

# MCLM Newsletter



## Message from the Interim Executive Director

Welcome to the first 2010 issue of the Mayme Clayton Library and Museum Newsletter. This is both a difficult and a hopeful time for us. The untimely and unexpected loss of Avery Clayton, our iconic founder, has left us shocked and saddened. It has also left us challenged and energized to fulfill the mission that Dr. Mayme A. Clayton set forth for us through her heroic accomplishments in assembling this priceless treasure, the Mayme Clayton Collection.

Please take time to read about our most recent happenings, the joyful and the sorrowful, and then give some thought to how you might contribute to our important effort.

Her son Avery was the first to pick up the torch and take the collection into a permanent home. We who are now left to nurture the dream and protect the treasure are rising to the challenge to take the institution to new heights. Please join us on this journey that is only beginning as we move toward a formal opening of MCLM, just as Avery anticipated. We need your love, prayers, and most especially your tangible support to move the institution forward. Check back often at our website [www.claytonmuseum.org](http://www.claytonmuseum.org) to make a donation, volunteer your time and talent, and see what we are planning.

Read more about MCLM in the media:

<http://www.wavenewspapers.com/news/local/84076042.html>

[http://culvercityobserver.com/news/newsmain\\_view.php?editid1=120](http://culvercityobserver.com/news/newsmain_view.php?editid1=120)

## Masters of Jazz

The heyday of the Central Avenue music scene was remembered at the Mayme A. Clayton Library & Museum (MCLM) on Saturday, November 21, 2009. A capacity crowd attended a panel discussion billed as *Central Avenue Revisited: Masters of Jazz*. During the 1920's through the early 1950's, Central Avenue was as significant in the jazz world as Harlem and New Orleans.

The panel was presented in conjunction with *Central Avenue & Beyond: The Harlem Renaissance*

*in Los Angeles*, a collaborative exhibition between MCLM and the Huntington Library on display at The Huntington Oct. 24, 2009 - Feb. 8, 2010. The exhibition included never-before exhibited items from the Clayton collection: vintage photographs of such Central Avenue jazz performers as the California Cotton Pickers, the Top Hatters, the Rajahs of Swing, plus a program from a performance by Duke Ellington.

The November 21<sup>st</sup> panel discussion at MCLM featured five master musicians of that era recounting their experiences performing on Central Avenue and living in Los Angeles from the 1930's through the 1950's. Musicians Clora Bryant, William Marcel "Buddy" Collette, Jackie Kelso, Charles Owens, and Gerald Wilson fondly recalled many other prominent musicians who taught and accompanied them over the years, their experiences at Jefferson and Jordan High Schools, and their memories of the famed Dunbar Hotel. A sixth panelist, Michael Dolphin, a co-producer of the Central Avenue Jazz Festival, spoke eloquently about his father, John Dolphin, the legendary music entrepreneur who founded Dolphin's of Hollywood Record Store. The discussion was ably moderated by LeRoy Downs, program host on K-JAZZradio, and jazz historian Jeffrey Winston. In addition, the film *Central Avenue Live* (2005) produced by Rosie Lee Hooks and directed by S. Pearl Sharp for the Watts Towers Art Center was screened following the jazz panel event.

Before the panel discussion began, panelists and guests viewed MCLM's current exhibition, *Masters of Jazz*, a collection of photographs by Warren Berman. Attendees also watched a video compilation of various scenes from the life and performances of Jazz Masters produced by professor and historian Chet Hanley.

The panel presentation was organized by Judith Samuels, MCLM Events Consultant, who would like to acknowledge Mr. Steve Isoardi, editor of *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles*, published by the University of California Press.

## A Night at the Movies

A double bill of documentaries complementing the *Central Avenue & Beyond: The Harlem Renaissance in Los Angeles* on exhibit at The Huntington was held with great success on December 9, 2009 in Friend's Hall at the Huntington. The first, *Mama Laura's Boys*, is a 30-minute documentary about Babe's and Ricky's Inn, the venerable Central Avenue blues club founded in 1955 by Ms. Laura Mae Gross of Vicksburg, Mississippi. A quintessential rocking blues bar. Babe's and Rickv's Inn is a legendary Los Angeles live music club still operating in

Leimert Park that showcases some of the best of the West Coast blues scene. The film included interviews with the founder, Ms. Gross and her partner since 1996, Jonathon Hodges, a prop master in the motion picture industry who played at the Central Avenue club on Sunday afternoons and was instrumental in assisting the move from Central Avenue to Leimert Park in August of 1997. Several long time performers and the club's staff were also interviewed in the film. Russel Brown, the film's director was on hand to make introductory comments. The film was especially poignant owing to the recent death (October 3, 2009) of Ms. Gross at the age of 89.

The second feature was *Central Avenue Live!* a film by S. Pearl Sharp and Rosie Lee Hooks, produced for the Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department. Filmed at the 1996 Central Avenue Jazz Festival, the documentary is packed with performances, and interviews with legends of jazz and residents who frequented this historic neighborhood in its heyday.

Executive producer Rosie Lee Hooks, director of the Watts Towers Arts Center and former Sweet Honey in the Rock member along with Writer/Director and poet S. Pearl Sharp also lead a traditional African tribute to the late Avery Clayton that opened the event.

## A Celebration of Life

by

Barbara Cruse

On December 19<sup>th</sup> 2009 a moving Celebration of Life for Avery Clayton was held at the Agape International Spiritual Center. More than seven hundred people turned out to celebrate Avery's life, representing a strong testament to the far-reaching influence of a gentle man with a great spirit and relentless devotion to the making the world a better place. Family members, long time friends, business associates, and supporters of Avery's work at the Mayme A. Clayton Library and Museum gathered to pay tribute to this remarkable man. The celebration began with a heartfelt welcome from family friend and spiritual director of Agape, Reverend Michael Beckwith, with Reverend Coco Stewart leading the ceremony thereafter.

Many of Avery's friends and loved ones, including brothers Lloyd and Renai Clayton, lifelong friend Dr. Cynthia Hudley, and Avery's best friend Wade Frier, offered moving remembrances of Avery's life and times as well as his passion for the mission of the Mayme Clayton Library and Museum. Their stories, peppered with laughter and tears, told of the unique richness that Avery brought to each of their lives.

The celebration continued with a host of proclamations and acknowledgments in recognition of Avery's devotion to the perpetuation of his mother's dream. Congresswoman Diane E. Watson, former Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke, Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley Thomas, and Los Angeles City Council member Bernard C. Parks were on hand to offer their personal reflections as well as formal proclamations from their respective legislative bodies. As well, the Mayor of Culver City, Andy Weissman, gave a wonderful tribute.

Vocalist Many Otto and saxophonist Charles Owen lent their talents to perform beautiful musical selections. This was a truly bittersweet day for all of us who knew and loved Avery as we celebrated a life of powerful meaning well and fully lived, and at the same time we deeply mourned his passing.

## Meet MCLM

Cynthia Hudley, President of the Board of Directors and Interim Executive Director, is a professor in the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she has also served as an Associate Dean of the University. Dr. Hudley has published academic volumes with Oxford and Yale University presses and received a national award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), for her research on youth violence prevention. Hudley has held leadership positions with the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, the Society for Research on Adolescence, and the Association of Social and Behavioral Scientists. Prior to her academic career, Hudley spent 15 years as a professional educator, working with students with learning disorders and emotional disturbances, as well as with incarcerated juvenile populations.

Michael Leventhal, MCLM Board member, lawyer and business consultant, is the founder of both MC Squared, The Law Firm, and MC Squared, The Consultancy. Michael brought many years of intellectual property, digital and traditional media expertise to MCLM as pro bono counsel for before becoming a member of the Board of Directors. Michael is passionate about the power of culture and knowledge to do good in the world. He is also a Los Angeles native with deep ties to Culver City.

James C. Roberts III, MCLM Board member, is managing principal of Global Capital Law Group and CEO of its affiliated strategic consulting firm, Global Capital Strategic Group. Mr. Roberts is responsible for the digital, M&A and international areas of practice. He advises on transactional and corporate matters for innovative companies. He also advises museums, artists and collectors on digital rights. He received his law degree from the University of Chicago, his MA from Stanford University and his BS from the University of California, Berkeley.

James E. Silcott, MCLM Board member, is a Commissioner of the Los Angeles California Area Planning

Commission and was the first African-American project architect for Los Angeles County and the University of California. His architectural projects have included the Martin Luther King Hospital, Inglewood Courts Building, Jules Stein Eye Clinic at UCLA, and the UCLA Boathouse at Marina Del Rey. He also serves on the board of the Kennard Design Group, the largest Black-owned architectural firm west of the Mississippi. In 2003, he received the Kresge Coca-Cola Award for philanthropy to historically Black colleges and universities. He received a Bachelor of Architecture from Howard in 1957, and served as a sergeant in the U.S. Army.

Patricia Smith-Hunt, MCLM Board member, is Head of Preservation Services at the University of California, Riverside Libraries. Prior to joining UCR in 2007, Dr. Smith-Hunt spent more than 18 years at Ohio University where she established and headed the institutions first library-wide preservation initiative. While at OU she also managed a \$1 million Preservation Endowment, one of a few such endowments among ARL research institutions in the nation. Smith-Hunt earned her undergraduate degree from Morgan State University, a Masters degree in Library Science from Atlanta University, and a doctorate in Counseling & Higher Education from Ohio University. Dr. Smith-Hunt also has an Advanced Certificate in Preservation Administration from Columbia University.

Jessica L. Darraby, Board Counsel, is a principal and founder of the Art Law Firm, a California-based firm that serves an international clientele of arts organizations, collectors, conservators, boards of directors and trustees, appraisers, insurance companies, artists, museums, corporations and institutions. She advises nonprofit corporations on board governance, regulatory compliance, and best practices. Ms. Darraby, a former dealer and director, has owned a contemporary art gallery, collects contemporary art, and is a patron of arts and dance groups. Ms. Darraby is the author of *Art, Artifact, Architecture & Museum Law* (2009: 14<sup>th</sup> ed.), a multi volume legal treatise published by Thomson Reuters. She currently is the Chair of the Arts & Museums Division for the American Bar Association Forum on Entertainment and Co-Chair of Intellectual Property for the International Section.

Evelyn C. Davis, Director of Communications, is responsible for external communications including press relations. Prior to joining the MCLM team, Ms. Davis was Senior Director of Marketing and Public Relations for more than ten years at the Autry National Center's Museum of the American West in Griffith Park and the Southwest Museum of the American Indian in Mt. Washington. Ms. Davis is the immediate past president of the Friends of the Watts Towers Arts Center, Public Relations Chair for St. Thomas the Apostle Episcopal Church in Hollywood, and a founding member of the Museum Marketing Roundtable, where she serves on its Executive Committee.

Leah M. Kerr, Director of Archives at MCLM, has a background in motion picture and television production. Ms. Kerr has authored a book, *Driving Me Wild: Nitro Powered Outlaw Culture*, in which she writes about women and minorities in motor sports. She has also worked as a screenwriter and has authored a produced script, *For Hire*. Ms. Kerr has a Bachelors of Science in Psychology from Colorado State University, and a Masters of Arts in Moving Image Archives Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. Ms. Kerr also serves on the board of Film Forum.

Gil Mars, Operations Manager, is a Business professional who has his B.S. in Business Management from California Polytechnic University, Pomona. Mr. Mars has held several Management positions prior to coming to MCLM. His diverse experience brings a new perspective to the Museum/Library. He has interests in Museum Art and History but has pursued internships in the banking and business fields to better his understanding, knowledge, and skill set for the business world.

Rose-Marie Richmond, treasurer for the Board of Directors, began her accounting career in New York City

during the early 1970's. She entered the couture arena in 1980, as Controller for Cidat USA Inc., working with esteemed labels like Valentino, Ungaro and Giorgio Armani, under the Gruppo GFT USA umbrella. For 12 years Ms. Richmond supervised the presentation of two major collections in the New York showroom of Gruppo GFT USA . In 1992 she moved to Los Angeles to work with Timmy Woods and her whimsical handbags. Currently, she consults as a Controller for a series of underground biker-chic apparel and jewelry lines. In 2002, Rose-Marie served as Regional Director of FGI-LA.