**Black Spartans (1907-1948)**

**Curators**
Carli V. Lowe, University Archivist
Kate Steffens, Special Collections Librarian

**Artist**
Yeab Kebede ('22, Digital Media Arts)

**Graphic Designer**
En Yu Ma ('22, Graphic Design)

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"Black Spartans (1907-1948)" represents ongoing research in SJSU Special Collections & Archives identifying documentation of Black experiences throughout SJSU history. This exhibit is the first of several installments. Much of the information we have comes from the Spartan Daily student newspaper and the La Torre yearbooks. With too few exceptions, Black Spartans' stories are not told in their own words but from the perspectives of their majority white classmates. This is reflected in the language and focus of the articles. We invite you to read critically.

The Black Spartans featured in this exhibit pursued their educational goals while contending with institutionalized racism and other major crises of the 20th century: two World Wars, the influenza pandemic of 1918, and polio. Locally, "the deed to virtually every home in San Jose" included restrictions against Black and Asian residents known as “restrictive covenants” (Spartan Daily, February 16, 1948, page 2). On campus, blackface and minstrel shows were a regular part of student events.

"Black Spartans (1907-1948)" is an invitation to the community to join us in surfacing these stories, ensuring these histories are preserved and presented in a way that honors these students' lives. Contact us at special.collections@sjsu.edu to participate.

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**Exhibit Curators Statement**

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**Artist Statement**

The "Black Spartans (1907-1948)" exhibition is a homage to Black culture and history at San José State University and the Bay Area at large. Until recently, the significance of Black bodies in Bay Area history (as well as U.S. history) was overlooked. Unless it was associated with the struggles of civil rights leaders, athletes, or celebrity-personas, the story of a graduate from a state school wasn’t valued because we weren’t part of the mainstream culture. As a Black Spartan myself, I was deeply connected to these individuals that started out just like me. I saw a reflection of myself and my community throughout the process of making these mixed media portraits and came to realize how important it is to know your history because it becomes a catalyst for knowing who you are.

My work explores the intricacy of identity and the role culture, tradition, and history play. These portraits are embodiments of our Black Spartans, they are visual representations of the colorful and captivating lives they led. Through this work, I hope to influence other artists and individuals to take part in researching and finding out the infinite layers of what it means to be Black. Our history is beyond our struggle. We are the blueprint.

Yeab Kebede
'22 Digital Media Arts
Douglas Kinnard attended San Jose State College from 1934-1935. At SJSC, he was active in sports including shotput and track. He was also a member of Phi Mu Alpha, a men’s music honor fraternity, and directed the Little Symphony Orchestra in a student recital. After leaving SJSC, he returned in 1939 to perform as a bass player as part of Johnny Cooper’s Orchestra.
Douglas Kinnard is pictured as a member of the San Jose State College track team.
Spartan tracksters in preparation for approaching season

By Steve Murdock

Faced with the loss of five of last year’s most important point winners in the form of Frank Cunningham, javelin thrower; Noel Knight, hurler, Sherman McFedries, quartermiler; Red Wood, pole vaulter; and Bud Hubbard, quartermiler, Coach Erwin Blesh, who guides San Jose State’s track destiny, is laboring hard to whip his squad into shape for the opening meet of the season with the University of California at Edwards Field in Berkeley on the 10th of March.

For the first two meets of the season, those with California and San Francisco State, Blesh will depend on a squad built up around the men who garnered 37 of the 49.5 points which brought San Jose second place in the Conference meet last year.

With the opening of the spring quarter in March he expects to induce some of his missing stars to return to school as well as some promising junior college transfers and thus bolster up the squad for the yearly battle to wrest Conference honors from Fresno’s mighty Bulldogs who are rumored to be more powerful than ever this season.

The 37 returning points are concentrated in some nine men, six of whom were among the first ten in all-season scoring for last year.

They are Captain Lou Sabano, sprinter; Doug Taylor, sprinter and broad jumper; Harry Murphy, hurler and high jumper; Jordan McPherson, discus thrower; “Doc” Sheehian, broad jumper; Jack Prouty and “Lol” Stevens, pole vaulters; and Bob Cheno and Fred Oerum, half millers. A tenth, Glenn Harper, who ranked fifth in the season’s scoring, took second in the Conference mile, but was disqualified.

Adding strength to the nucleus will be four exceptional members of last year’s fresh team, three transfers, five letterman who went unplaced in the Conference meet, and several promising non-lettermen.

The extra-fresh who are expected to go places on the varsity this year are Ken Provan, quartermiler; Rune Hayen, hurler; Ralph Raymond, weight man, and Bert Watson, pole vaulter and broad jumper.

Transfers include Ed Lynch, two miiler from Sacramento J.C.; Harold Stephenson, weight man from Salinas J. C.; and Tate, also a weight thrower from Cal Poly.

Lettermen include Louis Margulis, discus; Tom Marshall, shot; Everett Lydi, two mile; Elmer Sunquist, javelin; and Pete Dravon, a veteran javelin man of the ’31 and ’32 teams who was not in school last year.

Among the more promising non-lettermen are Jack Chapelle, two miiler; Ray Atto, quartermiler; Clark Gibson, javelin thrower; Karl Robison, sprinter; and Douglas Kinnard, discus thrower.

Blesh has been putting the squad through strenuous “building-up” sessions which will continue for about two more weeks. Following this the

January 17, 1934

Douglas Kinnard is listed among the “more promising non-letterman” as the track team prepares for its season.
Erwin Blesh is “waxing enthusiastic” about the track team’s prospects in shot put thanks to the presence of Douglas Kinnard, among others.
Douglas Kinnard is listed among the tuba players for a concert given by the San Jose State College Band.

April 11, 1934

Spartan Daily
Spartan Daily

May 4, 1934

Douglas Kinnard misses a track meet due to an injury.

Fresno Favored to Keep F.W.C. Title; Spartans Hope To Upset Dope Sheets

Doug Taylor Will Be Entered In Dashes And Broadjump

With a “do or die” spirit, Coach Bledsoe will leave with his track squad for Sacramento today. The chance of winning the meet are possible, but not probable. However, with the men all coming through in their respective events the probable will become a fact.

In an interview with Bledsoe he said, “I really think the Spartans have a chance in this meet. Unlike the Spartans a break here and there, and with the fact that Chico and Nevada will cut it on Fresno in some of the Spartans’ weak events, is what I have my conclusions upon.” With a spirit like this behind a team it is quite possible that the Spartans will come through with some unexpected points.

The casualties of the team are only two in number. Douglas Kinnard, the shifty shot putter is still bashed by his sprained ankle he received in the Fresno meet. He has not worked out since this accident, saying his talent until the conference when he hopes to get off one heave that will count.

Anson Hayne is the other member of the team who is out.

(Continued on page two)
Journalist Gil Bishop expresses concern that Douglas Kinnard’s musical interests will take time away from preparing to compete in track.
Douglas Kinnard pledges into the men’s music honor fraternity Phi Mu Alpha.

April 17, 1935

La Torre Yearbook
Douglas Kinnard competes in shot put in a meet between San Jose State College and the San Francisco Gators.
Chest Jamboree Acclaimed As Bigger Hit Than The Revelries

By IRENE MELTON

“Better than the Revelries” was the opinion of many concerning the Community Chest Jamboree given in the Morris Dailey auditorium Tuesday night.

With a flashing, coordinated program introducing new talent and many familiar performers, the show proved a smashing success both from a financial and entertainment viewpoint, judging from the proceeds of approximately $148 received from the production.

To state it briefly, music, music, and more music dominated the show, keeping the rafters of the Morris Dailey ringing and the members of the audience busy tapping and swaying to the tuneful treats of Gene Goudron’s musicians, Al Davina’s orchestra, Johnny Cooper’s “ride” rhythms, and many others.

Surprise hit of the show was the syncopated harmony of the men’s quartet singing with Cooper’s group. The four melody maestros, Tommy Coleman, Jack Johansen, Teddy Noga, and “Bags” Peele, members of Howard Fredericks’ band, gave forth with such tantalizers as “Love’s Old Sweet Song”, “South of the Border”, and “Shiek of Araby”.

Another audience favorite was found with the wicked bass beating of Doug Kinnard, also with Cooper’s orchestra.