Black Spartans (1907-1948)

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

Artist
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Graphic Designer
En Yu Ma (’22, Graphic Design)

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Exhibit Curators Statement

“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 Toire 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.

Carli V. Lowe - University Archivist
Kate Steffens - Special Collections Librarian

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
Aubrey Minter attended San Jose State College from 1940-1944. He was a football halfback, baseball player, and novice boxer. Minter was a member of the football team when they traveled to Hawaii in November 1941 to play against both University of Hawaii and Willamette University. The trip was violently interrupted by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and Minter and his teammates spent the weeks after the attack assisting the local police and engaging in the work of digging trenches, installing barbed wire, and patrolling to ensure the safety of the island's inhabitants. Minter and his teammates' experience is detailed in the book “Scrimmage for War: A Story of Pearl Harbor, Football, and WWII.”
Aubrey Minter joins the San Jose State College football team after attending Fullerton Junior College.
Coach Glenn "Pop" Warner nicknames Aubrey Minter "Mule".
Football team manager Chauncey Benevento praises Aubrey Minter's speed and skill on the field.
San Jose Crushes Nevada 28-0 For 5th Straight Win

San Jose State Spartan football warriors victimized their fifth straight opponent here last Saturday night, trapping the University of Nevada Wolves, 28-0. The DeGroot-Warner machine manufactured its own breaks and then made the most of them to turn back the Wolfpack. It was San Jose’s “Maginot Line” that leaked through the Nevada forward wall to block two punts and pave the way for two of the backs four touchdowns.

MINTER RAMBLES

Aubrey Minter, big-nagging little sophomore halfback, provided the only real thrill of the ball game on an 80-yard run to a touchdown on Nevada’s kickoff at the start of the second half. The diminutive colored boy took Mitch Coenga’s hook on the 20, swung to the right sideline where he picked up an escort of Spartan linemen whose sudden-like blocking sprung him into the open. Once in the clear, Minter’s twisting-building big-action carried him by the Nevada safety man for the score, Manoukian kicked the extra point.

San Jose’s first scoring opportunity occurred late in the first quarter, with Captain Bob Tickenchel breaking through to block Coenga’s punt that a swarm of Spartans recovered on the Nevada 20.

COSTELLO SCORES

Four straight reverses with Morris Manoukian packing the mail and a one-yard skirt of right end by Leroy Zimmerman worked (Continued on Page Four)

Eighty-Yard Ramble By Minter Highlight Of Spartan Attack

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<th>STATISTICS</th>
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</tbody>
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Scoring: San Jose, touchdowns: Costello, Zimmerman, Minter (sub for Costello). Turnover: extra points (by place-kick), Cook two, Manoukian (by run), Manoukian.

Spartan Daily

October 9, 1939

Aubrey Minter plays a pivotal role in a football team victory over the University of Nevada.
Aubrey Minter closes out a “perfect year” with the San Jose State College football team.
Aubrey Minter enters a novice boxing tournament.

January 23, 1940

Spartan Daily
Aubrey Minter is listed among students due to win athletic awards in Varsity football.
Aubrey Minter wins a technical knockout over his opponent in a novice boxing match.
Aubrey Minter is included in the starting lineup for the San Jose State College baseball team.
NOTICE

Boy Scout Leadership group:
The following members must pay
their quarter to Chuck Johnson to-
day between 12:45 and 1:00 in
Room 24: John Allen, Wayne Bon-
ham, Robert Bryson, Ken Hogan,
Donald Macrae, Aubrey Minter,
Earl Paullus.

Spartan Daily

March 7, 1940

Aubrey Minter is listed among the members
of the Boy Scout Leadership group.
Aubrey Minter is pictured as a member of the football team.
Spartan Daily

Aubrey Minter is pictured as a member of the baseball team.
Aubrey Minter is pictured in his football uniform with a short description of his accomplishments in the most recent game.

Spartan Daily

September 16, 1940

Aubrey Minter is pictured in his football uniform with a short description of his accomplishments in the most recent game.
SAN JOSE RECORDS 24 FIRST DOWNS TO ONE FOR BEATEN MONTANA

Scooting Halfbacks Run Enemy Ends Ragged In Piling Up Big Yardage

Butte, Montana, Sept. 22—San Jose State college’s Spartans went back to their high-scoring ways tonight as they buried Montana State’s Bobcats under a 34 to 0 score before 5,000 fans.

The Spartans, rolling up their first win in two starts, were never threatened. They amassed nearly 400 yards from passes and scrimmage, chalking up 24 first downs as they shoved the Bobcats all over the Butte stadium sandlot.

San Jose ended up with a net loss of 12 yards from scrimmage, and were able to make but one first down.

San Jose’s first touchdowns came with four minutes remaining in the first quarter. Tornell running over from the one yard line after a Spartan march of 85 yards. Little Aubrey Minter set up the score, going to the 3 yard line on a 10 yard double lateral from Tornell and Pursell. Captain Sonny Cook place-kicked the extra point.

**NYGREN SCORES**

A pass, Hubbell to Nygren, was good for 26 yards and the second San Jose score midway in the second period. Hubbell place-kicked the extra point to make it San Jose 14, Montana 0. Nygren featured this drive with a classy bit of running.

John Woofington sparked the (Continued on Page Three)

WOOFINGTON, MINTER PLAY STARRING ROLES

(Continued from Page One)

San Jose threatened continually during the final quarter. Pursell finally scoring with three minutes to play from the two yard line. Minter and Pursell did most of the ball packing to set up the score. Cook place-kicked the extra point to bring San Jose’s total to 28.

San Jose had to score three times to make one of their touch downs stick during the final moments of the game. Two passes from Tornell to Minter, and one from Tornell to Westberg placed the ball on the Montana 5 yard line. Minter crossed the goal line first on a 3 yard dash over the right side. An offensive penalty nullified the play.

**MINTER SCORES**

Next Pursell took a pass from Tornell, but the referee ruled he caught the ball out of the playing field. Minter made it stick a few moments later on a 6 yard sprint around the right side. Cook’s place-kick for the extra point was blocked.

San Jose’s scoring halfbacks, Minter, Westberg, Nygren and Pursell rolled up most of San Jose’s yardage as they ran the enemy ends ragged en swarming Warner reverse.

In the line, Ends Allen and Westberg played bang-up games for State.

San Jose takes off tomorrow morning for Logan, Utah, pointing for victory over the Utah State Aggies.

Spartan Daily

September 24, 1940

Aubrey Minter plays a “starring” role in a football game against Montana State University.
Behind effective blocking, scooter Aubrey Minter starts for the races with Texas A & I men in pursuit. Minter managed to go for 12 yards before being dropped.
Aubrey Minter is pictured as a member of the football team.
SPARTANS HELD BY SOLDIERS

SCORE LATE IN FOURTH QUARTER TO GAIN TIE WITH FORT ORD

By WILBUR AGE

The Golden Raiders of San Jose State college met their equal in Spartan stadium Friday night at the hands of a rugged Fort Ord eleven, managing to just hold their own and remain undefeated by coming from behind in the fourth quarter to beat the score at 8-6.

It was little but tough 170-pound Aubrey "Mule" Minter, left half, for the Spartans, who came through with a brilliant nine-yard run after taking a wide pass from Fullback Allen Hersey, to pay dirt, despite the fact that three Fort Ord players were hanging on.

Fred Lindsey, who was injured at the close of the half, was sent in to make the conversion but the big Soldier line crashed through to block the attempt.

Fort Ord won the toss and elected to kick off, which was taken by "Mule" Minter on the 18-yard line and carried back 18 yards to the 18-yard line. After two plays, which gained nothing, Lindsey kicked into Soldier territory.

On the first play, Louis Davis passed to left end John Johnson for 20 yards with Minter stopping the play after it got by the other line backer. Pete Zager, towering Fort Ord fullback, went for another first down on the next play, again being stopped by Minter in the secondary.

SPARTANS ROLL

San Jose then took over on downs and with an exchange on a fumble and a pass interception began to roll. Minter went for nine yards with Lindsey making it a first down in a long plunge. Hard hitting halfback Bert Robinson then galloped around left end for 24 yards for another first down and on the very next play picked up another seven yards. Lindsey again found a hole in the Fort Ord line and plowed to another first down, picking up 15 yards.

However, the Cord eleven took over at the end of the first quarter on a kick into the end zone after the Spartan drive had been stopped.

The Spartans came back fast, however, and took over on a punt.

On the first play, Minter streaked around right end for 20 yards. Lindsey on three line-plunges made another first down. Minter picked up seven but the Cord eleven held and Lindsey kicked out of bounds on the five-yard line.

From there on it was a warren battle with both teams putting out (Continued on Page 2)

Spartan Daily

October 6, 1941

Aubrey Minter demonstrates his skills in a tough football game against Fort Ord.
While Aubrey Minter continues to excel in sports at San Jose State College, his family rarely gets to see him play.
The picture of Aubrey Minter posing with a football is showcased again, this time with a short description of his skills and future prospects.
Aubrey Minter is pictured positioning a football for a kick by the team captain.

Spartan Daily

November 24, 1941
Towards the end of his time playing at San Jose State College, Aubrey Minter was leading his teammates in average yardage.
Aubrey Minter was among the football players in Honolulu for a game during the attack on Pearl Harbor.
Aubrey Minter is given honorable mention in the announcement of the Little All-Coast football team.
Spartan Daily

January 15, 1942

Aubrey Minter is listed among Varsity players to receive letters in football.
La Torre Yearbook

1942

Aubrey Minter is pictured in action on the San Jose State College football team.
Looking back at 'gold era'
Alumni remember football of the 1930s
By Doris Kranes-Ferreira

Fans at Spartan Stadium Saturday celebrated the golden anniversary of an era in SJSU foot-
ball history, '39-'40, which they believe will ever stand as an inspiration for all
future Spur fans in future years.

The years '39-'40 were the peak years of the 'wonder team', and more than 40 letter players along
with numerous other proud alumni came back to SJSU to reminisce about the most successful football
teams in Spartan history.

Special recognition was given in particular to the '39 team that won the Naismith Bowl and capped
the season with a 13-0 record, and scored a smashing total of 1,797 points against an average of only
49 points per game of the opponents in a purely 10 points.

According to alumnus Jesse Murray Grifflin, who traveled to SJSU from Clovis Heights, at least
100 alumni 'survived' the 50 years and made it back for the reunion.

"The team of '39 had the highest scoring team in the nation," said Griffin. "We actually went to a
bowl game and won.

The year was a consecutive year that the Spartan team had led as the nation's high scorer.

The 1939 team's Glenn 'Pop' Warner came out of retirement to devise an unforgettable offense for
head coach Dudley Delkness.

The plan allowed SJSU to fan

The 15 opponents, according to San
Jose State University Football
Magazine.

This 'wonder team' included
halfback Leroy Zimmerman, half
back Herman Zetterberg, Morris
Marquez, Aubrey Minter, Howard
Carstens and Hugh Staley. All gain-
ing strength under the Warner strat-
gy, the magazine reported.

In addition to participating in the
Spartan's homecoming celebration,
the golden alumni will also visit the
campus and share memories after the
luncheon at the Faculty Cafeteria.

Spartan Daily
October 30, 1989
San José State University celebrates the
golden anniversary of the "wonder team" that
included Aubrey Minter.