



The Biddy Mason 
Charitable Foundation
Going the distance to make a difference for foster youth

July 19, 2020

Orphans of History

The recent attention being given to the threatened Zakheim murals at the University of San Francisco points vividly to how little is known about African American history.

One of the largest challenges of being an African American in this country is the absence of the knowledge of African American history to the general public. African American history is often overlooked as not being relevant; or it is confined to several respected or feared leaders. Names like, Benjamin Banneker, Phyllis Wheatley and Biddy Mason are just not widely known. In short we have become orphans to our own history. African American history is American history.

I am sure to many who have viewed the mural; the presence of a lone African American woman in the center of the mural was viewed without much thought. The panel that depicts Biddy Mason as a central figure working as an equal with Dr. John Griffin is key to the mural. Dr. Griffin and Biddy Mason had a close working relationship. They were a team that was an essential medical resource to the early Los Angeles Community.

Biddy Mason was a midwife. She not only delivered babies but she provided herbal medical remedies to many in the community. Her philanthropy is legendary as she fed the homeless cared for the sick founded a school and orphanage. She is most widely remembered for the crucial role she played along with eight other men in the founding of First AME Church Los Angeles in the living room of her home on North Spring Street.

Biddy Mason was an enslaved woman and midwife who was taken from the South with a Mormon slave owning family to Salt Lake City Utah in 1848 and then to San Bernardino in 1851. She and her family were freed in 1856. She continued to practice nursing and became one of the first African- American women to own property in Los Angeles.

I would strongly urge the Land Use Committee to act as a godparent to the history these murals represent. The murals depict the medical history of California of which Biddy Mason in particular played a vital role. These murals should not be destroyed!

Jackie Broxton, Executive Director

An Outreach Ministry of First AME Church of Los Angeles

P.O. Box 41711, Los Angeles, CA 90041 Tel: 626 319 4417

E-mail: JBiddymason1@biddymason.com

The Biddy Mason Charitable Foundation is a 501© (3) non -profit foundation

From: adam@volcanopress.com
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: [Aaron Peskin](#); [Richard Rothman](#); [Mike Buhler](#); [Newman, Brian \(UCSF\)](#)
Subject: Please enter this comment into the record / Zakheim Toland Hall Murals
Date: Monday, July 20, 2020 3:43:20 PM

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(I never had the chance to speak by phone. It was NOT clear how to indicate my presence.)

Hello, my name is Adam Gottstein and I am the grandson of Bernard Zakheim. Thank you Supervisor Peskin and members of the committee as well as Mr. LaBounty for his detailed explanation of the murals.

His series of Toland Hall frescoes graphically depict historical figures and the evolution of medicine in California.

However, this colossal undertaking may soon be undone.

Alumnus Dr. Robert Sherins asked me to quote him - and reference another alumnus - in reinforcing the importance of California's medical history:

"In 1996, Dr. Robert Schindler spoke on the history of the UCSF and the Toland Hall murals. Schindler was a credentialed medical historian when he entered UCSF medical school at the remarkably young age of 20. His background lends enormous weight to his words and account.

He emphasizes that, until the early 20th century, medical schools were proprietary. This means students were accepted simply for their "interest" in becoming doctors. Dr. Hugh Toland arrived in San Francisco during the gold rush and went on to establish a self-named medical school, he was then convinced to donate it to the newly established University of California. He requested that the medical school retain his name. They denied him that honor, but acquiesced to naming him the first dean -- and later named the lecture hall after him.

UCSF became the first medical school to establish an academic model of only accepting as medical students those who had been previously university trained. It was so successful in promoting "SCIENTIST DOCTORS" that the model was subsequently adopted by other institutions of repute."

From both an artistic and historical perspective, the Toland Hall murals are irreplaceable works of art. As a family we hope to ensure their survival so future generations can appreciate and learn from them.

Dr. Sherins is an alum of the UCSF and is a tremendous resource. I would be happy to put interested parties in direct touch. Please contact me, Adam Gottstein adam@volcanopress.com

My best,
Adam

Adam Gottstein
209 296.7989



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From: [Monte Buchsbaum](#)
To: [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Landmark Designation for the Zakheim History of Medicine in California Frescoes 200677
Date: Monday, July 20, 2020 5:14:40 PM

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I strongly urge support of the Landmark Designation for the Zakheim History of Medicine in California Frescoes 200677

I and other alumni of the University of California School of Medicine were inspired by the murals when we attended classes in Toland Hall.

The murals are clearly historically important and deserve Landmark Designation. You must act before the building is demolished.

According to the University, no date for demolition has been established and no architect selected.

Thus this is the moment to preserve the murals and Toland Hall and plan for its incorporation into any new structures.

I am working with others to save the murals in Toland Hall in San Francisco from destruction as part of the plan to replace the building with a new building. I believe the entire Toland Hall could remain in place as a historical site and place for teaching and education. European medical centers retain their old lecture halls for teaching and international scientific meetings. Preservation as part of a new structure is common in many new European buildings...as in Italy where Roman structures are incorporated. I believe the architects could win awards for the graceful preservation of the murals and even the lecture hall.

Please let me know who to write to support the preservation of the murals.

Monte S. Buchsbaum, M.D. 1965 MD UCSF
Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry and Radiology, Emeritus, UC San Diego
Professor of Psychiatry Emeritus UC Irvine.

Monte S. Buchsbaum, M.D.

mbuchsbaum@ucsd.edu

monte.buchsbaum@gmail.com for consultation, large files and manuscripts, and Psychiatry
Research correspondence

direct laboratory phone on my desk 949-376-6906 11/11/2017

efax 949-315-3079

917-592-2652 worldwide cellphone

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