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June 26, 2018

Chair Charchian and Members of the Design Review Board
City of Glendale
633 East Broadway
Glendale, CA 91206

RE: PDR 1800579, 1442 Montgomery Avenue

Dear Chair Charchian and Members of the Design Review Board:

The Glendale Historical Society is grateful for the opportunity to comment on the proposed project at 1442 Montgomery Avenue. Our non-profit organization has more than 700 members and works to preserve and celebrate Glendale's rich history and remaining architectural heritage.

TGHS has prepared a Historic Survey (DPR-532ab) form that finds the property at 1442 Montgomery Avenue to be a historic resource for purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). It was prepared by Francesca Smith, an architectural historian with over thirty years experience who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (SIPQS) and who has a substantial record in evaluating properties related to African American culture and in preparing and professionally reviewing African American ethnic history contexts. We also submit comments from five architectural historians who meet the SIPQS and one environmental planner who concur with the finding that 1442 Montgomery is a historic resource based on its association with Franz Taibosh at a time when Glendale was racially restricted.

Staff state that TGHS has not provided "substantial evidence" to support the finding that 1442 Montgomery is a historic resource under CEQA ("Assessment of Historic Survey Form," May 10, 2018, p. 6, hereafter AHSF). This letter gives the rationale for our finding and provides supplementary evidence.

As staff note, we do not claim the property is significant for its association with the life and career of Taibosh, a famous circus sideshow performer also known as "Clicko" and "the Wild Dancing Bushman." Staff agree, which is why the point that Taibosh's most important years as a performer did not coincide with his brief residency in Glendale is not relevant; nor do his likewise short-lived

The Glendale Historical Society (TGHS) advocates for the preservation of important Glendale landmarks, supports maintaining the historic character of Glendale's neighborhoods, educates the public about and engages the community in celebrating and preserving Glendale's history and architectural heritage, and operates the Doctors House Museum. TGHS is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization, and donations to TGHS are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

tenancies at three properties (two identified) in New York matter, even though they “may have deeper connections with the productive period of Taibosh’s life” (AHSF, p. 7).

Rather, the property is historically significant because of his tenancy’s importance to *Glendale*, a city that was notoriously racist and where black people did not enjoy the freedom to live where and how they chose. Staff notes that “Glendale’s hostility toward blacks and other people of color is well-documented (racially restrictive covenants were recorded against virtually every residential property in Glendale at that time),” but these covenants “were not unique to Glendale, and in fact were widespread through many parts of the United States” (ASHF, p. 6) We contend that this statement, while true, also radically understates the situation in Glendale. Its hostility to blacks is not merely well-documented but was infamous. As a “lily white” community that went to great lengths to keep it that way, Glendale has been widely reputed to have had a formal “sundown ordinance” that not only prevented blacks from residing in property within the city but made it unlawful, which is to say, unsafe, for them to be caught within city limits after dark (Carey McWilliams, *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land* [1946; rept. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1973], 328). Glendale actively cultivated a reputation that “No Negro sleeps overnight in our town” (cited in Merry Ovnick, *Los Angeles: The End of the Rainbow* [Los Angeles: Balcony Press, 1994], 244; see also “Glendale Your Home” [Glendale Merchants Association, 1928] and Eugene Hoy, “So This is Glendale” [Glendale, 1939]). After visiting the Glendale YWCA in 1941, a national representative of the organization reported that board members had told her “‘Glendale has no race problem, meaning no Negro problem,’ but she later learned that ‘the reason that there is no Negro problem there is because Glendale does not allow a Negro to stay overnight in the town’” (Sherrie Tucker, *Dance Floor Democracy: The Social Geography of Memory at the Hollywood Canteen* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2014], unpaginated online).

No formal law has been proved to exist, but white residents of Glendale didn’t need it: “It [Glendale’s racial exclusion] might as well have been official since it was enforced as such”; “African American residents of Los Angeles were well aware of Glendale’s danger for black travelers after sundown, *as was the national black press*” (Tucker, my emphasis). Glendale’s whiteness was enforced at the time not only by realtors and homeowner organizations but by the police. Numerous anecdotal reports describe police picking up black people (and sometimes dark-skinned white people by mistake) around sunset and dropping them off at the Glendale city limits (see, for example, <http://sundown.tougaloo.edu/sundowntownsshows.php?id=1107>), and also sympathetic white drivers offering aid to those they feared would not make it out before nightfall. Glendale’s notoriety has even found its way into a tour, “Bad Glendale,” offered by local historian Gary Keyes to Glendale Community College students to call attention to this troubling past. The tour includes the site of a cross-burning on the present GCC campus, following a two-day Ku Klux Klan initiation ceremony that began on July 12, 1924. In the 1930s the student newspaper warned students against participating in “secret societies” and deplored a rumor that a group of freshman had organized into the “Clansmen.” The tour also covers a shameful episode in 1936, when high school teams from Pasadena and Glendale met to play football. Future baseball star and icon of integration Jackie Robinson “was targeted and viciously attacked” by the Glendale team badly enough to require hospitalization (<https://elvaq.com/campus/2010/06/14/bad-glendale/>).

It is difficult to track the history of individual black residents in Glendale, since they were not welcome here, and history favors the exploits of the Leslie Brands, not the socially and legally

oppressed or marginalized. Census records are our most reliable, if still uneven and by their nature incomplete, evidence from this time period. Despite the claims indicating that no black people were allowed to live in Glendale, census records reviewed on Ancestry.com indicate a very few blacks did so, 39 of 62,738 total population in 1930 and 63 of 82,582 in 1940, or less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the population in each census.

Overall in 1940, 47 black residents were women; all but one were domestic servants who lived where they worked. Six women were fortunate enough to live with their husbands who also were in service at their place of residence. Eleven women were reported as married but did not live with their husbands. Only six men were not in service, but they appear to have lived onsite at their place of work, primarily as janitors. There were no black children living in Glendale in 1940. In 1930 32 of 39 black residents were women, all but three of whom worked as domestics. No black married couples lived together in domestic service, although nine female servants were married. Two sons lived with their mothers.

The rare exceptions to the rule are worth noting. Most importantly, from 1922 - 1931 Mark Noble (a pseudonym) and his wife Mae lived at 466 ½ Maple; they were listed as the only black property owners in the 1930 or 1940 census. Under his real name Noble Johnson, he was a motion picture character actor who played many races and ethnicities in Hollywood films and a producer of “race films” as co-owner of the Lincoln Motion Picture Company from 1916 - 1921. It is possible that Johnson “passed for white” in Glendale; according to UCLA film historian Jane Gaines, he could “easily have [done so],” and his death certificate listed him as “white” (“In and Out of Race: The Story of Noble Johnson,” in *Early Race Filmmaking in America*, ed. Barbara Lupack, [London: Routledge, 2016], unpaginated online). The Johnsons’ residence, if intact, would certainly be historically significant, but it has been demolished, as have residences associated with other anomalous black residents in the 1930 and 1940 census: three black women lived at the Glendale Sanitarium, where they were employed as student nurses; a black woman lived with her Mexican husband at 425 Franco Court in 1930; a male laborer lodged at 1300 S. Central in 1930. The buildings where janitors lived and worked have also been demolished (1227 ½ S. Central; 500 N. Glendale; a rear house at 1500 San Fernando). There were fewer black residents recorded in Glendale in the 1920 census (and none recorded before that); for the 16 records on Ancestry, seven black residents lived independently (and were gone by the 1930 census): two lived as lodgers (120 E. Colorado); one bootblack lived at 112 N. Brand, probably in the stand he owned; and Louis Ellis Jones, a laborer, lived with his wife and two children in a home he owned at 232 S. Verdugo Road. All of these properties have been demolished.

All evidence suggests that Taibosh’s situation in Glendale was unique, and the house he lived in still stands and retains sufficient integrity to qualify as a historic resource. Taibosh was not employed within the family, in his place of residence, but was something closer to a member of it (which is not to say that he was treated as an equal). A recent biography by historian Neil Parsons, *Clicko: The Wild Dancing Bushman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), describes his formal guardianship under Evelyn Cook, following the death of her husband Frank, who had befriended Taibosh while working as a legal adjuster for Ringling Bros. Evelyn Cook wrote an unpublished memoir and spoke with writer Laurens van der Post about her life with Taibosh, and Parsons interviewed Cook’s daughter Barbara, who lived at 1442 Montgomery with her mother and Taibosh. Evelyn Cook described Glendale’s 6 pm “curfew” and that they had to keep Taibosh “secretly in the house at night until they gained the confidence of the neighbors” (p. 279). The only

neighbors mentioned are two elderly sisters who lived next door, whom Taibosh encountered while indulging his passion for gardening, and they became “good friends” (281). It is unimaginable based on everything we know about Glendale that Taibosh was wandering the streets and enjoying its amenities freely at night.



Figure 1. Evelyn Cook, Buffalo Bill's niece, Maud W., Barbara Cook, Franz Taibosh, and "Boots," Glendale, CA, from *Clicko*.



Figure 2. Barbara Cook, "Clicko" in his stage costume, and Walter Pidgeon's daughter at Al G. Barnes-Sells-Floto Circus, 1939, Los Angeles, from *Clicko*.

We have no way of knowing what Taibosh himself wanted, which makes staff's claim that his sojourn in Glendale lacked “personal agency” (ASHF, p. 7) difficult to prove. Even if he preferred to live elsewhere, what black person after 1924 until well into the second half of the twentieth century would not have had serious reservations about making Glendale their home? What does personal agency mean in this context? It seems safe to say that black residents identified in the 1930 and 1940 census lived here—usually without their spouses, without children except in two instances—because this was a place they could find work and did so even if it meant being subject to the indignity of a police escort to the city limits, or worse, if they were caught outside after dark. Taibosh's residency here was brief, the winter season of 1938 – 1939, which may have been three months, or four, or six, but it was an occupational hazard of the circus performer to live a peripatetic life. He didn't live anywhere for very long after he left South Africa; he retired in 1939

but died in 1940. And at any rate, despite the apparent, noteworthy complicity of two elderly white next-door neighbors, all evidence overwhelmingly suggests Glendale is not a place he could have lived for very long.

Finally, we are surprised and disappointed that staff deride efforts to recognize the historic significance of a property that would bring attention to Glendale's racist history and the presence of black residents—including one who did not serve at the pleasure of white employers—in spite of it. It is important to remember this legacy; as William Faulkner memorably put it: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." The history of the African American experience in this city has everything to do with the fact that many years ago a little remembered black man had to hide while living here. We do not, as staff allege, "diminish...the importance of those families throughout the country who bravely and knowingly crossed 'color lines' to assert their equal right of homeownership"; nor do we "discount...the multitudes of longtime Los Angeles-area residents who routinely suffered the indignity of racial discrimination in housing" (ASHF, p. 6, 7) by making a case for the historic significance of a property associated with Taibosh. There are certainly important avenues for further research, and we hope some day Glendale will prepare an African American ethnic history context as other cities have done, to help uncover the identities and stories of some of these individuals to the degree they are recoverable. But none of this negates the importance of Taibosh's time in Glendale and the fact that the property that housed him still exists. It does not do those who bravely struggled to assert their civil rights any favors to deny the consanguinity of Taibosh—a documented black resident who temporarily evaded Glendale's informal but ferocious exclusionary policies—with less visible residents who were unable to avail themselves of the manifold attractions Glendale offered white people for the asking.

With the attached DPR 523ab form, the evidence presented in this letter, and the statements from five qualified architectural historians and an environmental planner supporting our position we have met the "substantial evidence" test that 1442 Montgomery is a historic resource eligible for the Glendale Register under Criterion 1: "The proposed historic resource is identified with important events in national, state, or city history, or exemplifies significant contributions to the broad cultural, political, economic, social, or historic heritage of the nation, state, or city." We therefore ask that you do not approve demolition without further environmental review as required under CEQA. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Greg Grammer

Greg Grammer, President
The Glendale Historical Society

cc: Phil Lanzafame, Director of Community Development, City of Glendale
Erik Krause, Deputy Director of Community Development, City of Glendale
Jay Platt, Senior Urban Designer, City of Glendale
Danny Mannaserian, Planning Assistant, City of Glendale