

Black Spartans (1907-1948)

Curators

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

Artist

Yeab Kebede ('22, Digital Media Arts)

Graphic Designer

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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 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.


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



Originally from Oakland, **Roger Romine** attended Oakland Technical High School and Salinas Junior College before transferring to San Jose State College, which he attended from 1941-1942. He was active in track, and as Chairman of the college YWCA-sponsored Cosmopolitan Club. He studied both Architectural Drawing and Bacteriology, as well as taking civilian pilot training classes. Romine left school to serve in World War II as a First Lieutenant in the Army Air Force, and was one of the first Black officers commissioned from Oakland. He received his training at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, making him a member of the famed Tuskegee Airmen. While serving, he was a member of the first all-Black fighter group in the AAF, and was credited with destroying three Nazi aircraft. Romine passed away in an accident while serving, on November 16, 1944. He was the first member of his Negro Mustang Fighter group to receive a posthumous award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

At Angell Field

VARSITY MEETS INDIANS TOMORROW AT 2 P.M.; YEARLINGS FACE PLACER

Provided the rain doesn't come down in too heavy torrents, San Jose State college's varsity track team will finally open its 1941 season against Stanford at Angell Field, Palo Alto, tomorrow afternoon at 2 o'clock.

In the morning at 9:45 San Jose's frosh, of unknown quality, will meet Placer junior college on the Spartan field.

NO OUTSTANDING STARS

Every man on the team has as much chance of winning his event as anyone else, as there has not been enough practice to choose outstanding favorites. San Jose was rained out of its meet with California Poly last Saturday and the Indians were unable to compete with Fresno State.

Few veterans reported to Coach Tiny Hartranft this year, so any hopes he holds for copping the affair tomorrow rest upon the ability of junior college transfers. Johnny Dierker, former Sacramento J.C. student, is the only member of the team that has had competition this year. He competed in the javelin event at the Long Beach Relays and threw the spear 189 feet 10 inches.

KERR LEADS TEAM

Capt. Jim Kerr is expected to provide keen competition in the 220-yard event. He is capable of doing at least :22.5. Kerr and John Sedell who hit around the 50-second mark in the quarter-mile, will carry the Spartan colors in the 440.

John Eikenbery, Pasadena junior college transfer, Fred Kmetovic, brother of Stanford's Pete Kmetovic, and J. Coleman will compete for the Spartans in the 880. Al Ornelas, transfer from Los Angeles City college, Kearney Siegler, and Davis have been named by Hartranft to enter the mile, while Ornelas, Siegler, and Eikenbery will compete in the two-mile run.

HURDLES EVENTS

Running the high hurdles will be Wayne Rose, Wallace Marshall, Dick Campion, and Angel, while in the low hurdles will be Willard Shank, Creighton Groeling, and Dave Siemon.

Hopes for a Spartan victory in the shotput and discus events rest on the shoulders of Floyd Wheat, Coalinga JC transfer, Lawrence O'Connor, Wilson, and Larson.

Salinas junior college provides San Jose with strong material in the jumping events. Roger Romines has cleared 6 feet 3 inches in the high jump, Yamamoto has done 23 feet 6 inches in the broad jump, and Edwin Schneider has vaulted 13 feet 3 inches.

MEMBERS MEET AT 12

Competing in the high jump besides Romines will be Yamamoto, Kmetovic, and Webb. Evans, Miller, and Yamamoto will compete in the broad jump. Stokes and Terry will give Dierker support in the javelin event. Completing the meet in the relay will be Kerr, Sedell, Kmetovic, Coleman, or Siegler.

All varsity members who are to compete are to meet at 12 o'clock to take buses, according to Hartranft.

Spartan Daily

April 4, 1941

Roger Romine comes to San Jose State from Salinas Junior College, showing himself to be a strong competitor in the high jump track and field events.

Cosmopolitan Club Members Meet

All students are invited to attend a meeting of the Cosmopolitan club tonight at 7:30 in the Student Center, according to Ellen Okagaki and Roger Romine, co-chairmen of the organization.

Miss Jean Thoits, YWCA secretary, will speak on "Living in Japan", after which a social hour will follow.

Spartan Daily

October 16, 1941

Roger Romine and his classmate, Ellen Okagaki, serve as Chairs of the campus Cosmopolitan Club. The Club holds events that include speeches and slideshows from San Jose State students, staff, alumni, and faculty. These events are often led by Romine. Okagaki is later noted as one of many Japanese students who are incarcerated during World War II (Spartan Daily, May 29, 1942).

SPARTANS IN THE SERVICE

By ED MARION

PROMOTIONS and DECORATIONS

First Lieut. Roger Romine of Oakland has received the fifth Oak Leaf Cluster to his Air Medal. Romine was a high jumper on the Spartan track team in 1941, and is now "high jumping" Nazi planes for Uncle Sam's 15th Air Force team over the Reich. He was one of the first Negro officers commissioned from the Bay area and is a member of the first all-Negro fighter group in the AAF. His outfit, under Col. Benjamin Davis, is flying Mustang fighters on escort missions over Germany and German-occupied territory in Austria, Jugoslavia, and Italy.

Spartan Daily

November 22, 1944

After leaving San Jose State to serve in World War II, Roger Romine is spotlighted in the Spartan Daily for his heroic actions during the war.

DFC Is Awarded Posthumously to Former SJ Student

The award of the Distinguished Flying Cross has been made posthumously to First Lt. Roger Romine, 24, former athletic star at San Jose State College, who destroyed eight enemy planes during one attack, it was learned in San Jose yesterday.

Romine was the first member of his Negro Mustang Fighter group to receive the DFC posthumously. His outstanding career as a pilot included a strafing mission to Hungary as a member of a flight that accounted for more than 12 enemy aircraft parked on dispersal areas. In aerial battle he had encountered and destroyed three enemy fighter planes.

During his attendance at San Jose State in 1941, he excelled in track and boxing, and participated in the Pacific Coast Conference boxing tournament in that year. Romine also was a high jumper, and played on the 1941 Spartan football team.

ROMINE, ROGER, 1st Lt.

302nd Ftc. Swd. 332nd Ftc. Gp.
APO 520 C/O Postmaster
New York, N.Y. 9/6/44

Killed January 24, 1945

Awarded the Dist. Flying Cross
829-36 St. Oakland

3824 Book 4
45-6 Flag 3

San Jose State College World War I and World War II Collection

Roger Romine is tragically killed in the line of duty in 1945. He is posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

In Memoriam

Walter Bachrodt

ARN 3c Wendell C. Adair
1st Lt. Jack W. Aldrich
Ens. James R. Andersen
Sgt. Joseph P. Azevedo
Lt. Kenneth Bailey
Lt. Ray L. Baughman
Capt. Frank Beales
1st Lt. William J. Bebbington
Major Keith G. Birlem
Capt. Charles E. Blanchard
Rudolph Blauer, USA
1st Lt. Frank D. Bradford
Capt. Nathan T. Bradford
Lt. Edmund H. Breschini
S.Sgt. C. Orville Brown
Paul Bunch, USA
Pvt. Albert W. Callender
Lt. Donald E. Carter
A/C William Cashin
A/C Leroy E. Charlesworth
S.Sgt. Wing S. Chuck
Lt. Robert G. Chute
Pvt. Donald H. Cochran
Sgt. Paul Compton
1st Lt. Hugh G. Cramer
George L. Cropley
A/C Iril Crowe
Lt. Joseph Cukar
Pfc. Allen C. Daley
Lt. Howard Dillwood
Lt. Marvin Dillwood
A/C Joseph DiMaggio
Jack Dixon, USAAF
Lt. Stanley W. Dodge
S.Sgt. Thomas L. Dowling
Capt. Harry Edwards
1st Lt. William Everding
Pfc. James B. Fellom
A/C Donald Ferguson
Lt. Jerome H. Ferguson
Cpl. Joseph Ferreira

Franklin Delano Roosevelt
Kenneth Coleman

GOLD STARS

A/C Ernest J. Figone
A/C Kenneth Fox
Lt. Louis W. Frangos
Capt. Salver Gagliardo
Lt. Verne Gerrans
Lt. William L. Gilson
Lt. George Glans
Lt. Joseph E. Haas
Sgt. William Hanchett
Sgt. Svend Hansen
Pvt. Robert E. Haver
Lt. Joseph Heatwole
Lt. Edwin Hill
Sgt. David T. Hines
Pvt. Earl R. Hodges
Lt. Henry Hoffman
S.Sgt. Paul N. Hoover
Lt. William Hoover
Capt. Lloyd Hubbard
A/S Houston Hunter
Pvt. Herbert Hussey
Sgt. John B. Hutchison
Ph. M. 1c Paul Jungerman
Lt. (j.g.) Grant L. Kelley
Richard Kershner, USNR
Lt. George P. Klingler
Lt. John W. Knight
Lt. Warren K. Knopf
Lt. Peter Knudson
A/C Emil Kunz
Pvt. Franck W. Laine
Sgt. Donald E. Lanini
Lt. Theodore E. Lee
Lt. Joseph Loftus
Lt. William Logan
Lt. Jesse Luker
Lt. R. David Lundberg
Major Jack Mathis
Cpl. Cecil R. Mattos
Lt. Herbert Mayes
Capt. Donald McAuley

J. C. Stillwell

Pvt. Edward P. McConnell
Lt. William P. McDonald
A/C Wilbur K. Meeks
Lt. J. P. (Jack) Messing
Walter A. Moore
A/C Francis E. Morgan
Ens. Hugh H. Morris
Lt. Davis Murdock
Sgt. Stafford F. Narvaez
Lt. William R. Newby
Lt. Jack J. Niosi
Lt. Forrest O'Brien
Cpl. Jacob O'Neill
1st Lt. Sidney C. Ormsbee
Lt. Ralph Poling
A/C Frank Postle
Lt. (j.g.) Curtis F. Pullen
Lt. Lloyd W. Rauch
Lt. Eugene E. Ravera
Lt. Roger Romine
Cpl. George M. Ryan
Lt. Robert Sacry
S.Sgt. Claude W. Seifert
Lt. Robert E. Slater
Lt. Gilbert Smith
Cpl. Victor Soares
Pilot Malta Stepp
Ens. Ellsworth W. Stevens
S 1c Ralph Sweezey
Pvt. Wesley E. Thomas
Pvt. Raymond J. Valenta
Cpl. Clyde Vance
R 3c Burton Vanderkamp
Lt. Ralph Vick
A/C Henry E. Walker
Lt. Jerome Weinberg
Pvt. Hamilton White
Lt. (j.g.) Johnston B. Wiles
Lt. Robert Wiley
Lt. Paul E. Woodruff
Lt. Frederick G. Wool

La Torre yearbook

1945

Roger Romine is honored for his service in World War II.

