



Black Spartans (1907-1948)

Curators

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

Artist

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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.

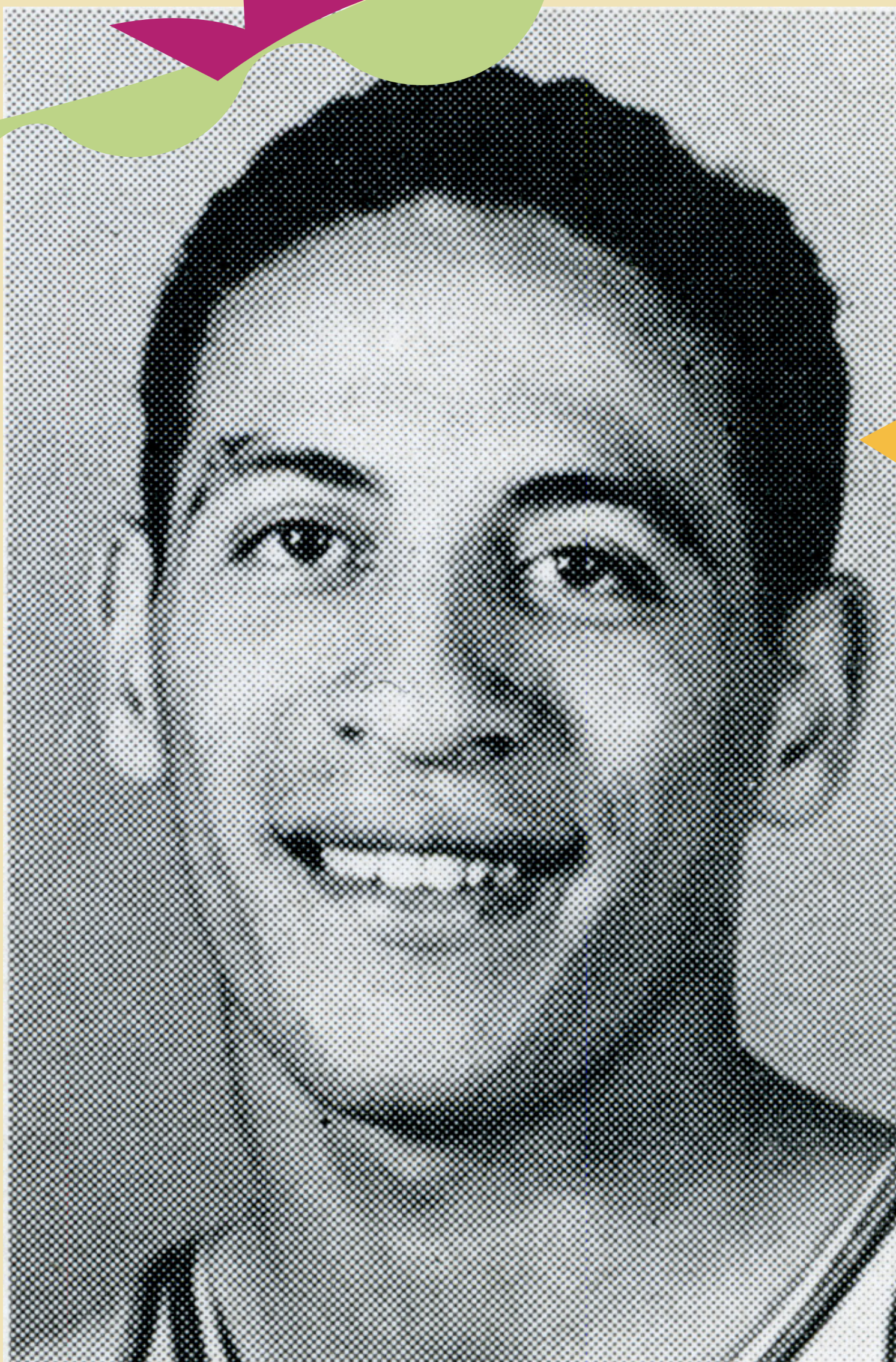
Carli V. Lowe - University Archivist
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Artist Statement

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



Ernie Allen attended San Jose State College from 1940-1941. Allen was born in Oakland on November 1, 1918. He was a member of the basketball teams at Oakland Technical High School, Marin Junior College, and San Jose State. Allen was active in civil rights causes, and was the plaintiff in the 1953 lawsuit that ended racial segregation in the Oakland Fire Department. For 43 years, he ran Supreme Poultry and Grocery in East Oakland, which was one of the only Black-owned groceries in the Oakland area. Allen passed away on June 27, 1997.

BASKETBALL TEAM PLAYS SECOND GAME TOMORROW

The San Jose State varsity basketball team will make its second appearance of the year tomorrow night on the local hardwood when it plays host to the Ferrero Bros. team, a strong San Jose quintet.

Coach Walt McPherson has scheduled several pre-season games in an effort to test out some of his new prospects under fire. Other games scheduled for the remainder of this month are November 18, Independent Iron Works; November 28, L. A. Young, which game will find the Spartans seek-

ing to gain revenge for an earlier 47-37 defeat.

In December, the Spartans will meet the Chapel of the Oaks team on the 4th; French A. C. on December 5; Italian A. C. on the 6th; and Bank of America on the 11th.

Among the newcomers showing promise in the early scrimmages are Fred Kmetovic, Ernie Allen, Dutch Boysen, and Pete Filice.

Still out for football, and expected to make strong bids for first string berths when they don basketball suits are Truck Tornell,

Spartan Daily

November 12, 1940

Ernie Allen joins the San Jose State College basketball team.

SPARTANS TIE FOR CCAA TITLE

SPARTANS SPLIT SERIES IN CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES

BY FRANK BONANNO

Dick Uhrhammer's return to form during the second game against Fresno State college, which saw the big, blond center tank 24 points and give San Jose State the second game of the series, 39 to 36, was responsible for the Spartans getting a first place tie for the California Collegiate Athletic association championship.

Uhrhammer, playing his last game of his collegiate basketball career for the Spartans, found the Bulldog hoop to his liking on Saturday night, and with some inspired cage exhibitions on the part of his teammates was able to pull the second game out of the clutches of Fresno State.

OUT OF TITLE

A hot Fresno five, paced by Burton Acker at center, who hit the field goal mark for 10 and garnered 20 points for the night, dumped San Jose right out of the CCAA championship with its 57 to 45 win over the Spartans Friday.

Using a sophomore starting lineup for the first time this year, Fresno's airtight defense bottled the Spartans completely during the first tilt. While San Jose's Carruth and Ernie Allen did most of the scoring for the Spartans on Friday, George Genamis with 14 points and Acker with 20 were the big guns for Fresno.

NEED WIN

Needing the second game for at least a tie in the CCAA race, McPherson used Menno Siebert at forward and Dick Uhrhammer at center, seeking to overcome the height advantage the Bulldogs had

(Continued on Page 3)

Spartan Daily

March 3, 1941

Ernie Allen is one of two Spartans doing "most of the scoring" in a game against Fresno State for the CCAA title.

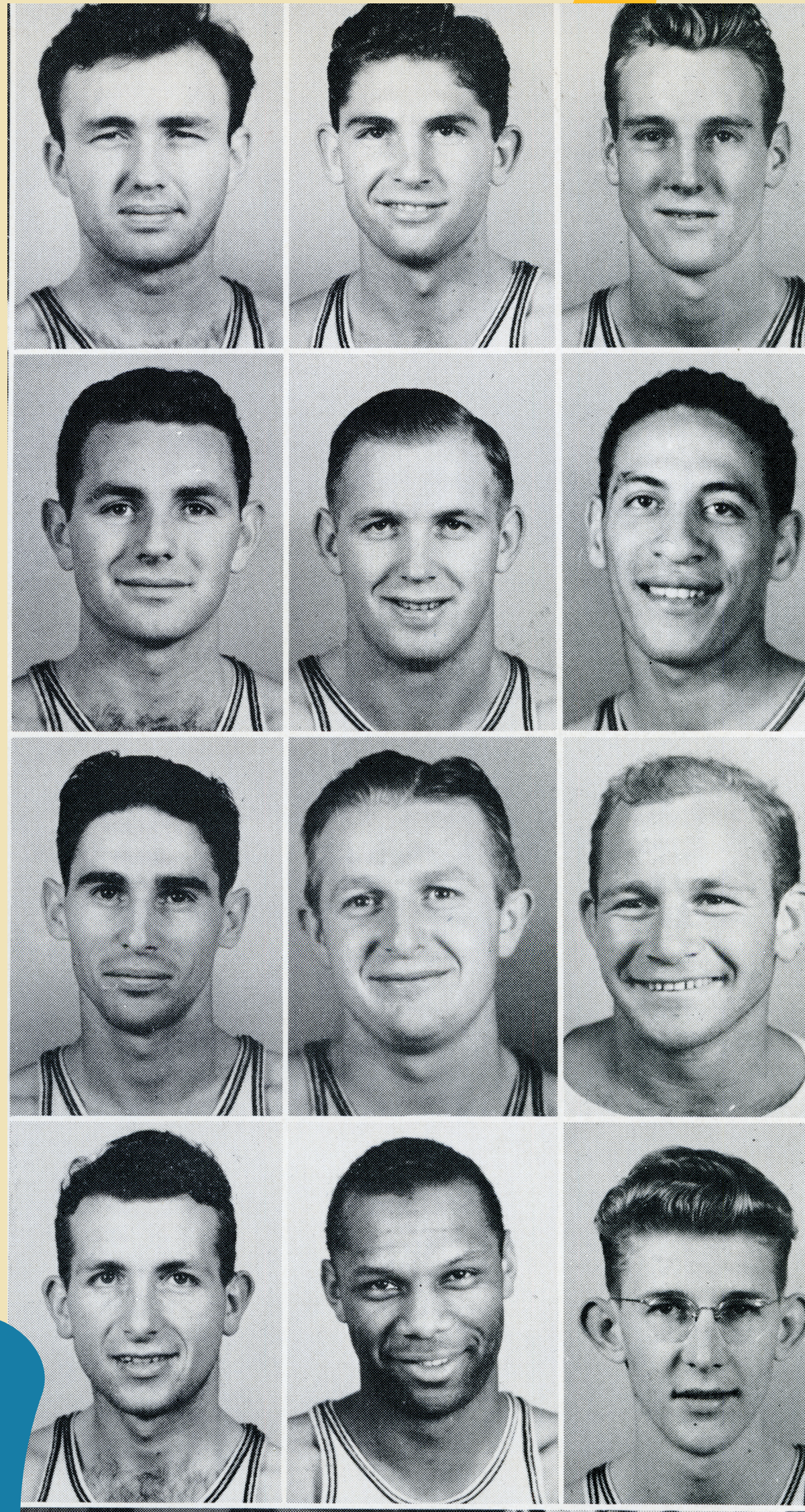


Ernie Allen (28) grabs a ball from midair as John Allen and Duke Tornell look on. The lone enemy player is lost in a maze of Spartans.

La Torre Yearbook

1941

Ernie Allen is pictured in action playing basketball.



Crowley
Sturz
Robinson

Diedericksen
Uhrhammer
E. Allen

Helbush
Boysen
Carter

Paullus
J. Allen
Siebert

La Torre Yearbook

1941

Ernie Allen is pictured as a member of the basketball team with fellow Black Spartan Johnny Allen.



Denver
Cultural