

Gerald W. Johnson: Celebrating 100 Years

By Käto Cooks,
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He steps smoothly into Mr. B's, his favorite New Orleans retreat, to relax with his spouse and business partner, Valerie Voorhies. He is dressed casually, neatly, and comfortably. Adorning his head is a cap with the inscription: Took 100 years to look this good.

And he smiles about it. "He" is Gerald Johnson, publisher and co-founder of the *Small Business Exchange* trade newspaper, digital and print. "It" is his 100th birthday, which impends (January 28).

There were a lot of experiences leading up to this and several yet to come. For example, the California-based Construction Contractors Alliance announced a scholarship in his honor. And something is stirring in San Francisco along the lines of a proclamation [see below]. His world percolates. But leading up to today . . .

In 1946, Gerald W. Johnson left service in the US Navy and returned home to New Orleans. He was forced to leave town in a hurry after refusing to sit behind a sign in an area designated for "Coloreds." He ended up in San Francisco and almost immediately began building his legend.

Shortly after getting settled in San Francisco, he organized a successful picket line to protest the absence of Black workers employed in retail shops in the Fillmore District. He was just getting started.

Next, he and some friends formed the Civic Progressive Union and took the protest to San Francisco's theatre district. Subsequently, the local NAACP joined in with its support.

Johnson then organized in the Carpenters Union to get more Black business agents hired. That organizing continues in Southern California to this day. And where titans connected, Johnson got renaissance man Paul Robeson booked into a local Black church to perform, at a time when Robeson was blacklisted in the US and unable to secure concert bookings.

In 1969, according to research by writer Marie Sheahan Brown, "(t)he Martin Luther King-Marcus



Garvey Square Cooperative Apartments were slated for the Fillmore District—the first in San Francisco to be built by Black construction workers." Johnson, however, decried the absence of Black-owned lumber companies involved in the

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Opportunities

Proclamation

Whereas, Gerald W. Johnson, born January 28, 1925, in New Orleans, Louisiana, has championed legendary contributions to the San Francisco community through organizing and advocating for social justice and equal employment opportunities, particularly within labor union movements; and

Whereas, Gerald W. Johnson arrived in San Francisco in 1946 after serving with the United States Navy in North Africa during WWII, and alongside friends and allies, immediately formed the Civic Progressive Union to protest the dearth of Black workers within San Francisco's Theatre District, a movement that was later supported by the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); and

Whereas, In 1969, Gerald W. Johnson started his own lumber company after discovering the absence of Black-owned lumber vendors in the construction of the Martin Luther King-Marcus Garvey Square Cooperative Apartments despite it being built in the historic Black community of the Fillmore District; and

Whereas, In 1984, Gerald W. Johnson, and his wife and business partner, Valerie Voorhies, co-founded the San Francisco-based Small Business Exchange (SBE) newspaper with the explicit purpose of empowering businesses owned by minorities, women, veterans, disadvantaged and disabled entrepreneurs, with equitable economic opportunities; and

Whereas, In order to further the movement to integrate African Americans into trade unions during the 1970s, Gerald W. Johnson brought together communities of color, created the Asian Black Latino Enterprises (ABLE), and successfully negotiated an agreement to ensure that the city's minority groups secured work on at least 25% of San Francisco's public school seismic retrofit projects; and

Whereas, Gerald W. Johnson's steadfast organizing, fearless advocacy, and tireless work to empower small businesses and diverse communities is truly inspirational; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco, in recognition of and to honor his groundbreaking contributions and lifetime of accomplishments dedicated to advancing social and economic justice, do hereby declare January 28, 2025, as Gerald W. Johnson Day; and be it

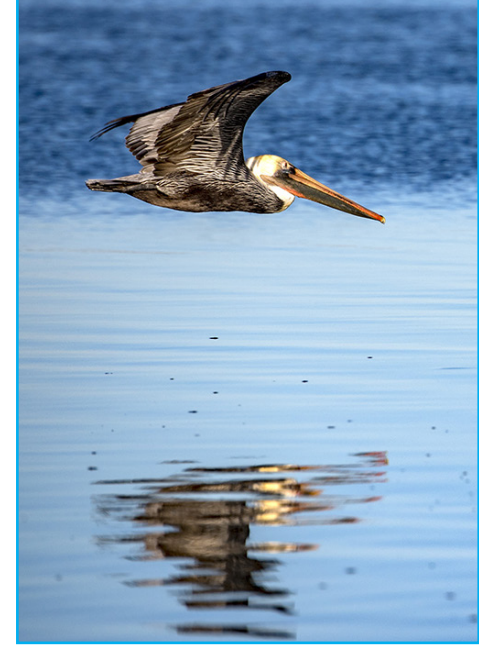
Further Resolved, That the Board of Supervisors extends its highest commendation to Mr. Johnson on his centennial birthday celebration.

[Signatures]
Gerald W. Johnson Day
 Supervisor Connie Chan, District 1
 January 28, 2025

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SOUTHEAST EVENTS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

2025

Federal Contracting: Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Certification Program Webinar
 Tuesday, February 18, 2025, 1:00 pm–2:00 pm CST Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: Patrice Dozier, patrice.dozier@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required
 SBA is creating a space for Woman-Owned Small Businesses, via WOSB certification! Are you a woman owner of a small business? The federal government's goal is to award at least five percent of all federal contracting dollars to woman-owned small businesses each year. Join us for training on how to register for SBA's Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) program, which helps eligible small businesses to qualify for federal contracting opportunities. The monthly sessions include an overview of the self-certification process, and a discussion of the NAICS codes that qualify as WOSB or EDWOSB. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/woman-owned-small-business-wosb-certification-program-tickets-1123658967219>

8(a) Orientation and SAM Registration Webinar
 Wednesday, February 19, 2025, 9:30 am–11:00 am CST Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: SBA Illinois District Office, 312-353-4528, illinois.do@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required
 Join the Small Business Administration (SBA)

Illinois District Office for a virtual workshop providing an overview of the 8(a) Business Development program, eligibility requirements, and program benefits. Also learn how to increase your potential for federal contract opportunities through System for Award Management (SAM) registration, including information that you need for the registration process. SBA presenters will offer additional tips, address FAQs, give directions on where to get further assistance, and answer your other questions. To register for this free webinar, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/basics-of-sbas-8a-business-development-orientation-and-sam-registration-tickets-1030102924577>

Selling to the Federal Government Webinar
 Thursday, February 27, 2025, 12:00 pm–3:00 pm CST Online
Main Sponsor(s): US Small Business Administration
Contact: George Tapia, 610-382-3086, george.tapia@sba.gov
Fee: Free; registration required
 Did you know that the federal government is the largest purchaser of goods and services in the world? Interested in learning how your business can market your services or goods to the federal government? Register online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/how-to-sell-to-the-federal-government-tickets-1013616774057> SBA helps to ensure small businesses get fair opportunities to share federal government prime contracts. Topics will include: How to Register, Small Business Certifications, Finding Opportunities, Marketing Your Firm, Federal Supply Schedules, Getting Paid, Tips to Prepare Your Offer, How to Seek Additional Assistance. All training sessions are held via Microsoft Teams Meeting.

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[Signature]
 MAYOR MITCHELL J. LANDRIEU - CITY OF NEW ORLEANS
 June 15, 2010
 DATE

