Finding Aid to the David Johnson Photograph Archive

Bancroft Library staff
The Bancroft Library

2018
The Bancroft Library
University of California
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URL: http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language of Material:</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributing Institution:</td>
<td>The Bancroft Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title:</td>
<td>David Johnson photograph archive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator:</td>
<td>Johnson, David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifier/Call Number:</td>
<td>BANC PIC 2017.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Description:</td>
<td>5000 photographs in 21 boxes and 1 oversize folder: chiefly film negatives, gelatin silver prints and film transparencies; sheets various sizes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date (bulk):</td>
<td>approximately 1940-2015, bulk 1945-1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract:</td>
<td>Rich representation of the African American community in San Francisco, particularly the Fillmore District, from the post-World War II era to the Civil Rights movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Location:</td>
<td>Many Bancroft Library collections are stored offsite and advance notice may be required for use. For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the library's online catalog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions Governing Access</td>
<td>Collection is open for research. Digital exhibition prints and their accompanying originals are restricted. Negatives and slides are available by appointment only. See library's online catalog record for details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions Governing Use</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some materials in these collections may be protected by the U.S. Copyright Law (Title 17, U.S.C.). Copyright for material created by David Johnson has been assigned to the University of California Regents, managed by The Bancroft Library. In addition, the reproduction of some materials may be restricted by terms of University of California gift or purchase agreements, donor restrictions, privacy and publicity rights, licensing and trademarks. Transmission or reproduction of materials protected by copyright beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written permission of the copyright owners. Works not in the public domain cannot be commercially exploited without permission of the copyright owner. Responsibility for any use rests exclusively with the user.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All requests to reproduce, publish, quote from, or otherwise use collection materials must be submitted to The Bancroft Library. See: <a href="http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/reference/permissions.html">http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/reference/permissions.html</a> .</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Source of Acquisition</td>
<td>The David Johnson Photograph Archive was purchased by The Bancroft Library from David Johnson in 2016.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>David Johnson was born August 3, 1926 in Jacksonville, Florida. He acquired his first camera at age 14 and soon thereafter aspired to be a professional photographer. Drafted into the U.S. Navy in 1944, he served in the Philippines for the remainder of World War II. Prior to his time in the Pacific Islands, Johnson was stationed in San Francisco and developed an intense attraction to the city. After the war, Johnson departed Florida upon his acceptance into Ansel Adams’ first class in the new Department of Photography at San Francisco’s California School of Fine Arts, becoming the master photographer’s first African American student. Johnson lived briefly with Adams, and was mentored by Minor White, another teacher at the school. After moving to the African American neighborhood of San Francisco’s Fillmore District, Johnson was encouraged by Adams and White to document his local community. In the early 1950s Johnson established a photography studio on Fillmore Street. For the next two decades he developed a body of work strongly influenced by the people and events of his community and the broader social and political issues of his times, including much portraiture and documentation of demonstrations, concerts, political campaigns, streets scenes and other aspects of San Francisco’s African American community and the local and national civil rights struggles of the era. In the early 2000s Johnson’s work from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s began to be revived and exhibited in various local venues, with much critical and popular success. The City of San Francisco honored Johnson’s contribution to the cultural heritage of his community by including his name among those engraved in Gene Suttle Plaza on Fillmore Street. Johnson’s memoir, A Dream Begun So Long Ago, was written by his second wife, Jacqueline Annette Sue, and published in 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preferred Citation</td>
<td>[Identification of item], David Johnson photograph archive, BANC PIC 2017.001, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Processing Information</td>
<td>Processed by Chris McDonald and Marisol Trejos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Scope and Content | Rich representation of the African American community in San Francisco, particularly the Fillmore District, from the post-World War II era to the Civil Rights movement. The collection consists of both professional studio portraits and informal
depictions of individuals and groups. While the vast majority of the subjects are everyday people, a small number of chiefly candid images depict noteworthy figures such as Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, W.E.B. Du Bois, Nat King Cole, Edmund G. "Pat" Brown, Eartha Kitt, Roland Hayes and Willie Brown. Also present is documentation of demonstrations, concerts, parties and other social and political gatherings; street scenes and other views taken in public spaces; and a small assortment of still lifes, landscapes, nudes and other subjects. Personal materials are also included: photographs of Johnson, his family, friends and associates; correspondence, business records, clippings, ephemera and miscellaneous papers pertaining to Johnson’s photography; and other papers.

Separated Materials
5 optical discs containing digital images by David Johnson, and 1 disc on the work of San Francisco photographer Charles Wong, transferred to the Digital Collections Unit of The Bancroft Library (BANC DIG 2018.005).

Subjects and Indexing Terms
African Americans -- California -- San Francisco -- Photographs
Civil rights demonstrations -- California -- San Francisco -- Photographs
Fillmore (San Francisco, Calif.) -- Photographs
Johnson, David

Digital exhibition prints
Scope and Content
Set of 67 oversize digitals prints, to be used for exhibition, made by The Bancroft Library from a selection of original prints from the collection. Topics include portraits, events, streets scenes and other subjects. This set, along with the corresponding original prints that were digitized, are restricted and require curatorial permission for access. An additional set of smaller format viewing prints derived from the same digital files is available for use, without restriction, in PIC box 1.
For many of these images, additional copies of the originals that were digitized are found in other series of the collection, often in multiple sizes (i.e. PIC, AX and/or B). These additional copies are identified as such and are housed in folders separate from other images in their respective series.

Digital viewing prints
Note
Titles and dates were taken from original prints selected for digitization, and from image captions in Johnson’s biography. Other titles, presented in square brackets, were devised by library curators in consultation with David Johnson at time of digitization (2017). If alternate titles and/or dates were found on other copies of the same images, these have been recorded in an accompanying note field.

PIC_box 1, item 1  Clarence, 1947
Note
Some copies of this print are dated 1948.

PIC_box 1, item 2  Elegant lady, 1951
PIC_box 1, item 3  Johnny, 1946
PIC_box 1, item 4  Emanuel, age 18, undated
PIC_box 1, item 5  Man on skateboard, 1948
PIC_box 1, item 6  [Interior with 2 babies in baby carriage], 1948?
PIC_box 1, item 7  Dancing at a joint in Bayview, 1948
Note
Other copies of this print have included other titles: Sock it to me; Party at Fillmore flat.
PIC_box 1, item 8  [Painter at his easel], undated
PIC_box 1, item 9  [First African-American bank teller], undated

Note
Caption accompanying another copy of this print: First teller hired by Bank of Amer [sic; i.e. Bank of America]. Results of CORE demonstration.

PIC_box 1, item 10  Jazz Fashion, Wesley Johnson, Club Flamingo, 1948
PIC_box 1, item 11  [Man standing in doorway to dry cleaning shop], undated
PIC_box 1, item 12  Pressler Clothing, Fillmore & Geary, undated
PIC_box 1, item 13  Lucy Mae Ellis Johnson and child, 1951
PIC_box 1, item 14  Boys in Watts, weekend after riots, 1965
PIC_box 1, item 15  Boys in Watts, California, 1965?
PIC_box 1, item 16  Girl in Doorway, 1948

Note
Another copy of this print bears different title: Girl with lunch bag, 1948.

PIC_box 1, item 17  Boy and Child, 1947

Note
Other copies of this print are dated 1950 and 1953.

PIC_box 1, item 18  Boys and Flag, Hunters Point, undated
PIC_box 1, item 19  Girls playing hopscotch, Hunters Point, undated
PIC_box 1, item 20  Kids at Church. [Broad Street Baptist Church], 1948
PIC_box 1, item 21  Langston Hughes, 1947 or 1948?

Note
Curator's note: Jones Methodist Church, Poetry Committee reading.

PIC_box 1, item 22  Paul Robeson at Russian Center, 1948
PIC_box 1, item 23  Nat King Cole at Fairmont Hotel, undated
PIC_box 1, item 24  W.E.B. Du Bois, age 90 with wife, Shirley Graham, 1948 or 1958?

Note
Du Bois would have been 90 in 1958, and he married Graham in 1951, so the suggested 1948 date is unlikely.

PIC_box 1, item 25  Eartha Kitt, New Orleans Swing Club, S.F., 1947
PIC_box 1, item 26  Willie Brown, first try for Assembly, 1962?
PIC_box 1, item 27  [Barbershop], undated
PIC_box 1, item 28  [Group of women], undated
PIC_box 1, item 29  [Group portrait of men behind pulpit], undated
PIC_box 1, item 30  [Group portrait of civil rights activists], 1972

Note
Another copy of this print included an inscription written by the photographer on the back: NAACP Regional Conference, Asilomar, Calif. 1972.

PIC_box 1, item 31  Reflection in glasses, civil rights demonstration, 1963
PIC_box 1, item 32  "We demand." Civil rights demonstration, San Francisco, 1963
PIC_box 1, item 33  Boy and Lincoln, undated
PIC_box 1, item 34  Bill Bradley of CORE at S.F. City Hall, undated
PIC_box 1, item 35  Lift Every Voice and Sing. [San Francisco City Hall], 1964
PIC_box 1, item 36  Equality, undated
PIC_box 1, item 37  Civil rights woman wearing Malcolm X button, undated
PIC_box 1, item 38  Palace Hotel, civil rights protest, 1960
PIC_box 1, item 39  Rally, S.F., CA. Palace Hotel, undated
PIC_box 1, item 40  Civil rights. [Woman holding "Coming soon" sign], undated
PIC_box 1, item 41  Cow Palace. [Woman at demonstration with sign: "The only hope for negro and white..."], 1963
Digital exhibition prints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital exhibition prints: nos. :1-:30</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>For contents, see item list of Digital viewing prints.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Digital exhibition prints: nos. :31-:67</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Note</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For contents, see item list of Digital viewing prints.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corresponding originals

**Scope and Content**

Original prints from which digital images were scanned, and for which viewing prints and digital exhibition prints were printed. Item numbers correspond to items as listed under Viewing Prints in this finding aid. Mounted originals have been boxed separately from unmounted prints, so housing order is not strictly numeric.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B_box 3</td>
<td><strong>Corresponding originals: unmounted</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Scope and Content</strong>&lt;br&gt;Unmounted originals: nos. 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 30, 33, 39, 40, 46, 47, 48, 51, 55, 56, 61 and 66.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_box 4</td>
<td><strong>Corresponding originals: mounted (group 1)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Scope and Content</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mounted originals: nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 26, 27 and 29.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_box 5</td>
<td><strong>Corresponding originals: mounted (group 2)</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Scope and Content</strong>&lt;br&gt;Mounted originals: nos. 31, 32, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 49, 50, 53, 54, 57, 59, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65 and 67.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIC_box 1</td>
<td><strong>Portraits</strong>: smaller format prints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AX_box 1</td>
<td><strong>Portraits</strong>: medium format prints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_box 6</td>
<td><strong>Portraits</strong>: larger format prints (mounted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_box 9</td>
<td><strong>Portraits</strong>: larger format prints (unmounted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIC_box 2</td>
<td><strong>Events</strong>: smaller format prints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AX_box 1</td>
<td><strong>Events</strong>: medium format prints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_box 7</td>
<td><strong>Events</strong>: larger format prints (mounted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_box 9</td>
<td><strong>Events</strong>: larger format prints (unmounted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIC_box 3</td>
<td><strong>Street scenes</strong>: smaller format prints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AX_box 2</td>
<td><strong>Street scenes</strong>: medium format prints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_box 8</td>
<td><strong>Street scenes</strong>: larger format prints (mounted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B_box 9</td>
<td><strong>Street scenes</strong>: larger format prints (unmounted)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Other subjects**

**Scope and Content**

Still lifes, nudes, landscapes and other subjects.

For oversize prints shelved in size B, mounted and unmounted prints are shelved in separate boxes.

**PIC_box 3**

**Other subjects: smaller format prints**

**AX_box 2**

**Other subjects: medium format prints**

**B_box 8**

**Other subjects: larger format prints (mounted)**

**B_box 9**

**Other subjects: larger format prints (unmounted)**

**Negatives**

**Scope and Content**

Chiefly 35mm film negatives. Originally housed in binders, the contents of which included little or no descriptive information such as captions or dates. Binders were assigned numbers (i.e. Binder 1, Binder 2, etc.) by library staff. The binders’ contents were then rehoused, with the original order of each binder preserved as received (whether or not that order reflected a discernable intention). Each binder grouping has no apparent subject matter that differentiates it from that of another binder; each contains a variety of subjects -- i.e. portraits, events, etc. Also includes a few film transparencies.

Corresponding contact sheets for selected groups of negatives, originally filed in the same binders, were separated and are described in a different series. Among the negatives are many images not found in the contact sheets or other prints.

Binders 6 and 10 contained contact sheets only. Binders 12, 13 and 16 contained slides only. No negatives were present in these binders.

**NEG_box 1 (strip)**

**Negatives: contents of binders 1, 2, 3 and 4.**

**NEG_box 2 (strip)**

**Negatives: contents of binders 5, 7, 8 and 9.**

**NEG_box 3 (strip)**

**Negatives: contents of binders 11, 14, 15 and 17.**

**NEG_box 4 (strip)**

**Negatives: contents of binders 18, 19, 20, 21, 23; plus miscellaneous negatives.**

**NEG_box 1 (4x5)**

**Negatives: larger format 4x5 negatives from binders 22 and 24.**

**Contact sheets**

**Scope and Content**

Contact sheets originally filed with corresponding negatives in their respective binders. Similar to their corresponding negatives, the contact sheets have little descriptive information. Some contact sheets are later digital prints derived from scans of earlier negatives. Binders 6 and 10 contained contact sheets only, with no accompanying negatives, while other binders contained many groups of negatives with no corresponding contact prints.

**PIC_box 3**

**Contact sheets**

**Slides**

**Scope and Content**

A small number of 35mm slides, both color and black and white, from binders 9, 12, 13 and 16. Some slides are copy photographs of Johnson’s earlier prints, while others are camera-original slides from the 1960s to the 1980s with no corresponding prints.

**LAN_box 1**

**Slides**
Personal materials

Scope and Content

Personal photographs, personal papers, ephemera and clippings, originally received together in a single file. Photographs include portraits and snapshots of David Johnson; his wife (and author of Johnson's biography) Jaqueline Annette “Jackie” Sue; his mentor, photographer Minor White; and various friends, associates and family members, dating from Johnson’s youth and his military service in the 1940s, if not earlier, to his retirement years. Personal papers include correspondence, printed promotional brochures and flyers, article clippings, and other material pertaining to exhibitions and other aspects of Johnson’s photography. Correspondence includes letters from friends, clients, associates and admirers, among them Langston Hughes and California Governor Edmund G. “Pat” Brown. Also includes ephemera pertaining to Johnson’s biography, A Dream Begun So Long Ago; flyers containing images by Johnson; student essays on Johnson’s work; certificates; a replica button of the National March for Freedom, Washington D.C., 1963; material pertaining to Johnson’s Marin County retirement community, The Tamalpais; newspaper clippings and other articles on Johnson and his work; business cards; flyers from Johnson’s campaign for Sheriff; miscellaneous ephemera and other papers. Also includes two copies of a 2007 promotional poster featuring Johnson’s “signature print”, his 1947 portrait of a young boy named Clarence.

PIC_box 4
AX_box 2
B_box 9
B_box 8
oversize-folder --C
folder 1

Personal materials: photographs and papers
Personal materials: photographs and clippings
Personal materials: exhibition ephemera and captions
Personal materials: mounted exhibition caption and sign
Personal materials: "Signature Print” poster (image of Clarence)