



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER – February 2024

## QUILTING SISTAH NEWS

*African American Quilt Guild of Oakland*

*In Loving Memory*



*The African American Quilt Guild of Oakland  
is saddened to announce the passing of our founder and friend*

*Esther Pancho*

*1925 - 2025*

*Without her vision, we would not exist as an organization  
celebrating our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.*

*Our condolences to her family. She will be  
greatly missed for her kindness,  
creativity and thoughtfulness.*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Black History Month Greetings!

As we prepare for our annual Black History Month Celebration on Saturday, February 22, 2025, we received news of the death of our beloved founder Esther Pancho. Esther's vision for AAQGO was to preserve the art and craft of quilting in the African American community.

After graduating from NYU, Esther travelled the world. According to her daughter, Carol, she painted in Provence, taught on the Tohono O'odham reservation in Arizona and gathered colorful fabrics from Africa for her quilts. Once Esther arrived in Oakland, she desired to create an organization that advanced a vision of preserving the art of African American quilts and encourage others to quilt.

In 2000, Esther invited friends to come to her home and discuss the idea of forming the African American Quilt Guild of Oakland. The first chartered members were Dolores Vitero Presley and Julia Vitero, who both continue to be very active members of AAQGO. As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of AAQGO, Esther Pancho would be very proud of all we have accomplished since she founded our organization. We have grown to over 80 plus members, exhibited our quilts throughout the Bay Area, taught children to quilt, given presentations and lectures on African American quilting throughout the country and created many partnerships. Although Esther was unable to actively participate in the AAQGO activities, she continued to read our Quilting Sistahs Newsletter. As we celebrate AAQGO's 25 years as an organization, Esther, we are continuing your vision and mission.

In memory of Esther, I encourage all members to participate in our annual Black History Month Celebration on Saturday, February 22nd. Come and continue Esther's vision of teaching others about African American quilting. Bring someone who is unfamiliar with African American quilting and assist them in learning how to quilt. Come and teach a child or adult the art of quilting.

It is our time to march into our next 25 years proudly refining our quilting skills, displaying our quilts, teaching the beauty of African American quilting, and speaking about our Guild.

I end with a quote from Alice Walker:

*Whenever you are creating beauty around you,  
you are restoring your own Soul.*

Rest in Peace Esther Pancho!

Blessings,  
*Marie dePorres Taylor*

# ON BECOMING A MASTER QILTER ~ OBMQ

*Jacquelyn Carter*

The idea of offering a beginner's quilting series, at the library, came to me once I was aware that some patrons of the library desired to learn the art of quilting. After much discussion in the library's parking lot, Jacquelyn Carter and Marsha Carter (not related) came up with a plan of offering a quilting series at the library. We approached Nitoshia Ford, West Oakland Branch Library Manager, with the idea of teaching quilting through the library. She was very excited and receptive to the idea and advertised the classes through the Oakland Public Library Website.

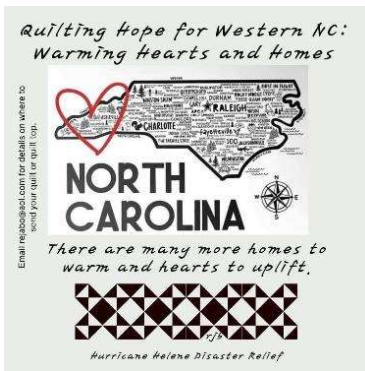
The series is designed to teach the fundamentals of quilting and the various blocks that OBMQ students need to know. The series will run for eleven months, ending with a finished twelve block quilt. There will be master quilter instructors, teaching the various blocks and techniques of quilting.

The first class took place on January 25, 2025, with over 20 pre-registered men and women attending. The balance of the series will be offered every 4th Saturday of every month at the Library.



# AN OUTPOURING OF LOVE and WARMTH

Teri Green



When there was a call for help – AAQGO members and our quilting friends responded and provided warmth and comfort to North Carolina hurricane victims.

In late September 2024, Hurricane Helene caused widespread catastrophic damage and fatalities. It was the deadliest hurricane to strike since Katrina in 2005. The storm caused severe flooding and left many communities in ruin. More than 100,000 homes in North Carolina were destroyed, with countless families who lost everything.

**Regina Boyd**, with the Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, put out a call on Facebook asking for donations of completed quilts. But she also requested “quilt tops” that would be completed by the longarmers. This was a unique opportunity to clear out our quilt stash for a useful purpose including tops that were just sitting there. So, I alerted my quilt Sistahs and gathered enough to send two shipments to North Carolina. Many others sent quilt tops on their own. Here is information from Regina about the ministry:

**The Friendship Missionary Baptist Church (FMBC) Quilting Ministry** strives to honor both the artistry of quilting and the rich history of quilts in the African-American community. For 25 years, our ministry has crafted thousands of quilts, bringing comfort and warmth to those in need. Our guiding scripture is Philippians 4:13 (KJV): *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

We are dedicated to teaching the art of quilting and helping others develop their skills and confidence in creating high-quality quilts to share with others. Members invest their time and resources to learn through ministry-led classes, quilt shows, and new techniques online. Their contributions have made a lasting impact—locally, nationally, and globally—through this treasured art form.

Over 75 active members commit, on an annual basis, to mission outreach through quilting that provides comfort in disaster relief, supports youth who are displaced or age out of the foster care system and provides encouragement to persons who experience homelessness and women who are experiencing or surviving cancer. Since January 2000, we have remained committed to serving others through quilting, supporting many other causes and conditions.

After Hurricane Helene, the FMBC Quilting Ministry, joined by other talented quilters, came together to provide beautiful quilts for Disaster Comfort efforts in Western North Carolina. These heartfelt quilts, along with no sew throws lovingly made by our FMBC Youth, were distributed to those in need. It is truly a blessing to witness our quilting community uniting to bring warmth, comfort, and love to others during this season.

We are beyond grateful for the overwhelming support quilting community. More than 500 quilts and blankets collected, created by the FMBC Quilting Ministry, of the **African American Quilt Guild of Oakland**, the **Fiber Artist Network** and the **Sew What Sistahs** (all California groups), and many other dedicated quilters states. This is an on-going effort, with distributions February/March and thereafter, as needed.



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A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed their time, talent, and love to make this effort possible. Together, we are spreading warmth and kindness to those who need it most. Your donation is more than just a quilt—it is a gift of encouragement, a symbol of compassion, and a reminder of God’s love. (Below are just a few photos of the quilt distribution.)

We are deeply grateful for your partnership in this mission and pray that you are blessed abundantly for your generosity. With gratitude and blessings,

**The FMBC Quilting Ministry - Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, Charlotte NC**

Here is a [link](#) with more information about the ministry.



# AAQGO 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY FIRST MEETING OF THE YEAR

## JANUARY 25, 2025

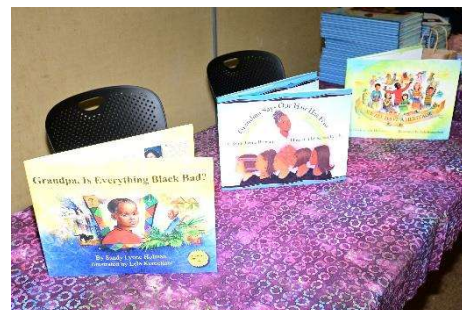
The first meeting of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year on January 25, 2025, was filled with many new events, under the umbrella of the meeting program theme, ***“FROM THE SHELVES OF THE LIBRARY, AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN’S STORYBOOKS, STITCHED ON QUILTS.”***

The **“AAQGO PRECIOUS MOMENTS - CHILDREN’S PROGRAMMING”**, presented by History Committee member, Catherine Mukai, focused on our Twenty-five-year history of Community Outreach Programs for children. We were reminded of the passion of our founder and first President, Esther Small-Pancho, who had the vision of including an educational component to encourage creative endeavors especially among the youth.

Rachel Birenbaum, West Oakland Library Branch, Children’s Librarian, assembled an impressive display of over 50 African American Children’s Storybooks and presented the many Children’s Literature Genres. She also prepared a colorful two-sided copy of the book covers of books that were on display.



Guest Speaker, Sandy Lynne Holman, African American Children’s Storybook author of three children’s storybooks, **“GRANDPA, IS EVERYTHING BLACK BAD?”**, **“WE ALL HAVE A HERITAGE”** and **“GRANDMA SAYS OUR HAIR HAS FLAIR”**, inspired, encouraged and reminded us of our Sankofa obligation to young people, as elders, artists and keepers of the legacy of the African American quilting tradition and pride in being African American.



Sandy gifted over 40 members, a signed copy of her book ***“GRANDMA SAY’S OUR HAIR HAS FLAIR.”***



AAQGO resident authority on African American Quilt History and Documentation and artist "extraordinaire" of Children’s Storybook quilts, presented a workshop on the techniques of extracting stories from African American Children’s Storybook’s and stitching the stories onto quilts. Her presentation included extensive information for copyright permission from publishers.



# PRECIOUS MOMENTS

## STRIP QUILTING

*Loretta Henry, AAQGO Historian*



Enslaved Western Africans brought their traditions, skills, and culture with them to the Americas. In traditional Ghanaian society, the men did the weaving on looms creating fabric strips about 4.5 inches wide. The women would stitch them together to make larger pieces of cloth. Women then used stitching, embroidery, and appliqué to embellish the fabric. Working together not only built community but was more efficient than working alone. Arriving in the Western Hemisphere, African peoples also brought memories of design patterns and symbols.

Quilting as we know it, did not exist before the mid-1800s as fabric making was labor intensive and expensive. The idea of cutting expensive fabric into smaller pieces, then sewing pieces together would have been considered a waste of time and resources.

However, following the US Civil War, machine made fabric was inexpensive and plentiful. Freed blacks would form quilting bees, not only to build community, but to quickly complete more bedding. Younger women were taught traditional sewing skills of sewing strips together to make fabric by their mothers and grandmother who had been born in Africa. Pieces of bright bold colored old clothes, scraps, and worn-out bedding were recycled into strips. These stripes were then sewn together without regard as to matching color, size or pattern into larger pieces which would then be sewn to a quilt top. The completed quilts have a feeling of not being planned. The quilter(s) used whatever was at hand.


As part of our 25th Anniversary Celebration, The African American Quilt Guild of Oakland is proud to share this heritage with others. Like our ancestors we use quilting to build community, to connect to our past, to celebrate our quilting traditions and to ensure that the knowledge will live on.



# SUNSHINE AND SHADOWS

Our positive thoughts and prayers are with our members and their families who are facing challenges at this time.

## EVENTS

<p>February 22, 2025  <b>AAQGO Annual Black History Month Family Workshop</b>          West Oakland Branch Library          Oakland, CA</p>	 <p>Black History Month Family Workshop 2017</p>
<p>February 13 – April 7, 2025  <b>Celebrating Black History</b>          Hayward Library          Hayward CA</p>	<p>February 24 – March 31, 2025  <b>AAQGO BHM Exhibit</b>          Laney College Library          Oakland, CA</p>
<p>April 15 – June 15, 2025  <b>18<sup>th</sup> Annual African American Fiber Art Exhibition</b>          North Charleston City Hall          North Charleton, SC</p>	<p>May 3 - 4, 2025          Foothill Quilt Guild          Auburn</p>
	<p>June 7–November 30, 2025  <b>Routed West: Twentieth-Century African American Quilts in California</b>          Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA)</p>
 <p>11/17/2024</p> <p>Rachel K. Clark – SF Bay Quilts Presentation  <i>“I am Black 11 months of the year, but in February I am Blackity Black.”</i></p>	 <p>Carolyn Pope modeling Rachel’s coat,  <i>Blackity Black</i></p>

# ***BIRTHDAYS***



## ***FEBRUARY***

Dianne Marangio – 4  
Patrice Anderson - 4  
Libby deJuan – 14  
Catherine Mukai – 20

## ***MARCH***

Cynthia Coats - 6  
Ryan R. Young – 12  
Betty Ubiles – 14  
Carolyn Walker - 14  
Sandra Oby - 15

## ***APRIL***

Dolores Vitero Presley - 5  
Benita Jones - 10  
Amal Johnson – 11  
Anita Carse – 17  
Katie Wishom - 17  
Faith Darling - 20  
Susie Faye Patrick - 22  
Loretta Cohen – 28

# OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

September 1, 2024- August 31, 2026

Officers and committee chairpersons can be reached at [aaqgoakland@gmail.com](mailto:aaqgoakland@gmail.com) or  
PO Box 31834, Oakland, CA 94604

OFFICERS	
President	Marie dePorres Taylor
Vice President	Marsha Carter
Secretary	Dianne Marangio
Treasurer	Dolores Vitero Presley
Historian	Loretta Henry
Parliamentarian	Elaine Yau
COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS	
Education	Ernestine Tril
Exhibits	Ora Clay Dolores Vitero Presley
Membership	Teresa Weyand Jerry Oyarzo Hickey
Newsletter	Dolores Vitero Presley Teresa Weyand
Sunshine	Evelyn Johnson
Website	Catherine Mukai
Worthy Causes	Deborah Butler
NON-VOTING MEMBER	
Past President	Jacquelyn Carter

JUST A REMINDER - Our email address - [aaqgoakland@gmail.com](mailto:aaqgoakland@gmail.com) - is to be used for Guild business only. Names and addresses are not to be shared with other organizations or businesses. Please use your roster to contact individuals in the Guild.

MEMBERSHIP - Membership shall be open to anyone interested in the purpose and objectives of this Guild, and payment of annual dues. No discrimination shall be made with regard to race, color, creed, or sexual or national origin.

**A Publicly supported organization – 509 (a) (3) – Federal ID No. 91-2100443**