



Nick Gabaldón Day 2016 Final Report



The day of celebration around the pioneering African American and Mexican American surfer Nick Gabaldón (1927-1951) was celebrated on June 4th, 2016. It included youth from the Los Angeles County region learning to surf for the first time. All attending learned about local history, ocean stewardship, ocean safety and marine biology.



Through the support of California State Coastal Conservancy and The Bay Foundation, the Black Surfers Collective (BSC), Surf Bus Foundation, Santa Monica Conservancy and Heal the Bay (HTB) were able to provide this unprecedented educational and recreational programming.

United by our love of the ocean, we remember the past and move forward together as stewards of this precious environment.

Why celebrate Nick Gabaldón Day?

Our environmental health, which has a direct impact on our community health, will only improve when our neighborhoods are connected to natural, cultural and historical heritage. This is the foundation of stewardship and is imperative for the development of the next generation of conservation leaders. This innovative celebration provides an amazing opportunity to broaden education and to connect Angelenos with their cultural, historical and natural heritage as well as renewing our commitment to defend access to our amazing shared resource.

Why is it important to expose youth of color to surfing?

American Swimming Association's study revealed that:

- Seventy percent of African-American and sixty percent of Hispanic/Latino children cannot swim.
- African-American children drown at a rate nearly three times higher than their Caucasian peers. (Source: CDC)
- If a parent does not know how to swim, there is only a 13 percent chance that a child in that household will learn how to swim.



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It has always been a priority of the celebration to connect the celebration to the importance of learning to swim and ocean safety. The youth from Concerned Black Men LA had to pass swimming in order to participate in the celebration.

Leading up to Nick Gabaldón Day



The Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook Park screening of the “White Wash” film on Saturday, May 30, one of several activities that were part of the Nick Gabaldón Day celebration.

The outreach for NGD began with historian Alison Rose Jefferson leading an overflow crowd through a lively discussion at the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook Park after a screening of the “White Wash” film on Saturday, May 30th. Special thanks to Luis Rincon, Jennifer Dandurand and Iann Williams of California State Parks for taking the leadership in organizing the

program.

We were also able to partner this year with Santa Monica High School by providing a Nick Gabaldon panel as an introductory experience for the freshman seminar civic action project. Students confront the complexities of history by analyzing racial relations in Los Angeles as lens for exploring their own identity and community. Over 400 freshman students attended a panel discussion with Sara Wan, former CA Coastal Commissioner, Greg Rachel from Black Surfers Collective, Alison Jefferson, historian and Marion Clarke from Surf Bus Foundation moderated by Heal the Bay.



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Nick Gabaldón Day-June 4th

Beach Side

The day's event opened on the sand with Jeff Williams and Greg Rachel from the Black Surfers Collective sharing the history and the significance of Nick Gabaldón and the Bay Street beach site to regional and national history. The traditional paddle out occurred in observance of Nick's passing with help from the LA County Lifeguard boat.



Even the unseasonable cold couldn't keep these eager new surfers away. We had an amazing morning with over a hundred and fifty appreciative people visit the historic beach sometimes referred to as the "Inkwell," the gathering place of African Americans during the nation's Jim Crow era of racial restrictions on many areas of life. Youth from Concerned Black Men Los Angeles from South Los Angeles and Compton were thrilled to have had the opportunity to experience both the surfing and the cultural education of this important beach.

Throughout the morning, historic preservation and naturalist educators were on hand to broaden the experience for those on the beach, along with volunteers offering surfing instruction to young and old event attendees.

Santa Monica Pier Aquarium

After attendees were treated to a free lunch on the beach, the activities moved to Heal the Bay's Aquarium at Santa Monica Pier, where admission was free for the afternoon courtesy of the Explore the Coast Grant. With over 1,100 visitors, attendance was nearly tripled compared to the same day last year.

The Aquarium visitors worked on specially created activities in honor of Nick Gabaldón. The coloring book pages are available for download at the Heal the Bay website. Visitors were treated to a special children's story time featuring guest readers Ali Larter and her husband Hayes MacArthur!



Ali Larter and son celebrate Nick Gabaldon at Heal the Bay's Aquarium story time.



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Visitors continued to explore the HTB Aquarium offerings and enjoyed the screening of “WhiteWash” and “12 Miles North: The Nick Gabaldón Story” documentary.

As part of the celebration of Nick Gabaldon Day, a portion of "In the Spirit of Nick," a multi-media art installation by Yrneh Gabon Brown, a MFA graduate student in the Social Practice program at Otis Art Institute, was on display at the HTB Aquarium at the Santa Monica Pier. Based on Nick Gabaldon's story, the full art installation included the material art pieces on display at the Aquarium, and videos of public interviews and the artist's performance experiences on land and in the ocean which can be viewed at Yrneh Gabon Brown's Facebook page.





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A volunteer from the Surf Bus Foundation and CBM youth taking advantage of the day surfing at the historical African American, Bay Street/Inkwell beach site in Santa Monica.



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Youth from Concerned Black Men LA experience get ready for their first surf experience.





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Marion Clark from Surf Bus Foundation works with members of Black Surfers Collective



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The Significance of Nick Gabaldón to Southern California Surfing, and Regional and National History by Alison Rose Jefferson

As a teenager, Gabaldón began surfing in the Pacific Ocean at the Bay Street beach. Anglos referencing the skin color of the beach-goers who visited the area derogatorily called this beach the “Inkwell.” Gabaldón and other African Americans in Southern California, however, transformed the hateful moniker into a badge of pride.

Gabaldón’s courage and dedication have empowered many for generations to see him as a role model as they pursue their passion of surfing and other human experiences as he did. He challenged racial hierarchies when he surfed and when he and other people of color, hung out at the beach public spaces that were at the core of California’s formative mid-century identity.

His and others actions are the local stories historians identify as “document[ing] a national narrative of mass movement to open recreational facilities to all Americans.” In reconsidering the formation of California’s leisure frontier, scholars has moved beyond examination of economic and political issues, to demonstrate how the struggle for leisure and public space also reshaped the long civil rights movement.

In 2007 the City of Santa Monica officially recognized the historical African American beach gathering place controversially known as the "Inkwell" during the nation’s Jim Crow era (1900s-1964) and Nick Gabaldón, with a landmark monument at Bay Street and Oceanfront Walk. Nick Gabaldón Day joins this Inkwell/ Gabaldón monument to further support an identified sense of place and inclusive social history in the landscape, which allows for a more culturally inclusive shared civic identity, and history encompassing public process and memory.

As illustrated by the activities described that took place on June 4, this multifaceted programming met the social needs to benefit the community and enhance the quality of life of Los Angeles County citizens through engagement of participants in educational, recreational and environmental awareness programming.

The team of organizers of Nick Gabaldón Day will be back at Bay Street on Coastal Cleanup Day as a continuation of energy around this regional and nationally significant beach and individuals such as Nick Gabaldón. We hope people connect this to their enjoyment of the ocean, action, education, and remembrance of our collective history and shared cultural identity.

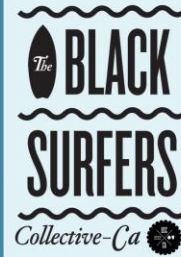


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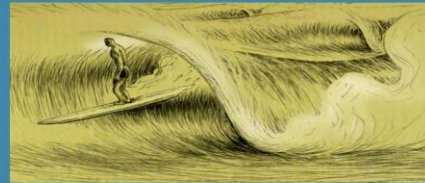


Honoring the Legacy of L.A.'s Early Surfer of Color

NICK GABALDON DAY



The Black Surfers Collective and The Surf Bus Foundation invite you to participate in Nick Gabaldon Day. This beach celebration honors those who came before us and teaches those who will lead us into the future.



Nick Gabaldon Day Saturday June 4th

At the historic Inkwell, Tower 20 Santa Monica Beach, at the end of Bay Street.

9:00 am Welcome Ceremony & Memorial Paddle Out for Nick

10:00 am-1 pm Free surf lessons provided by Surf Bus and the Black Surfers Collective.

1:00 pm Lunch

1:00-5:00 pm Santa Monica Pier Aquarium open for free

Sponsored by: The BSC, The Surf Bus Foundation, Heal The Bay, The Bay Foundation and the California Coastal Conservancy

Partners: Body Glove, LA County Lifeguards, The Santa Monica Conservancy, and Whole Foods

You must sign up to get a lesson, and we also need volunteers. Get more info at: www.blacksurferscollective.org or on our Facebook group page.

Surf lesson sign up: <http://goo.gl/forms/wP8SYpwnPY>

Volunteer Sign-Up: <http://goo.gl/forms/ynLs0KY2kA>





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Mimi Miller BSC member, Alison Rose Jefferson, Santa Monica Conservancy, Luis M. Rincon and Ian Williams from State Parks