Come! See! Hear!

SENATOR EUGENE MAIER
ASSEMBLYMAN W. BYRON RUMFORD
AND
Tarea Hall Pittman
Regional Secretary NAACP
SPEAK ON THE CAMPAIGN FOR
A FAIR HOUSING
LAW IN CALIFORNIA
and Other Human Rights Legislation
IN 1963
FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 1963 - 7:30 p.m.
Ben Franklin Junior High School

Proposal by Dana King
Proposal: William Byron Rumford Memorial Project

South Berkeley's William Byron Rumford is one of the country's greatest civil rights heroes that most people have never heard of. Called into public life from his pharmacy on Sacramento Street, Rumford became the first African-American legislator from Northern California and went on to author and pass the state's key civil rights legislation that banned discrimination in employment and housing. These efforts were passed in the face of tremendous opposition, and helped spark the civil rights movement in California and pave the way for federal civil rights legislation nationally. With South Berkeley going through rapid demographic changes, the time is ripe for our community to honor Rumford's life and legacy through a permanent artistic memorial that tells three interlocking stories:

**The Leader:** Rumford's story is inspiring on many levels, in particular because he demonstrates the power we all have to take the mantle of leadership and make change happen. Rumford didn't seek to become a professional politician - he was a neighborhood pharmacist who was passionate about addressing the biggest issues impacting his community and was willing to step up and lead through hard work, legislation, coalition building, and compromise. Rumford's story reminds us that we all have the power to lead and do great things.

**The Community:** Rumford's Pharmacy at 2960 Sacramento Street (now the Rumford Clinic) served as a hub of political and civic activity for the thriving South Berkeley African-American community during the postwar era, and helped spawn a whole generation of community leaders and engaged citizens. Telling this story through a permanent memorial on that same block of Sacramento Street will help preserve that piece of our neighborhood's history, in the face of rapid demographic changes that are transforming South Berkeley under our feet.

**The Cause:** Rumford is best known for the 1963 Rumford Fair Housing Act that banned housing discrimination, which was rampant throughout Berkeley and the rest of California. This story is being told in cinematic detail through a soon-to-be-released documentary called *FAIR LEGISLATION: The Byron Rumford Story*. This history is particularly pertinent today as rapid gentrification once again raises the critical issues of racial equity in housing.

A diverse group of community members has come together to make this project a reality over the next year, including Carole Davis Kennerly, the first African American woman on the Berkeley City Council who was mentored by Rumford; Zach Franklin, an active community member from the nearby CalJulia neighborhood group; Rumford's son (and former Berkeley councilmember) Billy Rumford; Rumford's grandson Byron Rumford III; and award-winning local artist Mildred Howard, whose mother Mabel Howard was a contemporary of Rumford's and a revered civil rights hero herself. Ms. Howard has volunteered to help spearhead the development of the artistic vision for the project, and has recommended local artist Dana King to create the artwork for the memorial. In addition to being an accomplished sculptor, Ms. King is herself a community leader and public figure. She served as a longtime Bay Area journalist and KPIX news anchor, and was recently a candidate for Oakland City Council.

Our goal is to complete the project by summer 2018, with a block-party style public celebration of its completion on or around July 18th to coincide with the anniversary of the passage of the Rumford Act. Ms. Howard and Ms. King have developed a preliminary vision for the artwork that will be based in the public median strip on Sacramento Street, on the same block as Rumford's pharmacy and accessible by an existing crosswalk. The initial vision is to have a bust of Mr. Rumford speaking at a podium, with the initial text of the Rumford Act below. The projected budget for this project is $30,000, which includes a discounted rate at a local foundry negotiated by Ms. Howard. We are currently working to secure these funds from a variety of sources, and are able to accept charitable grants for the project through a nonprofit foundation that Mr. Franklin has. Additional funds that can be secured beyond this amount will be used to fund the community completion celebration, including activities that will engage the community and the general public in celebrating and learning about Rumford's legacy and the three interlocking stories described above. These activities could range from a screening of the Fair Legislation documentary, to collecting and digitizing neighborhood histories, to engagement with local school groups. Our goal is to make a museum-worthy creation accessible to the public to encourage current and future generations to take inspiration from our history and take a leadership role in building a stronger, more inclusive, and more just community for everyone.