

THE EMPEROR NORTON TRUST

31 May 2022

Hon. Willie L. Brown, Jr.

Dear Mayor Brown,

As you probably know, 2022 is the 150th anniversary of Emperor Norton's three newspaper Proclamations of 1872 setting out the vision for what opened as the San Francisco–Oakland Bay Bridge in 1936.

Like some 250 other Proclamations the Emperor issued between late 1870 and mid 1875, these "bridge Proclamations" were published by the Black-owned and -operated *Pacific Appeal*, whose editor Peter Anderson was a respected Black thought leader and activist on the Pacific Coast and also, apparently, a friend of the Emp's.

We are historians of San Francisco who see this historic anniversary of Emperor Norton's celebrated Proclamations for the Bay Bridge as a **once-in-all-our-lifetimes symbolic opportunity for the California legislature to help Californians pay long-overdue public tribute to the Emperor** – by passing a concurrent resolution in the 2022 session simply to *add "Emperor Norton Bridge"* as an *honorary* name for the Bay Bridge as a whole.

Under this proposal, all existing names and signage for the bridge – including your own honorific on the bridge's Western section – would remain in place.

We hope you will lend your public support to this honorary naming proposal.

In the 1860s and '70s, Emperor Norton issued Proclamations calling for Black children to be admitted to public schools and for Black citizens to be allowed to ride public streetcars. The Emperor also, in his Proclamations and other actions, insisted on equal access and equal justice for other marginalized groups – immigrants, Chinese, Native Americans and women – and advocated for fair labor practices and fair taxes.

In all these ways, **Emperor Norton was an early herald and champion of the values of fairness, tolerance, self-determination and the common good** that came to be associated with San Francisco, Oakland and the Bay Area.

In supporting this honorary "Emperor Norton Bridge" naming for the Bay Bridge, you can help to forge a lasting connection between your own legacy and the Emperor's.

And: Placing Emperor Norton's name on the bridge that he promoted 64 years before it opened would **give the Bay Area a wonderful tool for telling its pioneer story to itself and to the rest of the world.**

THIS IDEA IS POPULAR ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BAY. An online petition from The Emperor Norton Trust – the leading public resource for research, education and advocacy on the Emperor – currently has **6,554 signatures**, with many from Oakland and the East Bay.

In 2018, the Trust produced *Emperor Norton at 200*, a 6-week series of talks, exhibits and special events to celebrate the bicentennial of the Emperor's birth on 4 February 1818. Institutional partners for the series included the California Historical Society, San Francisco Public Library, Mechanics' Institute and Society of California Pioneers. It was the Trust whose requests to the Mayor's Office and San Francisco Recreation and Parks resulted in the "gold-lighting" of both City Hall and Coit Tower on the Emperor's 200th birthday.

We'd love to discuss the "Emperor Norton Bridge" honorary naming proposal with you further.

Please respond to John Lumea of The Emperor Norton Trust at john@EmperorNortonTrust.org or 917 538 1013.

We look forward to your thoughts.

John Lumea

Founder, The Emperor Norton Trust

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