

Speech for SFLC Martin Luther King Jr. Breakfast
By Tina Staten, Painters 913
January 15, 2010

Good morning. My name is Tina Staten. I am a painter with Local 913, District Council 16, where I am a member-at-large. I am also Sergeant at Arms of the San Francisco Building Trades Council and a delegate of the San Francisco Labor Council representing Local 913.

I am a beneficiary of the Civil Rights Movement. I was born in 1962 at San Francisco General Hospital. I have five brothers, three of whom I was raised with. We lived with my mother and father in Bay View Hunter's Point A, across the street from the naval shipyard. My friends and I, we played in the shipyard. We picked the fruit from the apricot trees, wild blackberries, honeysuckles, sweet and sour grass. I also remember at 4:00 PM we couldn't play outside because the cars wouldn't stop. The shipyard was open, in full swing! Our school took us on a field trip into the shipyard, where we had lunch with the Navy men and women in the mess hall. I never forgot that experience.

The school district would often take us on field trips – to the zoo, Golden Gate Park, the Academy of Science, the museums. However, in the 1970's life as we knew it would change forever – the Civil Rights Movement hit home! All over the United States schools were being integrated. My brothers and I and everybody in our neighborhood were bused out, way across town. I went to Francisco Junior High. We had never gone to school with kids of other races. The Chinese kids had never seen black kids. So you know, the first thing we did was fight, for two years. After that things were OK. We played school sports together (I played basketball and softball) and rode the yellow school bus together, stopping in different neighborhoods. Then it was time for high school. I started at John O'Connell in 1978.

Living in the housing projects there was always a carpenter, glazier, painter, or laborer around. I didn't think much of it then, but I did decide to go to Painting and Decorating Trade School. I was the only girl to graduate from my Painting and Decorating program. In fact, in all my classes in the program I was either the only black or the only girl. I've been making history from there ever since. I am the first African American female Sergeant at Arms for the San Francisco Building Trades, and the first member-at-large in my union, Painters Local 913.

And my painting has taken me places I never imagined! I had the pleasure of painting the exterior of my elementary school, Jedediah Smith. Wow! In the Bayview Hunter's Point I've painted over 3,000 doors in a 17-year span. At Bret Heart Elementary School every window, door, trim is my work. At Star Pierce King Elementary the window stain is my work. I am the only painter in the city that can say at this time they've worked on the old and new Academy of Sciences. Bayview Plaza is all my work, both interior and exterior.

Being a part of a union has done great things for me. I have a dream – of becoming a solo painting contractor: *Tina Staten Painting and Decorating ~ No Job Too Big – No Job Too Small.* Call me!

Thank you.