



San Francisco Public Library

100 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102 - 4733

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 17, 2017

To: San Francisco Library Commission

From: Luis Herrera, City Librarian

Regarding: City Policy Regarding Depiction of Women on City Property and Maya Angelou Statue at the Main Library

The San Francisco Public Library is bringing forth information about the San Francisco Board of Supervisors resolution and ordinance to improve the depiction of women in the public realm and, more specifically, to erect a statue of Maya Angelou in front of the San Francisco Main Library.

The resolution (“Affirming San Francisco’s Commitment to 30 Percent Female Representation by 2020”) and the ordinance (“Maya Angelou Statue at Main Library - City Policy Regarding Depiction of Women on City Property - Women’s Recognition Public Art Fund”) are both attached and were proposed by Supervisor Mark Farrell. The focus of this legislation is to rectify the inequity in women’s representation in elected office, leadership roles, and in the public realm.

As the resolution states: “Despite comprising half of the population, women, at the most, comprise 20% of elected representatives, media figures and private sector leadership roles across the United States. Women only make up 20% of tech industry executive teams and 4% of Fortune 500 Company executives.” To improve upon these numbers, Supervisor Farrell is pushing San Francisco to be the first city in the nation to establish a goal of 30% female representation in city public spaces, Boards, Commissions and publications by 2020, which is the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment, granting women the right to vote.

A meaningful step toward the “30% by 2020” goal is by installing a female statue to provide San Francisco with public space representation of women. Currently, Golden Gate Park has 26 statues, 14 of them are of men and only one is of a woman. It depicts an allegorical woman: The Pioneer Mother. There are 585 permanently sited works on public view from the San Francisco Civic Art Collection, including 87 sculptures and memorials. Only two depict non-fictional women. They are the bust of Dianne Feinstein at City Hall and British citizen, Florence Nightingale, at Laguna Honda Hospital.

Farrell’s ordinance directs the Arts Commission to erect a statue of Maya Angelou in front of the Main Library; sets a City policy that at least 30% of nonfictional figures depicted or commemorated in statues and other works of art on City-owned property, public building names, and street names, be women; and amends the Administrative Code to create a fund to accept gifts to pay for the design, construction, repair, maintenance, and improvement of public art depicting historically significant women on City property.

The author Dr. Maya Angelou was chosen because she is a national and San Francisco icon. Among Dr. Angelou’s many accomplishments in breaking color and gender barriers, she was San Francisco’s first African American female streetcar conductor. Dr. Maya Angelou went on to become a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient as well as an acclaimed poet, author and civil rights activist. Her poems “*Phenomenal Woman*” and “*Still I Rise*” continue to inspire generations of female activists. The library is fitting place to honor Dr. Angelou’s contributions because of her literary legacy and her statements on behalf of public libraries, which she credits with saving her life after suffering abuse as a child. The library and its books helped her find her voice, and gave her the courage to speak out.

As part of the ordinance, “the Library Commission shall appoint an individual, who may be a member of the Library Commission, to serve on the Arts Commission’s selection committee for the artist. Additionally, in selecting the design and location, and in overseeing the construction and placement of the statue, the Commission shall solicit input from the Library Commission and the City Librarian, or his or her designee.”

The cost of the statue is estimated by the Arts Commission to be \$350,000, which includes a maintenance endowment. City funds have been committed by the Board of Supervisors for \$250,000 over the next 2 years, with the balance being raised by private funds. There is no fiscal impact on the library budget.