

ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE COL. ALLENSWORTH STATE HISTOPIC PARK



MEETING AT ALLENSWORTH MAY, 1976

Front Row (L-R) MS. HATTIE CRAWFORD, DR. EDWARD E. FRANCE, CECIL BERKLEY, MS. GAYNELLE GREEN, AL GREEN, CHAIRMAN; MS. VASSIE WRIGHT, MS. FRANCES R. MILLER, MS. ELENA ALBERT, ROYAL E. TOWNS, MS. KAY GREEN.

Second Row: JEFFERSON PIERRO, MS. BETTYE WILLIAMS, EUGENE P. LASARTEMAY.

Third Row: MS. MARCELLA FORD, MS. LOIS CARSON, GEORGE POPE, MS. GEMELIA HERRING, MS. WILLIE POPE.

To: CA State Rec and Parks Commissioners

By Email: "State Parks and Recreation Commission@Parks" <SPR.commission@parks.ca.gov>

Att: : Prasanna Hankins - *Admin Assistant & Division Admin Coordinator*

State Park and Recreation Commission Liaison
Strategic Planning and Recreation Services Division
California Department of Parks and Recreation

Submission of written comments and further context, concerns and recommendations related to Public Comment to be made on 3/5/26

COLONEL ALLENSWORTH STATE HISTORIC PARK

Community Engagement: Concerns, Recommendations & Public Comment

Presented on Behalf of the living community, residents and neighbors of present day Allensworth
March 2026 | California State Park & Recreation Commission

EXISTING FRAMEWORK ON RECORD: CASHP2

The Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park Partnership (CASHP2) is an existing, documented collaboration between the Allensworth Alliance (led by the APA and including the Friends of Allensworth, et Al) and California State Parks. CASHP2 includes formal partnership and collaboration commitments that the state has agreed to — among them: using a clear and collaborative process for setting park priorities; setting clear roles in park staffing; ensuring respect, representation and cultural sensitivity in park staffing; and ensuring the accuracy of the historical narrative told at the park. The hiring of a Community Engagement Specialist without community consultation is a direct violation of these documented commitments. This document should be read in that context.

Key CASHP2 Commitments on record:

- (1) Clear and collaborative process for setting park priorities.
- (2) Clear roles and responsibilities in park staffing, management, and project development.
- (3) Respect, representation, and cultural sensitivity in park staffing.
- (4) Accuracy of the historical narrative told at the park.
- (5) Acknowledgment of constraints — and commitment to changing practices that don't align with shared vision and values.
- (6) A shared commitment to address past and ongoing harm.

I. CONCERNS REGARDING CURRENT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

The following concerns reflect the voice of the living community of Allensworth — those by fate and by choice charged with carrying the vision of Colonel and Josephine Allensworth forward. They are grounded in the current Community Engagement Specialist job posting (JC-506494) and in a pattern of state engagement that has consistently fallen short of the standard set by the 1969 Advisory Committee.

- **No Proposed Community Consultation in the Hiring Process:** The living community of Allensworth, the Allensworth Progressive Association (APA), and the Friends of Allensworth — established in 1984 by Nettie Morrison as a formal bridge between the state and the community — have not been consulted, invited to participate, or given any meaningful input into who fills this position. A role explicitly tasked with community engagement cannot ethically be filled without the consent and counsel of that community.
- **We Have No Say in Who Represents Us:** Beyond consultation, the community has no formal input into candidate selection. This is not simply a procedural oversight — it signals that the living community is seen as a recipient of programming rather than a co-author of it. Allensworth is the only community in California with a state park attached to its living residents; that distinction demands a hiring process unlike any other.
- **No Required Cultural or Historical Competency:** The posting lists experience in natural resource management as 'desirable,' with no requirement for knowledge of African American history, the specific legacy of Allensworth, Tulare County's Black agricultural communities, or cooperative self-governance traditions. Someone hired under these terms will be learning the community's story from the community — reversing the intended relationship entirely.
- **Insufficient Compensation Undermines the Role's Gravity:** The posted floor salary of \$3,861/month — where new hires must start — does not reflect the weight of stewarding one of California's most historically significant African American landmarks. The 1969 Advisory Committee assembled university chancellors, NAACP chapter presidents, architects, historians, and civil rights leaders. Compensation must honor comparable cultural weight.
- **No Accountability to the Living Community:** The position reports solely to the Senior Park and Recreation Specialist within the state bureaucracy. There is no described accountability, advisory relationship, or formal liaison role connecting this position to the APA, the Friends of Allensworth, or community elders. Without structured accountability to the community, this role risks becoming another layer of institutional distance.
- **Friends of Allensworth Has Been Sidelined:** The Friends of Allensworth (FOA) was established specifically to serve as the liaison between state parks, the Commission, and the living community. The emergence of this position without any apparent engagement with FOA raises critical questions: What is the current state of California State Parks' relationship with FOA? Has the state honored, resourced, or engaged the organization my grandmother Nettie Morrison built for this exact purpose?
- **Docent Staff Do Not Reflect the Community's Narrative:** Beyond this hire, there is a longstanding concern that interpretive and docent staff at Colonel Allensworth SHP do not accurately reflect the cultural narrative the park is meant to preserve. Visitors should encounter living representatives who embody the legacy — not simply interpret it from a distance.

- **A Single Entry-Level Position Cannot Bear This Weight:** The 1969 Advisory Committee had over 30 members — each bringing specialized expertise, community standing, and institutional relationships. Reducing decades of needed community investment to a single, under-resourced, entry-level position signals that the state does not understand the depth of engagement this site requires.
- **The Application Process Structurally Excludes Community Practitioners:** The CalCareers system, civil service examinations, and STD 678 requirements create significant barriers for local residents, community historians, and cultural practitioners — who may be the most qualified to serve in this role — but who lack experience navigating state bureaucratic infrastructure.
- **This Hiring Process Violates Existing CASHP2 Partnership Commitments:** The CASHP2 framework — a formal, documented partnership agreement between California State Parks and the Allensworth Alliance — includes explicit commitments to use a 'clear and collaborative process for setting priorities,' to establish 'clear roles and responsibilities in park staffing,' and to ensure 'respect, representation and cultural sensitivity' in staffing decisions. Advancing this hire without community consultation is not simply an oversight — it is a breach of agreements already on the record. The Spectrum of Community Engagement embedded in CASHP2 documents places the state's current posture at 'Consult' at best — far short of the 'Collaborate' and 'Defer To' standard the community has requested and the partnership framework reflects.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

These recommendations draw directly from the model of the 1969 Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park Advisory Committee — a body of over 30 community leaders, scholars, civil rights organizers, and park professionals who built this park through genuine co-governance. That model is the floor, not the ceiling.

1. **Community Participation in Hiring — Immediately:** Before this or any future Community Engagement Specialist is selected, California State Parks must formally engage the living Allensworth community, the APA, and the Friends of Allensworth in defining the role criteria, reviewing candidates, and providing input into final selection. At minimum, a community advisory review panel should hold formal standing in the hiring process.
2. **Reconvene a Community Advisory Committee:** Reconstitute an advisory body modeled on the 1969 Committee — with formal, standing representation from the APA, Friends of Allensworth, Allensworth descendants, regional HBCU partners, civil rights organizations, and Wowol Yokut and Indigenous community representatives. This body should have real advisory power with the State Parks Commission, not a symbolic seat.
3. **Revise Minimum Qualifications to Reflect Cultural Complexity:** Require demonstrated knowledge of African American history and specifically Allensworth's legacy; experience in culturally grounded community organizing; familiarity with solidarity economy, cooperative governance, or liberation-centered placemaking; and existing relationships with BIPOC communities in the San Joaquin Valley or comparable rural agricultural contexts.
4. **Compensate the Role at the Level of Its Responsibility:** Restructure the position classification and salary to reflect what is genuinely being asked: not a generalist park

coordinator, but a cultural steward and community liaison for a nationally significant African American heritage site. Consider alignment with senior specialist or cultural program director classifications.

5. **Restore and Resource the Friends of Allensworth:** Formally acknowledge the Friends of Allensworth as the authorized community liaison organization, consistent with Nettie Morrison's founding vision. Provide institutional support, clear communication channels, and meaningful partnership agreements that give FOA a defined and resourced role in programming, hiring consultation, and community governance of the park.
6. **Request a Dedicated Meeting with the Commissioner Subcommittee:** The APA formally requests a meeting with the Outreach and Engagement Subcommittee commissioners to present the community's vision for engagement, share the history of what has and has not worked, and co-develop an engagement plan that reflects what only the community itself can know about its own needs.
7. **Establish Interpretive Staff That Reflects the Community's Story:** Prioritize hiring docent and interpretive staff who are drawn from or deeply connected to the living Allensworth community and the broader Black farming and cooperative tradition of the Central Valley. The people who greet visitors should embody the legacy they are interpreting.
8. **Build a Multi-Person, Multi-Disciplinary Engagement Team:** A single community engagement specialist cannot do what a 30-person advisory committee accomplished in 1969. Commit to a phased expansion of community engagement infrastructure — including community historians, cultural programmers, solidarity tourism coordinators, and youth engagement specialists — in genuine partnership with the community.
9. **Honor and Reinstate the CASHP2 Partnership Framework:** The CASHP2 collaboration documents — including the Shared Vision, Collaboration Principles, Collaboration Roles Chart, and Project Priorities Map — represent formal commitments made by California State Parks to the Allensworth Alliance. These commitments must be honored, not set aside when inconvenient. The state should formally acknowledge where CASHP2 commitments have not been kept, begin remediation, and resume the structured quarterly calls, annual summits, and working groups defined in the partnership framework.
10. **Formally Reconvene the Allensworth Alliance as a Co-Governance Body:** The Allensworth Alliance — the intergenerational, multicultural organizing body that includes the Friends of Allensworth, APA, and community partners — must be formally reconvened with state support as the primary vehicle for community co-governance of the park. The Alliance is not an external stakeholder; it is a co-author of the park's future. The CASHP2 framework recognized this. The state must act accordingly — designating a staff liaison, resourcing Alliance facilitation, and ensuring the Alliance has formal standing in all major decisions about the park, including staffing, programming, and interpretation.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT — CALIFORNIA STATE PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION

Agenda Item: Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda / Commissioner Subcommittee Reports — Outreach and Engagement

Speaker: Tekoah Kadara, Co-Associate Executive Director – Allensworth Progressive Association

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT 01

Agenda Item: Public Comment for Items NOT on the Agenda

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Approx. Time: 2 minutes (~250 words)

Greetings Chair, Vice Chair and Commissioners — It's good to be with you all again.

As some of you know, my name is Tekoah Kadara. I am the co-associate executive director of the Allensworth Progressive Association and the grandson of Nettie Morrison, who in 1984, founded the Friends of Allensworth — specifically to serve as the living bridge between California State Parks, this Commission, and the community of Allensworth, who carry the vision of Josephine, Colonel Allen Allensworth and other founders and families forward daily.

I want to begin with genuine gratitude. The efforts this Commission and specific State Parks staff have made toward authentic connection and engagement. That work matters, and we see it.

And also, I come today with a concern that must be named: the recent posting for a Community Engagement Specialist at Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park — a role we welcome in principle — was developed and advanced without consultation with the living community. No input from the APA. No invitation for the community this park exists to honor to weigh in on who will be entrusted with our legacy.

This is not a new conversation. The CASHP2 Partnership — a formal collaboration agreement between California State Parks and the Allensworth Alliance — already contains explicit commitments to use a collaborative process for park staffing, to ensure cultural sensitivity in hiring, and to acknowledge harm when it occurs. Those commitments are on the record. This process did not honor them.

Allensworth is the only town in California with a state park attached to a living community still carrying the founder's dream. That is not a footnote. That is the whole story.

I will offer specific questions and requests during the Subcommittee update. Thank you.

SUBCOMMITTEE PUBLIC COMMENT 02

Agenda Item: Subcommittee Updates — (c) Public Engagement & Communications Committee

Agenda Item: VII. Subcommittee Updates — (c) Public Engagement & Communications Committee

Approx. Time: 2 minutes (~250 words)

Greetings, Commissioners — Tekoah Kadara again - Allensworth Resident and Co-Associate Executive Director of the Allensworth Progressive Association.

Thank you for sharing the work you are doing between meeting on the Subcommittees..
Earlier I named a concern. Now I want to offer context and ask three direct questions.

The standard we are holding the state to is not new — it was set in the early 1970s, when Director William Penn Mott appointed an Advisory Committee of over **thirty** individuals: Dr. Kenneth Goode of UC Berkeley. Grandvel Jackson of the San Francisco NAACP. Eugene and Ruth Lasartemay of the East Bay Negro Historical Society. Architect Alfred Green. Historians, educators, civil rights leaders — people who built this park through genuine co-governance. That committee was the model. We are asking this Commission to return to it.

With that as context, we bring three questions:

First — what is the current state of California State Parks' relationship with the Friends of Allensworth? My grandmother built that organization for exactly this purpose. Has it been honored, resourced, and engaged?

Second — how can the APA and FOA be formally included in candidate review and selection for this position going forward?

Third — We would like to request a meeting with the PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATIONS Sub COMMITTEE –with Commissioners Jeff Williams and David Galaviz

We are not asking to be consulted after the fact. We are asking to be co-authors of what comes next. The Allensworth Progressive Association is ready, The Allensworth Alliance is ready.

We are asking the Commission and State Parks to join us in a collaborative, cooperative, and comprehensive community engagement process.

Thank you.

Submitted by the Allensworth Progressive Association (APA) in partnership with the Allensworth Alliance

For questions, contact: tekoah@allensworthpa.org