

MAYA STOVALL

A something = x

3998

parrasch heijnen

September 18 - October 30, 2021

Maya Stovall: *A something = x*

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Parrasch Heijnen is pleased to present the gallery's first exhibition with conceptual artist Maya Stovall (b. 1982, Detroit, MI).

A something = x showcases sixteen neon works depicting dates ranging from 3998 BCE to 1996 CE along with three, colored neon forms representing abstracted space. Following the first series, 1526, 3998 is the second series of the overarching project the artist has termed Neon Theatre (2019-ongoing). Neon Theatre functions as a possibility of experiencing the world as it is through understanding of structures and systems across time. Stovall, who has a Ph.D. in anthropology, intentionally chooses moments, represented within a singular year, after researching hundreds of scholarly archives. She acknowledges and dismantles the romanticized and often nationalistic narrative of our collective past.

The works in this exhibition seek to spur our cognitive processes; each piece builds on prior knowledge associated with the date, the medium, and the overall sensory experience to reexamine and impart further meaning with the artist's chosen events. The warm, inviting neon glow emphasizes pivotal yet obscure events through a self-aware device of marketing; Stovall's typographical decision to use Helvetica Neue presents a simple, pure aesthetic form strongly linked to smooth functionality.

The artist's latest chronology begins in 3998 BCE with a passage out of civilization's oldest preserved manuscript from Ancient Egypt that was later adopted by western moral philosophy (beginning with the Ancient Greeks). From this point she begins to identify modes of power and a structural ontology of western colonial history.

Stovall's project focuses on how the legal apparatus forms and assigns identity as a legitimizing force, separating people into categorical hierarchies. Subsequently, the tension created has historically prevented larger organization and unity of those it aims to exploit and oppress. Key pillars of this structure purposefully reshape cognition through effective storytelling, maintaining nonwhite and ally disunity. This can largely be seen today in public discussion around critical race theory where the subject is turned into a headline that is debated without the definition that the artist scaffolds across the project.

Stovall points to the cyclical nature of time where identity or ownership and their relationship with power has led to biased structures and systematic oppression. The few but salient rebellions come in the form of political satire whether through poetry or plays, as in works *1084* and *1965*, where writing and reeducation of the oppressed and society lead to perceptible change and a step toward equality.

This series ends on the year 1996, where the largely Democratic state of California voted on Proposition 209 stating race and sex could not be determining factors for public employment. The proposition completely disregarded the socioeconomic inequality amongst communities where education and resources were lacking as a result of legal apparatuses. Consequently, nonwhite university enrollment and public employment fell drastically. The "colorblind" proposition was upheld

in 2020 denying affirmative action once again through confusing rhetoric and political lobbying, maintaining the direction of the status quo.

An informative notecard is provided to accompany each neon date with specific quotes and details pertaining to the documentary archives. These provide jumping off points where further intervention could lead to a broader understanding. The years ask the viewer to question the narrative and the perspectives presented in an easily consumable and potentially nomadic medium. In highlighting the cyclical nature of time, Stovall acknowledges the intersectionality of discrimination through each chosen hallmark.

Interspersed among this historical timeline are three abstract neon forms which are individually titled *A_____ That Defies Gravity*. Meant as moments of reflection in a post-abstraction metaphor, the works are spaces themselves where the criticality of space and place theory metamorphosizes from analysis to the corporeal. As Stovall describes: "This space is produced, this space is political, this space is contentious, this space is ableist, this space is heterotopic, this space is gendered, this space is floating, this space is _____." These pauses allow for introspection and meditation through the vibrant wash of hued neon enveloping the senses and propose possibilities.

Maya Stovall lives in Southern California where she is Assistant Professor in Liberal Studies at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. She received a Ph.D. in Anthropology from Wayne State University, Detroit, MI, an MBA from The University of Chicago Booth School of Business, and a BBA from Howard University, Washington, D.C.

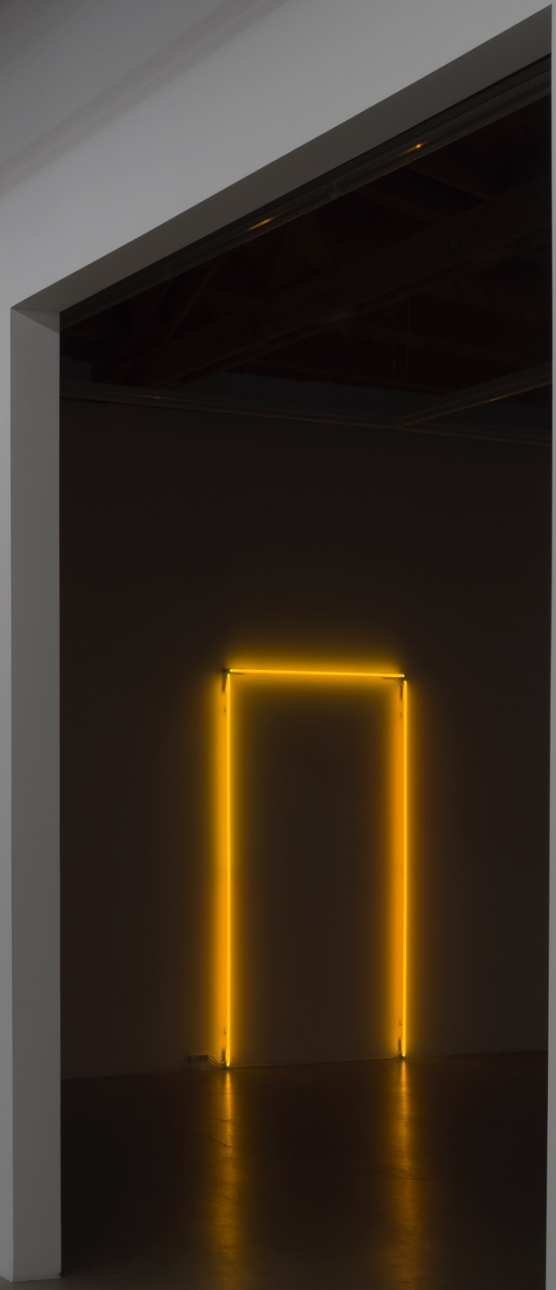
Stovall's work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions including: The Whitney Biennial 2017, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, NY); Atlanta Contemporary Art Center (Atlanta, GA); Museum of Contemporary Art Canada (Toronto, CA); The Studio Museum in Harlem (New York, NY); Newbridge Projects (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK); Contemporary Art Museum (St. Louis, MO); Cranbrook Art Museum (Detroit, MI); Maryland Institute College of Art (Baltimore, MD); AKA Artist Run (Saskatoon, CA); Jessica Silverman Gallery (San Francisco, CA); Reyes Projects (Detroit, MI); Library Street Collective (Detroit, MI); and POP Montréal (Montreal, CA). She was an artist in residence in Aarhus, Denmark, and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Stovall's work resides in permanent collections including: Cranbrook Art Museum, (Detroit, MI); Kalamazoo Art Institute (Kalamazoo, MI); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles, CA); and Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, NY). Her book, *Liquor Store Theatre* (Duke University Press, 2020) takes readers behind the scenes of the six-year-running video project of the same name in her hometown of Detroit. Stovall is represented by Reyes | Finn Gallery, Detroit, MI and parrasch heijnen, Los Angeles.

Maya Stovall: A something = x will be on view at parrasch heijnen, 1326 S. Boyle Avenue, Los Angeles, from September 18 – October 30, 2021. An opening reception will be held on Saturday September 18, 11a-6p. The gallery has secure, private parking onsite. Proper face coverings and social distancing are currently required while inside. Gallery staff are available to guide you through our exhibitions virtually via Zoom upon request. A 360° VR Tour can be found on our website to view from your desktop computer or mobile device. For more information, please contact the gallery at +1 (323) 943-9373 or info@parraschheijnen.com.



1951 1956



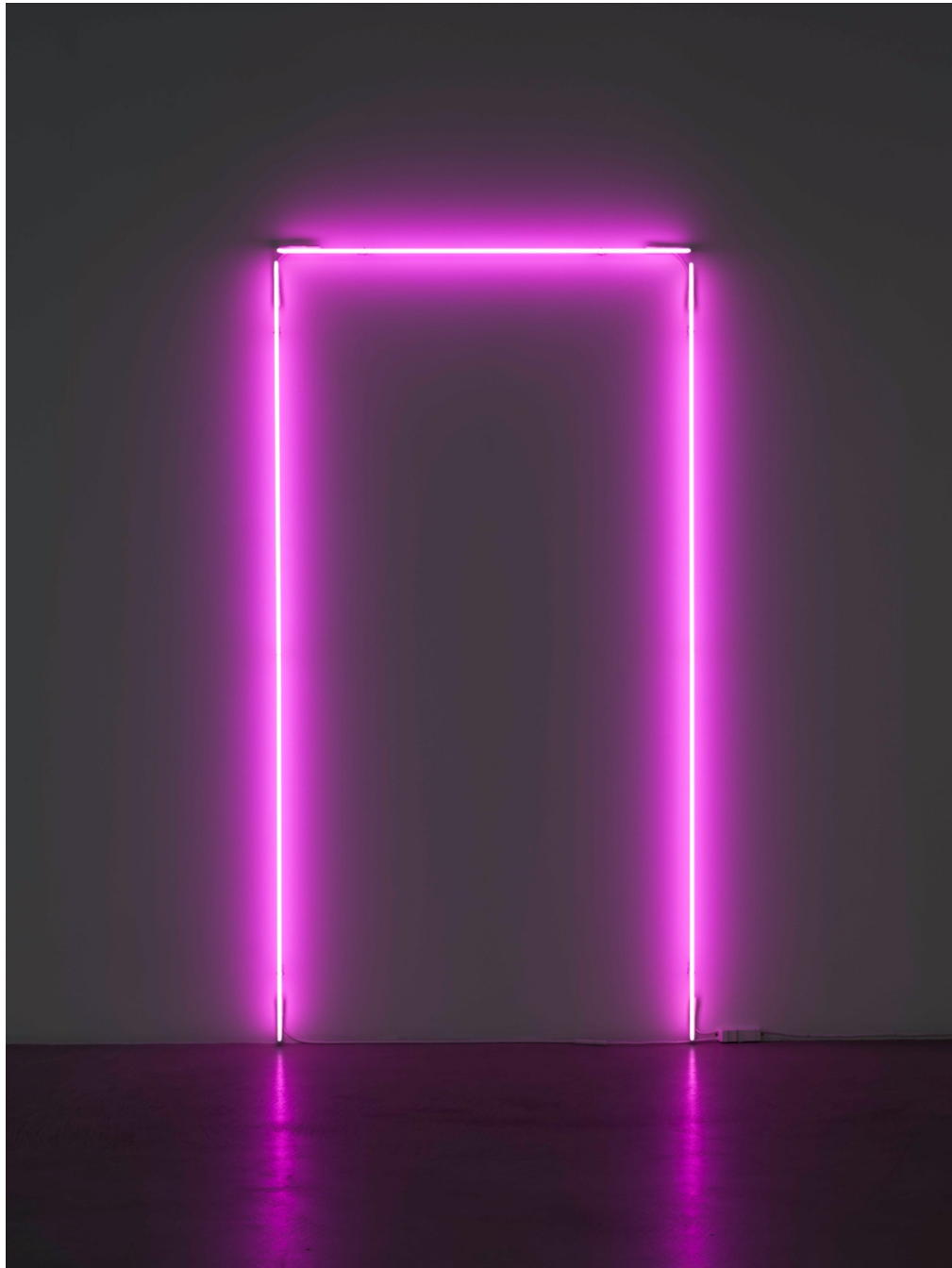
3998

parrasch heijnen



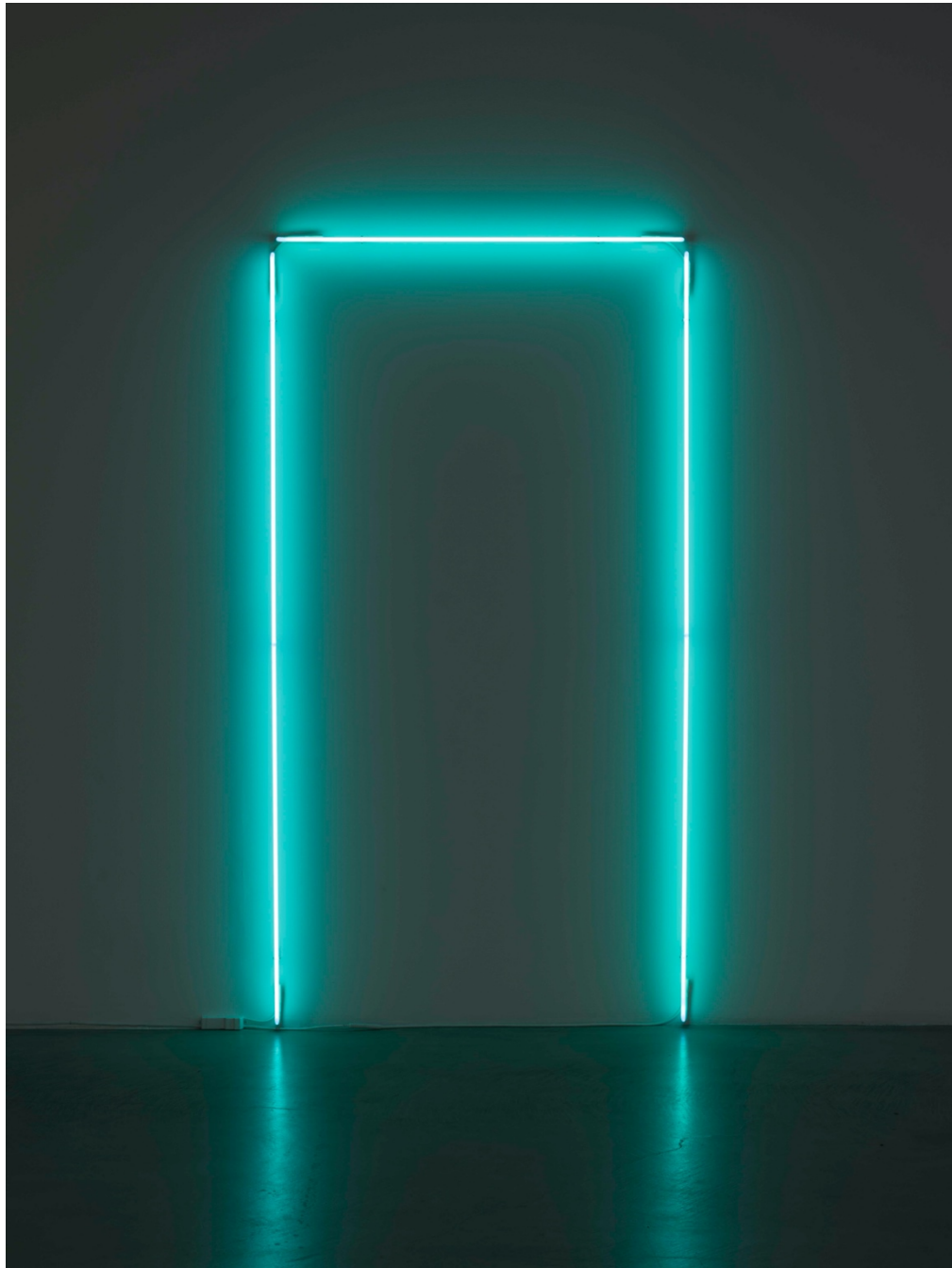
A_____ *That Defies Gravity, no. 31-33*
pale yellow neon
87 in x 46 inches

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A_____ *That Defies Gravity, no. 34-36*
dreamy pink neon
87 in x 46 inches

parrasch heijnen



A_____ That Defies Gravity, no. 37-39
baby blue neon
87 in x 46 inches





3998 BCE

3998, no. 1, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

The cautious man flourisheth,
the exact one is praised;
the innermost chamber openeth
unto the man of silence.

Civilization's oldest manuscript is written by Ke'gemni, the Governor of the Land unto its Limit, the Director of every Command, in the Reign of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt (Kemet), King Heuni, the last ruler of the Third Dynasty in 3998 BCE.

The Instruction of Ptah-Hotep and the Instruction of Ke'gemni: The Oldest Books in the World, Tr., with an Intr., by Battiscombe George Gunn. (1906).



3550 BCE

3998, no. 2, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

I pray thee, let this thing be done,
that sin may be banished
from among persons of understanding,
that thou may enlighten the lands.

Civilization's second oldest manuscript is written by Ptah-Hotep, the Governor of his City, the Vizier, in the Reign of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt (Kemet), King Isôsi, the last ruler of the Fifth Dynasty in 3550 BCE.

The Instruction of Ptah-Hotep and the Instruction of Ke'gemni: The Oldest Books in the World, Tr., with an Intr., by Battiscombe George Gunn. (1906).



430 BCE

3998, no. 4, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

Two black doves flew away from Egyptian Thebes,
and while one directed its flight to Libya,
the other came to Greek Dodona.

She alighted on an oak,
and sitting there began to speak with a human voice,
and told them that on the spot where she was,
there should henceforth be an oracle of Jove.

(Herodotus, *The Persian War*, Book II, Section 2.55)

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326 BCE

3998, no. 3, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

Together with Aristotle, Alexander of Macedonia loots the Royal Library in Egypt, plundering hundreds of books. The Royal Library's Ancient African Kemetite writings and books are gradually presented as Western philosophy.



1084

3998, no. 5, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

Last night there was intermittent rain, a gusty wind.
Deep sleep did not relieve me of
The last effects of wine.
I ask the maid rolling up the blinds,
But she replies: "The crab-apple is lovely as before."
"Don't you know?"
"Oh, don't you know?"
"The green should be plump and the red lean?"

(Li Qingzhao, 1084-ca.1155, Tune: A Dream Song, Spring Ends, Jiaosheng Wang, translation, 1989)

She is a "genius much admired but hardly ever equaled by later writers."

(Jiaosheng Wang on Song Dynasty poet Li Qingzhao)

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1823

3998, no. 6, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. McIntosh

In 1823 the United States Supreme Court rules in a unanimous decision written by Chief Justice John Marshall that the Principle of Discovery provides “white nations an absolute right” to Indigenous lands.



1848

3998, no. 7, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

In 1848 the United States signs the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo following the Mexican-American war where at least 25,000 Mexican people are killed.

With this treaty the United States annexes Mexico's land which becomes the states of Texas, Arizona, California, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, southwestern Colorado, and southwestern Wyoming.

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1850

3998, no. 8, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

The 394th section of the Act Concerning Civil Cases provides that any nonwhite person shall not be allowed to testify as a witness in any action or proceeding in which a white person is a party.



1921

3998, no. 9, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

May 30, 1921, a teenager named Dick Rowland is threatened by a murderous mob. World War I veterans arrive, armed, and put a stop to the mob. The rage of the mob then turns to one of the wealthiest communities in the country—Greenwood. In attacks from aircrafts and on the ground, Tulsa Police Department and the mob murder at least 300 people, destroy at least 1,115 residences, and flatten the businesses and surrounding neighborhood.

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1923

3998, no. 10, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

The Queens of the Golden Mask, a women's secret society known also as the Women's Ku Klux Klan (WKKK), receives its first official charter in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1923. Women argue that the Klan is the best vehicle for protecting women and children, asserting the rights of women relative to men, and incorporating women's political savvy into the political arena.

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1942

3998, *no. 11*, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

Between 1942 and 1945, more than 120,000 people are imprisoned across ten American concentration camps. Manzanar, one of the concentration camps, at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountains, incarcerates at least 10,000 people, with 90 percent of the imprisoned people coming from Los Angeles.



1965

3998, no. 12, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

“We did not, in fact, come to the United States at all.
The United States came to us.”

In 1965 the playwright and director Luis Valdez creates *El Teatro Campesino* (*Farmworkers Theater*) and tours migrant farmworkers camps with 15-minute, one-act plays documenting cultural legacy and asking questions of human liberty. *El Teatro Campesino* accelerates El Movimiento and continues to present day.



1982

3998, no. 13, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

On June 19, 1982 twenty-seven-year-old son, brother, and fiancé, Vincent Chin, is celebrating his upcoming wedding at a bachelor party in Highland Park, Michigan when he is murdered in a racist hate crime by a Chrysler plant supervisor and an unemployed autoworker. The killers negotiate second-degree murder charges down to manslaughter and plead guilty in 1983. They pay a \$3,000 fine and serve three years probation with no jail time. The family continues to honor Chin's memory.



1984

3998, no. 14, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

FINALLY, WE ARE ALL GOING TO BE LINKED TOGETHER AT ONE POINT IN TIME.
IMAGINE IF YOU WILL, ALL OF THE GREAT MINDS OF
THE PATRIOTIC CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT LINKED
TOGETHER AND JOINED INTO ONE COMPUTER.
(Louis R. Beam, 1984, capitalization in original)

I hate my job of “babysitting” inferior beings and then being maligned because I’m White on a daily basis.

(MightyIrishWhitey, Stormfront registered user, teacher, and mother. October 30, 2005, capitalization in original)

In 1984 Louis R. Beam launches Aryan Nations Liberty Net. ANLN is among the Internet’s first bulletin board systems and precedes Don Black’s Stormfront. Stormfront is called the murder capital of the Internet with registered users linked to hundreds of racist murders and hate crimes.



1995

3998, no. 15, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

On May 18, 1995 twenty-two-year-old son and brother, Derrick Conner, is walking in Elkhart, Indiana when he is murdered in a racist hate crime by two plainclothes Elkhart Police Department officers. Court records indicate the Medical Examiner and Police Department collude to cover up the murder through manipulation of physical evidence, witness intimidation, and evidence tampering. The killers are not charged and remain employed by Elkhart Police Department today. The family continues to honor Conner's memory.



1996

3998, no. 16, 2021

archives, buttercream neon

4-1/4 x 11-3/4 inches

In 1996, California Proposition 209 amends the California state constitution to prohibit state governmental institutions from considering race or sex across public education, public employment, and public contracting.

Prop 209 is wrongly named the California Civil Rights Initiative by its authors, conflating legislative efforts to mitigate 494 years of murderous affirmative action policies, which include original affirmative action of human trafficking, land annexation, murder, and genocide.

During the 2020 election, Prop 16 offers a ballot option for California voters to repeal Prop 209. The repeal is rejected by 57 percent.

1850

