



CITY OF OAKLAND

## **Cultural Affairs Commission**

**Regular Meeting – Minutes**

**Monday, October 26, 2020**

**4:30 – 7:05 PM**

**Members in Attendance:** Diane Sanchez (Chair), Kev Choice (Vice Chair), Roy Chan, Jennifer Easton, J.K. Fowler, Michelle Mush Lee, Michael Orange, Charmin Roundtree-Baaqee, Vanessa Whang, Theo Aytchan Williams

**Members Absent:** Richard Raya

**Staff in Attendance:** Roberto Bedoya, Neha Balram, Raquel Iglesias, Jim MacIlvaine, Denise Pate, Kristen Zaremba

**Guests:** James Cagney

### **1. Welcome & Acknowledgement of Land**

Commission Chair Sanchez opened the meeting by welcoming staff members of the public. Chair Sanchez read a statement acknowledging the territory of Huichin by naming it as the unceded land of the Chochenyo Ohlone.

### **2. Action Item: Approval of Minutes from September 29, 2020**

Motion to approve the minutes from September 29, 2020 made by Commissioner Whang; seconded by Commissioner Fowler. The motion passed unanimously.

### **3. Call to Presence**

Commissioner Roy Chan led the Call to Presence by asking listeners to meditate on the power of place by reflecting on the tai chi community in Madison Square Park in Oakland.

### **4. Cultural Affairs Division Manager's Report**

Roberto Bedoya provided an update on Cultural Affairs staff projects and commented on the following items:

- a. **Cultural Funding Program** – Financial resources for Oakland Artists and Arts Organizations since March 2020. Fund Total: \$993,300
  - Round One: Organizational Assistance, Second-year grant awards to be approved at the October 20, 2020 Council Meeting - \$643,300
  - Round Two: Neighborhood Voices for Organizations and Neighborhood Voices for Individual Artists awards to be approved at a January 2021 Council Meeting - \$350,000

- b. **Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund** – A new multi-year program that turns to Oakland’s cultural practitioners of color to radically reimagine a racially just city. In Year One of the program, Reflect & Reimagine grants will support breathing space and idea generation for what a just Oakland could look like, feel like, and be like. Fund Total: \$300,000
  - 113 applications received
  - 12 Reflect & Reimagine grants in the amount \$25,000 per grant
- c. **Oakland CARES Act Funds** – Cultural Affairs Division received \$1.8 Million funds from Federal Government CARES Act. The City of Oakland launched the Oakland CARES Fund for Artists and Arts Nonprofits. Distribution of this Covid-19 Relief Fund is through a partnership between the City of Oakland’s Economic & Workforce Development Department, Cultural Affairs Division and the Center for Cultural Innovation. CARES Arts Fund Total: \$1,425,000
  - Grant award size for arts nonprofits: Up to \$20,000 each
  - Grant award size for individual artists: Up to \$3,000 each
- d. **Oakland CARES Technical Assistance Program** will provide technical assistance to help Oakland-based arts organizations and artists develop a robust online digital presence.

From November 9 to December 10, Youth Speaks, in partnership with YR Media and Zoo Labs, two Oakland artists-centered organizations, will offer 14 free, virtual workshops to train participants on available tools for programming and production; producing content utilizing low-cost tools and technology; the aesthetic associated with virtual presentations; social media and marketing strategies; and strategies on how to monetize one’s presence. For details on the workshop offerings and registration, please visit [lifeisliving.org](http://lifeisliving.org)

#### 5. Update on Cultural Site Visits

Vice Chair Choice reminded Commissioners of their responsibility to attend arts and culture events in the city. He invited Commissioners to share with the group the arts, culture, and community events they recently attended. After Commissioners shared details about their most recent activities, Vice Chair Choice encouraged Commissioners to make their presence at events known so that the community is aware and feels supported by the Cultural Affairs Commission.

#### 6. Public Comment

Chair Sanchez apologized to the members of the public who had difficulty joining the meeting between 4:00 - 4:30 PM, which was due to the City’s technical difficulties.

#### 7. Ad Hoc Team Report Out & Discussion

- **Ad Hoc Team Community Cultural Development**  
Membership: Chan, Orange, Easton and Fowler.

Commissioner Chan presented on his group’s priority areas:  
Festival Culture/Cultural Commons

- Cultural Asset Map can be used to inform internal decision making. One of the

Cultural Plan's charge is to look at data in the Asset Map created for the Plan to understand community capacity for cultural expression. Using a Cultural Asset Map to study resource disparities across Oakland's districts can help Cultural Affairs and the City of Oakland create more intentional and equitable programming. Commissioner Chan shared the other local examples including the "Mapping Small Arts & Culture Orgs of Color" report by Akonadi & Kenneth Rainin Foundations and the Culture Compass map that was created by CAST and San Francisco Arts Commission. Ultimately, the group would like to build a Cultural Asset Map that can answer the following questions: **What's not recognized?** (Uncover Assets), **What's being lost?** (Reveal Inequities), and **What's possible?** (Reimagine future).

### Spaces

- Community Benefits Agreements as potential vehicle for supporting cultural development when new developer projects are proposed by the City. Members of Oakland's cultural community should be included in conversations and provide input when new developments go through the public review and approval process to advocate for community benefits that reflect the goals of the Cultural Plan.

### Civic Engagement/ Civic Narrative of Belonging

- Fellows Program

- Poet Laureate Program

Commissioner Fowler presented on the proposed Poet Laureate Program. Commissioner Fowler noted that while Oakland has a Youth Poet Laureate program, the Commission has a charge from Mayor Schaaf to create an adult Poet Laureate Program. Plans are still in draft form however, the goals of this program include promoting the understanding of the transformative power of poetry to rebirth, reinvigorate, and help situate us in space and place as we moved forward, celebrate the beauty, diversity and resilience of Oakland, build relationships throughout the community, help bring Oakland to the national stage. The Poet Laureate would do an inaugural address, a quarterly collaborative reading series with the Youth Poet Laureate Program, four one-time readings in City-owned spaces, a commemorative poem about Oakland, and a publication. A rotating committee would help select the Poet Laureate along with Roberto Bedoya. A tentative timeline for the program has a launch date of January 2021 with a public call for applications and a finalist announced by April 2021, which is National Poetry Month.

- **Ad Hoc Team Revenue Streams & Advocacy**

Membership: Roundtree-Baaqee, Orange, Easton, Whang

### Analyze the Cultural Affairs Budget

- Review existing revenue streams & expense allocations

- Work with appropriate City staff to answer questions and get a deeper understanding of existing revenue streams, expense allocations and restrictions, and true-ups

#### Research Potential Public Revenue Streams for Cultural Affairs

- Develop a list of possible public revenue streams and research the procedures for increasing, reallocating, creating revenues for the cultural sector (e.g., taxes/surtaxes, fees, finding relevant existing streams, etc.)
- Support building relationships with other City departments to build common cause
- Research potential state and federal funding
- Research revenue-generating mechanism of other cities

#### Research Private Philanthropy for Innovation or Seed Funding\*

- Research pros and cons of different mechanisms for raising, parking, and accessing private contributions (e.g., Oakland Fund for Innovation, "Friends of" model, etc.)
- Support CAD Manager's research of possible private funding for ideas generated by CAD and other Ad Hoc Committees

\*The Commission will be careful not to pursue funding possibilities that would be in direct competition with constituents.

#### Strengthen the Advocacy Case for Cultural Affairs & Oakland's Cultural Sector

- Research arts & culture budgets of comparable cities
- Research effective advocacy campaigns for strengthening municipal arts & culture units and the field
- Strengthen relationships with cultural community advocates

#### Process & Outcomes

- Ongoing information sharing with the Commission and Cultural Affairs staff
- Make recommendations for more robust support of the cultural sector based on research
- Propose advocacy strategies

- **Ad Hoc Team Covid-19 Recovery & Re-imagine**

Membership: Lee, Choice, Roundtree-Baaqee, Raya, Williams

Commissioner Lee lead an overview of the team's short and long-term priorities that overall strengthen Oakland's cultural infrastructure and jobs program for artists. Commissioners Williams, Choice, and Roundtree-Baaqee took turns presenting on various ideas and examples of how each priority can be executed.

## **SHORT TERM**

### Artist Relief

- Additional round of Covid-19 relief funds for artists in 2021
- Craft policy recommendations for artists and arts organizations to return to public spaces using San Francisco JAM ordinance as a research model

## **MID-TERM**

### Build Economies and Capacity of Cultural Sector

- Set-up city-sponsored safety zones for artists to do business
  - Latham Square
  - Safe public marketplace
- Provide another round of technical assistance programs or services for artists that include trainings in digital storytelling, social media marketing, organization strategy
- Universal Basic Income for 100-150 Oakland artists - explore how to give artists a monthly stipend =to support during and in the aftermath of Covid-19

## **LONG TERM**

### Cultural Spaces

- City-subsidized program for Below Market Rate (BMR) for new/returning cultural spaces

## **8. Artist Spotlight: James Cagney**

Commissioner Fowler introduced poet James Cagney who read his poems “Toguna at 61st and Market” (poem on next page) and “What Remains Eternal”.

## **9. Announcements**

## **10. Closing**

Chair Sanchez thanked the Commissioners, the public, and guest poet James Cagney for participating and staff and KTOP for their support and assistance.

**The meeting adjourned at 7:05 PM**

# TOGUNA\* AT 61ST AND MARKET

James Cagney

My father's blood followed the current of the street  
spawned, too—apparently.

Any time daddy wasn't home, he'd be  
*Down The Street*  
had a secret life there  
where they breathed blue 90-proof air.

In those rooms,  
his heart defrosted  
circled his chest like a catfish

*Down The Street* was some 9 blocks south-  
*and a reservoir of filth*, to my mother's taste.  
Bottom feeding old drunks noodling nothing

In an open garage  
A designated RV  
A momma-free living room

Drunks from my dad's longshoreman days.  
Haggard and greying drunks  
Falling bones and bullshit drunks

A grapevine of drunks  
A bullpen of drunks  
A stagger of drunks

Burdened with crossroad prophecy in blues harmonica

Wagging in like bees from fresh nectar juke joints

From the hour school let out  
till long after the sun hung over a noisy, belligerent sea.

A kind of sea shimmered between the old men

A black whisky sea  
a sky latticed with Lightnin'  
Hopkins a murder of Old Crow bourbon

unscrewed and squawking

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\*Toguna is a Dogon Meeting House For Older Men. Built with a low roof, you're encouraged to sit within. Anyone who rises to his feet in anger or excitement hits his head on the beams and is quickly returned to a state of calm.



Oakland-native **James Cagney** is the author of *Black Steel Magnolias In The Hour of Chaos Theory*, out from Nomadic Press and winner of the PEN Oakland 2019 Josephine Miles Award. You can find more of his writing at [thedirtyrat.blog](http://thedirtyrat.blog).

author portrait by Arthur Johnstone