



CITY OF OAKLAND

Cultural Affairs Commission

Regular Meeting – Minutes

Monday, July 27, 2020

4:00 – 6:00 PM

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

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Roberto Bedoya, Neha Balram, Jim MacIvaine, Denise Pate, Kristen Zarembo

Guests: Dr. Ayodele Nzinga

*Indicates partial attendance

1. Welcome

Meeting called to order by Commission Chair Diane Sanchez at 4:00 PM.

2. Centering Exercise

Recognition of the meeting space as Huichin territory, the unceded land of the Chochenyo Ohlone led by Commissioner Jennifer Easton. She asked the group to reflect on the following questions:

- How does this acknowledgement relate to the work you are doing?
- What intentions do you have to disrupt colonialism in support of Ohlone and other native communities beyond this territory acknowledgement?

3. Tribute to Rep. John Lewis and Rev. C.T. Vivian

A musical tribute led by Commissioner Kev Choice in memory of the recently departed Representative John Lewis and Reverend C.T. Vivian.

4. Overview of the Cultural Affairs Commission

Commission Chair Diane Sanchez provided a brief overview of the re-established Cultural Affairs Commission and a description of its roles and responsibilities as advocates and ambassadors for arts and culture in Oakland.

5. Action Item #1: Vote on Vice Chair Position

Commissioners cast their vote for Vice Chair for either candidates, Commissioner Kev Choice or Commissioner J.K. Fowler. Commissioner Choice was elected to the Vice Chair position with seven votes. One abstention and one absence.

6. Public Comment

The following members of the public made comments: Indi McCCasey, Deborah Vaughn, Zakiya Harris.

7. Cultural Affairs Division Manager's Report

Roberto Bedoya provided updates and comments on the following items:

- a. **FY20/21 Budget** - Cuts to the Division resulted in zeroing out support for the City's Festival Fund, zeroing out the City's sponsorship of the Art & Soul Festival, and a modest cut to our Cultural Funding grantmaking program. The budget deductions were linked to Transient Occupancy Tax and the loss of those revenues.
- b. **Cultural Funding Program** - Postponed spring 2020 grant round. Cultural Affairs Division secured resources needed to honor the 2nd year Organizational Assistance FY20-21 will include categories for: Neighborhood Voices, Youth Voices, and Spaces.
- c. **East Bay/Oakland Relief Fund for Individuals in the Arts** - \$416K allocated to Oakland artists in June; seeded through the Mayor Schaaf's COVID-19 Relief Fund and the Cultural Affairs Division
- d. **Oakland Creative Works** (Organization Projects & Individual Artist Awards) - Designed to invest in our diverse communities that has been impacted by COVID-19, our contracted economy, the calls for equity and the work of realizing a Just City. Will support projects that address our civic needs, foster social cohesion and create feelings of belonging in a time of physical distancing by offering ways that animate civic recovery and well-being.
- e. **Racial Equity Impact Analysis** - Oakland-based firm LeaderSpring hired to conduct analysis of the Cultural Affairs Division's programs as part of Phase 1 of the Cultural Plan.
- f. **Oakland Murals Art for the Movement** - The East Oakland Black Cultural Zone Collaborative and the Black Cultural Zone Community Development Corporation (collectively the Black Cultural Zone or the BCZ), along with other Black-led organizations and Black artists, are leading this effort to hold the conversation and frame a path forward, which will include working with artists to re-mount ongoing exhibitions. The Oakland Museum of California, Oakland Art Murmur, and a host of allies have committed to support the Black Cultural Zone's goal of lifting Black voices in the pursuit of justice and equality.
- g. **Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund** - new multi-year program that turns to Oakland 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. 113 applications were received; 12 Reflect & Reimagine grants of \$25,000 each; award announcement expected late summer- early fall
- h. **CARES Funds** – Cultural Affairs Division received \$1.8 Million funds from Federal Government; funds will be used to support individual artists and arts organizations with the assistance of an intermediary non-profit organization; funds need to be spent by December 30, 2020.

8. Open Forum

The following members of the public made comments: Indi McCCasey, Jean Marie Durant, Destiny Muhammed

9. Commissioner Comment Period

10. Ad Hoc Teams Chair Report Out

a. Community Cultural Development

- Spaces: Community Benefits Agreement
- Festival Culture-Cultural Commons: Cultural Mapping
- Civic Engagement/Civic Narrative of Belonging:
 - Poet Laureate Program
 - Fellows Program

b. Covid-19 Recovery & Re-Imagine

- Racial Equity
 - Devoted to working with Oakland’s arts and culture economy to strategize how City resources are accessed, as well as adequately and equitably, distributed, especially in ways that better serve artists and communities disproportionately affected by displacement and poverty.
- Cultural Infrastructure support - Teaching Artists, Individual Artists, Cultural Gig Workers, Arts Organizations
 - What do we need to understand in order to support artists to thrive in spaces of technology and innovation? What assistance do our teaching artists need in order to effectively remote teach? What are ways artists and gig workers can monetize arts-based teaching experiences?
- Jobs Program for Cultural Workers - Artists and cultural workers positioned to lead workforce trainings and public health protocols for events, festivals and concerts (post-Covid-19)

c. Revenue Streams & Advocacy

- Build trust within the arts and culture communities
- Research current and potential revenue streams into the Cultural Affairs Division
- Partnerships: Grow cross-sector relationships internal/external relationships
- Platform: Improve Cultural Affairs portal for more equitable access to information

11. Artist Spotlight: Ayodele Nzinga

Commissioner J.K. Fowler introduced Dr. Ayodele Nzinga who recited her poem called “Roll Call” (poem on next page).

12. Announcements

Commissioner Williams announced that Samba Funk! is moving forward with the Oakland Carnival virtually in August on Fridays from 7:00 – 10:00 PM and on September 4 they will host a live virtual Carnival Dance Party. Commissioner Choice announced that his band Black London will perform live virtually at the Piedmont Piano Company on August 13 6:00 PM. Commissioner Roundtree-Baaqee announced new online art auction she founded and curates called “The Art of It All” (Instagram: theartofitall_bayarea) supporting local artists and non-profits.

13. Closing

Commission Chair Sanchez thanked the Commissioners and the public for participating and staff and KTOP for their support and assistance.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 PM

ROLL CALL

Ayodele Nzinga

the curtains are pulled back
lights up & here we sit
in the mist of the muddle of Babylon
lead by mumblecrats
who babble on
wielding ink like a wand
stalwart stewards of the status quo
deciding the borders between here & there
& who has the right to air
we are here
in the doorway
breathless
after crossing redlines
after sundown
after being
studied vilified
unbenignly neglected
surrounded & drowned
washed on to sidewalks
tent cities under freeways
& next to exit signs pointing
the way out of town
after generations of
building up
pouring out
& sanctifying
after suns setting on our sons
through wars on drugs
& other wars on us
balloon bombs eating houses
& the ground they stood on
after leveling those posted on
by trains ran on us
we are here
realities ruptured
as wheels turn
deals are made
the status quo safe
is a town just a place
or the people
hearts beating
drums sounding
something about to burst
we are here
amongst the jackhammers & cranes
as the ground shrinks
and the sky recedes
water rising
with bruised real lives
that read like make believe

instructed by history & memory
no resting place
since refugees dreamed
the shades of blue
flowing from & to
the 16th St. train station
building in the narrows
determined to live
the narrative
of us thriving
we are here
the storm again
arrival called for
by survival
here in the doorway
& we see you
we see you
? are your eyes open
tomorrow is listening
? can you hear us
shrill horns
rumbling piano keys
refrains of constraint
echoing through halls
REPORT THIS AD
stretched like shadow
painted on tall walls & eclipsed
by taller walls
beyond resource seeking recourse
can you hear us?
starving on broken promises
we won't take beads & fire water this time
are your eyes open
all roads lead here now
to bridges
built or burnt
cymbals crashing like waves
we will write the story of
you this place this time
this moment calling
across the land for
heroes tall dreams
all in the pot
you with us or you not
speak now or mumble on
& that's what we'll put in the song
we are the storm
The Town
forever embedded in discourses of liberty
we remember to remember

bleeding for the world
that's still watching still waiting
we are here
speak clearly they are listening
here in the midst of the muddle
of Babylon decide which character
you will play in the history
we make
the path is clear
the stage is yours
but the story is ours
we are here
the cameras are rolling
& everybody pays for their mistakes
no retakes
this is one shot
ready or not
close ups baby
we here
so clear some seats
set out the feast
we here to make sure
everybody eats
no surrender no retreat
stand up straight
so we can see
if you hit the right notes
this your moment
don't choke
yup that mic is hot
sang
make it a banger
we can bang
from the flats to the hills
rising in effervescence over the lake
the sound of the peoples will
let it reverberate
while we cruise
all beautiful free to
be
in crystal clarity of early mornings
in the balmy bloom of late night
in the glow
of our own lovely light
& just chill
cuz' we here
still
film at 11



author portrait by Arthur Johnstone

Ayodele Nzinga is the founding producing director of the Lower Bottom Playaz, Inc. Founded in 1999, they are Oakland's oldest North American Theater Company, currently in the 21st Season of continuous production. Described as a renaissance woman, Nzinga is considered a multi-disciplined creative force—she is a producing director, playwright, poet, dramaturg, actress, performance consultant, educator, and community advocate. She is the founder of Lower Bottom Playaz Summer Theater Day Camp, established in 2017, a performance-based literacy camp that serves youth 5-18 free of charge. She is the Founding Director of the Black Arts Movement Business District Community Development Corporation, Oakland, (BAMBD CDC) and Founding Producer of BAMBD FEST, an annual multi-venue month-long arts and cultural festival celebrating the Black Arts Movement and Business District in Oakland, CA. Nzinga holds an MFA in Writing and Consciousness, and a Ph.D. in Transformative Learning. Work for the page includes *The Horse Eaters* published by Nomadic Press, *A Narrative Inquiry into Performance Pedagogy*, work in *Vision Magazine*, two volumes of the *Journal of Pan African Studies*, *14 Hills Journal*, *Magnolia Journal*, and in the anthologies *Environmental Terrorist* and *Say it Loud*. Nzinga's work for the stage has been reviewed internationally. Stage productions include *Mama at Twilight: Death by Love*, *Mack: A Gangsta's Tale*, *Lifer*, and *Beyond the Bars: Growing Home*. Film credits include *The Everlasting Coconut Tree*, *So Beautiful*, *Protection Shields*, *Cleanse*, *The Story of a King*, and *Tent City* produced by 393 Film. Nzinga is credited with directing the longest-running African American play in North America, *One Day in the Life*, and is the only director to produce a fully-staged play in the iconic African American Museum and Library at Oakland, CA. Nzinga is a Cal-Shakes Artist Investigator Alumni, the founding Artistic Director of the original Recovery Theater, a Helen Crocker Russell Arts Leadership Fellow, and a member of the Alameda County Women's Hall of Fame, inducted for contributions to Arts and Culture. Nzinga is recognized by Theater Bay Area as one of the 40 faces in the Bay Area that changed the face of theater in the Bay Area. She is also recognized by the August Wilson House as the only director in the world to direct the complete August Wilson Century Cycle in chronological order.

Her full-length book of poetry, *SorrowLand Oracle*, is forthcoming with Oakland-based Nomadic Press and will be available in 2020.