2017-18 ACTIVATE PROJECTS

MEMBERS OF THE 2017-18 ACTIVATE PROGRAM COHORT LAUNCHED ADVOCACY INITIATIVES (ACTION PROJECTS) IMPACTING 13 MUNICIPALITIES AND 22 SCHOOL DISTRICTS/ CHARTER NETWORKS ACROSS LA COUNTY. BELOW YOU CAN LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE FELLOWS AND THEIR ADVOCACY INITIATIVES.

Margaret Aichele

Cultural Policy
Pomona

Margaret Aichele, a Cultural Policy Fellow representing Pomona, is the Executive Director of the dA Center for the Arts, a multidisciplinary arts organization that strives to make the arts accessible, inclusive, and equitable for all residents of Pomona and beyond. Aichele has decided to revive the City of Pomona's 2010-15 Cultural Arts Plan written with support from the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts. On April 14th, 2018, Imagine Pomona was launched. The exhibition focuses on engaging, listening to, promoting, and culturally remapping the Pomona community. The goal is for the dA to annually organize and guide 20 residents in each of the six districts of Pomona from schools, organizations, places of worship, and commerce to advocate for a diverse array of arts and cultural activities to be available to all residents. This emphasizes how accessible and inclusive arts are intrinsic to healthy neighborhoods, a thriving economy, education, tourism, and the quality of life for Pomona residents.

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Aurora Anaya-Cerda

Cultural Policy
Whittier

Aurora Anaya-Cerda, a Cultural Policy Fellow, is currently Director of Community Relations and Outreach at Levitt Pavilion Los Angeles. She represented the city of Whittier, where her family has resided for over 15 years. Anaya-Cerda has engaged with city officials and members of the City of Whittier Cultural Arts Commission and has provided programming ideas for the annual summer concert series. Anaya-Cerda plans to continue in arts advocacy by collaborating with the Cultural Arts Commission to develop and support programming for Whittier residents.

Pierre Arreola

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 7

Pierre Ivan Arreola (aka Pierre Boogie) is a hip-hop dancer and community advocate from Pacoima, a Los Angeles neighborhood located in Council District 7. Through a series of artist mixers and studio shares dubbed CREATE.CONNECT.COLLABORATE, Arreola and his partner, Melissa Ehekalli Sanvicente, intend to engage artists across multiple disciplines as agents of social change by fostering intergenerational and intercultural exchange. Recently, Arreola and his grassroots community organization, The GR818ERS, were awarded a residency at the newly opened Arts Incubator in Pacoima, which serves as a cultural arts hub for the community. Arreola and Sanvicente will further activate the space to engage the Northeast San Fernando Valley and beyond to foster creative spaces where interdisciplinary artists can bring their artistic genius, cultural equity, and resources to the table to create and explore collaboration for the betterment of their local community.

ACTIVATE ARTS ADVOCACY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Arts Innovators

ACTIVATE Fellow Directory

Delegates Cohort 2022

Emerging Arts Leaders Cohort 2022

Innovators Cohort 2021

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Samantha Avitia

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 14

Samantha Avitia, a Cultural Policy Fellow, represents Council District 14. Avitia worked to create legislation in Los Angeles County that emphasized language accessibility within museums and nonprofit art spaces. Avitia has partnered with a few different organizations, such as the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, Self Help Graphics, and the Main Museum, to amplify the importance of this legislation. The final goal of her project is to ensure that museums and nonprofit art spaces are accessible to the extremely diverse population of Los Angeles.

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Jill Beale

Arts Education
LAUSD District 2

Jill Beale, an Arts Education Fellow from Los Angeles, is the Senior Project Manager for the LAUSD Arts Education Branch. For her action project, Beale wanted to create a district-wide event that would bring hundreds of teens together in workshops and dialogue to explore creativity through dance, visual arts, spoken word, film, photography, design, activism and more. The hope was to begin shifting the narrative on arts education by placing creativity at the core. The project is called, The Creativity Summit (www.youthcreativitysummit.org). Approximately 300 students from all corners of Los Angeles came together at SCI-Arc on March 2nd, 2018 and participated in dozens of hands-on workshops, storytelling sessions, and an opportunity fair. The event was a huge success, and the next step is to secure funding to produce this event annually and nationally, allowing more students and communities to be reached.

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ceccily bednash

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 7

Ceccily Bednash is a Cultural Policy Fellow from Pasadena District 1 and a board member of Remainder's Creative Reuse, a community-based makers space and creative supply depot. As a Clinical Art Therapist, her passion and vision to bring art therapy programming to arts and non-arts community service organizations has developed over the last year. She has been able to use Remainder's Creative Reuse as an incubator for assessing the needs of the surrounding community and establishing partnerships with leaders that have the potential to connect individuals to the process of healing and exploration of self through art. This is the essence of community-based art therapy. Bednash plans to continue to develop community based art therapy programming throughout Los Angeles county by partnering with established community organizations, bringing new funding resources to arts nonprofits through access to mental health funding, creating new employment opportunities for art therapists, and helping individuals and communities heal through creative expression.

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Robert Benitez

Cultural Policy
Lancaster

Robert Benitez, a Cultural Policy Fellow from Lancaster, has been with the Museum of Art and History (MOAH) since 2010. Benitez began his ACTIVATE Fellowship with the intention of changing mindsets around arts and culture. He is working with Suzy Silvestre at the Lancaster Performing Arts Center to present a new collaborative series aimed at engaging local youth in visual and performing arts. Through conversations between artists and audiences, Benitez and Silvestre hope to expand young people's understanding of the arts and their various intersections. Benitez would like his advocacy work to facilitate stronger bonds between Lancaster's cultural assets, residents and stakeholders for the purposes of achieving cultural equity and creative placemaking.

Jason Blackwell

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 13

Jason Blackwell, a Cultural Policy Fellow who represents Council District 13, is a resident of Koreatown. Blackwell set out to create a coalition of emerging and mid-career arts administrators of color, primarily working in culturally specific or minority-focused performing arts institutions to share best practices, provide a network of support, and collectively shape each other into the best practitioners in the field. Currently, Blackwell is collecting a network of names and organizations to reach out to regarding this idea with the intention of having the first interest meeting during the summer of 2018. The ultimate goal of this work is to create a network for people of color in arts administration, primarily in the performing arts.

Elaine Burn

Arts Education
LAUSD District 2

Elaine Burn, an Arts Education Fellow, has been an LAUSD Theatre Teacher for over fourteen years. She set out to work with key Arts Educational stakeholders to form the California Arts Educational Code Enforcement Task Force. She has begun initial groundwork in gathering information on potential collaborators. Through the Arts Education Committee within UTLA (United Teachers of Los Angeles), Burn has drafted a motion that states "The State of California is required to ENFORCE the California Educational Code that requires all 1st-12th grades to provide instruction in ALL four arts disciplines: Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts." Her longterm goal is to work with state legislatures, specifically, State Senator Ben Allen, 26th District and Chair of the Education Committee. With his office and key Arts Educational organizations, such as CETA, California Educational Theatre Association, of which Burn has been a member of for over a decade, she hopes to draft a state bill that will STRICTLY enforce the Educational Code to mandate VAPA (Visual and Performing Arts) for all California public school students, grades 1-12.

Cliff Campbell

Arts Education
Green Dot Public Schools

Cliff Campbell, an Arts Education Fellow, is the Drama Instructor at Animo South Los Angeles Charter High School, which is a part of the Green Dot Public Schools charter network. Campbell set out to build more opportunities for collaboration and support between drama teachers at Green Dot, who often operate individually on their home campuses. Campbell identified and prioritized the need for more pathways in drama education to build mastery. To tackle this, he was able to advocate for an advanced drama course for seniors during the 2018-19 school year and also attended a training session with other Green Dot teachers to partner with “Get Lit”, a highly successful slam poetry and literary organization. Multiple drama teachers will be incorporating this work into curriculum for the next school year, providing additional pathways to advanced drama instruction. Campbell will meet with drama teachers this summer to set goals for the upcoming school year to increase the depth and breadth of drama instruction at Green Dot.

Enrique Castrejon

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 13

Enrique Castrejon, a Cultural Policy Fellow representing Council District 13, is a Research Coordinator for an HIV bio-behavioral observational study at the LA LGBT Center and a visual artist interested in combining public health measures and art to help reduce HIV infection in LA County. Castrejon is working on producing poster-making workshops and intends to help participants better understand HIV/STI (Sexually Transmitted Infection), risk reduction and treatment, PreP use, HIV stigma, alcohol and drug use in the LGBT community, and access to health care services. Participants will learn basic painting, drawing, and graphic design techniques to create personalized health posters that will help spread their knowledge.

Castrejon’s project targets Black and Latino gay individuals and MSM and transgender women (ages 18-24), and hopes that it will help generate dialogue within targeted communities through the project’s peer-to-peer health messages that are specific, personal, and accessible. Posters will encourage people to get tested and access health care services, reduce HIV stigma, and inspire future HIV advocates.

The posters produced in these workshops will be public through social media campaigns and displays in participating community organizations. Castrejon’s intention is to make the poster workshop and curriculum available and to present it at various community organizations, schools, and communities of faith to address HIV infection. Castrejon is working to finish curriculum and will organize focus groups to test the poster-making workshop and refine based on the findings.

Jacquil Constant

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 4

Jacquil Constant, a Cultural Policy Fellow from Hollywood, has been working to develop the Haiti International Film Festival in Los Angeles. Constant seeks to transform the negative images we see of Haiti on the big screen and in the media by creating his own platform to promote the diversity, strength, and authenticity of the Haitian Diaspora through filmmaking. Constant has met with representatives of Council District 4 (CD 4) to increase awareness of the need for inclusive filmmaking and to identify funding opportunities for emerging nonprofit arts organizations. Constant has also secured a sponsorship from CD 4 to gain access to marketing and funding opportunities for the film festival within the district. Constant will present the 3rd annual Haiti International Film Festival in August 2018 to inspire and promote the next generation of diverse filmmakers in Los Angeles and the Haitian Diaspora.

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Kimberly Counes

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 13

Kimberly Counes, Owner and Principal Designer at Post Atelier, represents Hollywood in Council District 13 as a Cultural Policy Fellow. Counes's project focuses on financial solvency and career retention for women artists and designers during periods of both planned and unplanned absences from the workforce. The goal is to create a one-to-one support network for women, shifting the burden of maintaining the connection to their careers to maintaining a relationship with a single 'mentor'. The goal is to help close the gap of income loss from an extended career absence and to create a vibrant network of mentors and mentees, which helps keep women in their art careers. A trial program is currently being developed; from this trial program, data will be collected and then presented to potential partner organizations and institutions.

Amber Cromwell

Arts Education
LMU LA Family of Schools

Amber Cromwell, an Arts Education Fellow, is an arts educator and a clinical art therapist, who represents Loyola Marymount University (LMU) and the LMU family of schools in West Los Angeles. As an Arts Education Fellow, Cromwell focused on social and emotional learning through arts programming. With 10 years of experience in school environments, Cromwell has always wanted to target an observation that explores why many school environments do not provide opportunities for students in upper grades to mentor those in lower grades. Cromwell collaborated with an arts outreach initiative at LMU called ARTsmart to develop a pilot program aimed to use artistic story-telling to access leadership, mentorship, and inclusion amongst a group of middle school-aged students who were paired with second grade students in a school within Los Angeles Unified School District. Cromwell aims to advocate for more mentorship programing and plans to refine a curriculum that she may workshop for other universities and schools, perhaps offering a platform for further scholarly research.

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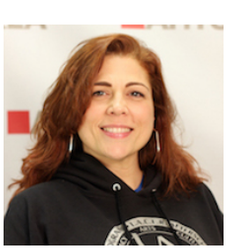

Jeanine DiTomasso

Arts Education
LAUSD District 4

Jeanine DiTomasso, an Arts Education Fellow, is a parent, arts advocate and nonprofit professional who works and lives in LAUSD local district west. She is dedicated to creating more arts opportunities for the children of her community. DiTomasso wanted her action project to connect students, parents, elected officials, local business owners, professional artists, teaching artists and the community. In collaboration with LACER Afterschool Programs and eWKUKs Gallery, Jeanine created an art exhibition entitled If I Were President. She asked middle school students and professional artists to create works based on this theme. Both the professional artwork and the student artwork is displayed at the eWKUKs Gallery on Fairfax Ave. The show ran from May 1st to the 14th of 2018. The opening night reception on May 5th was filled with parents, students, elected officials, community members and professional artists. The ultimate goal is to continue creating connections with these stakeholders, focusing on connecting professional artists and students, allowing for children to see the impact of their art on our community and for artists to see how they can be a powerful leverage point in the education system.

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Olivia Fales

Cultural Policy
Santa Monica

Olivia Fales, a Cultural Policy Fellow from Santa Monica, is the Specialist for Family and K-12 Audiences at the UCLA Hammer Museum. When she learned that the Santa Monica Police Department was equipping officers with more nuanced tools for engaging with the homeless population, she became interested in the role that museums can play in fostering successful interactions between police officers and homeless individuals. As spaces that foster connection, dialogue, and observation skills, museums are a powerful tool for building empathy. Fales is in the research phase of her project and, ultimately, hopes to pilot a museum visit with Santa Monica Police Department as part of their officer-training curriculum.

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Ines Familiar Miller

Cultural Policy
Pasadena

Inés Familiar Miller, a Cultural Policy Fellow from Mexico City and a Pasadena resident, focuses on providing professional development opportunities for emerging cultural workers in Los Angeles County. She set out to create a cultural equity and inclusion policy for Emerging Arts Leaders/Los Angeles (EAL/LA), a non-profit network devoted to the professional development of the next generation of arts leadership in the Greater Los Angeles area. The policy aims to strengthen the professional pipeline of arts sector leadership by ensuring that new generations consider cultural equity and inclusion a priority and support emerging talent from traditionally underrepresented communities through a network of like-minded and committed cultural workers.

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Carolina Gamero

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 14

Carolina Gamero, a Cultural Policy Fellow and resident in the district of Boyle Heights, partnered with local lending library, Libros Schmibros, to expand and strengthen their bilingual storytelling program for children and families. Gamero conducted local outreach for Libros Schmibros's Children's Storytelling Hour/Hora de Cuentos and collaborated with artists and guests to incorporate creative and cultural activities that would further activate the space. In March, Libros Schmibros collaborated with the Melrose Poetry Bureau, setting up a vintage typewriter booth to encourage patrons to write their own poems and created a children's typewriter activity as part of the storytelling hour program. During April, Los Angeles children's illustrator, Ashlyn Anstee, activated the space with an imaginative character drawing activity. As future guests are incorporated regularly into the programming of the storytelling hour, and by deepening outreach and engagement with participants and future volunteers, Libros Schmibros improves access to literature, bolster bilingualism, and preserves the cultural and social fabric of the neighborhood.

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Lyn Goldfarb

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 8

Lyn Goldfarb, a Cultural Policy Fellow from Los Angeles, is a documentary filmmaker who works in South Los Angeles. Concerned that Los Angeles is not collecting the stories of the leaders and activists who have shaped and transformed the city, Goldfarb is creating a visual history project that will document and preserve these stories and create a new narrative of Los Angeles. Goldfarb has consulted with institutions and organizations who are also concerned with the story of Los Angeles and who support the critical need to interview these historic and contemporary leaders.

Her goal is to work with city officials to create Our Los Angeles Story, a visual history project designed to document, preserve, share, and communicate the voices and stories of Angelenos through filmed interviews. A centerpiece of the project will be an interactive website with a searchable database featuring filmed interviews and video portraits. She is working with Joel Jacinto, the Board of Public Works Commissioner, who is serving as an advisor. She will work with communities, neighborhoods, organizations, and other storytelling projects to identify interviewees and showcase their stories.

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Jill Elizabeth Gower

Arts Education
LAUSD District 4

Jill Elizabeth Gower, an Arts Education Fellow, is the parent of two children who attend Topanga Canyon Elementary and Paul Revere Middle School in LAUSD Board of Education District 4. Her Action Project worked to inform parents, community members and students about the importance of arts education, along with the impact that it can have on creating a better quality of life for all. As of May 2018, in collaboration with fellow arts educator, Jeffery Hsueh, a bi-lingual Arts Advocacy Zine was produced in both Spanish and Mandarin. The Zine conveys current statistical information about the importance and impact a quality arts education can have on a student, as well as information about or district's LAUSD and Walnut Valley. The long-term goal of Gower's advocacy work is to continue to collaborate with other artists, designers and institutions to create object-based projects that convey the importance of quality arts education in K-12 public education.

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Edgar Grajeda

Arts Education
KIPP LA Schools

Edgar Miguel Grajeda is an Arts Education Fellow from Long Beach, California that teaches K-4th visual arts in South LA. His Action Project is centered around connecting students to local street art (murals) within a 2 mile radius of their school. Grajeda hopes for students to develop a sense of pride in their community and the art within it, while raising the question of which types of artists have the opportunity to showcase their art in museums and who are disenfranchised from such institutions. With this question in mind, Grajeda is planning field trips for the 2018-19 school year, where his students will have the opportunity to take photographs of local street art, document the art, and learn about the artists within their community.

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ilana gustafson

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 8

Ilana Gustafson, a Cultural Policy Fellow from Los Angeles, is the Manager of Performing Arts at the Natural History Museum of L.A. County. As a Fellow, Gustafson focused on how to use the theater program at the Museum to best serve the local community through the facilitation of dialogue between its members, particularly amongst teens in Council District 8, about our past, present, and future. By using the museum's history collections as inspiration, she is creating a series of performances that focus on the stories from Los Angeles's history that are not often told and using this to create an "exemplary memory" as we imagine what we want for our future as Angelenos. She is collaborating with local artists, activists, students, academics, non-profits, educational institutions, and other community members to produce a series of theatre performances coupled with facilitated conversations, largely following the model of Forum Theatre from the work of Augusto Boal and his Theatre of the Oppressed.

Ashley Harris

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 4

Ashley Harris, a Cultural Policy fellow from Council District 4, is interested in building awareness of arts resources among L.A. County residents through her role as Marketing Manager at LACMA and beyond. Aligning her action plan with the L.A. County Arts Commission's Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative, Harris's project connects audiences to cultural information and connects organizations to new audiences and participants. Harris will organize and host quarterly gatherings of arts marketers. Each meeting will focus on specific and relevant marketing topics like new audiences, strategic partnerships, etc. Participants will present projects, promotions, and initiatives and how they engaged various audiences. Break out sessions will give arts marketers time to talk to each other one-on-one, share priorities, and identify potential collaborations. Brainstorm and strategy sessions in support of smaller arts organizations will also be part of each meeting. Arts marketers can help outline strategies for smaller arts organizations, while smaller arts organizations can advise on reaching niche audiences. An annual report will be shared with the L.A. County Arts Commission on successful audience engagement techniques. The first meeting will be held during the summer of 2018.

Daniela Hernandez

Cultural Policy
Pasadena

Daniela Hernandez is a Cultural Policy Fellow representing Pasadena. As a fellow, Hernandez set out to find a way to aid in the demystification of the fashion industry and all of its various ongoing social and environmental injustices. She is constructing a website, the Fashion Coalition, to serve as a jumping off point for people to learn how to create and sustain change in the global fashion industry. The Fashion Coalition aims to provide various avenues for involvement, whether that is changing how you think about the clothes you wear and who makes them, where and how you shop, or getting involved with policy work in your own community.

Martin Hernandez

Arts Education
LAUSD District 2

Martin Hernandez, an Arts Education Fellow from Hollywood, is passionate about creating opportunities for youth who have been pushed out of the traditional educational pipeline. His Action Project seeks to create clear pathways into arts careers for young people who experience barriers in employment, such as low career exposure and lack of access. By utilizing existing city and county funds for workforce development, Hernandez created a plan for developing an "internship-to-employment" model with local arts non-profits for youth ages 16-24. He hopes to use the pilot in FY 18-19 as a way to generate data to expand the work in future years, and create more opportunities for youth.

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Carolina Ibarra-Mendoza

Cultural Policy
Montebello

Carolina Ibarra-Mendoza, a Cultural Policy Fellow from Montebello, is a Chicana feminist, freelance graphic designer, and appointed Chairwoman of Publicity for the Montebello Historical Society. The goal of her Action Plan is to establish a permanent art space in Montebello. Since joining forces with Veronica Diaz, ACTIVATE (2015-16) Fellow, they have successfully presented to the Montebello Historical Society with the opportunity to adopt an abandoned barn built in 1898 and transform it into a future art space. Ultimately, both Ibarra-Mendoza and Diaz plan to form a comprehensive proposal to present to the City of Montebello to lay the groundwork for saving the abandoned historical site and to transform it into a community gallery space and art studio.

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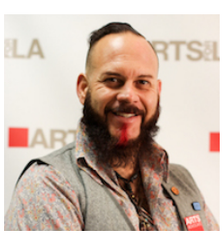
Brenda Janairo

Arts Education
PUC Schools

Brenda Janairo, an Arts Education Fellow and art educator from PUC Schools in Eagle Rock, has been working to build a program that brings arts experiences to students and their parents. Working with fellow Activate member, Lucia Beltran, Janairo has begun creating the Creative Families curriculum that makes art accessible to students and their parents at two Los Angeles schools. By offering creative experiences where art is valued and all participants feel successful, parents become advocates for the arts. Ultimately, Janairo hopes that the collaborative arts experiences will empower parents to lead the arts experiences and that the arts curriculum can be shared in schools around LA County and beyond.



Juliano Jarquin

Cultural Policy
South Gate

Juliano Jarquin, a Cultural Policy Fellow, represents his home city of South Gate and County District 1. Jarquin is an educator, grant writer, behaviorist, and the founder of The Human Element Passage. Jarquin's Action Project focuses on relationships, emphasizes the importance of making a connection, and brings communities together by using 26 Djembe Drums that represent cities of the South East Los Angeles Region. The Life-Mastery Drum-Circle launched April 18, 2018. Over 7 workshops throughout Los Angeles County took place before then.

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Malky Kertis

Arts Education
LAUSD District 3

Malky Kertis, an Arts Education Fellow from Valley Glen, LAUSD Board of Education District 3, is an artist, parent, and neighborhood council board member. Driven by her experience and involvement in the community and her passion for printmaking, Kertis is in the midst of developing and implementing the "Print Into Action" workshops and curriculum. The program is based on the application of art and printmaking as a method of empowering high school students and introduces the impact of application of practical art on the individual and the community at large. The program explores what printmaking is, provides positive, hands-on experience, and emphasizes growth and self-development while being involved in the creative economy of Los Angeles.

Alexa Kim

Cultural Policy
City of Los Angeles, Council District 14

Alexa Kim, a Cultural Policy Fellow, is the Program Coordinator at Self Help Graphics & Art in Boyle Heights where she manages the organization's 45-year-old print archive and assists in coordinating mobile art workshops in the community. In order to document pieces of intangible cultural heritage, Kim is exploring storytelling through the lens of home cooking. By conducting interviews with women about memories tied to a recipe that has been passed down to them, she hopes to capture how we honor the past and our histories by continuing to cook these foods. In order to share these stories, Kim plans to host a series of pop-up meals featuring the dishes and stories, shared to create a dialogue around remembrance, forging new traditions, and archiving memories.

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