



ACTIVATE Delegates: 2020 Cohort Biographies



Alyse James is a visionary artistic leader and theatrical professional. She has worked as a producer, theater administrator, and dramaturg. Alyse is passionate about devising new work that highlights the power of empathy and its ability to encourage audiences to become active allies in their own communities. As a producer, Alyse's interest is in fostering new work. She has served as the line producer for several projects that have been featured at California Institute of The Arts, REDCAT, The Huntington Gardens, Bootleg Theater, and The Orchard Project.



Alyssa Bierce is a young professional working in communications in higher education, currently at the USC Thornton School of Music. She has a background in visual and performing arts, and earned her BFA in Art Photography from CSU Long Beach. Alyssa is interested in public art as a source of civic identity and activation, and would like to see a future where pursuing a career in the arts isn't synonymous with poverty wages.



Amanda Vincelli is an artist, strategic designer, cultural programmer and community organizer from Montreal, Canada. She is currently the Program Director and Co-Founder of NAVEL, a non-profit organization fostering collectivity and kinship through accessible cultural public programming, collaborative learning initiatives, and space residencies. Through her personal, curatorial and organizing practice, she imagines, studies, designs and activates systems for cooperation and dialogue across difference. Along with her many collaborators, she develops cultural programs and projects that are rooted in social, economic and environmental justice—working towards a more equitable, caring, creative and collaborative future.



Ben Evans: Following an extensive career as a full-time professional artist specialized in performance and choreography, my work developed into projects of public engagement rooted in practices of walking. After ten years of being based in Paris and Barcelona and working globally, I moved back to the States in 2016, settling in Los Angeles. I have been the Programs and Gallery Director of the ACE/121 affordable housing development for artists since 2018, and have been instrumental in deepening arts visibility in Glendale. It is a further goal to establish a regular practice at the confluence of art, AIDS and activism, within the local communities where those themes emerge and intersect.



A proud Chicana, **Carla Contreras Cabrera** was born and raised in the San Fernando Valley. After graduating from Humboldt State University, she immediately moved back to Los Angeles to continue her work in uplifting underrepresented communities through equitable community engagement and advocacy. In previous roles Carla was a student mentor at the Latinx Center for Academic Excellence at Humboldt State University, committed to the advancement of underrepresented students. She also organized events with Latino Outdoors to empower underserved communities to strengthen their cultural connection to outdoor spaces. Most recently, Carla was an Outreach and Education Coordinator at the Housing Rights Center, the nation's largest civil rights organization focused on promoting and securing Fair Housing. As the Community Outreach Coordinator for Levitt LA, Carla acts as a liaison with key community partners, leads Levitt LA's youth development program and builds community through music.



Cynthia Sanchez: Attorney and mediator specializing in the entertainment and cultural industries with experience in the following sectors: federal government, private, public and non-profit in the U.S. and abroad.



Dr. Sheila Reamer: I am a motivated teaching professional inspired by the concept of leading by following. I received a foundation from USC through the completion of a Bachelor's, Master's and Doctorate degree in education and music, but true learning occurred out in the field. Years of experience in education and specialized knowledge in literacy and music have developed my skills to adapt and modify project planning and instructional design. Having served as a vocal music teacher, classroom teacher, English Language Arts resource coach, and church musician, I've gained a broad perspective and opportunity to work with a diverse population. My passion is equity for diverse student populations and I believe the arts are a beautiful means of enriching the educational experience.



Mr. Ed Rodriguez currently serves as consultant for nonprofits and is Executive Director of the TahDah Foundation. He holds a master's degree in Educational Administration from California State University Dominguez Hills and a bachelor's degree in liberal studies from California State University, Northridge. Mr. Rodriguez has fifteen years of experience as an educator and non-profit executive after serving eight years in the leadership of Mellon 1st Business Bank in Downtown Los Angeles. Mr. Rodriguez began his career in the Los Angeles Unified School District as a teacher. He then served as a director, administrator and COO of various public charter schools in Los Angeles and Orange County. Mr. Rodriguez currently serves as an educational consultant & as the Executive Director of the TahDah Foundation, an organization focused on fundraising and providing holistic arts education to underserved and inner city communities in California, New York, and Virginia.



Edwin Burgos is the Brand Marketing Manager for the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board, where he assists in developing brand strategy and delivering marketing media plans to drive global visitation to the city. He serves as the Board's point person for LGBTQ Marketing and provides support for the organization's cultural partnerships, including the 2019 Frieze Art Fair. Prior to his work with the Tourism Board, Edwin worked as a project manager in the telecommunications industry and as a marketing assistant for an LA-based independent record label. He has a degree in Audio Electrical Engineering from the University of Miami.



Fabian Fuertes is a Manager, YOLA with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, an internationally renowned orchestra that harnesses the transformative power of live music to build community, foster intellectual and artistic growth, and nurture the creative spirit. As a native Angelino and first-generation Latinx, he is extremely proud to be a part of an organization that designs and delivers world class learning opportunities to under-resourced communities. In his work with Youth Orchestra Los Angeles (YOLA), Fabian is a part of a team that serves more than 1,200 young musicians across four sites in Los Angeles County, providing them with free instruments, intensive music instruction, academic support, and leadership training. Through the ACTIVATE Arts Advocacy Leadership Program, he hopes to explore personal blind spots, transcend ineffective behavior patterns, and enable transformation. Collectively, he believes that arts advocates can create a world where the beauty and challenge of art inspire any person to fulfill their greatest potential.



Heather Collette-VanDeraa: I've worked in nonprofit management, academia, political and arts fundraising, taught a range of courses in the Humanities and Social Sciences, I just launched a jewelry line of handcrafted artisan pieces and I volunteer with patients battling mental illness. My life has defied easy categorization and so have I, but not without abject failures and starting over—more than once! Friends and colleagues describe me as courageous, tenacious, kindhearted, generous, unapologetically feminist and trustworthy.



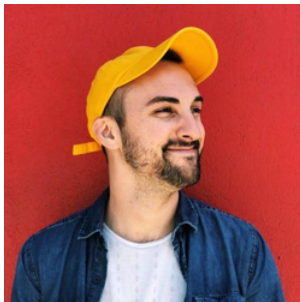
James Panozzo, Founder & Executive Director LAUNCH LA co-founded TARFEST, a free multidisciplinary festival held annually at the LaBrea Tar Pits Park, in 2003. He served as the Director of Lawrence Asher Gallery from 2004 – 2010, exhibiting emerging and mid-career painters, sculptors and installation artists. James created the non-profit social enterprise LAUNCH LA in 2010 to oversee the production of TarFest annually. LAUNCH LA also presents programming and exhibition opportunities at its gallery on La Brea Avenue as well as other temporary locations throughout Los Angeles. James is from Cleveland, OH and moved to Los Angeles immediately upon graduating from Miami University in Oxford, OH. He has also enjoyed living and working in Phoenix, AZ, San Diego, CA, New York City, Vilnius, Lithuania and Warsaw, Poland.



Johanne Preciado: Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and Professional Clinical Counselor who provides program oversight and management for children and family mental health services in the Westlake area. Uses and trains clinical staff using art and non verbal methods to address mental health treatment and community engagement.



John Pick is Creative Producer of the Snowball Party, a community based social experience. He is also known for his series The Best of Craigslist on TruTv and Funny or Die which was nominated for the Best Webseries by the LA Weekly. He also directs and produces a live version of the Best of Craigslist. He led storytelling workshops at the Ojai Playwrights Conference and taught acting for the East LA Classic Theater Company.



Josh Coen is an artist and photographer based in Los Angeles. He received his Bachelors in Fine Art from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette I'm Fine Art Photography. His work has been exhibited across the world in various group and solo exhibitions. He currently teaches photography to adults with Cerebral Palsy at UCPLA in Culver City, and is a vocal advocate for arts education within the disability community.



Joshua Jesse Ramirez: I have always chosen to live a life of contribution; continually looking beyond my own reflection with a willingness to serve. As a first-generation low-income minority student with a disability, I have never let the circumstances I was born into, dictate who I am. In fact, it is because I was continually challenged that I built an unbreakable passion for the Arts, specifically Art Education and Creation. Mark Twain once said, "Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life." For me, education is freedom, and a way to continually learn new and exciting concepts that allow me to grow as an educator, while learning to apply them in my life and in my career.



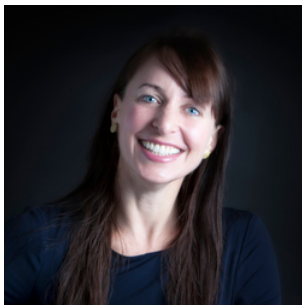
Kelsey Smith serves as Programs Director at the Young Musicians Foundation (YMF), a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing access to quality music education experiences through a robust Teaching Artist Program that serves nearly 5,000 students throughout Los Angeles, as well as new initiatives including the Debut Fellowship Program. Before her role at YMF, Ms. Smith taught for four years as a music educator at a progressive arts integrated school, creating curriculum, designing and leading programming, and developing opportunities for her students to engage in civic awareness



and action through the arts. A passionate arts administrator and educator, she is an advocate for the universal inclusion of arts in all student's school experiences, and continually develops and promotes opportunities to further this mission. She has presented numerous conferences and institutions including CASMEC, CMEA, USC, and UCLA among others, on topics ranging from culturally responsive pedagogy to integrating technology in the classroom and music curriculum. Ms. Smith received her B.A and teaching credential from UCLA, majoring in music education and minoring in applied developmental psychology.



Kenny Ng is the Arts Program Manager at LA Promise Fund, where he facilitates the development of arts education curriculum and projects for LA County schools. In his current role, he oversees communications, classroom scheduling in Media ArtsMatter, a 3-year arts integration program funded by the Department of Education, manages Teaching Artists, and oversees ArtsMatter 2030, a game design integration grant project funded by Epic Games.



Kristin Friedrich has become fixated on accessible, easy-to-digest, jargon-free communication that drives people to action. After a decade of assistant and story editor work in film and TV, her first paid writing job was for the website Retroland.com, which met its demise during the dot-com bust. What followed was a path-shifting position into more localized and place-based writing (rather than the virtues of Barbie), as a writer and arts/culture editor at the local weekly, Los Angeles Downtown News. Kristin next ventured to the Natural History Museums of LA County (NHM, La Brea Tar Pits and Museum, and the William S. Hart Museum), first as a writer and editorial manager, then as the Director of Communications. She spent 13 years touting the museums' transformations, relevance, and strategic direction. Her most recent post is at the LA County Department of Arts and Culture. Instead of demystifying science and nature topics for the public, she works on delivering actionable communications about the new department's services to the media, the field, but most importantly, the people of LA County.



LaMar Anderson: As Founder and CEO of Axum Creative in Pasadena and as a professional photographer I collaborate with socially conscious companies advocating justice thru consultancy and the creation of positive image making. As a teaching artist I develop photography curriculum reflective of CA, VAPA and Social Justice standards to create relevant, dynamic and engaging lessons which cultivate learning and safe creative space for youth K-12.



Luz Rodriguez: I am presently an Arts Associate at the Lincoln Heights Youth Arts Center with the City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs. Since 2016, I have provided LHYAC's multidisciplinary youth arts program with arts administration and graphic design support. Additionally, since 2008, I have been offering my skills as a graphic designer, mixed media artist, and arts administrator to various arts and culture nonprofits and organizations, such as Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural & Bookstore, InnerCity Struggles, HOODsisters Collective, and many more. I firmly believe arts can transform and heal communities, and it is crucial to provide access to high-quality arts education, especially to our underserved populations.



Marco Barcena: City of Bell Gardens Council Member Marco Barcena graduated from the University of California Berkeley, where he created his own Interdisciplinary Studies Field Major with an area of concentration in Technology and Consumer Behavior. His major integrates Art coursework such as interface design and visual thinking. Marco wrote a major thesis on The Rationalization of Emerging Marketing Trends and graduated to continue working in local government as an employee of over 15 years. Marco's recent work includes guiding the City into the digital age by establishing online presence, creating award-winning management systems, developing policy that supports community health and wellness, rebuilding parks and playgrounds, and increasing staff productivity. Marco believes that Art empowers communities, but due to challenges commonly found in significantly disadvantaged communities like his, Art has faded into the background, something he hopes to change during his tenure in council.



Maricela Martinez: I am a 38-year-old Mexican with the purpose of sharing and enhancing the mariachi culture to the world. Peace, human and equal rights advocate, activist, and artist immigrant. Married with children who believes in the power of community and service, who believes in the power of music and the arts.



Melba Martinez is a community/cultural organizer and artist from Pacoima, CA. Melba has been an organizer for over 10 years and has worked with LGBTQ communities, students, communities of color and immigrant communities to create futures where they can thrive. Melba's art explores themes of fatness, queer kinship, home and belonging. Melba works across a variety of mediums including performance, installation, video, zine making, makeup, costuming and fiber arts. Melba uses art as a tool for creating community. During their time as the Director of Creative Incite Melba developed a passion for arts leadership and making the arts accessible to marginalized communities. Melba believes in the power of marginalized people using art to tell their stories and create spaces of joy and pleasure.



Monica Harte is an accomplished artist and arts administrator noted for her unique approach to opera. As co-founder and general director of Remarkable Theater Brigade in New York for 14 years, she launched Opera Shorts at Carnegie Hall for which her logo design won a mention on the Grammy website blog: "They had my favorite promotional graphic of the year..." As general director of the Nevada Opera Association, she applied her innovative approach to operatic repertoire winning the company world-wide attention with an anime version of *Madame Butterfly* and biker version of *Carmen*. She earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Graduate Center in New York City, where she served on the voice faculty at both Manhattan School of Music and The Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College. Most recently she has found a home with The Actors' Gang in Culver City, CA as Managing Director.



Nohemi Camacho is a Creative Health and Wellness Coach. She helps creative individuals design balance, wellness, and greatness in their life and work. She is a certified Integrative Nutrition Health Coach from Institute for Integrative Nutrition. She is a graduate from California State University Los Angeles with a degree in Theatre Arts and Dance. Her work in theatre, music, and arts management ignites her belief that all creative individuals can lead a healthy, productive, and joyful life.



Rachel Kilroy is an educator and endeavors to be a force in producing programs that bring about systemic change to the implementation of arts education programming. Her passions lie in advancing the ubiquity of arts education, expanding access to arts participation for every child, and engaging art learners of all ages. Rachel began her arts career as a Los Angeles County Department of the Arts funded intern and grew to have extensive experience as a Program Coordinator at Get Lit-Words Ignite and School & Group Program Coordinator for Cayton Children's Museum. In the last year, she served as an Arts Education Exposure grant adjudication panelist for the California Arts Council and is currently a member of the Leadership Council and Marketing Committee Chair of Emerging Arts Leaders / Los Angeles. She is a member of Museum Educators of Southern California, Museum Educators Roundtable, Americans for the Arts, and Arts for LA.



Sara Aceves is a 24 year old Latina, who was born and raised in Boyle Heights. She received her BA in Fine Arts from Mount Saint Mary's University. Since graduating she has been creating her own art and is also part of her family art collective called KalliArte. She is currently working as an assistant to the director of Avenue 50 Studio. Sara has reignited her passion for art and community through this job.



Scarlett Kim is a Seoul-born, LA-based director, artist and producer. She works with performance as survival ritual, intimate exchange, and act of revolution. She is Co-Director of The Mortuary, a curatorial initiative and laboratory for unclassifiable practices in life and art, and Programs & Projects Manager at CultureHub LA, a global art + technology community. Scarlett creates participatory environments for collaborative authorship and curates communal contexts for strategizing alternatives to hegemonic systems. She engages experiences of abjection and displacement to imagine non-linear, collaged, and undefinable narratives. Across physical and virtual spaces, she activates emerging technologies to redefine liveness, agency, and presence. Scarlett has recently presented work with the Prague Quadrennial, Thomas Mann House, Heidi Duckler Dance, Chilean National Council of Culture & the Arts, and La MaMa Umbria Next Generation Residency. She also works as a translator and cultural liaison between Korea and the U.S. MFA Directing, CalArts. scarlettjkim.com



Sheila McMullin is author of *daughterrarium*, winner of the 2016 Cleveland State University Poetry Center First Book Prize chosen by Daniel Borzutzky. A community-based workshop leader, she facilitates creative writing workshops for all ages. She co-edited the collections *Humans of Ballou* and *The Day Tajon Got Shot* from Shout Mouse Press. As a youth ally and organizer, she is committed to supporting young people amplify their voices through storytelling, art, and civic participation. She holds an M.F.A. from George Mason University and helps maintain her neighborhood's Free Little Libraries. Find more about her writing, editing, and activism online at www.moonspitpoetry.com



Rachel May (Ray) Smith is on a mission to change the arts sector from the outside in, making it stronger and more equitable for everyone. She has over 10 years experience in the arts and nonprofits leading administration and programming and creating engaging experiences with the arts for a wide variety of audiences. Ray has published pieces on art education with *Art Education: The Journal of the National Art Education Association* and *Zócalo Public Square*. Currently the manager of New Frontier Programming at the Sundance Institute in Los Angeles, Ray also previously served on the leadership council of Emerging Arts Leaders/Los Angeles.