



CITY OF OAKLAND

**Cultural Affairs Commission  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Monday, January 25, 2021  
4:02 – 7:45 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

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

**Guests:** Rachel Yang, Favianna Rodriguez (Center for Cultural Power), Tony Leong (Fox Theater/Another Planet Entertainment/East Bay Venue Coalition), Rosalyn Nash (The People's Conservatory), and Sana Miller (The People's Conservatory)

**1. Welcome**

Meeting called to order by Commission Chair Sanchez at 4:02 PM.

**2. Acknowledgement of Land**

Recognition of the meeting space as Huichin territory, the unceded land of the Chochenyo Ohlone led by Rachel Yang, the Cultural Affairs Division's high school intern.

**3. Action Item 1: Approval of Minutes from October 26, 2020**

Motion to approve the meeting minutes from October 26, 2020 made by Commissioner Whang; seconded by Commissioner Fowler. The motion passed unanimously.

**4. Call to Presence**

Commissioner Williams led the Call to Presence by asking those in attendance to participate breathing practices and some centering stretches.

**5. Cultural Affairs High School Intern Highlight: Rachel Yang**

Miss Yang provided an overview of her assignments and accomplishments as an intern for the Cultural Affairs Division including internal communications improvements for the Commission and communications strategy research.

**6. Public Comment**

The following members of the public made a comment: Danielle Roundtree, Jenny Roy, Ashara Ekundayo, Damon Sudds, Destiny Muhammad, Jean Marie Durant.

**7. Cultural Affairs Division Manager's Report**

Roberto Bedoya provided an update on the City’s budget and the \$62 Million shortfall. He noted that Economic & Workforce Development Department, including Cultural Affairs, and all other City departments have been asked to prepare budget cut scenarios. The Mayor’s proposed budget will be released in May. The Commissioners discussed their options to build City Council’s support for arts and culture in Oakland.

**8. Action Item 2: Approval of Cultural Affairs Commission Work Plan Template**

Commissioner Whang and Commissioner Easton provided an overview of the Work Plan Template. Commissioner Whang noted that the document could be used as a communication tool to compare the outlined goals in the Cultural Plan to the activities of the Cultural Affairs Division and Cultural Affairs Commission. This document represents the Commission’s commitments and work.

The first page of the spreadsheet summarizes the Phase One Actions and the Phase Two Recommendations outlined in the City of Oakland’s [Belonging in Oakland: A Cultural Development Plan \(CDP\)](#) as organized by the work domains defined in the plan—that is, **Cultural Spaces, Neighborhood Places, Civic Cultural Commons, Strengthening the Cultural Ecosystem**, and **Building Internal Infrastructure** (of the Cultural Affairs Division) **for Cultural Equity**.

The second page of the spreadsheet names and briefly describes the work plan areas proposed by the Commission Ad Hoc Teams.

- Cultural Asset Map
- Cultural Affairs Division Budget Analysis
- Research Potential City Revenue Streams
- Research Potential External Revenue Streams
- Strengthen Advocacy for the Cultural Sector
- Artist Relief – Additional Direct Funding
- Artist Relief – Access to Public Spaces

Commissioner Roundtree-Baaqee made a motion to approve the Work Plan Template; seconded by Commissioner Fowler.

Choice	AYE
Chan	AYE
Easton	AYE
Fowler	AYE
Lee	AYE
Orange	AYE
Roundtree-Baaqee	AYE
Whang	AYE
Williams	AYE
Sanchez	AYE

The motions passed unanimously.

**9. Action Item 3: Approval of Oakland Poet Laureate**

Commissioner Fowler presented the plan to introduce a Poet Laureate program for adults in Oakland. The creation of an Oakland Poet Laureate program is a response to a call from Mayor Schaaf and the hope is to launch by April 2020. The new Poet Laureate would have a two-year term, receive a stipend, participate in various public engagement activities, and create a poem for the city. The group discussed the makeup of the review committee.

Commissioner Williams proposed a friendly amendment that Oakland Poet Laureate Oversight Committee (OPLOC) charged with reviewing applications and selecting a finalist, should include five members – one member from the Cultural Affairs Commission, one member of the Cultural Affairs Division staff, the Oakland Youth Poet Laureate, and two literary community members.

Commissioner Williams made a motion to approve the proposal to support an Oakland Poet Laureate with the friendly amendment of five members; seconded by Commissioner Chan.

Choice	AYE
Chan	AYE
Easton	AYE
Fowler	AYE
Lee	AYE
Orange	AYE
Roundtree-Baaqee	AYE
Whang	AYE
Williams	AYE
Sanchez	AYE

The motions passed unanimously.

**10. Public Art Update**

Commissioner Roundtree-Baaqee provided a high-level update on the public art elements of the Mosswood Park MP and Community Center, examples of Public Art in Private Development - Commercial and Residential Properties, and Artist & Community Initiated Public Art for Public Spaces/City Property.

**11. Guest Presenter: Favianna Rodriguez**

Chair Sanchez introduced Favianna Rodriguez –Oakland artist, activist, and co-founder of the Center for Cultural Power. Rodriguez presented on the power of culture. She explained that culture has the ability to shape and accelerate both political and economic change. She discussed the need to change the negative narrative about Oakland to a positive one that shows the full complexity of our community, which can lead to better investment and funding. She provided

examples of how the Center for Cultural Power utilizes narrative strategy for visible and irresistible storytelling about Oakland arts and culture.

### **12. Oakland Venues Update: Tony Leong, Another Planet Entertainment**

Tony Leong from Another Planet Entertainment and The Fox Theater provided an introduction of the East Bay Venue Coalition and highlighted the severe impact of the pandemic on the music industry. Venues in the East Bay shuttered since March 2020, resulting in revenue losses for the venues, promoters, employees and performers. The East Bay Venue Coalition is actively advocating at the state level to re-open venues in a safe way.

### **13. Announcements**

Chair Sanchez noted the following award and recognitions received by Oaklanders:

- Sugar Pie DeSanto has been selected to receive the prestigious Arhoolie Award for 2020
- *Land of the Cranes* by Aida Salazar received the 2021 Honor Book for Older Children at the Jane Addams Children's Book Awards

#### Grammy Nominations

- Fantastic Negrito - Best Contemporary Blues
- Ledisi (Oakland native) - Traditional R&B Performance
- Ambrose Akinmusire - Best Jazz Instrumental Album
- Toro Y Moi (Oakland based studio) - Best Dance Recording

### **14. Artist Spotlight: The People's Conservatory**

Vice Chair Choice introduced The People's Conservatory, an Oakland nonprofit dedicated to training young art explorers to envision and create a humane and just world through their art. Rosalyn Nash, Executive Director of The People's Conservatory, talked about the mission of The People's Conservatory and introduced student and youth poet Sana Miller. Miller recited a poem called "Black Girls Do" that she co-wrote with Makeda Booker and set to the music of their peer Sael Rohan (poem on next page).

### **15. Closing**

Chair Sanchez thanked the Commissioners, the public, and all the guest presenters and performers for participating, and staff and KTOP for their support and assistance.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 PM.

## **Black girls do**

Supported by The People's Conservatory  
Words by Makeda Booker and Sana Miller  
Beats by Sael Rohan  
Choreography by Robyn Salmond

Take a moment and think, is there anything a black girl can't do?  
WE are the originators.  
I'm talking about that dance and that hair do.  
Only if you could understand what us black girls have been through.  
take a minute, hear my words maybe you'll get a clue.  
From our birth we are not equals with someone with eyes of blue.  
We sit quite out of fear of a ratchet point of view.  
Hide our curls and our curves, our lips just to avoid the slurs.  
But what they don't know is that us beautiful black girls ain't no amateurs.  
From Michelle to Lisa, gabby to Tina, Halle to Nina. to Oaklands own Angela  
can you imagine a world without our crew?  
But dear beautiful black girls our power ain't nothin new.  
We've been running this ever since the skys been blue.

Black girls, born with the beautiful melanin that colors our skin.  
Giving us power and culture the moment our lives begin.  
We walk around in the vast world  
forced to run the treadmill of life in the box you put into at birth.  
We use the holes u poke into the box for air, for a breath of change.  
But black girls do rise  
Grow from the unwanted soil you gave us  
Black girls do create  
Making the world not as dark as it was  
We don't wake up and decide to put on our skin yet we wear it with pride  
Black girls will no longer be put aside.  
We are tired of being lonely and feeling owned,  
we don't like your world so we'll make our own.

We are the ones carved over accent tombs.  
We must tell them that our culture is not no costume.  
i know you feel it coming. I know you smell the fumes of our lashes, our lip gloss braids  
and cantu.  
I can see how you're watching the glistin of our melanin.  
You're captivated by our grace and our elegance.  
We feel like grandma's hands or the way your body moves when you embrace the blues.  
Watch and be amazed at what a black girl can do.