



Cultural Affairs Commission

**Regular Meeting – Minutes
Tuesday, September 29, 2020
4:00 – 6:30 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 MacIlvaine, Denise Pate, Kristen Zarembo

Guests: Randolph Belle (Black Cultural Zone and RBA Creative), Jean Marie Durant (Oakland Art Murmur), Damon Rowden, MSN, RN (SambaFunk!), Eileen Ng (Alameda County Public Health Department), Tureeda Mikell

1. Welcome & Acknowledgement of Land

Commission Chair Sanchez opened the meeting by welcoming staff, members of the public, and guest speakers. 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 July 27, 2020

Motion to approve the minutes from July 27 with the noted edits made by Commissioner Whang; seconded by Commission Vice Chair Choice. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Call to Presence

Commissioner Raya led the group in an exercise where the group was asked to reflect silently on the following questions:

- What is the story of your life right now? What are some of the recurring themes or narratives you find yourself confronting the past several weeks or months?
- What is one piece of advice a trusted friend would give you right now?
- How does today fit into your story?

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. **East Bay/Oakland Relief Fund for Individuals in the Arts** - A pooled fund led by Kenneth Rainin Foundation together with Akonadi Foundation; City of Berkeley, Berkeley Civic Arts Program; City of Oakland, Cultural Affairs Division; Richard Diebenkorn Foundation; Fleishhacker Foundation; Gerbode Foundation; William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; Nion McEvoy and Leslie Berriman; Oakland Covid-19 Relief Fund; San Francisco Foundation, Shuler-Heimbürger Family Fund at East Bay Community Foundation; Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation; and individual donors. Fund Total: \$416,850
 - 286 grants awarded
 - d. **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
- 5. Update on Cultural Site Visits**
- Vice Chair Choice explained that part of the Commissioner’s formal role is to attend arts and culture events in the City, including grantee events. He noted that future Commission meetings will include an opportunity for Commissioners to share cultural events they have attended recently. Staff is developing new online platforms, including a virtual event calendar, to track event attendance and access a list of current and past grantees. Commissioners took turns listing arts, culture, and community events they recently attended.
- 6. Public Comment**
- The following members of the public made comments: Lyz Luke and Indi McCCasey
- 7. Ad-Hoc Team: Covid-19 Recovery & Re-imagine**

Commissioner Lee led a presentation about the progress and direction of the Covid-19 Recovery & Re-Imagine Ad-Hoc Team. She noted that the Team's priority is to "Strengthen Oakland's Cultural Infrastructure & Jobs Programs for Cultural Workers". She said that the Team has researched cities and artists who have adapted public performances to Covid-19 safety protocols and made note of potential barriers and challenges for Oakland artists and performers. Vice Chair Choice provided an update on the state of Oakland venues, noting performance venues that have closed in 2020 or are facing closure. The Team is interested in exploring the following questions: What will it take to restore cultural experiences? How to re-assess Oakland's cultural infrastructure since Covid-19? What harms/hurdles experienced to professional, artistic, creative work? What new skills are needed to adapt to a Covid-19 world?

8. Invited Speakers on Covid-19 and Impacts on the Cultural Sector

- **Oakland Art Murmur Board President**, Jean Marie Durant
- **Black Cultural Zone and RBA Creative**, Randolph Belle
- **SambaFunk! Board Member**, Damon Rowden, MSN, RN
- **Alameda County Public Health Department**, Eileen Ng

9. Public Comment

The following members of the public made comments: Lisa Bullwinkel, Chris Ullsperger, and Robin Green-yeh.

10. Commissioner Discussion Period

The Commissioners engaged in a discussion about the presentations from the guest speakers and reflected on the following questions:

- What role do Oakland's cultural workers and artists play in influencing how our communities come together to share in cultural experiences that are safe, creative, inspired and adhere to Alameda County health guidelines?
- What is our role as Commissioners to ensure that the voices and expertise of artists and cultural workers are considered and consulted as the county and city moves toward a process of reintegrating live performance, music, theater, dance, visual art, film and more?
- What are the aspects of cultural experiences that we would like to pay special attention to (the art of gathering that we hope to preserve while still being safe)?

11. Artist Spotlight: Tureeda Mikell

Commissioner Fowler introduced poet Tureeda Mikell, who recited her poem called "The Tale Tells of Genocide" (poem on next page).

12. Announcements

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 6:45 PM

THE TALE TELLS OF GENOCIDE

Tureeda Mikell

Memory is an insurance policy against loss, against loss, against loss
The cruelest thing you can do to a people is take their memory, take their memory, take their memory

August 2015 Saturn's day, daybreak soul wakes, eyes zoom,
scans the room, stops. Looks at a book title facing the bed.

Claiming Earth: Race, Rage, Rape, and Redemption, by Haki Madhubuti.

Book stares I glare remembering something when
27 bones move behind that scene pick up another title exposing

We Charge Genocide—Crime of Government Against the Negro People

242-page petition delivered to the United Nations by Eleanor Roosevelt,
wife of the former president, Franklin D. Roosevelt,
Signed by Paul Robeson, Civil Rights activist in 1950.

Memory is an insurance policy against loss, against loss, against loss
Cruellest thing you can do to a people is take their memory, take their memory take their memory!

How did I forget? I remember purchasing it.

Spirit says, "Find **We Charge Genocide** on the net"
Find Sandra Bland's mother's FaceBook page post, "**We Charge Genocide**"

One day later, the Native American event displays table brochures cascading,

WE CHARGE GENOCIDE, WE CHARGE GENOCIDE, WE CHARGE GENOCIDE

3 Days after, attend Tongo Eisen Martin book signing, titled **We Charge Genocide II**

Memory is an insurance policy against loss, Memory is an insurance policy against loss
The cruelest thing you can do to a people is take their memory, take their memory, take their memory!

Remembered 1981, James Baldwin saying, "Something very brutal must be said about this great
melancholy nation of ours, and if you don't believe me, you can ask the Indians.
The intentions of this country's government has always been, genocidal."

Remembered the year after, Kwame Ture, saying,
"Education in this country makes you stupid, but what is worse, it makes you arrogant in your
stupidity, The Revolution is coming whether you want it or not, we must be politically prepared for
what is coming!"

And in 2006, 55 years after the first petition of **We Charge Genocide** was signed and delivered,
the late great President, Hugo Chavez, of Venezuela addressed the U.N. stating,
"The hegemonic pretensions of the American Empire are placing at risk
the very survival of the human species. We continue to warn you about this danger and we
appeal to the people of the United States and the world to halt this threat, which is like
a sword hanging over our heads."

And this one nation under a god that despises life answered,

"And Think NOT I come to bring peace on earth, but a sword!"

Memory is an insurance policy against loss, Memory is an insurance policy against loss
The cruelest thing you can do to a people is take their memory!



author portrait by Arthur Johnstone

Educator, consultant, poet, griot/elocutionist/story medicine woman, **Tureeda Mikell** began working the healing arts in 1977 via poetry, storytelling, and QiGong energy therapy. Mikell is the founder of Tree of Life Health Literacy Project and works in collaboration with California Poets in the Schools.

In 2018, Mikell was the Eth-Noh-Tec NuWa Delegate from the US to Beijing, China, in Gengcun Village of renowned storytellers in collaboration with the University of Beijing on mission to heal cultural boundaries. Mikell has been a featured reader with Kim Shuck, poet laureate of San Francisco, California, presented Al Young (named poet laureate of California in 2015) with the lifetime achievement award at the 2018 Berkeley Poetry Festival, and has opened for Saul Williams at Grand Lake Theater in Oakland. She is a BAWP Fellow at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Education, has worked and read with the late Amiri Baraka via EastSide Arts Alliance, and is one of the co-founders of the Black Writers Conference in Otisville, New York.

Her first full-length book of poetry, *Synchronicity: The Oracle of Sun Medicine*, was published by Oakland-based Nomadic Press in 2020.