

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

May 17, 2022

Supporting the “Advancing Equity Through the Arts and Humanities Act” (H.R. 7627)

The arts are a powerful tool for challenging oppression in its many forms and for advancing equity. Social justice movements have often used symbols to make their message accessible, build coalitions, and inspire. In the 1960s, the iconic image of a raised fist became a symbol of [black empowerment](#), and thereby an accessible means for the public to show support for the movement. In 1978, [Gilbert Baker](#) created the Rainbow Flag to inspire individuals to “come out” and “live in the truth,” and this flag has since become a universal symbol of LGBTQ pride.

In addition, art can inspire change and transformation in unexpected ways. Charles Black, Jr., an attorney who helped Thurgood Marshall write the legal brief for *Brown v. Board of Education*, recalled being [inspired](#) by the musical “genius” of Louis Armstrong to join the legal fight for desegregation. Visual art can empower viewers to bear witness and speak out against injustice. In 1942, American photographer Dorothea Lange was hired by the War Relocation Agency to document the unjust mass incarceration of individuals of Japanese ancestry. The United States government did not anticipate that her photographs would reveal the inhumanity of internment, leading to the [censorship](#) of these images.

The arts support the achievement of equitable outcomes, enhance quality of life, and build healthier and safer communities, enabling them to overcome many of the barriers created by structural racism. In a comparison of low-income neighborhoods with

- MORE -

MOTION

SOLIS _____

KUEHL _____

HAHN _____

BARGER _____

MITCHELL _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

May 17, 2022

PAGE 2

and without access to cultural resources, researchers found that those with such resources had 14 percent [fewer](#) cases of child neglect and abuse, and 18 percent [less](#) serious crime than those without. Researchers also found an [association](#) between cultural districts and improved child welfare, lower morbidity rates, and reduced poverty. In several areas, participatory arts [activities reduce](#) negative physical health [symptoms](#) and mitigating [mental health](#) challenges, especially for those with disproportionately high trauma exposure.

The arts can also address employment needs for those who face barriers to gainful careers. A Los Angeles County (County) Arts Commission study found that about [half](#) of all creative economy jobs in the Los Angeles region do not require a Bachelor's degree, and half of those jobs provide higher earnings and on-the-job training. In addition, the arts build social capital, [enhance](#) social-emotional learning, and bring people of varying demographic, economic, and social backgrounds together.

The arts also provide spaces for people to see and express themselves, their communities, and their cultures through public performances, cultural activities, and exhibitions. Importantly, researchers have found that creating art can validate an individual's uniqueness, provide a sense of accomplishment, increase their sense of [self-worth](#), develop social identity, encourage goal-oriented behavior, and strengthen resilience. For young people, arts education increases academic [achievement](#) and reduces justice system involvement and adjudication. When the arts reflect and further the self-determination of our diverse humanity through our many vibrant communities, organizations, artists, and cultural forms, they can be a powerful part of supporting antiracism and realizing a multiracial democracy.

Everyone deserves to have equitable access to the many benefits of the arts. As the largest and most diverse County in the nation, the Board of Supervisors is committed to ensuring that all the benefits of, and opportunities provided by, the arts are available and accessible to all residents, no matter who they are or where they live. The work to make this commitment a reality is guided by the County Department of Arts and Culture's programs, its efforts to foster access to the arts, and its Cultural Equity and Inclusion [Initiative](#).

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HOLLY J. MITCHELL

May 17, 2022

PAGE 3

The County has an opportunity to deepen its commitment by supporting efforts at the Federal level to provide grant funding for this work. On April 28, 2022, Congresswoman Barbara Lee introduced H.R. 7627, the “Advancing Equity Through the Arts and Humanities Act.” This legislation would establish a competitive grant program within the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to support public and nonprofit organizations that directly combat systemic racism through the arts and humanities. As the largest arts and humanities funders in America for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories, the NEA and NEH must ensure that its grants support and advance equitable outcomes across the range of funded programs.

I THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Instruct the Chief Executive Office (CEO) Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch, to support H.R. 7627, “Advancing Equity Through the Arts and Humanities Act,” which would establish a competitive grant program within the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities to support public and nonprofit arts and humanities organizations that directly combat systemic racism through the arts and humanities.
2. Instruct the Director of the Department of Arts and Culture to share educational information about this legislation in the Department’s communications, including on social media platforms and their website.
3. Instruct the CEO’s Center for Strategic Partnerships to consult with the Director of Arts and Culture on similar grant opportunities that may be available on an ongoing and as-needed basis.

###

(CAS)