

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS AND  
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS**

**OCTOBER 27, 2015**

**Improving Leadership, Work Force, Programming and Audience Diversity in Los Angeles County Cultural Institutions**

As the County of Los Angeles (County) is recognized around the world as a leader in the arts, its Arts Commission should be at the forefront of encouraging a constructive County-wide conversation about ways to improve diversity in cultural organizations, in the areas of their leadership, staffing, programming, and audience composition. This dialogue is an important first step in developing a thoughtful analysis and response to recent data indicating a lack of diversity at all levels in many arts organizations.

For example, on July 29, 2015, the Mellon Foundation issued the first comprehensive survey of diversity in American Art Museums in conjunction with the Association of Art Museum Directors and the American Alliance of Museums. The survey was undertaken to replace anecdotal evidence with hard data. It provides the first statistical baseline against which progress can be measured for diversifying the field. Important findings from the study of diversity at museums include:

- **Minorities are significantly underrepresented in top positions:** As one of its chief findings, the study documented that among museum leaders, only 4 percent are African American and 3 percent are Hispanic.

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SOLIS \_\_\_\_\_

RIDLEY-THOMAS \_\_\_\_\_

KUEHL \_\_\_\_\_

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- **Women are in the pipeline for top museum positions:** The study found that there has been a significant movement toward gender equality in art museums with women now comprising 60 percent of museum staffs and a majority in the curatorial, conservation, and education positions. These high level jobs can be a pipeline toward higher leadership positions.
- **Minorities have no significant pipeline for leadership positions:** The survey found that no such pipeline for leadership exists for individuals from underrepresented communities. Although they represent 28 percent of museum staff, the great majority of these workers are concentrated in security, facilities, and other jobs that generally are not a pipeline to leadership positions.

Elizabeth Merritt, Director of AAM's Center for the Future of Museums, noted during the release of the study that "To thrive in the long term, it is crucial that museums bring the demographic profile of their staff into alignment with that of the communities they serve."

The City of New York and others have recognized that diversifying the arts field is an important challenge not only for museums, but for all arts institutions, including the performing arts. As a result, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (Department) launched a major initiative in January of 2015 that includes a demographic study of the diversity of boards and staff of New York City arts institutions. The purpose of the study, whose results will be made available within a few months, is to create a baseline that will help inform more meaningful City-wide conversation around this issue of diversity and provide an underpinning for adopting new strategies and implementing best practices to further diversify the field.

The New York initiative includes "peer-to-peer discussions about the successes and challenges" they experience related to cultivating a diverse field. A major goal is to "identify and celebrate best practices regarding the cultivation of workforce, leadership, and audience diversity for adaptation by the field." The Department has noted that "this

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project has met with enthusiasm from its grantees as well as partners at major philanthropies, who are all eager to work together to address challenges and share best practices for this issue.”

In its most recent annual report on the status of the arts in Los Angeles, the Otis School of Design noted that the Los Angeles Region is the creative capital of the state as well as the nation, with one out of every seven jobs in the County being generated from an arts-related field. The 2014 Otis Report on the Creative Economy found that there are almost 200,000 people working in 79 creative occupations in the County. Nearly half of these creative occupations in the County require less than a four-year college degree. These findings highlight the importance of opening up job opportunities in the arts to a wider demographic and including arts instruction in all of our schools. Currently, Arts for All, the County’s initiative dedicated to making the arts core in K-12 public education, works with 59 out of 81 school districts within the County.

There are a number of “promising practices” to encourage individuals from underrepresented communities to enter the arts as a career and have a pipeline to leadership positions. The County’s annual Arts Internship Program, coordinated by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the Getty Foundation, provides nearly 250 undergraduate interns with meaningful on-the-job training and experiences at the leading arts institutions in Los Angeles, while also developing future arts leaders to serve in staff positions, as board members and leaders in nonprofit and civic arts organizations. The program is the largest paid arts internship program in the country. In addition, foundation-funded programs like the pilot program of undergraduate curatorial fellowships at a number of museums, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, open museums as potential workplaces to students belonging to historically underrepresented minority groups.

Indeed, as demographics change, diversifying audiences is another challenge; one which may well be the key to future sustainability of many arts institutions. As the 2014 James Irvine Foundation-funded report called “Making Meaningful Connections”

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pointed out, “the participant mix for the majority of cultural institutions remains largely unmixed. It is still the rare cultural organization whose regular participants truly reflect the socio-economic, ethnic or generational demographics of its wider community.”

In an effort to reach out and engage a wider, more inclusive audience, the Los Angeles County Music Center facilitates a public engagement program which draws thousands of new, diverse, and younger arts participants. This initiative aims to ensure the future of that important performing arts institution and was launched with support of the James Irvine Foundation. Last month, the Music Center Board adopted a Diversity Framework indicating their commitment to greater inclusion in all aspects of their organization, from their board and staff to their programming and audiences.

Given that Los Angeles is arguably the most diverse county in the country, as well as the creative capital of the nation, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission should play a leadership role in implementing model programs and leading discussions about how to ensure that arts organizations appropriately reflect the diversity of our communities throughout the organization, including on their boards and in their staff, as well as in audience members, performances, exhibits, and educational programming.

**WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

Direct the Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission to:

1. Establish an advisory group of diverse art/community leaders to work with arts-related institutions within the County to develop recommendations for ways to enhance the participation and leadership of individuals from underrepresented communities in the arts.
2. Work with the arts field and nonprofit and foundation leaders to identify “best practices” being utilized around the country to expand the diversity of audience members, exhibits, and performances and encourage individuals from underrepresented communities to enter the arts as a career, creating a pipeline for them to access leadership positions.

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3. Work with each County Department to identify ways in which arts can be integrated into their programming and make recommendations for enhancements and how they can contribute to the dialogue.
4. Establish a close working relationship with the New York Cultural Affairs Department, whose consultant is compiling “best practices” to inform their work, as well as with others doing similar work, to benefit from their experiences and findings.
5. Report back to the Board within 180 days in writing with a status report on recommendations and a final report within a year that would lead to (1) greater access to arts jobs by individuals from underrepresented communities, including in leadership positions, and (2) more diverse arts boards, staff, audience members, and programming at appropriate arts institutions. The report should also include the results of the discussions with each County Department to integrate arts into their programming. The estimated cost of proposed initiatives should be included.

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(AA/RT)