

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CULTURAL AFFAIRS, LIBRARIES AND
INTERNATIONAL INTERGROUP RELATIONS

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May 4, 2016

Start: 1:33 p.m.

Recess: 4:14 p.m.

HELD AT: Brooklyn Museum
Iris and B Gerald Cantor Auditorium
Third Floor
200 Eastern Parkway
' Brooklyn, New York 11238

B E F O R E: JAMES G. VAN BRAMER
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Elizabeth S. Crowley
Julissa Ferreras-Copeland
Peter S. Koo
Stephen T. Levin
Andy L. King
' Costa G. Constantinides
Laurie A. Cumbo
, Helen K. Rosenthal

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner
Department of Cultural Affairs

John Leo, Creator and Teacher
Theater of the Oppressed NYC

Jon Mincey, Performer
Theater of the Oppressed NYC

Catherine Morris, Sackler Family Curator
Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art
Brooklyn Museum

Nancy Yao Maasbach, President
Museum of Chinese in America

Jorge Daniel Veneciano, Executive Director
El Museo Del Barrio

Kathy Engel, Char
Department of Art and Public Policy
Tisch School of the Arts, New York University

Nazli Parvizi, Board President
Groundswell

Leslie Schultz, President
BRIC

Jason Baumann, Coordinator of Collection Assessment
Humanities and LGBT Collections
New York Public Library

Andrea Louie, Executive Director
Asian-American Arts Alliance

Jenny Laludes (sp?)
Art New York
Representative of 360 Theaters

Alex Sarian, Director
Lincoln Center

Dr. Marta Moreno Vega
Caribbean Cultural Center
Studio Museum in Harlem

Ryan Gilliam, Director, Downtown Art
Board Member, BOI Resident Theaters
Founder of FAB NYC

Kelley Girod, Founder and Executive Producer
Fire This Time Festival

Tom Block, Founding Director
Institute of Prophetic Activists Art
Art Activists Incubator at Dixon Place

Rise Wilson, Director of Philanthropy
Robert Rauschenberg Foundation

George Emilio Sanchez, Performance Director
Emerge NYC

Megan Dodd, Ensemble Member & Community Liaison
Honest Accomplice Theater

Guy Ed Robb, Managing Director
League of Independent Theater Artists

Martha Wilson, Artist Director
Franklin Furnace Archive, Inc.

Felicia Young, Founder and Executive Director
Earth Celebrations

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[background noise, comments, sound check,
pause]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, good
afternoon, everyone, and welcome to this very
important and we think historic Committee on Cultural
Affairs, Libraries and International Group Relations
hearing. We are thrilled, absolutely thrilled to be
here at the Brooklyn Museum, which is the home of our
amazing colleagues, Council Member Laurie Cumbo. We
are in Council Member Cumbo's district, a huge
supporter of the arts, and I want to start by
recognizing Council Member Cumbo's amazing
contributions to the arts and to her district, and
also welcome and recognize the other members of the
committee who are here Council Member Helen
Rosenthal, all the way from the way from Manhattan
here in Brooklyn today and Council Members Elizabeth
Crowley from Queens. I know that several other
committee meetings are happening at City Hall and the
other members will be on their way, but we're
absolutely thrilled. As Chair of the Committee on
Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
Intergroup Relations, we really want to take these
hearings outside of City Hall, and this we believe is

certainly the first in my 6-1/2 years as the chair of
this committee inside a museum where we are both
celebrating some of the current exhibits, but also
using that as a launching pad to talk about the power
of art and culture for catalysts for political and
social change, and we--we like and we often do, and--
and should talk about the budget, and how much
funding we want for culture and, of course, everyone
knows that I've been doing that an awful lot and will
continue to do that as a committee. But one of the
reasons that I think we all believe in--in art and
culture is because we know how powerful it is, and--
and we know that behind and with so many movements
comes great art, and--and culture helps to drive
social change. We just toured one of the exhibits
and speaking as a--as a--as a gay man, I know that
ACT UP, for example, and--and Gran Fury combined to
do some amazing work in--in highlight the AIDS crisis
and to propel out federal government in particular,
but also our city government at the time to act and
to do something as men and women were dying without
any support from their government. But artists were--
--were central that movement, and the art that they
created was absolutely essential and inspiring and--

and a driving people into the streets to demand change. Needless to say, with respect to the Women's Rights Movement and--and so many others, the Civil Rights Movement, art and culture are--are so essential to--to those movements, and to equality and to freedom, and--and so behind all of the advocacy that we do is--is a central belief that New York City is not New York City without culture and--and the arts. But even more broadly we are all indebted to culture to art--to artists for helping to sustain and propel movements for social justice and social change. Of course, they are also very prominence in politics and political campaigns and posters and--and media. Essentially, we--we do very little when it comes to social and political change that doesn't in some way involve the arts and culture, and so we wanted to highlight that today, and--and talk about it, and a few people who know about this issue as--as much as Commission Tom Finkelpearl who believe in the power of culture and--and the arts to literally change the world that we live in every single way. So we're thrilled that he could be here today to talk and I know that so many of in the audience will be speaking and--and some will even be performing. I

1 know that Theater of the Oppressed is one of my
2 favorite organizations, and I know they have their--
3 their Legislative Town Hall that's happening this
4 week. I know some of the young people are going to
5 be performing here as part of this hearing. But--but
6 that, too, is an example of how we use art and
7 culture in that case theater to both lift up and
8 empower young people, many of whom are Queer who are
9 homeless, and use the power of theater and the spoken
10 word to not only develop skills and self-esteem. But
11 then, also to take the power of those words and
12 those--those actions, and--and create legislation and
13 legislative change, and--and I know that they will
14 have an important performance for us. So this is a
15 hearing that we've been looking forward to for a long
16 time, and we're very, very excited to be here. We
17 want to thank this great museum for having us and--
18 and for allowing us this opportunity here at the
19 Brooklyn Museum. So, with that I want to welcome Tom
20 Finkelpearl, our Commissioner for the Department of
21 Cultural Affairs to deliver testimony.

22
23 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: First, well
25 because you are a Commissioner, you have to sworn in,

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though I do consider you very trustworthy. I wanted
to say that.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Commissioner, would you
please raise your right hand. Do you affirm to tell
the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the true
before the committee members today, and in your
question and answering?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I do.

LEGAL COUNSEL: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Greeting
everybody. Lots of good friends of culture over
here.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, before you
go.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Because you--you
looked over and I missed, but our amazing colleague
Council Member Stephen Levin from Brooklyn is also
here.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Oh.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So thank you,
Council Member Levin.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Okay, so I'm
going to read my testimony. I'm Commissioner Tom

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Finkelpearl of the New York City Department of
Cultural Affairs here today [coughs] to testify on
the impact of item culture--the impact item cultures
has on the social and civic fabric of our
communities. I'd like to thank Chairman Van Bramer
and the members of the committee for highlighting
this critical topic. I'm joined here today by a
number of my colleagues from DCLA. The Brooklyn
Museum is a fitting venue for today's hearing given
the pageant prop, the exhibition is upstairs and
currently in theaters. In the testimony today I'll
divide the topic into two categories: Art and
cultural programs that explicitly address social
justice and the broad range of social benefits that
result from engagement with arts and culture. The
first category encompasses programs that serve high-
risk populations like the youth involved in the court
system or students in low-income communities. So
here are some examples. [coughs] Carnegie Hall is
right lauded for Neon Arts Partnership, with the
partnership with the Department of Probation.
[coughs] Excuse me. Maybe is there water available.
[coughs] So, now. Okay.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Can you get me
some. (sic)

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Neighborhood
Opportunity Networks or NEONs are centers located in
all five boroughs. Put them together with community
organizations, government agencies, local businesses,
and residents to connect people on probation to the
opportunities and resources and services. Thanks to
Carnegie Hall, NEONs offer young people access to
programming in a range of artistic disciplines
including dance, music, theater, visual arts, poetry
and digital media. This helps to develop creative,
social and emotional skills and builds--and to build
positive peer relationships. I've seen this program
in action first hand. It's incredibly powerful--
powerful to give these young people the chance to
inherit an identity beyond that of "court involved
youth." Following these programs will allow others,
creators and collaborators, and studies back this up.
Showing that at-risk youth who participate in arts
programming have improved social interactions and
attitudes towards school, fewer court referrals and
better self-esteem. So we put--plan to show examples
of this research on the DCLA Facebook page after the

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hearing. So we're going to put up--you know, so I'm
going to mention the day of studies. I don't want to
talk about it in-depth. We're going to put up on our
Facebook, and anybody in the audience can go to
Department of Cultural Affairs Facebook, and see the
back--background of the--the proof of--of what I'm
saying essentially. We have a strong partner in the
City Council who's supporting these programs, Council
Member Laurie Cumbo's Art is a Catalyst for Change,
Gun Violence Program is one example, providing
funding to engaged youth who have after school arts
programming in communities afflicted with gun
violence. The Cultural Immigrant Initiative headed
by the Speaker and Chair Van Bramer is another
Council Initiatives making major impacts in our
communities. This program saw that the diverse forms
of cultural expression that our residents bring from
all over the world sometimes bringing immigrants out
of the shadows and onto the stage. Earlier this
year, the Administration of Children's Services, ACS,
testified at a hearing-- Oh, thank you very much.
Thank you, sir. Perfect. [background comments]
Testified at a hearing held by the Council's
Committee on Juvenile Justice and Cultural Affairs.

That hearing highlighted a number of ways in which arts benefit some of our most vulnerable populations. These include writing and acting programs that empower youth to create their own stories, and see them come to life, advance programs that build relationships and self-confidence while introducing participants to the fundamentals of the movement. And these are programs that when youth show off their new skills to friends and families as they develop and grow their abilities. Cultural organizations that receive City support also welcome these youth off site providing access to performances and exhibitions that every New Yorker should have the opportunity to experience. These are just a few examples of the important work our cultural community is doing in neighborhoods across all five boroughs. Through the Cultural Development Fund, CDF, and Cultural Institutions Group, we support hundreds of programs like this that enrich the lives of residents in bringing the transformative benefits of arts to every single neighborhood of our city.

As I've said many times before, we appreciate the economic value of the arts attracting visitors from around the world to our cultural

1 organizations. We also understand the personal
2 value, the almost spiritual impact that a great work
3 of art can have on the--on an audience. Somewhere in
4 between these important cases for the arts, there's
5 the social value of the arts. This includes what
6 community based cultural groups are doing all over
7 the city everyday. An appreciation for this full
8 spectrum of benefits from the personal to the
9 neighborhood to the regional, provides a car flagging
10 (sic) for the arts. As this Administration and the
11 Arts Agency has launched or expanded a number of
12 programs to measure and promote the benefits--these
13 benefits so that we can better understand and support
14 the organizations doing this important work. All of
15 us have an obligation to ensure that every New Yorker
16 has the opportunity to experience the full breadth of
17 benefits that engaging with the arts can bring.

18
19 The de Blasio's Administration's number
20 one priority when it comes to arts is supporting arts
21 education in our public schools. I know the Council
22 shares this commitment. Along with the Council we
23 announced an increase an increase in funding
24 allocated--allocated and published by the Council.
25 In the very first year of the Administration in free

family breadth of the White House's National Turnaround Arts Program, the four high need programs right here in Brooklyn. Turnaround Arts is a three-day intensive arts education immersion program incorporates the arts as part of the strategy to improve education outcomes for underperforming schools. Participating schools are also partners with some of the artists to work with students and generate excitement for the arts. In fact, some of the artists partnered with PS 165 and Ida Posner in Brownsville with Paula Abdul, and she is rehearsing a routine right here in the Brooklyn Museum with some of her students. We're actually going to get out to the White House in the not too distant future to perform there with our friends, the Obamas. And advanced arts education is the foundation of our city's creative life, and we look forward to gathering on this commitment with our partners in the City Council. But we want to emphasize that we believe creativity--creative activity can be intrinsically good. The value to our city and to our students is multi-faceted. Volumes of evidence show the benefits that quality instruction in a wide variety of artistic disciplines can have on such

divers skill sets as problem solving, creative thinking and even math and languages. Again, we'll post examples of this research on Facebook. We owe it to the next generation to make sure that we--they have the opportunity to paint, write, sing, dance, perform, imagine and create.

Another program we'll invest in arts as a path to its greatest social equity is building community capacity. This program seeks to strengthen the organizations and cultural networks that connect residents in targeted neighborhoods. Building community capacity takes a collaborative and comprehensive approach to building cultural capacity by bringing together local stakeholders from across sectors for training workshops, public programs and more. We announced in January that East New York, Cypress Hills and Brownsville would be the first neighborhoods to host this new DCLA program. We want local cultural groups to be deeply engaged in the community planning process currently underway.

Another way that the Council provides-- proves itself a powerful ally, an agent for change in the art communities is SU-CASA This program was expanded this year to become the largest creative

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Asian program in the country reaching older New Yorkers in all 51 Council Districts. And again, we aren't just crossing our fingers that these programs have concrete benefit for participants. Research tells us that there are a number of real benefits that our older adults can gain from participating in creative programs. These include cause and effects on age-related cognitive functioning and general health, decreases in anxiety and depression and increasing overall wellbeing. We also plan to post examples of this research on our Facebook page. Another partnership is the Cultural After School Venture Program. Recently increase in funding from CASA represent a major investment as education providing kids all over the city with meaningful cultural programming at the end of the school day. Thanks to this and increased funding and other initiatives, DCA is current budget is among the largest in the agency's history--agency's history. A number of other programs are based on the notion that there's an undeniable good, social, moral and economic and opening up arts for everyone. For example, our Public Artists And Resident or PAIR, has placed artists and residents at the Mayor's Office of

Immigrant Affairs, the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs and seen in the Administration for Children's Services. These artists focus on addressing civic issues through creative practice giving new ideas in energy to city services. There's a broad consensus that arts belong in certain areas of the service provided by government such as education. With PAIR we hope to open the door for creative practices to have a role in addressing even more wider--even a wider range of civic and social issues.

As government agency we seek solid data to driver our actions. This is why we have championed the social impact of the Arts Project. This program based out of the University of Pennsylvania has made major progress in compiling a comprehensive report on what cultural services are provided in New York City. They are addressing the services--what the services are and what impact they have on our communities. In this new SIAP Study, the Social Impact of the Arts Project, is looking to capture the impact of not only the 1,200 or so non-profits that are eligible for city funding, but thousands of more cultural services providers that engage New Yorkers in neighborhoods where they live

each and every day. In other city, most notably Philadelphia, Social Impact of the Arts Project had uncovered some remarkable results, which we will share on Facebook. Communities with strong cultural engagement show signs of broader revitalization such as lower poverty without social displacement, better child welfare outcomes and reduced signs of ethnic and racial strife. Perhaps for any government official this is truly exciting stuff. We are expecting the report from--the full report from Social Impact of the Arts Project later this year.

My staff and I have been able to cover a lot of ground, new ground. This would not have been possible without the support and the encouragement of a huge range of partners including Chair Van Bramer and the Committee here on the Council. So thank you again for the opportunity to highlight this important work, and for the chance to remind everyone how much more there is to do. I'm happy to answer any questions you have at this time. If I may add one comment past my-- So, the Social Impact of the Arts Project, which we'll have in hand, we're going to have some preliminaries also at the end of this fiscal year, and then into the fall we'll get the

1 full results. They are going to be really good to
2 have when the Cultural Plan really kicks in, which is
3 starting in August. So I just wanted to add--I forgot
4 to put in my testimony, but I did want to mention
5 that. We've been in--in touch with the people from
6 Penn a lot, and the results are really interesting.

8 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's very
9 exciting. We--we--we await that very eagerly. I
10 want to first say that apparently you have a Facebook
11 page that you would like us all to really look at.

12 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
13 I'm awaiting that.

14 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: If all of you
15 didn't pick that up in the testimony, there is a
16 Facebook page for the Department of Cultural Affairs
17 that we all are supposed to go to right after you
18 leave this room.

19 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
20 There's, yes, so that's--

21 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
22 Maybe while you're at this hearing, you can look at
23 it.

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [laughs] Well,
25 I am a social media guru. The page is sitting--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

Apparently, with your testimony, but--[laughter].

So--so that's great. I love social media and we will all take a look at that. The second thing I want to say is I'm glad to see your testimony highlight the--the City Council initiatives. This Council has worked very hard to increase funding for the existing initiatives and create new initiatives, and--and also highlight the work that Council Member Levin and--and I did on the Cultural plan. And then, of course, we didn't even talk about IDNYC, which is we add another pretty important way in which culture and the arts helped drive social change. And you're obviously particularly proud of that at the Council, and obviously the administration rightfully so. So it's a really important program but it--it isn't as successful as it is, maybe not successful in the way that we want to without the participation of culture and the arts. And maybe you'll want to speak to that a little bit. I encourage you to do that, and then within the context of that, I don't know if you've seen the exhibit Agitprop that we have, but maybe you can speak to some of the ways in which you think art and culture drove social movements and social change.

I mentioned ACT UP and Gran Fury, and maybe you have a few of--of your own that you can think of that are particularly important and relevant here today in the city of New York.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Let me clarify because I'm under oath, and I have to tell the truth. I have not been in the galleries upstairs for the show [laughter] but I've seen pictures of it. So I want to clarify that. Okay. [laughter] There's nothing like really seeing that, but I'm going to go up. I want to see it. After this I'm going to go up there.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You should.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Believe me, I will.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: But I'm really glad you clarified for the record that you didn't, in fact, go to see Agitprop.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I nodded, right to set the frame. [laughter] So, first of all, I--we actually--the impact of the--I was talking to Tanisha Gewolb (sp?) about this the other day from Immigrant Affairs, and the impact on the card, the ID card of these memberships, but-- By the way, the

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cultural memberships are now at 363,000. The number of people with the card is 800,000. When embarked on this, and a lot of our cultural friends in the audience will back me up, in saying that we understood that the most successful program in any other city in America with the ID Captured one percent of the population. So, then in New York about 84,000 people or 85,000. We expected to be much more successful in that partially because of a-- just because we felt we'd do a better job and we had a bigger mechanism. Communication was better, maybe trusts with immigrant communities was better. So we said we could probably triple or quadruple that. Now, we are obviously at--almost ten times that. So this is a much more successful endeavor that I heard about at the beginning of a process. But we're-- there are direct statistics on how important it was to have the cultural membership. But when I think about the de Blasio Administration and the Council's idea of one city, I think one of the things that the cultural membership did was it made a bond. It made it a card for everybody. Like everybody needs to have access to culture. You could be on the Upper East Side or you could be from Brooklyn Heights, you

could be from Brownsville. We have lots and lots of members getting the ID--I mean the, you know, cultural memberships from areas where there are large concentrations of undocumented people like in Corona, Queens, in Washington Heights and Sunset Park, Brooklyn. So I love that crossover, and I think it absolutely-- You know if this gets--I would say that that Ryan Max, who wrote the testimony, did have that in there, and I think well, that's kind of indirect, but thinking about it, I think it actually should have been in the testimony. So sorry about that, Ryan and thank you, Chair Van Bramer for mentioning that. And so, I just want to mention one other thing. I was involved in the very early days of a group called Visual Aids, and Visual Aid had an Artists Caucus, and the Artists Caucus said--at one meeting they came forward and said we'd like to do this thing. It's called the AIDS Ribbon, and it came out of a group of artists because artists are smart about marketing and branding and just thinking of how to make something visual. And then through other art connections, which was the award shows on television. So the Academy Awards and the--those kind of things.

People staring wearing ribbon. I don't know if you
remember these moments.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I do.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Nobody knew
what it was yet, and then there was this craze--it
was pre-social media buzz. There was buzz all over.
Why are they wearing that ribbon, and then that came
to be this internationally recognized symbol for AIDS
awareness. And I wore the ribbon for years at that
time, and people were like I saw that on TV. What do
you--I mean it allowed me to open up discussions with
random people on the subway about AIDS, and I have to
say that that--that's another example like what ACT
UP was doing. Like what other activists were doing
in the movement. That just the arts were there hand-
in-hand from the beginning. So that's--that's
another kind of meaningful intervention.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely, and
so the 363,000 cultural memberships so far, it
appears that we--we--we could hit 400,000 at some
point this year I assume. Do you think that that's
possible--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --or likely.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, the--there was this huge spurt, of course, in December when people saw that the year was about to expire. And then so it went down from December to January, but January and February see you have to understand there's also new groups like Museum of Chinese in Americas, BRIC here in Brooklyn like Loma like Victor (sic) Guggenheim, and the Museum of some sort.(sic) I can't remember them all. There--there are some new groups. So people are like oh my goodness.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: MOCA certainly appreciates the hi and the--the shout-out there.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Most definitely. Yes, and I--as I understand it maybe MOCA is going to just--I think they doubled, over doubled their membership already.

MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] Quadrupled.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Quadrupled their membership. So that was something where there are lots of ways where we're--we're--we're working with the groups to understand how to do it better so that there is some intermediate meetings, private meetings just with those groups. We have another

meeting coming up, which is going to be about things like retention, how to keep these hundreds of thousands of people engaged as ticket buyers or as members, et cetera.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, good. As we approach 400,000 cultural memberships from IDNYC, you know, it is a good time to thank the cultural community and--and I think that the cultural community has really stepped up and come through in a very major way for the city of New York. And needless to say, I'm supporter of the additional funding that's being requested by the cultural community, and obviously we've got some work to do, but I--I sincerely hope that Mayor de Blasio will join us in that effort and make sure that we increase funding not just on the City Council cultural initiatives, which we've been--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --leading the way on, but--but to make a--a more meaningful increase to the budget of--of every arts group including the program groups, which is really, really essential to the city of New York. So I know that

you appreciate the role of culture in making IDNYC as successful as it--as it is, and--and I know that that is absolutely true. And I also know that you won't comment on the budget right now, but--well, I appreciate it. I want to recognize Council Member Peter Koo from Queens who's joined us, and just say with the--with respect to the--the AIDS ribbon and obviously as a gay man, I came out of 1999 at--in some ways the height of the epidemic and--and as you were saying, and I was remembering when the AIDS, the ribbon was a stamp. It was created--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --by the Postal Service.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Oh, yeah, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And what an epically important moment that was.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I have some-- excuse me, but so I've lectured a lot public art. That was my first job and I've used that as a great example of public art, but the HUSA (sp?) Art Project by--and Frank Moore was a very good friend of mine

1 who passed away, who was really the father of that
2 moment, even though it was the--it was the whole
3 Artists Caucus, but Frank was really the guy at some
4 level. But to have Frank Moore and--and that group
5 of artists on our stamps circulating through the
6 mail. I mean it was just unbelievable, and--and that
7 the federal government could--could see that symbol
8 as that valuable. Really, yeah, it was mere--very
9 meaningful to have that.
10

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, I bought
12 all of my stamps for a couple of years and to make
13 sure that we sent them out because I felt like that
14 was a--

15 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
16 Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --a form of AIDS
18 activism was to actually put one of those stamps on
19 your Christmas cards, which I did, and--

20 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
21 Yes.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and little--
23 little things, but--but again, art is really at the
24 hear of--of so much of what we--what we believe and
25 what we do and how we change hearts and minds, and--

and societies. I know that Council Member Rosenthal has some questions, and if any other colleagues do as well, let me know.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Okay. Thank you so much, Chair Van Bramer, and in my first two years in the Council you have paved the way for opening up the arts for everyone's constituents but in my district I've been able to bring cultural and art into so many more communities because of the initiatives that you've spearheaded, and I want to thank you for that. I--I guess I'm wondering a couple of things, Commissioner. One is I'm Chair of the Contracts Committee and, you know, I've sort of--this is a little bit linear thinking so I apologize for it, especially when we're in a cultural institution.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [laughs]

That's fine.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: You're supposed to be beyond that, but as Chair of the--of the Contracts Committee, one thing that we've been noticing is the underfunding of contracts. So where we expect--let me--the--actually, I had a hearing last week on--or a couple weeks ago on human services contracts. So we

asked human service providers like social service providers, day care workers, senior care workers to provide the service, but in general we pay less than 80 cents on the dollar. So if you're sort of linear thinking about it, it's--it's hard to, you know, put those two things in one sentence. We want you to provide the service. We're going to underfund you. Do you think that's also--is it possible that that is true in the cultural world, and to what extent--what--what ways can the Council help you? What ways have you been advocating internally? I mean I represent of couple of cultural institutions. They've talked to me about a pensions issue, you know, where--again where the city is asking our cultural institutions to do something. I mean, the ID I thought was a perfect example. What a wonderful way to bring about social change through arts and culture.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: You know, ask our cultural institutions to step up and provide free membership. So--but meanwhile it's been such crazy, wonderful success, and it's putting an additional burden on our cultural institutions. At what moment

1
2 did--does government also step in with additional
3 funding?

4 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Well, there
5 are many parts to that question. One thing I do want
6 to say is that [coughs] one of the ways that we can
7 be involved with cultural institutions is funding,
8 and another way is just sort of professional
9 development and--and I do think that at this building
10 community capacity particularly in communities where
11 there are underfunded organizations, one thing you
12 could do is give money and other ways you can give
13 advice and training and sort of on-board development
14 on development. You know, policies on--on just, you
15 know, how you handle your money, how you market. And
16 so that's something we really have been focusing
17 quite a bit on especially in communities where
18 there's rezoning, et cetera. So--and I feel good
19 about that, and I feel good that we can expand that.
20 I was just talking to some people in the private
21 sector about getting some money for that as well. So
22 I mean I think at the--your question is, you know,
23 sort of a complicated questions when you think about
24 something like the IDNYC, which does obviously I know
25 from--I know cultures--many cultural institutions

1 have had to hire extra staff on the weekends, et
2 cetera to just accommodate the volume. The other
3 thing is that there's this great potential upside
4 both economically and in terms of audience
5 development. So you have a--so we were just talking
6 to one of our--I'm not going to mention who, but one
7 of our particular organizations that participated the
8 first year, and they found that there were 300 people
9 who had made 1,700 visits to their organization with
10 the free ID, and we said those are people that love
11 this place so much. We're going to get those people
12 involved, and those are going to be long-term
13 partners with our cultural organization. This is an
14 organization that started the day with I think only 5
15 or 600 members, right? So to have 300 additional
16 super engaged. So the people who have been able to
17 capture the data best, which is again a capacity
18 issue, are the ones who are going to be able to make
19 people into visitors. I mean, you know, ticket
20 buyers and long-term sustainability. I don't know if
21 that answers your question. But--and I also just
22 want to assure you that we have been in deep
23 discussions on the whole CIRS pension issue.
24
25

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COUNCIL MEMBER ROSENTHAL: Great. Thank
you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Council Member
Levin.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [background noise,
pause] Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you,
Commissioner. It's good to see you. I want to ask
if you could give us a little bit more information
about the PAIR Program--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: --and in terms of
the nuts and bolts of it, the funding for that
program comes out of DCLA's budget or from the
agency's budgets?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: It's both plus
private.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, it depends
on the--we're just getting this started.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So I mean for
example actually the--the person that does that, who
put all that Facebook stuff is also running the

1
2 program. So, you might correct me, but there are
3 like at Immigrant Affairs, we got a grant from a
4 foundation that was put together with some money from
5 our agency. In some agencies there are, you know,
6 it's \$20,000 from us and \$20,000 from them, and then
7 you hire the artists and resident. One of the things
8 we've been finding is that they--you know, there's a
9 lot of nuts and bolts stuff. We're just getting it
10 started. One year is probably not enough--

11 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: [interposing] Uh-
12 huh.

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --for a
14 residence. So a residency has got to probably be
15 more than that. So it is agency money.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh.

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: It is ACS
18 that's--that's paying for part of that residency.
19 It's--it's money from our budget. Micro purchase
20 it's called, although we're going through, you know,
21 the selection process is quite similar to percent.
22 It is a panel. You know, it's an open call.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh.

24 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: And so, I
25 would say that it's an experiment. We're trying

everything. But also there's a lot of private philanthropy interest in this as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Great because it-- it kind of--it goes to the idea of--of how--you know this is an administration that views social change and political change as--as part of its agenda or mandate. It's--it's, you know, being a progressive agent is important to this administration. The--the arts community obviously can play a--a big role in-- in meeting those objectives. This seems like a very compelling format to--to make that pairing where you're talking about actual pol--you know, incorporating the policies, the policy objectives of the agencies and in matching that with a--within an artist's vision. Is there--is there a plan to expand it to other agencies as well--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: --beyond the ones that you've mentioned?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So my boss is Tony Shorris, and Tony called the meeting of every agency head. Not everybody came, but we had I think 35 or more commissioners at the meeting, and we do

1 want to spread it properly. I mean we have capacity
2 issues to run it. It turns out to--to bet it
3 started, to get any new program started is very labor
4 intensive. So we're piloting it. Yes, we want to
5 expand it to a variety of agencies, and I--and I--
6 what's on the list right now I can't quite say, but
7 we do have more on the queue.
8

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: And are there
10 other types of--of programs or that--that you're
11 looking at in--in terms of pairing with other city
12 agencies to, you know to--?

13 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
14 Yes. So I mean one of the things that I find very,
15 very exciting--Oh, I can't--I can't believe Laurie
16 Cumbo is not here for this. Because she's very
17 interested in the percent for our legislation. One
18 of the ideas is to pair these public arts and
19 residency with a percent for art.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh.

21 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So this is
22 something so at the end of the day then you do a
23 commission after a residency. It hasn't been--we
24 don't even know if we're going to do it. It hasn't
25

1
2 been announced or anything, but it's an idea that's
3 being examined, and I think it could be really great.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh, and then
5 on the SIAP program--

6 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
7 Yes.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: --program, that's--
9 --that sounds very compelling. Can you give a little
10 more background about how DCLA and the City of New
11 York teamed up with the University of Pennsylvania
12 and kind of maybe what--a bit of what their findings
13 have shown in Philadelphia--

14 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]
15 Yes.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: --and--

17 COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So first of
18 all, this is a privately funded independent study so
19 we don't--but what we've been able to do get them,
20 you know, in the door to everybody that has data
21 about the city. So Planning has been quite helpful,
22 et cetera. So we have [coughs]--what they've found
23 in Philadelphia if you have two neighborhoods that
24 are quite similar, it's almost like a control group.
25 [coughs] Sorry again. And one of those neighborhoods

had--is rich with arts--arts and culture, and the other is not and these are--we will say demographically similar. There are all these positive social outcomes that occur in the arts rich community. This is a correlation. It's not necessarily cause and effect, but it could be. I mean it's actually circular. [coughs] But those communities rich in arts and culture have more social capital, more interconnection between people, which creates more opportunities for more art, which created more social capital. It goes back and forth.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: These are arts organizations or what--what--what are you considering these to be then.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: These are generally speaking small scale arts organizations often non-profit, but not exclusively non-profit also. So one of the things they're looking at, they're looking at galaxy or whatever of 5,000 organizations.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So that includes a club that has much. It's a for-profit enterprise. It's not something in our--or a small

commercial art gallery or something like that. So these places or even, you know, a little choral group that doesn't even have a place to meet that performs in the community. So you add up all that artistic activity and it has all kinds of great special effects.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: And it's one thing to--to do this in Philadelphia where they're located over a period of 20 years. It's another thing to come into New York and try to crunch the data, the social wellbeing data. It's really intense.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Are you going to be able to incorporate some of those findings since the cultural plan--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing] Absolutely. Oh, for sure. Yes. It will be integral I think because, you know, it's--it's like it will be the best map we've ever had of cultural participation.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEVIN: Uh-huh. All right. Thank you very much, Commissioner.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much. Council Member Koo.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [background noise]
Thank you, Commissioner, and thank you Chair Jimmy
Van Bramer for hosting this--an event at the Brooklyn
Museum, and giving me a chance to come here.
Otherwise, I would--I would come here. [laughs] This
is a lovely museum.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [laughs] It
is.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: My--my questions and
this is on the topic of public artists in residence.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: That sounds like a
very good program, and so right how many public
artists in resident do we have in the city?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So, there's--
there's on public artist in residence who's been
there forever who's not part of our program. We have
three agencies right now we're working with, and
there are other agencies on deck, but that's what we
have here.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Oh, okay.

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COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So it's
Veterans Affairs, which is now an agency--

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: [interposing] Yes.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: --Immigrant
Affairs and Administration for Children's Services.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So who is called
upon to be a public artist, and what kind of
congregation.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: So we did, for
example, for ACS residency, we did a call or public
all, and we got all kinds of different artists, and
actually that group is a theater group. It's not a
visual arts, and they have experience working. This
is going to be in six foster homes for LGBT youth in
Queens and Brooklyn, and they're going to be working
with the-- So, ACS was on this selection committee,
outside professionals and our agency, and the idea
was to look and see who's going to be able--from the
experts in the room being ACS--who's going to be able
to connect and be meaning--do meaningful work with
the particular target population. It's very exciting
and very moving, yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So, in the future
like--like there are of like new events we're trying

to have, and do you have--and then one of the famous
artists and you know, it's--it's depending on the
local and--and all kinds of disciplines.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Uh-huh.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: So if they are
interested in being a public artist, then how do they
get training for that? Do they call--call you or--?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yes, so we're--
-so Facebook I'll say again.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: We have a
Facebook page. We--we--really that's the best way to
keep in touch. We announce everything. It's on our
website also, but with a website you have to wait.
On the Facebook page it comes to you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Do you also have
Twitter and Instagram?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: We--we do.
Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes and we would
assume that you would want folks to go to those as
well. [laughter] Like social media even.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: That is
correct. Yes, so, yeah--no I would--I quite honestly

would be Tweeting this out. We did that as well. So that's the way to keep in touch for artists who want to get involved there.

COUNCIL MEMBER KOO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So I--I am always on social media and I have just re-Tweeted one of your Tweets, Tom.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Oh. [laughs]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Although, suspiciously it did not look like you're Tweeting.

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: I think somebody in the first row Tweeted.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Someone Tweeted from the Department of Cultural Affairs. [laughs] So I just wanted to ask one other question, and I know that Laurie will be back, but on Friday, Council Member Chin and I toured the Museum of Chinese in American, and I see Andrew Louis (sp?) as well, and--and--and, you know, so art culture creates incredible social change, right, in just what every movement for changes has--has been driven by artists. But there's--there's a piece that speaks to a little bit of your diversity initiative, but it's--to what extent are we not providing opportunities for artists

from communities of color other communities? To what extent do we intentionally or unintentionally hide some of those artists or not provide opportunities. And--and--and what can we do more to make sure that--that every artist, you know, has an equal opportunity to get what's deep inside them, you know, into great institutions or--or other places that are highly visible?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Well, I'm not quite sure how to answer that question. I think that that is very important, but I also would just actually like to mention one other staff members with us today. So Maria Kellar, who's sitting here, who worked as a--an organizer, a car wash organizer and a housing organizer. So one of the things that I've asked Maria to do is to help me understand better different immigrant communities and the Spanish speaking community--and by the way, we just hired a Cantonese speaking staff member, although a Mandarin speaking Cantonese, you know, went off and quit recently. But it's not just a matter of language. It's a matter of understanding communities, understanding how people access or don't access cultures. I was up in Washington Heights not long

ago and I met with some groups who weren't non-profits. They're--they have a film festival up there that happens on the other basis. It look like--I hadn't been there, but it's a wonderful Spanish language phones (sic). How do you--is it always the right thing to try to become a non-profit, and if you don't become a non-profit and that we're having, you know, building community capacity is working up in that neighborhood. It's a long process, but really do, you know, have that dedication to try to get to know different communities. I don't know if that answers your question, but that--believe me we're thinking about the same thing, and I think the social impact of the Arts Project, and the way they're mapping culture in the city is going to be really helpful for our interest in it.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right, well, I-- I--it--it will be partly, but I think, you know, it's certainly throwing out a, you know, a challenging political question, too, right, in--in terms of--the diversity of the issue is--is ostensibly about--about who works at our cultural institutions and impacts to leadership and--

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COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and barriers
and whatnot, and then--but that can also exist for
the artists themselves--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

Yep.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --in terms where
there are opportunities to--to develop show to even
make sure that every single child in the city of New
York knows that becoming an artist or a dance or a
singer is an option, right, and--

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: [interposing]

Yeah, you're right.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and then that
we, you know, those who are arts administrators,
those who are elected officials and commissioners,
you know, are thinking about that in terms of
opportunities to show as well, right?

COMMISSIONER FINKELPEARL: Yeah, and so--

and since you mentioned diversity initiative, we do
have some grants coming up from the Theater

Subdistrict Council for diversity in the theater, and
one of the things that we're focusing on is let's say

1 you're a kid who hasn't, you know, had a lot of
2 opportunity to go to the theater, and you go to the
3 theater. Most of what you're focused on is what's on
4 the stage, and the question of could I become an
5 artist. You know, I might be invisible two years go.
6 All these other jobs that you actually interacted
7 with like the person at the front of that house. The
8 person who wrote the press release that got the--the
9 New York Times review or the--or the hourly review
10 (sic) or whatever. It allowed the audience to keep
11 the show alive. The person who raised the money, you
12 know, this--well, you know, the variety of the jobs.
13 If you're in the arts, you walk into an organization.
14 You see all the jobs. It's quite apparent. That's
15 not necessarily the case if you're not experienced
16 with it. So--so, one of the big questions for the
17 diversity money or the diversity grant within the
18 theater is to--to make it apparent, and to open the
19 doors to those. Just so the whole city gets to work
20 with the institutions.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
23 much and obviously Council Member Cumbo is--is back.
24 I just want to let you know that Tom said lots of
25 things about you while you were away. [laughter] But

you have to go to Facebook to know what he said.

[laughter] So, I want to say thank you to

Commissioner Finkelpearl for--for being here, for

being an amazing champion of the arts, and we want to

get right to some of the more fun--not that wasn't

fun. It was a lot of fun, but folks and--and there

is an exhibit here and a prop, which is interesting

to say the least, and Catherine Morris, curator here

at the Brooklyn Museum we want to ask her to come up

and talk a little bit about that work, but also

welcome the folks from Theater of the Oppressed. It

looks like Jon Mincey and John Leo if the three of

you would take the stage, and then Catherine will

talk a little bit about Agitprop and--and then I

think John and John will perform for us, and show us

how it actually works in real life.

[background comments, noise, pause]

JON MINCEY: Hi.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Should--can

Catherine go first or do you want to--? Is Jon going

to--?

JOHN LEO: Yeah, he's ready.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: All right, I

don't want to stop progress so--

JOHN LEO: Let's--let's go--let's go
forward.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Let's--let's go
forward.

JOHN LEO: Thank you for having us.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Of course.

JOHN LEO: And we'll see an ex--you'll
see an excerpt from the *Housing Circus* right now.
Here we go.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Great.

[JON MINCEY PERFORMS EXCEPT FROM *THE
HOUSING CIRCUS*] [applause]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, thank you
very much for that. [laughter] I--I can certainly
tell that you've captivated the entire audience here
today with your--your performance, and obviously it
was very powerful.

JOHN LEO: Yeah, and--and I wanted to say
a little bit more about Theater of the Oppressed NYC
and the Legislative Theater Festival that you were
just talking about. We partner with communities all
over New York City to--who are facing discrimination
to inspire transformative action through theater.
Our Annual Legislative Theater event, which is now in

its fourth year, is happening this very week, and we take social, political impact one step further, to watch original plays like the one you just saw, the monologue you just saw, and you--this is based on the actor's real life experience of oppression. And then you get on stage. You act along side the actors to offer alternative responses to systemic problems on individual institutional and pos--policy level. Representatives from City Council, representative Van Bramer has been there several years. The Mayor's Office and the federal government are present to take your ideas and craft new policies. Finally, you and your fellow audience members vote to carry these ideas forward to representatives' respective chambers. You'll use theater in order words to spark concrete civic actions. Augusta Boal, who was the pioneer of Theater of the Oppressed in Brazil created legislative theater when he was a city councilman in Rio de Janeiro as a way to give his voters the opportunity to vote their opinions. Some 13 laws, actual laws were created through--through legislative theater throughout Boal's time in government. So this is why we--we want New York City to support the arts for social impact and civic engagement, and to

involve the arts in policy change by inviting groups like TO NYC to testify through theater--theater at hearings like this, and to perform in Council Chambers perhaps in the future to create new laws. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. You are more than welcome, and we should probably figure out a way to get you into the--the chambers of City Hall for a performance, but that was too unfake. (sic) So thank you very much.

JOHN LEO: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And you're welcome to sit, and--and hear Catherine's testimony or you can go back to the audience as well.

JOHN LEO: We'll listen.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay, well, they're apparently interested, Catherine.

JOHN LEO: And we'll make a pleasure to someone. (sic)

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughs] If you agree, you can squeeze the sound things, right? So Catherine Morris, Agitprop, Brooklyn Museum. Thanks for hosting us and feel free to begin.

CATHERINE MORRIS: Thank you. Thank you very much. Good afternoon, Chair Van Bramer and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Catherine Morris, and I am Sackler Family Curator of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art of the Brooklyn Museum. Thank you for providing this opportunity on the important topic: Art and Culture as a Catalyst for Political and Social Change. The Sackler Center for Feminist Art was founded at the Brooklyn Museum in 2007 with the mission of creating and supporting dialogue in visual arts communities, local, national and international addressing a 50-year legacy and impact of the Feminist Movement. We're also envisioning ways in which we can continue to be a vital contributor to the changing and develop priorities of contemporary feminism into the future. Focusing on producing dynamic and influential exhibitions and engaging programming, the center has presented 29 exhibitions, three special projects and hundreds of programs over the past nine years. This fall we will begin a long--a year-long celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Sackler Center with a museum wide initiative that will include nine

distinctive curatorial projects and an extraordinary
calendar of what--of related programs.

Our current exhibition Agitprop grew from
a desire to exam my suspicion that it must be
possible to find in any historical moment in any
placed in the world artists working--making work
intended to spark dialogue and to challenge the
status quo. One of the extraordinary opportunities a
place like the Brooklyn Museum offers is the chance
to think broadly about history and human connections.
As the show illustrates, at key moments in history
artists have reached beyond galleries and museums
using their work as a call to action to create
political and social change. For the past 200 years,
the term "agitprop" a combination of agitation and
propaganda has been used directly to reflect the
intent of this work. Agitprop explores the complex--
the complexity range and impact of these artistic
practices by presenting both historical and
contemporary work including photography, film,
prints, banners, street action, songs, digital files
and web platforms within a unique framework that
expands over the run of the exhibition. It opens
with works by 20 contemporary artist committed to

social change and dialogue with five historical case studies. Two more waves of contemporary work were subsequently added with each wave of artists choosing the next. These projects highlight social justice struggles to turn the 20th Century from Women's Suffrage and the Anti-Lynching campaigns of the NWAACP to contemporary demands for human rights, environmental advocacy and protests against war, mass incarceration and economic inequity. A total of 92 artists, 60 living, 32 dead are included in the Agitprop. Forty-one collectives are represented. Twenty-three countries are represented. We cover 105 years of history and there are a total of 4--41 curators participating.

The value of exhibitions like Agitprop is that it fosters a vital sense of engagement with multiple communities, and invites an understanding that museums are responsive, open and available to multiple points of view while also presenting art that contributed our own cultural heritage, one that reflects current lived experience. Thank you very much for this opportunity to share my work.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, and we certainly are grateful to the Brooklyn

Museum for hosting us here today, and to you for starting us off for--with an amazing performance that reminds us of the power of theater, and for captivating the audience in a way that probably few testimonies here today will. [laughter] But we thank all three of you and now we're going to call our next panel. Nancy Yao Maasbach, Museum of Chinese in America; Jorge Daniel Veneciano, El Museo Del Barrio and Kathy Engel from the NYU Department of Art and Public Policy. If the three of you would take the stage. [background comments, noise, pause] Yes, we're going to put the time on with the sergeant-at-arms. Everybody gets three minutes. So, if you want to start would be great.

NANCY YAO MAASBACH: Okay, great. Culture colleagues and fellow New Yorkers especially my Queens brothers and sisters, Chairman Jimmy Van Bramer and other members of the New York City Council. Thank you so much for your great service to the city, those elected and those in the audience, and also specifically to the Chairman to the very real and tangible differences you are making leading the committee for our museums, our parks, our libraries, just to name a few. My name is Nancy Yao

Maasbach. I have the real pleasure of serving as the President of the Museum of Chinese in America, and we're celebrating our 36th year. We are monkeys on the Asian Zodiac. I'm very excited about that, but also to the Chairman and--and New York City thank you also for IDNYC. Since joining IDNYC, on January 1st of this year, MOCA, as mentioned has quadrupled its membership. Thank you also to Commission Tom Finkelpearl for his encouragement. I'm so happy to see him upon his return. Oversight art and culture as a catalyst for social and political change. Art and culture are rooted in expression. Expression is art through painting, dance, set design, written words, stage. Expression is culture through language, food, dress, traditions, and expression is a form of sharing, informing, educating and learning. Expression is delivered from one's perspective, accepted with one's interpretation. The social and political state of any city especially this one in particular also needs input. Social and political change require participation, but the question is how. So this morning I had the great pleasure of speaking with 100 fifth graders at PS 124 on Division Street in Chinatown, New York. I asked them how many

of you are fifth grade? And naturally I think 98% of the students at PS 124 are of Asian-American--are Asian-American. But how many of you are fifth grade--100 Asian-American classmates would go into arts and culture? Surprisingly, several of them guessed less than five. Unfortunately, the answer is one.

Actually, one percent of your 99 Asian-American classmates if--if we're in today will go into arts and culture. I then asked them why do you think your name is one? And the response is: It is not safe. I am scared to talk in front of a group. I like to draw, but my parents don't want me to draw. I'm going to be a doctor. I'm going to be a lawyer. I'm going to be a postal worker. I'm going to be an accountant. My parents want me to make money. I do not know any artists. Then I asked the group how many of you know an adult who is an artist? Zero. How many of you know a painter? Zero. How many of you know an actor? None. How many of you know a set designer? What's a set designer? How many of you know an architect? Zero. How many of you know a dancer? Not a one. We need models [bell] period.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughs] This is good. Keep going.

NANCY YAO MAASBACH: Okay. The museum is there for discovery. It's discovery for one's identity, but it's a discovery for paths. We need paths. We know we need to use the discovery of the strength and humility of Tyrus Wong, who many of you probably don't know, but transformed Disney animation, but during a time of exclusion in America. So no one know who Tyrus Wong is. Discovery is about the love and passion of New Yorker Ming Cho Lee, renowned American set designer who has influenced the American stage and every living artist on the stage, but very people know who he is because he also grew up in a time of exclusion. Over 600,000 Chinese-Americans live in New York City. Over four million Chinese in America comprising 25% of the Asian-American population within this country. We have none going into arts and culture. We have such a few percentage. MOCA needs to be there, and arts and culture need to be there. Without art and culture, this is no foundation for participation. There is no confidence. There is no ability to be in front of a group. There is no ability or encouragement. Museums, library, arts venues. I mean you could be there to not only exhibit and model, but to create

internships. How do we get internships? There are not enough internships for people of color. There are just not enough opportunities. How does one get an internship at the Met? You need other internships. Where are the internships? Thank you to the Chairman and the Committee for your hard work. We are here to support you. We are there to be active in this participatory progress. Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Do you want to go, Jorge Daniel Venciano.

JORGE VENECIANO: Yes. I am Jorge Daniel Venciano, Executor at El Museo Del Barrio. I am also the Vice Chair for the Cultural Institutions Group representing the Borough of Manhattan. I want to thank you, Chair James G. Van Bramer and other committee members as well as the entire City Council for this opportunity to speak before you. The city of New York has historically--has a history rather of assuming great democratic responsibilities. These responsibilities are manifold, and we are here to talk about one sector of civic responsibility and that is culture. The fabric of civic life is interwoven with culture throughout. We know that the

City Council and the Mayor's Office are working hard to make New York a more equitable city for its citizens. We want to stress that among the instruments of social change such as education, social services and employment opportunities, culture has also been an active vibrant field of activity for those who want to imagine what society can be or do in the example that you gave yourself of Gran Fury and--and ACT UP, for example, as well as for those who want to promote a change, or take public positions about the world in which we live. Arts and culture can catalogue ideas and promote the millions of living that benefit the wellbeing of a city's citizenry. It is with this understanding that El Museo Del Barrio was founded in 1969 on the principles of democratic representation at a time in our history with the Puerto Rican community had no presence in school curricula and none in museum exhibitions and presentations. The quality of civic life involves more than the right to vote and work. It includes the right to be recognized, to exist as contributors to society, and only cultural recognition can do this. Fighting for the advancement of all people in our multi-faceted city

we must include the support of arts and culture.
This support is as basic to the infrastructure as the
city as paving roads and more so in fact. For these
reasons we ask that the City Council support the
supplemental increase requested on behalf of the
cultural--the Programs Groups as well as the Cultural
Institutions Group. The city's objectives to build a
more equitable habitus that would greatly enhance and
strengthen by fueling this vital engine of social,
cultural change. We thank the City Council and the
Mayor's Office for engaging--engaging us in these
conversations, and look forward to working in
partnership with you to improve what the city has to
offer.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.

KATHY ENGEL: My name is Kathy Engel. I
am the Chair of the Department of Art and Public
Policy at New York University's Tisch School of the
Arts, and I'm a poet for 38 years I've been what we
sometimes call a cultural worker engaged at the nexus
between social movements and art, imagination and
culture. I want to thank the Commissioner and the
City Council for opening this hearing, and for their
work to deepen and further engage the relationship

between--that--that is a basic live relationship
between arts, imagination and culture, and the
desperately needed social change in our city and in
our country. Our students from all over the world
and all over the country are risking tremendous debt
to engage. One of our alums is here today, Adrian
Cocane (sp?), who spend their lives in the endeavor
or social justice through and with and of the
imagination and the cultural life of their
communities. What I want to do now is to say that we
commit ourselves to working in partnership with the
City to do whatever it takes to make the art in our
communities and of our young people particularly the
dinner and not the dessert. That it is fundament
that art be integrated, and it always has been. This
is not a new conversation. We all know this in this
room. This is an old conversation. So what do we
need to do honor the words of James Speldewinde,
which are in the creative process societies may never
know it, but the war of an artist with this society
is a lover's war, and he does at his best what lovers
do, which is reveal the love to himself and that
revelation makes freedom real. I'd like to close
with a poem by my friend the poet, Ross Gay, which

has been read by hundreds of thousands of people
through the Internet through a group called Split
this Rock in Washington. And it most powerfully
illustrates what we're here to talk about today.

By Ross Gay, a Small Needful Act--Fact.

A small needful fact is that Eric Garner worked for
sometime for the Parks and Rec Horticultural
Department, which means perhaps that with his very
large hands perhaps in all likelihood he put gently
into the earth some plants which mostly likely some
of them in all likelihood continued to grow.
Continue to do what such plants do like house and
feed small and necessary creatures [bell] like being
pleasant to touch and smell like converting sunlight
into food, like making it easier for us to breathe.
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you. Very
powerful stuff. I--I guess that is curious for--for
all three of you, but certainly for--for MOCA and
Museo. How have your institutions since they've been
founded and--and Daniel you sort of talked a little
bit about it, but how--how does MOCA, how does having
El Museo, you know, move the communities forward,
right? How does it--how has it made a difference

1 since 1969? In your case and MOCA I know exactly
2 when you were founded, but maybe you can give an
3 example of--of how having you founded and how the
4 city is continuing to support the efforts have
5 actually moved the dial?
6

7 JORGE VENECIANO: Well, I could--could
8 just--briefly I'll add to what I said that, you know,
9 it's what in my comment in my testimony I was
10 referring more to the ability for a community in New
11 York City to be able to recognize itself, see itself
12 in the--the civic life of its own city. That's one
13 dimension. I think the other part that's really
14 crucial here is that it's really for all of New
15 Yorkers for the entire citizenry to learn about its
16 neighbors, its--the fellow communities among which
17 they live. So it's--in terms of social change, the
18 ability to harmonize life in the city by
19 understanding, by knowing something about and
20 appreciating the culture and arts of different
21 peoples in the community is a great step toward
22 creating a more equitable city in--in our opinion.
23 That's one--one of many possible answers.

24 NANCY YAO MAASBACH: All right, Chairman,
25 I'll tell you about Bonnie, our intern. She's a

1 student at Baruch. She's interned for us for the
2 last six months, and she was hesitant about declaring
3 an arts major, but after seeing an institution, a
4 legitimate living, breathing institution that had
5 faces like hers on the wall, that artists like her
6 showcase, she got that confidence to pursue art
7 because she's talented and gifted. But we are her
8 encouragement. Unfortunately, her encouragement is
9 not coming from home. It's not coming from siblings.
10 It's not coming from classmates. The huge burden to
11 conform in many different in this city is--is a
12 heavy, heavy burden. And we need to really provide
13 that institutional legitimacy and those pathways--
14 pathways so that people like Bonnie can actually do
15 something they love. Because I always say if you
16 pursue something you love and you're passionate about
17 it, you will absolutely succeed. And success isn't
18 monetary always, but it's success in the heart and
19 success in being a living, breathing participatory
20 individual in your society. So that's a real
21 example.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you all
24 very, very much for--for being here and reminding us
25 of why this is all so--so absolutely necessary and

powerful. So thank you all very, very much. Our next panel is Nazli Parvizi from Groundswell; Leslie Schultz from BRIC, and Jason Bowman from the New York Public Library, and that panel will be followed by Andrea Louie, Jennie Laludes (sp?) and Alex Sarian [background comments, noise] Nazli, you can go first and then Leslie and then Jason.

NAZLI PARVIZI: Good afternoon everyone. Thanks for affording me the opportunity to testify today. My name is Nazli Parvizi. I'm Board President of Groundswell, New York's leading community public art organization. With me over there is Patrick Dougher, our Director of Programs. Groundswell's New York programs engage artists who are marginalized and underserved young people and community members in creating visible and lasting change in neighborhoods across the city. Our mission is to bring together artists, youth and community organizations together to use art as a tool for social change. Our guiding principle is that thoughtful community public art can open space for meaning--meaningful dialogue on a wide range of ideas and perspectives while beautifying neighborhoods and engaging youth in the process of personal societal change through their work with us.

Our projects unfold in four stages. First, a community partner defines their objective for a mural. Then the mural team undertakes the research process that results in a visual language to address the objectives of the mural. Third, using this visual language the mural team artists--leading artists develop a design that is approved by the community partner. And finally, the mural is painted by the team, and dedicated in a public family. For nearly 20 years of developing this process and working in the city, we have many stories about how art can affect social change. For our testimony today, I'd like to point--focus on a relatively new program from which we've seen profound and inspirational results in the space of just a few months. With the support of Council Member Ritchie Torres in January, we launched a program called Public Art Public Housing. Through this program we're collaborating with tenant associations at five NYCHA developments to create three projects at each development. The sites for this first round were selected from 15 target developments of the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety. We have one development per borough. Our interest in working at

NYCHA development--developments stem from our sense that these are communities with stories to tell, but which because of complexities working at developments have been hard for us to reach. With funding in hand and an introduction to the tenants associations from NYCHA, our meetings with the TAs were not successful. We were told that the students were not interested in art programs when there were other pressing needs of the developments, and that our presence at these developments were regarded with suspicion. As we got to know our collaborators on the TAs better, they became supporters of the program. We were offering paid work activities for youth in the developments, opportunities to articulate issues of concern to the community, and chances to improve the appearance of lack luster areas of their neighborhoods at no cost to them. In early April, we completed the first set of murals at the five developments, which were greeted with universal excitement and enthusiasm. This is a familiar reaction for us. Visible neighborhood change of almost any scale creates excitement and enthusiasm. We were less prepared for other responses to the projects. A number of youth said they were vaguely aware of the community centers

at their developments, but until doing the projects with us had never been there. Other participants age 14 to 24 expressed their appreciation for our offering non-sports use activity at the community centers during the evening. Many youth were unaware of the existence of tenant associations, and attended their first meeting from the context of our program. [bell] And the projects con--created-- Do you mind if I finish the last paragraph?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Sure.

NAZLI PARVIZI: Created unusual opportunities for cross-generational conversation. In short, without even addressing the specific content of the murals, we saw vividly through public art and public housing how art can foster community, which is a platform for creating change. Residents believe they will lead the change they desire. As I mentioned earlier, our meetings began as residents declaring their skepticism and their--about our intentions and wariness about top-down interventions. The skepticism softened when it became clear that our mural making process gives them key decisions about the network content and location. I'll close out by saying that in the end we will have employed 200

young adults by the time our program concludes this summer. And just as a quick statement of my conflict of interest, I would just like to note that I work part-time for a company that actually oversees and project manages the NYCHA Sandy rebuilding efforts. So while I did mention the NYCHA project, I wanted to make sure I mentioned that.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.
Spoken like a true veteran of the administration.

NAZLI PARVIZI: We do what we can.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And great to see you so active with--with this organization which is terrific.

NAZLI PARVIZI: Thank you. I stopped working after I left office, and this has been--well, more than a part-time job, but it's considered the greatest thing. When people have kids, arts become even more interesting, the power of art becomes more interesting. That's for sure.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: That's great.
Next.

LESLIE SCHULTZ: Good afternoon. I'm Leslie Schultz. I'm the President of BRIC. I'm here with my colleagues Vinton Van Joseph and Leslie

Sucher (sp?) Chairman Van Bramer, thank you so much for holding this--this hearing on this vital subject and for all the hearings and the listening that you do. It's vitally importantly. BRIC firmly believes that the arts have the power to move beyond representation and critique into work that directly enables communities to effect change both in attitude and in action. As a catalyst for social and political change, art is unique in its capacity to provide the tools and platforms for community members to represent their own experiences and aspirations, to enable visionary thinking and practice to bring communities together to engage in challenging conversations that can lead to advocacy, action and change. Because of the long history and extensive reach of our programs, we've seen first hand the impact that BRIC's programs have on community. These art based projects actively contribute to the struggle for equity and social justice in our city to a number of approaches. Some artwork directly catalyzes social action. We've seen Roger Guenveur Smith's one-man play about Rodney King spontaneously lead to a stoop street protest against police violence. In another example just a week ago Sunday

we've seen how artist Sol Aramendi, who's in our current exhibition Whisper or Shout: Artists in the Social Sphere, is working with day laborers to create an app to report wage theft and hold employers accountable. Other workers maybe are less direct, but they prompt reflection and create the opportunity for people to consider the kind of future they want to create. We've seen artists such as the accomplished Brooklyn painter and activist Juan Sanchez, who had a show at BRIC House last fall, testify to his ongoing struggle with the expectations that his work be political at all times. Sometimes Mr. Sanchez told us art can also remind us what we're fighting for meaning space and time to reflect on the beauty of patterned textures and inspirations in the world around him. This very approach is catalytic. Sanchez is envisioning of a different type of future is itself a call to action. Art can also deepen our understanding of social issues in powerful ways, and provide a means for self-representation. We've seen this with hundreds of community producers--community producers who learn to create their own media at BRIC and tell their own stories on Brooklyn Free Speech TV. Similarly, working with young people in the arts

has allowed us to witness first hand this catalytic power of creative expression. As part of New York City's new school based anti-gun violence program, BRIC is working with students from PSMS 208 in Bed-Stuy to develop an original mural for their school that draws from there personal experience of gun violence. Adding a further dimension [bell] to mural project, students are documenting their discussion and process in a collaborally--collaboratively made video. This documentary will reveal how art making necessarily involves dialogue and debate especially when youth are empowered to create and direct their own expressions. BRIC's educational programs reach thousands of students occupying the art deserts in our city introducing the creative and critical opportunities that come with art making. Some programs are directly tied to urgent social and political issues, and others take a more playful approach. However, they all provide a uniquely empowering space for youth to create, collaborate and direct their own representation expression. Art can catalyze change in a multiplicity of way, some of which are direct and some of which are less obvious, and equally effective. I was interested in your

question like exactly, you know, what have you done?
And sometimes it's very specific and sometimes it's
an investment that's going to take a long time to
grow. Thank you very much for this hearing, and
thank you so much for all your advocacy to--
particularly with the funding initiative to support
artists--art institutions and the arts in our city.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you.
Thank you for everything that you do, and as you
know, we love BRIC very, very much. So thank you.
And Jason I--I already started reading some of your
testimony. It looks really, really like you wrote it
for me almost, but--[laughter] go ahead.

JASON BAUMANN: Okay. Good afternoon.
My name is Jason Baumann. I'm Coordinator of
Collection Assessment Humanities and LGBT Collections
at the New York Public Library. I would like to start
by thanking Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and
Majority Leader Jimmy Van Bramer and the entire City
Council for holding this hearing, and allowing us to
testify today. It's my great privilege to assist in
the preservation and promotion of the library's
historic achieves of LGBT and AIDS activist history.
These archives include the papers of pioneering

organizations like the Humana (sic) Chain Society of New York; the Gay Activists Alliance, People with AIDS Coalition and with individuals like Barbara Gittings. These collections bear witness to the tremendous courage and creativity that these activists demonstrated in order to make our city and our nation more conscious, just and kind. One of the most important points proved by these archives is a deep interrelationship between the arts and social change. For instance, NYPL is the repository of the archives of the AIDS activist organization ACT UP New York and they're closely associated with artist collective Gran Fury. These groups changed not only our conceptions of HIV, politics and civil disobedience, but also the possibility of her arts as activism. ACT UP transforms--transforms strategies of social protest through new forms of street theater ranging from die-ins to practical jokes, which broke the boundaries between politics and performance. Gran Fury broke free from the boundaries of the art gallery to spread their Agitprop message in newspapers, billboards, and bus advertisements. Another example is our collection of photographs from Kay Tobin Lahusen and our activist photographer who

changed the image of lesbians in the United States
creating the first images of lesbians as happy, well
adjusted individuals. Furthermore, at NYPL Schomburg
Center for Research and Black Culture, the papers of
writer/editor Joseph Bean, instrumental in fostering
the Black Gay Literary Renaissance, testified to the
power of literature to transform the way that LGBT
people of color conceive of ourselves and politics.
These often underappreciated artists activists
revolutionized our society by creating new ways of
seeing visions of a more equitable world. In my work
at NYPL I have seen how these archives inspire the
next generation of social change. For example, the
recent resurgence of the AIDS activism of the 1980s
and '90s has led younger activists to explore the
posters and Agitprop art of groups like ACT UP and
Gran Fury. They're both drawing on this and historic
work and transforming it to face the challenges of
the HIV and epidemic today. A similar process is
currently taking place in renewed interest in the
politics and aesthetics of organizations like the
Black Panthers whose achievements are also documented
by the Library Schomburg Center. Without a doubt,
libraries and museums are pivotal in providing

historical memory and continuity in this process. I am proud of the work of--of the work my colleagues and I do to preserve and make available these immensely important bodies of work. I would like to thank the committee and the council members for offering me this opportunity to testify today. I welcome any questions you many have.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much and as you mentioned, the--the die-ins, I recall participating in a die-in in front of then Governor Pataki's home up in I think it was Garrison, New York and I never thought of myself as an artist, but if that was an act of street art in some form, I'm really thrilled to be an artist. But that's terrific. Thank you so much for--for the work, and obviously we're thrilled that the New York Public Library knows that this stuff is as important as it is, and then someone like yourself who is the caretaker and making sure that people see this history, which is amazing. Have you seen the Agitprop?

JASON BAUMANN: No, I need to go.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You have to go up there because there's an amazing piece about

1 lesbians, and that is all brilliant that I haven't
2 seen in a long time. So, very, very powerful stuff.
3 Thank you all very much for being here, and for your-
4 -your role in the city of New York. I want to thank
5 Andrea Louie, Jennie Laludes and Alex Sarian. I
6 those three would come to the stage followed by Dr.
7 Martha Moreno Vega, Ryan Gillian and it looks like
8 Kelley Girod and Ziva--Ziv. Now I've got two people
9 right. Okay. So that throws us off. So we're--
10 we're going to--I'll it different. Just one?

12 FEMALE SPEAKER: Just one.

13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Perfect. All
14 right. [background noise] Andrea, why don't you
15 begin.

16 ANDREA LOUIE: Okay, great. Thank you
17 very much. So Council Member Van Bramer and members
18 of the committee, both accept my deepest appreciation
19 to give testimony today regarding arts and culture a
20 catalyst for political and social change. As you
21 know, the Asian-American Arts Alliance has for 34
22 years supported individual artists and small arts
23 groups across the five boroughs of New York and
24 social change has been deeply embedded in our work
25 and values from our founding. I'm proud that his

work continues today, and I'd like to give three examples of the Alliance and our community's work regarding social change. Just this past Monday the Alliance co-presented an event at Fordham University for an audience of 250. Beyond Orientalism, the Forum, addressed the prevalence of yellow face and brown face or the portrayal of Asian and Asian-American characters by non-Asians on New York City stages. More than 250 art--theater artists and allies attended the high level panel discussion with theater artists, artistic directors and critics and then broke out into small groups to put for their suggestions on how to change the industry from within. The event was accompanied by a hash tag campaign: My Yellow Story, which went viral on social media and then it was live streamed to viewing parties around the country. Together with our partners, the Theater Communications Group, Asian-American Performers, Action Coalition Alliance for Inclusion in the arts and the Smithsonian ATA Center were are launching a national campaign to increase race equity in a field that also brought us the success of Hamilton. So it can be done. Later this month on May 17th, the Alliance will partner with the

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Museum of Chinese in America to present a panel discussion to help inform immigrant visual artists. Speakers from Fractured Actors--actors, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and the Asian Women Giving Circle will give specific resources available to the immigrant artists from funders, artists and the arts--and arts organizations. We are proud that this project is supported by the Culture Immigrant Initiative, which is championed by you, Council Member Van Bramer, and we extend an open invitation from the entire Council to attend. Finally, just recently in March two of our peer organizations had a wonderful and creative partnership. Kundabal (sp?) an Asian-American literary organization came together without a car. A social service agency addresses the needs within the Pali speaking community from Nepal, Bhutan and some parts of India. Together, they presented creative writing over four consecutive Sundays for the Nepali and Tibetan women who work in the nail salon industry. The women were immigrants, sometimes undocumented and are from home, and they share their stories of living and working in today's America. The act of writing gave an agency and a voice they didn't even know they had. The writers

will read their work on different dates and, in fact,
tonight they will be reading at the Ruben Museum.
These are all examples of programs that have been
driven not by major cultural institutions, but by
small community based arts organizations that are
working directly in New York's neighborhoods. For
all of us, public funding of the arts is especially
important. So as I have before, I urge the New York
City Council to increase expense funding for fiscal
year 17 to the DCLA by \$40 million so that
organizations like the Alliance and our colleagues
can continue and expand our work. [bell] The diverse
cultural workforce that lives and works in New York
City is what makes us an international city,
exciting, vibrant and robust. I look forward to
working with all of you to make New York a more just
and more equitable place. Thanks for your kind
attention.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much, and--and when I was up at MOCA on Friday with
Council Member Chin, I asked Nancy if she was working
with you, and was thrilled that you are working
together, which is--which is terrific because I think
you've been such a--a guiding on--on these issues in

so many ways, and to partner with that amazing institution a venue longer than Nancy, but you're equally dynamic and impressive and--and it's just incredible what you're doing so--

JENNY LALUDES: Thank so much for that.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and you've got to good--

JENNY LALUDES: It's like in every way a-- a team effort.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes. No, absolutely and you got there in the \$40 million, and I would I just--I would just, you know, stress that, you know, the Council is supportive of--of this and included it in our response to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget and--but was not included in the Executive Budget, but we continue our advocacy. So it takes two to tango, as they say, and

JENNY LALUDES:[interposing] Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and we do need the Administration to fully embrace this concept as well in addition to the City Council.

JENNY LALUDES: That's right, and we did with the Deputy Mayor's Office, but yes, I have been trained in message discipline okay.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely.
3 [laughs] Jennie.

4 JENNY LALUDES: I'm going to deviate from
5 my remarks. So don't bother looking at them.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I love when you
7 do that.

8 JENNY LALUDES: [laughs] First of all,
9 I want to thank you for having this hearing, and I
10 want to thank you for leading the charge in the \$40
11 million for Cultural Affairs. We're working with you
12 to make the press conference as dynamic as possible
13 Dee (sic) Santiago, Hub--Hud Simon Dacki (sp?).
14 Moreno Vega is doing everything she can because she
15 loves you to be there. So thank you very much.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I love that and
17 I just got a text from one of my colleagues.
18 Apparently there was a competition for the--for the
19 steps at the time that we want, and--and a colleague
20 deferred, and so, you know, we will--

21 JENNY LALUDES: [interposing] Good.

22 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --it will--it
23 will go off all as we planned.

24 JENNY LALUDES: Is that counting towards
25 my time?

1

2

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that?

3

JENNY LALUDES: [laughs] It isn't. It

4

isn't.

5

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [laughs] I

6

can't believe you said that to me. [laughter]

7

JENNY LALUDES: I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

8

So I'm going to--

9

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

10

Now, you know I really love you because I'm, you

11

know, we--I just keep--I could keep talking and then

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that thing is going to go off, and then we include

13

that.

14

JENNY LALUDES: And you could do my

15

testimony for me and it would be better.

16

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I and Nancy goes

17

home with me and read it.

18

JENNY LALUDES: Okay. So I'm going to

19

read it. I'm just not going to read all of.

20

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: No, I--I love it

21

when you--when you just speak from the heart and--and

22

I know you capture some of what you've got in here

23

anyway, but--but no you know that I'm--you are one of

24

my favorites.

25

JENNY LALUDES: Well, thank you. You can start now. [laughter] On January 8th--first of all, because I represent 360 theaters, I could talk about--I didn't want to talk about one performance that I saw that represented social change because then the other people in the room will talk about. So instead some of them are here, but I chose to talk about a playwright that you all know I'm sure, the Pulitzer Prize winner Lynn Nottage and she is also Vice President of the Board of RIC--of BRIC. She is head of production of a play called Sweat at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and it has been on a stage in Washington, D.C. And in a January 8th interview with the Washington Post, she said and I quote, "Sweat really began to take shape when I met a group of steel workers who had been locked out of the factory. The majority were middle-aged white men who had signed onto the American dream. They fully believed that they would retire with healthy pensions. They found themselves locked out of the factory, their pensions frozen, without healthcare and back to square one, being asked to work for what they were making when they started. They said no. I found myself incredibly moved by their story. We

were all sitting in a circle and I thought we are finally in the same circle where these men understand what it means to be marginalized and overlooked and pushed out of society, which is something that we as women and people of color experience on a daily basis. Sweat has been praised and celebrated for its brutal and honest portray of blue collar life in 21st Century America. The play ended with the theories, which became the battle cry of Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign. By identifying with the other, Sweat has touched thousands of Americans both black and white, blue collar and white collar, Republicans and Democrats. When a play bridges such a gap and helps the audience sympathize with the other, you have achieved the first step towards social change, understanding."

So now I'm going to deviate. The most vivid experience I ever had, which demonstrated to me what the loss of art would mean was a moment in Hom Bada Kabul (sp?). Despite after the Taliban had attacked Kabul, and religious statue has been destroyed, you're not allowed to read, the library is closed. You're not allowed to listen to music, to sing or to dance. A young British girl drops her

1 Walkman. An Afghani man picks it up, listens to it,
2 hears Frank Sinatra, and the tears comes down his
3 eyes, and at that moment, I knew what it would be
4 like to live in a world without art. So to me the
5 arts build out social change because our playwrights
6 are the conscience of our society. From Socrates to
7 Shakespeare, from Landers to Larry Kramer, from
8 Lindsey Ferrentino to Jose Rivera playwrights have
9 told the stories from the human suffering of war to
10 anti-semitism, from racial discrimination to the
11 discrimination of the LGBTQ community from
12 homelessness to the struggles many of our veterans
13 are in--have integrating themselves back into
14 society. Thank you for this important hearing. I
15 have attached a list, which when I read through it, I
16 realized is not quite complete. Of 165 theaters that
17 self-identify as doing work of social justice or
18 social change, but it did not include our new member,
19 Honest Accomplice, which is testifying. The Garness
20 (sic) which is in the Bronx in the Speaker's district
21 and the Chocolate factory, which is in the district.
22 So I will send an amended version to you out
23 tomorrow. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much Jenny for--for your passion, and even the fact that you would get choked up talking about that is part of why I--I--I love you and it was making me think as you choked up, and I also--you were talking about Larry Kramer that the Normal Heart, you know, which is a very, very powerful--about powerful--

JENNY LALUDES: [interposing] And the fact that he got kicked out of an organization he founded because of his passion.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah. Well, you know, I--I saw that recently in one of the--

JENNY LALUDES: It was on Broadway--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
Yeah.

JENNY LALUDES: --about two years ago.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I did see that.

JENNY LALUDES: That was when I first saw it.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah, and I--it was the first time I had seen it. I knew the story obviously, but it's a perfect way that the theater, right, sort of talks about the politics of the

moment, and then use that play, right, and--and what
Larry Kramer there to--to change.

JENNY LALUDES: If you were there, you
probably saw him passing our flyers after the play.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, yes.

JENNY LALUDES: He asked his staff.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And I bawled at
that--at that play as well, of course, but--and I got
to meet Larry Kramer a few years ago for the first
time, which was amazing as well, and he is still
going strong as--as you know. So thank you very much
for that and last, but not least, on the panel.

ALEX SARIAN: Thank you very much.

Chairman Van Bramer and member of the committee, my
name is Alex Sarian and I am honored to represent
Lincoln Center on this important topic. Before
today's City Council has heard testimonies from
fellow--fellow Lincoln Center staff members on how
our programs partner with over 250 schools a year,
respond robustly to the needs of children with
disabilities and their families, empower adults and
juveniles residing in non-secure placement facilities
and engage adults with dementia and their caregivers.
My colleagues have articulated what we do and how we

do it. Today, I come to share why we do it, and how our commitment to civic engagement connects through Lincoln Center's wide range of programs. Our founding chairman said the arts are not for the privileged few but for the many. Their place is not on the periphery of daily life but at its center. They should function not merely as another form of entertainment, but rather should contribute significantly to our wellbeing and happiness. More than 50 years later, Lincoln Center still commits energies and resources to the intersection of culture, participatory democracy and social justice. The late Dr. Maxine Green, Lincoln Center Education's long-time philosopher in residence said, "The arts, it has been said, cannot change the world, but they may change human beings who might change the world." We take this responsibility very seriously to partner with like-minded individuals to and community based organizations to ensure that access to the arts unifies people instead of dividing them. Through our Family Link program we partner with social service agencies across the five boroughs to welcome more than 500 families with financial and other barriers to productions on the Lincoln Campus, pre and post

show activities and sustained opportunities to return time and time again. In partnership with the New York City Department of Education we host the Middle School Arts Audition Boot Camp, which levels the playing field for 8th graders in Title 1 schools seeking to audition for specialized arts high schools. This year, we recently found out 98% of our participants received an offer to attend a specialized high school, and we are excited to report that as a result of our work with IDNYC, we are engaging more New Yorkers than ever before in terms of age, income, race, ethnicity and education. The arts cultivate a skill set and a mindset that are indispensable for the 21st Century, and Lincoln Center equips audiences with the tools to serve as active participants in our communities. In the words of Jessica Torres, a 19-year-old high school student who recently participated in one of our programs, this was an entirely judgment free zone. I was able to speak my soul unapologetic--unapologetically and comfortably for the first time in my life. Through the work of--through our work as Dr. Maxine Green would put it, people imagined the world as if it could be otherwise. On behalf of Lincoln Center and

the millions of people we welcome every year, we
thank the Council for its continued support of arts
that challenge the status quo and inspire
conversation.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much and obviously we're thrilled [bell] that Lincoln
Center--wow and you came in right on time. Thank--I
like that Lincoln Center is obviously a very special
place. We want every child to--to be able to see
Lincoln Center and feel welcome at Lincoln Center. I
know the organization has been working really hard at
doing that, and then also Lincoln Center going out
into the neighborhoods and we're doing that in--in my
district, which you all are just terrific. So I want
to say thank you to this panel for being here, and
call up our next panel Dr. Marta Moreno Vega, Ryan
Gillian, and Ziva Kelley Girod or Ziv, and then the
panel after that is I think Rise (sp?) Wilson.

RISE WILSON: Rise.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Resai?

RISE WILSON: Rise.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Beautiful name.
That's the next panel. George Sanchez and Tom Block
and then there's only a--a few more after that.

[background noise, pause]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Why don't we
start with Marta and go down the line, if we could.

DR. MARTA MORENO VEGA: Buenos Tarde.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Buenos.

DR. MARTA MORENO VEGA: Thank you for the
opportunity and thank you Councilman for being so
brave in opening up this topic and this discussion.
I'd like to focus on why we built institutions coming
out of the '70s, the Caribbean Cultural Center and so
the Bifield (sic), which I was the second director
of, the Studio Museum in Harlem came out because we
understood the race system, discrimination an
aesthetic that exclude--the majority of the world's
population was not being addressed. So that when we
look at issues of social change really we're talking
about discrimination. We're talking racisms, and
we're talking about the inequity in the distribution
of resources, and that includes the educational
system, which still does not include the story of the
many. So that when we're looking at this issue, we
have to look at systemic racism and how we develop
policy to change that because that's ultimately what
we're talking about. I was going to start my

introduction with the poetry of Langston Hughes,
right, talking to like Buddha, Alfonso Schomburg,
Puerto Rican who was asking Nico Lavian of Cuba to
show Langston Hughes the African community of Cuba,
and why was that necessary? Because Alfonso
Schomburg understood that the story of our people was
not really in the school system and was not
recognized and valued. And that is the pathology and
it's as being less than, but as people contribute
this to our history and our experience, and that
still is something that is not happening, and this
panel begins to open that discussion. So thank you
for being brave.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Does that mean
you're going to read Langston Hughes?

DR. MARTA MORENO VEGA: What?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Are you going to
read Langston Hughes?

DR. MARTA MORENO VEGA: No, I'm not going
to read Langston Hughes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay.

DR. MARTA MORENO VEGA: I'm going to
continue.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: All right. Go ahead.

DR. MARTA MORENO VEGA: [laughs] I think that we need to look at the work of Susan Kahn , who addresses the issue of Eurocentricity and--and the study that prefers Eurocentricity as opposed to others. That when we talk about the distribution of resources, we're always talking about the yard sticks being Eurocentricity, and others at the side. We have to change that dialogue, and recognize that the majority population in New York City is now of color, and people are beginning to use the misnomer of minority majority. No, it's the majority and we have to look at the inclusion of all of our cultures and all of our experiences as central to the dialogue. The work of Deepa Puente, the work of Celia Cruz, Jorge Soto and Rex Nettleford is speaking to--the other contributions that have been made in this city, which include the [bell] contributions of native peoples of Asian people, Latinos and Latinas. And the fact that we're still talking about it as an appendage to culture, the art is incorrect. We embody culture as Afro-Latinos. We embody--all right, we embody creativity. It doesn't necessarily

happen within institutions. It happens within communities, which we have to respect and acknowledge, and we have to understand that community based institutions it's also a misnomer. These institutions are working on the ground and doing work that is vital to our communities. And it doesn't exclude the fact that Lincoln Center exists. So the messages they have there are old, but our institutions have been always on the ground. Therefore, they shouldn't be seen less than, the distribution of resources shouldn't be less than. The work of our communities have always been activists. They've had to be because we've been excluded for so long. So that if we're going to talk about real change, then we have to look at maybe the framework at the United Nations in looking at what hating (sic) means. Looking at what policy means that would change systemic racism and discrimination and be an equitable distribution of opportunity and resources. And if we can begin to look at that as a city, it would provide the model for other institutions, other cities and other places. This is the moment, and this is the next institution to that, and I thank you for being so brave.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I--I thank you. I rarely listen to testimony and--and wish it were long, but I--I love everything that you have to say because you say it with such passing--passion and--and--and I know it's--it's true, and--and from the heart. So, you know, I--I want to thank you and I think we're taking albeit little steps, but we're taking some steps, but obviously much more needs to be done, and--and, you know, that's part of what I wanted to do at this hear, right, is to not have it just be about the budget in the way that we always talk about the budget, right. Because I do a lot of hearings like that, but actually to go a little bit deeper, which is what you always bring.

DR. MARTA MORENO VEGA: Well I think we take a policy change--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]
Yes.

DR. MARTA MORENO VEGA: --because we're always, you know, doing piecemeal things, and the state when I started with basically address this racism. Langston Hughes and I think--I think Dr. Schomburg and Golaggi (sp?) Yank talking about racism and exclusion, and the need to make our presence

felt. Not as a pathology, but as equal contributors to society, and that's what the goal needs to be, and the policies need to reflect that. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely. Thank you for everything that you--you do for--for the city of New York, and have for quite some time. So thank you very much.

DR. MARTA MORENO VEGA: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Next up.

RYAN GILLIAM: Thanks for the opportunity to speak. My name Ryan Gilliam. I'm a community based artist. I direct a company, Downtown Art. It's based in the East Village area of the Lower East Side. I'm also on the Steering Committee of Natural Occurring Cultural Districts in New York, on the Board of BOI Resident Theaters in New York and the founder of FAB NYC. I have a long history of collaborating with teens. I recently worked with ten girls ages 13 and 17 on Birmingham 1963, performance based in all histories with the struggle to end segregation in Alabama. The ten ensemble members who were of diverse racially, nationally and religiously played all the parts crossing gender, race and age to do so. They told the story and in particular the

pivotal role young people played. Because it was high school aged students younger, as young as nine years old who were on the front lines in that campaign, going to jail who faced the dogs and the hoses. A lot of people don't know that A lot of people don't know that the first major rent strike in New York City, which involved thousands of families was led by a 16-year-old girl. They don't know those young factory workers ages 14 to 22, who organized the uprising of the 20,000 the first major strike by women in the U.S. After each performance of Birmingham, the girls facilitated a conversation with the audience around racism in the U.S., and they shared their own stories. One company member described how students at her school or organizing around the Black Lives Matter Movement. She was drawn to it but hesitant. By being a performer in Birmingham, she said she found how she could be an activist and make a contribution. All the young people in the audience and on stage spoke of the frustration of not knowing their own history, of not knowing how people their age had been involved. They were frustrated that their history class only offered brief highlights of the Civil Rights Movement or

focused on a few individuals like Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King. As one teenager said, "Why don't they teach us history we can use?" Some company members started to take on new roles. One surveyed her classmates to see what if they knew, if anything about Birmingham's segregation. Another was in English class reading a letter from the Birmingham jail. In these same discussions, her--this company member could demonstrate the racism in Alabama, quote the Governor George Wallace calling for segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever. Her teacher told her she was mistaken. Her told her no politician would ever say such a thing. Wrong. Recently I've worked with high school students interviewing residents of the Lower East Side about pathways forward in our community. Many answered that we must look back at what we've done to organize in the past, how we moved forward then, how we succeeded and learn from our past how to move forward now. The responsibilities of teaching a curriculum in high school can limit--can create limits on what young people can learn there [bell] even in art class. Community based culturalists can provide the information that allows young people a fuller

understanding of their history and the history of
their community, the history they can use in-depth
and detail connecting the past and the present and
embracing young people as full partners in creative
change. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much and--and because I--I heard one of the
presidential candidates reference the letter from the
Birmingham Jail yesterday, and you'll never guess
which one it was. It made me think about the point
you were making, which is hard to believe that
politicians spoke that way, but the truth is there
are still politicians who speak that way in this
country. So, thank you for reminding us of--of that,
and I--I thought that particular use of--well, the
person who was using the letter from Birmingham Jail
yesterday was outrageous, but--because of the non-
political programs. So, we--we won't go there, but
last, but not least on this panel.

KELLEY GIROD: I'm Kelley Girod, the
Founder and Executive Producer of the Fire This Time
Festival, and thank you for allowing me to speak.
[coughs] The power of African-American playwright
and novelist James Baldwin's book, *The Fire Next Time*

was taking from a line of the Negro spiritual *Mary Don't You Weep*, which states, "God gave no other rainbow sign, no more water, the fire next time." Baldwin's book about race relations in the '60s pays homage to the African-American legacy and response to our ancestors call to each generation to take up the torch paths that will continue to lead us further into the future. It was with this in mind that I founded *The Fire This Time Festival*, a two-week theater festival at Fudge it (sic) New York's Kraine Theater in Lower Manhattan that is dedicated to providing a platform for emerging playwrights of color to represent the voices of our generation and our evolution since the time of black theater figures like James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, August Wilson and Amiri Baraka. The festival came into being in 2009 when myself and five other playwrights met in a tiny theater on the Lower East Side to discuss our frustrations with an industry whose idea of black theater did not reflect our ideas of black theater. The plays that were prevalent on stages were those of our forebears like Baldwin, Wilson, Hansberry and Baraka, and many of the plays being done fit into the standard of black theater that they--they defined in

the '60, plays that dealt specifically with the African-American struggle. These plays were so powerful that they consequently boxed us into a rigid standard of writing, but we felt that our voices were not being recognized as authentic black expressions. We decided to dedicate ourselves to putting up plays that were relevant to where we are as a community today. Our motto is that any play written by a black playwright is a black expression even if it is a play about two white people in love.

Since 2009, we have chosen six to seven playwrights a year who are of African, African-American or other African Diaspora descent to write ten mini-pieces, which are compiled into a fully staged theater showcase. We started with four days of sold out performances and now produce three weeks of two-minute showcase panels, readings and open mic nights. In our featured program, the two-minute showcase, there are no restrictions placed on theme, style or content of the piece so that the playwright can express themselves freely. By allowing the artists to express themselves freely, we are seeing pieces that range from adaptations of vintage classical novels to pieces of sci-fi theaters to

romantic comedies to plays set in Brooklyn's Hipster's community and the dining room of a Muslim family. The styles ranged from straight drams to avant garde to poetic, and at a time of incredible racial tension our playwrights have addressed police brutality, institutional racism, homophobia, the Black Lives Matter Movement and affect that slavery still has in our country. By allowing our artists to be who they are and expressing themselves freely, we get a true picture of not just the black community, but of our society as a whole, and this trickle down and reflects in the audience who attends our work. We count among our greatest achievements the fact that our audience have diversified year over year, creating houses that reflect many different racial backgrounds. We see this as a tremendous success because that while we live in a city that likes to see itself as progressive, we still live in segregated neighborhoods, send our children to segregated schools and attend segregated theaters. This isn't always conscious, as we have come to see black [bell] theater for black audiences and white theater for white audiences. By opening up what our playwrights can write about, we open up who can play

1 those roles and as a consequence we create a theater
2 that truly represents the world we live in. This is
3 important because in art--in an art form that has
4 struggled to diversify, and makes both our black
5 artists and black audiences feel that they belong,
6 and adds our voices to the story telling landscape to
7 theater. Something that is necessary if theater is
8 truly going to produce social and political change.
9 Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so
12 much, and what's your--what's your budget and funding
13 look like? Are you getting funding from the city or--
14 -?

15 KELLEY GIROD: Glad you asked. [laughs]
16 We are--we are almost seven years old, and we could--
17 we could use more funding from the city. We have,
18 you know, we work on a very small budget, and for--
19 for what we do a lot of times for a lot of these
20 playwrights it's the first time they're ever seeing
21 their play on stage, and for what we do on the budge
22 we have, it's almost incredible. So we could
23 definitely use more help, right. We've had our
24 individual funders who have come through year over
25 year, but--and we've--we just received an Obie (sic)

award and an Obie grant last year, and we get some funding from MISCA (sp?) and we've gotten some small grants from LNCC, but in order to keep the work moving at the--the rate that it is growing, we definitely need more support.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Well, I asked that question because based on the timeline of when you were founded and then all of the stuff that you're doing, and I know you've grown, I'm like, wow, how do you put on all those performance? That's like pretty impressive, and then you did not mention the Department of Cultural Affairs in your funding apparatus.

KELLEY GIROD: I do believe we do get some from ARAS.

MALE SPEAKER: [off mic] I think we do.

KEN GARDINER: [laughs] Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay. So we should talk offline and--and figure out how we--we can correct that, but it sounds like it's really, really terrific. Thank you for doing that work, all of that work. Thank you very much to this panel for challenging us always, Marta and all. So the next panel is it Rivay?

RISE WILSON: It's Rise.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It's Rise

Wilson. Rise Wilson, George Sanchez, Tom Block. Are
all three here? It looks like yes, and then the next
panel, which is the next to last panel is Megan Dodd,
Guy Ed Robb and Martha Wilson and then--there is only
two others. [coughs] [background comments] Barishian
(sp?) [background noise] and the last name looks like
Babatanel. [background comments] I can't read the
first name. [background comments]

TOM BLOCK: Okay, you want me to go first
then? [background noise] Yes, okay. Oh, I'm sorry.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Why don't you
start?

TOM BLOCK: I'm just going to start right
in.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes.

TOM BLOCK: Right from the click to click
of the tempest sergeant. Man--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Fair enough.

TOM BLOCK: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you for
your--your cooperation.

1
2 TOM BLOCK: My name is Tom Block and I'm
3 the Founding Director of the Institute of Prophetic
4 Activists Art and Art Activists Incubator at Dixon
5 Place in the Lower East Side. Of course, I want to
6 thank Majority Leader and Committee Chair Van Bramer.
7 It's been an unusual pleasure as an artist to see
8 your interest in this topic. It's a little
9 surprising. So that's great.

10 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Some of us
11 started out as activists a long time ago.

12 TOM BLOCK: There you go, and you retain
13 that soul. So that's--that's important and the other
14 members of the City Council as well as the staff of
15 the Brooklyn Museum brought us today's hearing. I
16 also want to thank Jenny Laludes, the Executive
17 Director of ART New York, for inviting me here today
18 to speak. I have a 20-year in art activism as a
19 painter, author, playwright and producer. During
20 those two decades of work, I have come appreciate how
21 the objectives of many involved in government, and as
22 we have seen clearly the New York City Council and
23 the goals of art activists have much in common. We
24 may use different methods, but we share the desire to
25 work toward racial, social and gender quality,

economic fairness, heal the environment and move
towards a more just society. I've been fortunate--
I've been very fortunate to do a lot of art activist
work in Department of Cultural Affairs funded
institutions, and have come to appreciate how
important this aid is not only for an encouragement
and forward looking art activism, but also for the
greater society as we work together to heal social
ills. Under one example I've been working here in
the DCA funded Ellie Cohan's (sp?) Dixon Place and
because of her funding, she's been able to provide me
with tremendous assistance for my own art activist
activities including free space, advertising and
outreach and a well known venue to founding the
Institute of Prophetic Activist Art to work with
other activist artists as they build their projects.
At the Institute I've worked with an actress inspired
by Black Lives Matters to create a collective of
black artists and activists, a transgendered South
Asian man who has been in a project. He gently
introduced ideas of gender otherness into traditional
South Asian communities. He first opened the Gay
Jewish Pop Star in New York. He was working on an
autobiographical project. A Fractivist who is using

1 theater to raise awareness of the dangers of fracking
2 and numerous other art activists as they build their
3 endeavors. I can say that it's great to be
4 accomplished, but without the funding provided to
5 Dixon Place, that venue would be unable to provide me
6 with a home for this novel endeavor. This is one
7 example of how DCA funding can help generate
8 restorative energy that ripples out through creative
9 non-profit partners and into individual projects and
10 through them to the general society. Thank you very
11 much for the opportunity to speak today.

12
13 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you and is
14 the Gay Jewish Pop Star Ari Gold

15 TOM BLOCK: It is indeed.

16 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, my God.

17 TOM BLOCK: Because I thought you might
18 know that one. I just saw Ari last night so--

19 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes, he's great.
20 I've met Ari a few times. Great. Rise.

21 RISE WILSON: Good afternoon. So I am a
22 newby to testifying so I have very super long
23 remarks. I'm going to give the quick notes version of
24 those remarks, and tell you that I am testifying on
25 behalf of the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, which

was founded by the American artist Robert Rauschenberg who actually believed art could change the world. But I'm also testifying on behalf of the Cultural Agenda Fund, which is a seven funder collaboration of \$1.3 million investing in cultural equity in New York City. We really wanted to make sure that small and mid-sized arts organizations have the capacity they need to advocate for the resources that they need, and yes. So that's the context. So the quick notes version is in bold. So core ideas, lasting change has to be about policy, but also about cultural change, right and clearly artists and cultural organizations have a key role in facilitating some of the value and the least system shifts that make policies actually be implemented and upheld. And if we're not sure what it looks like to have the opposite, if you look at the repeal of the Voting Rights Act, you know what happens when you have a policy but the underlying--the systems don't support that. So looking at the--the role artists in cultural organizations can play in--in generating the overall conditions in our society, the work of the foundation really believes that artists can be activists, that they really can inform civic

1 practice. Not just in terms of raising the awareness
2 around an issue, but really in terms of being problem
3 solvers, and coming to the table as strategists. So
4 our program that focuses on ours as activists is
5 robust. It's up to \$100,000 for two years for
6 artists who are applying the creative practice to a
7 social challenge. Currently, that social challenge
8 is mass incarceration, and in the federal world
9 announced ten new federals who are looking at that
10 issue from the lens of reentry of what it means to
11 have parents who are incarcerated, of what it means
12 to be a woman reentering versus men, which is a--is a
13 different situation. So all that to say that really
14 what I think this hearing gives voice to and the
15 opportunity to is really consider the role of artists
16 as partners and strategists [coughing] in policy
17 making and zoning (sic) and thinking about artists
18 not just as entertainers or decorators or even
19 engagement professionals but really as a unique set
20 of expertise that can think about an issue from a
21 different angle, and how we might employ artists to
22 be at those tables as visionaries and strategists in
23 our--in local government is something I'm--I'm
24
25

particular curious to hear what the--the Council is
thinking. [bell]

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very
much. It's good to see you at our community. So you
did well, and thank you for the funding that you're
bringing to the table, which is an important piece of
this. And, you know, I love what you said last
there. You know, if you went to the The Theater of
the Oppressed's legislative forum tonight, you would
see not only the gentleman who performed here today,
but the whole troupe perform, but then also after the
performance, right, there is actually a--a real
legislative town hall involved in both the artists
and all the folks in the audience, and--and they're
going to tackle some very important issues, and then
actually come out of that proposing solutions and
legislation with everyone there. And then they
actually follow up on the proposed legislation. It's
an amazing program.

RISE WILSON: It's actually in my
written testimony, but since you already gave a shout
out for it--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Ah

RISE WILSON: --I didn't repeat it, but
it--it is a great example and--and actually just to
put a fine point on it, what I'm pulling up is that a
program like PAIR that Tom spoke to is--is a great
first step, and you know, I would be curious what
appetite there is for that become the new norm as--
rather than that being sort of an artist in
residence. That is a normal practice to have artists
at every table of decision making in our local
government.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely, and
I always encourage artists to run for office as well--
-

RISE WILSON: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --because like a
seat at the table--

RISE WILSON: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --which my
activism as a--as a gay man is what brought me to the
table in the first place--

RISE WILSON: Uh-huh.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --and believe
that we needed more seats at the table, and that
applies to everyone and to artists, and to people who

care about this as well. Last, but not least on this panel.

GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: Yes, thank you.

My name is George Emilio Sanchez. I'm here today because I was invited. I'm the Performance Director Emerge NYC, which is a program that works with artists and activists to look at the intersection, to explore the intersection, to explore the intersection between arts and activism. But I wear many, many hats. I want to thank the committee. I've got to cut to the chase. So I want to pick up on Marta's point, and that is the reasons I'm here is not much to get a bigger budget for Emerge NYC, but to address your mission, and I want to thank everybody who's here as well as you for coming to give your testimony, because I think collectively even though I'm singing to the choir being together can help us louder and that's about the arts and culture. And I'm really concerned about it, but prior to this I worked for CUNY. I was arrested for band in front of Govern Cuomo playing with Rush. I had to go to court to get my charges dismissed. In fact, I mentioned the Black Bombardiers (sic) in the courtroom, and when I walked into the Brooklyn Museum on one train

ride, that's not what I saw when I walked into the museum, and that's what I'm really concerned about. So with all due respect to all you do, there's a lot of work we have to do, and I want to talk about is arts and culture--

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: [interposing]

I'll just say I--I got arrested most recently with 32 BJ protesting at La Guardia Airport for airport workers who are organizing to be paid a living wage and--and to receive benefits and--and we, in fact, had to spend a day in the courtroom there in Queens as well, and--and I saw what you say, right and it was staggering.

GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: It's staggering and it was wow, what a beautiful country. You know, here we are and we do all these things, and we say all these things, and who do I see in the courtroom? And so this idea--and it's not an idea, it's a reality. And the schools to prison pop line is really there, and what is the intervention between the schools to prison pop line--pipeline? Arts and culture. Arts and culture is not an add-on. It's not dessert. It's not even dinner. It's life and death. I say that because if it wasn't for art,

1 culture and activism. It's like Ranberry (sic) said,
2 I would not be here. I know that. And so when I
3 work with young people in gay, straight, trans
4 communities in my classrooms, in my projects whether
5 it's in the Bronx with the anti-gun violence, whether
6 it's in Manhattan that already--or Staten Island
7 where I work or at Bach's (sp?) where I work, I see
8 that the--it's in their eyes. And what we're trying
9 to do is help make sure that what they see is going
10 to be realized by working together. This is no doubt
11 in my mind that acting culture saves lives. That
12 political and social change saves lives, and if you
13 look at from--from Stone Wall to Occupy to Black
14 Lives Matter, it's clear as day that social political
15 change makes a better union. It makes a stronger
16 union, and those words I know were written by a group
17 of exclusive white men, but at the same time it's an
18 ideal. And the ideal of this nation there's a big
19 gap between the ideal and what we experience, and I
20 saw them in the courtroom today, and I see them in
21 the classroom at CUNY, we're underfunded. It's
22 austerity measures, and that also carries over to
23 such things as arts and culture. So what Marta was
24 saying and what you were just saying are why don't we
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do a New York City Congress of the Arts where there's
a representative from each election district? Why
don't we do what the participatory budget is doing
and take another 1% of the discretionary funds and
dedicate it to arts and culture, and have
representatives from that Congress of Arts pitch in
on where that money should go? We need to get more
equity and representation in this money. Both you
love the idea, it still can be used greatly. We know
how to maximize dollars. If you're in arts and
culture in New York City, you know how to maximize
dollars. Forget about equity. We know how to
maximize dollars.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you so
much and you apparently were in court with one of my
neighbors, who mentioned on Facebook this morning
that she was herself in court for the CUNY protest.

GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: What is her name?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Deborah Gans.

GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: Yes, she was
there.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: You know
Deborah?

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GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: Yeah.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: She's a good
neighbor of mine and I congratulated her on Facebook
because I very much believe in the power of protest
and civil disobedience--

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GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: Thank you. Thank
you. Yeah.

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CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --subjecting
yourself to--to arrest for these kinds of causes that
we all believe in, and I've done it several times,
but thank you for doing that, and--and I love the
idea about participatory budgeting and--and, which we
should definitely bring back all the Council and--and
I'm big believer in CO-PB, and we do it in my
district. In fact, we allocated this for almost \$2
million even though we--we said we would only do a
million, but we're--we're doing almost \$2 million
this year because some people vote and I wanted to
acknowledge the level of excitement in the district
in the votes, and--and so it was important for us to
increase that.

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GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: It's--it's a fine
note, but we have a ways to go. The participatory

budget in Brazil is up to 17% of the--of the budget.
It's not one or two, it's 17%.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Right.

GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yeah. No, we--
but I would add that \$2 million out of my \$5 million--
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GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: [interposing]
It's fantastic. Love it.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --is--is more
than 17%. [laughter] So in our district, we were--
and--and a bunch of my colleagues are doing the same
thing. But I appreciate everything that you said.
Thank you---

GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: [interposing]
Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --all of you for
being here.

GEORGE EMILIO SANCHEZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: And now we have,
I hope is still here, Megan Dodd from the Honest
Accomplice Theater, which sounds like a lovely place
and Guy Ed Robb, from LIT, the League of Independent
Theater Artists, and Martha Wilson, if Martha Wilson

1 is still here. It says--it looks like three people
2 are approaching the stage, which is great, and then
3 the very--the very last panel, if they are still here
4 after this panel is Felicia Young from Earth
5 Celebrations, which also sounds like a lovely place,
6 and I--I cannot read the first name here. It looks
7 like Barbara Danielle is the last name if that person
8 is still here, but if not, then Felicia gets to go
9 all by herself. All right. Why don't you start?

11 MEGAN DODD: Okay. Good afternoon. My
12 name is Megan Dodd, and I'm an ensemble member and
13 community liaison for Honest Accomplice Theater. I
14 want to thank Majority Leader and Committee Chair Van
15 Bramer, the members of the City Council Committee on
16 Cultural Affairs, Libraries and International
17 Intergroup Relations and, of course, Anne Pasternak
18 and the staff of the staff of the Brooklyn Museum for
19 hosting today's important hearing.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: I think you were
21 saying the entire name of my committee, which just
22 took a path of your time, but thank you. [laughter]

23 MEGAN DODD: It's what I was told to say.
24 Anyway, Honest Accomplice Theater's mission is to
25 deepen understanding and acceptance of and incite

community dialogue about women and trans people by exploring topics that are often silence, seen as shameful or portrayed as one-dimensional. Many topics remain binary leaving a community of women and trans people feeling ignored, and this misrepresented. Honest Accomplice energizes that community and does round them by engaging professionals and members of the community to work together to devise new work that makes visible the nuanced and personal experiences of women and trans people. This approach engages the audience allowing them to relate the experiences played out on stage to those in their lives as well as empowering the community itself with an opportunity to construct and own their narratives. We believe the creation of such work is vital to counteract mainstream art, which often ignores or misrepresents the voices and interests of our diverse participants. We do tour performances to college campuses and high schools, as this is where many of our cultural crises are played out, challenged or upheld. It is where young people can discover and explore new identities, and yet many experience great isolation. We believe theater can engage students, energize them to think critically,

provide them with the opportunity to see their perspectives both presented and challenged on stage, and galvanize them to become more engaged with discerning community members. Our performances, workshops and talks-backs have had a significant impact on the lives and perspectives of our audience members. After seeing one of our pieces called *The Birds and the Bees Unabridged*, one audience member said, "The show was a total game changer. Thanks for making me think." And Roberta Sklar, an LGBT activist and theater director said, "The Birds and the Bees Unabridge--Unabridged made me laugh and even want to cry. It's not heavy handed, and is a platform for opening up crucial conversations that otherwise might not happen because of the nature of the content." We firmly believe that art can [bell] and should be a catalyst for political and social change, and are very encouraged by the City Council's recognition of art's power and potential to affect others.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much, and do you know Robert Sklar?

MEGAN DODD: I don't, no.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Okay because I--
I think I know Roberta Sklar as well. She used to
work for the Prior (sic) Agenda, which apparently
proves that I know every single gay person in the
city of New York.

MEGAN DODD: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Every time
someone says--but thank you very much. This is very
important and how did you come up with the Honest
Accomplice Theater--with the name?

MEGAN DODD: With the name? Well, like
most of what we do is participatory so the two
founders and directors sent out an email to all of
the people who have been part of creating these
devised pieces, and said we're looking for a name.
What do you think.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: It's really
good. We're just Honest Accomplice Theater,
colleagues, right. [laughter]

MEGAN DODD: No, that wouldn't make it.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Fair enough.
Thank you for being with us again.

GUY ED ROBB: Thank you. Thank you to
the Chairman and to the Council for the opportunity

to testify today. My name is Guy Ed Robb. I'm
Managing Director for the League of Independent
Theater. The League is a 501(c)(6) political advocacy
organization, and we're testifying today on behalf of
the city's 50,000 independent theater artists. On
December 29, 1989 when Czechoslovakia had its first
selections for president after decades of Communist
rule, the elected Vaclav Havel perhaps history's only
playwright president. This was in recognition of all
the he'd spent writing plays, books, essays while he
was hassled, censored and arrested by authorities.
He wrote that the power every person has is to speak
out the truth through essays or performances or
photographs, any means at their disposal, and that
just the act of speaking truth has power and culture
whether it's visual art, performance, writing,
translations, poetry. It's how the community speaks
to itself publicly. It's how we speak truth to each
other through many different languages and through
many different modes. You can see culture speaking
out in all different kinds of ways. For example, in
independent theater, I've been extremely excited by
Diana Oh's installation, My Lingerie Play where she
stood in public bearing signs that boded to public

harassment and mistreatment of women. Literally, standing on a soap box and inviting people to join her and bear witness to their own lives. Theater started a vital conversation about how people live, making change by breaking silence. Over the last year I've seen arts speaking to injustice, to police brutality, to the need to accept--extend compassion to refugees, to the need to not destroy the planet we live on. I've seen artists investing themselves in every community they hold dear, and with whatever cultural tools are at their disposal. And right now, one of those communities that needs the investment is culture itself. Since 2008 in my field of theater, we've lost at least 70 performance venues across the five boroughs. In 2008, the City invested \$186 million after inflation--before inflation. Last year's fiscal budget was \$166 million, which was an improvement on the year before, and thank you to the Council for your efforts on that. But since 2008, costs have gone up, displacement has gone up, venues have closed, and despite again the City Council's recommendation the proposed Executive Budget still doesn't restore funding to even the 2008 levels. We've heard so many voices today n the power of art

and culture and to spark political and social change. Artists and culture will continue to get made, but the artists who make it will be driven out of their homes and their communities by rising rents. Just as we speak about food deserts, we will find New York City growing culture deserts where only the wealthy have access to consume art and most New Yorkers will have lost the ability to actually take part. And that may cripple art and culture's ability to support in all of the other political and social changes that it's out to effect. In order for it to serve its purpose to society, its conversation needs to be accessible and diverse. [bell] Meaning not just in some neighborhoods and for high prices because that's the only way to make ends meet. I ask the Mayor and the City Council as they've recommended to invest properly in art and culture so that art and culture can continue to invest in the city. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you very much for your continued advocacy. LIT does great job and--and I appreciate your recognizing what the Council has done because to the extent that the--the budget for culture increased last year, and I'm proud to have fought alongside my colleagues to get that

done, and the Speaker is a big supporter, virtually all of that voice of the Council initiative funding increased the budget for the arts. So we definitely need to do all to--to partner with us more. Last but not least on this panel.

MARTHA WILSON: Hi. I'm Martha Wilson. I'm an artist and I'm the Director Franklin Furnace Archive, Inc., and avant garde arts organization that turned 40 years old this year. We are now located on the campus of Pratt Institute down the block. The new term is social practice. However, artists have been political activists for a long time. A hundred years ago avant garde artists founded Cabaret Voltaire, Emmy Hemmings and Hugo Ball in Zurich, Switzerland in 1916. Emmy was--served jail time because she was forging papers for artists who wished to avoid military service in Germany. Famously, the Russian Constructivists organized protests in Mintz (sic) Square to change public attitudes. Today, there are groups like Gulf Labor Coalition who are protesting working conditions for the workers who are building the Guggenheim outpost in Dubai. Artists are outsiders, but this does not prevent them from feeling, thinking and acting upon the social and

political conditions that affect us all. How can such activity be fostered? A blade of grass foundation, which in turn is supported by the Shelly and Donald Rubin Foundation provides support for individual artists and collaborative groups that produce works of social value. Although it is not a requirement Creative Capital Foundation also supports activists' works of art, and the Franklin Furnace Fund a grant for emerging performance artists selected annually by peer review often singles out artists who are trying to change the world. Another way such activity can be fostered is for it to be not viewed as criminal.

Before the Republican National Convention in New York in 2004, Mayor Bloomberg proactively arrested artists and activists who were planning actions and protests, and artists Franklin Furnace supported spent \$30,000 in legal fees clearing his name after he was arrested and he never got his magic bike back. This is a bicycle with a cell phone on the handle bars that had a machine on the rear wheel that would spray the charge--the text messages received in chalk on the sidewalks of New York. It was--it was lost by the New York City Police

Department. Activities such as graffiti, which were regarded as vandalism by the Giuliani Administration have been used to create communities sense of invention here in New York City. Occupy Wall Street was an effort by activists, artists and regular people to organize for social good, but deliberately a shoed hierarchy invested, not developed, bringing this down by ten policy statements, but Occupy was on the frontlines of helping people recover from Hurricane Sandy. Demonstrating its fundamental purpose of social good. Artists may be counted upon to have their antenna out feeling what the culture is up to, and turning it to social benefit. Many not-for-profit organizations have stepped into funding gap in New York City public schools engaging in art [bell] activities than natal (sic) students who have different learning styles to excel. This in-school and after school activity deserves support from the New York Council. It has been proven that arts activity improves test scores among children as well as spreading job. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Thank you for ending with joy. I would just say that we can't do

1
2 enough in terms of arts and ed, and--and we have long
3 way to go.

4 MARTHA WILSON: [interposing] I'm glad
5 you have an initiative to support arts and ed.

6 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Yes. We have a
7 long way to go, but we also--Commissioner Finkelpearl
8 started off this hearing by talking about the
9 Administration's commitment to arts and ed and,
10 indeed, there was a significant add in the budget in
11 their first year. But I would--would also highlight
12 that the \$23 million in additional funding for four
13 years was put in the budget, but the City Council
14 once again led the way requesting that funding in our
15 budget response and that did get funded after we
16 fought for that, and the budget negotiating team and
17 with the Speaker's leadership we made that happen.

18 MARTHA WILSON: You've got to start when
19 they're young.

20 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: What's that?

21 MARTHA WILSON: You've got to start when
22 they're young.

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely. No,
24 I mean it's critically, critically important, and--
25

and that \$92 million is just the start, right? We
want to do more--

MARTHA WILSON: That's correct.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --but--but there
are so many other things that--that we can do and
should do. So thank you all for--for sticking it
out, and being here, and for your advocacy, and now
is Felicia Young? Yes, Felicia Young, thank you so
much for waiting it out, and I don't--[background
noise] Yes, is there anyone else who's registered to
speak? How about I ask that since I can't read this
name, but okay. So then Felicia, you are it, by
yourself.

FELICIA YOUNG: Great. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: On the stage to
close it out on behalf of all artists in the city of
New York.

FELICIA YOUNG: Okay, I'm honored to be
here alone to close out this very important session.
I'm Felicia Young. I'm a social action artist and
the Founder and Executive Director of Earth
Celebrations, a non-profit organization I developed
in 1991 based on the Lower East Side of New York to
engage communities to effect equalizing on social

change through the arts. For the past 25 years I've engaged people and organizations throughout New York City with a grassroots and citywide coalition efforts through art projects aimed to impact ecological issues of waste management, recycling, community garden preservations, species and habitat conservation, river and water restoration and climate issues. An example of community engaged cultural organizing project that was highly successful was the procession to save the gardens that I cultivated with my local community on the Lower East Side for 15 years, which had layered and expanding impact mobilizing the local and then city wide grassroots effort that led to the preservation of hundreds of community gardens on the Lower East Side and through New York City. I initiated the community engaged art project in 1991 as a direct response to wanting to bring attention to the magnificent network of gardens that exist in my neighborhood or the Lower East Side, but under the looming set of destruction by development plans and also because the idea of their permanent preservation. I proposed to the gardeners in neighborhood creating a large scale art project, a day long theatrical pageant procession visiting over

40 gardens. Gardeners, local artists, residents and children in the neighborhood to create visual art masks drawing puppets for the procession. Presentations of performance, dance, music, poetry and ceremonies so each garden could celebrate and tell the story of achievement, struggle and the effort to permanently preserve the gardens. After the first year, the procession to save the gardens developed an annual project because of community enthusiasm and will to do it again was there, and it served the interest of the community on many levels. The project grew into a nine-month long community building and creative production process with over 40 participating gardens, 50 local organizations, schools, community centers, neighborhood block associations, 500 local artists and several thousand participants that grew year after year. The community worked together over months creating visual arts, songs, dances, performance, poetry, contributing their numerous--and numerous skills to make this neighborhood project a reality. Beyond acting out this creative vision and theatrical performance and ceremony publicly in the streets and the gardens. We aimed--we were in reality building a

support and grassroots effort through the project in shaping the narrative of this drama [bell] not in the world of art or theater, but in the daily reality and context of one of the most critical city issues. The project revealed the potential of these creative strategies for building and mobilizing a broad based network bringing together many local organizations and disparate groups who did not often work together for the common goal that benefitted many people's lives in the neighborhood. The approach through visual art performance, dance, and poetry also engaged and built an effort that enabled the community to collectively express itself creatively, and connect people to feel the experience of the importance of the gardens on an emotional level. It provided an inspirational point of entry for diverse engagement of people and groups in the community who would not normally participate in political actions and civic processes. And people beyond the gardeners who were more indirectly affected. It took the edge off fears, embedding the high stake goals within the immediate experience of creativity and imaginative play. It generated excitement, and with the potential of making what we can imagine a tangible experience

that can be shared. The project actively demonstrated and built an alternative mode of action that was joyous, collaborative and creative. As the threats to the gardens increased, we were able to build on the activated community network established through this large scale project, initiating Lower East Side Garden Preservation Coalition in 1994, and then the Citywide Coalition bringing together gardeners from Harlem, Bronx, Upper West Side, Brooklyn and the Lower East Side. The activation of the Coalition working through more traditional grassroots organizing methods and simultaneously with the ongoing community engaged art project created a very powerful combination. Each method significantly enhancing the achievements that alone may not have been reached. We catalyzed an effective and creative effort. Built the bridges for my low-income marginalized neighborhood to people and institution and positions of power gathering increasing support from elected officials, philanthropists, lawyers and even celebrities. The efforts led to Mayor Bloomberg upon taking office transferring hundreds of gardens from their slated status to be destroyed for development to the Parks Department, temporarily

protecting them. Despite these massive achievements and their lasting impact on the city of New York, this work was minimally funded. Just small grants through Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the New York State Council on the Arts, Manhattan Community Arts Fund, and the Fund for Creative Communities as well as the Department of Cultural Affairs Public Service Award. And then some small grants for community organizing. This was largely a massive volunteer effort of thousands of people within the community creating culture and in claiming the arts to impact and bring about social, political and ecological Change. Community engaged arts bringing about significant positive impacts should be strongly supported at the grassroots community level. And I struggle everyday after 25 years to gain support for this work, and you know, it's been an emotional journey for me, and I--I really think--I mean one of the things that I've thought in this whole issue is that as small organization we were really only eligible for project support grants, and as you all know, LNCC and they enabled us. They gave a lot of support to enable small groups that got together to do important work to get these grants. But the

1 missing piece was we didn't have general operating
2 support. On the other side, when we were so focused
3 on this crisis, which became-- You know, we had a
4 built it up into a massive issue in the city of New
5 York that a lot of the other funding that started
6 funding, and which was great in supporting the issue
7 from philanthropists such as the Rockefellers. As
8 soon as we actually achieve the results and the
9 victory of getting any of these gardens saved, then a
10 lot of that funding pulled because you almost became
11 the victim of your own success. And so, we continued
12 basically with the small arts grants because they
13 were the ones at least invested in our creative
14 approach to social changes as opposed to just the
15 issue, which now we had succeed in achieving. So,
16 you know, my suggestion is, you know, you have had
17 big institutions here. We've had mid-sized non-
18 profits, and then there are also the very small
19 groups that need that support going from project
20 support to general operating support. You know who
21 have created major impact in the city so--

23 CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Absolutely, and-
24 -and I gave you extra time because you waited longer
25 than anybody else.

FELICIA YOUNG: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: So, I--I thought we owed that to you at a minimum. So, I do appreciate--I don't think you were the only small organization that testified today. I think these mothers who probably feel equally strong as you about the small organizations and--and us doing more and I think that's the beauty of the \$40 million ask, right, is that it would sensibly serve both the large or the midsize and the smaller organizations. Although, of course, we have a lot more work to do to get lots of organizations even into the funding pipeline, and we're committed to that, but I--but I--I love the work that you've done and I--I love your passion for it, and I really am very appreciate that you stayed as long as you did to make sure that your voice was heard, and--and I also gave you the added pressure of representing every single artist and cultural person in the city of New York. So, you did a great job on behalf of the--

FELICIA YOUNG: [interposing] Okay, thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: --hundreds of thousands of folks in the cultural world, and--and--

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and--and I--I really do thank you for--for being
here. I thank all of you for being here, and clearly
we have a lot of work to do, but this a--a very
valuable contribution to our work. So thank you all
very much, and with that I want to thank the staff
here who Robbie from the Speaker's Office, Amita and
Chloe from the Cultural Affairs team and--and my
staff Matt Wallace and Stephen--

FEMALE SPEAKER: [off mic] Where are your
staff members?

CHAIRPERSON VAN BRAMER: Oh, running
around and we have the Museum staff. Wow, there's a
lot, Anne Pasternak, Catherine Morris, Bertrand,
Stephanie Weisberg (sp?), Terry Jackson, George
Williams, Cuzal Jimenez, and Jim Kelly, and as I
already mentioned Clara Vet (sic) and Curalon (sp?)
Robbie Welch, Steven Miller and Matt Wallace. All of
you are terrific. Thank you very much, and with that
this hearing is adjourned.

[gavel]

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date May 21, 2016