

Practice Sessions pre-Town Hall (with interviewers for the interviewer position)

Well, I'm actually a student at a big art school out here it's a great school, great teachers But I know like two other Latino students there out of almost 2000 students. There's not a lot of variety of socioeconomic backgrounds I see.

Like, I'm the first to go to college in my family and I don't see a lot of that there. I started volunteering on this diversity council and we talked to admissions about why there aren't more Latino or Black students, (seriously, you can count them on one hand), and they said they recruit at all kinds of schools. I've said to the council like 100 times that if they want Black and Latino students, they are gonna have to throw more money at us...so we can come to fancy schools like this all the art starts looking the same. It's boring.

I go to museums a lot and some of the stuff is just hard to get or feels like ...I saw this sculpture, and it was like a super realistic sculpture of a cleaning lady it just felt like it was making fun of those people. People see cleaning ladies all the time. I do anyway.

People stop and stare because it's art but I dunno, it felt like looking at an animal or something. My mom was a cleaning lady a lot. I don't think she'd want to be stared at. The people standing around are just there to make sure you don't touch anything. Museums are supposed to be for the public but it doesn't always feel like it.

Yesterday I was at a conference and I brought up a bunch of issues about race but when our group "presented" back to the larger group, our presenter just said "there were also some comments about race" with no specifics.

Recently my boss talked to me about changing the program to change the kind of audiences we get. I told her I thought what we were doing was working but she was clear in her message. I had concerns about the kind of change. She wants to change the music from Latino groups to Swing and Big Band. She's been hinting at wanting to change the programming for a while. I'm upset because our concerts are very well attended and actually are relevant to the community we are in.

Monday, May 2, 2016
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Torrance Cultural Arts Center
3330 Civic Center Drive

There is a lot of "yellow face" or "brown face" happening in film and stage of late. Don't actors who are not Asian or South Asian feel awkward playing a race that is not their own. No one would ever think of doing blackface on stage or on film but somehow the principles are not equal when it comes to Asian or South Asian roles. Why is that?

I feel that the landscape has a certain pedigree, a particular leaning. As an African American man, I definitely feel like a token or rarity, both due to my color and gender.

The language was new to me and I didn't feel welcomed into that "world." Being resourceful, I started to read about arts presenting online and developed my own awareness. I only used the word token to point to being under-represented. It's not a blaming mechanism either. It's my responsibility to address the lack of diversity in arts presenting.

I don't think that anyone means to exclude another in the arts presenting world. I think that people naturally fall into their comfort zone, their day-to-day, their busy lives...But I think that it's easy for the arts presenters to vet colleagues and programs that have similar narratives or life-orientations. It's a very human thing to do.

I applied for a job as a programmer with an organization and realized that a woman got the job who wasn't necessarily more qualified, but she was from the same community, clique. I didn't take it personally but I felt that there was a bias in the hiring. I could have been completely wrong. It's a tough conversation for me because I believe in personal accountability and I make my own way regardless of biases.

I think it's important to launch a conversation for including youth in the arts presenting world beyond being a rapper, a singer or consumer. I think it would be productive to have conversations with youth about the lack of diversity in roles such as programmer, community outreach, production, FOH/sound engineering, grant writing, marketing and communications, etc.

Saturday, May 7, 2016
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
South Gate Municipal Auditorium
4900 Southern Avenue, South Gate, CA 90280

Transportation is always an issue. I might want to go to a museum or some art thing, but the buses aren't going that far, or they don't run that late.

This was very productive. I just connected with an artist that I'm going to collaborate with. Sometimes organizations throw these pow-wows and nothing comes of it, so you gotta make something of it yourself.

We tried to organize a music festival, and, like, go through the city and do it right, and it just seemed like the public officials didn't give a shit about helping us. Transportation is always an issue.

I speak three languages: English, Spanish, and Art. Trying to discuss art to my Spanish speaking parents who migrated to this country with low education is impossible. I seemed entranced to the art world but my parents got left behind.

I only had one art class prior to pursuing a studio arts major at a university. That was all it took to ignite my passion for art. I hope to do so for my future students as an art educator with a social justice lens. I aim to share my passion and each individual to use art as a tool to communicate their views, beliefs, and cultural history.

Saturday, May 14, 2016
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
DA Center for the Arts
252 South Main Street
Pomona 91766

For me it's about access, even access to the conversation. I'm looking at who is in the room and who is not here. How do we work better to be inclusive? LA County is gigantic. How do we provide access to the arts, to jobs, to community?

I didn't have the vocabulary for this conversation 20 years ago. Equity. Access. Racial equity. Now what do we do?

I created a mural for a local government agency they rejected it because they thought it was too "multicultural."

Only thirty years ago, the head of my drama program told me: "Women don't direct."
I did it anyway. Things are changing. But we've got a long way to go, baby.

Monday, May 16, 2016
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Arts and Recreation Center
City of Baldwin Park
14403 East Pacific Avenue

Eons ago, when I was in high school I was a participant in my school's drama class. Before each performance the student "leaders" gathered the actors into a prayer circle. There was one non-Christian who stood off to the side, alone. After the first time it happened, I stood off next to him but I always felt uncomfortable because there is a sense in which people who did not conform would actively be excluded.

I'm hoping this is the first and last time I have to have a conversation about ArtsEquityLA.

As a Filipino American/arts viewer/participant, there are a lot of assumptions about what I like simply based on my race/ethnicity. A lot of what I like culturally has nothing to do with my ethnic background.

I do appreciate my cultural traditions, but I would say I have a stronger passion for other things. When there are Filipino artists being presented, the norm is to "outreach" to the Filipino community. Am I bad if I'm not that huge of a fan of Lea Salonga?

The point is, often there are a lot of assumptions made based on race/ethnicity about someone's cultural tastes and habits. I love Afro-Cuban and Latin music and dance. But you wouldn't know that from looking at me.

Cultural identities, as you say, are complex, and I think this is a beautiful thing.

I was last at Oakland Museum of CA and it was a blast. Their Friday Night programming was great. And it was the kickoff night for Open Engagement conference so they tend to be on the welcoming, inclusive spectrum.

I was also at LACMA just the weekend before with a friend to check out the Mapplethorpe exhibit. It was a Sunday afternoon. The museum was lively but it was definitely a different feel. I'm familiar with the space so I feel welcomed, but it does feel a bit more formal. Formal isn't always bad. It's just different. I've gone to their concerts on the lawn and those are a bit more informal....people picnic and hang out.

I did still pursue music after high school. Thanks to the dedication of some of my teachers who pushed for the success of their programs and students. I became a member of my university marching band and concert ensemble. I feel like individuals are the only ones who can push through those structural disadvantages. They don't get enough support at all.

Monday, May 16 (Continued)

There are many ways to categorize myself and I rarely feel part of any group larger than myself.

I'm a worker in the information mines of arts and culture.

Lack of diversity in the sense of alienation is a daily experience.

In the most immediate and visually evident sense, I don't see many people who look like me in my field.

I'm always limited by my understanding of others (particularly their outsides) and vice versa. People may look like me but identification, empathy, kinship are related but separate matters.

I'm Asian. As the only brown person in the room I feel alienated a lot by art experiences. But maybe alienation is part of the art experience then that's part of the artist's intention?

I'm from Canada where there's a lot of government funding for the arts. It's not bad here, but don't get me started on the public transportation!

Wednesday, May 25, 2016
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Santa Monica Civic Auditorium
1855 Main Street
Santa Monica 90401

I grew up in Colombia so I saw lots of things that where supposed to represent me but they did not really... Imagine watching breakfast club in Colombia? Are there universal themes in there?

My life has been about shedding light to ideas and people that would not normally have the opportunity to do it—Art and culture always have forms of micro aggressions and bigotry toward one particular group or another.

Cultural life in America will change so radically in the next 15-20 years that 2016 will seem like a distant memory...

I think in more institutionalized settings, I don't see myself being represented in the art world as a Latina.

The reality is that the people that are in management are mainly White - they don't welcome people of color even if they are educated, qualified, or the perfect person for the job. Yes there are a few, very few, exceptions but seriously the people making this diversity policy are not of color. I await the change.

I am a storyteller.

All the time, my POV tends to make people uncomfortable.

People tend to censor my comments on social media.

I received an email from our city manager regarding a piece I wrote on my blog diversity matters.com. I followed this piece with a first amendment post. In Santa Monica, government polices. Politics People Group page the moderator removes some of my posts because they are incendiary.

I run a nonprofit organization that provides dance training to youth living in Los Angeles' inner cities. I have witnessed very strong equity and inclusion in the arts. Our mission being to expand access to the arts with and specific focus on those historically disenfranchised and underserved. Dance is seemingly transcending cultural boundaries in our organization.

Wednesday, June 1, 2016
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Natural History Museum
900 Exposition Boulevard
Los Angeles 90007

I'm Mexican, but I'm also from Los Angeles, so I like a lot of different types of culture. I'm not just Frida Kahlo and flamenco dancing. My cultural richness goes beyond an "artistic program for Latinos." The people working in the arts need to learn that equity is not about underestimating my identity. Every time there's an art event, it's like the city just wants to throw hot sauce and mariachi music at us. We are all much more than that. Why segment the arts by race and instead learn to be inclusive and collaborate?

I am co-executive producer of the Foundation for New American Musicals. We are currently engaged in a diversity project to bring show writing courses into the majority minority's high schools. We are trying to expedite the process of getting support from the County. We hope they will move quickly - especially the 2nd supervisor district so that we can maximize the opportunity to get talented African American and Latino kids who can join the program's beginning this fall.

Diversity and inclusion needs to be more complex than just separating everyone into different cultural boxes.

As a white man I feel that this diversity conversation has gone too far in the other question. The other day I found a meme on twitter that was "#Whitepeoplesuck."

I work in county policy. Bureaucracy is a double-edged sword. It's how things happen but too much of it keeps things from happening. One of the main barriers to diversity: applications for civic grants are 30 pages long and in English.

Distance has shaped the way I see an experience art in LA. Living in the far East region of LA County, I wasn't able to experience or see certain exhibits, shows, or galleries. Living in downtown I now have better access to art. But I know so many people don't have it - due to access, distance and/or transportation.

Saturday, June 4, 2016
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Armory Center for the Arts
145 N Raymond Avenue
Pasadena 91106

When I moved to Los Angeles I was surprised at the little representation Latinos, primarily Mexicans, had in the city. I came from a town in Texas that was almost 75% Mexican. Latinos here (in LA) didn't hold elected office, had key jobs, and were certainly not reflected in the media. Being reflected in the arts is a key indicator that you have a role in society. Latinos, although the largest movie-going audience, are not seen on the big screen and are just starting to make inroads in television.

I was in the process of producing a free cultural event for an arts organization. Then, suddenly the resources for this event were pulled and directed towards a major donor cultivation event for 30 some people as opposed to tens of thousands people who would have attended the event I was producing. Arts organizations need to think through if they are serving their mission or just serving an elite few.

I experienced a situation where a large arts organization received federal funding to create a project to include diverse partner organizations. The project was funded and into the last half of the project timelines, the pass-through funder realized that there was very little diversity in terms of the type of projects that were immersed in "diversity and inclusion." If you read the grant application everything reads very well. However, thank God there was someone who was tracking what was stated in the proposal and saw the disconnect and found a way to take care of it. Just because diversity and inclusion is mentioned [doesn't mean it's there], there has to be a built in process to check while the project is going on.

There has been a greater move to have information shared in multiple languages. There still exists the idea that folks who are not dominant English speakers are working from a deficit asset rather than a benefit of multiple linguistic skills.

Most work that is done, most meetings that take place, and much of what is presented is primarily in English.

Another example is being involved with arts grants, being on a panel who felt that a presentation that was primarily in Spanish was an item that needed closer scrutiny. The particular exhibit/performance was going to have subtitles. It was focusing on an art form/expression that was based in Spanish language arts. There was an "ah, ha" moment that occurred when it was pointed out that there was no concern about all of the other candidates that were to be presented monolingually in English.

June 4 (Continued)

I feel that in the hiring of arts admin staff, barriers are put in place that don't seem to favor one race or another, but that, if you scratch the surface do. Arts institutions claim to want diversity in their staff, but create and use only the molds that they have used before. There is no expanding the field, no risk taking in recruiting or hiring.

One of my early experiences was riding the bus. I was with my dad and brother heading to the beach, I was sitting next to an older woman when I accidentally pulled her jacket instead of mine. Instantly she started yelling at me. I was horrified, but my father quickly lashed out at her. Defending me, I heard him saying how could you be yelling at a child. I was so confused by the experience, I started to realize that lady had a mental problem. There are so many people with mental, financial, and home issues. Equity is important, and never the same for everyone.

Wednesday, June 15, 2016
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Valley Performing Arts Center
18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge 91330

I'm an actor in an all Asian-American comedy group. We get this bias that anything we do is only relatable to Asians. Universality means "Whiteness."

You need people who have the appetite and ability to fundraise. How do you find those people? They're already clustered in areas that tend to be more privileged.

When young kids come to see a show, it looks like the makeup of Los Angeles, there are all kinds of kids.

Saturday, June 18, 2016
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Veteran's Memorial Building
4117 Overland Avenue
Culver City 90230

As a 21-year old in a sphere where my colleagues have been working in this arena for as long as I've been alive, I feel very privileged as a young Latina to have a platform and the ability to create a tangible difference in the way my age group approaches arts experiences, that they see the arts not as an extracurricular but as integral to a full life.

I've been to the theater a lot recently, and I'm discouraged that audiences are mostly elderly, and white. Thrilled they are there, but where is everyone else?

I think it's geography and ticket price, mostly. Even Susan Lori Park's show at the Taper had a homogenous audience. And protocol -- people aren't used to coming to the theater, and may not feel genuinely welcome. What to wear? How to behave?

Art and theater experiences don't need to be watered down for working class audiences. A few summers ago the LA Opera staged free performances out on the courtyard of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. That stood out among other types of free outdoor events. Class is inextricably bound up with culture. Staging free operas outdoors felt at least like an attempt to strip an art experience of its social freight—THAT's the part that often alienates people, not necessarily the art itself.

This is so great. I wish I could attend everything, making connections and learning from others. But it really comes down to MONEY.

I volunteer with an arts nonprofit. In the schools most of the students are Hispanic, African-American... arts programming is badly needed.

I'm impressed with the positive approach of this initiative to create / promote / support the arts for all communities. Please keep up the energy! We all want to support!

Wednesday, June 22, 2016
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Santa Clarita Sports Complex
20880 Center Pointe Parkway
Santa Clarita, CA 91350

People make art in tribes and they're going to stick to those tribes, it's a hard habit to undo.

Communities are not always included in or made aware of the arts opportunities that are local to them. Better communication, accessibility, and transportation will go a long way to connect diverse communities together and create collaborative experiences. I pretty much never hear about an event or resource until it's too late.

Make secondary education affordable for students in the arts without putting them in debt by graduation. My current number is \$63,000.

Monday, June 27, 2016
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Museum of Latin American Art
628 Alamitos Avenue
Long Beach 90802

I loved having arts while in high school it was a relaxing and non-stressful outlet. Working for two elected officials that love and support the arts has been very important to me. Live entertainment is so vital and especially when it's free.

I think the city needs to change its attitude towards the arts completely. The arts seem to be something they give lip service to but really have no idea how deeply ingrained and powerful they can be for the populace.

Use real artists to present and receive information rather than a council member who says he or she kinda is more artistic than the other people at City Hall. Put more money to the arts that is not already designated to specific and now very unimaginative "arts" activities - an example: The POPS orchestra. C'mon this is fine for people who want to have a lovely relatively high cost evening out with their mature friends. This is NOT the arts.

There have been many events I've heard about after the fact. Social media and news is so fragmented it's hard to keep in the know about stuff I'd have loved to participate in.

There isn't a top of mind presence for the arts around the general population. You have to actively seek it out in order to be in the know.

We promoted a multimedia show in Austin and had local artists contact media outlets because we were not featuring as many locals as they thought we should have.

To us art is art and all should support and appreciate the efforts of others. They felt they should have received more "exposure." We offered to promote a show for them but they felt we were outsiders. It was a fractal art/craft/music/pottery show with the emphasis on Latino cultures. It was just the attitude we received from them. We would have been happy to promote them in Arizona and other states to gain a larger audience. That was our goal with those we promoted in Texas.

Communicate with the promoters their feelings at the very beginning. We did reach out to some of the local galleries and centers. No response. So we just went on with our program assuming all was good. I suppose we should have talked to the artists directly.

June 27 (Continued)

I'm on the board of an arts organization that is almost entirely Caucasian. When I brought up the idea that we should have more diversity I was told that people of color do not typically have the financial means necessary to participate on a board!

That's quite an assumption about who has means. The programming of the organization is very white and will stay that way unless we do something to change the way that it is run - especially in PR and marketing.

I was asked to create a cultural mural for the Samoan community at my old high school. When asked to select a wall I chose the one that was in the center of the quad area (which previously displayed an Aztec warrior mural that was painted over a few years back). I was denied and given a wall in the back bungalow area. I felt there may have been a feeling of the school not wanting too much "Samoan-ness" at the center of the school. Not sure why though, as the previous Aztec mural was on display for over a decade.

I missed a lot of this event because I was at another equity event. Very happy this discussion is happening though.

**Arts Summit
LA County Arts Internship Program
June 29, 2016**

It wasn't until I saw Basquiat that I even felt comfortable calling myself "artist." That word felt too White, too European, like it wasn't made for me.

My parents are both immigrants from Poland, so there was a lot of emphasis on my becoming a doctor, lawyer, or engineer. The whole American Dream thing.

But they seemed really into things like symphony and opera. I don't know if it's because they enjoyed those things, or because they were trying to fit in with a different social class.

I'm really into theater, and when I go see theater in L.A. I feel like I'm surrounded by only older White people.

I went to see a fabulous play last weekend. Right before it started a whole group of young, non-White people arrived. I honestly felt relief.

I grew up attending theater, but it was more seen as a recreational activity. I had to make it an important, long term goal. My family is not very supportive of my career ambitions because they see the arts as an activity, not a lifestyle.

Last year my school put on the play 'Chavez Ravine' and received a lot of backlash because it was cast colorblind, yet those students were the ones who gave it their all, did their research, and I believe did a great job. It was the students who did not audition, did not understand the story, who chose to speak negatively against it—they were a part of the group that was being discussed in the play but chose not to contribute.

A lot of the music and movies and art that I like was influenced by my parents. They took me to museums and Seattle Film Festival arts events as a kid.

With younger people there's a lot of bragging involved with liking art and being artistically "aware." When I said recently that I didn't like a contemporary art piece, another woman my age said she "could understand" that it was "pretty cerebral," as if to say I'm not cerebral. There's no dialogue. You just "get it" or you don't.

I did anthropology when I worked at my college's writing center, and I used to talk with people about looking at writing and education as a whole other culture and language. It can be impossible to understand when you're not on the inside, and that's on purpose, I think.

So I'm getting it and I'm getting the language and I'm getting experience, but do I "get it"?

Maybe.

June 29 (Continued)

Dance has always been my first love, however, due to the fact that my parents were poor, I did not take dance classes in my youth or get to go to a school where it was offered.

I was intimidated and discouraged to pursue dance once I began to audition against those who were considered 'professional' because of their training.

I'm a spoken word artist now and challenge myself daily to read and write more in order to perfect my craft. My background and development still plays a factor, but I promised myself I would not quit.

I am the first to go to college in my family, my mother and father never graduated high school. Ebonics is my first language, LOL.

Literally.

I'm proud of myself for pursuing a higher education. I just don't want the system to continue to fail me.

I've found there's a large disconnect and neglect to non-native speakers. ESL communities are often left out of conversations regarding content creation and storytelling. I was part of an ESL program in high school, so was my mother before me.

I recall that if I did not catch on quickly, my language barrier was viewed as a disability and something to correct.

Later I became a thespian with my theater program. That had both positive and negative aspects. Mainly I wished that ESL programs were more integrated as opposed to being seen as "other."

As an actor I was able to build empathy, but I also got cast purely on race sometimes, ex. Maria in West Side Story.
