

**Senate Special Committee on International Games and
Joint Committee on the Arts**

Joint Informational Hearing

***The Cultural Olympiad, Community Festivals, and Arts
and Cultural Plans for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games***

PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES

PANEL 1: Cultural Olympiad – History



Dr. Tawny Paul
Professor of History at UCLA
Director of the Luskin Center for History and Policy

Dr. Tawny Paul is a history professor at UCLA and Director of the Luskin Center for History and Policy at UCLA, which brings historical knowledge, perspective, and analysis to bear on key contemporary issues and policy deliberations. Paul is an award-winning scholar of Britain and America, with a particular interest in histories of capitalism, urban development, and public history. She has written extensively on commemorative practices and the intersections of art and history. Since 2020, Paul has also directed the UCLA History Department's Public History Initiative.

Anaghime Esmeralda Ziani, co-principal investigator with Dr. Paul, is unable to attend. Their work is represented in today's hearing, by Dr. Paul. Anaghime is the Founding Director of International Heritage Development at Qatar Museums, where she leads international cultural-heritage initiatives, develops institutional partnerships, and advises on projects connecting museums, cultural policy, international cooperation, and sustainable development. She holds a BA in Political Science and Government from UCLA.



Zev Yaroslavsky
Director
Los Angeles Initiative at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs
and the Department of History

Zev Yaroslavsky is director of the Los Angeles Initiative at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and an authority on the modern history of Los Angeles and on local politics and government, having served 40 years as an elected official. Yaroslavsky, who also has an affiliation with the history department in the UCLA College, served for 20 years as a member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors before term limits ended his tenure in 2014. While a supervisor, Yaroslavsky helped shape county policy on public finance, transportation, homelessness, public health, the environment, public safety and the arts.

Prior to serving on the board of supervisors, Yaroslavsky was a member of the Los Angeles City Council for 20 years, during which time the council negotiated to host the 1984 Summer Olympics ensuring that the city would be protected from cost overruns. Yaroslavsky also led efforts to reform the Los Angeles Police Department. With his decades of public service, Yaroslavsky is a leading authority on municipal finance and budgets, as well as land use and development.

PANEL 2: The Creative Plans



Nora Halpern
Executive Director and Vice President
LA28 Cultural Olympiad

Nora Halpern is the Executive Director and Vice President of LA28's Cultural Olympiad, bringing over two decades of leadership in arts policy, curation, and advocacy.

Prior to joining LA28 in 2024, Halpern was appointed by President Joe Biden to the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Her extensive career includes serving as Vice President at Americans for the Arts for over 20 years, helping establish the Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation as its Curator, and serving as the Founding Director of the museum at Pepperdine University.

An accomplished art historian and curator, her recent projects include a monumental Jenny Holzer installation on the National Mall and the co-curated exhibition *A More Perfect Union*. Halpern holds both a BA and MA from UCLA and completed the Whitney Museum of American Art's prestigious Independent Study Program as a Helena Rubinstein Fellow.



Dwayne Jones
Senior Vice President
Cultural Olympiad and Stakeholder Events

As the Sr. Vice President of Cultural Olympiad & Stakeholder Events, Dwayne Jones leads the logistical planning and delivery of LA28's internal and public-facing meetings and events as well as one of the organization's signature properties – the Cultural Olympiad.

He has managed hospitality and delegation experiences at 11 Olympic Games, the Paralympics, the U.S. Open, The Masters and the Academy of Country Music Awards and served as a Vice President on the LA2015 Special Olympics World Games Organizing Committee. His experience in the Olympic and Paralympic Movement, coupled with his previous LA event experience at Universal Studios Hollywood, LA Tourism and Hollywood & Highland Center, have positioned him at the intersection of the city's sports and entertainment sectors.



Daniel Tarica
General Manager
Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles

Daniel Tarica is the General Manager of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, leading the Department's work to strengthen the quality of life in Los Angeles by fostering economic opportunity for artists and arts/cultural organizations and increasing access to arts education and programming for youth, families, and artists across Los Angeles, under the values of inclusion, diversity, equity, excellence, and access.

The Department empowers Los Angeles's vibrant communities by supporting and providing access to quality visual, literary, musical, performing, and educational arts programming; managing vital cultural centers; preserving historic sites; creating public art; and funding services provided by arts organizations and individual artists. Managing a full-time staff of nearly 100 and a part-time staff of more than 250, Daniel oversees the 2028 Cultural Program for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, as well as the Department's portfolio of facilities, capital improvement projects, grants, educational initiatives, and programming.

A native Angeleno, Daniel previously served as DCA's Assistant General Manager and has served in several leadership positions for the City of Los Angeles for the City Council, City Controller, and City Administrative Officer.



Christopher Concepción
Assistant General Manager
Department of Cultural Affairs, City of Los Angeles

Chris Concepción is an eighteen-year government administrator with the City of Los Angeles. He currently serves as the Assistant General Manager of the LA Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), the City's arts and cultural agency. In this capacity, he assists the General Manager in overseeing the operations of the agency and DCA's implementation efforts for the 2028 Cultural Program for the Olympic and Paralympic Games. DCA strives to provide equitable access to diverse and enriching cultural activities through, in part, community art, grantmaking, performing arts, and public art.

Previously, he served in the Office of LA Controller Ron Galperin in a number of roles, most recently as Chief Deputy Controller, the Office's Executive Officer. Preceding his time in the Controller's Office, he spent nearly a decade with the Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst, supporting the Los Angeles City Council. Chris also formerly worked for San Bernardino Mayor Pat Morris as the Assistant to the Mayor for Communications, Education Policy & Initiatives.

Chris holds a degree in Political Science and Opera Performance from the University of Redlands and resides in Los Angeles.



Kristin Sakoda
Director
Department of Arts and Culture, Los Angeles County

Kristin Sakoda is Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, the local arts agency with a mission to advance arts, culture, and creativity throughout the most populous county in the U.S. The Department's programs include grants and technical assistance to nonprofit organizations; creative career pathways including the nation's largest paid arts internship program; public-private arts education initiatives; commissioning artists for the LA County Civic Art Collection; professional development; research and evaluation; and cross-sector arts strategies to address civic issues—all done through a lens of cultural equity and inclusion.

Ms. Sakoda is an arts executive, attorney, and performing artist with over 25 years in the field. As an artist she appeared on stages around the world including with dance and social justice company Urban Bush Women, in *Rent*, and *Mamma Mia!* on Broadway. Prior to her work at LA County, she served at New York City Department of Cultural Affairs overseeing a \$200M portfolio of strategic, programmatic, policy, and legislative projects on diversity and inclusion; public art; creative aging; cultural facilities; grants; and affordable workspace for artists. She holds a J.D. from NYU School of Law with honors in Entertainment Law, and a B.A. from Stanford University with a specialization in Race and Ethnicity and secondary major in Feminist Studies.

Kristin Sakoda is Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, the local arts agency with a mission to advance arts, culture, and creativity throughout LA County. Its programs include grants to nonprofit organizations; creative career pathways; arts education initiatives; commissioning artists for the LA County Civic Art Collection; professional development; research and evaluation; and cross-sector arts strategies to address civic issues—all with a lens of cultural equity and inclusion.

Ms. Sakoda is an arts executive, attorney, and performing artist with over 25 years in the field. She appeared on stages with dance and social justice company Urban Bush Women, in *Rent*, and *Mamma Mia!* on Broadway. Prior to LA County, she served at the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. She holds a J.D. from NYU School of Law, and B.A. from Stanford University. Visit www.lacountyarts.gov and follow @kriPstinsakoda on Instagram.

PANEL 3: The Arts Community



Gustavo Herrera
Chief Executive Officer
Arts for LA

Gustavo was appointed as Arts for LA's Chief Executive Officer in December 2018. Prior to working with Arts for LA, he was the Western Regional Director for Young Invincibles (YI), where he was responsible for leading YI's California offices, including its West Coast expansion. As director, he set strategic direction and advanced YI's policy priorities on health care, higher education, jobs, and civic engagement for the region.

Before starting at Young Invincibles, Gustavo was the Executive Director of LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes (LAPCA), overseeing the day-to-day operation of a county museum, including the oversight of a master plan committee responsible for strategically developing three acres of additional museum campus. From 2010-2012, Gustavo led programs and operations for the Maestro Foundation, a classical music and performance arts foundation. Between 2007-2010, he assessed and recommended business growth strategies in the US marketplace for the global Fortune 500 Company, American Honda Motors, Co.

Gustavo holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from American Jewish University and a dual Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies with an emphasis in socio-politics and economics and Art History from the University of California Santa Barbara. Gustavo served on the Board of Directors of CA for the Arts and was Vice Chair of the Board of CA Arts Advocates. He is a current board member and the past Chairman for CA Forward and an Advisory Board Member for UCLA Extension.

His commentary has been mentioned in major news outlets, including ABC, The Los Angeles Times, LAist and CBS. He has published commentary on the creative economy and equitable policy making.



Heather Heslup
Director of Public Arts Programs, Destination Crenshaw
Board Member, Californians for the Arts

Heather E. Heslup is the Director of Public Art Programs for Destination Crenshaw and an arts and culture leader with over 18 years of nonprofit experience spanning public art, arts education, organizational strategy, and creative economic development.

At Destination Crenshaw, she has been integral to the development of an ambitious public art and cultural ecosystem rooted in South Los Angeles. Since joining the organization in 2023, she has built its programmatic framework, encompassing public art commissions, exhibitions, and community programming; creative economy initiatives; workforce development; and long-term stewardship of Destination Crenshaw's public art collection.

Beyond programming, Heather has provided leadership in organizational strategy, strategic partnerships, fundraising, and planning for the long-term operations and community impact of Destination Crenshaw's 1.3-mile open-air Arts & Cultural experience.

Previously, Heather led programmatic initiatives for Turnaround Arts: California, a program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and is the founder of Pure Art Solutions, a strategic consulting practice supporting community-centered arts organizations and institutions. A passionate advocate for the arts, her work is grounded in how culture can advance equity, social justice, and economic opportunity.

Heather holds degrees from Howard University and Columbia College Chicago, as well as an Executive Leadership Certification from Cornell University.



Sofia Klatzker
Cultural Affairs Manager
City of Santa Monica

Sofia Klatzker is a visionary civic leader with over two decades of experience advancing regional cultural policy, equitable grantmaking, and large-scale creative economies across California. As the Cultural Affairs Manager for the City of Santa Monica, she oversees close to \$600,000 in city administered grant programs, the city's public art program, and has secured an additional \$1.2 million in external funding from sources to expand programming citywide, while forming key partnerships that have streamlined civic operations and shaped the city's upcoming Cultural Olympiad initiatives.

Klatzker's impactful tenure includes conceiving and opening Santa Monica's first municipal art gallery at Bergamot Station, reopening vital closed facilities like the Miles Playhouse, and launching the nation's most expansive daily digital billboard arts program on the Third Street Promenade.

Klatzker previously served as the Executive Director of Arts for LA, where she spearheaded major voter engagement campaigns for the creative sector and championed regional arts education. Her extensive strategic experience includes leadership roles at the Los Angeles County Department of Arts and Culture, the 99% Invisible podcast, and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA).

She holds an MA in arts administration from Goucher College and BM in electronic music composition from Oberlin Conservatory.