

# CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA



**ERIC GARCETTI**  
MAYOR

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## DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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DANIELLE BRAZELL  
GENERAL MANAGER

June 13, 2018

Honorable Eric Garcetti  
Mayor of Los Angeles  
City Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Attention: Mandy Morales, Legislative Coordinator

Honorable City Council  
C/O: Office of the City Clerk  
City Hall, Room 303

**RE: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO RETROACTIVELY APPLY FOR, AND ACCEPT, A \$50,000 GRANT FROM THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS FOR THE BLACK DOLL SHOW**

### SUMMARY:

The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs applied for and received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts in the amount of \$50,000 to support a publication on the legacy of DCA's "Black Doll Show."

In accordance with Administrative Code 14.6.B, DCA requests authority to accept these grant funds, and expend them in accordance with the recommendations below.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

The General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs respectfully requests that the City Council, subject to approval by the Mayor:

1. AUTHORIZE the General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs or designee to retroactively submit a grant application to the National Endowment for the Arts, Artworks category;
2. AUTHORIZE the General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs or designee to submit all necessary paperwork relative to the grant, subject to City Attorney approval as to form and legality;
3. AUTHORIZE the Department of Cultural Affairs to accept a grant award from the National Endowment for the Arts in the amount of \$50,000;
4. AUTHORIZE the General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs or designee to negotiate and execute the grant award and agreement on behalf of the City and submit the required reporting relative to the grant, subject to City Attorney approval as to form and legality;
5. AUTHORIZE the Department of Cultural Affairs to receive and expend National Endowment for the Arts funds for activities for all eligible purposes;



6. AUTHORIZE the Controller to:

- a. ESTABLISH a new appropriation account within Fund 337/30, Cultural Affairs Grants, to be labeled "Black Doll Show;"
- b. APPROPRIATE \$50,000 received from the National Endowment for the Arts into the newly established account "Black Doll Show" within Fund 337/30;

7. AUTHORIZE the General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs or designee to prepare any Controller's instructions needed to implement actions approved by the Council and Mayor on matters presented in or deriving from the transmittal, and/or to make necessary technical adjustments, and further, request that the Controller implement these instructions.

**BACKGROUND:**

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Artworks grant category supports artistically excellent projects that celebrate our creativity and cultural heritage, invite mutual respect for differing beliefs and values, and enrich humanity.

This grant award will provide partial resources for The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) to publish a catalog celebrating the artistic legacy of the Black Doll Art Show at the William Grant Still Art Center. Now entering its 38<sup>th</sup> year, the exhibition was founded by noted African American curator Cecil Ferguson (1931-2013) as a response to The Doll Test, a 1940s study on the psychological effects of segregation by Dr. Mamie and Kenneth Clark demonstrating that African American children preferred playing with white dolls. This test went on to become evidence in civil rights law suits; the Clarks became expert witnesses in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, helping to create the landmark decision to desegregate schools.

The Black Doll Show was discussed in a 1990 oral history with Cecil Ferguson from UCLA's African-American Artists project, and was referenced in Daniel Widener's *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*. Ferguson noted, "Black dolls are the perfect showcase of our people's dreams deferred, denials of suffrage, and perseverance throughout an American history of inequality. Our accomplishments and future aspirations are there too."

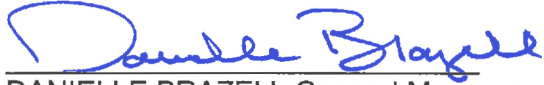
Since the show's inception, Los Angeles-based artists have participated in thematic exhibitions, including *Dolls of Color from Around the World* (2008), *From the Cotton Fields to the New Millennium* (2004), *A Century of African-American Dolls: The Pride and Politics of Portrayal* (1999), and *Puppets and Puppeteers: The Afro-American Image* (1986). While the show has evolved with new generations, it has kept close ties to its founders. As founders and participating artists age, and the community continues to shift demographically, it becomes increasingly urgent to document the evolution and growth of the Black Doll Show.

The exhibition has been referenced in academic literature, yet no formal documentation has been produced. This publication will document the history, content, themes, and impact of the Black Doll Show, and feature oral histories; scholarly and reflective essays; photography artwork; and archival material. Content will highlight approximately 300 artworks and more than 50 artists, doll collectors, and curators that have made the Black Doll Show a meaningful and successful program. The

publication is anticipated to coincide with the February 2019 African American Heritage Month, and be will be accompanied by arts education programs and community engagement activities.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no impact to the General Fund 100.



DANIELLE BRAZELL General Manager  
Department of Cultural Affairs