

**TEXAS ART FOR JUSTICE FORUM
JULY 14, 2018
HOUSTON, TX**

FINAL REPORT

Summary

California Lawyers for the Arts (CLA), in collaboration with Texas Accountants and Lawyers for the Arts (TALA) and the Houston Museum of African American Culture, presented the Texas Arts for Justice Forum, at the Houston Museum of African American Culture in Houston, Texas on July 14, 2018. This was the second forum in a national series that took place in six different states—Michigan, Texas, Georgia, Alabama, California and New York.

A total of 80 persons from across the state included state legislators, arts organizations and artists who are engaged in policy making and dialogue with regards to criminal justice and arts education for persons confined in correctional institutions and for those re-entering society. Breakout sessions provided opportunities for identified topics to be discussed in depth. A light breakfast and full lunch were provided for all registered participants. A Summary Evaluation and Results for the forum accompanies this report.

Highlights

The forum took place on Saturday, July 14, 2018. The day began with opening statements by John Guess, Jr., CEO of the Houston Museum of African American Culture and Alma Robinson, Executive Director of the California Lawyers for the Arts. An inspiring keynote address was given by Kathryn Griffin Grinan, a woman who was formerly incarcerated and is now employed by the Harris County Sheriff's Office. In 2017, she received the Rothko Chapel Oscar Romero Award for her work in prisons with women who have been convicted of sex trafficking crimes.

Griffin Grinan's address was followed by the first panel entitled "Setting the Stage." The panelists included State Representative Garnet Coleman, Texas House of Representatives District 147; John Abodeely, CEO, Houston Arts Alliance; Gary Gibbs, PhD, Executive Director, Texas Commission on the Arts, Moderator; Sandra Guerra Thompson, Director, Criminal Justice Institute, University of Houston Law Center; and Jeremy Osborne, Assistant Director of Education, Austin Classical Guitar.

The afternoon began with a performance by Saul Paul (returned citizen, artist and motivational speaker) who engaged the audience in a "call and response" refrain that energized the participants for the afternoon proceedings. The second panel was entitled "Criminal Justice and the Arts. Participants included State Representative James White, Texas House of Representatives District 19; Leah Pinney, Executive Director, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, Moderator; SaulPaul, Musician and Activist, ReRoute Music Group; and Raphael Travis, DrPH, LCSW, Associate Professor, Texas State University School of Social Work.

The second panel was followed by five breakout sessions on the following topics: Juvenile Justice, Incarcerated Women, Restorative Justice, Bail Reform and Other Policy Issues, and Program Development, Evaluation, and Funding. Using the lessons learned from the Michigan Forum, our breakout facilitators were experts on their topics and provided a summary of the topics for the participants.

The third panel was entitled “Next Steps” and included Gary Gibbs, PhD, Executive Director, Texas Commission on the Arts; Ann S. Graham, Executive Director, Texans for the Arts; John Guess Jr., CEO, Houston Museum of African American Culture; and Alma Robinson, Executive Director, California Lawyers for the Arts

The day ended with a closing reception.

Recap of Texas Forum

- Texas Forum held at Houston Museum of African American Culture on July 14, 2018
- Of critical importance was the presence of state legislators from both political parties and the Statewide leaders of the major State criminal justice and arts organizations
- Interactive Performance by SaulPaul (returned citizen, artist and motivational speaker) was a good segue from lunch into next panel — great energy boost.
- During discussion following his panel presentation, Texas Rep. James White asked Gary Gibbs, the Executive Director of the Texas Commission on the Arts, to call an official at the state Department of Criminal Justice the following week to see if some programs could be started now, rather than waiting for the next legislative cycle.
- HMAAC is editing a video of the Texas Forum that will be posted to Youtube.

Evaluations

- We received a total of 27 completed evaluations from the Texas Forum.
- 100% of respondents (25 out of 25) said their objectives for attending the Forum were met.
- 73% (56 out of 77 responses) ranked the plenary panels as excellent, while 25% (19 out of 77) ranked them as very good.
- 96% (47 out of 49 responses) ranked the discussions during the breakout sessions as excellent or very good.
- 92% (24 out of 26) rated the content of communications received prior to the Forum as excellent or very good.

When asked what was the most valuable part of the Forum, a visual artist said, “the wide variety of attendees,” while another respondent shared, “the Rep. Coleman and White presentation.” Several respondents suggested follow-up convenings; one recommended to “have meetings with the interested legislators,” and another suggested, “perhaps a LinkedIn group to continue this conversation after today’s event.”

After the conference, Johnathan Kana, a returned citizen, worked with project consultant Jacqueline Trescott to complete an article describing the forum. His piece, “A Perspective on the Texas Art for Justice Forum” was posted as a blog on the website of the Justice Arts Coalition: <https://thejusticeartscoalition.org/2018/10/17/a-perspective-on-the-texas-arts-for-justice-forum/>

Funding Sources

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This report was written by John Guess, CEO of the Houston Museum of African American Culture, with support from Ariel Heinicke of California Lawyers for the Arts.