



County of Los Angeles
Workforce Development, Aging
And Community Services
Office of External Communications
3175 W. 6th Street, Suite 302 – Los Angeles, CA
90020
<http://wdacs.lacounty.gov>



Cynthia D. Banks
Director

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

October 10, 2017

Contact: Joel Diaz
Cell: (213) 738-3084
jdiaz@wdacs.lacounty.com
Twitter: @LACountyWDACS

**Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and Human Relations Commission
Holds John Anson Ford Human Relations Awards and Reception**

On Tuesday, October 10, 2017, The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and Commission on Human Relations honored exemplary change makers and innovators for their contributions towards transforming prejudice into acceptance, inequity into justice, and hostility into peace within the communities of Los Angeles County. The John Anson Ford Human Relations Awards is an annual event to honor individuals, organizations, and companies that have significantly impacted human relations in Los Angeles County for the better.

“On behalf of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services, I want to extend my congratulations to this year’s John Anson Ford Human Relations Award winners. The true reward is not the acknowledgement we give today, but the impact of these life-altering programs. Our success depends on unity between innovative individuals, organizations and other community partners, such as the outstanding awardees we recognize today,” said Cynthia Banks, Director of County of Los Angeles Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services.

Those recognized on October 10th included:

- **Claudia Rueda & W. Kamau Bell** – Rueda is a 22 year old university student activist who courageously speaks out for immigrants' human rights despite being an undocumented DACA-eligible 'dreamer;' she was arrested by federal immigration authorities after prominently protesting for her mother's release. Bell examines subjects related to intergroup relations and human rights in Los Angeles County and across the nation through thought provoking humor, interviews and discussion; he gives viewers a lens to examine their own perspectives on race, intergroup conflict, and power
- **Vaka Faletau** - Now serves as the Vice-Chair, Board of Directors Member of the Pacific Islander Health Partnership (PIHP). Mr. Faletau is the co-founder of the Tongan American Youth Foundation (TAYF) with its mission to motivate, educate and empower Tongan Americans and Pacific Islanders, especially youth, to reach

their full potential as positive, productive and successful members of society, including seeking alternative to youth and community violence.

- **Santee High School's Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Club** - Led efforts to establish L.A.'s first all-gender bathroom at a public school despite fierce opposition. Students gathered over 700 signatures among stakeholders and presented their request to LAUSD administrators and got it approved through district channels. Despite tactics and arguments used by opponents of "All-gender" bathrooms, as of almost 1 year of implementation, the "All-Gender" bathroom at Santee Education Complex has been described by administrators as one of the cleanest bathrooms in the school and more importantly ZERO complaints of sexual harassment in said bathroom have been filed.



- **Community Coalition's 25th anniversary commemoration project of 1992 L.A. Uprising** - Re-Imagine Justice is a critical reflection of the 1992 LA Uprising, present day life in South LA, and an imaging of the future of our city. The multi-generational offering narrates the history of struggle and depth of resilience and resistance, of destruction and liberation.



- **Somos Familia Valle's Youth and Parent Leadership Project** - Created in 2014 by San Fernando Valley first-generation college students of color, supports, trains, empowers, and mobilizes the LGBTQ+ community, immigrant families, and our supporters for racial, gender, economic, and environmental justice.



- **Educated Men with Meaningful Messages (EM3)** - EM3 started in 1996 with a three-year grant award from the California Department of Health Services Office of Family Planning's Male Involvement Program. EM3 is committed to supporting and assisting multiethnic male youth in building their self-esteem, gaining leadership and decision making skills as well as having a positive and influential voice in the Long Beach community. Utilizing peer-to-peer model approaches, EM3's envisions enabling young men to develop resiliency skills while defining their own successes.



- **Center for Conflict Resolution's Hindenburg Park Sign Mediation project** - The group worked extremely hard to come up with a solution that was ultimately acceptable to all parties; one that acknowledged both sides of history regarding the Crescenta Valley Community Regional Park.



“At a time when there is a sense of heightened discrimination and polarization, it’s important for our Commission to lift up the often unsung heroes who are advancing justice and building bridges of understanding,” said Robin Toma, Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations.

Commission President Isabelle Gunning noted that “For all the good work that our Commissioners and staff do, we deeply appreciate these amazing peacemakers, educators and advocates whom we need to meet the numerous intergroup relations and human rights challenges we face in our county.”

The awardees have made tremendous steps toward impacting the County in a way that creates positive social change now and for the future. The Commission on Human Relations, as part of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services, is proud to acknowledge and recognize the great work and programs of the awardees.

About Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services

Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) is committed to connecting communities and improving the lives of all generations in Los Angeles County. We provide employment services to adults and youth. We work with employers in times of hiring and downsizing. We offer mediation services to avoid court filings. We investigate

abuse claims against our older adult and disabled population. We provide nutrition and other life-enhancing services to older adults. Our Human Relations Commission is dedicated to fostering positive inter-group relations.

About the Human Relations Commission

The Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations is one of the oldest and largest agencies of its kind in the United States. The Commission's mission is to promote better human relations in Los Angeles County by working to transform prejudice into acceptance, inequity into justice and hostility into peace.

###