



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** May 12, 2016

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**READOUT AND BACKGROUND: NYC DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
HOSTS PUBLIC DISCUSSION ON CULTIVATING DIVERSITY IN NEW YORK CITY  
THEATER COMMUNITY**

On May 9, Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl welcomed more than 200 representatives of theater groups from across the city to The New Victory Theater, located on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street in the heart of the city's theater district, to discuss strategies and opportunities for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Opening remarks were made by Cora Cahan, President of The New Victory Theater; Executive Director of the NYC Department of City Planning Purnima Kapur; New York City Council Majority Leader Jimmy van Bramer; and Commissioner Finkelpearl.

In remarks, Commissioner Finkelpearl shared results on theater diversity from the [demographic report released earlier this year](#) on City-funded cultural organizations. He emphasized why it's important to cultivate a theater sector that looks like New York City – seizing this opportunity to open up the careers and opportunities for creative expression made possible by this vibrant marquee NYC industry to residents of all backgrounds. He also highlighted the importance of keeping disability and access at the forefront of the conversation.

**Theater Subdistrict Council**

This was one in a series of conversations DCLA has hosted among cultural stakeholders to talk about what works in engaging more New Yorkers in our cultural community at more points in their lives. With the **\$2 million in new funding available for diversity efforts through the City's [Theater Subdistrict Council](#)**, DCLA is eager to seize this moment to share substantive ideas and innovative proposals for how we can make sure that every resident has the opportunity to participate in our city's vibrant theater community. Learn more about the broader diversity initiative and share your views at [www.nyc.gov/culture/diversity](http://www.nyc.gov/culture/diversity).

**Diversity in Theater Panels**

First Panel

**Kristin Sakoda**, Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (Moderator)

**Teresa Eyring**, Executive Director, Theatre Communications Group

**Reg Flowers**, Executive Director, Falconworks

**Lindsey Buller Maliekel**, Director of Education / Public Engagement, New Victory Theater

**Rosalba Rolon**, Artistic Director, Pregones Theater / Puerto Rican Traveling Theater

**Alexander Santiago-Jirau**, Director of Education, New York Theater Workshop

At the start of the first panel, Deputy Commissioner Sakoda highlighted her personal connection to the theater community, and identified actions that organizations can do to advance diversity

efforts. She introduced the panelists and articulated that the goal for the panel is to share insights and effective diversity-building strategies.

Topics discussed included the risk of diversity and inclusivity becoming just a buzz word; that diversity isn't just a program, it's a deeper pattern; intersectionality – the considerations of different kinds of diversity (racial and ethnic, socio-economic, disability, and others) at once; and that unless diverse colleagues and partners are incorporated into decision making, we run the risk of tokenism.

### Second Panel

**Edwin Torres**, Deputy Commissioner, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs (Moderator)

**B.D. Wong**, actor; Board Member, Rosie's Theater Kids

**Julie Menin**, Commissioner, Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment

**Christine Bruno**, Disability Advocate, Alliance for Inclusion in the Arts

**Alessandra DiGusto**, Chief Administrative Officer, Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation

**Sue Frost**, Broadway League / Junkyard Dog Productions / Diversity Committee

Deputy Commissioner Torres opened the panel by articulating NYC Department of Cultural Affairs' conviction that the embrace of staff diversity helps us to achieve the goal of having cultural experiences touch the lives of more New Yorkers at more points in their lives.

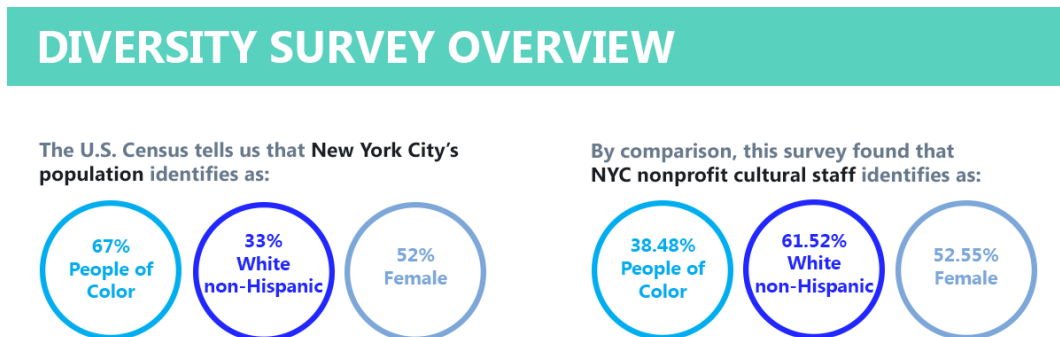
Topics discussed included the importance of early and frequent exposure to and engagement with culture for children; the value of mentoring aspiring young professionals; and the need to include disability in our definitions of diversity for any efforts to be truly inclusive of all.

Throughout panel discussions, @NYCulture shared highlights through #CultureForAll: <https://storify.com/NYCulture/cultureforall>.

### Background: NYC Theater Diversity Data

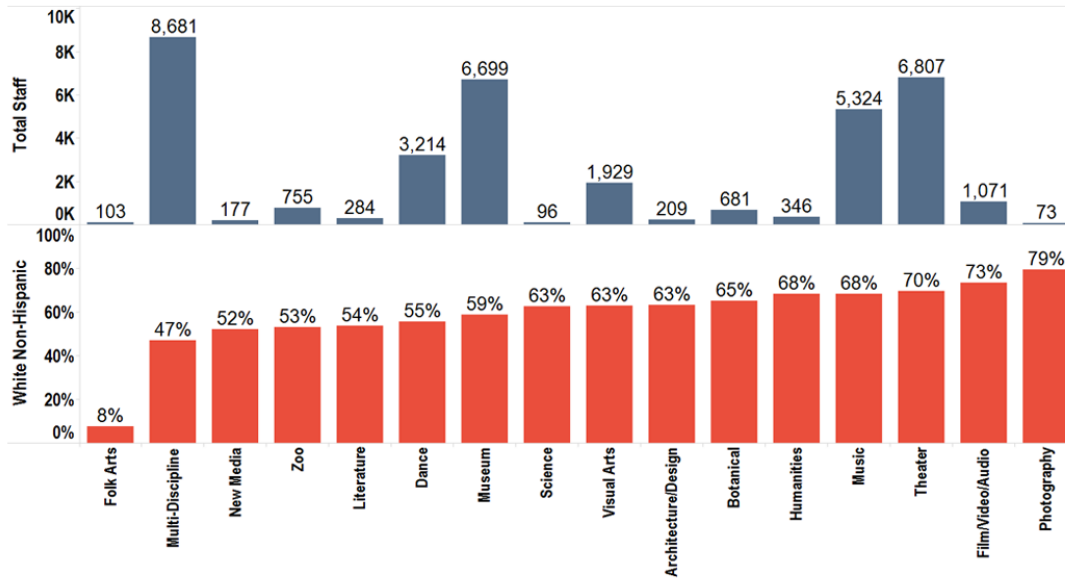
As part of de Blasio Administration's commitment to equity and inclusion, DCLA conducted a survey of the cultural organizations that receive funding from the City:

- 987 organizations provided information on 36,441 paid employees, providing an in depth look at who works in our cultural community:



**The theater sector faces particular challenges:** The survey captured 6,807 positions and found:

**Discipline totals and percent white non-Hispanic**



- **70%** of people employed in theaters identify as white, 9% higher than the cultural field in NYC.
- While **51% of theater leadership is female**, only 35% of technical / production jobs are held by women.
- Programming positions are generally around 45% people of color for cultural groups. In theater, these positions are around 25% people of color. These positions decide what gets on the stage. At a time when Hamilton – one of the most diverse shows around – is also the hottest ticket around, programming decisions matter.

For more information visit [www.nyc.gov/culture/diversity](http://www.nyc.gov/culture/diversity).

Commissioner Finkelpearl’s closing remarks focused on the urgency of this moment, and why the willingness of people to come together and take a hard look at where we fail and where we succeed is incredibly important. We have an opportunity to make sure that theater continues to be a place that New Yorkers can seek fulfillment, entertainment, and meaningful connections and opportunities for creative expression for generations to come.