

# California Lawyers for the Arts Launches Designing Creative Futures Program for Formerly Incarcerated Residents

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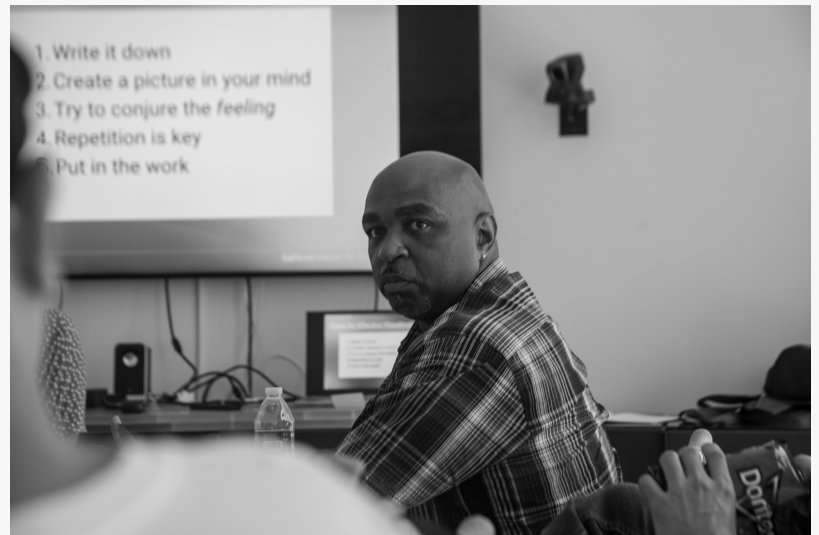
San Diego, CA—[California Lawyers for the Arts](#) (CLA) is helping formerly [incarcerated](#) San Diego County residents build their futures through [Designing Creative Futures](#) (DCF), a job training program that places them in paid four-month internships with arts organizations. With the support of a new state contract, this program is being expanded statewide.

"The Designing Creative Futures re-entry program is a holistic, wonderful way to provide career counseling, professional development, and support to formerly incarcerated Californians who are working to build their future careers and contribute to our communities," said Senate President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins (D-San Diego). "I was pleased to support CLA's request for \$3 million in state budget funding to expand this program statewide over the next three years."

CLA has begun placing participants with San Diego organizations based on the participants' interests and the



The current cohort engages in a goal setting exercise led by Program Managers Morgan Mandalay and Toyin Moses.



Participant James Phillip listens intently during a recent professional development workshop hosted by the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego.

organizations' needs. During the internships, the interns are engaged with the organization's staff in a range of careers—from teaching artists to technical roles and nonprofit arts administration. Throughout the internship period, participants receive support from an education/career counselor to assist in securing full-time, permanent employment and/or further educational opportunities, and social services support as needed. The interns also participate in monthly professional development workshops provided by CLA that build job readiness, communication, and conflict resolution skills. In addition to \$20/hour for 20 hours/week during the four-month internships, they receive transportation stipends.

"The San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture is pleased to support California Lawyers for the Arts with launching Designing Creative Futures in our city through grants from the NEA's Our Town Program and the City of San Diego Creative Communities Program, said Jonathon Glus, the Commission's Executive Director." Additional funding for the San Diego pilot was received from the Conrad Prebys Foundation, the Art for Justice Fund, and the San Diego County Board of Supervisors.

Glus continued, "Giving formerly incarcerated persons opportunities to work in paid internships with stellar arts organizations has provided the creative sector with a meaningful strategy for reducing recidivism while helping people rebuild their lives with work they can be proud of. We are pleased to see the program expanding to Los Angeles and other California cities with additional support from the Art for Justice Fund, the NEA, and the state of California's Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation."

In San Diego, nine formerly incarcerated persons have been placed in paid internships with nonprofit arts organizations this year. One intern in the philanthropy department at the Old Globe Theatre commented that what she liked most was "the opportunity to pursue my dream of grant writing." She continued, "This has been an amazing opportunity and (I am) grateful for this experience through DCF." When she applied for the internship, her goal was to learn how to write grants to create a nonprofit organization that could help other women coming home learn about financial literacy. While she was incarcerated, she had been engaged in the Old Globe's Shakespeare program. At the conclusion of the CLA-sponsored internship, the Old Globe has continued to employ her.

An intern who worked in the exhibitions department at the Institute for Contemporary Art stated, "I like that they (CLA) did all the foot work for me and placed me where I normally would not step in....I was given an opportunity to work at a place where I always dream of being." In addition, he said, "The supervisors are awesome and easy to get along with." Asked what changes he'd observed in himself, he responded, "I've seen a lot of maturity within myself. I also like (that) I'm being paid for being an intern and being placed in Balboa Park."

Applications can be completed online or downloaded from [calawyersforthearts.org](http://calawyersforthearts.org) and will be reviewed on an ongoing, rolling basis. Basic eligibility requirements are:

- Ages 18+
- Formerly incarcerated, released within the past three years

- Interest in the arts\*
- Ability to commit to four-month part-time internship period
- Documented proof of COVID-19 vaccination

Here's a video demonstrating an intern's experience at the Old Globe:

<https://vimeo.com/730844005>

For more information, visit [calawyersforthearts.org](http://calawyersforthearts.org) or contact Mike Mena at 310-913-0625 or [mike@ileanainternational.com](mailto:mike@ileanainternational.com)

About California Lawyers for the Arts:

California Lawyers for the Arts (CLA) empowers the creative community by providing education, representation, dispute resolution, advocacy for the arts and justice reform. In addition, CLA aims to be a model arts organization, focusing on innovation and collaboration, while providing statewide and national leadership in the field of art/law organizations and articulating a role for the arts in community development.

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