

## **UCLA: THE “BELOVED COMMUNITY” AND THE ROOTS OF THE CULTURAL (r)EVOLUTION**

How C. Bernard Jackson and Dr. J. Alfred Cannon reflected UCLA’s heritage of “The Beloved Community” as they founded the Los Angeles Inner City Cultural Center, launched the multicultural arts movement and expanded the University’s cultural footprint in the City of Los Angeles.

By Ernest Dillihay, UCLA ’76, ’81

During its first 100 years of existence, UCLA has made use of its resources and the talents of its administrators, faculty and students to grow in prestige and influence while building a legacy that continues to evolve to this day.

That legacy includes contributions to the social fabric of both the University and the City of Los Angeles – particularly in the world of arts and culture. In my own personal history and interests in that arena, two figures loom large. One is the former UCLA Chancellor, Franklin D. Murphy; the other is a former student, C. Bernard Jackson, who obtained his B.A and M.A. in music from UCLA.

From a top-down and a bottom-up perspective, these two individuals, each working with his own set of resources, impacted the social, arts and cultural fabric on and off the UCLA campus. Building a legacy may or may not have been their intent when they embarked on their respective journeys, but there is little doubt that their endeavors laid the foundation upon which their legacy resides.

UCLA in the 1960s was a simmering cauldron of conscious, revolutionary, creative, cultural arts activism and the base from which Jackson and Murphy impacted – probably beyond their own imaginations — the social fabric and artistic and cultural tapestry of Los Angeles. Thus, UCLA can be said to have provided the foundation upon which “The Roots of the Cultural (r)Evolution” took place in the city of Los Angeles.

I came to this conclusion while conducting research for the Cultural Legacy Project – i.e., the Los Angeles Inner City Cultural Center / C. Bernard Jackson Memorial Library – which will support the design, construction and operation of a public / private institution honoring the legacy of the Inner City Cultural Center and its co-founders, C. Bernard Jackson and Dr. J. Alfred Cannon.

I knew that both were connected to UCLA. Mr. Jackson, a former Merchant Marine from the Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, was a budding playwright, lyricist, and a composer of original music for such dance legends as Alvin Ailey, Bella Lewitsky and Paul Taylor. He also served as Ailey’s musical director on a South American tour. In the late 1950’s and early 1960’s, while pursuing his M.A. in music, Jackson worked as a rehearsal pianist in the UCLA Dance Department.

Dr. Cannon, formerly of Westbury, New York, was a faculty and staff member at the UCLA Neuropsychiatric Institute, who focused on mental health issues in the inner city.

As Jackson tells the story, he had been in New York and decided to return to the West Coast. He was spending his nights trying to form a small company, dedicated to the ideas that had seemed so clear at the beginning of the '60s, while having returned to his previous position in the UCLA Department of Dance. From his article in *Newworld*, 1980, No. 2, page 10, *Perspective: Art and Reality*:

“It was at UCLA in 1964 that I met Dr. J. Alfred Cannon, a young psychiatrist whom everyone agreed was destined to have a brilliant career. He was on the staff of UCLA’s Neuropsychiatric Institute where Alma Hawkins, chair of the Dance Department, and I were involved in an experimental movement program. It took only a few conversations to reveal that his aims and mine were the same: To utilize whatever skills we possessed to improve the conditions of people of color in a society that had barred all but a few from full participation. I was to find out later that Dr. Cannon was not just a psychiatrist, but one of the most dynamic organizers I have ever had occasion to meet.”

Once Jackson and Cannon had agreed that the arts could help improve mental health and cross-cultural communications among minority groups who shared similar discriminatory social, justice, cultural, educational and economic issues, the seeds of the Inner City Cultural Center took root. They enrolled other interested parties tied to UCLA, including Gregory Peck, and more discussions ensued.

My former theater management graduate program advisor John Cauble, who became an ad hoc Inner City Cultural Center Committee member, told me of the numerous “green room” meetings and discussions that took place on the UCLA campus and other locations in the community. For example, Gregory Peck’s daughter Cecilia Peck shared with me that her father had hosted several meetings regarding Inner City at his home.

These Inner City formation meetings benefited from UCLA’s position in the world of theater, film and television and the ties to cultural leaders in Hollywood it had enjoyed since its inception. They were cross-pollinated by the likes of Gregory Peck, Robert Wise, Marlo Thomas, Budd Schulberg and George Savage – all of whom eventually became ICCC Board members and/or Trustees – who were willing to combine their individual and collective interests to create a positive impact on a long-neglected segment of the greater Los Angeles community.

When Watts erupted in 1965, Peck was serving as a National Council of the Arts board member for the National Endowment for the Arts, which at that time was looking for a third leg for its National Educational Theatre Laboratory Project, designed to introduce middle and high school students to theater. With Peck’s recommendation, the NEA chose the Inner City Cultural Center – which had been incorporated in 1966 -- as one of three organizations to implement this project beginning in 1967, along

with the Trinity Square Repertory Company in Providence, Rhode Island, and the Repertory Theater of New Orleans.

ICCC secured additional funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the Ford Foundation and the Los Angeles Unified School District, and began its inaugural theatrical season in 1967. For three years, from 1967-1970, ICCC bussed in 35,000 middle and high school students annually to witness and experience Inner City productions.

Unlike its contemporaries in Rhode Island and New Orleans, however, ICCC did not present theater classics in the usual manner. Instead, Inner City employed a non-traditional and color-blind casting philosophy in its approach to programming and production. By casting minorities in classical as well as contemporary productions, ICCC gave birth to the multicultural arts movement.

While many luminaries gave birth to ICCC's cultural legacy, one of particular note was George Takei, a UCLA student and contemporary of Jackson. He and Jackson had already held conversations long into the night about the Inner City concept. In fact, at a 2016 awards celebration, Takei reminisced about how he and Jackson had watched the television coverage as Watts erupted.

When Takei secured the role of Lt. Sulu on the groundbreaking Sci-Fi show "Star Trek," which boasted TV's first multicultural cast, he was teaching classes at Inner City.

Simultaneously, Takei and Jackson's brother-in-arms, Mako -- an Oscar® nominee for the 1966 film *The Sand Pebbles*, and also an Inner City board member -- was instrumental in founding the East-West Players, the oldest Asian American Theater Company in America.

What Jackson and Cannon envisioned for the Inner City Cultural Center was unique and revolutionary for its time. Jackson's philosophy of color-blind casting enabled any actor, regardless of ethnicity, to perform any role -- a principle he applied, for example, in Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," which tells the story of the fictional American small town of Grover's Corners from 1901-1913 through the everyday lives of its citizens. This Pulitzer Prize-winning play, staged with Jackson's color-blind casting, was a full-on multi-cultural, ethnic and racial production reflective of 1967 Los Angeles as opposed to the fictional Grover's Corners.

This was a significant departure from the more stereotypical roles minorities and people of color were relegated to in the theater, film and television industries at the time, and provided them with greater opportunities for employment.

At the same time, ICCC also began developing a training program for minorities interested in pursuing technical and administrative positions behind the scenes in these same industries, where the number of minorities employed behind the cameras and curtains was also abysmal.

From the outset, Inner City not only established a program of diversity and inclusion, but advocated that the theater, film and television industries embrace this philosophy as well.

The Inner City Cultural Center's position as a multicultural, color-blind and non-traditional arts and cultural institution thus established ICCC as the original genesis -- the "O.G.," the root, the progenitor, the forerunner -- of today's diversity and inclusion initiatives.

What had begun as a conceptual discussion, revolutionary for its time, among UCLA student and faculty members, grew to encompass the support, talent and resources of the University and the community. As ICCC extended its reach, it impacted, contributed to and forever changed the arts and cultural landscape that is embedded in the magic and allure of the city of Los Angeles, the most culturally diverse and creatively enriched city in the world.

One could make a case that the concept of UCLA and its talented progeny extending the University's reach and influence beyond the campus and into the surrounding Los Angeles community is embedded within UCLA's DNA. Certainly, in the case of Jackson and Cannon, they were able to use the UCLA resources at their disposal to effect change from a grassroots, bottom-up approach.

## PART II

UCLA Chancellor Franklin D. Murphy, on the other hand, was able to enlist his colleagues in the University hierarchy and his broad cadre of support to influence, impact and contribute to the arts and cultural environment in a considerably more significant manner -- thus demonstrating how the leadership position resident in the Chancellor's office could be applied to effecting positive change in the broader community.

UCLA had been founded in 1882 as the State Normal School, a teachers' college, in downtown Los Angeles, and moved to a Vermont Avenue location in 1907. In 1919 it was renamed the University of California at Los Angeles and became part of the University of California system. In 1927 ground was broken for a new campus in Westwood as the centerpiece of the Janss Investment Corporation's development of that area. In 1929 UCLA moved to its new campus, then consisting of four buildings -- one of which was the iconic Royce Hall, the only performing arts venue on campus.

Royce Hall was named after the philosopher Josiah Royce, a man who never set foot on the UCLA campus, but who was chosen as the Hall's namesake by UCLA Provost Ernest Carroll Moore and Charles H. Rieber, the first dean of UCLA's College of Letters and Science. They wanted the "chief classroom" on the UCLA campus to represent the thinking and tradition of Royce and his ideal of the "Beloved Community," which he described as "a community capable of achieving the highest good

as well as the common good,” one in which its participants became part of an existence that extended beyond any of their own individual lives.

The inherent value of Royce’s philosophy appears to have been recognized on the UCLA campus from the time Royce Hall was dedicated. Ms. Pebbles Wadsworth, who began working with the Student Committee for the Arts in the early ‘70s and eventually became executive director of the UCLA Center for the Arts at the age of 28, and who had been mentored by then-Committee on Fine Arts Productions executive administrator Frances Inglis, shared with me the history of the arts and culture movement on the UCLA campus.

This movement quite likely began with university administrators like Robert Sproul, University of California President beginning in 1929 and additionally the Provost of UCLA beginning in 1936.

Sproul recognized that a number of European emigrées fleeing Nazi Germany, e.g., Gregor Piatagorsky, Arnold Schoenberg, Pia Gilbert, Kaman Aron, William Melnitz and many others, had arrived in Los Angeles and taken root in the Hollywood community. Some secured positions at UCLA, in some cases having been recruited by their colleagues already at the University, and became teachers, writers, deans and chairs of departments. The potential role the arts could play in the life of UCLA was quickly expanded and became more prominent.

In 1936, in his role as UCLA Provost, Dr. Sproul established a Committee on Drama, Lectures, and Music – successively known as the Committee on Fine Arts Productions, the Department of Fine Arts Productions, Center for Performing Arts, UCLA Live and currently known as the Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA -- with the idea that it would present one musical event per year on campus.

The Committee’s first presentation in February 1937 was the Vienna Choir Boys. Its first subscription series at Royce Hall began later that same year and included the great contralto Marian Anderson, the Budapest String Quartet, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic conducted by Otto Klemperer.

While that first season was devoted to classical music, over the years dance also became an integral part of the programming as such groups as Merce Cunningham, Alvin Ailey, Twyla Tharp, Martha Graham and many others were presented, along with other forms of music.

However, the 1800-seat auditorium in Royce Hall had been designed for speech acoustics, not for music. Not until successive remodelings, overseen by Vice Chancellor Elwin Svenson, had been completed in 1982 did Royce Hall emerge as a regionally important concert hall and the main performing arts facility on the UCLA campus, open to students, faculty and the public.

Svenson’s work reinforced the viewpoint of former Chancellor Murphy and his successor Charles Young, who undertook expansive community engagement initiatives, that UCLA was a regional center

for arts and culture and that UCLA's contribution to the arts in Los Angeles was as important off-campus as it was on-campus.

Murphy recognized the value of the arts and was determined that UCLA should nurture this important resource. For that reason, in 1959 he had recruited Frances Inglis, who had extensive experience as an administrator for talent agencies, film studio heads, and as executive director of the Writers Guild of America West, to come to UCLA and build the first college performing arts program in Los Angeles -- initially known as the Committee on Fine Arts Productions (CFAP) -- on the UCLA campus.

Together with William Melnitz, the founding Dean of the College of Fine Arts, Murphy and Inglis built the foundation for supporting, nurturing and commissioning the arts at UCLA, providing nourishment not only for the students, but for the greater Los Angeles community.

During Chancellor Murphy's tenure and under Frances Inglis's leadership, and with the assistance of critics such as Leonard Feather and input from the Student Committee for the Arts, CFAP -- aka the Center for Performing Arts -- built a national and international reputation for the scope and sophistication of its pop and jazz music programs.

In 1973, Inglis was succeeded by Edmond Harris, who increased the number of programs and encouraged works by new and avant-garde artists. In 1979, Harris was succeeded by Pebbles Wadsworth, who, as a mentee of Frances Inglis, continued innovative and progressive programming, and also served as the first woman president of the International Society of the Performing Arts.

Meanwhile, Dr. Murphy continued to provide leadership in other areas as he plunged deeply into campus affairs. He developed a program of interdisciplinary institutes and study centers and restructured the College of Applied Arts into the College of Fine Arts. During his administration the School of Library Service was established, as was the School of Architecture and Urban Planning.

Dr. Murphy also took it upon himself to become actively involved in various civic and cultural endeavors, the most notable of which was the Music Center of Los Angeles County, which was arriving at the apex of its development in 1964. From his position as Chancellor, he had more than just considerable influence; he was a powerhouse.

William Wilson, art critic of the Los Angeles Times, the Times Mirror Corporation's flagship newspaper, noted that Dr. Murphy had "fashioned an awesome record as a cultural catalyst in the building of museums, libraries, collections and scholarship."

In addition to his work with the Music Center, Dr. Murphy served as chairman of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, was a founder of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, a trustee of the Ahmanson Foundation, and trustee emeritus of the J. Paul Getty Trust.

In 1968, Dr. Murphy left UCLA to become chairman and chief executive officer of the Times Mirror Corporation, holding that position through 1980. The Murphy Sculpture Gardens and Murphy Hall are named in his honor.

UCLA also provided other pillars that contributed to the growth and prominence of the Music Center.

William Melnitz, UCLA Theater Department chair, and the director John Houseman developed the Professional Theatre Group at UCLA – aka “The Group” -- from 1963-1967, creating a model that other universities emulated. In the meantime, as the Music Center was in development during the early 1960s, the Center Theatre Group had been established as one of its resident companies.

Music Center founder Dorothy “Buffy” Chandler reportedly asked Houseman to bring “The Group” at UCLA to the Music Center. Houseman declined and instead recommended a stage manager named Gordon Davidson, with whom he had worked in Connecticut and subsequently brought to UCLA to be “The Group’s” stage manager, to take the Music Center assignment.

With elements of the Professional Theater Group in tow, Davidson thus became the artistic director of the Center Theater Group, ultimately overseeing productions and operations at the Mark Taper Forum and Ahmanson Theatre. This was another example of UCLA progeny extending its influence, talent and resources beyond the campus and impacting the city’s cultural landscape.

Dr. Murphy had laid a foundation for expanding UCLA’s community engagement, which then became a hallmark of Chancellor Charles Young’s administration. Under Dr. Young, the programs developed under the leadership of Frances Inglis, Ed Harris and Pebbles Wadsworth flourished. They reflected a mindset that would accommodate the new influx of energy, changing demographics and popular tastes filtering into and onto the UCLA campus.

Royce Hall was an anchor and center of this performance history for University progeny and the regional Los Angeles community, as exemplified by the list of the artists who performed in Royce Hall and other campus venues during this period of growth and artistic diversity.

During this same period, CFAP adopted a new name designed to recognize and identify its own evolution: the Center for the Performing Arts (CAP). The collaboration of CAP with the Student Committee for the Arts became the mechanism that brought the arts together on campus.

During the late 1950’s, another unique and progressive movement had begun in the UCLA Dance Department, headed up by Alma Hawkins, Pia Gilbert and Allegra Fuller Snyder and continued later by Judy Mitoma.

Recognizing dance as an integral part of human dynamics, Hawkins took dance from the women's gym to the Fine Arts Department, and by 1962 dance was established as a full-scale department. As mentioned earlier, she also began conducting experimental dance movement sessions in UCLA's Neuropsychiatric Institute, where Dr. J. Alfred Cannon was on staff and for which C. Bernard Jackson was the pianist.

Later, the Dance Department, now under the leadership of Professor Allegra Snyder Fuller, grew to include the Ethnic Arts (World Arts and Cultures) Program, an inter-college, interdisciplinary program known as the WAC/Dance Program.

The collaboration between C. Bernard Jackson and Alma Hawkins is another example of how a foundation was laid that contributed to the history and legacy of dance in Los Angeles, with UCLA progeny again providing influence and leadership in this area both locally and nationally. Jackson had already toured as a musical director for Alvin Ailey, and he composed music for the Los Angeles dance community, UCLA dance students, and dance professionals such as Bella Lewitsky, Alvin Ailey, Twyla Tharp, Arthur Mitchell, Donald McKayle, L. Martina Young, and Lula Washington, among others,

Thus, during an important period in the cultural (r)evolution, UCLA's academic, arts and cultural programming and community outreach expanded to create a simultaneous synergy and a broader cultural footprint that included the grassroots, the urban core, previously neglected communities of color, the downtown civic center, the Wilshire corridor, and numerous classrooms and other arts and cultural communities throughout the city of Los Angeles.

This evolution had its roots in the work of such impassioned predecessors as Robert Sproul, Chancellors Murphy and Young, Kenneth McGowan, William Melnitz, George Savage, Ralph Freud, Alma Hawkins, Allegra Fuller Snyder, John Cauble, and UCLA Theater Film and Television Dean Gilbert Cates – a prime influencer in the film and theater communities and an inspiration to me and many others. These individuals, along with others who also had ties to the evolving theater, film and television industries, helped spur the growth of UCLA and its community engagement in arts and culture in profound ways.

These programs. These people. This university. They all came together to lay the foundation upon which the progeny of UCLA could participate in developing and influencing Los Angeles as a regional arts and cultural center. In doing so, they created meaningful change synonymous with Josiah Royce's ideal of the "Beloved Community."

This is why, when I think of Royce Hall, Josiah Royce, and the idea of the "Beloved Community," I think too of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who took up Royce's idea and made it central to his work. In a speech he gave on UCLA's historic Janss Steps on April 27, 1965, Dr. King stressed that the ultimate goal



of the civil rights movement “must be the creation of the beloved community.” He foresaw those many years ago that the American ideal of a shared purpose was endangered by the strategy of division that has poisoned American politics from the mid-60s to the present day.

I do not know whether Jack Jackson, Dr. Cannon, George Takei or any other individuals mentioned in this article were in the audience that day; I do know that it was Chancellor Murphy who introduced Dr. King before he spoke.

Four months after that speech, the Watts rebellion broke out, causing Dr. King to return to Los Angeles to address this outbreak of violence.

And ten years after Dr. King’s speech on the Janss Steps, the Inner City Cultural Center presented the world premiere of the musical “Selma,” written by and starring Tommy Butler and executive produced by Redd Foxx, as a tribute to Dr. King.

As a graduate in the first Ethnic Arts class, a Student Committee for the Arts member, and as a cultural arts career professional, I am witness to the results of the “revolutionary” fire simmering in the city of Los Angeles that gave rise to the 1965 Watts Rebellion.

Although that event was external to the University, it also gave birth to the Inner City Cultural Center and its genesis as the first performing and visual arts institution of its kind in the nation. And as Inner City was presenting its inaugural theatrical season in the urban cultural core in 1967, the Music Center was rising in prominence in the downtown Los Angeles civic center.

As UCLA Chancellor Franklin Murphy was to the Music Center, moving in circles equal to his status, so C. Bernard Jackson, UCLA student and rehearsal pianist in the UCLA Dance Department, was to the Inner City Cultural Center. While these two cultural centers might appear to be somewhat a “tale of two cities,” in essence a prince and pauper scenario, their simultaneous emergence is but one more example of UCLA’s storied legacy.

The Music Center was in the highly supported and economically secure environs of downtown Los Angeles, serving as an anchor for the development of downtown Los Angeles. The Inner City Cultural Center established its roots in the urban cultural core and planted the flag of multiculturalism, a forerunner of today’s diversity and inclusion initiatives. Both had an impact on the cultural landscape, from a top-down and bottom-up approach respectively. UCLA’s role in the development of these two organizations is part of its legacy from which the city of Los Angeles continues to benefit today, as are the legacies of these organizations themselves.

The legacy of the Music Center continues in philanthropic support, bricks and mortar, and expanded arts programming. Preserving the legacy of the Inner City Cultural Center, once its founders had passed on and it no longer occupied its previous physical locations, has been more of a challenge.

Still, the ICCC legacy has been kept alive with annual celebrations of C. Bernard Jackson; with participations in play reading festivals in Leimert Park; with three successive 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations commemorating ICCC milestones in 1965, 1966 and 1967; with an Inner City Cultural Awards Shows and the presentation of annual Legacy Awards; and with the formation of the Cultural Legacy Project, designed to house the archives of C. Bernard Jackson, other ICCC alumni and Los Angeles-based artists and arts organizations while simultaneously providing a foundation for a new and reimagined Inner City Cultural Center that reflects the breakthrough that artists of color have finally made and will continue to make in the entertainment and performing arts industries. The first Inner City Short Film Festival and Awards Show in November 2020 was a first step in that direction.

The timing could not be better for the rebirth and further evolution of the Inner City Cultural Center. Not only are the roots of the cultural (r)evolution are still alive, but momentum is growing as we assemble a board and a management team to expand upon the ICCC legacy.

There are children, there are students, there are alumni, there are those in the entertainment industry – many of which include UCLA progeny -- who are available and eager to further the ICCC legacy through the Cultural Legacy Project, and its rebirth as a regional urban arts center with national impact.

UCLA's leadership, its students and its graduates – the parent and its progeny – are uniquely positioned to build upon the (r)evolutionary process laid down by such predecessors as Dr. Franklin D. Murphy, C. Bernard Jackson, Dr. J. Alfred Cannon, Gregory Peck, Marlo Thomas and Robert Wise, among others – influencing and making significant contributions to the arts and cultural landscape in the city of Los Angeles over the next century and beyond.

Having played a significant role in giving roots to and continuing the legacy of the “Beloved Community” -- the stuff dreams are made of -- UCLA now has the further opportunity to build on its 100-plus years of leadership and service to the community by providing talent and resources to help grow the Inner City Cultural Center's Cultural Legacy Project as an anchor and a bridge to UCLA.

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Author's Note: In 2015, UCLA launched its Beloved Community initiative (BCI) with a mission "to explore and advance The Beloved Community as a global vision for the 21st century." The Beloved Community Initiative offers immersive interdisciplinary multimedia experiences utilizing the legacy of Royce Hall and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1965 campus visit to examine contemporary and historical issues through film, broadcasts, panels and more, to effect positive change -- locally, nationally and globally. <https://www.uclabelovedcommunityinitiative.org/about>

The first BCI Awareness Week took place in April 2019. At the inaugural Beloved Community luncheon, the first BCI Bridge Builders Awards were presented to the distinguished engineer Shelby Jacobs '56, a "hidden figure" of the U.S. Space Program who was project manager of the Apollo-Soyuz orbiter, and former Congresswoman and Ambassador Diane Watson '56, the first Black member of the Los Angeles Unified School District school board and of the California State Senate.

In 2020 the Bridge Builders Award winners were former California Assemblymember The Honorable Shirley Weber ('70, M.A. '71, Ph.D. '75), now California's first Black Secretary of State; and Reverend Gregory Boyle, S.J., founder and director of Homeboy Industries, the world's largest gang-intervention and rehabilitation program, and former pastor of Dolores Mission Church in Los Angeles.

Prior to 2021 BCI Awareness Week, the Bridge Builders Award was renamed the C. Bernard Jackson Bridge Builders Award.

The 2021 Awards were presented to the entrepreneur Mathabo Kunene, Executive Managing Trustee of the Mazisi Kunene Foundation Trust, Durban, South Africa, and Dr. David Hayes-Bautista, UCLA Distinguished Professor of Medicine & Public Health and Director of the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture.

BCI Awareness Week and renaming the Bridge Builders Award for C. Bernard Jackson are two important steps in honoring and strengthening the bond between Los Angeles Inner City Cultural Center and the fertile ground at UCLA where ICC's "root system" originated.