

Joint Committee on Arts

Informational Hearing

Veterans and the Arts: Healing Lives through Creative Expression

Tuesday, May 22, 2018 2:00 p.m.

State Capitol – Room 2040 – Sacramento

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

PANEL 1: Overview



Vito Imbasciani, M.D.

Secretary, California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet)

Vito Imbasciani was sworn in as secretary at the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) on September 28, 2015. Imbasciani was director of government relations at the Southern California Permanente Medical Group since 2004, and has been an active urologic surgeon in that group since 1997.

He served as state surgeon for the California Army National Guard from 2006 to 2014 and as a surgeon in the U.S. Army Medical Corps from 1986 to 2014, with four deployments in support of operations in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Landstuhl, Germany. He retired as colonel in the Medical Corps of the U.S. Army in 2014. Imbasciani has been president of the Los Angeles County Medical Association and the California Urological Association, as well as a trustee of the California Medical Association and the California Association of Physician Groups.

He earned a Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Vermont College of Medicine and Doctor of Philosophy and Master of Arts degrees in musicology from Cornell University. He studied in Rome, Italy as a Fulbright Fellow.

<https://www.calvet.ca.gov/>



Ann Bown-Crawford
Director, California Arts Council

Anne Bown-Crawford was appointed Executive Director of the California Arts Council by Governor Jerry Brown on December 22, 2017. As lead executive, Bown-Crawford promotes the Arts Council's mission to advance California through the arts and creativity by way of the agency's grant programs, services, and initiatives.

With nearly 40 years as a teacher at the secondary level, Bown-Crawford is a champion for arts education in California, serving as administrator for numerous exemplary arts programs. Outside the classroom, Bown-Crawford's sphere of influence spans from community-based work, helping to link the creative industry with economic development; to statewide leadership as an arts supporter; to international impact, endorsing creative education in higher education and technology settings.

Bown-Crawford is on leave from her position as the Founding Director of the Arcata Arts Institute and the Innovation Design Institute, both programs within Northern Humboldt Union High School District; as well as the Fine Arts Department Chair at Arcata High School.

Bown-Crawford is a founder of the Create CA Leadership Council, a statewide collective impact organization with a mission to rethink and create an educational environment for all California students featuring arts education as a central part of the solution to the crisis in our schools. Her work in that capacity led State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson to appoint Bown-Crawford to help write the "Blueprint For Creative Schools."

Bown-Crawford is a new media studio artist and a freelance graphic designer who specializes in branding not-for-profit organizations via print, web, and social media. She is currently a FabLearn Fellow in the Transformative Learning Technologies Lab at the Stanford Graduate School of Education and an Adobe Education Leader. Bown-Crawford holds a Master of Arts in Education from UC Berkeley, a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Design from Northern Illinois University, and was an MFA Design candidate at the California College of Arts. Bown-Crawford is a member of the National Art Education Association and the California Art Education Association.

<http://www.arts.ca.gov/>



Nolen V. Bivens

Brigadier General, U.S. Army, Retired

Military and Arts Community Engagement Advisor, National Endowment for the Arts and Department of Defense Creative Forces Initiative

Nolen Bivens is the founder and President of Leader Six, Inc., a management consulting and service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business, providing professional services and products to customers in federal, state, and local government and well as commercial, health and nonprofit sectors. Prior to starting Leader Six, he was a VP of Business Development and Sales within the defense sector.

A former U.S. Army General, Nolen has led in positions of ever-increasing responsibility from infantry rifle company commander to Deputy Commanding General 4th Infantry Division. He culminated thirty-two years of military service as Chief of Staff, U.S. Southern Command. He also served as Chief Operations Officer with U.S. 3rd Army and Coalition Forces Land Component Command and in several Army, Joint, and U.S. Special Operations Command senior staff officer positions.

Nolen is an advocate at the unique intersection of our military veteran and arts communities. As a Board Director of Americans for the Arts, he testified before Congress on how the arts aid military and diplomatic goals and benefit ill, injured and wounded veterans, families, and caregivers, particularly those suffering the invisible wounds of war. As Chair of the National Leadership Advisory Council for the National Initiative for Arts and Health in the Military, he works across military, government, private, and nonprofit sectors to advance artistic expression in health, healing, and therapies and increase development funds. He also serves as the senior military community engagement advisor for the DOD and NEA Creative Forces Initiative.

His presentations in support of leadership development, youth entrepreneurship, and arts and healing for our veterans and their families can be found online and in printed publications such as the Smithsonian Institution, Huffington Post, the Aspen Institute and Howard University.

Nolen is a graduate of SCSU with a BS in Chemistry, and Beta Kappa Chi National Scientific Honor Society inductee, with a Master of Science in Management from the Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey CA, and in National Security Strategy from the National Defense University, Washington, DC, respectively.

<https://www.arts.gov/partnerships/creative-forces>
<http://leadersix.com/>

PANEL 2: Veterans Voices: Personal Experiences from Veterans Engaged with the Arts



Adam Stone
U.S. Marine Corps, Retired
Member, So Say We All

Adam Stone is a retired Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant with 20 years of service including multiple combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, and numerous peace keeping deployments around the world. He has been published in “The War Horse, and Zero Dark Thirty” and the recipient of the “Brian Turner Creative Writing Scholarship, from Fine Arts Work Center Massachusetts.

He is a stay at home dad and beginning his college career in pursuit of an English literature degree.

<http://www.sosayweallonline.com/?s=veterans>



Phyllis T. Miller
U.S. Navy, Retired
Artist; Creator and Founder, The Veterans Art Venue

A veteran of the U.S. Navy, with service in Vietnam, Phyllis Miller is a seasoned artist with over 25 years of experience in fine art, medical illustration and drafting. She creates art in a vast array of mediums including oil, acrylic, water color and pastel.

Her interest in art started when she was seven years old. She studied at the Art Center College of Design and learned the drafting process during her tour of duty in the U.S. Navy. Phyllis is the owner and founder of the Meroe (Art) Gallery, which she has run since 2007. She also created “The Veterans Art Venue” which provides a passageway for internal healing for fellow veterans that are struggling with PTSD and other service-related health issue, and to ignite a sense of empowerment. She uses her art programs to eliminate the great disconnect felt among and between veterans and civilian communities. Current projects include a touring art exhibit, “Visual Beyond Words, We Bring the World to You” and “Paint and Sip”, a therapeutic hands-on art project for veterans.

Phyllis has been the first place winner for five years, 2008 through 2017, in the Western Region Veterans Administration Arts Competition; has had art published through The Military Arts Foundation; and her work displayed, by invitation, within the executive gallery at Los Angeles City Hall.

<http://www.meroegallery.com>



Christopher Loverro
U.S. Army, Retired
Founder, Warriors for Peace Theatre
Participant, The Veterans Project, Diavolo Dance

Christopher Loverro is an Iraq War veteran and former police officer turned actor. Raised in Oakland, California he is a graduate of UC Berkeley's Peace and Conflict Studies department. He performs with Diavolo's Veteran's Project and is the founder of Warriors for Peace Theatre. While working as a Berkeley Police Officer, he joined the Army Reserves in 2001 and was later deployed to Iraq. He served on a Civil Affairs team in support of the Stryker Brigade Combat Team (3-2) in Mosul and was awarded the Combat Action Badge. Among various other missions he participated in humanitarian relief operations for over 2,000 refugees.

Ironically, after surviving his year in Iraq, he returned to his job as a police officer and was injured in the line-of-duty while fighting a kidnapper. This eventually cut his law enforcement career short. He then studied acting using the post 9/11 GI Bill and found it to be a great form of catharsis.

Christopher Loverro is using acting and film making to promote awareness about veteran's issues and through his Warriors for Peace Theatre company. Its mission is to enable US veterans to perform Shakespeare with veterans from other nations in order to promote peace and healing. His experience with Diavolo has been life changing and it has taught him that barriers are an illusion and that there is beauty and strength in all of us. Diavolo has given him a new lease on life.

<https://www.christopherloverro.com/>
<https://www.warriorsforpeacetheatre.com/>
<https://www.diavolo.org/>



Amber Hoy
U.S. Army, Retired
Artist; Artist Programs Manager, Kala Art Institute

Amber Hoy is an interdisciplinary artist and artists administrator based in Oakland, California. She is also a former combat veteran whose artwork explores issues faced by women in the military, including those issues that intersect with trauma.

Amber grew up in Yankton, South Dakota and enlisted in the US Army and deployed to Qayyarah West, Iraq as an ammunition specialist from 2006-2007 with the 592nd Ordnance Company. She served a total of eight years in the military. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree with an emphasis in photography from University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2011 and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Photography and Integrated Media from Ohio University in 2015.

Since 2015, she has worked at the Kala Art Institute in Berkeley, CA as the Artist Program Manager. At Kala, Amber has managed multiple artist programs including their Artist-in-Residency Program, Media Arts Program, Veteran Residency Program, Parent Artist Award and Kala's Fellowship Program.

<http://www.kala.org/>

PANEL 3: LOCAL ENGAGEMENT: COMMUNITY ARTS PROVIDERS



Elizabeth Washburn
Executive Director, Combat Arts San Diego

Elizabeth is a professional visual artist who exhibits her artwork in galleries and museums throughout the United States. She has been teaching art for over 15 years in museums, art schools and colleges including: University of California San Diego, Timken Museum of Art, and Athenaeum School of the Arts. In addition, she holds a Master's Degree in Painting from the Laguna College of Art and Design and a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco.

In 2010, after volunteering at the Balboa Naval Hospital in San Diego for three years, Elizabeth founded the nonprofit organization "Combat Arts San Diego". Combat Arts provides free art classes, public art opportunities, mentoring, museum tours, and art exhibitions for post-911 combat veterans who are receiving treatment for Post-traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injuries at Department of Defense and Veteran Administration facilities. Using art as a tool to heal, Combat Arts serves over a hundred veterans a year.

<http://www.combatartssd.org/>



Reginald Green
U.S. Navy, Retired
Volunteer Instructor, VetArt

Reginald Green was born and raised in Texas. He is a 14 year, recently retired Navy veteran. “Reggie” got into art to heal and stay busy due to the highly debilitating migraine headaches he acquired as a result of his service.

Prior to finding VetArt, Reggie took it upon himself to learn the basics of molding, painting, and expressing himself through clay. He says, “when I work with clay it allows me to get lost in the process and I don’t feel the pain so much.” Reggie is a dedicated VetArt participant and this dedication inspired him to train to become an instructor with the organization.

Reggie lives in San Diego.

<http://www.vetart.org/>



Samuel R. "Mombo" Hernandez
U.S. Marine Corps, Retired
Musician and Teaching Artist, Del Norte Association for Cultural Awareness

Mombo began hand drumming in the early 70's. Studying, learning, and listening to other percussionists, Mombo developed his own unique style. Playing all types of music, he kept being drawn back to contemporary jazz. He was able to connect with with vocalist, Slim Man, in the 90's, which created Mombo's big break into the Jazz scene. This afforded him the opportunity to perform with icons like Peter White, Steve Oliver, Lou Rawls, Roger Smith, Michael Paulo, Freddie Ravel, Marc Antoine, Greg Vail, Tony Windle, and more!

Mombo has been focusing on hands-on percussion demonstrations in schools and drum circles for veterans and their families. It is very important for him to keep the magic alive by sharing his passion for world percussion and sound effect instruments. This helps kids with self-esteem and lets them know that they should never give up on their dreams. Drumming with veterans allows them to "talk to each other with their hands" and produces feelings of well-being, relaxation and reduces stress.

<http://www.mombomusic.com/>
<http://dnaca.net/>



Rebecca Vaudreuil, Ed.M., MT-BC

Music Therapist

Music Therapy Lead, Creative Forces Initiative; Concussion Care Clinic, Camp Pendleton

Rebecca is a board-certified music therapist who earned her Bachelor's degree in music therapy at Berklee College of Music and her Master's degree in Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education with a concentration in educational neuroscience.

She founded military music therapy programming in San Diego, California in 2010, which provided the first sustainable music therapy program model implemented on military bases in support of active duty service members, veterans, and military family engagement.

Rebecca is a clinical music therapist at the Intrepid Spirit Center at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton where she provides rehabilitative music therapy services for wounded, ill, and injured service members. Her position is supported by The National Endowment for the Arts Creative Forces Military Healing Arts Network, of which Rebecca is the Lead for Music Therapy Programs. Through the Creative Forces initiative, she develops best practices and expanded access to creative arts therapies across military and veteran healthcare systems and promotes arts-based partnerships in clinical and community settings.

Rebecca's work in the field of music therapy with military populations has been highlighted in news featured by CNN, ABC's World News Tonight with David Muir, and at the 2017 Memorial Day Capital Concert, which aired on PBS. She has briefed former President Barack Obama and current Second Lady of the United States on music therapy with military populations. She is a published author and lectures at various national and international symposiums, conferences and universities.

<https://www.arts.gov/partnerships/creative-forces>