



Hello listeners, this is ISC ensemble member and Independent Shakespeare Co.'s Artistic Associate for Social Justice Carene Rose Mekertichyan. Thank you all for joining me for ISC's first ever news round up. These monthly episodes will feature social justice initiatives and ways you can serve the Los Angeles Community.

After an incredible movement for Black lives and justice we saw this summer, it is critical that we remain committed to racial justice. If you're unsure of where to start, I will be sharing a number of organizations you can follow and their most recent initiatives in today's episode.

If you are a white ally in the fight for racial justice, consider getting involved with White People 4 Black Lives (WP4BL), which is a white anti-racist collective and activist project that operates within a national network of white anti-racists called Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ).

You can join White People 4 Black Lives' Saturday Dialogue which is a gathering for white anti-racists who want to discuss issues of identity, community, privilege, and racism with the intention of strengthening their own practice as anti-racist.

Before you join a Saturday Dialogue meeting, White People 4 Black Lives simply asks that new members attend an orientation which they hold on Wednesdays. For more information you can find them on instagram at White People 4 Black Lives.

White People 4 Black Lives also works in association with Black Lives Matter Los Angeles which is another important organizing group that you all should support. BLM's latest action is a call to stand with District Attorney George Gascón in his efforts to build true criminal justice reform in our community. Police associations and a number of prosecutors are attempting to block Gascon's progressive criminal justice reform, which is in direct contrast to what we as a community voted for when George Gascón defeated incumbent Jackie Lacey.

Gascón wants to stop seeking prior felony conviction enhancements for things like gun possession, gang membership, and violation of the "three strikes" law. These enhancements unfairly lengthen a person's sentence and research has shown excessively long sentences actually increase the likelihood of recidivism, meaning they increase the likelihood that convicted criminals will reoffend.

It is also important note that prosecutors also routinely decline to charge enhancements and this responsibility falls with our elected district attorney, not individual courtroom deputies.

For more information on how you can support criminal justice reform in our community go to Black Lives Matter Los Angeles.

LA county voters also passed the Reimagine LA or Measure J bill which provides alternatives to incarceration through Direct Community Investments. Now what should this look like?

Reimagine LA would look like increased funding for community based youth development programs and restorative justice programs. There would be career trainings and jobs for low-income residents that support the implementation of alternatives to incarceration. There would also be rental assistance and housing vouchers for at-risk individuals without any of those dollars going to or through law enforcement agencies.

Justice LA, which is the community organizing group responsible for getting Reimagine LA passed, is continuing to do incredible work in addition to holding City Council accountable in the Measure J Advisory Committee meetings.

You can get involved with Justice LA at their three upcoming virtual action meetings which will be on Feb 8 at 10:30 AM, Feb 10 at 06:30 PM, and Feb 15 at 10:30 AM. For more information, find them at Justice LA.

Now, another organization that you should be following is LA Students Deserve. Back in June, LA Students Deserve managed to get the LAUSD Board of Supervisors to cut \$25 million from the \$75 million school police budget. While this was a great start, it is not enough and LA Students Deserve is calling on the LAUSD Board of Supervisors to fully defund its School Police Department and invest the \$25 million they were already pushed to cut from their budget into support services for Black students, including counselors, PSWs, nurses, and campus aides. Police in schools are a waste of limited school resources and lead to the disproportionate policing of Black and brown students.

Now, shifting from policy actions, I want to talk about the weather. Yes, the weather. It's been cold and rainy in Los Angeles recently which can be a mild inconvenience for some of us but dangerous to our unhoused neighbors.

While our weather is relatively mild, hypothermia and exposure leads to more deaths among unhoused people in Los Angeles than in New York City and San Francisco combined because we have the most unhoused people living outdoors in the country right here in Los Angeles.

There are a number of incredible organizations that are taking donations to support our unhoused neighbors in this cold and rainy weather such as KTown for all, SELAH, Polos Pantry, and Street Watch LA. Street watch LA is also a great resource on ways to protect our unhoused neighbors from the street sweeps that threaten their safety and belongings. For a full list of local organizations go to [iscla.org/justice](https://iscla.org/justice).

It is also important to note Los Angeles winter shelters will also be operating until March 31st. For more information on these shelters you can also go to our website.

Los Angeles is now at the center of the coronavirus epidemic with an estimated 1 in 3 Angelenos contracting the virus. Members of our community have started to get vaccinated, providing hope in what at times feels like a crisis with no end in sight.

Currently we are in phase 1A and tier 1 of phase 1B in vaccine distribution. What does that mean? Essentially, all healthcare workers are being vaccinated and individuals over the age of 65, who are part of the phase 1B, are also being vaccinated.

If you are a licensed clinical professional, consider volunteering to vaccinate others. To register yourself or your loved ones for a vaccine and to learn about volunteer opportunities go to [publichealth.lacounty.gov](https://publichealth.lacounty.gov).

Before I let you all go I want to highlight an organization doing wonderful work in the LA theater community.

Support Black Theatre was founded by friend of ISC Sophina Brown and is dedicated to the development, enrichment and promotion of Black art, Black Artists, and Black audiences in Los Angeles.

SBT is a community led organization committed to Black artists and Black autonomy in the theatre. SBT functions as the pointer, but is not the point.

It is important that our arts institutions uplift and center, not just Black artists and storytelling, but also the Black led theater companies that have been doing the work for decades.

To learn more about Support Black theatre follow them on instagram at support black theatre.

Thank you so much for listening to our first ever ISC news roundup. To see ISC's social justice initiatives follow us on social media or head to [iscla.org/justice](https://iscla.org/justice) where you can also find links and information about the organizations and initiatives that I mentioned today.

Are their initiatives in our community you want featured on our next ISC news round up? Email me [carene@iscla.org](mailto:carene@iscla.org) and that's Carene, C-A-R-E-N-E, and I will add it to my list. I can't wait to gather with you all in the park again, but until then please stay safe my fellow Angelenos.