Hello listeners, this is ISC ensemble member and Artistic Associate for Social Justice Carene Rose Mekertichyan. Thank you all for joining me for ISC's April community action update. These monthly episodes feature social justice initiatives and ways you can serve your local Los Angeles Community in addition to other communities.

I want to start this week’s update by taking a moment to honor the lives lost in mass shootings in Georgia and Colorado. As more and more of our community gathering spaces and institutions open up, we will unfortunately begin to see the spike in mass gun violence that is unique to the United States. Demand your representatives and senators fight for broad and specific gun control measures. In Boulder, Colorado, a law banning high capacity magazines and certain assault style weapons, was overturned days before the gun was purchased by the Colorado shooter. Our laws have direct consequences and the ability to save lives. Contact your representatives.

In our last action update, I spoke about the alarming spike in hate crimes targeted at the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. The shootings that occurred in the Atlanta metro area, on March 16, were the product of white supremacy, misogyny, and the continued fetishization and intersectional erasure of Asian women and femmes. Since March 19, 2020, Stop AAPI Hate received over 3,795 firsthand accounts of anti-Asian hate crimes from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Race was cited as the primary reason for discrimination, making up 90.3% of incidents. Women reported incidents 2.3x more than men. 2021 has already seen 503 incidents reported to Stop AAPI Hate. This spike in attacks has been centered in the Bay Area of California, specifically in San Francisco and Oakland’s Chinatowns.

At ISC, we reaffirm our commitment to justice and stand in solidarity with the AAPI community during this devastating and frightening time. Simply making performative statements of solidarity is not enough; we must actively support our AAPI neighbors with sustained actions and continue to fight to dismantle systemic white supremacy in ALL of our communities.

Our hearts are with the families of the victims, who we honor and uplift.

For resources to take action go to stopaapihate.org. For more information on bystander intervention trainings and gofundmes for the families of the victims, go to our website iscla.org/justice.

An action item I mentioned in last month’s update is still in desperate need of your attention. In our nearby county of Santa Barbara, Chumash land defenders and allies have been fundraising to protect their sacred ancestral homelands in the San Marcos Foothills. This unceded indigenous land is in danger of development by The Chadmar Group into 8 multi-million dollar homes. This development would also devastate local wildlife, including owls, white-tailed kites, various hawk species, and coyotes.

Save the San Marcos Foothills has met their initial fundraising deadline of $4 million on March 24th, but they still need to raise $18 million as part of their 90-day agreement.

Our community members who are indigenous to this land should not have to buy their ancestral lands back from others, but this is the system we live in. This and other land back campaigns are the most powerful way you can support and stand in solidarity with the indigenous community.

For more information on fundraisers and the land back campaign, follow them on instagram @savethesanmarcosfoothills and donate at savethesanmarcosfoothills.org

In more local action, ISC and The Los Angeles Theater Coalition for Justice stands with Arts for LA in supporting the resolution put forward in support of directing federal stimulus funding to the arts and culture sector. It is critical that we demand significant public investment in the grassroots organizations and working artists struggling to meet their basic needs. Our leaders in City Council must direct federal stimulus funding to the arts workers and organizations that make our communities healthier and more equitable. You can send a prefilled email sharing your support of the resolution to your Councilmembers by going to our website iscla.org/justice or going to www.artsfiora.org/local_funding_for_the_arts

Our unhoused community members at Echo Park Lake are facing uncertainty and displacement after being forcibly removed from their encampments surrounding the lake to “clean” the area for those who can afford to live in the
increasingly expensive and gentrified Echo Park. While many of these residents were, at the time of this recording, recently given hotel vouchers after public outcry, these vouchers are not a sustained or permanent solution, and we must continue to stand by our unhoused neighbors and center their needs.

For up to date information go to @streetwatchla on Instagram.

To support another organization doing great work for our unhoused neighbors on the ground, follow SELAH, which is an organization serving the unhoused in Silver Lake, Echo Park, Los Feliz, Atwater Village, and Hollywood. Find them on Instagram @selahnhc

Los Angeles County is home to the largest community of Armenians outside of Armenia proper and April 24th marks 106 years since the start of the Armenian Genocide in which 1.5 million Armenians were killed. The Biden administration has promised to be the first presidential administration in history to put its strategic military relationship with Turkey aside and acknowledge history by formally recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Promises have been made and broken in the past, so join your fellow Armenian Angelenos and Congressman Adam Schiff in calling on the Biden administration to make good on their promise. Last year, both houses passed a resolution recognizing the genocide for the first time in history only to have the measure vetoed by our former president.

You can join the movement by going to yesitsgenocide.org

And now, the time has come! In LA County Covid vaccines will be available to all Angelenos aged 16 or older on April 15th! At the start of the month of April, vaccines did open up to individuals aged 50 and older, so if you are part of that age group you can get vaccinated right now. On a personal note, I received both doses of the Pfizer vaccine last month as an educator and I want to stress that there is nothing to fear. The process moved smoothly and aside from soreness and fatigue, my reaction was relatively mild. Each person is different so be sure to listen to your body, stay hydrated, and avoid making significant plans on the days immediately following your vaccine.

If you happen to be a licensed clinical professional, please do 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.

Thank you so much for listening to this month's Community Action Update. To see ISC's social justice initiatives head to iscla.org/justice where you can also find links and information about the organizations and initiatives that I mentioned today. Be sure to follow us on social media @indyshakes as well.

Are there initiatives in our community you want featured on our Community Action Update in May? Email me carene@iscla.org and that's Carene, C-A-R-E-N-E at ISCLA.org, 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