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 September Community Action Update. These monthly episodes feature social justice initiatives and ways you can serve your local Los Angeles community and beyond.

If you are listening to this, you are likely a theatre lover and also someone who understands the importance of ensuring our community is safe and equitable for all. I have had the honor of being part of two wonderful actions that are doing just that right here in our LA theatre community.

I co-authored the Los Angeles Anti-Racist Theatre Standards, or LA ARTS, which is a set of standards drafted by a collective of LA theatre artists dedicated to true equity and looking to create lasting, systemic change in LA theatre institutions and communities. The group is majority BIPOC, female, intersectional, intergenerational, and contains representation from the LGBTQ+ community and other marginalized populations. ISC is proud to be a pre-launch endorser of these standards.

The full set of standards can be found at LATheatreStandards.com

ISC’s Marketing Assistant & Producer of our Art Break Podcast Carolina Xique and I are also contributors to the organization that will be implementing the standards, BLKLST, and that’s B-L-K-L-S-T. Blklst is a Los Angeles based, Black and Brown led mechanism of accountability that focuses on transparency and community oversight. Our mission is to help provide safety, agency, and equity for all BIPOC theatremakers while also recognizing and welcoming the queer, disabled, deaf, and neurodivergent folx within the BIPOC community and beyond.

To learn more about BLKLST go to blklstcollective.com

Another way to support equitable arts is to ensure arts workers are paid and receive adequate funding. California Bill SB-628 or “The Creative Workforce Development Act”, would create greater opportunities for arts workers by funding critical creative employment and training opportunities at the local level across the state AND prioritizing underrepresented communities in the arts sector. The bill made it through California Assembly and must now be signed by Governor Newsom.

To take action by sending a prefilled email to Governor Newsom go to votervoice.net/CAARTS/Campaigns/86258/Respond and you can find that link on our website as well.

While we tend to focus on local initiatives, Los Angeles is home to many immigrants, refugees, and their descendants, so we would be remiss to ignore two critical refugee
crises happening internationally. The United States is failing Afghan refugees just as it fails those seeking a better life on our southern border. This country spent the last 40 years destabilizing Afghanistan and now that the result of those actions has come to a head, we can not abandon the people who are left in its wake. Contact your representative to ensure we expedite the process and support Afghan families when they arrive. California alone is expected to receive 5,225 Afghan refugees, the most of any state.

There are a number of ways you can support the Afghan community here in LA.

Go to [afgdiasporahub.com](http://afgdiasporahub.com) to stay aware of fundraisers and protests.

The 7.2 earthquake that occurred in Haiti on August 14th, severely damaged several cities, damaged or destroyed more than 120,000 homes, took over 2,200 lives, and injured more than 12,000 people. This horrific disaster came after political upheaval that has destabilized the country after the assassination of their President Jovenel Moïse.

On September 19th, US border agents were deployed on horseback against Haitian migrants, whipping them, in what Human Rights Watch has declared racially discriminatory and abusive behavior. If you find yourself rightfully horrified and outraged, you can support Haitian Bridge Alliance, which is a coalition of Haitian non-profit organizations and community activists who have come together to serve the Haitian community in California and beyond.

You can learn more by going to [haitianbridge.org](http://haitianbridge.org) and donate to Haitian Bridge by going to [secure.actblue.com/donate/supporthaitians](http://secure.actblue.com/donate/supporthaitians)

There are many refugees who need assistance all over the world.

You can host refugees through AirBnB by going to: [www.airbnb.org/refugees](http://www.airbnb.org/refugees)

You can donate your frequent flyer miles to refugees by going to: [miles4migrants.org](http://miles4migrants.org)

On the second Monday of October we celebrate Indigenous People’s Day to honor the original stewards of the land we occupy in LA County. While we have made this necessary change in our county and the state of California as a whole, “Columbus Day” still remains a widely celebrated day in the U.S. Columbus Day is not only disrespectful to indigenous people; it also presents a false history of America’s “discovery” and glorifies one of history’s most destructive villains.
Illuminatives has provided a wonderful toolkit to advocate for the celebration of Indigenous Peoples’ Day in the places that have yet to do so. If you are a parent or educator, they also offer a wonderful Indigenous Peoples’ Day lesson plan so you can honor the true history of Turtle Island, the original name for this country, with the youth in your life.

You can access all of these materials by going to: illuminatives.org/indigenouspeoplesday

The fall season may have begun but we are still dealing with dangerous heat advisories here in LA County. Water Drop LA works all year to combat water inaccessibility on LA’s skid row and surrounding areas. Consider donating to them and/or volunteering with them every Sunday from 11am-2pm.

To donate or volunteer with Water Drop LA, you can go to: waterdropla.org/links

I would like to end today by providing an update on our SELAH summer hygiene kit drive! Thank you to everyone who came to the park and dropped off supplies before watching ISC’s production of “The Tempest”. We collected so many goods that we were still finding bags in the ISC studio during our set strike and unloading process! I dropped off our last collection this past weekend but you can still donate goods or volunteer with SELAH.

To volunteer with SELAH, go to selah.volunteerlocal.com/volunteer/

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 I mentioned today. Be sure to also follow us on social media @indyshakes.

Are there initiatives in our community you want featured on our Community Action Update in October? 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. Until we see you again, please stay safe my fellow Angelenos.