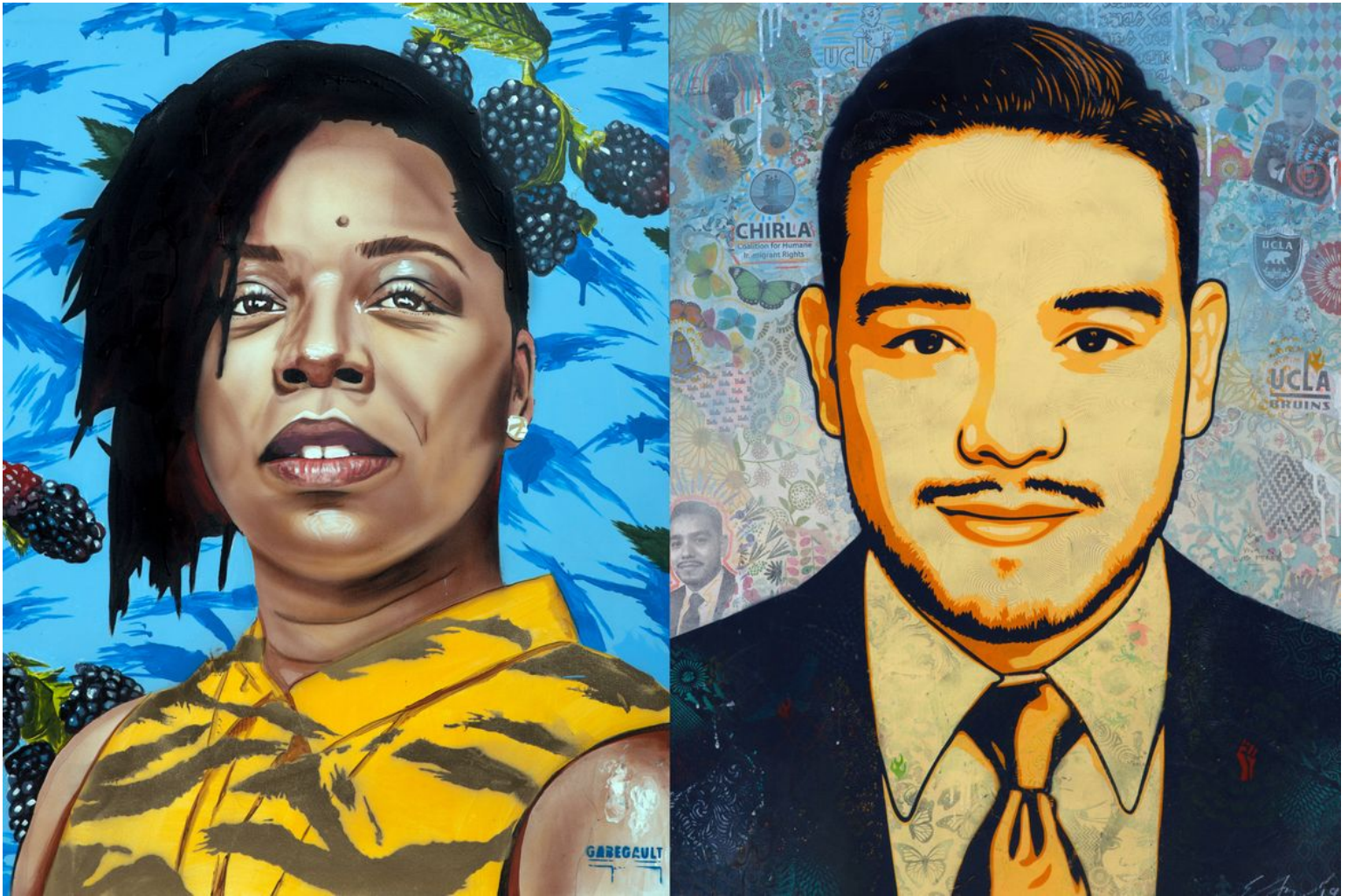


First UCLA Centennial initiative honors alumni who have fought for social justice

The 'UCLA: Our Stories, Our Impact' exhibition featuring commissioned portraits from activist artists launches on campus today



Composite by UCLA

Patrisse Cullors, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, left, and Luis A. Perez, director of the legal services department at Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles.

Vanessa Codilla | October 3, 2019

To highlight the legacy of UCLA and its alumni in creating a world with more equity and equality, the university is launching a traveling art exhibition that highlights Bruins who have

advanced social justice in fields ranging from law and policy to the arts to political and cultural activism.

[“UCLA: Our Stories, Our Impact”](#) is an important part of UCLA’s ongoing celebration of its centennial and it features 10 new original works — nine portraits of alumni and one that represents “A Century of Activism at UCLA” by California-based artists Ernesto Yerena, Gabe Gault and Mer Young, all of whom have produced work that comments on social movements.

This exhibition, which debuts in the Kerckhoff Art Gallery today and later will tour throughout Los Angeles, is the first in a series of four Centennial initiatives that are designed to expand public access to UCLA’s scholarly resources and build upon UCLA’s longstanding commitment of service to the community. Each one is a collaboration among multiple departments, centers, institutes and community groups.

“As we celebrate UCLA’s first century, we also celebrate the impact of our alumni,” UCLA Chancellor Gene Block said. “Their efforts, across a diverse spectrum of fields and disciplines, embody UCLA’s commitment to the public good. We are extremely proud to present these powerful images of Bruins who are leaving an indelible mark on our society.”

Among the alumni in the exhibition are Charles Burnett, award-winning L.A. Rebellion filmmaker; Patrisse Cullors, Black Lives Matter co-founder; Antonia Hernández, past president and general counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund; and Tam Tran and Cinthya Felix, immigration activists.

“The alumni that we celebrate took less linear paths through education — but nevertheless made lasting impact,” said Abel Valenzuela, director of the [UCLA Institute for Research on Labor and Employment](#) and leader of the project. “They have led efforts to support diversity, equity, and social justice at UCLA and beyond. They make our campus and Los Angeles a better place and they continue to connect us with the most pressing issues of the day, including the UTLA teacher’s strike, support of undocumented students, and organizing with the Black Lives Matter movement.”

The exhibition will remain at Kerckhoff through Oct. 17. Then it will move to the Los Angeles City Hall Bridge Gallery, the Mercado La Paloma in South Los Angeles, the Robert F. Kennedy UCLA Community School in Koreatown, the Social Public Art Resource Center in Venice, and Self-Help Graphics & Art in East Los Angeles. The exhibit is open to the public and admission is free. A pop-up version of the exhibition will appear at CicLAvia on Oct. 6.

The other alumni featured in the exhibit are:

- John Delloro, labor leader and co-founder of the Pilipino Workers Center in Los Angeles

- Chancee Martorell, founder and executive director of the Thai Community Development Center
- Luis A. Perez, advocate for undocumented immigrants and director of the Legal Services Department at Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
- Robert Singleton, one of the original members of the Freedom Riders and the Founding Director of the Center for African-American Studies, now the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies
- Natalie Stites Means, advocate for indigenous people's rights and member of the South Dakota Advisory Committee of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission

"UCLA: Our Stories, Our Impact" also incorporates a multimedia component on the exhibit website which will go live Oct. 3 and feature 15 additional stories and short documentaries of five featured selectees.

UCLA enlisted three artists with a commitment to social justice to create the mixed-media portraits that will become part of the university's permanent collection.

Yerena's poster portrait of UCLA alumna Roxana Dueñas became the visual symbol of the recent strike by teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District. He is also known for his work with mentor Shephard Fairey as part of the "We the People" poster project that launched around the January 2017 presidential inauguration. Born in El Centro, California, Yerena's major project "Hecho Con Ganas," blends his vibrant color palette and experimental textures to tell stories of struggle, perseverance and hope in the Chicanx community.

Pop-culture inspired artist Gabe Gault, a Venice native, has created portraiture of cultural icons such as Nipsey Hussle, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Stan Lee. He uses classical techniques with modern materials to explore themes of identity and duality, challenging his viewer's notions of labels and definitions.

Mer Young, from Long Beach, focuses her mixed-media aesthetic on images that tell stories of marginalized communities, like migrants, indigenous people and women of color. Her public works can be found in Long Beach, Glendale, South Pasadena, and the downtown Los Angeles Arts District.

By shedding light on lesser known stories of alumni who have made positive social impact, Valenzuela said he hopes the exhibit will inspire current and future Bruins.

"Whenever I travel the globe or visit events in Los Angeles, I am reminded that so many stories have yet to be told as current and future Bruins impact Los Angeles and the world." Valenzuela said. "I believe, as do many on our campus, that we have an obligation to make

change and to better Los Angeles. If we can channel this work via the power of art and visual storytelling, then we will have moved our mission forward to promote transformative change, civic leadership and social justice for the next century.”

The project is led by UCLA’s Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, the UCLA Labor Center, and the Chancellor’s Advisory Council on Immigration Policy in collaboration with the Institute of American Cultures, which is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its founding, the American Indian Studies Center, the Asian American Studies Center, the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies and the Chicano Studies Research Center.

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