



## The Unusual Suspects General Talking Points

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sara Scott  
*Board Chair*

David Borsari  
Russ Cashdan  
Albert G. Chou  
Ryan Jones  
Melissa Peterman  
Julio Quijada  
Gina Reyes  
Karine Rosenthal  
Decker Sadowski  
Kristina Segesvary  
Lesley Wake Webster  
Joe Weil  
Charlotte White

### ADVISORY COUNCIL

Laura Leigh Hughes  
*Founder*

Shawn Amos  
Bradford Bancroft  
Tameka Carter  
Ed Coghlan  
Sally Fairman  
Markese Freeman  
Annabeth Gish  
Rachel Goldberg  
David Henry Hwang  
Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Deborah Lintz  
Annie Lukowski  
Lara Magnusen  
Johnny Ortiz  
Luis J. Rodriguez  
Elizabeth Silver  
Julie Tugend  
Kirsten Vangsness

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Melissa Denton

- The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company (US) is an arts-based social justice nonprofit that provides theatre-arts education and mentorship to youth and families in under-resourced communities, across the Los Angeles region.
- The Unusual Suspects is committed to meeting the needs of Los Angeles' most vulnerable youth by identifying and working with communities, schools, and detention centers in neighborhoods with the most incidents of violence and crime, and the highest poverty, incarceration, and dropout rates.
- The Unusual Suspects Theatre Company was born out of the 1992 L.A. Unrest, which was fueled by a cry for justice. US was built around a commitment to provide a voice for the voiceless, a platform for self-expression, and healing through the arts. In connection with its mission, through this spirit of unity and collaboration, US continues to stand hand-in-hand with Los Angelenos; offering a safe space for participants to be heard and to collectively write, perform and share their unique stories - uncensored.
- What started as a single small program for foster youth 28 years ago, has now grown into several intensive, multi-month, in-school, after-school, and virtual theatre arts education programs provided in numerous middle and high schools and juvenile detention centers, as well as intergenerational theatre arts and community-building programs for local residents. **US** now has **seven** free, place-based programs that work collectively to provide a well-rounded impact for nearly 1,000 Los Angelinos last year, including underperforming students, foster youth, struggling parents, English Language Learners, Special Education and Neurodiverse students, adolescents suffering from PTSD, and incarcerated minors
- The Unusual Suspects' programs help with academic, social, and emotional growth for underserved youth and families, all through the stage.
- Since its inception: The Unusual Suspects has offered programming in over 47 locations, including 17 juvenile detention centers, serving over 9,650 youth inclusive of incarcerated youth and over 600 adults, creating over 110 original plays performed over 200 times to over 22,000 audience members.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic struck, office staff and US's Teaching Artists have been working remotely, exploring new technology and developing alternative online/distance curricula, content, and best practices to reach their participants. US has actively worked with partners, classroom teachers, LAUSD, and the Los Angeles County Probation Department to reimagine programs and reconnect with their youth. Teaching teams have been developing live and pre-recorded lessons, delivered via services such as ZOOM. US has also offered additional mentorship via phone calls, messaging services, and group videoconferencing, and its newly-established Alumni Advisory Committee began weekly virtual meetings.
- With the pandemic affecting US's under-resourced communities, US continues to be on the front lines of providing creative self-expression, and believe now is an important time to create a platform to spotlight the importance of the arts when we are all missing our social connectedness.
- To celebrate 28 years of helping youth and families through theatre-arts education, The Unusual Suspects Virtually UnUSual Create-A-Thon Celebration will be June 30, 2021 hosted by long-time supporter, actress, and board member, Melissa Peterman, and advisory committee member and actress, Kirsten Vangsness and will honor US's incredible teaching artists.