

Title	"Words That Made the Difference: Brown v. Board of Education"	03/20/2025
	by Meleah Hall in 2025 Cultural Arts and Arts Programming RFP	id. 50027836
	2226 Encinal Ave 1632 Moreland Drive Alameda, California 94501 CA United States 5107987429 brownvboardplay@gmail.com	

Original Submission	03/20/2025
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Score	n/a
Please be aware that I Understand all application documents and other materials submitted to the City are subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.	
Enter the name of your public art proposal	"Words That Made the Difference: Brown v. Board of Education"
Are you a non-profit or government agency?	No
Please upload proof of non-profit status. For example, a valid IRS tax exemption certificate.	
If you are NOT a non-profit or government agency, are you using a fiscal sponsor for this grant?	Yes, a 501(c)(3) tax exempt sponsor has agreed to receive the funds on our behalf.

Please upload Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement/MOU (only for fiscally sponsored organizations)

[Fiscal_Sponsorship.pdf](#)

Please provide the name of the non-profit organization or public agency submitting this proposal:	Unity in Marin - fiscal sponsor
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Please provide the name of the primary point of contact:	Cindy (Shirlinda) Acker
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Please provide the daytime phone number for the primary point of contact:	+15107987429
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Please provide the E-mail for the primary point of contact:	cindyacker@montessori.org
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Please provide the name of the secondary point of contact:	Amos White
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Please provide the daytime phone number for the secondary point of contact:	+14154890074
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Please provide the E-mail for the secondary point of contact:	amoswhite3@gmail.com
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Please provide the address for the organization or public entity submitting this proposal:	600 Palm Drive (fiscal sponsor) 2226 Encinal Ave (Cindy Acker) Novato (fiscal sponsor) Alameda (Cindy Acker) CA 94949 US 38.066178 -122.547972
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Which level of grant are you requesting?	\$10,000
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Where will the proposed cultural arts or arts programming be held?	Park Street Area Other
If you selected "Other," please explain:	Outreach to schools across the Island
Organization Details	
Please provide your organization's mission statement:	Words That Made the Difference is a powerful play, whose purpose is to shed light on the accurate history of our nation and the courage of the people who stood up for justice. We mission is to share this information through the arts with as many people as possible.
Please provide a brief organization history:	<p>The project is the theatrical production, Words That Made the Difference: Brown v. Board of Education. It began as a desire to help students understand the legacy of desegregated education in the United States, to help students and adults understand the underpinned legacy of desegregated places and opportunities for people of color. When Cindy Acker began the research for the project, the granddaughter of the late Chief Justice Earl Warren heard of the play that she was writing, and approached her, offering her grandfather's memoirs to have a deeper understanding of Warren's work and rationale for the unanimous Brown decision. From that, she wrote a play that has been touring in many cities in the United States, including Alameda, Novato, Palo Alto, Sausalito, St. Petersburg, Florida, and livestreamed across eight countries. It was also requested by the Barbara Lee/Elihu Harris Speaker Series and was performed for a packed audience in Oakland. Surprisingly, Sausalito was the last and most recent U.S. city to fully desegregate (as of 2019). The cast was specifically invited to assist the healing of the community with this play about the courageous work that has been done to bring about a just nation.</p> <p>As an Alamedan, educator, and playwright, Dr. Acker has wanted this work to be performed for residents, students and teachers in Alameda, to help them learn the history and give them a safe place to begin discussions about how their lived experiences may be shared and compared. We hope they will have words that make a difference in our community and in their lives.</p> <p>As such, the play, Words That Made the Difference, lifts up her expertise, to create an honest historical work that involves the exact words of the court cases, bringing them to light and enlightening their powerful message. The background work of all of the court cases was done by Dr. Acker and Sarah McArthur LeValley, former executive of Disney and Pixar.</p>
Please provide a list or summary of artistic programs, activities, and recent	THE AUTHOR: Dr. Cindy Acker holds five degrees in education, cultural studies, human development, and a terminal degree from UC Berkeley in educational

key accomplishments from the last five years:

leadership. Her focus has been social justice, encompassing diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging. As a historian and scholar, she has won two awards for her work in Canada and the U.S, as a playwright, an award for Words That Made the Difference from CETA (California Educational Theater Association) and created an Emmy award winning news feature on parenting for Fox [then Cox] Broadcasting. Additionally, Dr. Acker is a five-time award winner in the area of social justice and pediatric health and education. She has written two books on social justice issues (one which has been used in schools to curtail otherness connected to LGBT and HIV issues, and train teachers about communicable diseases, and one written for teachers in Texas, Florida, and Oklahoma to assist their curriculum in light of challenged laws in those states). She is a consultant to school districts and organizations for difficult issues affecting marginalized populations. She is also a keynote speaker, educating populations about the history of people, laws, and ethnicity, often sharing unknown information – which is also within the pages of this play.

Show Production History

October 5, 2024. - Novato Unified School District (High School Theater), Novato, CA
October 4, 2024. - Altarena Playhouse, Alameda, CA
May 18, 2024 - The Barbara Lee and Elihu Harris Lecture Series, Valley Center for Performing Arts, Oakland, CA
May 10 & 11, 2024 - Rhythmix Cultural Works, Alameda, CA
February 11, 2023 - Unity Palo Alto, Palo Alto, CA
November 4, 2022.- International Montessori Conference, Vinoy Renaissance, St. Petersburg, FL
July 9 & 10, 2022 - Altarena Playhouse, Alameda CA
June 12, 2022 - (by request of the Marin-Sausalito School District) Dunphy Park, Sausalito, CA
February 26, 2022 - Rhythmix Cultural Works, Alameda, CA
January 21, 2021 - Live Streamed
January 15, 2021 - Live Streamed across eight countries
June 23, 2019 - Unity In Marin, Novato, CA (Readers' Theater)

News & TV

KRON TV 4 - Local playwright discusses 'WORDS That Made the Difference: Brown v Board of Education' Lifestyle Feb 9, 2023: Playwright and Director of 'WORDS That Made the Difference: Brown v Board of Education', Dr. Cindy Acker discussed the importance of the play. [Watch the clip]
www.kron4.com/video/local-playwright-discusses-‘words-that-made-the-difference-brown-v-board-of-education’/8377784

Alameda Post

<https://alamedapost.com/events/words-that-made-the-difference-brown-vs-the-board-of-education>

Marin IJ

Granddaughter of the late Chief Justice Earl Warren honors his memory with participation in play based on Brown v Board

<https://www.marinij.com/2019/06/22/marin-snapshot-earl-warrens-granddaughter-honors-his-memory/>

Play Based on 1954 School Desegregation Opens in Sausalito on June 12 in Honor of Juneteenth. June 8, 2022. By, Oakland Post
www.postnewsgroup.com/play-based-on-1954-school-desegregation-opens-in-sausalito-on-june-12-in-honor-of-juneteenth

"Words That Made the Difference" Coming to Dunphy Park on June 12.
City of Sausalito News
June 3, 2022 www.sausalito.gov/Home/Components/News/News/6342/457

Marin County Free Library, Words That Made the Difference: Brown v. Board of Education
<https://marinlibrary.bibliocommons.com/events/628fbe1dd9db29943d29b3bf>

Sausalito offers play on desegregation for Juneteenth By, Sherry LaVars/Marin Independent
www.marinij.com/2022/06/06/sausalito-offers-play-on-desegregation-for-juneteenth

East Bay arts group adjusts — again — to latest pandemic challenge
Rhythmix Cultural Works deals with omicron. By, Angelica Cabral, Bay Area News Group. January 17, 2022
www.mercurynews.com/2022/01/17/arts-group-adjusts-again-to-latest-pandemic-challenge

For Immediate Release: City of Alameda Commemorates Juneteenth with Streaming of “Words That Made the Difference: BROWN vs the BOARD OF EDUCATION”. City of Alameda June 10, 2021
<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/CAALAMECITY/bulletins/2e322e0>

Production Awards & Recognition

Proclamation: - City of Alameda Proclamation, February 2022 (PDF)

Production:
Cindy Acker Playwright/Director
Sarah McArthur LeValley Producer/Dramaturg

Zoom Production:
Cindy Acker Playwright/Director
Sarah McArthur LeValley Producer/Dramaturg
Steve Shlisky Editor/Sound Effects

Music:
Suzanne Ciancimino Original instrumental
DEM Hold On

2024 Tour
Cindy Acker Playwright/Producer-Director
Robert Paine Director

Show Dedication

“This play is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Darline Stella Bell Maxwell, and Washington Maxwell, who were born in 1930 in Topeka and Kansas City, Kansas, respectively, and for whom ‘Brown’ was a victory, because it set a precedent for other civil rights. Thank you, for holding the world for me – as one without limits. The play is dedicated to those allies for equity, inclusivity and justice – the witnesses and plaintiffs, who courageously faced opposition from others, and the Supreme Court Justices, who provided a model of leading with integrity and justice for all.”
– Cindy Acker, Playwright/Director

Please provide a description of the communities your organization is rooted in, engages and/or serves:

The playwright and several actors are based in the city of Alameda, and Dr. Acker is head of school of The Child Unique Montessori School in Alameda. According to USA Data, the city of Alameda is comprised of this racial demographic: White (Non-Hispanic) (41.3%), Asian (Non-Hispanic) (31.1%), Two+ (Non-Hispanic) (6.88%), Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (6.76%), and Two+ (Hispanic) (4.98%). Dr. Acker's schools have a range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. When WORDS has been performed in Alameda before, the audience encompassed many older, White Alamedans and several Asian and biracial individuals. It is our hope to include Alameda teachers and high school students to view and discuss this important piece.

Which artistic discipline(s) best fits your Organization:

Theater
Spoken Word / Oral Tradition

If you selected "Other," please explain:

Project Details

When will the project be developed/presented? Please indicate if there are public performance dates already known.

The dates are not 100% solidified but we are hoping to have the performance on the anniversary of the Brown v Board Decision on May 17th. We would invite high school students to attend on May 16th which is the dress rehearsal, and when students would still be in school. If we are unable to be funded before then, we would like to perform it in conjunction with Juneteenth.

If you have venue information secured, where will the work be presented? Please also describe any permits or approvals you may have secured for your location:

We would like to have the play at Alameda Theater

Is there an online/virtual component to the project:

No

Please provide a project summary and concept, inclusive of your artistic vision, goals, and decision to undertake this project at this time:

The play, Words That Made the Difference: Brown v Board of Education, is the focus of a multi-faceted program with a dual objective. Via the arts, students will learn history of the landmark case of desegregation and how the reversal of Separate but Equal changed the nation.

In the article, Integrated Schools: Segregated Curriculum, Walsemann and Bell (2011) posit that in-school segregation still exists on many levels; hence, segregation still affects teens. Presenting the cases of Brown and the continued effects of differing types of segregation opens an avenue of discussion for students who experience separation and segregation, leading to isolation, loneliness, and other mental health issues.

Why is this so important now? The present administration is no longer requiring an explicit prohibition of segregated facilities in new government contracts. The rollback of segregation protections threatens progress, making education vital to recognize inequities, challenge discrimination, and build an inclusive Alameda. At a time when the ban on segregation is being questioned, it is a crucial time to examine the importance of the history of justice, including the changing demographics of people in our nation, our state, our community, our very own city.

GOALS

GOAL 1: Use the Arts to Provide Accurate Historical Information

Objective: Provide historical education on equity in public education and the courage of those who paved the way for integrated schools. Students and residents will learn how segregation shaped Alameda's schools, housing, and opportunities, with lasting effects today. Outreach to schools, senior centers, and community groups will foster dialogue and inspire a more inclusive Alameda.

Measurable Outcomes:

Classroom and community discussions

Teacher discussions/feedback on what they learned and how students responded

Student and teacher feedback on the play and project

GOAL 2: Help Students and Teachers See the Lasting Impact of Brown v Board

Objective: Show how Brown laid a foundation for future work in desegregation and equity.

Measurable Outcomes:

Student follow-up dialogue after the actor panel discussion

Student assignments:

"What's Next for Me to Bring Equity?"

"How the Legacy of Brown v Board Has Opened a Path for My Education"

GOAL 3: Open Safe Spaces for Student and Adult Mental Health

Objective: The play highlights challenges students and adults faced, self-esteem issues, and segregation's effects on education and mental health.

Measurable Outcome:

Collaborate with mental health providers and create a resource list of agencies that can provide support for the negative impacts of segregation.

Please describe the planning process, marketing and/or outreach for this project or recent projects you have completed:

Program Description and Work Plan

Preparation for Play:

This 2.5-hour play is based on the five court cases leading to and including the landmark case of Brown. It uses the exact words from the court transcripts and culminates in the final ruling given by Chief Justice Earl Warren. Research of each case, including court transcripts of all cases leading to Brown v Board

Use of exact transcript wording, and connecting with NAACP and others for validity

Curriculum for Teachers (Upon Grant Approval) will Include:

Synopsis of the court cases

Creating a timeline leading to the Brown case

Providing insight into how education occurred in cities/states before Brown, and the laws supporting segregation

Watching a movie based on the case, seeing nuances in discriminatory practices, the courage of the characters, and the strategy of the NAACP (A Simple Truth, etc)

Studying characters rarely mentioned, such as the women of Brown and the White woman, Emma Brown, who worked to desegregate schools

Learning the history of the last city to desegregate (Sausalito) and how the law changed the Marin City/Sausalito school district

Production

This 2.5-hour play is based on the five court cases leading to and including the landmark case of Brown. It uses the exact words from the court transcripts and culminates in the final ruling given by Chief Justice Earl Warren.

The curriculum includes:

A panel of actors sharing their experiences:

Why they chose to be a part of this play

Personal experiences with segregation and speaking out

How segregation still occurs in communities

Teacher-led discussions to help students unpack:

Current-day segregation in schools

How students may have experienced segregation

Why it is difficult for students to speak up and for allies to speak out

Ways to be courageous

Timing Consideration: The post-discussion aims to capture student feelings while still fresh post-production

Roles of Key Personnel

Playwright/Co-Director: Cindy Acker

Co-Director: Robert Paine

Work with actors on script understanding, stage setup, blocking, and rehearsals

Design rehearsal schedules

Stage Manager (SM): Quinn

Present at rehearsals, support actors with scripts, track attendance, and substitute when needed

Ensure actors have scripts and work with the sound person on music cues and mic functionality

Manage COVID testing

Venue Sound Person:

Handle sound equipment at the venue

Work with the SM for dress rehearsal and final production

We have presented this play and partnered with the International Montessori Council (educating teachers) and the Novato School District (requested by the Superintendent)

Who are the main artistic collaborators or project partners (artists, organizations, technicians, administrators)? How will they contribute to the project? Provide brief biographical information, as appropriate.

Partner Organizations

All AUSD, charter, and private high schools

Apart from the community, the performance is for Alameda high school students and teachers

We aim to partner with all high schools (public, charter, and private) for this production

Partner: Gene Kahane

Retired AUSD teacher, former cast member of WORDS, and actor/director
Assist with curriculum, connections, and panel discussions

Roles of Key Project Partners

Cast and Structure:

22 actors play the plaintiffs, witnesses, justices, bailiff, court reporter, and two narrators

The narrators fill in gaps that the transcripts do not elucidate

Post-Production Discussion and Understandings (1-2 Days Following Play)

Playwright/Co-Director: Cindy Acker

Dr. Cindy Acker, Ed.D. (Playwright and Director) is a five-time award-winning educator, author, and playwright. She was vocally trained by the late Johnny Land, and has sung with the Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir, the Glide Ensemble, Unity In Marin, and the MCC Worship and Praise Choir of San Francisco. She has led and toured three choirs, performing in the Governor's chambers on behalf of marriage equality. Cindy has produced an Emmy award-winning feature entitled Creative Parenting, and has written several plays, performed in the US and a Canada, including an award-winning musical entitled, In Our Hands.

Local Actors:

Co-Director: Robert Paine

Robert Paine is a resident of Alameda, CA and is the former artistic

director and a founding member of Virago Theatre Co. He has worked as an Actor, Puppeteer, Writer and Director on stage, voice and film. As an actor Robert recently appeared with Rhythmix Cultural Works “Island City Waterways” as “Radio Announcer”.

Sarah McArthur LeValley (Historic Researcher) spent her career in theatre and feature animation at the Mark Taper Forum, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Walt Disney Feature Animation, Pixar Animation Studios and Lucas Animation.

Amos White (Thurgood Marshall) is a resident of Alameda, CA and is an awarded American haiku poet and author, producer, and civil rights activist. He is recognized for his vivid literary imagery and breathless poetic interpretations.

Alfred Spielmann (Chief Justice Earl Warren) was born in the Bronx, New York in the 1960s. He graduated from University of California School of Law, San Francisco and worked for 25 years as a criminal defense trial lawyer.

Rebecca Pingree, was born and raised in Alameda, and is a well-known actor.

Brionna Robinsons, was raised and lives in Alameda, and is a well-known actor, having won awards at Alameda High School.

Judges: Some city council and prominent members.

Is there an intended audience for this project? If yes, how will you engage them?

Segregation in California schools affected many communities, including African Americans, Mexican Americans, Japanese Americans, and Native Americans. Until *Méndez v. Westminster* (1947) and *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), many students of color were denied equal education through legal and local policies. Those born before 1942—now 83 years or older—may have attended segregated schools in California, experiencing firsthand the challenges of racial exclusion in education. To honor these lived experiences and educate the broader community, we will engage in extensive outreach. This includes partnering with Mastick Senior Center, senior citizen homes, and local religious centers to connect with elders who experienced segregation. We will collaborate with Alameda Community College, K-12 schools, and local law schools to provide historical context and spark discussions on civil rights and education. Community engagement efforts will also include panel discussions, post-play dialogues, and visits to historical and cultural institutions to ensure a diverse audience gains insight into the impact of segregation. By bridging generations through these connections, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of history and inspire ongoing efforts toward equity in education.

You may provide up to 3 work samples totaling 5 minutes of material to review. Work samples can be provided by using online links (video or audio), or uploading JPGs (images), and PDFs (documents).

[Media_1.pdf](#)

Describe how your work samples relate to the proposed project. If submitting videos, please indicate necessary user/password info and cueing instructions.	The video provides a powerful snippet of the importance of providing this experience to residents of Alameda. Theater allows individuals to reflect upon the message. The other documents show evidence of the important work of Cindy Acker and the importance of providing an opportunity for more individuals to be able to experience this award winning play.
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Budget and Financial Details

Please upload your own project budget. Submission can include a combination of narrative and table(s) that convey how fund dollars would be dedicated to the various components of the proposed program and its administration. Response should also indicate whether/how any other funding sources would be leveraged to implement the program:

[Budget_Arts_Grant_2025_-_Google_Sheets.pdf](#)

If you do not have a budget template, you can download the example template below.	Budget Template
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Please also provide an organizational chart showing personnel (2 page maximum).

[Org_Chart.docx](#)

Demographic Survey (Optional)

Org Chart

Leadership

Playwright: Cindy Acker

Media Team:

Amos White

Bill Brobeck

Jeff Moon

Promo

<https://youtu.be/4KilYz0oz38> (44 secs)

Article

<https://www.marinij.com/2019/06/22/marin-snapshot-earl-warrens-granddaughter-honors-his-memory/>

City Proclamation

Proclamation: - City of Alameda Proclamation, February 2022 ([PDF](#))

P.O. Box [redacted] San Francisco, Calif. 94102

Treasury Department

450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36040
San Francisco, California 94102

District Director

Internal Revenue Service

Date: May 28, 1968

In reply refer to:
L-178, Code 414

A:R:EO:MF:Rm 5102



Unity-in-Marin
24 "H" Street
San Rafael, California 94901

Gentlemen:

Purpose: Religious, Educational
Address Inquiries and File Returns with District San Francisco
Director of Internal Revenue:

Form 990-A Required: ☐ Yes ☒ No
Accounting Period Ending: March 31, 1967

SF:EO:68-371

On the basis of your stated purposes and the understanding that your operations will continue as evidenced to date or will conform to those proposed in your ruling application, we have concluded that you are exempt from Federal income tax as an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Any changes in operation from those described, or in your character or purposes, must be reported immediately to your District Director for consideration of their effect upon your exempt status. You must also report any change in your name or address.

You are not required to file Federal income tax returns so long as you retain an exempt status, unless you are subject to the tax on unrelated business income imposed by section 511 of the Code, in which event you are required to file Form 990-T. Our determination as to your liability for filing the annual information return, Form 990-A, is set forth above. That return, if required, must be filed on or before the 15th day of the fifth month after the close of your annual accounting period indicated above.

Contributions made to you are deductible by donors as provided in section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers or gifts to or for your use are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes under the provisions of section 2055, 2106 and 2522 of the Code.

You are not liable for the taxes imposed under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (social security taxes) unless you file a waiver of exemption certificate as provided in such act. You are not liable for the tax imposed under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act. Inquiries about the waiver of exemption certificate for social security taxes should be addressed to this office, as should any questions concerning excise, employment or other Federal taxes.

This is a determination letter.

Very truly yours,

Joseph M. Cullen
District Director



*A positive path
for spiritual living*



Unity Worldwide Ministries
200 Unity Circle N, Ste. A
Lee's Summit, MO 64086

March 11, 2025

RE: Unity In Marin
600 Palm Drive Novato
CA 94949-5018

FEIN: # 94-6172989

To whom it may concern:

This letter serves as official documentation that Unity In Marin, is an active Unity member ministry, sub-ordinate to Unity Worldwide Ministries (legal name, Association of Unity Churches, Inc. FEIN: 44-0668175). This ministry falls under the 501c3 tax exempt umbrella for the Association of Unity Churches, Intl. Gen 2062.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Roxanne Graves".

Rev. Roxanne Graves, President and CEO
Unity Worldwide Ministries
www.UnityUWM.org
816-524-7414



March 19, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

Unity in Marin, a 501c3 non-profit, is thrilled to act as the fiscal sponsor for Cindy (Shirlinda) Acker, for the purpose of performing the play, Words That Made the Difference: Brown v Board of Education.

Unity In Marin's proof of 501c3 status is attached.

Please let me know if you need anything else.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DeeAnn Morency".

Rev. DeeAnn Morency
Senior Minister & CEO
revdeeann@unityinmarin.org
c: 510-356-8464

Unity In Marin
EIN # 94-6172989

Rev. DeeAnn Morency, *Senior Minister & CEO*