



## California Humanities Welcomes Three New Members to the Board of Directors

### For Immediate Release

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**January 22, 2024**—(Oakland, CA)—California Humanities is pleased to announce three new members of the California Humanities Board of Directors. From their locations in Northern California, the Bay Area, and Southern California, each is centering the humanities in their work as grantmakers, community leaders, and culture-bearers.

**Nilofar Gardezi, PhD**, currently resides in Oakland. She is a Program Officer and Grants Manager at the Dean & Margaret Leshner Foundation, which funds programs in Contra Costa County, CA benefiting arts & culture, education, and children and families. Nilofar was named a 2021 Northern California Grantmaker Rising Leader and a 2015 Mellon-ACLS Public Fellow. She has also served on the Board of Directors for Arts for Oakland Kids.

Nilofar holds a PhD in English from University of California, Berkeley, and a BA in African American Studies from Yale College.

"I am excited to join the Board of Directors of California Humanities," said Gardezi. "Humanities help us understand ourselves and those around us as we engage one another and shape the stories for our shared civic future. I look forward to listening to, learning from, and supporting communities across California."

**Karen Mack** currently resides in Los Angeles. A longtime leader in the arts and culture sector, she is the Founder and Executive Director of [LA Commons](#), which implements artistic and cultural programs that reflect the unique character of LA's neighborhoods with the goal of fostering interaction, dialogue, and a better understanding of the city.

She also serves as an Advisor and Research Scholar for the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI), and has been a past Research Fellow of Harvard University. Mack is the former co-chair of the Los Angeles County Department of the Arts' Cultural Equity and Inclusion

Initiative. Her professional positions include Vice President of Community Partners, Associate Program Director at United Way of Greater Los Angeles, and Program Director at California Humanities (formerly California Council for the Humanities).

"Despite reports to the contrary, the humanities are more important than ever," said Mack. "I am proud to join the California Humanities board to be part of the work to promote ideals and values that are deeply rooted in diverse human experiences, enabling us to successfully grapple together to find answers in one of the most challenging times in our history."

**Christopher H. Peters** (Puhlik-lah/Karuk), currently serves as the President of [Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples](#). With 34 years of leadership experience, Peters is a practitioner of traditional ceremonies and an experienced grantmaker, responsible for developing grantmaking approaches that serve traditional Native communities and their initiatives.

Part of his work focuses on leading the efforts to revitalize the Earth Healing ceremonies of Northern California Tribal Peoples after decades of forced dormancy; he now coordinates with Humboldt County, the State of California, and the National Park Service to ensure these cultural practices continue unhindered. Peters also developed a successful independent consulting firm called Red Deer Consulting, that focuses on cultural mentoring for Native American youth and young adults.

He has earned a BS degree from the University of California at Davis in Native American Studies, and a MA degree in Counseling Psychology from Stanford University.

"For most of my life, I have been involved with traditional ceremonial practices of the tribal nations here in Northern California," Peters stated. "I feel honored and confident in my life's work and hold the dedication and commitment to continue a necessary leadership role in the Native American community. My life experiences and skills can serve the good work of the California Humanities' Board of Directors."

California Humanities is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors made up of a diverse group of humanities-focused leaders from across the state. The board provides nonprofit governance oversight to the organization, and individual board members act as ambassadors and advocates for the public humanities within their communities and networks.

**California Humanities**, a statewide nonprofit partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, promotes the humanities—focused on ideas, conversation, and learning—as relevant, meaningful ways to understand the human condition and connect people to each other in order to help strengthen California. California Humanities has provided grants and

programs across the state since 1975. To learn more, visit [calhum.org](http://calhum.org), or like and follow on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn.

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*From left: Nilofar Gardezi, Karen Mack, Christopher H. Peters.*