WHY HISTORY MATTERS
L.A. 2024 and the Lessons of Olympics Past
Tuesday, November 17, 2015

Participant Biographies

Zev Yaroslavsky, Director of the Los Angeles Initiative, UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and Department of History; Former Member of the LA County Board of Supervisors

During a career in public life spanning nearly four decades, Zev Yaroslavsky has been at the forefront of Los Angeles County’s biggest issues, including transportation, the environment, health care, and cultural arts. He has been a pioneering advocate for the region’s homeless population and has played a key role in efforts to reform the county’s law enforcement agencies.

Yaroslavsky was first elected to office in 1975, stunning the political establishment by winning the Los Angeles City Council’s coveted 5th District seat at the age of 26. He honed his fiscal skills as chairman of the Council’s Finance Committee and earned a reputation for being unafraid to tackle controversial issues, including the Los Angeles Police Department’s use of excessive force and its improper spying on law-abiding residents. He authored two landmark ballot initiatives, one which cut in half the size of new commercial developments near residential neighborhoods in the City of L.A., and the other which banned oil drilling along the city’s coastline.

In describing Yaroslavsky’s City Hall tenure, the Los Angeles Times wrote that he “was more often than not a dominant player in virtually every municipal initiative of note since he joined the City Council.”

In 1994, Yaroslavsky was elected to the five-member Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, representing the western part of the county and a constituency of two million people. He served five terms as the Board’s Third District representative. Because of term limits, he retired from office on December 1, 2014.

As a member of the Board of Supervisors, Yaroslavsky quickly emerged as a leader on fiscal, health care, transportation, cultural and environmental matters. He authored several landmark ballot initiatives: the 1996 park bond, which resulted in the preservation of a broad swath of rural open space and the development of urban parks throughout the county, and the 2002 trauma tax, approved by more than
73% of county voters—a measure credited with saving two public hospitals from closure and keeping the county’s emergency services intact.

Yaroslavsky was the driving force behind several major transit projects, including the hugely successful Orange Line busway across the San Fernando Valley, the Exposition Light Rail line from downtown to Santa Monica which will be completed at the end of 2015, and the subway---Purple Line---extension from Western Ave. to West Los Angeles which broke ground in 2014.

Yaroslavsky also launched the building of three innovative school-based health clinics in largely working-class neighborhoods where many residents are living below the poverty line and rarely seek medical attention. He also led the effort to provide permanent supportive housing for thousands of homeless persons who’ve been identified as most likely to die if they remained on county streets.

In his public service career, Yaroslavsky has been the county’s leader in the cultural arts. The Los Angeles Times said of him before he retired, “It would be hard to find another major politician anywhere in the entire country with Yaroslavsky’s record for outright arts support and achievement.” He championed efforts to rebuild and modernize the world famous Hollywood Bowl amphitheater and was instrumental in the development of architect Frank Gehry’s iconic Walt Disney Concert Hall, home of the L.A. Philharmonic Orchestra. He has also funded major investments in the County Museum of Art, the Museum of Natural History and the San Fernando Valley Performing Arts Center.

Yaroslavsky is also credited with playing a leading role in the sweeping reforms of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. He is responsible for the creation of the Citizen’s Commission on Jail Violence in 2011 which recommended dozens of measures to restore constitutional policing and integrity to the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department and its jails.

Apart from his responsibilities as an elected official, Yaroslavsky has long been associated with the National Democratic Institute (NDI), a non-governmental organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., that promotes the development of democratic institutions in burgeoning democracies. He has monitored four elections for NDI: Romania (1990), Mexico (2000), Ukraine (2004) and Nigeria (2011). He has conducted seminars on democratic institution-building in Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and Bosnia/Herzegovina.

Yaroslavsky is founder and Chairman of the Yaroslavsky Institute, a Los Angeles based research organization focused on governance, fiscal and transportation reform in Southern California. He was born and raised in Los Angeles and earned an M.A. in British Imperial History and a B.A. in Economics and History, both from UCLA. He is a graduate of Fairfax High School in Los Angeles.

Over the past two decades, Dr. Hunt has worked on several projects exploring the issues of access and diversity in the Hollywood industry. He was lead author of the Bunche Center’s 2014 and 2015 Hollywood Diversity Reports, which provide comprehensive analyses of the employment of women and minorities in front of and behind the camera in film and television. Recently, he has worked as a consultant on film and television projects focusing on sensitive portrayals of race and ethnicity. Dr. Hunt has also been a frequent public commentator on questions of media and race.
**Barry Sanders, Chairman, Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games**


Sanders is an international corporate lawyer. He recently retired from the partnership at the global law firm of Latham & Watkins after practicing with the firm for over 35 years. He led the Latham & Watkins’ International Practice Group for many years. In addition, he was founding president of the Los Angeles Center for International Commercial Arbitration and founding chair of the International Law Section of the California State Bar Association. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Pacific Council on International Policy. In April 2001, he was awarded the Learned Hand Award for outstanding leadership in the legal profession.

Sanders is Chairman of the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games. This organization is independent from the United States Olympic Committee and has been engaged in promoting the Olympic Movement since 1939. As Chairman, he led the effort to bid for the 2016 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. In September 2007 he received the Olympic Spirit Award from the United States Olympic Committee and the William May Garland Award from the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games. As a supporter of amateur sports in Southern California, he represented the Los Angeles Sports Council, the America’s Cup Organizing Committee, the LA84 Foundation, the San Diego (“ARCO”) Olympic Training Center, the Special Olympics and the Los Angeles Olympics Sports Festival. He headed the legal team for the Salt Lake City Organizing Committee in its bribery scandal. He served on the Board of Special Olympics of California. He is now a Director of the Los Angeles Sports Council and of the Los Angeles Sports Council Foundation. He serves as an arbitrator at the international Court of Arbitration for Sport.

**David Phillips, Associate Professor, UCLA Department of History**

David D. Phillips is Associate Professor of Greek history in the UCLA History Department. His books include *Avengers of Blood: Homicide in Athenian Law and Custom from Draco to Demosthenes* (2008) and *The Law of Ancient Athens* (2013).

**Peter Chesney, Graduate Student, UCLA Department of History**

Peter is a Los Angeles area native. He studied history at Vassar College (B.A. 2008) and then moved back to Southern California to teach for five years. He is a Ph.D. candidate in history at UCLA.

**Caitlin Parker, Graduate Student, UCLA Department of History**

Caitlin Parker is a PhD Candidate in US History at UCLA. Her dissertation focuses on urban policy and racial inequality during the twenty-year tenure of Tom Bradley, the first African-American mayor of Los Angeles. She is currently a Lecturer at CSU Long Beach, where she teaches 20th Century US History, Urban History, and Historical Methods.
**Moderator**

**Stephen Aron, Professor and Robert N. Burr Department Chair, UCLA Department of History**

Stephen Aron is professor of history and Robert N. Burr Department Chair at UCLA. For many years, he split his time between UCLA and the Autry Museum, and, in these dual roles, he has sought to bridge the divide between “academic” and “public” history. Aron is the author of *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (1996), *American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderlands to Border State* (2006) and *The American West: A Very Short Introduction* (2015), and co-author of *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the World from the Beginnings of Humankind to the Present* (4th edition, 2014). His current research focuses on the “history of concord” for a book with the working title, *Can We All Get Along: An Alternative History of American Wests*. An elected member of the Society of American Historians, Aron was appointed to the Peter and Margaret D'Angelo Chair in the Humanities at St. John's University for 2015. In 2016-17, he will be the President of the Western History Association.