

The CSJ Center for Reconciliation and Justice presents:

Hidden Heroes Recognition Awards and Dramatized Narratives Presentation



So that all may be one

Sunday, March 26, 2023
2PM via Virtual Platform

“CSJ” refers to “Congregation of St. Joseph” and is the set of initials used by the Sisters of Joseph of Orange for identification.



Loyola Marymount University
**CSJ Center for
Reconciliation
and Justice**

HIDDEN HEROES SPRING 2023

Directed by Judith Royer, C.S.J.

Edited by Doris Baizley

Production Coordinator - Stefani Mejia

Video Director - Keith Stevenson

Original Music - Frank Jansen

Production Manager - Jordan Lynne Fray

INTRODUCTION - The Company

1 Amir Hussain – written by Bonnie Banfield, read by Satiar Pourvasei

2 “Intertwined” Lisa Jackson’s story – written by ValLimar Jansen, read by ValLimar Jansen, David Haley, Bonnie Banfield, Matisha Baldwin.

3 Bradley Smith – written by Keith Stevenson, read by Brian Letscher

4 Paco Estrada – written by Eliza Black, read by Victor Manso

5 Hania Ahmar – written by Rose Portillo, read by Rose Portillo

CODA - The Company

Followed by a virtual meet-and-greet with awardees and members of the company.

AWARD RECIPIENTS – BIOGRAPHIES



HANIA AHMAR

**Co-founder of Ahmar Family Foundation
Vice President and Co-founder of Ahmar Investments Inc.**

Hania Ahmar is the Vice President and Co-founder of Ahmar Investment Inc., a real estate development company. She is also a licensed California Broker and serves in this capacity for Ahmar Investments Inc. Ahmar earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in English Literature and her Executive MBA from Loyola Marymount University. In 1999, she and her husband, Mike, started the Ahmar Family Foundation, a non-profit organization formed to serve charitable and educational purposes. Ahmar is deeply committed to education and currently teaches a course in accounting and finance at Chapman University.



JESUS (PACO) ESTRADA

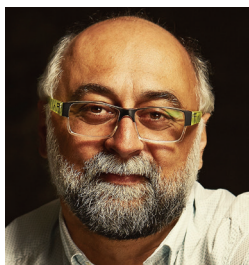
Undergraduate Student, Class of 2024, LMU

Jesus “Paco” Estrada is a first-generation Mexican American born and raised in South Central Los Angeles. His parents sacrificed everything, crossing the US-Mexico border to provide their family with opportunities not available in Mexico.

Estrada is proud to be the son of immigrant parents and the first in his family to go to college. At LMU, he is pursuing a degree in Theological Studies and Spanish as part of the Class of 2024. Estrada is the ASLMU Vice President of Cultural Affairs and Justice; a student leader with the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Center Alliance; the RESILIENCE Representative-at-Large; a Program Assistant for Chicano Latino Student Services; and a member of the Magis Service Organization. He has an emphatic desire to one day serve his community by running for public office and fighting for social justice at the institutional/political level. He feels confident in his ability to reach that goal thanks to his fellowship and internship experiences with 10+ organizations that include law firms, think tanks, non-profits/NGOs, and political campaigns.

Currently, Estrada is a fellow with Young Invincibles, the largest public policy group in the nation advocating for the issues most affecting young people, and America Needs You, a national organization fighting for the economic mobility of first-generation college students. He serves as a Core Leader for the LA Voice Youth Cohort, a community of young advocates committed to building an inclusive and equitable LA County, and as Outreach Chair for the Alumni Service Committee at his alma mater, Verbum Dei Jesuit High School. In 2022, he was selected as one of 12 students from 38 different countries to address Pope Francis directly in a global migration justice initiative.

In his free time, Estrada enjoys leisure reading, bingeing Netflix shows/movies, and bopping his head to Latin music.



AMIR HUSSAIN

Chair and Professor of Theological Studies, Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts, LMU

Dr. Amir Hussain is Chair and Professor of Theological Studies with a speciality in the study of Islam, focusing on contemporary Muslim societies in North America. His academic degrees (BSc, MA, PhD) are all from the University of Toronto. Dr. Hussain has received a number of awards, including the University of Toronto’s highest award for alumni service. For the fall semester of 2016, he was on a fellowship to the Institute for Advanced Catholic Studies at the University of Southern California. From 2011 to 2015, Dr. Hussain was the editor of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, the premier scholarly journal for the study of religion. He is President of the American Academy of Religion.

Dr. Hussain has a deep commitment to students and holds the distinction of being the only male to serve as Dean of Women at University College, University of Toronto. Before coming to California in 1997, he taught courses in religious studies at several universities in Canada. He is active in academic groups such as the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion and the American Academy of Religion. He is on the editorial boards of four scholarly journals, the *Journal of Religion*, *Conflict and Peace*; the *Ethiopian Journal of Religious Studies*; *Religious Studies*

and *Theology*; and *Comparative Islamic Studies*. Dr. Hussain is also interested in areas such as religion and music, religion and literature, religion and film and religion and popular culture. He was an advisor for the television series *The Story of God with Morgan Freeman*, and appears regularly on *Ancient Aliens* and *The UnXplained with William Shatner*. In 2008, he was the first LMU faculty member to be appointed a fellow of the *Los Angeles Institute for the Humanities*.

Prior to his appointment at Loyola Marymount University, Dr. Hussain taught at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) from 1997 to 2005. He won a number of awards at CSUN, both for his teaching and research. In 2001, he was selected for the outstanding faculty award by the National Center on Deafness. For the academic year 2003-04, he was selected as the Jerome Richfield Memorial Scholar. In both 2008 and 2009, Dr. Hussain was chosen by vote of LMU students as the Professor of the Year. He is the co-editor for the fourth edition of *A Concise Introduction to World Religions*, published by Oxford University Press in 2019. He is also the co-editor for the fifth editions of *World Religions: Western Traditions*, and *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, textbooks published in 2018 by OUP. In 2016, he wrote *Muslims and the Making of America*, published by Baylor University Press. Prior to those books, he wrote an introduction to Islam for North Americans entitled *Oil and Water: Two Faiths, One God* (Kelowna: Copper House, 2006). Dr. Hussain has published over 60 book chapters and scholarly articles about religion.



LISA JACKSON

Director of Special Events, University Advancement, LMU

Lisa Jackson is a passionate event marketing professional by day and a self-professed fashionista, shoe connoisseur, interior stylist, and pop culture junky by night! She is the Director of Special Events in the University Advancement division. Before joining LMU, her background included a mix of events, marketing, and communications in both nonprofit and corporate environments. Jackson began her time at LMU as a temporary employee to assist with the planning of Timothy Law Snyder's inauguration, the LSB Dedication, and many other key projects. After a brief stint away from the University, she was offered full-time, permanent employment in June 2016. During her time on the bluff, Jackson has actively been involved in the campus community, having taken part in LMU's Management Certificate Program, Cultural Consciousness Conversations, Faculty & Staff Learning Community: Racial Justice and Catholicism, created the "In Six Words..." storytelling project, and is currently a member of the Black Faculty and Staff Alliance Executive Board and Public Safety Advisory Committee, chairs the University Advancement Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, and currently in her second term as a Staff Senator and current Staff Senate President.



BRADLEY SMITH

Director of Student Addiction, Recovery, and Prevention, Student Affairs, LMU

Bradley Smith is a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC), a Licensed Advanced Alcohol and other Drug Counselor (LAADC), a Certified Addictions Treatment Counselor, Level Four (CATC-IV), and the Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) Specialist at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) in Los Angeles. Among his many roles at LMU, he is the Director of *The Center for Collegiate Recovery*, designing and sustaining programs that address Prevention, Early Intervention, Harm Reduction, Education, and broader community mental health advocacy when responding to SUDs and other complex relationships.

Bradley is also senior faculty in the Substance Use Disorders Counseling Certificate Program at LMU Extension, where he has taught for 15 years.

A lifelong musician and songwriter, Bradley is releasing a compilation CD later this year and is working on two books: a compendium of short stories and a guide for young leaders, "Moth Theory: What To Expect When You Decide To Carry The Light."

COMPANY – BIOGRAPHIES



Doris Baizley (Script Editor) teaches in the LMU Department of Theatre Arts. Her published plays *MRS. CALIFORNIA*, *SHILOH RULES*, and *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* were developed and premiered at the Mark Taper Forum, ACT Seattle, and the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. Her documentary and community-based plays include *SISTERS OF PEACE*, about four activist CSJ Sisters, *ONE DAY SARAH HOUSE: LIVING AND DREAMING IN HOSPICE*, winner of the Santa Barbara Independent Award for best original script; *PH*REAKS: THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES* (co-written with Victoria Ann Lewis); and *SEX STING*, based on an FBI internet case, listed as one of the LA Weekly's 10 best original plays in 2013. As story editor for documentary films, she has worked with Anne Makepeace on "*We Still Live Here! As Nutayanean*" and *Tribal Justice* winner of the American Indian Film Festival documentary award, both seen on the PBS series *POV*. Dorie continues to work with Judith Royer, CSJ on dramatized narrative projects, most recently *SPIRIT MOVES: The Life and Work of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange*.



Matisha Baldwin (Actor) was once hailed by *The Los Angeles Times* as "The next rags to riches, Jennifer Hudson story..." She has been in the entertainment business since the age of three. Over the span of her diverse career, she has received several accolades for performing, directing, choreography and playwriting: Ovation, NAACP, ADA, ACTF (Kennedy Center) and a Dorothy Dandrich achievement award.

A native of Chicago and a true triple threat who has danced in music videos, toured the U.S. with multiple musicals and featured on television shows and movies such as *The Gabby Petito Story*, *All American: Homecoming*, *How To Get Away With Murder*, *Unbelievable*, *On My Block*, and *One Day At A Time* to name a few.

Ten years ago, Baldwin formed The It Factor Theatre Academy. A training facility aimed at developing triple threat talents. Students in her productions have been recognized by the likes of Kenny Ortega, won several Young Artist Awards, obtained record deals and competed in the World Championships of Performing Arts. Baldwin has become a sought after vocal and acting coach as well as Creative Director for an independent record label and several music managers, developing and producing up and coming artists.

In 2020, Baldwin launched Ladywood Entertainment, Inc. A film production company that will release its first feature film at the end of 2023. Any opportunity she has to give back and tell transformative stories that aspire to educate and motivate is a blessing. *Hidden Heroes* is the culmination of all of those things...a true blessing.



Bonnie Banfield (Writer/Actor) is a Playwright, Actor and founding member of LA Theatre Works. *The Circle*, a video presentation she worked on with Theatre Workers Project during the pandemic, was chosen as an official selection for the Monologues and Poetry International Film Fest 2020. A lyrical blend of spoken word and movement, written by men from California State Prison, Los Angeles County's Progressive Programming Facility, and performed by formerly incarcerated artists, *The Circle* was also presented as part of the inaugural Baltimore Micro Film Fest, and screened as part of the Opening Night of the Social Justice Film Festival in Seattle. Returning to *Hidden Heroes* for another season is a major highlight of her year.



Eliza Black (Writer/Actor) was born in Birmingham, Alabama in 2000, and lived there throughout her childhood and teenage years until coming to Los Angeles for college. She graduated from Loyola Marymount University in 2022, majoring in Theatre Arts with a focus on playwriting and acting. Black continues to live in Los Angeles to pursue writing, playwriting, and art.



Jordan Fray (Production Manager) is a double major in Political Science and Peace and Justice Studies at Loyola Marymount University. Fray is senior from Chicago, IL. This year, she has the honor of being the Research Assistant for the CSJ Center for Reconciliation and Justice and is delighted to be working on Hidden Heroes. She is dedicated to storytelling through her major in Peace and Justice Studies and her seat on the TRHT advisory council. Additionally, Fray plans to continue her mission of social justice by attending law school to pursue her dream of becoming a civil rights lawyer.



David Haley (Actor) has been a working professional in Hollywood and Off Broadway since he was in college at LMU. Haley has been in over 50 network television shows with many recurring roles. Recently, he completed his first pilot.



MaryAnne Huepper, CSJ (Award Presenter) is Associate Director at LMU's CSJ Center for Reconciliation and Justice and a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange. She has served in the field of education in diverse roles: as an elementary teacher, principal, high school teacher, college administrator, adjunct instructor for Marymount College and the University of San Francisco. Sr. Huepper served the Diocese of Orange as an instructor for the Pastoral Ministry Institute and the Deaconate Program and as a member of the Commission for Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs. Before coming to LMU she was Director of the Center for Spiritual Development in Orange. Sr. Huepper also served at St. Joseph Health (now Providence St. Joseph

Health), as a trustee in two hospitals and as a board member of a hospital foundation. She continues to provide presentations for programs of ministry formation, namely the Art of Spiritual Direction (ASD) program. She serves currently on the LMU Board of Trustees. Sr. Huepper has undergraduate degrees in Art History and Religious Studies from Loyola Marymount University and a master's degree in Sacred Theology and Religious Studies from Katholieke Universiteit (Leuven, Belgium).



Frank Jansen (Music) has been a professional musician for over 50 years.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Music Composition from California State University at San Bernardino. Jansen has a master's degree from Santa Clara University, where he received his degree in Liturgical Music Composition. He writes in a wide variety of styles including Sacred, Gospel, Rock, Country, Jazz and Classical. These works include Choral Music, Piano Music, String Quartets, Woodwind Quintets, and a Symphony. In addition, Jansen has been a music educator for 30 years and served in parish ministry for over 35 years.

Jansen was the co-founder, keyboardist, composer, recording engineer, and co-producer for the original Rock band "Bonedust." In 2013, the band won an L.A. Music Award for Musical Group of the Year. He has performed as a keyboardist with noteworthy artists such as: Grammy Award Winner Jay Migliori, Latin Grammy nominee Dr. Bobby Rodriguez, Nathan East, James East, Burleigh Drummond, Ricky Lawsen, Ted Perlman, and renowned studio artists Steve Hoffstader and Gary Herbig. He has toured with The Platters, The Coasters, and Jan Berry from Jan & Dean. He now tours extensively as an accompanist for his wife, ValLimar Jansen. They recently performed together at Carnegie Hall in New York City and received a standing ovation.



ValLimar Jansen (Writer/Actor) has performed and toured professionally throughout the world. She played the role of Beneatha with the Broadway touring cast, in the European premier of RAISIN. She went on to co-author a one-woman musical about the life of Ethel Waters that received a special commendation from the Kennedy Center, in Washington, D.C. With over 120 unique performances annually, Jansen has developed her signature blend of dramatic art, music, movement, prayer and inspirational exhortation. Her biggest international audiences was at World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland and then in Panama City, Panama. At the Loreto/Angora International Papal Event (In Italy) Jansen and her husband, Frank Jansen, performed for over 300,000 people and the event was broadcast on Italian television, EWTN and across the world!

Over the years, Jansen remains active with KCACTF-Region XIII, serving on the board, managing the Excellence in Education Awards, responding to productions, assisting with new play development, and consulting on matters of diversity. When her schedule permits, she continues to serve on the team for respondent training.

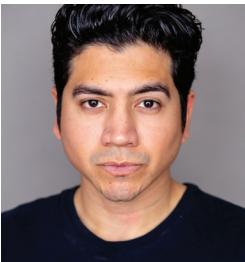
She has produced and/or co-produced fourteen CDs and has nine published works. Jansen's passion is to combine her faith & spirituality with her love of theatre and music. She draws on her undergraduate (CSUSB) and graduate (UCSB) degrees in the Arts. Presently, she shifted her focus to her five-year goal, to complete a MDiv, in Theology and a DMin, in Preaching. Jansen, her husband, and their supportive family live in Southern California.



Brian Letscher (Actor) has been a professional writer and actor for twenty years. As an actor, he's best known for playing "B613 Agent Tom Larsen" on all seven seasons of ABC's smash-hit *Scandal* – a role for which producers submitted him for EMMY consideration as "Outstanding Guest Actor in a Drama Series" on three different occasions. Letscher most recently recurred on *9-1-1 Lonestar* and as "Tucker Magnus" on CW's *Valor* as well as numerous other shows including *Grimm*, *Pretty Little Liars* and *Shooter*. As a writer, Letscher leaned into his time working for a data dot com during the tech bubble for his most recent play, SMART LOVE, about a heartbroken young genius who brings his father back from the dead. SMART LOVE premiered at The Purple Rose

in 2016 and was subsequently produced at Pacific Resident Theatre in Venice, CA, where it had a multi-extended run and was an *LA Times Critic's Choice*. SMART LOVE was developed by AMC Studios and Fish Ladder with Gail Mancuso attached to direct and Kevin Nealon and Bonnie Hunt to star. In addition, in 2019, Letscher was commissioned by USA TODAY Sports to write "Those Who Stay," a series of historical fiction articles chronicling the tumultuous 1969 Michigan Football season amid the civil rights movement.

Letscher currently resides in Los Angeles with his wife and two children.



Victor Manso (Actor) began his acting career at the National Youth Theatre of Venezuela where he was given multifaceted training and later on became a member of their company. Wanting to expand his knowledge he also studied filmmaking at the Barcelona Film School (ECIB) in Spain while leading a young troupe of actors. While in Spain, he auditioned and was accepted into the New York Stella Adler Studio of Acting. After graduating from the Adler Conservatory, Manso moved to Los Angeles where he continues to pursue his passion as a storyteller. Stage and screen credits include RICHARD III by William Shakespeare (Independent Shakespeare Company), MARISOL by Jose Rivera (The Harold Clurman Lab), *The Last Ship* (TNT) and *Jane the Virgin* (THE CW).



Rose Portillo (Writer/Actor) actor/writer/director/educator, is a 40-year *Veterana* of theater, film and television. Her career began with a lead role in Luis Valdez's *Zoot Suit* creating the role of Della (original L.A. production, Broadway, and film), and appeared in its 40th anniversary LA revival as Mama Reyna. With many credits in a long career, most recently, Portillo is proud to be a part of Disney's *Encanto*. She has also developed works of theater rooted in oral history for a variety of communities and organizations and teaches Theater with Young Audiences at Pomona College in Claremont. In addition, Portillo is currently Master Artist for Outside in Theater developing an oral history theater project about Highland Park. Honors include: The Los Angeles Womens Theater Festival's *Maverick Award*; *La Opinion*'s Mujeres Destacadas Award; Playwrights Arena Lee Melville Award for outstanding contributions to the L.A. Theater Community; Recognitions by the City of Los Angeles for various artistic contributions.



Satiar Pourvasei (Actor) grew up in Los Angeles and is a graduate of the University of Southern California with a B.F.A. - Acting degree. As a member of the Pacific Resident Theatre company, notable theatre credits include his portrayal of Marco in Arthur Miller's *A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE*, and Ludovico in Bertolt Brecht's *GALILEO*. Other theatre credits include the premier of *HOSTAGE* by Michelle Kolos Brooks at the Skylight Theatre, and *WAR WORDS* also written by Michelle Kolos Brooks and performed at The Actors Gang. Television credits include *The Practice*, *J.A.G.*, *Days of Our Lives*, and *NCIS: Los Angeles*. Thank you to Bonnie Banfield, Doris Baizley, Sr. Judith Royer, Keith Stevenson, and Dr. Amir Hussain for allowing me to share his story.



Judith Royer, CSJ (Director) is the Director of the CSJ Center for Reconciliation and Justice and Professor Emerita of Theatre at Loyola Marymount University. She has worked as producer, director and dramaturg with new play development programs sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, California Council for the Humanities, Playwrights Theatre, The Mark Taper Forum, Southern Repertory Theatre, Theatre Gallery in Los Angeles, of which she was founder and former artistic director, and a series of Oral Histories/Documentary Theatre projects with seniors, cancer survivors, veterans and clients from agencies dealing with issues such as homelessness, human trafficking, immigration and restorative justice. Judith is a founding

member of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE); former chair of that organization's Playwrights Program; former coordinator for the New Plays Production; and member of the respondent's workshop training team for the Region XIII Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival.



Keith Stevenson (Writer/Video Producer) is the author of THE FRIED MEAT TRILOGY. The first play in the trilogy, *OUT THERE ON FRIED MEAT RIDGE RD.* (2012 Ovation nomination, Playwriting for an Original Play) played at Trafalgar Studios in London's West End with Stevenson performing. He is a resident artist at Pacific Resident Theatre and Rogue Machine Theatre. Stevenson and his partners at Small Films have presented shorts at film festivals around the world.



Become a partner
in the mission
of reconciliation
and justice



CSJ Center for Reconciliation and Justice - Mission Statement

The CSJ Center for Reconciliation and Justice offers a forum for dialogue, a place of education and a resource for reflective action, to promote unity among all persons and with God. The Center gives tangible witness to the presence and tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange at Loyola Marymount University and in a wounded world in need of compassion and healing.

CSJ Social Justice Scholarship

The Center develops its annual programming with a focus on social justice issues, often intersecting the power of the arts. This year, we have officially launched an official scholarship drive. The scholarship will be awarded to students whose academic and extracurricular activities focus on social justice.

For more information on how to support the CSJ Center, please visit our website at www.lmu.edu/csjcenter or contact Stefani Mejia, Senior Administrative Coordinator at the CSJ Center for Reconciliation and Justice, at Stefani.Mejia@lmu.edu or 310.568.6694.

SPECIAL THANKS

CSJ Center Hidden Heroes Recognition Committee:

Doris Baizley
Katherine Brown
John Flaherty
MaryAnne Huepper, CSJ

Lisha Maddox
Stefani Mejia
Christine Nangle-Koehl
Wayne Negrete, SJ

Fred Puza
Olivia Rodriguez
Judith Royer, CSJ
Leticia Vidal

With gratitude to our LMU awardees for sharing their lives and work with us, their family and friends who support them, the wonderful artists, writers and actors who are telling their stories.

Special thanks to:

Gina Ahmar
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John Sebastian
Angela Smith
Linton Valdock

Madhu Viswanathan
Isabel Villalobos-Galeana
Pam Rector Center for Service and Action
Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange
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Director

Judith Royer, CSJ

Script Editor

Doris Baizley

Award Presenter

MaryAnne Huepper, CSJ

Production Manager

Jordan Lynne Fray

Video Director

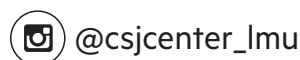
Keith Stevenson

Original Music

Frank Jansen

Event Coordinator

Stefani Mejia



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