



**MEDIA ALERT**  
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**Media Release**

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**City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs  
Receives  
National Endowment for the Arts Big Read Grant**

**Los Angeles to Read and Celebrate  
*The Best We Could Do*  
A Graphic Novel by Thi Bui**

Los Angeles - The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is one of 61 organizations nationwide selected to receive a 2021-2022 **NEA Big Read** grant. DCA was granted the largest award – \$20,000, to support reading groups and artmaking projects throughout the City with activities for students, families, as well as panel discussions and workshops for adult education. An initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest, the **NEA Big Read** broadens our understanding of our world, our communities, and ourselves through the joy of sharing a good book.

For this iteration of the **NEA Big Read: Los Angeles**, DCA and participating teachers and students selected ***The Best We Could Do*** by **Thi Bui**. The work is a personal story with universal themes around family connection, the importance of identity, and the very meaning of home. The story is told with poignant illustrations, exemplifying the symbiotic relationship between language and the visual-arts. ***The Best We Could Do*** expands one family’s personal story into a global, historic context. While this illustrated work is a memoir, it is a portrait of the human experience and has universal appeal – desiring a better future for our families while longing for a simpler past.

DCA’s planned program activities seek to advance literacy and are based on a celebration of storytelling and a creative exploration of personal history, and will include high-school reading and discussion groups for young people with select LAUSD schools throughout the City. The Los Angeles Public Library (LAPL) will host reading and discussion groups for adult-learners. After-school programming will teach visual arts to students through DCA’s Neighborhood Arts and Cultural Centers. Other planned activities include virtual exhibitions of student’s work; creative writing workshops; film screenings; and panel discussions around the work itself, as well as literary advances within the graphic novel format; and other innovative arts programming to benefit and enrich residents’ quality of life.



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Public events will run through June, 2022. All events are free and open to the public, and will include diverse activities to engage all age groups and demographics.

The 2021-2022 **NEA Big Read: Los Angeles** partner organizations include: Sony Pictures Media Arts Program (SPMAP), a DCA program in partnership with Sony Pictures Entertainment and the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts); the Los Angeles Public Library; and the Los Angeles Unified School District. Additional partners include cultural organizations and individuals such as: artwoxLA; Boyle Heights Arts Conservatory; the Culinary Historians of Southern California; Grand Park (Music Center for Los Angeles County); Libros Schmibros Lending Library; United Voices of Literacy; TeAda Productions, a theater of color organization with a mission to tell stories of immigrants and refugees; and Lalo Alcaraz, film advisor, author, and creator of the syndicated comic, La Cucaracha to amplify the program's cultural relevance and authenticity and host special events.

**Danielle Brazell, General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs** said: "For the past 14 years, we have been grateful for the NEA's annual awards to DCA. We use these critical funds to improve literacy and encourage people to experience the pure joy of reading with the **NEA Big Read: Los Angeles**. We are so proud that with each book selection, DCA exposes readers to new voices and cultures, helping expand horizons and worldviews so people can to see and understand life through different sets of eyes!"

"For 15 years the **NEA Big Read** has supported opportunities for communities to come together around a book, creating a shared experience that encourages openness and conversations around issues central to our lives," said **Ann Eilers, acting chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts**. "We congratulate the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs for receiving an **NEA Big Read** grant and look forward to a wide variety of meaningful community events."

"We're inspired by the creativity of this year's **NEA Big Read** grantees, who are finding new ways to bring people together after a challenging year," said **Torrie Allen, President and CEO of Arts Midwest**. "We are proud to support these organizations and communities as they explore the richness and diversity of American history and culture together through reading."

"The Los Angeles Public Library is proud once again to support the **NEA Big Read**, and we are excited for this year's selection of ***The Best We Could Do*** by **Thi Bui**, said **City Librarian John F. Szabo**. "The Big Read allows our creative librarians to connect the featured book, as well as its subject matter, to their communities and further enrich the experience of reading the book."



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### **About the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)**

As a leading, progressive arts and cultural agency, DCA empowers Los Angeles’s vibrant communities by supporting and providing access to quality visual, literary, musical, performing, and educational arts programming; managing vital cultural centers; preserving historic sites; creating public art; and funding services provided by arts organizations and individual artists.

Formed in 1925, DCA promotes arts and culture as a way to ignite a powerful dialogue, engage LA’s residents and visitors, and ensure LA’s varied cultures are recognized, acknowledged, and experienced. DCA’s mission is to strengthen the quality of life in Los Angeles by stimulating and supporting arts and cultural activities, ensuring public access to the arts for residents and visitors alike.

DCA advances the social and economic impact of arts and culture through grantmaking, public art, community arts, performing arts, and strategic marketing, development, design, and digital research. DCA creates and supports arts programming, maximizing relationships with other city agencies, artists, and arts and cultural nonprofit organizations to provide excellent service in neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles.

For more information, please visit [culturela.org](http://culturela.org) or follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/culturela](https://facebook.com/culturela), Instagram [@culture\\_la](https://instagram.com/culture_la), and Twitter [@culture\\_la](https://twitter.com/culture_la).

### **About the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)**

Established by Congress in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the Arts Endowment supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. Visit [arts.gov](http://arts.gov) to learn more.

**#NEABigRead**

### **About Arts Midwest**

Arts Midwest believes that creativity has the power to inspire and unite humanity. Based in Minneapolis, Arts Midwest grows, gathers, and invests in creative organizations and communities throughout the nine-state region of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. One of six nonprofit United States Regional Arts Organizations, Arts Midwest’s history spans more than 30 years. For more information, visit [artsmidwest.org](http://artsmidwest.org). **#ArtsMidwest**