

ODESSA COX FORUM

LOS ANGELES SOUTHWEST COLLEGE

"IT'S YOUR TIME, IT'S YOUR TURN"

ODESSA COX
FORUM 2023
DATE:
FEBRUARY 15
TIME 10:30 AM
LOCATION:
SCHOOL OF
SCIENCE
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ASSOCIATED STUDENT ORGANIZATION
LOS ANGELES SOUTHWEST COLLEGE

PHOTO Captures: July 11, 1967, Odessa Cox and her colleagues, including Adele Cannon, Dr. Agnes Moreland Jackson, and Sue Acosta (not in picture), met at Western and Imperial to watch as the first of 13 bungalows were delivered from Los Angeles City College.

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The Forum is named in honor of our principal founder, Mrs. Odessa Cox , who saw her 27-year vision BECAME a reality when the Los Angeles Board of Education approved plans for a new community college. LASC opened its doors on September 11, 1967. Today LASC remains an educational and cultural hub for the surrounding communities. Started in 2017 this year marks another annual Odessa Cox Forum.

Sponsored by our LASC ASO and African American Studies class.

Now celebrating its 56th year, Los Angeles Southwest College is the product of decades of hard work, vision and perseverance to achieve the dream of its principal founder, Odessa B. Cox.

The Cox family and a small group of community members started fighting in 1947 to bring a comprehensive community college to South Los Angeles. The path to today was not easy and was the result of the dedication of many.

Today, Los Angeles Southwest College, part of the Los Angeles Community College District, houses state-of-the-art facilities, including its recently renovated Library and Little Theater as well as the brand new School of Career and Technical Education building, where students receive top-notch instruction from a dedicated group of educators.



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▼▼▼ Cox and her husband, Raymond Cox, married in 1941 in Bessemer, Alabama, moved to Los Angeles in 1943, and in 1945 opened Utopia Cleaners in Watts, which remained in business for 48 years. They were staunch believers in education and continuously sought knowledge in formal and informal educational settings. The couple also worked on projects such as to increase the hiring of African-Americans and Mexican-Americans at banks and grocery stores in Watts.

The first steps toward the realization of this dream of having a college in the area were taken in 1950 when Cox and others formed a citizen's group -- The South Central Junior College Committee. The diverse group was influential in getting the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education, which oversaw Los Angeles community colleges, to purchase 54 acres of land for \$3,500 per acre in 1950 from the Union Oil Company at the corner of Western Avenue and Imperial Highway -- the eventual site of Los Angeles Southwest College. Another 16 acres would be purchased for \$14,230 per acre from Union Oil in 1964.

A sign was placed on the site in 1950 announcing the college's expected arrival, but many years would pass before construction would begin.

That day would arrive rather quickly after the "Watts Rebellion." During the unrest from August 11-17, 1965, 34 people died — 23 of whom were killed by police and National Guard. Two law enforcement officers and a fireman were among the dead. More than 1,000 people were injured.



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A California commission, under Gov. Pat Brown, later determined that the rebellion was caused by police resentment as well as a lack of jobs and educational opportunities for African-Americans.

Sandra Cox, daughter of Odessa Cox, and others believed the riots caught the attention of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

"If there was no rebellion, there would be no Southwest College," Sandra Cox, who currently serves as a Los Angeles Southwest College Foundation member, told the Los Angeles Times in 2001.

In January 1967, the Board of Education would earmark \$2 million to open the college campus at Western and Imperial.

At 3:30 a.m. July 11, 1967, Odessa Cox and her colleagues, including Adele Cannon, Dr. Agnes Moreland Jackson, and Sue Acosta, met at Western and Imperial to watch as the first of 13 bungalows were delivered from Los Angeles City College.

Classes started Sept. 11, 1967, with more than 600 students registered and 22 full-time faculty members, according to media reports. LASC's first president was Dr. John Grasham, and the original curricula revolved around liberal arts and academic transfer.

By 1976, LASC had seen steady growth in its student body as well as faculty, staff, and facilities. The number of students had increased to more than 5,000, and the faculty consisted of more than 100. The 13 original bungalows increased to 31, and construction had started on permanent facilities.

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"I didn't do this alone. I might have conceived the idea, but from the beginning to end, it took a lot of dedicated souls to bring the physical property you see today from an idea to reality ..., and it was a team effort all the way," Odessa Cox told The Sentinel newspaper in 2001. "All the way, we bolstered one another's spirit, viewed the setbacks as stepping stones, and moved ahead."

On Feb. 20, 1987, the college's Building B was renamed the Odessa Cox Building as a result of the campaign spearheaded by Los Angeles Community College District Trustee Marguerite Archie Hudson.

"It feels so good to see the things we have fought for so many years finally coming to pass," Odessa Cox said at the groundbreaking ceremony for the \$7 million center in January 1990.

Her comments were met with a standing ovation, according to media reports.

Currently, the LASC campus is undergoing a major transformation with more than \$400 million in funds from the Los Angeles Community College District Bond Construction Program. The college's modernization efforts include updating existing buildings with new technology and building new "green" facilities.

Additional projects have included the Thomas G. Lakin Physical Education Center, Student Services Building, Child Development Center, athletic stadium and field house, Maintenance and Operations facility, central plant, Cox Annex and a multi-level parking structure.



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The campus is also the site of Middle College High School, part of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Many Middle College High students take college courses at LASC to obtain their Associate's Degree while meeting the requirements for a high school diploma.

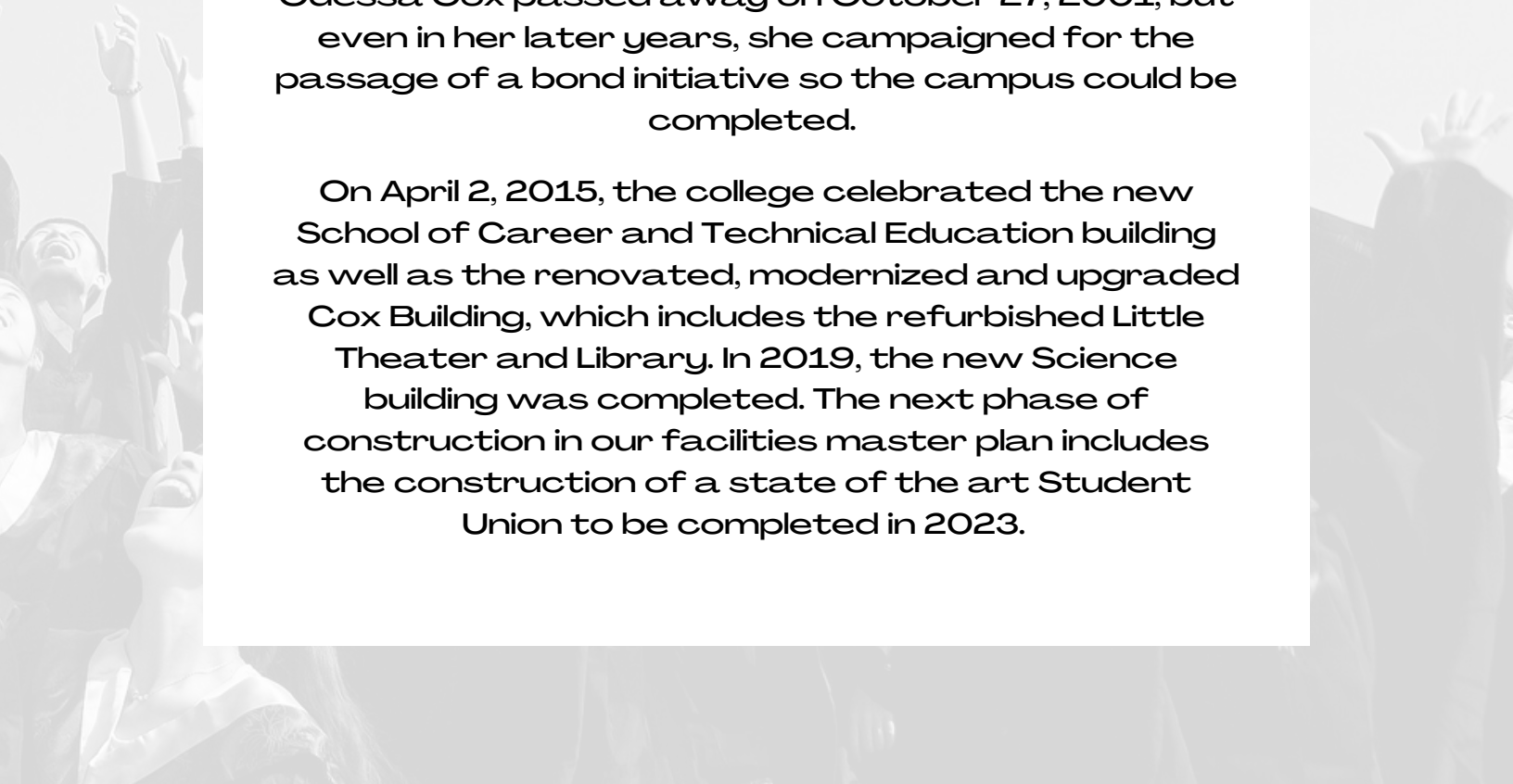
Since its opening, LASC has established itself as a key force in the educational, recreational, and cultural development of the region. Several academic and occupational programs have distinguished themselves over the years, including the Nursing and Child Development departments.

Today, LASC's student body has increased to more than 8,000. There are more than 300 faculty, staff, and administrators looking to help students find academic success.

More and more students each year are also taking part in online Distance Education courses, providing a new avenue in which students are receiving an LASC education.

Odessa Cox passed away on October 27, 2001, but even in her later years, she campaigned for the passage of a bond initiative so the campus could be completed.

On April 2, 2015, the college celebrated the new School of Career and Technical Education building as well as the renovated, modernized and upgraded Cox Building, which includes the refurbished Little Theater and Library. In 2019, the new Science building was completed. The next phase of construction in our facilities master plan includes the construction of a state of the art Student Union to be completed in 2023.



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LASC celebrated its 50th year on Saturday, September 30, 2017, at the Millennium Biltmore in Downtown Los Angeles at a sold-out anniversary gala attended by hundreds of the college's supporters, including Congresswoman Maxine Waters.

As we, the LASC family of students, staff, stakeholders, and faculty, continue to live in the manifestation of her dream, the vision of Mother Odessa Cox is getting closer to being fully realized.



Photo Captures: February 2019, the three daughters of Mother Odessa Cox, Brenda Cox, Reba Cox-Long and Dr. Sandra Cox featured keynotes at the Odessa Cox forum

Ponder:

As you leave the fourth annual Odessa Cox Forum, ask yourself, how will I honor the sacrifices of Mother Odessa Cox and her team of “dedicated souls” who made Los Angeles Southwest College our reality?

Quotes:

I feel like yes, I've been denied this, that, and other things—these rights and so forth. But get out there and do something about it. This has been my attitude all my life, you know. Don't just sit there and talk about it. Get up and do something about it (Cox, 1978,p.97).

“You got to do better than me, so you go to school and get you an education so you won't have to suffer like we're suffering” (Cox, 1978,p.22).

“Don't let that [prejudice] stop you from what you got to do... I got the feeling that is was our duty to correct these wrongs wherever” (Cox, 1978,p.26).

“I must have gone to the school board for ten years...I know at least three times a week, if not more...to convince them that we were going to have Southwest College.” (Cox, 1978,p.47).

“It feels good to see so many things we fought for for so many years come to pass.” (Cox, 1990)

References

Here is a link to:

Cox, O., & Chall, M. (1978). Challenging the status quo: The twenty-seven year campaign for Southwest Junior College.
<https://archive.org/details/odessastatusquo00browrich>

Challenging the status quo, the twenty-seven year campaign for Southwest Junior College

Description: Comments on family background, growing up and education in Alabama; move to Los Angeles in 1944; integration problems; continuing interest in equal rights; campaign for Los Angeles Southwest Junior College, 1965-69; her campaign for election to Board of Trustees, Los Angeles City Junior College District, 1969; organization and work of the Southeast Interracial Council

Here is an audio Link to Mother Odessa Cox's voice recordings

https://archive.org/details/cabeuroh_000168

Dr. Lance A. Robert and our LASC students created the Odessa Cox Forum in 2017