

Teresa (Tess) Barragan Banko, Master Of Social Work(MSW) and Master of Public Administration (MPA), enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in the Engineer field in 2000. She serves as Community Development Director for the West Los Angeles Veterans Collective (WLAVC.org), a billion-dollar effort of 3 key partners (Century Housing, Thomas Safran And Associates, and U.S.VETS), that will result in the largest permanent supportive housing and services community for homeless and at-risk Veterans, families and caretakers in the nation aboard the 70+ acre North Campus of the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration (VA) of the Greater Los Angeles VA Healthcare System.

As a seasoned executive leader with over 20 years of experience in public administration, systems-building, and behavioral health and wellness (including trauma, resilience and post-traumatic growth), Tess previously served for 4 years as the implementer and inaugural Executive Director of the first of its kind UCLA/VA Veteran Family Wellbeing Center (VFWC) at the West LA VA, offering Veterans and their families resilience-based wellness programming and services in a unique partnership with the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System. Today, she serves as the chief representative of the West LA Veterans Collective, integrating her community planning, design, administration and housing development skills, with clinical knowledge, community engagement, cultural competence, best practices, the social determinants of health and key research for a holistic approach to achieving and sustaining best outcomes for those she serves.

Tess deeply identifies with fellow Veterans and families on their paths to recovery, wellness and empowerment, as a devastating spinal injury while serving in the Marines at age 22 led to a tumultuous return to civilian life and the passionate pursuit of continued public service through empowering others. A military widow, Tess lost her husband, an active duty Marine, to suicide while he was deployed overseas in 2004. In 2013, her own PTS surfaced due to sexual trauma and moral injury experienced during military service. She strives to share the message that resilience, wellness and positive growth are possible, even while emerging from the most challenging of life circumstances.

Tess is honored to continue to serve the community beside and on behalf of her military and Veteran brothers, sisters, and their families. She has served as an LA County Veterans Advisory Commissioner (3 years) and Mental Health Advisory Commissioner (3 years) for 3rd District County Supervisor Lindsay Horvath, and was a member of the former Los Angeles Mayor's Veteran Suicide Prevention Challenge for Military and Veteran Families. Tess previously served as the 2nd Vice Chair and Chaplain of American Legion Ronald Reagan Palisades Post 283, and continues her volunteer support as the District Service Officer and as a member of the Department of CA Mental Health Committee.