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**On the Cover**

Thomas "Detour" Evans, *Moonshine for Lovers*, (2017), mixed media (Acrylic and latex paint on wood panel and cardboard), 24 in x 36 in.

Detour uses interactive paint that responds when touched. His goal is to make his art connect with people and that means letting viewers touch it.

*Moonshine for Lovers* is a one of the center pieces for the body of work *Between the Hues*, which was an exploration that took place at the intersection of color, shape, and sound. It explored the meanings and imprints that we place on each of those formal elements, and also investigates the ability to reshape how we see these elements in relation to each other.

## FROM AN EDITOR

I recently had the privilege to represent Grantmakers in the Arts in a discussion with early- and midcareer arts leaders of color from across the country alongside colleagues from fellow philanthropy-serving organizations. We were asked to speak to the significance of our organizations: why we exist and why we do what we do. Each of us took a slightly varied perspective on our respective roles in the field, choosing different motivations or entry points for our work, but in distilling the conversation we came to an important articulation, very plainly captured by Mario Garcia Durham, president and CEO of the Association of Performing Arts Professionals, “We are here to keep conversations going.”

This seems so simple. We are here to hold space, to begin, to foster, to advance, to revisit, to lead, to amplify, to echo discussions centrally important to our aims as a community and field of practice. What I have been ruminating on since having this conversation has been the follow-up, the “and then what?”

Here at GIA, we often express our belief that arts and culture are essential to individual and community wholeness, well-being, and thriving. And we believe this because we see the impact. As the perpetually brilliant adrienne maree brown reminds us, “what we pay attention to grows,” and we are seeing this in our members’ home communities and in the stories we share with each other. In this 2019 summer issue of the *GIA Reader*, you will find many different conversations engaging with this exact question: What is the impact — real and intended — of our work?

Lulani Arquette opens this issue with a discussion of the impact of climate change on Native communities, who are often in struggle with power concentrated outside their own communities. Arquette links place and environment with culture and justice, and she proposes an opportunity for self-inquiry around



Anne Focke explores the role of difference when collaborating at the community level, and Morgan Williams explores whether DEI initiatives move the field as much as our attention might suggest.

Researcher Hilary Malson writes about how communities use public art to uplift their own stories, ones that have too often been deliberately silenced. Malson writes of the establishment of counternarratives through first-person storytelling and art in a time of national dialogue about our public monuments. And Melissa Fondakowski tells the story of how, in partnership with New York Community Trust, The Redford Center supports documentary filmmaking that points viewers to solutions for the challenges of our time.

Sylvia Sherman, Shireen McSpadden, and Julene K. Johnson write about San Francisco’s embrace of culturally responsive choral programs in senior communities — moving the conversation about impact into the space of arts at the intersection of older adults and health equity. And we learn about the impact of the Arts + Social Impact Explorer from our colleagues at Americans for the Arts. Throughout this issue, we are invited to question our aims and our impacts; each article questions or demonstrates what is possible with consistent and persistent attention.

Through some self-inquiry, GIA has taken this call to look internally at what changes we can commit to that help us narrow the gap between intended and realized impact. This issue of the *GIA Reader* and all summer issues moving forward will be published and distributed digitally. We take seriously the

the disjuncture between intended and realized impact. Moving deeper into questions of impact, we have two case studies.

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### Grantmakers in the Arts

#### Our Mission

A national network of private, public, and corporate arts funders, Grantmakers in the Arts provides leadership and service that advances the use of philanthropic and governmental resources to support the growth of the arts and culture.

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crisis of climate change and strive to improve our environmental responsibility. This step will complement our ongoing initiative to reduce our carbon footprint, which includes minimizing or recycling conference materials, using paperless HR systems, and purchasing carbon offsets for our staff’s travel. We thank you for joining us in this initiative.

Nadia Elokda  
deputy director &  
director of programs  
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Grantmakers in the Arts

## FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO

### AT THE INTERSECTION

Welcome to Grantmakers in the Arts summer 2019 *GIA Reader*. Grantmakers in the Arts is continuing our exploration of Art at the Intersection, the category of our members' work that seems to be growing, with ever-more conference sessions and *GIA Reader* articles proposed by our members. These intersections between art and society are also where equity and justice can be explored.

In this issue, Lulani Arquette writes about the impact that climate change has on Native communities' cultural practices. As the field of environmental justice has taught us, the people who are most adversely impacted by climate change are too often our society's most vulnerable. They are also holders of insights and solutions. These solutions are often born of their cultures and are part of their cultural expression. We have the opportunity to allow cultural expression to change dominant narratives that so often silence the voices of those who are negatively impacted by the decisions of small numbers of power holders. Cultural expression builds bridges to collective social solutions.

For nearly a decade now, Grantmakers in the Arts has supported sessions at our annual conference that focus on cross-sector collaboration of one theme or another, arts and education, arts and aging, arts and health, arts and environment, arts in corrections, and so on to give a sample. It has been important to our work to find allies in non-arts sectors who deeply comprehend the value that arts and culture have for advancing our collective aims of greater well-being for all communities, with particular emphasis on low-income or under-resourced neighborhoods and communities of color. Often, it is individual artists or arts and culture leaders from such communities who have led this work through "neighbor labor" and trust building.

Examples of this work include the following from the 2018



by Baylen Campbell and Favianna Rodriguez; Filmmaking on the Frontlines: How Investing in Storytellers Is Good for the Arts and the Environment, led by Kerry McCarthy of New York Community Trust; a case study of Theatre of the Oppressed NYC, led by the David Rockefeller Fund; and an exploration of equity in the arts and the environment by Environmental Grantmakers Association and The Kresge Foundation.

We hear first-person accounts of the role arts and culture play in individuals' lives in San Francisco. The region's embrace of culturally responsive choral programs in senior communities — another example of cultural expression born of everyday people brought together by the unifying and uplifting power of self-expression — has marked positive social impact. The benefits of the arts on seniors' quality of life is well-documented, and we need not limit the role of the arts to treatment or mitigation. Culture is essential to the experience of being human.

And how might we track these social impacts of arts and culture? For this, we feature Americans for the Arts' Arts + Social Impact Explorer, created with support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. With concrete examples in which arts and culture intersect with and benefit other sectors of society, this instrument can serve to inform our advocacy for the arts as a social good when we speak and write to our elected officials and private sector stakeholders.

As our community and our peers learn more about each other's practices, it seems clear that, compared to the early days of my own career in the arts, our collective impact

conference: Making It Work for Real Inclusion: Strategies for Meaningful Participation of Undocumented Artists, a session led

toward more a just, equitable, and inclusive society is reliant upon our working together. Non-arts sectors are more willing and welcoming to seek creative solutions, and to see the collaboration as mutually beneficial and, ultimately, as a more effective and more human way of achieving the equitable world we work toward every day. Funders and administrators have the opportunity to build the knowledge of our peers in non-arts sectors of the value that arts and culture create in social change. As we focus on Arts at the Intersection, our aim at GIA and across the field is to support just social transformation at scale. GIA believes in the intrinsic value of culture and the transformation the arts engender in the minds, hearts, and souls of individuals. So often when we discuss the value of the arts at a larger scale, we focus on economic impact. We don't deny the veracity or value of the economic argument for the arts. But as we know, our nation's most vulnerable — and so often invisible — residents are not the beneficiaries of a robust GDP. The intersection of the arts with other sectors is where arts, equity, and justice live — from the individual to the community to the nation.

As you will read in this issue, our differences are our assets, writes Anne Focke; but diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts need not end with an embrace of difference, writes Morgan Williams. These efforts are negotiations of power, in which those of us in privileged positions must be willing to share or even surrender power.

We are called upon by our nation's residents to support the arts for their intrinsic benefits to all of us and for their impacts upon our communities, especially for those communities that are the most vulnerable to invisibility, exploitation, and disregard. Arts and culture are what make us fully human, and we owe that humanity to everyone.

*Eddie Torres  
president & CEO  
Grantmakers in the Arts*



## Our Collective Homelands: She's Your Mother Too

*Lulani Arquette*

Recently, five emerging Native filmmakers from tribal nations of the Pacific Northwest recorded Native elders, scientists, educators, and cultural leaders addressing climate change and how it was affecting their specific tribes. Ken Wilbur, elder with the Wasco Tribe, explained that climate is changing all over this great earth; the "Salmon People" are not coming back to the rivers. When he was a boy, it was common to catch a hundred salmon a day before 8:00 a.m.; now he fishes all day and is lucky to get five or six.<sup>1</sup>

Don Sampson of the Umatilla Tribe explained that salmon represent a very important part of the tribe's ceremonial and spiritual sustenance. Salmon are important to people's daily subsistence, as well as to their commercial and economic well-being. The idea of losing salmon because of climate change is unthinkable to Native people. Some of the impacts they speak about that are a result of climate change are drought conditions and a decline in snowpack in the high mountains. They are seeing huge catastrophic wildfires because of these dry conditions.<sup>2</sup>

Other culture bearers, from the Nez Perce and Warm Springs Tribes, speak of the beauty of their homelands and the importance of water from their rivers, streams, and snowpacks. They explain that the climate is warming up, and they are watching as streams dry up and rivers become too shallow. They speak about the traditional foods, such as the camas root, which was once 50 percent of their diet and is now disappearing. In their ceremonial songs, which

come from the creator and tribal wisdom, they pay tribute to the water and all of the animals and plants as a brother and sister.<sup>3</sup>

Tiyana Casey is from the Warm Springs Tribe and is a young urban dweller who has been away from home for years. She speaks of returning home in time to pick huckleberries, which is one of the sacred foods used in many of their ceremonies. She discovered that the weather has become much hotter than she

remembered since she has been gone. Casey said that huckleberry season used to happen later in the year, but it has been so warm that the huckleberries come earlier and are gone faster than they can pick them. She worries that all of their first foods are being threatened by changes in the climate and they will not have these foods anymore. But it is not only the huckleberries as a food source she worries about, but the other activities that are part of the cultural ecology of gathering huckleberries. A core part of that culture involves weaving baskets for gathering the berries and creating regalia for dance and song celebrating the berries. Also, gathering

food brings families together to commune with one another and with the natural mountain environment where berries are found. It is a meditative and joyous activity.<sup>4</sup>

Approximately 5.2 million people in the continental United States and Alaska identify as American Indian and Alaska Native.<sup>5</sup> There are approximately 527,077 people in the continental United States and Hawai'i who identify as Native Hawaiian.<sup>6</sup> There are 573 federal recognized tribes (nations) in the continental United States and Alaska that have their own governments and land base after forced removal from their original homelands during the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries.<sup>7</sup> Through treaties and



Warm Springs Indian Reservation, photo from author.

negotiations, a very small percentage of original homelands were set aside (returned) and now make up the reservations and land base of the 573 federal recognized tribal nations. Native Hawaiians are state recognized and have a total



Forest fires threatening the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, photo from author.

of 200,000 acres of Hawaiian Home Lands that were provisioned in the 1921 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act across six islands.<sup>8</sup>

It has been a long road toward reparations and self-determination for Native peoples in America,<sup>9</sup> and the journey is ongoing. The path is littered with bullets, broken lives, and settler-colonial damage from European countries and the first American colonists in earlier centuries. What has prevailed through all of this is an enduring respect for our natural world, regardless of where our home is and who lives there. The following is a perspective on “homelands” and their significance related to Native peoples. This is not a diatribe about stolen homelands. This is also not an essay on our natural environment. It is a deeper dive into the Native psyche and worldview related to “homelands” and how we all have a responsibility to take care of this precious place called Turtle Island, Hawai’i, and Alaska, or what is now known as the United States of America.

### **Our Collective Homelands**

A relatively small percentage, about 2 percent of the overall US population, identify as Native or Indigenous to this country. Our numbers have diminished over the past centuries due to colonization, genocide, forced removal from land, and disease. Tribal lands and Hawaiian Home

Lands; the land base for the rest of this country, which is now the home for over 350,000,000 citizens; and the natural world are significant in the consciousness of first peoples. Rural America encompasses nearly 75 percent of the land area of the United States and is home to more than 46 million people. Some of the most misunderstood areas of our country are rural areas, including American Indian reservations, Alaska Native villages, pueblos, rancherias, and Hawaiian Home Lands. Fifty-four percent of American Indian and Alaska Native people reside in small towns and rural areas.<sup>10</sup> Approximately 85 percent of Hawaiian Home Lands are in rural areas.

The relationships and cultural knowledge that are tied to homelands are critical. “Home” is the place in which the ancestors reside, the place one feels most connected to and the root of one’s existence. “Lands” include the collective natural world of one’s “home” made up of the earth and sky and the myriad creatures that reside in these habitats. Lands include the waterways, the oceans, and the air we breathe. The lands are thought of as an everlasting part of the ecology of life where “traditional agriculturalists hunted, gathered, and fished; and where spiritual bonds between humans and most life forms existed.”<sup>11</sup>

In Hawaiian culture, generations of families had such an intimate relationship with the

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natural world that they gave names to winds and rains that pertained to specific places they interacted with. For example, where my grandmother comes from in a place called Waimea on the largest island in Hawai’i, there is a wind and rain called Kipu’upu’u, which is a strong, cold wind or rain that pelts the skin. Waimea is often shrouded in misty clouds and colder than most other parts of the islands, particularly in the mornings and evenings. But its rolling hills and fields are green due to the abundance of the life-giving rain. In Hawai’i, there are over one hundred names for different kinds of rain,



and seventy-five names for various winds across the islands.

Humans are not considered superior to other creatures and natural phenomena, in spite of our developed brains and capacity to think. We coexist with other life forms. There is great difference between the belief of “co-existing with the natural world and its creatures” and the opposite psychology of “dominating the natural world and non-human life forms.”

Many Indigenous creation stories and numerous legends speak to the transformation of humans into natural phenomena or animal beings. A reciprocal exchange of form occurs where “life force” is physically mutable and changing. A grandmother becomes the moon, thwarted lovers become two sacred mountains in proximity, a beloved baby who dies young and is buried in the ground sprouts into a sacred plant, and so forth. The Native world is alive and filled with



Marie Rexford (Iñupiaq from Kaktovik, AK) getting the muktuk ready to serve during Thanksgiving, 2017, photo courtesy of Brian Adams (Iñupiaq).

the spirit of the creator and our cherished ancestors. It is all around us. Native peoples’ “homelands” are actually an extension of oneself and part of the greater family.

This deep *sense of place* continues to inform Native thinking generation after generation. Some do not recognize it until later in life. It could be said that it lies dormant in one’s DNA,

a consciousness of primal longing and familiarity waiting to be recovered. This connection to homelands defines most Native people’s fierce commitment to protection of what homelands we have left under our jurisdiction, or that are supposed to be protected under federal or state jurisdiction. It also underlies many Native views on how environmental policies are implemented

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### **This connection to homelands defines most Native people’s fierce commitment to protection of what homelands we have left under our jurisdiction, or that are supposed to be protected under federal or state jurisdiction.**

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and enforced across the United States on tribal lands, in urban communities, and in the broader natural world, especially relating to clean water, air, food, and land.

Certainly, peoples whose original ancestors are not indigenous to the United States may also feel a deep connection to this place based on their history of struggles and their unique experiences. Our original homelands are now places all call home. We understand this. We recognize that many people derive unexplained joy when they are in the woodlands of the Northeast, the plains of the Midwest, and the wilderness of Alaska. We understand the spiritual connection people have to the deserts of the Southwest, the mountains of the Pacific Northwest, and the beaches of Hawai’i. These are our glorious nests of comfort and our sacred medicine. They are our sources of inspiration and quiet contemplation. They are places where we have vision quests and commune with the creator and all of our relatives. We source our food and challenge physical and mental endurance in these diverse terrains. Trauma is transformed, and hope is restored. Faith in the wonder of our natural world overshadows everything else.

### **The Native Truth Narrative**

In 2017, research was undertaken to help determine what the broader population of our country knows and doesn’t know about Indigenous peoples of the continental United States. It was the first time that research and information of this nature were together in one study.

Reclaiming Native Truth (RNT) was released in June of 2018.<sup>12</sup> Key findings are not surprising and reveal bias and stereotypes that keep Native Americans invisible and limit Indigenous peoples' ability to celebrate contemporary cultural identity and attain racial equity. One of the most difficult aspects of Native equity is our relative invisibility and gaining traction in what is a very crowded, special interest-driven public.

What is most important is that in the RNT study, a national poll revealed that 72 percent of the people want more accurate history and education about contemporary Native Americans. This is encouraging. The RNT *Guide for Allies* provides tools and strategies for changing the narrative and eliminating these misperceptions and stereotypes about Native Americans.<sup>13</sup> I encourage readers to examine the part of the guide titled "Four Themes That Make the Narrative Strong" (page 12) to help understand how to craft new narrative and contribute to dialogue that is more helpful and accurate.

Recovering truth and reclaiming Native knowledge are an intentional effort to be achieved through education and cooperation. There will be many short-term wins to celebrate along the way. It takes working with allies from across the spectrum of practice, building trust, and engaging people where they are. Its intent is to move from the deficit-based approach that is often promoted in philanthropy to justify the need for support, to one that focuses on the strengths and positive contributions of contemporary Native peoples.

The narrative used in the environmental field about global warming and climate change is primarily derived from Western science, but it is

not successfully mobilizing action against these phenomena that threaten our human existence. Native people's experience of our homelands and the natural world can contribute greatly to the narrative. This knowledge is often informed by spiritual beliefs and a path to experience the divine as well as the experience of surviving in an often harsh environment. And it is not exclusive to Indigenous peoples:

*There are others whose views of the natural world are informed by their religion or spiritual beliefs. For instance, in Islam, a faith that evolved under conditions of severe water scarcity, the holy text offers many prescriptions of water usage and conservation. Water is viewed both as a physical purifier and a moral one. Similarly in Hinduism, cremation ceremonies specify what type and how much wood is to be used depending on properties of one's life. Judeo-Christian religion is a multi-faceted mosaic of experiences ranging from the "mastery over nature"*

*orientation from the book of Genesis with lower levels of environmental concern, to believing that nature is intrinsically sacred and God-given with human-as-caretaker models of nature that promote environmental concern.<sup>14</sup>*

Many Native artists, organizations, and institutions are working deeply across every area to bring more understanding about Native peoples to the general American public. In particular, Native artists are out front on a lot of issues, including their experience of the environment and natural world. For Allison Warden, the climate fight is personal. She traces her roots to Kaktovik, a mostly Inupiaq village in Alaska that battles oil companies drilling off its Arctic coastline. She has been called a *multidisciplinary*



*Standing Strong with my Feet Rooted to Mother Earth* (2014), sculpture, K. Whitman-Elk Woman.



*badass*, who uses a combination of theater, visual art, and hip-hop to address climate change and her cultural identity. Annie Leonard, executive director of Greenpeace USA, says, "One of Allison's most valuable talents is her ability to engage and involve many different audiences across generations and cultures, whether they're school kids, gallery-goers, or activists in kayaks." In 2015, Warden won the State of Alaska Governor's Award in the Arts and Humanities — despite the governor's avowed pro-drilling stance.<sup>15</sup>

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## **We cannot turn back or rewrite history, but we can support and mobilize the arts to do what they always have: tell our stories, educate people, and build pathways of empathy.**

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Maika'i Tubbs is a Native Hawaiian visual artist currently living in New York, who says his artistic development was influenced by his two grandmas. He creates work comprised out of 80 percent discarded materials and is interested in recycling, repurposing, consumerism, and the evolvment of "plastiglomerate," a new term used to describe the fusion of microplastics, rock, sand, basalt, coral, and wood discovered a few years ago on Hawai'i Island. Originally, people said the plastiglomerate rocks had been formed by the active lava flow on Hawai'i Island but then found the source to be human. Kamilo Beach has had plastic washing up on its shores for decades from the gyres in the North Pacific, which are giant circular oceanic currents that collect the plastic and trash that has been dumped in the oceans and wash them up on beaches.<sup>16</sup>

One of the movements we have observed over the past five years, in addition to racial equity and cultural justice, is the intentional partnering of arts practice and community engagement to achieve social change. This often happens organically in Native communities, and in other groups, and these partners find ways to use community arts practice to perpetuate culture, promote healthier lifestyles, and contribute to economic livelihood. There has been an increase in arts-based community engagement combined with mental health, prison reform, and aging. What we have not seen is enough use of the

arts to focus attention on environmental issues and climate change. Note that I don't like the terminology of *climate change*, which has been used throughout this piece; it does not convey urgency nor invoke personal responsibility, but it will have to do for now until new terminology becomes more widely used across communities and fields of practice.

### **Focus on Strengths and Values**

Our passion is that our fellow citizens come to care as much as we do about these homelands we all inhabit now. Clearly, many who are not Native have similar beliefs, which is evident in the many advocacy organizations who champion the environment. What we need is to use our collective ability to effect significant changes in policies and social values regarding our natural environment in new and unique ways. We cannot turn back or rewrite history, but we can support and mobilize the arts to do what they always have: tell our stories, educate people, and build pathways of empathy. Through that process, people are transformed, and new possibilities arise. Philanthropic organizations are in a position to drive this social change and community-engaged arts practice in Native country and other ALAANA communities. What it takes is finding the right partners and supporting the arts field to be a greater force in getting out in front of critical issues in this country, especially the environment and climate change.



Still from *Roots of Tradition*, 2017 Wisdom of the Elders Community Inspiration Program project, photo courtesy of Native Arts and Cultures Foundation.

In 2014, the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation launched the Community Inspiration Program in order to question dominant worldviews (narratives) and inspire social change. The program's strategy was to identify and support unique

projects that were led by Native artists, spoke to socially important issues, and engaged communities. Native Hawaiian spoken-word poet and performance artist Kealoha worked with teachers and schools in Hawai'i, other artists, and young poets to develop *The Story of Everything (TSOE)*. In this ninety-minute piece, Kealoha uses music, dance, and visual art melded with indigenous knowledge to weave the story of the Big Bang. The production culminates in a call to action on climate change. The effort has been so successful that school curriculum is being developed and another foundation is working with Kealoha to make *TSOE* into a film.

Native peoples have long recognized the importance of raising up our strengths and focusing on positive values. At the root of our self-determination is a sense of pride and the desire to live our lives with cultural freedom and true equality. We do not have all the answers, but we know our contemporary contributions and knowledge bring value to society, not just for us but for all of America. What is rewarding is how in the past few decades Native peoples have transformed so much pain and trauma into new avenues of leadership and social good. I have also witnessed this with other ethnic groups across America. While we have all come from vastly different experiences, some inherent part of us quests for connection and belonging among one another.

In Native Hawaiian thought, we say, "E homai ka ike Hawai'i," translated as "grant us the deep Hawaiian wisdom." That wisdom is vast and centered in values of both courage and humility. Just as important is an abiding sense of care and responsibility for our place in the community, and for our connection to all other peoples and life. We recognize the need for more aloha (love) and benevolence in this fractionalized country.

These are human values that we all recognize and many of us share. Some may think that espousing these human values is idealistic and contributes to softness or signals weakness. On the contrary, we believe that the conscious practice and embodiment of these values take great strength and discipline in the times we are living in.

When I think of our shared wondrous homelands and the natural world, what is extraordinary is how she continues to give back. After all the extraction, disruption, and abuse, she

manages to radiate her magnificence and continue caring for us. We are the beneficiaries of all of her infinite splendor, and she hasn't given up on us yet. If we think of her as a beloved family member and ask ourselves, Would I treat my mother or sister as the natural world has been treated by humanity? and then answer "no" and at least agree on that, then we can stand in awe together and commit to the survival of our shared homelands and this planet.

*T. Lulani Arquette is an artist and the president/CEO of the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, a national organization that provides support to Native artists, tribal organizations, and communities. Her current work is especially focused on how arts can intentionally intersect with environmental, cultural, and social concerns to educate the public, create new narratives, and effect social change.*

#### NOTES

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9. For the purposes of this article, the word *Native* is interchangeable with *Indigenous* and goes beyond the Merriam-Webster definition of being born or from a specific place. In addition to that definition, both *Native* and *Indigenous* refer to first peoples whose ancestors originated from and inhabited the lands for thousands of years that make up the current US geography and that are documented by Native knowledge and story, history, archaeological findings, and treaties.
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16. Maika'i Tubbs is a 2015 Native Arts and Cultures Foundation Native Hawaiian Regional Artist Fellow.

## Are Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statements Effective Tools for Foundations?

*Morgan Williams*

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become major topics of conversation in arts and culture within the past decade. Studies have shown that there is a marked lack of DEI in all areas of the sector, including audiences, artistic offerings, governing boards, professional staff, and financial support. Compounding this issue is the rapidly changing demographic makeup of the United States; it is estimated that by 2042, people of color will no longer be in the minority.<sup>1</sup>

While arts organizations can have a variety of revenue structures, many rely on foundation funding to pay their staff, run their programs, and fulfill their missions. The power imbalance between foundations and grantees can shape how grantee organizations approach their work. Because of this influence, it is important to understand how foundations can impact diversity, equity, and inclusivity in the sector.

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Increasingly aware of this lack of DEI, many foundations that support arts and culture are now trying to incorporate DEI values into their organizational culture and grantmaking practices. On the public-facing side, foundations are proclaiming their values using DEI statements or by including them in other official materials, such as mission, vision, or values documents. While many foundations are employing this strategy, it is unclear whether their actions match the rhetoric of their DEI statements. It is also difficult

to know how arts organizations interpret these statements, and whether arts and culture professionals believe they will lead to demonstrable change in funding practices.

The purpose of my research was to shed light on some of the complexities, nuances, and challenges of putting DEI theory into practice



Figure 1: Quantitative inquiry word cloud.

within foundation funding for arts and culture. I considered both the foundation perspective (as represented in DEI statements) and the grantee perspective. The following discussion represents the highlights of my research.

### Research Methods

My research consisted of two phases: a discourse analysis of foundation DEI statements, and interviews of professional staff at arts and culture organizations.<sup>2</sup>

To identify DEI statements for the study, I first searched for foundations that are leaders in the sector. These were foundations that had DEI statements on their websites or were mentioned for their DEI work in the media, academic literature, or industry reports. I also used data from the Foundation Center Website and Grantmakers in the Arts' "Arts Funding Snapshot" from 2017 to identify foundations that have given generously to arts and culture in the past four to five years.<sup>3</sup> I then searched those foundations' websites for DEI statements. Lastly, I included a few foundations in Philadelphia because my interview participants would be based in that area. The result was a list of forty-two foundations.<sup>4</sup> To find interviewees, I identified arts organizations in Philadelphia that



had received funding from one or more of the foundations included in the discourse analysis. I interviewed arts administrators representing a wide range of arts organizations and professional experiences. Interviewees remained anonymous to allow them to speak freely. The demographic breakdowns for my interview participants were as follows: women, 8; men, 1; African American, 5; white, 4; and Latinx, 1.

A potential caveat for this analysis is that there is great variety among foundations, which can make it difficult to generalize about how they perform as a group on any given issue. Because it is not a homogenous field, there has to be a lot of space for nuance. While all foundations are different, it is still worth looking at them as a unit to assess their role in furthering DEI in the sector and provide recommendations for improvement.

## Research Findings and Discussion

I conducted the discourse analysis in two phases: a quantitative inquiry to look at common words and phrases, and a qualitative mapping to identify larger themes.

### Quantitative Inquiry

#### The Current Discourse

In the quantitative portion of the discourse analysis, I identified common terms in the statements and compared their frequency of use. The resulting word cloud gives a sense of the current discourse on DEI in foundation support of arts and culture (see figure 1). *Diversity, equity, and inclusion* are used most frequently in the statements because they are generally accepted as the primary terms in the sector. Beyond these three, the code frequencies suggest that foundations use terms that are explicitly related to DEI less frequently than terms that can have multiple meanings. For example, words that are tied to identity characteristics, such as *discrimination, racism, privilege, social justice, and unconscious bias*, are mentioned relatively infrequently, especially when compared to their use in recent literature on DEI. Words that can have a variety of meanings and are not related as explicitly to identity characteristics are used more frequently. These include *access, justice, fairness, quality of life, representation, resources, underserved, disadvantaged, and opportunities*. Looking at word usage in this way demonstrates how foundations convey their stances on

DEI initiatives through specific language choices. It also suggests that some foundations have a clear vision for how they can impact the lack of DEI in their grantmaking areas, while others may intentionally skirt around the issue.

### Defining Diversity

I used a separate code scheme to get a sense of how foundations are defining diversity. The resulting word cloud shows that foundations are focusing primarily on race, ethnicity, gender, and gender expression when defining diversity (see figure 2). Foundations are not focusing as much on religion, socioeconomic status, education level, national origin and immigration status, or other identity categories.

Another notable pattern in the statements was that there were two clear methods for defining diversity: diversity based on its value to society, and diversity based on identity characteristics.

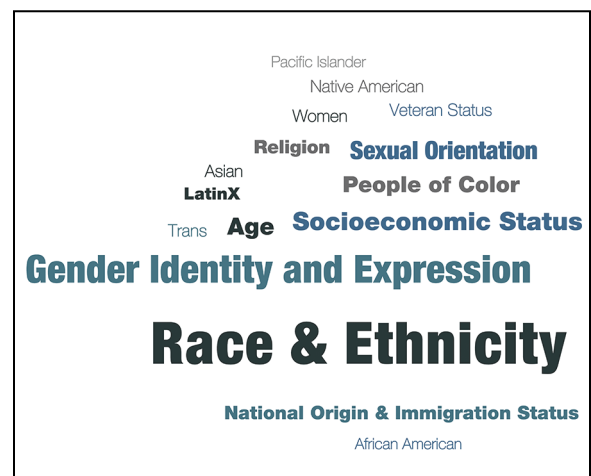


Figure 2: Defining diversity word cloud.

The Rockefeller Foundation, which uses the former type, writes, “we define diversity as valuing and leveraging the collective differences and similarities of our staff.”<sup>5</sup> They focused on diversity as an action. In contrast, the Wege Foundation defines diversity based on identity categories. They write, “the Wege Foundation believes diversity encompasses, but is not limited to, ethnicity, race, color, age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status, immigration status, economic circumstances, physical and mental abilities and characteristics, faith tradition and philosophy.”<sup>6</sup> Ideally foundations would define diversity using a combination of the two.

## Qualitative Mapping

The qualitative mapping portion of the discourse analysis showed that there is great variety in how foundations are choosing to address the lack of DEI in their practices. Some foundations' statements were multiple pages long, while others were a few sentences within a larger document (such as a mission, vision, and

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values statement or a description of a particular funding initiative or program). Despite the variety in length and subject matter, key themes emerged. Those themes, listed in order of most to least frequent, were as follows:

- systems change and social change
- the value of individuals: perspectives, potential, and voices
- diverse foundation board, staff, and partners
- diverse grantees or program participants
- the value and necessity of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- the need for cross-sector collaboration
- the importance of arts in society
- increasing access and removing boundaries
- political activism, arts advocacy, and democracy
- community engagement and community development
- the responsibility and role of foundations
- DEI as a journey and ongoing learning process
- the goal of increasing diversity
- the role of changing demographics
- structural racism

These themes show that foundations who are addressing DEI are doing so in ways that are generally consistent with the existing literature and sector-wide conversations on this topic. These themes include increasing board and staff diversity, working more directly with diverse grantees, using a systems change approach to grantmaking, removing boundaries to the arts, the importance of the arts in community development, and a foundation's responsibility to further DEI initiatives. The more unexpected themes are still related to these larger concepts. For example, the theme of *political activism, arts advocacy, and democracy* is consistent with the idea of systems change, or addressing the root causes of inequality rather than treating the symptoms.

There were several patterns in the statement themes when analyzed against foundation budget size, foundation type, statement type, and DEI mention type:

1. Even though systems change is talked about a lot in the literature as a framework for thinking about DEI initiatives, and it appeared frequently in the discourse analysis, only small foundations and community foundations mentioned *systems change and social change*. This is perhaps because smaller foundations are more likely to be looking at initiating change in smaller communities.
2. The themes of *diverse foundation board, staff, and partners* and *diverse grantees or program participants* were consistent across budget size. This shows that budget sizes, which are related to influence, are not a factor in whether a foundation is addressing these topics.
3. Private foundations, including family-run foundations, were more likely to write about *DEI as a journey and ongoing learning process* and *the role and responsibility of foundations* in relation to DEI than corporate and community foundations. I would argue that this is because the structure of these foundations allows for more board and staff reflection and development.
4. The theme of *increasing access and removing boundaries* came up more frequently in mission, vision, and values statements than in stand-alone DEI statements. This could indicate that while the topic is related to

DEI, some foundations are not making the connection between access and diversity.

5. Foundations that implied DEI values (addressed the general theme of DEI without using the exact term) were more likely to write about *the importance of arts in society* and *increasing access and removing boundaries*. These foundations are acknowledging that some people have less access to the arts. But they are avoiding the role that identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and so on play in limiting access.

### Interviews

Within a semistructured format, I addressed the same three major topics with each interviewee: (1) their reaction to foundation DEI statements, (2) the nature of their organization's relationships with foundations, (3) and any additional thoughts on the state of DEI in foundation funding for arts and culture.

I was genuinely surprised by the range of reactions to foundation DEI statements in my interviews. I assumed professional staff at arts and culture organizations would be interested in them. Instead, what I found is that only a small number of arts and culture professionals are paying attention to these statements. Based on my interviews, whether someone is paying attention depends on the size and capacity of their organization as well as their personal interest in the subject. For example, interviewees at the two smallest organizations (with three or fewer full-time staff) were not paying attention at all to foundation DEI statements. In contrast, the interviewee from the largest organization was paying very close attention. One interviewee even said that they will decide whether to apply for a grant based on the foundation's DEI statement (or other official content addressing DEI). Another interviewee said they will read a foundation's DEI statement and research previous grant recipients before applying for a grant. I can conclude from the interviews that if foundations intend for their grantees to read their DEI statements, it is only happening some of the time.

The role of power dynamics in foundation-grantee relationships has been addressed extensively in existing literature.<sup>7</sup> The individuals I interviewed were divided in their opinions on the nature of foundation-grantee relationships. Some said that arts organizations can never be

true partners with foundations because of the inherent power imbalance. One interviewee said, "I think most funders want to — and I believe need to — remain separate enough from their grantees so that there is no expectation of support." Contrastingly, other interviewees said that they have close relationships with foundation staff. Some observed that foundations are increasingly viewing grantee organizations as partners. One interviewee said, "I have good, friendly, and happy relationships with most of the individual program officers that I'm connected to. . . . I feel like some of them have made choices to treat me as a colleague." This is an important indicator of progress, as it shows that some foundations see themselves as part of the same system for change as their grantee organizations.

At the same time, interviewees argued that foundations could be doing more to harness these partnerships. One interviewee proposed that funders should partner with organizations to come up with ideas for how to solve larger issues in arts and culture and society more broadly. They explained, "we [professionals in the field] think we might have something to offer in solving a problem in our world, but we don't think we can figure it out on our own,

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and, even if we did, we are going to need help along the way in getting the right people to the table." They suggested that foundations should help convene people from across the arts and culture sector to brainstorm solutions to a problem before allocating dollars toward solving that problem. This collaborative approach could put the foundation and the grantee organizations it supports on more equal footing.

While most interviewees believed that balanced relationships with foundations are possible, all agreed that foundations' words do not always



match their actions. From their perspective, foundations will often say one thing, but the money will tell a different story. In addition, foundations will say they are diversifying their boards but then not do enough to make that happen. One interviewee spoke about the common issue of tokenism on boards, saying, "People have to give up their seats. You can't just bring one 'diverse' person onto an old board. Because a board is a body of people . . . one person isn't people having their voices heard."

Another common sentiment was that foundations are doing well in addressing diversity in terms of race and gender but are behind in other areas. One interviewee questioned whether foundations really understand what is happening in the sector, saying,

*When foundations say DEI, do they really mean across all spectrums of people or do they just mean on race and gender? Because I feel like there is a much bigger divide in the arts along class, religion, ableism, immigrants, etc. . . . we are doing much worse on those areas than we are on race and gender.*

This closely corresponds with the results of the discourse analysis. Race and gender were mentioned more than any other identity type in DEI statements. When asked to define diversity for themselves, all interviewees described it relative to an individual's unique identities, mentioning specific identity types, the intersections between them, and how those identities bring a range of perspectives to the table. As one interviewee said,

*It's about having differing backgrounds and opinions and bodies so that there can be a diversity of thought and a non-homogeneous way of seeing, and that has to be done at class, education, race, religion, income, sexual orientation, gender identity, parent or non-parent, immigrant or non-immigrant, fat and not-fat, people who are differently abled. You should think about it in every single possible way and try to have groups of people that are as representative of humanity as possible.*

While interviewees cited some foundations as positive examples, the general trend was that staff at arts and culture organizations do not think that foundations as a whole are grasping the concept of expansive diversity.

## Conclusions

### Themes

A few themes came up consistently in each portion of my research. These themes are not only relevant to foundations but are essential reminders for anyone supporting DEI initiatives in arts and culture. These themes include defining diversity, relinquishing power, and DEI as a consistent practice.

The meaning of diversity cannot be assumed but rather must be defined. As DEI becomes

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a more prevalent subject of discussion in the field, it also becomes more susceptible to an individual person's understanding of its context and scope. Defining it clearly will help the sector — and foundations writing DEI statements — avoid ambiguity and confusion. We also need an expansive definition of diversity; it is not enough to think about diversity in terms of race and gender. The arts and culture sector needs to consider less visible identity traits too, such as socioeconomic status, religion, educational background, professional experience, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, as well as how these traits intersect and influence how a person is treated in society.

Privileged parties need to be willing to give up some of their power, allowing room for marginalized individuals, organizations, and points of view to come to the foreground. Foundations can accomplish this in a variety of ways. Examples include adding more underrepresented individuals to foundation boards and professional staff, requiring that a certain percentage of grants be given to historically marginalized groups, and collaborating with grantee organizations to address key problems in the sector.

The pursuit for diversity, equity, and inclusion is a never-ending process. It is not a goal that can

be reached but rather something that must be consistently evaluated, worked on, and tracked. Foundations, arts and culture organizations, and individuals involved in the arts and culture sector need to be thinking constantly about diversity, equity, and inclusion, as demographics are always changing.

### **Assessing DEI Statements**

Foundations' DEI statements vary greatly in content, which is to be expected; foundations are unique as dictated by their individual missions. But even accounting for those differences, all statements serve the same function. Foundations use DEI statements, whether in the form of stand-alone DEI statements or other organizational documents, as devices for conveying their values. They function both as internal guidelines

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and as external announcements. The qualitative themes from my discourse analysis support this idea; many foundations discussed focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion within the foundation, in its grantmaking practices, and in collaborating with external stakeholders.

My interviews, however, showed that DEI statements are not always reaching grantees, who are arguably foundations' most important stakeholders. Foundations exist to serve the community by redistributing financial resources. If they are unable to effectively communicate with their grantees, then something is failing. Those who are paying attention to DEI statements are not necessarily convinced that foundations are acting on the intentions expressed within them. If foundations are to keep using DEI statements, they have to address the who, what, when, and why of their DEI initiatives in these statements.

**Who** are these statements for? Foundations need to be mindful of their audiences and communication channels. If a foundation's grantees, partners, and other stakeholders are not aware of their DEI statement, then the foundation needs to take the necessary steps to correct that. Staff at smaller arts organizations often do not have the time to read details on foundations' websites, so foundations need to think about how they can reach them in other ways. That could be through emailing, calling, setting up in-person meetings, or including details about their DEI statements in their grant application processes.

**What** are the goals, and **when** are we going to accomplish them? Foundations need to have measurable goals and deadlines for their DEI initiatives, and these should be included in their DEI statements. It is easy to overthink DEI; people get hung up on language choices, or they spend so much time defining the problem that they fail to act. Listing measurable goals or outcomes on the DEI statement will help foundations follow through on their values. Unless foundations hold themselves accountable, there is no point to DEI statements other than making foundations feel good internally or look good externally.

**Why** does it matter? This question is at the heart of the movement for greater diversity, equity, and inclusion in arts and culture. For foundations to play a role, they need to understand why DEI is necessary and urgent, and they need to convey those sentiments in their DEI statements.

All foundations are different, and while that presents a challenge when trying to evaluate them as a single group, that does not mean they cannot be held accountable as a group for their actions. While foundations may be driven by different missions, they all have a common purpose. Foundations ultimately exist to serve the public, and they therefore need to act in its best interest. The American public is changing, and foundations need to ensure that they are changing along with it. Supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in arts and culture is acting in the public interest.

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## NOTES

1. Spilka, Figueredo, and Kioukis, "Foundations Facilitate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion," 6.
2. In discourse analysis, a researcher systematically analyzes a body of material, whether composed of writings, recordings, videos, etc., for both manifest and latent messages in the materials by determining the frequency of message characteristics.
3. See Mukai and Stubbs, "Arts Funding Snapshot," 6.
4. Budget sizes of the foundations I included skew larger than the national average. This is because larger foundations that support arts and culture were easiest to identify based on available information. In addition, large foundations have more resources, staff, and a greater capacity for sharing materials with the public. These foundations were therefore more likely to have DEI statements or mission, vision, values statements that both mention DEI and are readily available online.
5. Rockefeller Foundation, "Diversity and Inclusion."
6. Wege Foundation, "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy."
7. See Spilka, Figueredo, and Kioukis, "Foundations Facilitate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion"; Scutari, "A Goal of Justice"; and Laing, "Grantee Inclusion."

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## Contested Memory

**Hilary Malson**

*"Contested Memory" is an essay series I recently wrote for Monument Lab (see <http://monumentlab.com/news/2019/2/24/the-rebel-archive>). In the first two essays, I drew from a range of theorists and writers to examine how the historical record is constructed through active erasure and probed at the radical potential that imagination holds for charting black cartographies of freedom. I concluded the series with a third essay, turning to two murals in Los Angeles to demonstrate how counternarratives are embedded in everyday urban landscapes. The first and second essays are synthesized and condensed here, and the third is reproduced in full below.*

### Parts 1 and 2: Syncopation and the Cartographies of Freedom

In his pivotal work *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, late Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot drew from the buried histories of his homeland to demonstrate how power is exercised through the production of historical narratives.<sup>1</sup> Trouillot focused his attention on the perceived impossibility of the Haitian Revolution. The uprising itself, he argued, was a direct affront to French and European conceptions of black humanity: that enslaved Africans could envision their own freedom and collectively rise up to overthrow a colonial government and create a new country was unthinkable, even among the European Left. Thus, the first successful slave revolt at a national scale was thinly referenced in the historical records of the moment, even as it unfolded, and it remains outside the frame of contemporary dominant discourse on the Age of Revolution. Trouillot linked that historical erasure to the ongoing exclusion and subordination of Haiti in world systems today. Events like the Haitian Revolution are not passively forgotten; they are actively silenced. Historical production occurs as events are transformed into facts, and it is through the creation, collection, interpretation, and resonance of these events-as-facts that power is exercised.

Across the Americas, the ongoing dispossession of black life by the state demands a distinct set of analytical tools for examining spatial erasure. As geographer Katherine McKittrick writes of Africville, the historic black community of Nova Scotia razed in the 1960s, commemorative gestures like historic markers inadequately

challenge the white normativity of Canadian history.<sup>2</sup> That Africville is continually heralded as the exception to that narrative — that it is nationally understood as *the* site where blackness was demolished, rather than as one contestation in an enduring struggle of emplacement — underscores what McKittrick deems the "absented presence" of black Canada.<sup>3</sup> Scores of evidence, in the form of slave burial grounds, anti-black surveillance laws, unmistakable spatial names, such as N----- Rock\* and Negro Creek Road, and the near total burning down of Montreal by an enslaved black woman named Marie-Joseph Angélique, disappear from the record through relocation, renaming, burying, and formalized forgetting.<sup>4</sup> These acts of effacement all work in tandem with the continual constitution of Canadian blackness as recent, as urban, and as immigrant; histories suggesting otherwise represent an impossible disruption to the national narrative. To return to Trouillot, "the ultimate mark of power might be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots."<sup>5</sup>

If the histories that are documented in national archives and on marble monuments reflect the politics of their creation, then illuminating the fragments cut out of the narrative is itself a



*James & Son, Women Walking from Africville towards Halifax, on Campbell Road near Hanover Street, 1917. Nova Scotia Archives Photo Collection.*

revelation. In his epic poem *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (*Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*), late Martinican writer Aimé Césaire framed historical documentation as a value-laden process.<sup>6</sup> He wrote that for colonized people, narratives of place and ways of knowing would never be captured within colonial monumental projects:

*At the end of the small hours these countries whose past is uninscribed on any stone, these roads without memory, these winds without a log.*

*Does that matter?*

*We shall speak. We shall sing. We shall shout.<sup>7</sup>*

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*does this man hold? what is the price of that woman?* — the souls of black folk have been silenced. Yet Césaire was writing at the dawn of Martinique's decolonization, when subjects became citizens, so his observations pushed beyond the absencing of blackness from historical narratives. His was a revisionist call, to reclaim that which was obscured in the past; and yet, perhaps more importantly, he suggests that the collective voices of emergent decolonized nations in fact join a chorus that was already present. We were always speaking, singing, shouting, regardless of whether there is any evidence of it at all. And as McKittrick reminds us, "the profoundly disturbing nowhere of black life, in fact, provides a template to imagine the production of space not through patriarchal and colonial project trappings . . . [but as] an outlook that is structured by, but not beholden to, crass positivist geographies."<sup>8</sup> Territories of black life have never been readily reflected on the maps of states developed through black dispossession. Knowing this, scholars thinking through the framework of black geographies are advancing alternative ways of imagining space, rooted in the promise and project of collective liberation.<sup>9</sup>

Beyond the field of geography, three writers working in very different traditions offer meaningful examples of the power of radical imaginaries to probe at the unknowable spatial histories of people stripped of their humanity. In *Lose Your Mother*, American writer Saidiya Hartman

traces her own travels back across the Atlantic in search of the unrecoverable, charting the disruptions of collective black life in the wake of the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>10</sup> While her work offers no easy answers, she concludes the book with a discussion of Gwolu, a town in northwestern Ghana founded by people who came together in the nineteenth century in search of refuge from slave raiders. For Hartman, Gwolu is not a recovery of lost roots; rather, it is the site where she recognizes shared legacies of fugitivity and dreams of freedom.

In her groundbreaking work *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South*, late historian Stephanie Camp



"A Negro Funeral." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 1859. Published in Camp 2004. Original caption: "It was in the remote spaces in the woods bordering plantations that enslaved people gathered for funerals, religious services, and secret, secular parties." Library Company of Philadelphia.

mined fragments in the archives to construct a spatial history of practices that enslaved people developed within the confines of antebellum plantation life.<sup>11</sup> Drawing from postcolonial theorist Edward Said's concept of rival geographies, Camp demonstrated how enslaved people manipulated their knowledges of plantation landscapes, cultivated through a lifetime of place-based bondage, toward the cause of freedom. Whether they assisted freedom seekers by providing them with shelter or came together at the plantation's edges for gatherings at nightfall, enslaved people utilized their spatial



knowledge to destabilize the efficacy of plantation order and create new forms of freedom. This rival geography offered enslaved people “alternative ways of knowing and using plantation and southern space that conflicted with planters’ ideals and demands.”<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, the rival geographies of plantation life are vividly imagined in *The Known World*, a novel by Edward P. Jones.<sup>13</sup> In this work, the contested territories of a fictional Virginia county are richly depicted through the nighttime wanderings of Alice, an enslaved woman who is presumed by all to have lost her mind. Regularly leaving her cabin in the darkness of night, she crosses the threshold of the Townsend Plantation and sets out along the roads that lie beyond. Though these walks are regarded as



Panels from *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*. Photos by Hilary Malson, 2019, and Kaelyn Rodriguez, 2015.

the harmless acts of a senseless woman, these strategic meanderings enable her to survive encounters with patrollers that leave others assaulted or worse, while obscuring her ultimate goal of charting a path to freedom. These spatial transgressions lead to her liberation, and the novel concludes some years after her successful escape.

Even as structures of power limit recognition of territorial claims to propertied classes, understanding rival geographies reveals that different ways of knowing space are always already underway. Hartman’s expansive search for the past, Camp’s close reading of archival fragments, and Jones’s historical fiction all create ways of imagining and mapping the unrecoverable. When we try to make sense of the past, we

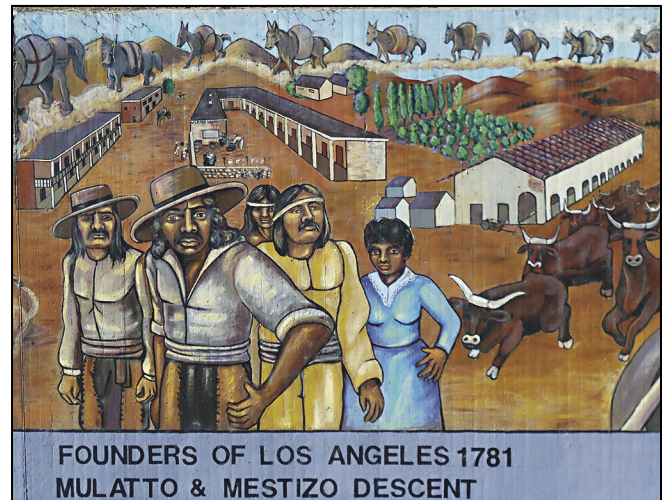
turn to records, and yet records are not neutral. Where the records stop — where the stories are silenced — the work begins.

### Part 3: The Rebel Archive

Contestations over collective memory extend far beyond recognizing absences and doing imaginative work. Counternarratives are embedded all around us; our work, then, is to recognize, amplify, and support that praxis.

...

“Los Angeles is a city of conquest,” historian Kelly Lytle Hernandez writes in her most recent book, *City of Inmates*.<sup>14</sup> In attempting to trace how Los Angeles came to be the incarceration capital of the nation, she was confronted with



a research dilemma: how could she examine the history of incarceration in a city whose policing institutions had systematically destroyed their own records for decades?

Her methodological intervention, the “rebel archive,” suggests a way forward. In trying to uncover the history of mass incarceration in Los Angeles, she turned to “the words and deeds of dissidents,” whose far-flung records documented more than a century of resistance to human caging.<sup>15</sup> She weaved together the scattered fragments of evidence, which ranged from scribbled handwritten notes to congressional testimony. By looking through and beyond repositories maintained by the state, she expanded the scope of her evidence and critically analyzed different perspectives on a single social institution. Backed by extensive research that

spanned two centuries, she presented a forceful argument: mass incarceration in Los Angeles is the outcome of the eliminatory logic of settler colonialism. Her conclusions ultimately rely on the ongoing struggles that targeted communities have sustained against a violent and repressive state.

Like Lytle Hernandez, muralist and scholar Judy Baca foregrounds conquest and struggle in her study of Los Angeles. *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* (see photos) is the product of the participatory efforts of more than four hundred local

Kaelyn Rodriguez, a PhD candidate in Chicana/o Studies at UCLA, researched *The Great Wall* for her master's thesis and supported its cleaning in 2015. In her research, she framed the participatory creation of the mural by the team of predominantly low-income teens of color as a monument in its own right. In an interview for this piece, Rodriguez observed that "Judy single-handedly organized this effort to work with youth who would have otherwise been a part of the juvenile justice system, because they were already on the road to incarceration. . . . She was able to convince other folks in the city and



Panel from *Our Mighty Contribution*. Photo by Hilary Malson, 2019.

teenagers, who worked collectively over several years to create a visual narrative of the multicultural history of Los Angeles.<sup>16</sup> Mounted on the retaining wall of a concrete channel in the San Fernando Valley, the mile-long mural was begun in 1976 and is thought to be one of the longest in the world. The panels are organized as a timeline, starting with the prehistoric era and then tracing the Native communities who have inhabited the land for millennia. Significantly, the muralists framed the colonial encounter dualistically: indigenous perspectives of colonial conquest appear adjacent to the myth of discovery. The mural subsequently follows this contrapuntal reading and is heralded today for its attention to the obscured dimensions of the city's history: labor organizers and community activists appear alongside global icons, and histories of violence, including lynchings, housing discrimination, and mass deportations, are framed as events that shaped life in Los Angeles as significantly as the development of the film industry. *The Great Wall*, then, is a monument: not to silencing but to the power of subaltern narratives that are preserved and shared despite ongoing suppression and threats.

say, 'instead of putting these kids in a detention facility, give them to me for the summer.'" As the teenagers worked together over multiple summers on the mural, Judy brought in historians, artists, dancers, and poets to work with them and teach them the history.

This collaborative ethos brought together people from very different backgrounds. As Rodriguez notes, "this was L.A. in the '80s, when there was a lot of racial tension. But no one got stabbed on the project, you know; there might have been fights, but Judy was a force, and people respected her and the work. For me, that is part of the amazing legacy of this project — all of the people who participated in making the mural." Not only did these four hundred Angelenos craft a larger-than-life counternarrative of the city, they continue to carry these histories and transform collective memory by sharing these stories with new generations.

*The Great Wall* is celebrated locally as a foundational corrective to whitewashed myths about the City of Angels, yet hundreds of such works of public art are scattered all over the city. Across town, *Out Mighty Contribution* tells a different story. The mural along a wall on



Crenshaw Boulevard connects black struggles in the United States to African history, Afrofuturist dreams, and global black consciousness. While murals have adorned the Crenshaw Wall since the 1970s, *Our Mighty Contribution* was created in the early 2000s by RTN (Rocking the Nation), a collective of graffiti artists.<sup>17</sup> Heroic figures like Frederick Douglass and Marcus Garvey are depicted alongside the pyramids of Kemet and soldiers of the US Colored Troops.

These icons of black history are not directly connected to this city, yet the mural is deeply embedded in place, for it monumentalizes South Central Los Angeles as the heart of black life in the city. The mural draws references from

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**Land claims in black American communities are continuously threatened by structural forces, ranging from eminent domain to eviction; as a result black senses of place are at once rooted and mobile. Geographer Laura Pulido reminds us that "just as individual trauma rests in the body, collective trauma rests in the land, even when it's rarely visible and in the everyday landscape, due to our heavy investment in denial."**

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across time and space to assert Crenshaw's role as a diasporic anchor. In a city whose black population has dropped precipitously since the 1990s, this is a bold territorial claim. Land claims in black American communities are continuously threatened by structural forces, ranging from eminent domain to eviction; as a result, argue sociologists Marcus Anthony Hunter and Zandria Robinson, black senses of place are at once rooted and mobile.<sup>18</sup> For black people in search of community in Los Angeles, the references enshrined in *Our Mighty Contribution* unambiguously announce: welcome home, you've arrived.

Geographer Laura Pulido reminds us that "all living things that pass through a landscape leave a trace — an energy if you will — that inhabits the land. Just as individual trauma rests in the body, collective trauma rests in the land, even when it's rarely visible and in the everyday

landscape, due to our heavy investment in denial."<sup>19</sup> The state's investment in denying and erasing its own violence is heavy indeed, but valuable records of the rebel archive lie all around us, if we know where to look.

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- \* This text was modified from the original printing for publication in this issue. Original text can be found at <http://monumentlab.com/news/2019/2/24/the-rebel-archive>.

## Joyful Singing, Healthy Living

**How Community Choirs Benefit  
Older Adults and Contribute to  
Age-Friendly Cities**

*Sylvia Sherman, Shireen McSpadden,  
and Julene K. Johnson*

Adults age sixty-five and above are currently the fastest-growing segment of the US population. In 2016, there were 47.8 million individuals age sixty-five and over in the United States (US Census Bureau 2017), and this number is expected to more than double by 2060. By 2040, nearly half of older adults are expected to come from diverse racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (Vincent and Velkoff 2010; Johnson,

including living on a fixed income, experiencing mobility impairment, and losing social contacts as peers pass away or suffer declining health (Steptoe et al. 2013).

Isolation can lead to a variety of negative outcomes. Social isolation and loneliness are associated with higher rates of mortality, likely due in part to lack of a support network to encourage medical attention when acute symptoms develop (Steptoe et al. 2013). Research also suggests that isolation can lead to greater use of certain components of the health care system, including emergency room visits and admission to nursing homes (British Columbia Ministry of Health 2004). Feelings of loneliness are linked to poorer cognitive function and faster cognitive decline (Cacioppo and Hawkley 2009). The National Council on Aging (2016) reports that isolated seniors are at heightened risk for abuse by others. Social isolation is also linked to poor health (Seeman et al. 2001) and has been found to be comparable to obesity, sedentary life styles, and possibly even smoking in its impact on health (Cacioppo et al. 2002).

### **Choirs: A Great Fit for Older Adults**

To address the problem of isolation, the City of San Francisco is increasing its funding of preventive and wellness-based programs to help older adults remain active, independent, and involved in community. These programs are more cost-effective than interventions further downstream, and early indications show that these programs can help older adults thrive in their communities longer, putting off the need for

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**"The time I spend with others sharing talents is priceless. I've been given my voice back."** — *CMC Castro Senior Center Choir*

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Rodriguez-Salazar, et al. 2018). San Francisco's population of older adults is higher than the national norm. "Our current health and social systems are not prepared to help support our rapidly increasing population of older adults," said Julene Johnson, associate dean for research and professor at the University of California, San Francisco School of Nursing. "For instance, there's a high percentage who experience loneliness and social isolation, and depression also is relatively high. There's a need to develop novel approaches to help older adults stay engaged in the community and also stay connected" (CMC press release 2018).

In this article we describe the Community of Voices program, a cross-sector approach to a high-quality, culturally responsive, older-adult choir program designed to help reduce loneliness and increase interest in life for older adults. We also share resources for those interested in learning more about developing community choirs.

### **The Need for Innovative Programs for Older Adults**

Older adults are at heightened risk for isolation. A combination of factors lead to this risk,

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**"I love coming to practice, knowing my choir family will be there to greet me. I leave there feeling very happy."**

— *CMC Bayview Older Adult Choir*

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more intensive and expensive services. Creative aging programs are poised to help reframe aging and provide older adults with meaningful opportunities for engagement in their communities (Johnson, Rodriguez-Salazar, et al. 2018).

Singing is a popular cultural activity that can require little to no previous training to participate and involves the entire body in breathing, physical movement, and brain activity. Choirs

### CMC OLDER ADULT CHOIR PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Thirteen older adult choirs (at senior centers, neighborhood centers, rehabilitation hospital, and senior residence)
- 385 participants ranging in age from fifty-five to ninety-seven: 74 percent identified as female; 24 percent, as male; 36 percent, as white; 15 percent, as Asian; 14 percent, as Latino or Hispanic; 10 percent, as Black or African American; 8 percent, as Filipino; 7 percent, as mixed heritage; 1 percent, as Native American or Pacific Islander; and 9 percent, as "other"; 2 percent declined to state
- Languages of choir sessions: Spanish, English, Tagalog (and Chinese language residencies)
- Musical styles: Latin American songs, gospel music, music from the Philippines to Broadway musicals to jazz
- Cost: all choirs are tuition-free

Note: These statistics are from CMC's 2017–18 Older Adult Choir Program.

bring people together and can be customized to reflect and respond to diverse cultural communities. The Community of Voices (COV) research study examined whether singing in a community choir is a cost-effective way to promote health and well-being among culturally diverse older adults. It involved a partnership between the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), the San Francisco Department of Aging and Adult Services (DAAS), and the San Francisco Community Music Center (CMC). The study was funded by a five-year grant to UCSF from the National Institute of Aging, a division of the National Institutes of Health.

The COV study (Johnson, Stewart, et al. 2018) found that singing in a choir reduced loneliness and increased an interest in life. UCSF researchers found that older adults who sang in a choir for six months experienced significant improvements in loneliness and interest in life. As one participant said,

*When I began singing in the choir I was very depressed. I didn't even want to get up and dressed in the morning. I had only been in the country (from Mexico) for two years and did not have many connections here. After joining the choir I started to come back to life. I loved singing with the choir, made several friends, and even started dancing again. I helped to organize a folk dance to perform*

*with the choir. It has been a wonderful experience for me. (translated from Spanish)*

### Cross-Sector Collaboration Anchors Success

CMC's Older Adult Choir program expanded through its participation in the COV research study. Twelve older adult choirs were formed during the course of the study, and every choir unanimously voiced intense interest in continuing after the study ended. Many singers expressed that the choir had changed their lives and that they wanted (and needed) to keep singing.

As choirs have cycled out of the study, they have been sustained by CMC in collaboration with DAAS and senior center partners. Singers and senior center partners engaged in the process of establishing choirs as an ongoing program integral to each senior center site. Members acted as advocates for the program and helped to identify resources and opportunities for the choirs. DAAS senior center partners and DAAS have also invested in the program, looking to the choirs as community connectors, promoting engagement and combating isolation, and helping to create an age-friendly city.

As a basic foundation for success, each partner must see the positive impact of the program on its own goals, making it a mutually beneficial collaboration. DAAS played a critical initial role in identifying strong senior center partners for the choirs. DAAS has also played a role in

### "Me eleva el ánimo y me conecta con mi cultura a través de la música."<sup>1</sup>

— CMC Centro Latino de San Francisco Choir

sustaining the choirs, providing funding, and identifying sites where it sees the potential for a choir to address a community issue. DAAS is focused on supporting cost-effective interventions that provide engagement opportunities, mitigate the effects of isolation, and lead to improved health outcomes. Executive Director Shireen McSpadden said, "There are studies that show that isolation has negative effects on people, particularly on older adults. [The choirs are] one way people can forget about that for a while. They can come together; they have

something to look forward to. It's amazing, the transformative power [of coming together through music]."

Senior center partners see the choirs as an attractive program that brings new older adults into their centers to sing but then also to learn of other activities and services. Senior center partners identify what music will be most relevant for their community, which guides the selection of an appropriate professional choir

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**"Coro Solera has helped me a lot. For years, I have suffered from depression; I took medicines to keep going. I didn't know how to breathe. To sing, you need to have air. Singing has saved me. Thank you so much."**

— CMC Coro Solera of Mission Neighborhood Center

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director. The center also supports recruitment and provides the location for choir rehearsals and performances.

The CMC provides professional music instructors, who select and arrange music, tailoring the curriculum to reflect the cultural traditions and interests of choir members. Professional choir directors with accompanists conduct the choir sessions. CMC also supports recruitment, organizes performances, and spearheads ongoing data collection and evaluation processes. For CMC, partnering with senior centers offers the opportunity to extend its mission to provide accessible music education in an effective way by providing choirs where older adults gather, removing transportation barriers.

### **Choir Program Design: A Culturally Responsive Approach**

The San Francisco cross-sector model of culturally responsive older adult choir programs can be a model for other cities and regions, showing how partnerships can act as a cornerstone of a successful older adult choir program, drawing on the strengths of each of the collaborators.

The older adult choir model today relies on four basic components, which grew out of the design of CMC choirs launched in 2011 and was further developed through the COV study to develop a

more intentional approach toward maximizing physical, cognitive, and psychosocial benefits:

1. Mutually beneficial, collaborative relationships with senior center partners;
2. A culturally responsive and neighborhood-based approach, with repertoire, teachers, language, and other cultural elements tailored to each site;
3. Weekly rehearsals led by music professionals, who provide physical, social, creative, and cognitive benefits, including physical warm-ups, vocal technique, and socializing adapted for older adults; and
4. Performances in the community, which serve to affirm cultural identity, allow choirs to share their accomplishments, and act as community ambassadors; performances also act as outreach activities for the choirs and senior center partners.

Activities, approach, language, and repertoire are tailored to meet participant interests, to be appropriate for older adults with various singing abilities, and to be challenging enough to facilitate growth and mastery over time. New choir directors are given training in best practices for working with older adults and the principles of the program, including opportunities to observe a veteran choir director run a choir session. Participant input is strongly encouraged and shapes many aspects of program delivery, increasing a sense of cultural affirmation and commitment.

Key to the success of a choir is hiring professional choir directors and accompanists who are deeply rooted in the communities where they teach, and musically fluent in their primary cultural traditions, which can vary significantly from community to community. For example, in San Francisco, a Mexican choir director conducts Mission District Latino choirs that sing music from Mexico and Latin America. African American older adults from the Western Addition and

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**"Singing gives me a sense of purpose."**

— CMC Solera Singers of the Mission Neighborhood Center

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Bayview Hunters Point participate in choirs with directors who are from these communities and teach gospel and jazz music. In South of Market, a Filipino choir director teaches songs in Tagalog at the Bayanihan Equity Center. This attention



to local needs is facilitated by close partnerships with the staff at each senior center, who directly observe benefits to those they serve, including reduced isolation, increased socialization, and an enhanced sense of well-being.

Rehearsal routines, including physical and vocal warm-ups, breathing, and vocal technique, are tailored for older adults. Integrating physical activity throughout the session, for instance, by standing to sing some songs and sitting for other activities, engages choir members in increased physical movement. Memorizing some songs and learning songs in new languages offer opportunities for cognitive engagement (Johnson, Rodriguez-Salazar, et al. 2018). Providing a snack or water break in the middle of the session provides an intentional time for socializing and community building.

Performance is a core component, allowing singers to demonstrate their skills and provide inspiration to their communities by modeling healthy aging. In San Francisco, choirs perform at their host sites and at a wide range of community events (e.g., other senior centers, libraries, street festivals) in prominent civic locations. In San Francisco, older adult choirs have

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**"Even after the rehearsals, choir members sing the songs they learn at other social gatherings and parties. It shows how much they are learning."** — *Luisa Antonio, Bayanihan Equity Center Executive Director*

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performed at prestigious festivals, including the Mission District Cinco de Mayo Festival, the Día de los Muertos Festival at Davies Symphony Hall, the Yerba Buena Gardens Festival, and the Black Cuisine Festival in the Bayview neighborhood.

Energized by their experience singing together, members take on active roles, helping to choose repertoire, assisting with concert production, arranging para-transit, designing and creating choir stoles, recruiting new members, and engaging in public advocacy. One singer said, "Choir has given me so much energy and enthusiasm because it makes me happy to sing for others and to see them become happy hearing us sing."

#### **SELF-REPORTED RESULTS FROM CHOIR MEMBERS IN SPRING 2018,**

- 89 percent of OACP participants reported the choir lifted their spirits, increased feelings of well-being, decreased stress, and was important to them socially.
- 85 percent said that being part of a group is very important.
- 78 percent said being in a choir makes them feel balanced and peaceful, forgetting everyday worries.
- 30 percent reported that they are new to the senior centers where they joined a choir.
- 151 people reported that they learned of new services at their senior center through participating in choir, ranging from exercise, computers, and nutrition to city services.

Note: These statistics are from CMC's 2017–18 Older Adult Choir Program.

### **Community Building: Cultural Affirmation, Trust, Service, and Empowerment**

Over the past eight years since CMC started its older adult choir program, community ties between older adult choirs and their host communities as well as the broader community have become evident. Through weekly rehearsals in which choir members meet in a culturally responsive learning environment and develop ongoing friendships with other choir members, their choir directors, and accompanists, a tremendous synergy develops that leads to a cycle of empowerment.

Because of these trusting relationships, the choir can become a place for singers to seek solutions to pressing issues. For example, one senior center director shared with CMC that they were grateful that two choir members, one who was facing homelessness and the other food insecurity, were able to learn of programs that could help them. Although they were coming to the

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**"I love choir! Best part of my week."**

— *CMC Western Addition Senior Center Choir*

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senior center, they did not approach staff about their problems until they were connected by a CMC choir director.

Choir members become support systems for each other, reaching out when a fellow member is sick, providing support and connections

for people facing dire circumstances, such as eviction, organizing transportation to events for fellow choir members, and so on. The choirs also become a place for self-expression and creativity; several participants wrote songs for their choirs to sing.

The choirs are able to support other important community needs through performance. For instance, one choir sang to support a local campaign to provide free public transportation for older adults and people with disabilities. Another choir sang to support the Dignity Fund, a proposition approved by voters in 2017 that allocates city general funds for older adult

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**“The choir has made a big change in my life. The experience was wonderful with the Community of Voices program, and I wanted to continue singing after the study ended. The choir has helped me with my breathing, with getting me out of the house and meeting new people — things that would not have happened without the choir.”**

— CMC Solera Singers of the Mission Neighborhood Center and the CMC 30th Street choirs

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services. Multiple choirs have sung at an array of healthy aging events hosted by participating senior centers and other community partners.

The singers’ empowerment is synergistic in several ways. The choir as a vital cultural community provides personal and social benefits. By helping others, participants gain a larger sense of purpose and meaning in their lives. Performing expands the senior center outreach in the most effective and authentic way possible, through the voices of those involved. Senior centers report that the choirs play an important role in bringing new members into their sphere to access their services, such as lunch programs and health and technology services. Ultimately, older adults become organized as they participate in choirs and can serve as powerful ambassadors and advocates for issues of concern to their community.

Through DAAS, San Francisco has joined the World Health Organization’s Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and has been engaged in a planning process to ensure that San Francisco is an age- and disability-friendly city. One attribute of an age-friendly city is that it provides opportunities for older adults to experience engagement and inclusion. The choirs truly provide a community-based and culturally relevant way for older adults to engage with their communities, make lasting friendships, practice memorization and breathing, and have fun.

## Conclusion

Older adult choirs offer an innovative approach to meeting the needs of older adults. Cross-sector collaboration creates an important foundation for this creative aging initiative that helps reduce isolation and increase interest in life among older adults. In San Francisco, we have seen how developing a high-quality culturally responsive program, directed by choir professionals, can yield meaningful results. Choir members develop support networks and can become more involved in their community.

Undoubtedly continued research is needed to reveal more about benefits of community choirs for older adults. What is clear, however, is their strong potential as part of a strategy to create age-friendly cities. Choirs can be part of intergenerational work and can be organized not only in senior and neighborhood centers but also at senior residences and other creative venues where people gather. The strong experience of the CMC-led choirs in San Francisco, the partnership with DAAS and senior center sites, and the *COV Manual* are important resources for replication of this model.

*Sylvia Sherman is the program director of Community Music Center.*

*Shireen McSpadden is executive director of the San Francisco Department of Aging and Adult Services.*

*Julene K. Johnson, PhD, is a professor at the UCSF’s Institute for Health & Aging and the UCSF’s Center for Aging in Diverse Communities. She was the principal investigator of Community of Voices research study.*

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## NOTES

1. Translation from original quote, provided in Spanish: “It elevates my mood and, through music I am connected to my culture.”

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## RESOURCES FOR OLDER ADULT CHOIRS

*Community of Voices Study Choir Program Manual* (<https://cov.ucsf.edu/program-manual>). This manual is a resource for those interested in research and best practices for developing older adult choirs. It

provides an overview of the Community of Voices research study and choir program and includes information about criteria for selecting choir directors and accompanists, developing repertoire, running a choir rehearsal, vocal and physical warm-ups, performances, vocal considerations for older adults, and developing financial resources for older adult choirs.

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Documentary on CMC Older Adult Choir Program: This documentary includes an overview of the program with participant interviews and performance footage: <https://sfcmc.org/adults/older-adult-choir-program/>.

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**"Choir has become a part of my life that I don't want to give up." — CMC Richmond District Older Adult Choir**

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## Beyond Environmental Gloom and Doom in the “Golden Age” of Documentary Film

**Melissa Fondakowski**

It's Friday night. A Netflix subscriber is sitting on their couch, scrolling through an endless feed of entertainment options. They pass by the next episode of *Stranger Things*, skip over the Marvel movies, shrug at *Friday Night Lights*. Finally, they land on the latest environmental documentary film release. They grab their blanket and popcorn and eagerly press play.

Admittedly, this might be a tough scene to picture. But that doesn't mean it isn't a vision that funders and filmmakers should aspire to. In 2015, The New York Community Trust, which has supported the creation of documentary films “that help Americans understand and take action on crucial issues” since 2002,<sup>1</sup> and The Redford Center, an environmental media organization cofounded by Robert Redford and his son James Redford that works to accelerate environmental movements through inspiring stories that galvanize action, partnered together to work toward realizing this vision.

Two short decades ago, documentary film was something that could be dependably relied upon to help you nap on Saturday afternoons. Within the film industry, documentary sat somewhere at the bottom of the hierarchy,<sup>2</sup> and the

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**The entertainment value of documentary films is on the rise, which presents tremendous opportunities to address key inequities within the entertainment industry itself. The stories that are being told could use greater diversity, too.**

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target audiences for these films were usually people who were already invested in the topic.<sup>3</sup> Documentary film was mostly boring, niche, and preaching to the choir. Today, the media landscape has shifted, and documentaries are now enjoying what many are calling a Golden

Age. According to Netflix, in 2016 alone, more than 73 percent of their subscribers watched a documentary. That is sixty-eight million people — and on Netflix alone.<sup>4</sup> The entertainment value of documentary films is on the rise, which presents tremendous opportunities to address key inequities within the entertainment industry itself.

According to the Center for Media & Social Impact's *2018 Documentary Film Diversity Report*,<sup>5</sup> documentary filmmakers are still largely white and male. Of the documentary films that



2018 Grantees learn GoPro drone skills at the top of Bearclaw Mountain during The Redford Center's Story Summit.

were nominated for Academy Awards in 2018, a whopping 80 percent were focused on social justice issues, but only 12 percent were produced or directed by people of color, and only 36 percent by women. The stories that are being told could use greater diversity, too.

While some documentaries, like Netflix's *13th*, which details mass incarceration and the New Jim Crow, are compelling works on global platforms with expansive educational reach, others — especially those addressing environmental issues — remain tough draws for funders and audiences. You have likely heard of *An Inconvenient Truth* and possibly *An Inconvenient Sequel*. But what about the hundreds of other environmental films that have been produced since?

Enter The Redford Center and The New York Community Trust. Although the Trust had been funding documentary film for more than a decade through their arts funding program, they had a specific desire to increase the number of



environmental documentary films they were supporting. The Trust first learned about The Redford Center in late 2014, when they partnered on a small grant to support the Center's impact campaign to help restore the Colorado River's delta, a goal of their 2012 documentary *Watershed: Exploring A New Water Ethic for the New West*. The Redford Center's filmmaking model — highly collaborative, environmentally focused, solutions forward, and impact driven — attracted the attention of the Trust's arts programming, and they approached The Redford Center to design a program that could get more highly effective, artful, and entertaining environmental documentaries made by under-represented filmmakers.

The Trust offered The Redford Center the opportunity to design a program that serves kindred filmmakers in ways that go beyond simple grant redistribution. The team conducted more

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than thirty interviews with industry leaders and funders, and a few key points were repeated again and again: funders do not receive many environment-themed documentary proposals, and of the ones they do receive, few are developed enough to understand their impact potential. Audiences sang a similar tune. When the team took a camera and set out on the streets of Oakland and San Francisco to ask people, "What was the last environmental film you watched?" the answers — or non-answers, really — were confounding. Nearly everyone interviewed had a hard time remembering even a single environmental documentary film that they had ever watched. Some could not answer at all. Of the few who could, after a lot of hemming and hawing, they would mention something remotely gloomy. One person

even said, "*Armageddon*?" referring to the fictional movie starring Bruce Willis as Earth's asteroid-blasting savior. The feedback revealed how audiences perceive environmental films — and how The Redford Center might be able to change that perception.

At the time the Trust approached The Redford Center, they were in production on another original environmental documentary film, titled *Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution*.<sup>6</sup> As part of their research for the film, they commissioned a landscape analysis of clean energy in the United States. One component of the study revealed that only 38 percent of Americans believed they would be personally harmed by global warming, yet 90 percent of Americans believed that energy independence — a pro-clean energy euphemism<sup>7</sup> — should be at least a medium priority for government.<sup>8</sup> The dissonance between these two statistics — people who, on one hand, were proverbially sticking their heads in the sand on the issue of climate change, and who, on the other, believed in the potential of clean energy — was compelling and affirming, leading the team to an even deeper understanding of the connective tissue that is missing for most people when it comes to the environment: *solutions*.

People are tired of hearing the bad news and want to understand how to fix things. Director of the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication, Anthony Leiserowitz, further clarified the team's findings: "We find in our audience research that even the alarmed [those most concerned about climate change] don't really know what they can do individually, or what we can do collectively. We call this loosely 'the hope gap,' and it's a serious problem. Perceived threat without efficacy of response is usually a recipe for disengagement or fatalism."<sup>9</sup> The Redford Center continued to gather more research and information on the impact potential of environmental documentary film and used it to develop the following Redford Center Grants Program.

### **Redford Center Grants**

Currently in its second cycle, the Redford Center Grants program is supporting fourteen filmmakers working on feature-length environmental film projects that drive awareness, education, and action on a variety of environmental topics. Through an open call for proposals, The Redford Center selects seven grantees per two-year cycle to receive a \$20,000 development grant for a

proof-of-concept short film; a GoPro camera and gear kit; and travel and lodging for its Story Summit at Sundance Mountain Resort, where they gain access to issue experts and film industry leaders; consideration for up to \$100,000 in



Brenda Robinson, Justin Wilkenfeld, and Cheryl Hirasa speak on a panel at the 2018 story Summit.

production funds toward their feature documentary film in year two; and fast-track consideration for fiscal sponsorship with The Redford Center. The six sections that follow describe the primary program strategies and details on how it is executed.

### **Inclusivity**

As filmmakers themselves, The Redford Center already had a strong awareness of the documentary field's diversity imbalance and placed inclusivity at the center of the program. Because environmental documentarians are an even smaller subset of filmmakers, The Redford Center knew the biggest challenge would be outreach. To cast as wide a net as possible with the first open call for proposals, they built an expansive network to support their outreach. To this day, little is more effective than personalized, meaningful, one-to-one outreach and connection. This effort began with building a diverse, multidisciplinary advisory team with relationships to the film industry and expertise in key areas, who could provide added value to future grantees — advice, connections, or knowledge — and who could help The Redford Center reach more prospective applicants.

The team also reached out to as many film funding and support organizations as possible, including Catapult Film Fund, Chicken & Egg Pictures, the Center for Asian American Media, Queer Producers Collective, and at least seventy others to engage them in outreach efforts and encourage them to connect filmmakers working on environmental film projects directly with The Redford Center. Staff also attended a number of local and regional film festivals to meet with filmmakers working in the environmental arena. And finally, they created promotional ads to release on mainstream as well as social media platforms that highlighted the goals of the program and were reflective of the types of filmmaker applicants the team was trying to attract to the open call.

Although the deadline for the open call was a limited window, folding in additional time for late applications proved important. Networking is never instantaneous, and it took extra time for the open call to reach some applicants that the network specifically targeted. Additionally, having real-time, highly responsive troubleshooting by knowledgeable staff and a midcall reminder to all filmmakers who had started an

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application but had not yet finished resulted in more completed applications and a great user experience — which helped create positive buzz among filmmakers around the program.

In the first cycle, The Redford Center received 282 grant applications, 90 of which were on target, on message, and of high aesthetic quality. Data collected in a survey of applicants showed that 33 percent of applicants were emerging filmmakers; 27 percent identified as Asian Pacific-Islander, Native American, African American, or Latino; and 42 percent of applicants were women, which was more than double industry standards at the time (2016).

## Story

The Redford Center's theory of change is rooted in the belief that awareness is the first step toward action on an issue, and positive, hopeful stories have an important role to play in inspiring public engagement and creating change. With renewed reassurance about the "hope gap," and aware of the effect that gloom and doom has on potential audiences, The Redford Center knew that for the environmental films to be watchable, they would need to be entertaining, character driven, and crafted with an emphasis on hope and solutions. The Redford Center was already utilizing these elements in their own films and saw the grants program as an opportunity to prioritize inclusivity. The Redford Center's experience with distributing environmental documentaries taught them that a majority of people do not consider themselves environmentalists for the simple fact that they do not identify with the usual suspects of the environmental movement: white men chasing

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## There are multitudes of solutions stories out there, and the time has come for more of them to be shared.

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after whaling ships or preserving spotted owls. Their call for proposals encouraged filmmakers to expand their notion of the environment to include environmental justice stories, unsung heroes making changes in their communities, the unlikely flora and fauna that do not make the glossy pages of *National Geographic*, and anything remotely relevant to protecting and preserving the planet and its people. The point being, there are multitudes of solutions stories out there, and the time has come for more of them to be shared.

Of note is that when a filmmaker was in doubt about whether their project was "environmental," The Redford Center encouraged them to apply anyway. What they found was that while filmmakers understood the nuance of their stories, they were not always able to articulate the environmental aspect. The Redford Center worked together with many applicants to help bring the environmental connection forward.

The Redford Center has awarded grants to fourteen film projects to date, on "clean" meat, youth environmental action, glacier melt and

geopolitics in the Bering Strait, community-based climate adaptation, a youth artist's response to Hurricane Harvey, Middle Eastern and European women on an Arctic expedition, the Black Belt Citizens Fighting for Health and Justice in Alabama, sustainable farming and permaculture, the Battle of Standing Rock, the young inventors of Intel's International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), the unbalanced protection of "ugly" species, desertification, toxic chemicals in health and beauty products, and a group of high school students from Brooklyn on a life-changing trek in Alaska.

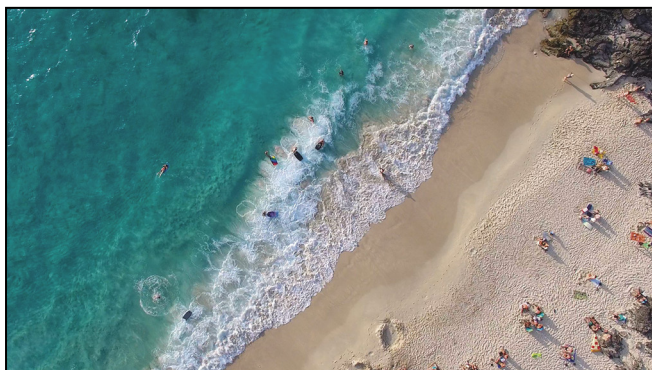
## Artist Development

A key part of The Redford Center's model is the Story Summit. It is well known that bringing people together outside of their daily lives and routines helps to establish fresh connections across disciplines, encourage dynamic interactions, and promote innovative and creative thinking. The natural setting of the Wasatch Mountains at the Sundance Mountain Resort provides a magnificent backdrop for collaborative, creative, and goal-oriented work. All grantee filmmaking teams attend the Summit, which includes small group sessions, panels, discussions, GoPro skills workshops, and networking with other filmmakers, industry leaders, and issue experts — with the goal of helping the film teams refine their narratives and identify opportunities for impact. The relationships that develop over the three days are invaluable to the filmmaking teams throughout the evolution and distribution of their projects, as many emerging filmmakers are just beginning to learn how to navigate the complicated networks of the film industry. Having the opportunity to be in community with kindred filmmakers and environmental leaders has been particularly motivating for grantees.

An important feature of how the Story Summit operates is that every person who attends also contributes to the experience. The total group number is capped at approximately fifty, and every participant — whether they are attending as a grantee, funder, advisor, or staff member — sits on a panel, gives a talk, or facilitates a small-group session. The participatory nature of the gathering levels the field and promotes collaboration, deepening each participant's investment in the film projects. This inclusive approach creates a space for a range of perspectives to come forward — on environmental issues, filmmaking,

media, marketing, technology, science, business, education, policy making, pop culture, and art.

According to surveys conducted by The Redford Center of all Redford Center Grants applicants, one of the top reasons filmmakers apply to the program (as opposed to other programs) is the Story Summit. Many artists work in isolation, and being present in a community is rare, but



Film still of Kua Bay via drone from the short film *Reefs at Risk*.

when it comes to environmental filmmaking — and environmental activism, generally — community is everything. It is how people organize and mobilize, maintain hope, and shape the stories that get told.

### Impact

Because The Redford Center's mission is to accelerate environmental movements, a film's potential for impact is a primary consideration in the Redford Center Grants selection process. For environmental films specifically, it is important to distinguish impact — the change a film can facilitate — from outputs — the number of screenings or awards a film receives. While awards and screenings are important, they are not necessarily an indicator of audience action. However, when character-driven solutions are the focus, motivating audiences to act is simpler: the film itself can model how and where audiences can get involved. The Redford Center helps filmmakers capitalize on this potential for impact by facilitating connections with organizations in their topic area doing on-the-ground environmental work. At the Story Summit and throughout the duration of the grant cycle, The Redford Center facilitates collaboration and partnership opportunities whenever possible.

Note that it is advantageous to invite stakeholders into the conversation early, as The Redford

Center does for filmmakers at the Story Summit. Doing so not only invites a wider range of perspectives but also supports the filmmakers in building a network of grassroots, action-oriented organizations ready to utilize their films as tools for community action.

Grantee films are having an impact on several movements, including STEM education, food security, community organizing around climate, and personal behavior change, in addition to policy shifts. The film team behind *Reefs at Risk*, a 2016 Redford Center grantee, used their proof-of-concept short film to rally support for the passage of legislation in Hawaii banning sunscreens containing the chemicals oxybenzone and octinoxate, which happened in July 2016. In February 2019, Key West, Florida, followed suit, passing similar legislation to protect their reefs from toxins.<sup>10</sup>

### Funding

When asked what the greatest challenge in making a documentary film is, the knee-jerk response most filmmakers will give is fundraising. However, when it comes to film funding, some dollars are harder to secure than others. Knowing when to jump in can make all the difference in helping a filmmaker capture a key moment or finish their film. Based on The Redford Center's own experiences and funder and filmmaker research, early development — when filmmakers only have an initial idea about their story but

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have not yet shot any footage — is the stage of the documentary filmmaking process for which funding is most difficult to come by. In fact, most documentary filmmakers will spend a significant amount of their own money to push their films through this early development phase, with the promise of a larger funder jumping on the project down the line. This option is not always viable for under-resourced filmmakers and is often a challenge for environmental documentary



projects. The Redford Center understood that their grants program could have a huge impact for filmmakers and film projects if they provided filmmakers with development funds that enabled them to create a proof-of-concept short film that could be used for multiple purposes, including fundraising and audience-building efforts for their feature.

However, supporting filmmakers through to the completion of their film projects was also a program priority. Because films can sometimes take years to complete, being able to engage with the filmmakers on their projects over multiple years could expand the kind of support the organization could lend — including and beyond the

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monetary. This thinking ultimately led to the creation of a two-year grant cycle that provides filmmakers with \$20,000 development grants in the first year to complete a short proof-of-concept film. In the second year, an additional \$100,000 in funds are distributed to support the production of one or more grantee films, and along the way The Redford Center facilitates opportunities for all filmmakers in the current grants cycle to fundraise for, promote, and advertise their films.

It is important to point out that though the grant award architecture was set, The Redford Center found it valuable to remain flexible with the call for proposals, being sure to give a second look at projects that while they were no longer in early development, still seemed unable to move forward due to the fact that they lacked a strong proof-of-concept piece they could use to promote their project.

Since 2016, The Redford Center has distributed more than \$500,000 in cash grants and travel and accommodation scholarships to fourteen grantees. With one and one-half grant cycles under their belt, Redford Center grantees have completed three feature-length documentaries and three short films, which are all being actively

distributed and have collectively screened at more than thirty film festivals.

## Partnership

The New York Community Trust and The Redford Center agreed on specific output goals for the program from the start, and The Trust provided enough room for The Redford Center team to be creative and flexible in how those outputs were achieved. That space empowered The Redford Center to engage additional program partners to add value for filmmakers. Examples include Cool Effect, an organization that helps promote carbon offsetting of film productions, and GoPro, a leader in content creation with high-definition cameras and gear. The Trust has offered guidance and structure without a heavy hand, trusting The Redford Center to do what it does best: develop a program that inspires the creation of more solutions-forward, entertaining, environmental film productions and can steadily shift the environmental documentary landscape for filmmakers, audiences, and movements.

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## The Golden Opportunity of Social Impact and the Arts

*Clay Lord*

### Digging Up

In 2013, Bill Gates gave an interview in the *Financial Times* in which he implicated the arts community in some kind of strained opposition to community health. “He questions why anyone would donate money to build a new wing for a museum rather than spend it on preventing illnesses that can lead to blindness.”<sup>1</sup> Not only was this not a great moment, but this kind of thinking ultimately harms the artists and communities doing important work together that we know contributes to social wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>

Gates was exploring why the philanthropic dollars from high-net worth individuals would be better spent on preventing illness-induced blindness in children than to build a new museum wing, and it incensed the arts world. This moment became a proxy for the challenges of public value. The problem of this paradigm is two-fold. First, philanthropic resources do not need to exist within a zero-sum frame. Second, arts are central to community betterment; this is a non-negotiable truth. Is a museum wing worth not preventing blindness? No. But, could the arts be a mechanism for that prevention? Yes.

Art makes better human beings; art makes being human better.

Within the arts and culture field, this concept is a given, and across the world — Germany, England, Japan, South Africa, France — we see arts and culture as a central value to living. Moreover, and importantly, this same centrality of arts and culture is evident in populations within the United States itself, including Native Americans, African Americans, Latinx communities, and countless others whose cultures have been threatened.

“As Indians we are artistic; it’s in our nature,” says Julie Garreau, executive director of the Cheyenne River Youth Project and founder of the Red Can Graffiti Jam. “We have no word for ‘art.’ People, for example, look at our tipis, and they say ‘that’s art.’ We look at our tipis and say, ‘That tells a story.’ It’s very cultural.”

Garreau’s words echo loudly in Gates’ paradigm, challenging the implication that funding cultural practices could be understood as superfluous, or even immoral. Such a perspective calls upon a deep-rooted strain of white skepticism about the

role of arts and culture in making communities better places, running the way back to the Puritan influences of the first European colonizers. The results of which have manifested in a prolonged and persistent division of arts and culture into two main threads: “community art,” which has often been diminished as ineffectual, amateur hobbyism; and “art,” which is predominantly considered the formal production of art, held in controlled spaces, with limited access, and solid parameters of form and function.

The hole we find ourselves in, then, is deep, and it has been around a long time. John Adams, in a 1780 letter to his wife, Abigail, famously laid out a sort of priority for European American ideology that remains basically true, saying, “I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematicks and Philosophy . . . in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry, and Porcelaine.”<sup>3</sup>

We are a country where security, industry, and pragmatism come first, and art comes later. This mix of Puritanical asceticism and patriarchal classism undergirds the system.<sup>4</sup>

As the country grew from the time of John and Abigail, civic-mindedness and communal progress emerged as strong traits. We were a country anxious to collaborate to solve major societal issues,<sup>5</sup>

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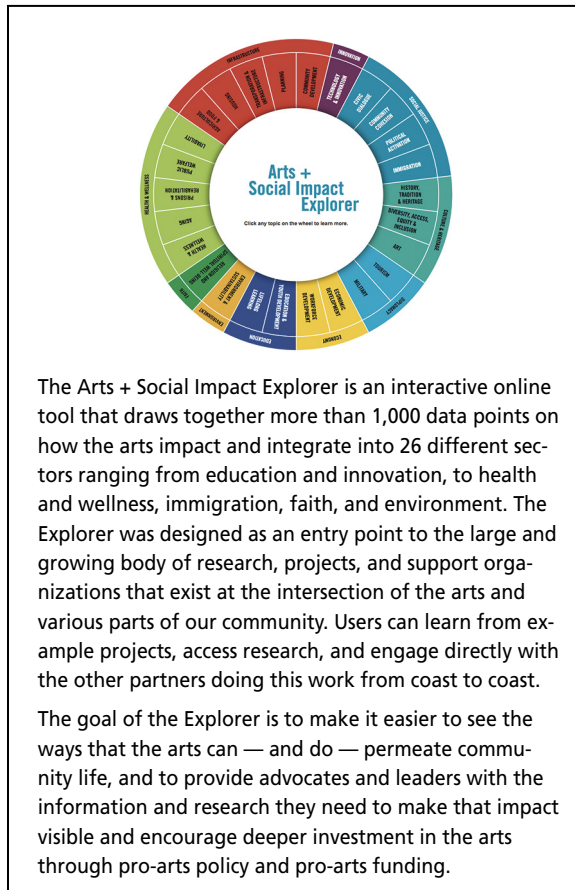
**The truth is, the arts are central to community betterment. Is a museum wing worth not preventing blindness? No. But could the arts be a mechanism for that prevention? Yes.**

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but also, as Alexis de Tocqueville noted, a country concerned with “exclusively commercial habits . . . which seem to divert their minds from the pursuit of science, literature, and the arts,” and focused “upon purely practical objects.” De Tocqueville brought it home, saying of the burgeoning United States, the “taste for the useful predominate[s] over the love of the beautiful.”<sup>6</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, the staggering inequity of the Industrial Revolution created both wealthy capitalist-philanthropists and a growing class of people disenfranchised by them. Community development became more structured, and the relatively unique animal that is private

American philanthropy was born.<sup>7</sup> At their core, most of these philanthropies endeavored to improve communities through targeted investment in social change — like privately underwriting the eradication of illness-induced childhood blindness. The arts, by and large, went unthought of in this model of philanthropy, with certain notable exceptions, such as Andrew Carnegie's library project. Most early arts philanthropy was instead about building up cultural institutions for



the dual purposes of creating desirable cultural reputations and enclaves of limited access in which to enjoy the grandiosity that followed. This type of philanthropy has increasingly gone by the wayside, in favor of incremental and measurable social betterment.

We are all, then, in a moment of crucial translation. Foundations, government agencies, and private donors want community impact. They can also be skeptical that the arts are — and always have been — instrumental in community cohesion and transformation. To dig up, we need to understand the value systems of those holding power and privilege who have historically dismissed the

necessity of the arts to community wellbeing, since they are the same people who ultimately make decisions about how to fund community wellbeing programs, and compel their embrace of a different narrative.

## Superpowers

My daughter loves superheroes, particularly Spiderman. Her obsession means I have spent a lot of time reading superhero stories lately, and I have found that superheroes can teach us a lot about our own power through the arts. Like a superpower, the social impacts of arts and culture are both extraordinary and agnostic. Superhumans are people before they are heroes or villains, and regardless of what other people think of them, “villains” tend to think they are heroes in their own story. Our power exists regardless of the outcome of use — beneficial or detrimental — and most times evaluating our social impact is an exercise in spectrums rather than opposite poles.

We can assert, the arts are not inherently good or bad, but they are powerful. You can create the WPA Arts Project or disenfranchise, erase, and disadvantage whole populations. Sometimes (often?), we, like Spiderman, aim for one but do some measure of the other. Sometimes we feel it. Other times, because of distance, privilege, or belief, we do not.

Our calculus exists in two steps, just like that of superheroes. The first is *social impact*: doing an extraordinary thing that transforms a community. The second is *social justice*: doing an extraordinary thing that transforms a community in the direction of justice. And yet, the caution: in someone's narrative, Magneto is an avenging angel, and Professor X and his troupe of superhuman mutants are just getting in the way. So, how do we navigate these narratives for ourselves while also thinking about those decision makers still in need of convincing?

Enter the Americans for the Arts' Arts + Social Impact Explorer. Since the launch of the Explorer, we have access to stories that speak to this calculus. For example, we know that having a cultural organization in a community has been shown to increase the nearby residential property values by as much as 20 percent.<sup>8</sup> In one Phoenix community, tax revenues more than doubled in a seven-year period following the integration of a “creativity hub,” compared to an overall decline in tax revenue across the city.<sup>9</sup> These are social impacts, but depending on the nuance of the stories, they may or may not be socially just outcomes.

This gets even more complicated as we begin to examine the various goals of a social impact lens for arts and culture. For example, the arts have been shown to reduce a patient's use of pain medication and the length of their hospital stay by up to one full day.<sup>10</sup> This is great for patients, but in ongoing dialogues with health care CEOs, Americans for the Arts has heard repeatedly that patient

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cost savings is often achieved by reducing revenue to the health care organization. That is not an argument to bring into a boardroom, no matter how on board with the arts a CEO might be.

At their best moments, social impact and social justice marry and create unlikely alliances. At a convening for the Create Justice collaborative, which works on juvenile justice reform, former Kentucky State Juvenile Justice Commissioner Hasan Davis offered up a story of working with both social justice advocates and conservative lawmakers to overhaul the justice system together despite their disagreements on whether the rationale was a moral or economic one. He ultimately succeeded in engaging the conservative legislature in crafting and passing a bill that overhauled the Kentucky juvenile justice system and de-emphasized jails in favor of holistic work within communities. This pragmatism, which can feel distasteful, is essential when trying to tackle something that many people have deciding stakes in.

Through arts education and arts experiences, Overland, Kansas's Arts in Prison program, has reduced recidivism rates among former participants in the program to less than half the average recidivism rate in the United States. That is both good for the incarcerated humans and good for the bottom line.

"We have to meet people where they are," says Margy Waller, senior fellow at the Topos Partnership, a communications and research firm that specializes in framing science. Adults, particularly, have their values systems firmly in place, and

success in communication is not about changing minds but about creating communications frames that help people understand that *their* value system and *your* value system align.

Bob Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts, tells a story about when a program officer at the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation let him know that after years of underwriting Americans for the Arts' work, the foundation was pivoting out of the arts space.

"Well, what are you pivoting into?" Lynch asked. The answer, it turns out, was improving local economies. "The arts do that. Would you help us quantify that impact?" Lynch said, thereby, with one well-framed question, launching a thirty-year body of work called Arts & Economic Prosperity.

### **Trees and Forests**

In a reality of limited time, attention, and dollars, for individuals and communities to be actively and creatively engaged in community betterment requires that:

1. The arts be ready to address issues that are top of mind for community members;
2. Arts practitioners be equipped to engage in such efforts alongside community members;
3. When such engagement occurs, the link between the creative intervention and the positive outcome be clear, thereby encouraging community members to support more such work in the future.

Proximity is key. The urgency individuals feel about different community challenges is at least partially determined by how proximate individuals are to those issues. Do they have children in school? Do they drive? Do they feel unsafe? But, sometimes, even proximity is not enough. While improvements are celebrated, root causes go unrecognized and this makes it difficult for efforts to proliferate. Evaluating and crediting the underlying interventions *while* addressing community issues expands what people care about and sets up a more successful conversation about what components would need to be deployed to address similar issues in the future. Interventions require resources, and resource allocation is prioritized based on perceived value and efficacy, as well as a belief that what is working should be given the resources to continue.

Public opinion polling research reveals a persistent disconnect between abstract and specific value; while nine in ten people believe the arts are important to quality of life, much lower percentages of people indicate a willingness to act by

giving money, attending, or supporting pro-arts candidates.<sup>11</sup> This is in part because the connection between arts and culture and the communities in which they live is not clear.

As Julie Garreau says, “We don’t want to save the world. We just want to save our kids.” For Garreau, the arts were integral to that salvation, and her Native American community got on board. This is not always the case.

“I see it as deconstructing the ‘art for art’s sake’ notion in a very positive way,” says Priya Sircar, director of arts at the Knight Foundation. “What is ‘art’s sake,’ anyway? It’s *our* sake.”

When asked, most people have trouble making the connection between arts and culture and a self-identified pressing community issue at all. When the arts intersect with someone’s primary personal or community challenges — basic health, good education, safe neighborhood, steady employment — the public needs to *know* that

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**More abundant financial and nonfinancial support drives jobs, encourages investment, eases pathways to capitalization, and puts an imprimatur on the work. This centers community in the conversation, and practitioners then learn to work more effectively to address the community’s challenges.**

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so they can *value* that. Since its launch in October, the Explorer has been viewed nearly sixteen thousand times, and the materials have been downloaded over six thousand times. Once there, people spend on average six minutes exploring, which is an eon in web surfing time.

Raising awareness of the role of arts and culture increases the likelihood of participation, public referenda, policy making, and more. And, support for arts funding increases when it is associated with another sector such as arts and education, health, or public safety.<sup>12</sup>

For funders, we see this dialogue increasing. Two arts program officers I spoke with indicated they had encountered significant challenges when talking to their foundations’ boards and leadership about why the arts program should not just persist but be more deeply funded in this time of

competing priorities, crisis, and increased awareness of social return on investment. Arts program officers increasingly find themselves educating applicants and grantees on the difference between true arts-based community development practice and lip service. They also often end up engaging with relatively persistent questions of mission drift, shifting values, equity, and legacy.

If we can ultimately increase the perception that arts and culture have value and improve and make more ubiquitous quality practice within the field, we can create better places with more complete support. More abundant financial and nonfinancial support drives jobs, encourages investment, eases pathways to capitalization, and puts an imprimatur on the work. This centers community in the conversation, and practitioners then learn to work more effectively to address the community’s challenges. Higher-quality support also prolongs a project’s life and deepens the community outcomes over time. In short, the community improves more. The quality of the work — its prevalence, the expertise and the complexity of the theories behind it, the specificity with which it is able to be evaluated — reinforces and redoubles the strength of the work itself, which then completes the cycle by enhancing and amplifying the effects of the arts intervention on the community.

Arts and culture is one of the best tools for equitable community betterment: it can be engaged by everyone, drives innovation, reinforces community identity, and creates joy and pride. Our charge: make sure great work is not a lonely tree falling in the forest. Practitioners must be prepared to engage effectively. Good work must be showcased and made visible to the entire community. Stakeholders must be educated about the impact of the arts on community transformation. Public will, and the associated policy and resources, must be lined up.

### **A Path of Persuasion**

“How do we frame our value in the community?” asks Maud Lyon, the president of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance. “Economic impact favors larger institutions in certain locations and cities, and my personal take is that 90 percent of arts and culture isn’t that anyway. It’s more community based, focused on residents — helping people live happier, healthier, more productive lives.”

During the summer of 2018, the Alliance conducted their first Social Impact Census,<sup>13</sup> driven by the release of the Arts + Social Impact Explorer and the completion of another research report the Alliance had commissioned, titled *Beyond the*



**Check.**<sup>14</sup> This second report compiled survey and interview data from individual donors and revealed that only about 30 percent of all individuals give to the arts as their priority. The rest range across education, the environment, and helping vulnerable populations. In a set of confidential interviews with high net worth individuals who *do not* give to arts and culture, interviewees revealed that they associated “arts and culture” with big organizations like museums, and that that was not what they were looking to do with their money. They wanted to reach the larger community, and they thought the arts were a nonstarter.

For the Social Impact Census, the Alliance surveyed 179 organizations and found over one thousand arts programs that had demonstrable, deliberate social impacts built into them. Some of these were about using the arts to educate the public on non-arts issues, and others were about using the arts directly with affected populations, like elderly or incarcerated people. Often the work was more than a decade old, and the dominant response was joy that their efforts were getting any attention.

We have a good story to tell, but we have not really told it. And in this moment, when much of both public and private funding is interested in addressing core, deep, persistent, and fundamental community needs we have a golden opportunity, if we can figure out how to take it.

“Here’s the thing,” Lyon says. “It’s all about a path of persuasion. We’ve got the stories, and more and more we’ve got the data. You’re not trying to change people’s opinions; you’re trying to build on what they already believe. So, let’s do that. Let’s get out there and open more peoples’ ears.”

*Clayton Lord, Americans for the Arts’ vice president of Local Arts Advancement, oversees field education, capacity development, and cohort building for the staffs of over 4,500 local arts agencies as they work to be relevant and transformative in the lives of citizens and communities. A frequent writer and speaker about the public value of the arts, Lord has edited and contributed to three books on arts, community, and impact. He oversees initiatives focused on the social impact of the arts as well as cultural equity, diversity, and inclusion, including the Arts + Social Impact Explorer, the organization’s ongoing work around cultural equity, and a growing portfolio around equitable investment and arts-based community development.*

## NOTES

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4. As de Tocqueville noted, “The religion professed by the first emigrants, and bequeathed by them to their descendants, simple in its form of worship, austere and almost harsh in its principles, and hostile to external symbols and to ceremonial pomp, is naturally unfavorable to

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**To make sure that great work is not a lonely tree falling in the forest, practitioners must be prepared to engage effectively; good work must be showcased and made visible to the community.**

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the fine arts, and only yields a reluctant sufferance to the pleasures of literature,” Alexis de Tocqueville, Chapter IX, Democracy in America, vol. 2, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/816/816-h/816-h.htm>.

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## Turning Differences into a Source of Creativity and Positive Change

**Anne Focke**

*The following is an excerpt from a longer essay, "Dynamics of Difference," inspired by several years of work with Peter Pennekamp, then head of the Humboldt Area Foundation. In a 2013 paper we co-wrote, Peter distilled principles that establish conditions for what he calls "living, breathing, on-the-street democracy." One of these principles is the "dynamics of difference," the idea that working with our differences can bring about positive outcomes.*

*The story takes place on the North Coast of California. In the late 1960s, after years of inadequate health services and the removal of federal assistance, members of the region's American Indian community came together to build their own health center. United Indian Health Services (UIHS) was incorporated in 1970. After twenty years of isolation and internal work by the tribes, in the late 1990s, UIHS proposed developing a new consolidated health facility to be known as Potawot Health Village. The facility would integrate Native and Western medicines while also restoring wetlands and prairie.*

*The forty-acre dairy farm they proposed as the site for the new facility was in a central and visible location where mountains and coastal highways converge in the liberal college town of Arcata. The land, which for centuries before white settlers arrived had been home to the Wiyot tribe, was zoned by the City of Arcata as "agriculture exclusive." To develop the land as the Potawot Health Village, it had to be rezoned as a "planned development." The hearing and permitting process stretched over eight months. A group of Arcata citizens, dedicated to saving the city's agricultural lands, were ready to fight.*

Between December 1996 and July 1997, the Potawot Health Village proposal was discussed at ten separate planning commission and city council meetings. During the permitting process, UIHS launched a major communications and community involvement campaign as a central strategy. The tribes created a brochure featuring the health village concept and information about UIHS. UIHS representatives gave presentations to city council members, service clubs, groups affiliated with Mad River Hospital, and the nearby elementary school. Their goal was to help the broader community understand UIHS and the dream for the Potawot Health Village. UIHS made certain that its supporters always filled the planning commission and city council

meeting chambers, each wearing a sticker proclaiming support for the health village.

Paula "Pimm" Allen (Karuk-Yurok) said,

*When the day came, we filled Arcata City Hall with Indians. I don't know if that had ever happened before. We had to tell them that sometimes there is an exception to the zoning rules. It wasn't like there hadn't*

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**Not having had the preparation that the tribes did, the white community had to respond quickly. But, as they heard the story from a Native perspective, they gradually came to understand what the land and its history meant to the Indian people.**

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*been a price paid for that ag land. This is an indigenous community coming back to reclaim the land.*

Through patience, organizing, and constantly showing up, the tribes got their story out. Peter elaborated:

*Not having had the preparation that the tribes did, the white community had to respond quickly. But, as they heard the story from a Native perspective, they gradually came to understand what the land and its history meant to the Indian people. They began to realize how bigoted their initial responses were. And many were ashamed.*

By the end of the hearings, both Arcata City Council and its planning commission unanimously approved the Potawot Health Village and the associated zoning. Through the long process of meetings and hearings, Laura Kadlecik, the Potawot project manager, reported, "A large percentage of the local community came to know, trust, and appreciate UIHS and their proposed project." The tribes had come out of their isolation. Amos Tripp, a Karuk leader, pointed out that the tribes were no longer willing to remain invisible:

*For such a long time I think we lived our lives separate from the larger community in many ways. And I think this Potawot represents turning the corner — because it shows that*

*we can successfully work with the larger community in these efforts. . . . So, it's not the end, it's just the beginning.*

...

The best outcomes arise, I learned through my work with Peter, when we don't ignore or eliminate our differences but when we work with them. Working with the "dynamics of difference" often means sitting uncomfortably with people who hold very different beliefs. "Tension," Peter wrote, "between individuals and groups with different experiences, cultures, beliefs, or backgrounds can either be the foe of democracy, keeping hostility high and blocking the path to common ground, or it can be transformed into a powerful source of creativity and innovation and a motivator for action and community improvement."

To work productively across our differences, we cannot start with the assumption that everything will be rosy if we just sit down and listen to each other, any more than we can start by shoring up our defenses and preparing for battle. We have to identify and clarify our differences, embrace the conflict inherent in them, accept the discomfort they cause, and allow productive growth to emerge from there.

It is important to know that when Peter wrote that the "dynamics of difference" could be a transformative force for democracy, he meant "community democracy," that is, "grassroots engagement where people uncover, activate,

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**The best outcomes arise when we don't ignore or eliminate our differences but when we work with them. Working with the "dynamics of difference" often means sitting uncomfortably with people who hold very different beliefs.**

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and energize their community's own assets, take responsibility for their formal and informal decision-making processes, and further their ability to work constructively with conflict and difference."

This democracy is not limited to casting a ballot and cannot be illustrated simply by an image of

raised hands. To be effective, it must also be active and engaged.

...

As inspiring and hard won as the Potawot decision was, this is not the whole story. It doesn't tell of all the ways the differences began to be identified, preparing the ground for the decision beforehand, and it doesn't tell of all the

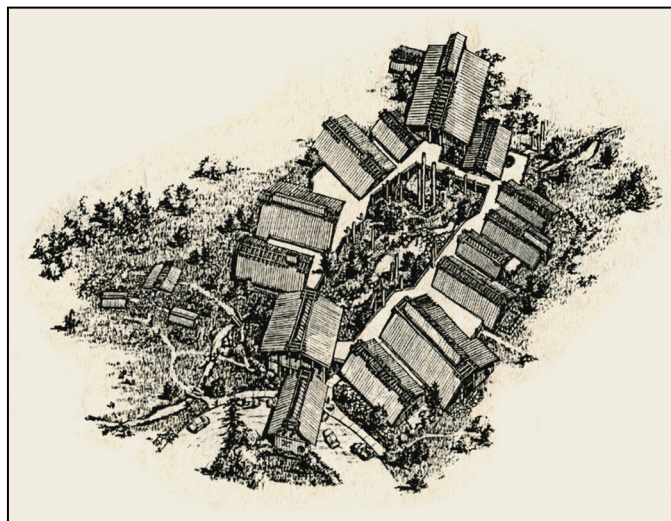


Illustration of United Indian Health Services (UIHS) from original dedication booklet, published for the ceremony, 2001, image courtesy of author.

ways the differences continued to play out and the reverberations continued to echo in subsequent years.

Many small steps toward understanding were taken over a long period of time before the Potawot hearings. By the time the conflict over the use of the dairy farmland had heated up, Indian and white "bridge builders" had already been quietly opening doors and lowering barriers. Earlier work done in the region by local American Indians to revitalize their culture gave them a foundation for their activism. An Indian community member (Yurok-Pit River-Maidu) was quoted saying:

*I know that in other communities the racism and fear are deeply entrenched, whereas here we've been fortunate that there have been a couple of generations now of Indian culture bearers, linguists, academics, traditional singers and dancers who have continually shared their perspective in many different venues. So [in the Potawot hearings] the fear and racism that were exhibited by*

*a few was overwhelmed by the acceptance and encouragement of many more non-Native people.*

Long before the Potawot hearings, these culture bearers were not only strengthening their culture internally but also sharing their perspective with allies in non-Indian, white communities. One of their first allies was Libby Maynard,

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**They could see their own prejudice and were embarrassed. We began to bring American Indians into the foundation, and it became a place where white people and Indians could work together and learn of each other's knowledge.**

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who in 1979 cofounded the Ink People Center for the Arts, a community-based arts organization in the area. Peter said, "[Libby] created a place where Indians from multiple tribal cultures could come together under their own leadership and, at their discretion and when it made sense to them, collaborate with white people." Ink People's engagement with American Indians continues today. This past November, Ink People hosted *From the Source*, a recurring exhibition of both traditional and contemporary art by Indian artists that began in 1990 as a collaborative project with UIHS.

When he started at the Humboldt Area Foundation in 1993, Peter observed that the foundation did not fund Native people, reasoning that the tribes received lots of support from the federal government. When the foundation board and staff learned how much this thinking misrepresented the truth of Indian lives, he said, "They could see their own prejudice and were embarrassed. We began to bring American Indians into the foundation, and it became a place where

white people and Indians could work together and learn of each other's [knowledge]."

These smaller, in-person connections illustrate another principle in the community democracy lexicon: "time and convergence." Different cultures and segments of a community have different clocks, Peter says. "Widespread, sustainable cultural change happens only when different timeframes come close to alignment and, at critical junctures, converge." The low-key, quiet efforts of the Indian culture bearers, Ink People, the Humboldt Area Foundation, and others played an important role in bringing the multiple cultural "clocks" of white and American Indian communities closer in line with each other and helped foster trust.

The Potawot Health Village was completed in 2001. While the work continues and remains unfinished, fundamentally it tells a story of healing that gives me hope and a sense of possibility.

*Anne Focke is an independent writer and organizer and was the first executive director of Grantmakers in the Arts (1999–2008) and coeditor of the GIA Reader (1991–2009). She posts much of her recent writing on her website, "Carrying On," [annefocke.net](http://annefocke.net).*

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#### NOTE

This essay includes terminology used by the Native people in this region. They refer to themselves as Indians or American Indians and to their cultural groups as tribes. Originally, the health center served nine tribes and more than thirteen thousand American Indians, primarily Yurok, Wiyot, and Tolowa tribal members. It serves many more now. With a few exceptions, UIHS now serves Native communities in all of Del Norte and Humboldt Counties.

My original essay, "Dynamics of Difference," is available here: <http://www.annefocke.net/?p=3398>. The longer version tells a story that begins in 1850 with the arrival of white settlers and a massacre of the Wiyot tribe, progresses through the inspiration and confidence the region's Native people gained from the African American-led civil rights movement in the 1960s, and concludes today in a dramatic and peaceful, if not widely known, return of sacred land to the Wiyot Tribe on an island in Humboldt Bay.

The paper Peter Pennekamp and I wrote in 2010, "Philanthropy and the Regeneration of Community Democracy," is available through the Kettering Foundation: <https://www.kettering.org/catalog/product/philanthropy-and-regeneration-community-democracy>. Peter was on the board of Grantmakers in the Arts from 1994 to 2000 and was its president when the board decided to add staff.

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