

# STANDING FOR CULTURAL DEMOCRACY

## THE USDAC'S POLICY AND ACTION PLATFORM



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# A BRIEF SUMMARY OF STANDING FOR CULTURAL DEMOCRACY: THE USDAC'S POLICY AND ACTION

**THIS CULTURAL POLICY PLATFORM IS OFFERED BY THE PEOPLE-POWERED U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE**, a grassroots action network inciting creativity and social imagination to shape a culture of empathy, equity, and belonging. It emerges from the USDAC's ongoing action research, engaging people across the U.S. in articulating hopes, dreams, and concerns through art and culture.

We offer this platform to amplify ideas that can advance social healing and a future that countless Citizen Artists have told us they wish to inhabit: **CULTURAL DEMOCRACY** grounded in equity and engagement; full **CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP**, belonging without barrier; and deep respect for the **RIGHT TO CULTURE**—expression, participation, recognition—underpinning any just and caring society. We understand **CULTURE** in many senses, but the foundation is a medium for growth of ideas, expressions, individuals, and communities. Ideas are essential to nurture the national conversation needed to reveal the true depth of demand for cultural democracy. Ideas are essential, yes, but without action they are stillborn.

**WE INTEND THIS PLATFORM AS A CALL TO ACTION THAT TRANSCENDS AND UNITES ACROSS LINES OF DIFFERENCE.** *We invite all to endorse, share, discuss, propose, experiment with, and advocate for this platform, which we hope will inspire reflection and action at many levels: national, regional, local, individual.*

*We are ready and willing to assist and collaborate as needed. Please download the full platform at [usdac.us](https://usdac.us). Then call on us to collaborate!*

In this platform, we describe ten ways to advance toward cultural democracy, a social order which embodies and affirms the right to culture in every aspect of our public and private policies; welcomes each individual as a whole, creative person; values each community's heritage, contributions, and aspirations; promotes care, reciprocity, and open communication across all lines of difference; and dismantles all barriers to love and justice.

**EVERYTHING HUMAN BEINGS DO IS ROOTED IN AND SUSTAINED BY CULTURE.** It is the medium for all social action. Culture influences the ways we comprehend and feel

about social problems and challenges. Our stories help to shape the world, either nurturing empathy or foreclosing it. Therefore racism is a cultural issue. Homophobia is a cultural issue. Gender bias is a cultural issue. Climate crisis is a cultural issue. The polarization of wealth is a cultural issue.

Cultural policy is the aggregate of values and principles guiding any social entity in matters touching on culture. Cultural policies are most often made by governments, from school boards to legislatures, but also by many private-sector institutions, from corporations to community organizations. Policies provide guideposts for those making decisions and taking actions that intervene in culture or affect cultural life.

To address our challenges, we need to engage new experiences, behaviors, and understandings—to change culture to change the world. We need to cultivate social imagination and empathy, two skills central to the work of artists who work for community and equity. To devise fresh and powerful ways to reconceive social arrangements and institutions, we need creativity and freedom.

**THE TIME IS NOW.** Artists and their allies are showing up everywhere, investing creativity in social and environmental justice. Yet the right to culture is under attack. This nation has experienced a long, painful stretch of punishment and persecution by a system that treats identity as a crime: driving while Black, protecting sacred lands and waters, walking in one's own city, dancing in a public club.

In asserting the right to culture enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we stake two crucial, inalienable claims:

- First, that the right to culture is a fundamental human right regardless of race, gender, orientation, ability, religion, ethnicity, immigration status, or any other personal or collective characteristic.
- Second, that rights are only as real as the resources used to protect, express, and extend them. Widespread awareness, purposeful effort, and significant investment are imperative.

*Please join us. Endorse, share, and act on this platform. Cultural democracy demands nothing less.*

### **1. INSTITUTE A NEW PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS PROGRAM.**

*Twice before—in the 1930s with the Works Progress Administration and the 1970s with the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act—this country’s response to widespread unemployment led to public service jobs.* The WPA and CETA put thousands of artists and creative workers (along with those in other sectors) to work in strengthening cultural infrastructure and social fabric, giving all Americans access to social goods that the marketplace deems a privilege for those who can afford them. There is ample evidence that strong arts programs reduce public spending, making them cost-savers even as they enhance quality of life. This case for a Culture Corps is being made via programs in creative aging, arts and health, intensive after-school arts programs, and in correctional institutions.

We call for three innovations: (1) Establish publicly funded public service jobs programs that address cultural fabric as well as physical infrastructure; (2) Expand Percent for Art Ordinances to include artists in residence, community-engaged projects, and creative social cohesion activities led by artists; and (3) Direct existing public service jobs, in both public and private sectors, to employing artists to strengthen cultural fabric and advance social goods. The full platform offers specific suggestions for local-scale experimentation with public service arts employment.

### **2. SUPPORT A CULTURE OF JUSTICE AND EQUITY.**

*Cultural rights are only as real as the resources used to protect, express, and extend them.* Even a glance at the numbers reflects more lip-service than investment in human rights and racial equity through our local, state, regional, and national arts agencies. Private-sector support to artists and groups tilts strongly toward big-budget Eurocentric organizations that can mobilize wealthy patrons. From the municipal level to the national, the picture is the same.

We call for two innovations: (1) Support cultural equity: a fair share of federal, state, and local resources and power for all communities; and (2) Support a national learning community to engage allies for racial justice through online and in-person learning venues; sustainable exchanges engaging individuals, organizations, and communities; and systemic rethinking of institutional biases.

**3. REDEEM DEMOCRACY WITH CREATIVITY.** *The recent presidential campaign revealed a stark and alarming truth: public space is being distorted and democracy eroded by the treatment of big money as protected political speech.*

Virtually all of our systems need an infusion of creativity to enable and serve a vibrant, functioning democracy. The culture of politics needs the full participation of artists.

We call for two innovations: (1) Support arts-based modes of political dialogue and deliberation, modeled on the USDAC Super PAC; (2) Hack democracy with creativity, deploying powerful methods developed through design labs, hackathons, and other collective creativity approaches to call for arts-based redesign of our electoral system to reduce the influence of entrenched money and vastly expand the level and diversity of participation. In a moment marked by both activism on the rise and less than half the eligible voters aged 17-29 taking part in 2016’s Presidential primaries, democratic participation of young people offers both a pivotal opportunity and concern; these initiatives should be shaped and infused with their participation.

**4. REFORM THE CULTURE OF PUNISHMENT.** *The U.S. has earned the nickname “Incarceration Nation” for our massive prison population, punitive sentencing practices, the scale of our criminal justice system and the associated taxpayer-borne costs.* From people of color being killed in police custody to a school-to-prison pipeline, this is not a single problem, but a complex, interlocking set of problems that deny African Americans and other people of color full cultural citizenship: feeling welcome in one’s own country or community, receiving equal recognition for value and investment in the common culture, equity in cultural representation, and full human rights.

We call for support through a new Creative Breakthrough Fund for artistic creation and learning opportunities to change the criminal justice system, focusing on arts-based projects created to align social attitudes with awareness of Incarceration Nation and its impact, and positive actions to ameliorate and respond to it.

### **5. INVEST IN BELONGING AND CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP.**

*Our chief cultural deficit is belonging.* How many Americans feel deprived of full cultural citizenship on account of race, ethnicity, religion, social class, ability, orientation, or other categories that experience social exclusion? To sustain a functioning civil society that even aspires to this aim, the challenge of belonging and dis-belonging must be acknowledged and addressed.

We call for five innovations: (1) Public and private entities should adopt a Policy on Belonging (a model policy appears

as an appendix to the full platform); (2) Support long-term artists' residencies at the neighborhood level by artists with experience and skill in community cultural development, engaging both local culture-bearers and visiting artists who share the values of placekeeping; (3) Support community-based centers that engage people directly in art-making and art experiences; (4) Support creative use of underused spaces such as schools, houses of worship, and public plazas; and (5) Repurpose disused spaces such as vacant lots and empty storefronts as pop-up community cultural centers. All of these initiatives should explicitly include meaningful roles for young people, who will make our collective cultural future one of belonging or dis-belonging.

**6. INTEGRATE COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE WORK OF ARTISTS INTO ALL SOCIAL PROGRAMS AFFECTING CULTURE.** *Across the U.S., we see rips in social fabric tear communities apart.* Anti-immigrant feeling obscures the positive impacts of immigration; rural communities lose their younger generation for lack of opportunity; in urban centers, people fear crossing the invisible boundaries dividing neighborhoods. These are cultural issues that demand multidimensional creative responses to bring people into authentic, equitable, constructive dialogue.

We call for two innovations: (1) Develop learning experiences and materials that communicate essential content about artists' work and value in advancing social goods, using the language and ways of learning relevant professions favor; and (2) Incorporate artists with relevant skills and experience into all programs and initiatives related to social well-being—policing, education, health care, environmental protection, community development, and other social sectors. Artists can be sustained in these roles not just through paychecks, as we advocate in proposal 2 above, but through subsidized housing and other forms of in-kind support.

**7. SUPPORT ARTISTIC RESPONSE TO NATURAL AND CIVIL EMERGENCIES.** *The USDAC will soon release a Rapid Artistic Response Toolkit offering guidance to artists and creative organizers who support communities facing natural or civil disasters,* be they floods or protests and crackdowns focusing on police-related killings.

We call for three innovations: (1) Ensure that funders, disaster relief agencies, law enforcement, and arts and cultural agencies and organizations recognize the crucial value of arts-based rapid response and begin providing the resources

necessary to sustain it, bridging the gap that currently exists; (2) Integrate cultural strategies in longterm recovery and resiliency planning; and (3) Provide adequate training for all parties through higher education and community and professional education programs, equipping artists to respond with creativity and sensitivity to situations that may leave people fearful, confused, or even paralyzed; and equipping relief agencies and responders to support and console affected communities with the power of artistic engagement.

**8. ADOPT A CULTURAL IMPACT STUDY.** *Community development policy is marred by a widespread proclivity to see communities of color and low-income communities as disposable in the face of economic "progress."* Longstanding neighborhoods and cultural and social fabric are demolished to make way for new freeways or sports stadiums. Longtime residents are displaced by gentrification. The disturbing fact is that culture has no legal standing in such decisions, no grounds for protection.

We call on all agencies and organizations with public planning responsibility to adopt a Cultural Impact Study (CIS) for every project with potential negative cultural impact, assessing impact on cultural fabric just as do Environmental Impact Studies with respect to the natural environment. A model Cultural Impact Study resolution appears as an appendix to the full platform.

**9. RECONCEIVE EDUCATION TO SUPPORT CREATIVITY'S CENTRAL ROLE.** *We're emerging from an era in the annals of education in which skills seen as "hard" (science, technology, engineering, math: STEM), those required for certain types of employment and measurable with standardized tests, were valued above other subjects. Increasingly, these notions—that the primary purpose of education is banking knowledge for job preparation, that the most important learning can be acquired by rote—are being discredited.*

We call for four innovations: (1) Recognize and support creativity as an integral capacity for all public and private education; (2) Invest in jobs for teaching artists, artist-educators working in both school and community settings; (3) Include curriculum devised by and for teaching artists and artists working in participatory, community-based contexts in every higher education program engaging artists, starting with first-year orientation; and (4) Support community-based purpose-built curriculum for community cultural development practitioners.

**10. ADOPT A BASIC INCOME GRANT.** *Economic challenges for artists and cultural organizers are the same as for other workers.* The current system mandates overproduction, often exacerbated by under-compensation. This is not special pleading for artists: in virtually every field, decision-makers fail to prioritize necessary time for reflection, restoration, and conviviality. It's a challenge to discern, integrate, and act on cultural development needs or other social goods when competition for survival eats what could otherwise be time for creativity, connection, and pleasure.

We call on Federal and state governments to introduce a basic income grant covering basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, medical care) and available without a means test or conditions. The full platform contains links to a wealth of domestic and international resources demonstrating the workability and affordability of this proposal.

**PAYING FOR CHANGE.** *New initiatives require new infusions of resources.* Our recommendations may touch on differing social possibilities—democratic revival, racial justice, education, and more. But the underlying idea and need are the same, to support art action research and creative innovation in building cultural democracy, addressing climate crisis, bringing about a social compact of justice and equity.

The most serious challenges we face as a culture are extremely convoluted, multifaceted, and resistant to solutions. We certainly need more dialogue and collaboration between Citizen Artists and existing public and private funders and policymakers. And to address our formidable challenges, we need new income sources.

We call for four: (1) An advertising tax; (2) A Robin Hood tax on financial transactions; (3) Public and private funders joining forces to establish a Creative Breakthrough Fund to recognize and support arts-based experiments that can lead to expanded investment in promising innovations taken to scale; and (4) Social Impact Bonds.

**THE DREAM AND REALITY OF CULTURAL DEMOCRACY.** Since the USDAC's public launch in the fall of 2013, we've engaged in serious play, both local organizing and national actions. Community members of every age, race, gender, orientation, ability, origin, and condition have joined in dreaming our ways toward a society that embraces our rich particularity of difference, one that lives out the democratic covenant that champions equity, nurtures belonging, and embraces our full-on potential as a people. We have been

affirmed in core understandings: that culture is the arena in which we can discover and articulate common cause, and that artists can be powerful midwives to the future of possibility so many passionately desire.

The obstacles include rigidly conventional thinking that misses the important connections between art and culture and our collective challenges; and a too-narrow understanding that consigns artists' work to the status of social frill instead of valuing it as essential social imagination and creativity.

We close with a call addressed equally to artists and cultural institutions and to every other individual and group committed to social and environmental justice. Culture is not a special interest. We want to deploy the power of these ideas to advance your aims, working together.

*Please join us. Endorse, share, and act on this platform. Cultural democracy demands nothing less.*

**THIS IS AN ACT OF COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION. ADD YOURS.**

Oh give me shelter in this fractured Union  
Give me shelter in this fractured Union  
Stitch up these worn bones  
Open my mouth  
Rip this silence from my foreign tongue  
Move this wedge of indifference  
Show me a sign that I am home  
Take away our boxing ring of conflict  
where we bloody each other with pride and prejudice  
Put out a welcome mat

Oh give me shelter in this fractured Union  
For I too am a sister and a prodigal son  
I've walked the earth and need to settle  
Give me space to be  
Let me be  
let me be in this United Place of America.

**FROM POET TRAPETA MAYSON'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE 2016 POETIC ADDRESS TO THE NATION**

# 1. CHIEF POLICY WONK'S INTRODUCTION: NURTURING A NATIONAL CONVERSATION



## THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE is a people-powered department—a grassroots action network inciting creativity and social imagination to shape a culture of empathy, equity, and belonging.

**SINCE THE USDAC'S PUBLIC LAUNCH IN OCTOBER, 2013, WE HAVE WORKED WITH PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO ENVISION THEIR COMMUNITIES TRANSFORMED BY THE POWER OF ART AND CULTURE AND TO SHARE AND ACT ON WHAT THEY SEE.**

We ask them to dream together of a future in which full cultural citizenship is a reality: where all of us feel welcome in our own communities; where we appreciate that all of us weave the social fabric that binds us as a people; and where these feelings are embodied in every aspect of our communities and institutions, public and private.

If you are one of the more than 15,000 people who have taken part in USDAC actions and events, you have contributed to the collective vision reflected in this platform. This is our second public report on the process of crafting community-envisioned cultural policy; *An Act of Collective Imagination: The USDAC's First Two Years of Action Research* was published in September 2015, and may be downloaded from [our website](#). Please read more about the USDAC's work in the final section of this report: "The U.S. Department of Arts and Culture: An Overview."

In the USDAC, we often speak in terms of the public interest in culture and culture in the public interest. Culture is part of our commonwealth as a nation and as communities: how we are represented, how our surroundings and society embody—or reject—our identities and heritages, whether or not we feel a deep sense of belonging, and how those things are expressed in the sounds, images, and experiences human beings create.

Considered in this light, everyone cares about culture. For example, many of the key areas of disagreement in our recent Presidential campaign are fundamentally cultural: how women are perceived, expected to behave, and stand in relation to power; how the contributions of immigrants to our society are perceived and valued; how freedom of association and expression are limited by the criminal justice system, its values and policies—to name just a few examples.

The conditions that determine cultural well-being are created by countless individual and collective actions, as well as by

laws, regulations, articulations of value, by investment and disinvestment—in short, by policy.

Just as everyone cares about culture, everyone makes cultural policy.

- When a city approves rezoning or redevelopment plans that induce gentrification, inflating real estate values and displacing long-term residents, cultural policy is being made, policy that prizes revenue while devaluing cultural fabric woven over decades of family and community life.
- When the federal government allows mining or licenses an oil pipeline on land that is sacred to indigenous people, it is making cultural policy, valorizing corporate profit over human culture.
- When a city sponsors cultural events that bring community members across literal or implicit barriers to meet, celebrate, and share both knowledge and food, it is making cultural policy, extending belonging and disrupting exclusion.

All such questions are the material of art. They may best be illuminated by creative interventions that hold up a mirror to our social challenges or open a window on new possibilities.

When its true scope is understood, the public interest in culture is a big issue. But right now, the public conversation remains small. In mainstream discourse, "the arts" are a special interest, and most contemporary "arts advocacy" focuses on mobilizing the direct beneficiaries of arts funding to plead for their own support. The phrase "cultural policy" may not even come into the debate, or if it does, be used to connote a narrow interest in arts funding.

The USDAC is doing all we can to change that. The public interest in culture should not be treated as a frill. It should be embodied in myriad policies and initiatives that extend belonging, cultural citizenship, engagement, and equity. To move toward that aim, we need a national conversation that breaks through the kneejerk trivialization of cultural policy, engaging people in calling for the policies and programs that make the right to culture real, that create true belonging and full cultural citizenship, that mobilize the transformative power of arts and culture in the service of social and environmental justice. Let our voices ring out!

# 2. STANDING FOR CULTURAL DEMOCRACY: THE USDAC'S POLICY AND ACTION PLATFORM



**THIS CULTURAL POLICY PLATFORM IS OFFERED BY THE PEOPLE-POWERED U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE, A GRASSROOTS ACTION NETWORK INCITING CREATIVITY AND SOCIAL IMAGINATION TO SHAPE A CULTURE OF EMPATHY, EQUITY, AND BELONGING.**

It emerges from the USDAC's ongoing action research, engaging people across the U.S. in articulating hopes, dreams, and concerns through art and culture.

We offer this platform to amplify ideas that can advance social healing and a future that countless Citizen Artists have told us they wish to inhabit: cultural democracy grounded in equity and engagement; full cultural citizenship, belonging without barrier; and deep respect for the right to culture—expression, participation, recognition—underpinning any just and caring society. We understand culture in many senses, but the foundation is a medium for growth for ideas, expressions, individuals, and communities. Ideas are essential to nurture the national conversation needed to reveal the true depth of demand for cultural democracy. Ideas are essential, yes, but without action they are stillborn.

We intend this platform as a call to action that transcends and unites across lines of difference. It describes policies and initiatives that can be enacted at national, regional, state, and local levels, by public and private entities and by individuals. We invite all to endorse, share, discuss, propose, experiment with, and advocate for this platform, which we hope will inspire reflection and action at many levels: national, regional, local, individual.

**WE ARE READY AND WILLING TO ASSIST AND COLLABORATE AS NEEDED.**

In this platform, we describe ten ways to advance toward cultural democracy, a social order which embodies and affirms the right to culture in every aspect of our public and private policies; welcomes each individual as a whole, creative person; values each community's heritage, contributions, and aspirations; promotes care, reciprocity, and open communication across all lines of difference; and dismantles all barriers to love and justice.

Everything human beings do is rooted in and sustained by culture. It is the medium for all social action. Culture influences the ways we comprehend and feel about social problems and challenges. Our stories help to shape the world, either nurturing empathy or foreclosing it. Therefore racism is a cultural issue. Homophobia is a cultural issue.

Gender bias is a cultural issue. Climate crisis is a cultural issue. The polarization of wealth is a cultural issue.

Cultural policy is the aggregate of values and principles guiding any social entity in matters touching on culture. Cultural policies are most often made by governments, from school boards to legislatures, but also by many private-sector institutions, from corporations to community organizations. Policies provide guideposts for those making decisions and taking actions that intervene in culture or affect cultural life.

To address our challenges, we need to engage new experiences, behaviors, and understandings—to change culture to change the world. We need to cultivate social imagination and empathy, two skills central to the work of artists who work for community and equity. To devise fresh and powerful ways to reconceive social arrangements and institutions, we need creativity and freedom.

The time is now. Artists and their allies are showing up everywhere, investing creativity in social and environmental justice. Yet the right to culture is under attack. This nation has experienced a long, painful stretch of punishment and persecution by a system that treats identity as a crime: driving while Black, protecting sacred lands and waters, walking in one's own city, dancing in a public club.

In asserting the right to culture enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we stake two crucial, inalienable claims:

First, that the right to culture is a fundamental human right regardless of race, gender, orientation, ability, religion, ethnicity, immigration status, or any other personal or collective characteristic.

Second, that rights are only as real as the resources used to protect, express, and extend them.

Widespread awareness, purposeful effort, and significant, equitable investment are imperative.

**PLEASE JOIN US. ENDORSE, SHARE, AND ACT ON THIS PLATFORM. CULTURAL DEMOCRACY DEMANDS NOTHING LESS.**

## 1. INSTITUTE A NEW PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS PROGRAM, PUTTING ARTISTS AND OTHERS TO WORK STRENGTHENING PHYSICAL AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

TWICE BEFORE—IN THE 1930S WITH THE WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION (WPA) AND THE 1970S WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACT (CETA)—THIS COUNTRY’S RESPONSE TO WIDESPREAD UNEMPLOYMENT LED TO PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS. The WPA and CETA put thousands of artists and creative workers (along with those in other sectors) to work in strengthening cultural infrastructure and social fabric, giving all Americans access to social goods that the marketplace deems a privilege for those who can afford them: theater, music, film, visual arts, parks and amphitheaters, cultural preservation, and much more.<sup>1</sup> There is ample evidence that strong arts programs effectively reduce public spending, making them cost-savers even as they enhance quality of life. This case for a culture corps is being made via programs in creative aging, arts and health, intensive after-school arts programs, and in correctional institutions.

When we refer to “cultural infrastructure,” we also mean the matrix of ideas and beliefs that underpins all policy and social action. There is a growing consensus about the interventions needed to protect Planet Earth from the consequences of climate crisis, from renewable energy to increased regulation. Calls for the political will to mandate these changes are increasingly loud, but the challenge remains how to engage many more people in ensuring they are heeded. Climate crisis affects everyone, but only a fraction are actively addressing it.

We can’t change this merely through circulating data or improving messaging. The culture—our collective story of Earth’s future—must offer new and more powerful stories that speak to people’s emotions and spirits as well as intellects, replacing a dystopian abandon-hope story with a culture of possibility. As with every critical cultural issue, this demands sustained work by artists engaging with activists, community members, and agencies in charge of relevant responsibilities: jobs, not temporary projects.

### PROPOSED POLICY AND ACTION:

**ESTABLISH PUBLICLY FUNDED PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS PROGRAMS THAT ADDRESS CULTURAL FABRIC AS WELL AS PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE.** Both the WPA and CETA offer viable structural models for a federal jobs program, the first focusing on national initiatives replicated and implemented through regional or local offices, the second on local “prime sponsors” focusing and managing

1 The USDAC has compiled this list of resources to learn more about the WPA and CETA: <http://bit.ly/2eY9EkO>

IN 2011, NY STATE COMPTROLLER THOMAS DINAPOLI CALCULATED THAT IN HIS STATE’S CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM, THE COST OF A SINGLE YOUTH IS \$210,000 PER YEAR, noting, “If, for example, New York spends \$500,000 on a crime prevention program, and only one child who would otherwise have become a career criminal is diverted from that path, the program would have generated total present-value benefits of \$1.5 million to \$2.2 million.” Putting teaching artists and community artists to work in these environments is a proven method of crime prevention, to pick just one social goal. Artists’ gifts for improvisation, resourcefulness, and resilience can advance all our positive social goals; all it will take is a modest investment.

USDAC CITIZEN ARTIST SALON  
TIME FOR A CULTURE CORPS!  
ARTISTS' JOBS FOR THE  
PUBLIC GOOD, THEN & NOW  
MAY 26 2016 6-7:30 PM EDT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
ARTS AND CULTURE

INFO AND REGISTRATION: <http://usdac.us/citizen-artist-salons>

public service employment supported by allocations from the federal Department of Labor. Both models easily lend themselves to regional, statewide, or local versions. However it is framed, the critical challenge in instituting a culture corps is to persuade policymakers to create public service employment when the idea has been strongly resisted by those on the right who see it as contradicting market economics. The 2016 Democratic Party platform included a public service jobs program that might have been expanded to include artists' jobs and cultural infrastructure, but the opportunity to implement that plank was not granted by voters.

**EXPAND PERCENT FOR ART ORDINANCES TO INCLUDE ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE, COMMUNITY-ENGAGED PROJECTS, AND CREATIVE SOCIAL COHESION ACTIVITIES LED BY ARTISTS.** Since the Department of the Treasury required one percent of the cost of federal buildings be spent for art and decoration during the WPA and the City of Philadelphia in 1959 implemented the first municipal legislation setting aside a portion of construction costs for art, more than 350 percent for art ordinances have been established in this country.<sup>2</sup> Most are run by municipalities or arts commissions, focusing on publicly funded construction, but increasingly, private development is included. Typically, percent for art programs are designed for conventional visual art forms such as murals and sculpture. They should be expanded to include projects in which community artists are employed to work over time with the users of a building or the residents of the surrounding neighborhood, to collaborate in making art in which process and product are given equal support and value.

**DIRECT EXISTING PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS, IN BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, TO EMPLOYING ARTISTS TO MEND CULTURAL FABRIC AND ADVANCE SOCIAL GOODS.** Especially until a major publicly funded jobs programs is established, it is imperative to deploy existing job opportunities for culture shift. Virtually every public and private agency has a budget for public information, for instance, often used to disseminate bulletins no one reads or hold public meetings few attend or expect to have meaningful impact. If the funds allocated for such purposes were redirected to support participatory media, theater, public art, and other arts-based activities that nurture community engagement with positive social goals and the programs designed to implement them, that alone would trigger a renaissance and flood of opportunity in the community cultural development field, just as it would trigger significant advancement toward public service employers' social goals.

**The USDAC stands ready to collaborate with any community with interest in piloting a form of public service arts employment. Please [contact us to explore a partnership to test these ideas.](#)**

**2 <http://bit.ly/2eEfDMB>**

**CONSIDER THE NEWLY CREATED TUCSON MURAL ARTS PROGRAM,** a collaboration between the City of Tucson and the Tucson Arts Brigade (TAB). For the inaugural projects of the City of Tucson Mural Arts Program in spring 2016, TAB managed a public art selection process, provided technical support, materials, and administrative guidance, producing eight murals by ten artists and twenty assistants. Funding was provided by the Tohono O'odham Nation, Visit Tucson and others. The Mural Arts Program worked in partnership with eight local businesses which were involved in selecting mural designs for their sites.<sup>1</sup> Speaking in May at a USDAC Citizen Artist Salon on "Artists' Jobs for The Public Good," TAB founder and USDAC Cultural Agent Michael Schwartz spoke of the need to be resourceful in recognizing and cultivating opportunity. "Within every government agency," Michael said, "there are dollars that anybody on this teleconference could access with our skillsets. They need our skills, and it's a matter of matching up those bids with our skills. Every single day there are thousands of these bids that go online looking for people to offer programs. Federal government, local government, tribal governments are all in great need of our services."<sup>2</sup>

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1 <http://tucsonmuralartsprogram.blogspot.com/>

2 <http://bit.ly/29l8G1c>

## 2. SUPPORT A CULTURE OF JUSTICE AND EQUITY

**CULTURAL RIGHTS ARE ONLY AS REAL AS THE RESOURCES USED TO PROTECT, EXPRESS, AND EXTEND THEM.** Even a glance at the numbers reflects more lip-service than investment in human rights and racial equity through our local, state, regional, and national arts agencies. Private-sector support to artists and groups tilts strongly toward big-budget Eurocentric organizations that can mobilize wealthy patrons. Arts organizations with budgets over \$10 million—one percent of the field—receive more than 50 percent of private donations. From the municipal level to the national, the picture is the same.

Public-sector funders should remedy this imbalance, but their budgets are now too small to solve the problem. To pick just one example, the real value of the 2016 dollar allocation to the National Endowment for the Arts is four percent less than it was in 1980, which equals less than half the purchasing power of 36 years ago. National cultural life has also been affected by cuts in dozens of other agencies, from the National Park Service to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, from the State Department to the Department of Agriculture. Even these limited government funds have not been distributed fairly. Women, people of color, and other groups with less access to private wealth have received far less than Eurocentric organizations.

This problem has been documented for half a century. Part of the reason it persists is that supporters of the organizations receiving the lion's share of funding have not advocated for equity, especially when the funding pie is perceived as finite and speaking out for someone else's slice is seen to risk your own. A saying has become commonplace: *When you're accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression.* Funding is only the tip of the equity iceberg. Two essential steps to change the picture are deepening awareness of inequity and offering support for those willing to face privilege and stand for justice.

### PROPOSED POLICY AND ACTION:

**SUPPORT CULTURAL EQUITY: A FAIR SHARE OF RESOURCES AND POWER FOR ALL COMMUNITIES.** Federal, state, and local policies and funding must affirm our commitment to cultural equity. More funding must be allocated to support the full range of our country's cultural life. Women, people of color, LGBTQ communities, indigenous communities, people with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups must be included as policymakers in all federal, state, and local agencies that spend money for purposes affecting cultural development, thus helping to shape their policies and allocations.

**SUPPORT A NATIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY TO ENGAGE ALLIES FOR JUSTICE AND EQUITY.** How do Citizen Artists and allies advocate effectively for justice and equity in the cultural sector? Even when intentions are positive, a lack of intercultural competency often

THERE ARE MANY ORGANIZATIONS ALREADY INVOLVED IN FOSTERING DIALOGUE AND ACTION ON EQUITY, from **Race Forward** via **Colorlines** and the Facing Race conference to **Grantmakers in the Arts'** work in promoting racial equity in arts philanthropy to **ArtEquity**, focused on facilitating conversations in the theater world, to the online community of the **Disability Visibility Project**—and many, many more.

CONSIDER THE NEWLY CREATED **INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**, a collaboration between **Alternate ROOTS** (**ROOTS'** Director Carlton Turner serves as Minister of Creative Southern Strategies on the USDAC National Cabinet), **First Peoples Fund**, the **National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC)**, directed by **María López De León**, **USDAC National Cabinet Minister of Inclusive Leadership Transformation**) AND **PA'I Foundation**. This a year-long rigorous personal and leadership development program for artists, culture bearers and other arts professionals conceived as an alternative to existing programs which “largely reinforced dominant cultural norms, modes of learning, ways of being and interacting that at times were out of sync with our commitment to cultural equity and to change-making in and with our communities.” Participants are chosen for leadership potential and deep commitment to community, social change and/or cultural equity. **ILI** treats understanding of equity as a skill just as necessary and foundational to leadership as the technical subjects most programs focus on, demonstrating the kind of learning community cultural democracy needs. **ILI's** definition of “intercultural” makes a strong case for understanding equity as something far deeper than diversity or inclusion:

impairs such efforts. Using structures, languages, and relationships to history that conflict with the self-understanding and identification of marginalized groups undermines positive intentions. We need a national conversation about how power structures shape what is thought of as “diversity and inclusion” work. About what it means to be an ally—and who judges? About the ways that lack of understanding drives planning, policy, programming, and fundraising.

The changes that need to be made to achieve justice and equity in the cultural sector begin with individuals and scale up to the largest institutions. They are not unitary: what it means to support cultural development focusing on indigenous languages and rooted in traditional practices in Native American communities may be very different from what is required to support cultural development in a diverse urban neighborhood under pressure from excessive policing. The many groups supporting real dialogue on these issues should be perceived and supported as part of a decentralized national learning community. Every part of the distributed conversation that drives such changes should include online and in-person venues for individual self-exploration; sustainable exchanges engaging individuals, organizations, and communities; and systemic rethinking of institutional biases.

### 3. REDEEM DEMOCRACY WITH CREATIVITY

**THE RECENT PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN REVEALED A STARK AND ALARMING TRUTH:** public space is being distorted and democracy eroded by the treatment of big money as protected political speech. Billions are spent on manipulative advertising, on discouraging voters, on lobbying elected officials to prioritize the interests of the privileged. And the results often follow the money.<sup>3</sup> The system has lost so much credibility that even in a hotly contested primary season, fewer than one-third of eligible voters turned out.<sup>4</sup> Virtually all of our systems need an infusion of creativity or an overhaul to enable and serve a vibrant, functioning democracy. The culture of politics needs the full participation of artists.

#### PROPOSED POLICY AND ACTION:

**SUPPORT ARTS-BASED MODES OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE AND DELIBERATION.** The conventional cultural forms typical of political campaigns have long been standardized and drained of vitality: the stump speech, the televised debate, the rally, the fundraiser, the door-knocker, and so on. Through USDAC Super PAC (Super Participatory Arts Coalition), we have demonstrated alternative ways to spark democratic dialogue, cultivate connection across cultural barriers, and

3 <http://bit.ly/2bSGlyt>

4 <http://bit.ly/1YdE7ty>

*In defining this collaborative program as an “Intercultural Leadership Institute,” we are making an important distinction. Cross-cultural approaches emphasize comparing and contrasting two or more distinct cultures. Intercultural approaches, on the other hand, stress the shared grooves of social memory, co-habitation and mutual accountability at the same time as they allow us to challenge dominant norms as well as honor, empower and find solidarity in the differences of our histories, traditions, identities, vocabularies and more.*



reach people who've been turned off by a system that has not been able to engage their trust and participation.

This work should be taken to scale. All political parties, Get Out The Vote groups, and voter education organizations should supply modest resources to a wide and diverse array of projects making democracy real through creativity in every region of the U.S. This can be accomplished through a new Creative Breakthrough Fund (as described below), or via decentralized action by stakeholders willing to invest in creative action research to spark participatory democracy.

**HACK DEMOCRACY WITH CREATIVITY.** Now that the 2016 election is over, the U.S. has time for reflection leading to social creativity. Civic action and education groups have proposed countless reforms to the existing system: same-day registration, weekend voting, public financing, and so on. Many of these can have significant impact. But it will require even more to achieve the vitality, transparency, and all-out welcome that strong participatory democracy requires.

The powerful methods developed through design labs, hackathons, and other techniques of collective creativity must be brought to this challenge. A wide range of interested partners should take part in a national call for arts-based redesign of our electoral system to reduce the influence of entrenched money and vastly expand the level and diversity of participation.

Appendix A, below, contains model language for **A Call to Hack Democracy With Creativity**. We invite all Citizen Artists and allied organizations to adapt the Call to their own contexts, share it, remain in dialogue with those who take it up, and use their own websites, programs, and publications to share as many of the resulting ideas as possible, fomenting a national dialogue on enlivening and strengthening the culture of politics.

**INTEGRATE ARTS-BASED CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING.** Campaigning is a small part of democratic participation. Many of the arts-based projects supported under the USDAC Super PAC are also transferable to important dialogues about issues communities face between elections. Artists have also been in the forefront with innovative forms of community engagement in public processes. Consider how **Arts & Democracy**, headed by USDAC National Cabinet member Caron Atlas, Minister of Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts, has served as a resource for Participatory Budgeting in New York City, "integrating arts, culture, and community media into this innovative approach to participatory democracy."<sup>5</sup> The USDAC has compiled modes of civic engagement that can enliven local governance, building participation and increasing responsiveness, and others are doing likewise. With support and encouragement, this can spread quickly.

5 <http://bit.ly/2eYkOoT>

## USDAC SUPER PAC PROTOTYPE PROJECTS INCLUDE:

**THE POP-UP STORY BOOTH** (Bushwick, NY) takes to public parks and other settings to increase awareness about and discussion of changes affecting a community, sharing community members' stories, concerns, and hopes.

**PAPEL PICADO NOW!** (Philadelphia, PA) uses a traditional Mexican artform- cut paper- to create powerful messages that can be made by children or adults and displayed anywhere.

**MAKE AMERICA CRATE** (Kansas City, KS) uses a giant, portable soapbox to invite anyone to step up and express opinions, ideas, and feelings on what makes America.

**BLACKBUSTER POP-UP PROJECTION** (Oakland, CA) sparks dialogue about equal representation in media and the democratic process needed to achieve it by holding a film screening and discussion on a public street.

**LAWNCARE** (St. Louis, MO) invites everyone to repurpose political yard signs to illustrate the values they want to campaign for, rather than using them to advertise politicians.

You can see all nine projects and download the Toolkit at: [www.usdac.us/superpac](http://www.usdac.us/superpac).



#### 4. REFORM THE CULTURE OF PUNISHMENT

THE UNITED STATES HAS EARNED THE NICKNAME “INCARCERATION NATION” FOR OUR MASSIVE PRISON POPULATION, PUNITIVE SENTENCING PRACTICES, THE SCALE OF OUR CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE ASSOCIATED TAXPAYER-BORNE COSTS. We have the world’s largest prison population and the highest per-capita incarceration rate of any industrialized nation.<sup>6</sup> Although African Americans make up approximately 13 percent of U.S. population, they account for nearly 38 percent of prison population.<sup>7</sup> There are more African American men incarcerated in the U.S. than the total prison populations in India, Argentina, Canada, Lebanon, Japan, Germany, Finland, Israel and England combined.<sup>8</sup> The figures for other people of color are also disparate, if not as stark.

Our headlines have been flooded with accounts of African Americans killed in police custody, often after being stopped for minor conduct offenses (Eric Garner was selling single cigarettes) or while walking, driving, or playing in a public place (Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Tamir Rice). There has been an outcry from racial justice advocates and civil libertarians over the “**school-to-prison-pipeline**,” which has criminalized what would formerly have been viewed as ordinary and trivial schoolyard incidents. The effect of this “zero tolerance” policy has been to channel primarily youth of color into a system that privileges punishment over rehabilitation, to cull young people into a permanent punishment category.

This is not a single problem, but a complex, interlocking set of problems that deny African Americans and other people of color full cultural citizenship: feeling welcome in one’s own country or community, receiving equal recognition for value and investment in the common culture, equity in cultural representation, and full human rights.

#### PROPOSED POLICY AND ACTION:

AS WITH EVERY CHALLENGE TO CULTURAL DEMOCRACY, SPECIFIC, CONCRETE INTERVENTIONS ARE NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE COMPLEX, RELATED PROBLEMS OF REPRESSIVE OVER-POLICING AND EXTREME OVER-INCARCERATION. We support Campaign Zero’s well-researched and conceived ten-point program for limiting police interventions, improving community interactions, and ensuring accountability.<sup>9</sup>

**SUPPORT ARTISTIC CREATION AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES TO CHANGE THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.** The Incarceration Nation story needs to be changed. The work of artists is critical here.

6 <http://bit.ly/2eW2zRh>

7 <http://bit.ly/1OQpl02>

8 <http://huff.to/1LHKj5F>

9 <http://bit.ly/1EalQIH>

IN SEPTEMBER 2015, THE RAUSCHENBERG FOUNDATION ANNOUNCED AN OPEN CALL FOR ITS ARTIST AS ACTIVIST FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM, offering up to \$100,000 in project support to recipients whose work addresses the thematic focus “racial justice through the lens of mass incarceration.” A second call with the same theme was issued in September 2016:

*2015 was a remarkable year for Criminal Justice reform. From extensive media coverage to the passage of a national bill that limits mandatory sentences for nonviolent offenders, advocates who have worked tirelessly to end mass incarceration saw reform at the forefront of national conversation, illuminating the challenges and pitfalls of a system that has 25 percent of the world’s known prisoners, but only 5 percent of the global population—a disproportionate number of whom are black and brown. How can artists and creative professionals support this momentum and highlight the need for further and more aggressive reform on issues such as, but not limited to, immigrant detention, policing, and the privatization of prisons?*

The ten 2016 recipients included Favianna Rodriguez, who serves as Secretary of Cultural Equity on the USDAC National Cabinet, to “convene artists alongside movement organizers and activists to explore the intersections between mass incarceration and immigrant detention with the goal of devising a cultural strategy that envisions a world free of prisons;” El Sawyer, who was featured in our **May 2016 blog** on Philadelphia’s Village of Arts and Humanities, for a project to create and disseminate “curricula for agencies that serve the inmate and ex-offender population to accompany screenings of his 2013 film *Pull of Gravity*, which highlights the struggle of re-entry for men returning home from prison;” and the Los Angeles Poverty Department, for a project involving “informal community policing vehicles that maintain respect for the wellbeing of their Skid Row neighbors.”

It has been amply documented<sup>10</sup> that prison arts programs support inmates in sustaining sanity and self-esteem, provide them with an essential expressive outlet, and educate others about humane alternatives to typical incarceration. Artists have also driven efforts to portray the police and the prison system accurately, spreading stories that connect much more powerfully than mere statistics. And there is a critical role for artists in envisaging and helping to enact alternatives to the existing system.

The Creative Breakthrough Fund described below in the “Paying for Change” section should support arts-based projects created to align social attitudes with awareness of Incarceration Nation and its impact, and positive actions to ameliorate and respond to it.

## 5. INVEST IN BELONGING AND CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP

**OUR CHIEF CULTURAL DEFICIT IS BELONGING.** How many Americans feel deprived of full cultural citizenship on account of race, ethnicity, religion, social class, ability, orientation, or other categories that experience social exclusion? As Roberto Bedoya, Secretary of Belonging on the USDAC National Cabinet, has written,

*The state of our society is under a great deal of stress triggered by the continuing recession and its challenges to our economy, the growing plutocracy’s abuse of our civil rights, the Cultural War 2.0 battles over women’s rights to control their own bodies, the rights of Union workers, the rights of Mexican American students to study Latino literature, the right to be free of racial profiling, the right of gays and lesbians to marry their loved one, immigrant rights...you can add your own example of the politics of dis-belonging at work in civil society.*<sup>11</sup>

To sustain a functioning civil society that even aspires to full cultural citizenship, the challenge of belonging and dis-belonging must be acknowledged and addressed. There is a long way to go to achieve even the first step here, awareness. Has any city or state adopted a policy on belonging, let alone invested in new initiatives to cultivate a universal sense of belonging?

### PROPOSED POLICY AND ACTION:

We urge investment in belonging and cultural citizenship at local, state, and national levels, supported with both public and private funds. The following core initiatives should shape them:

**ADOPT A POLICY ON BELONGING.** Appendix B contains a model policy on belonging that can be adopted by public institutions such as municipal or state governments and private organizations such as

**THE CHICAGO-BASED PROJECT NIA WORKS TO END YOUTH INCARCERATION** through a constellation of popular education, research, advocacy, and cultural interventions. For example, their 2010 publication **Giving Name to the Nameless – Using Poetry as an Anti-Violence Intervention with Girls** is a curriculum resource that includes more than 30 poems addressing gender-based violence and offers suggestions for individuals facilitating poetry circles with girls and young women. The title comes from an essay by Audre Lorde:

*Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.*



10 <http://bit.ly/2eNzzua>

11 <http://bit.ly/2eVVUq2>

community centers. Adopting such a policy is the foundation for any action taken to extend and deepen belonging.

**SUPPORT LONG-TERM ARTISTS' RESIDENCIES AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD LEVEL BY ARTISTS WITH EXPERIENCE AND SKILL IN COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT;** include support for tools, skills-building, and other necessary resources. Resident artists would design and execute projects inviting community members to express their own hopes and concerns through art-making. They would assess the state of belonging in their communities and creatively conceive and test ways to strengthen it.

Part of this responsibility includes recognizing and supporting the contributions of local artists and culture-bearers as well as preparing and supporting allied outside artists to enter communities, listen deeply without preconception, and respond to specific needs and opportunities in each place. Artists' roles include cultivating vision and possibility, helping people create something that represents them and their secrets of survival and often-overlooked resources, devising new ways of bringing people together without devaluing cultural differences—all of which yield useful knowledge for the larger society.

**SUPPORT COMMUNITY-BASED CENTERS THAT ENGAGE PEOPLE DIRECTLY IN ART-MAKING AND ART EXPERIENCES,** providing such social goods as public educational, performance, and exhibition spaces, providing skilled instruction, and serving as gathering-places across cultural barriers. Such centers are laboratories for belonging, offering ideas and experiences that can be replicated or adapted widely. They can simultaneously provide venues that help to focus, cultivate, and express the cultures of specific heritage communities; and serve as hospitable meeting-places for multiple communities to come together in mutual learning, dialogue, and celebration. In many places, these centers are sites of belonging that anchor a community, integral to strategies to resist displacement, preserve and strengthen existing social fabric.

**SUPPORT CREATIVE USE OF UNDERUSED SPACES SUCH AS SCHOOLS, HOUSES OF WORSHIP, AND PUBLIC PLAZAS.** Our communities are filled with public and private spaces that are radically under-used, with schools closed after class hours, places of worship closed when not used for services and related events, plazas vacant (and often dangerous) when the day's business is done. How can we together reimagine the untapped commonwealth these spaces represent, making maximum use of them for learning, making art, public performances and other gatherings?

**REPURPOSE DISUSED SPACES SUCH AS VACANT LOTS AND EMPTY STOREFRONTS AS POP-UP COMMUNITY CULTURAL CENTERS,** engaging people in art-making and art experiences as they go about their day. Especially where there has not been public

CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL VALLEY IS A SITE OF CULTURAL CONVERGENCE, WHERE FOR DECADES TAMEJAVI HAS BEEN WEAVING SOCIAL FABRIC at a cultural center in Fresno housed in the American Friends Service Committee's Pan Valley Institute, established in 1998. In a way, the name says it all. Tamejavi combines the languages of local immigrant groups to make a word meaning "cultural market," originating from the concept of a "plaza" or place of exchange: TAJ laj Tshav Puam (Hmong); MErcado (Spanish); and nunJAVI (Mixteco).

After a decade of biennial festivals, Tamejavi created an "18-month fellowship program designed to strengthen the cultural organizing skills of Central Valley's emerging cultural leaders" supporting "immigrant cultural holders, oral tradition masters, leaders, and organizers in their efforts of building strong and culturally vibrant communities."

As the website explains, "Each cohort of fellows spans a wide range of approaches to leadership, cultural organizing and artistic production nevertheless they are all committed to helping their community find a sense of belonging and build broader civic and political participation in Valley life. They all believe that the arts, creative expression, and traditional practices compose the lifeblood of indigenous and immigrant cultures and has an important role to play in catalyzing broader political participation and power."

IN THE RURAL EASTERN KENTUCKY TOWN OF WHITESBURG, APPALSHOP WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1969 to enact "cultural organizing and place-based media, arts and education to document the life, celebrate the culture, and voice the concerns of people living in Appalachia and rural America. We're helping to reimagine our region by bringing forth new and often unheard voices and visions from the

provision of accessible cultural space, temporary venues are essential to bring opportunities to explore and experience belonging to communities without meaningful access to inclusive, creative spaces. A key consideration is to anchor these spaces in existing community culture, so that they don't invite gentrification and displacement.

## **6. INTEGRATE COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE WORK OF ARTISTS INTO ALL SOCIAL PROGRAMS AFFECTING CULTURE**

**WHETHER THE SUBJECT IS SOCIAL PROBLEMS OR EMERGENT OPPORTUNITIES, INTEGRATING ARTISTS' SKILLS AND SOCIAL IMAGINATIONS CREATES NEW POSSIBILITY AND MAXIMIZES IMPACT.**

Across the U.S., we see rips in social fabric tear communities apart: anti-immigrant feeling obscures the positive impacts of immigration; rural communities lose their younger generation for lack of opportunity; in urban centers, people fear crossing the invisible boundaries dividing neighborhoods. These are cultural issues that demand multidimensional creative responses to bring people into authentic, equitable, constructive dialogue. But often the agencies charged with addressing such problems are unduly constrained by past practice privileging conventional approaches. There's a kind of institutional comfort with failing in familiar ways; the greater risk is venturing something new. Indeed, the bias toward past practice may be so powerful and tacitly internalized that people may not even know what arts-based approaches can bring to achieving their aims.

We also see signs of vibrant life: public visual art and performance are increasingly integral to public space and community development. When people think about nurturing community (whether in the problematic language of "placemaking" or as we prefer, "placekeeping"), they are increasingly aware of customs, traditions, languages, sites of public memory, and other aspects of culture that aren't encompassed by the built environment. But often, the people in charge of these initiatives—city planners, architects, developers, and so on—lack essential information and skills that can make their work so much more responsive and effective.

### **PROPOSED POLICY AND ACTION:**

**DEVELOP LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND MATERIALS THAT COMMUNICATE ESSENTIAL CONTENT ABOUT ARTISTS' WORK AND VALUE IN ADVANCING SOCIAL GOODS,** using the language and ways of learning the relevant professions favor. Artists skilled in social imagination have abundant knowledge. Expertise and resources are needed to package and deliver this knowledge in ways that increase appreciation and welcome of artists in community-building,

people of this place and demonstrating the power of arts and culture to create meaningful social and economic change. We present stories that commercial media doesn't tell, challenge stereotypes, support grassroots efforts to achieve justice and equity, and celebrate cultural diversity as a positive social value."

The project has grown to encompass programs in media training, film production, recorded music, live theater, a radio station, and more. It is widely considered an exemplary community center, not only supporting local cultural expression and development and building capacity, but telling its region's story to the wide world, and thus building allies for its aims.

**IN MAY 2016, FORECAST PUBLIC ART (WHOSE FOUNDER, JACK BECKER, SERVES AS PUBLIC ART MOBILIZER ON THE USDAC NATIONAL CABINET) RECEIVED A \$100,000 NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS (NEA) KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING GRANT THROUGH THE OUR TOWN PROGRAM,** supporting a two-year partnership with the 40,000-member American Planning Association (APA) to translate Forecast's deep knowledge of the public art field into learning tools urban planners and related professionals can use to serve mid-sized American cities.

This has significant potential to influence the field. The program will yield a public art certificate for participating planners, creating the added incentive of professional development credit. Many cities are required to produce annual updates to their comprehensive plans, so there's a high possibility that any element of the project that focuses their attention on improving public art-related practice can quickly be operationalized. Forecast's commitment is to cover "best practices in planning and designing healthy cities through the public art lens, including guidance on working with artists, tactical strategies for implementing public art projects, meaningful community engagement, and racial and economic equity," translating

social service, and public policy processes. Especially for professions that require continuing education units (CEU) as a condition of maintaining professional credentials, this can also fill a professional development need.

**INCORPORATE ARTISTS WITH RELEVANT SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE INTO THE WORK OF ALL PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES RELATED TO SOCIAL WELL-BEING:** policing, education, healthcare, environmental protection, community development, and other social sectors. In a world in which knowledge is separated into silos, we face a practical challenge: how to convey the understanding that the integral, cross-disciplinary nature of community cultural development practice can infuse and deepen all work that influences human culture. Regardless of a particular agency's or organization's focal topic, being able to engage the whole person—body, emotions, mind, and spirit—through direct creative experience activates capacity that can never be otherwise achieved. In recommendation two, above, we advocate a public service jobs program, which can also advance this aim. But there are many ways to collaborate other than full-time employment—as consultants, resident artists or fellows, advisors, volunteers, or on an ad hoc project basis—and these opportunities are likely to be more available now.

## **7. SUPPORT ARTISTIC RESPONSE TO NATURAL AND CIVIL EMERGENCIES**

**EARLY IN 2017, THE USDAC WILL RELEASE AN ARTISTIC RESPONSE TOOLKIT** offering guidance to artists and creative organizers who support communities facing natural or civil disasters, be they floods or protests and crackdowns focusing on police-related killings.

Community-based artists are eager to respond to such ruptures in the social fabric, engaging community members in powerful and beautiful modes of public expression; providing comfort, connection, and consolation; helping communities to heal in the aftermath of a crisis. In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, for instance, artists with relevant skills brought performances into public shelters, created theater with survivors, helped to surface and share stories that integrated traumatic experience and engaged resilience. Following the killing of Michael Brown and civil emergency in Ferguson, MO, artists offered classes and workshops, interactive public food events, created posters and photographic documentation highlighting community response.

### **PROPOSED POLICY AND ACTION:**

**ARTISTIC RESPONSE SHOULD BE A KEY ELEMENT OF RESPONSE TO BOTH NATURAL DISASTERS (AND THE HUMAN-MADE FACTORS THAT EXACERBATE THEM) AND TO CULTURAL CRISES.** To nurture consensus, we need to actuate a shift in understanding that

the field's ethics and values into language and learning pathways that fit planners' worlds. We're interested to see what will emerge from the second year of this curriculum project, when an APA chapter and a team of regional artists will create temporary demonstration projects to test the curriculum's effectiveness—and how far its impact will spread.



**BOSTON MAYOR MARTIN J. WALSH HAS STATED HIS COMMITMENT TO INTEGRATE ARTISTS INTO EVERY ASPECT OF CITY LIFE** (as part of Boston Creates, a recently released 10-year cultural plan). One initiative has been **Boston AIR (Artists-in-Residence)**. This year, 10 artists have been chosen for nine-month residencies, each “to develop and test ways that creative approaches can meaningfully impact the work of the public sector and society at large.” Each artist will be paired with one of ten designated Boston Centers for Youth and Family (BCYF) community centers which will provide studio space. Each will receive a stipend of \$22,500. Here's how the city describes their role:

*Through Boston AIR, artists are supported as agents of reflection, collaboration, and activism, whether through process-oriented practice, direct community engagement, and/or as leaders of system-wide change projects at BCYF and other City agencies. The ten selected artists are invited to study and expand their own civic and social practice, alongside a parallel cohort from ten BCYF community centers and other City employees who will explore methods to incorporate artistic social practice into government and community work. Both the artist and City cohorts will share examples of their work, attend master workshops and lectures by guest artists, and have opportunities to exchange ideas and co-design proposals.*

values artists' role in repairing social fabric lacerated by crisis. Multiple policymakers and actors must be engaged.

**ENSURE THAT FUNDERS, DISASTER RELIEF AGENCIES, LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND ARTS AND CULTURAL AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS RECOGNIZE THE CRUCIAL VALUE OF ARTS-BASED RAPID RESPONSE** and begin providing the resources necessary to sustain it. Right now, rapid artistic response—interventions that happen as a crisis is unfolding or immediately afterwards—is an add-on. There is a mutual comprehension gap. Mainstream relief agencies and responders are unlikely to be aware of the range of possible artists' contributions to their work, and are often nervous about engaging with artists they aren't convinced have adequate training or experience in risk management. Artists who want to help and have meaningful artistic skills to offer may not be aware of the protocols and constraints agency partners must accept. We hope our Toolkit will be a useful step in sharing knowledge, but much more must be done to close the gap.

**INTEGRATE CULTURAL STRATEGIES IN LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND RESILIENCY PLANNING.** Artists and cultural organizers have a great deal to bring to the long-term work of cross-sector communication, facilitation, and planning, conflict resolution, training, and other forms of engagement that address the whole person and the whole community so as to strengthen cultural fabric for future challenges.

**PROVIDE ADEQUATE TRAINING FOR ALL PARTIES THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION AS WELL AS COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS.** As a way to close the gap and maximize useful response to emergencies, both sectors should support learning that equips artists to respond with creativity and sensitivity to situations that may leave people fearful, confused, or even paralyzed; and learning that equips relief agencies and responders to support and console affected communities with the power of artistic engagement.

## **8. ADOPT A CULTURAL IMPACT STUDY**

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY IS MARRED BY A WIDESPREAD PROCLIVITY TO SEE COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES AS DISPOSABLE IN THE FACE OF ECONOMIC "PROGRESS."** We've repeatedly seen the destruction of longstanding neighborhoods—and along with their buildings and public spaces, their cultural and social fabric—to make way for highly subsidized or otherwise profitable development projects such as new freeways or sports stadiums. A more general impact has been displacement of residents due to gentrification, driving up housing costs to attract and accommodate trendier, wealthier tenants, converting neighborhood groceries to high-end boutiques and restaurants and public gathering-places to private amenities.

USDAC CHIEF POLICY WOKN ARLENE GOLDBARD INTERVIEWED CAROL BEBELLE, head of **Ashé Cultural Arts Center in New Orleans** as part of the research for the USDAC's forthcoming Artistic Response Toolkit. In this snippet, she begins by describing getting back into the city weeks after Hurricane Katrina:

*People needed something magical to help them feel better enough to face the next day. Every day was a reminder of irreversible loss. Probably most of us never had imagined what happened. People always talk about the perfect storm. There was a way in which—like death, you leave that out there as something that could happen, might happen. But when it happens to you it kind of strips you of your security blanket because you know that it's real. So we had art as a healing force: music, the opportunity for people to be together and to find creative ways in which to interact. This became the work we did.*

*There are so many things that anchor our existence. To lose them all leaves us on a sea without an anchor. So people were dealing with identity issues. They were dealing with disenfranchisement issues, they were dealing with homesickness. They were dealing with loss in a huge fashion. What we really came to appreciate was the necessity to get some air in the room first before you try and do something else, to get them some oxygen so that they can start breathing. So art became the oxygen.*

Ashé has been a community institution since 1998, offering exhibits, residencies, health and wellness programs, and educational programs including the **The KUUMBA Institute**, infusing education with culture and creativity; **The Institute of Cultural Education**, designed to improve teachers' cultural competency; and **Ashé College Unbound**, a community-based, collaborative, degree-granting program that celebrated its first graduating class in 2013. Programs like these, committed to continuity of service and community development, are precisely what fosters the culturally rooted resilience which is the greatest strength of communities under pressure.

The disturbing fact is that culture has no legal standing in such decisions, no grounds for protection. In seeking solutions, we contrast this with environmental protection. Since the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, proposed federal projects require an environmental assessment, and if that shows possible negative environmental impact, an Environmental Impact Study must be prepared and considered before approval, modification, or rejection of the proposed project. This powerful and influential tool of environmental policy forces consideration of impact before steps are taken that might do damage.

But what about the impact on cultural fabric? What about the sense of belonging, the sites of public memory, the gathering-places, the expressions and embodiments of heritage cultures that would be destroyed by proposed developments? Every community should be authorized to assess, study, and act on these too. The purpose of a Cultural Impact Study (CIS) is to help public officials make informed decisions reflecting deep understanding of negative cultural consequences and the positive alternatives available.

#### **PROPOSED POLICY AND ACTION:**

This problem can be addressed by any local, regional, or national planning authority, as well as any organization or institution contemplating physical development that may impinge on community cultural life.

Require from all agencies and organizations with public planning responsibility a Cultural Impact Study (CIS) for every project with potential negative cultural impact, designating each project as approved, in need of mitigation to avoid cultural harm, or disapproved. The complete text for a model resolution by a board of trustees or directors, a city council, county board of supervisors, state legislature or other authority adopting a CIS as official policy appears as an **Appendix C** to this report.

#### **9. RECONCEIVE EDUCATION TO SUPPORT CREATIVITY'S CENTRAL ROLE**

**WE'RE EMERGING FROM AN ERA IN THE ANNALS OF EDUCATION IN WHICH SKILLS SEEN AS "HARD" (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MATH: STEM), THOSE REQUIRED FOR CERTAIN TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT AND MEASURABLE WITH STANDARDIZED TESTS, WERE VALUED ABOVE OTHER SUBJECTS.** Increasingly, these notions—that the primary purpose of education is banking knowledge for job preparation, that the most important learning can be acquired by rote—are being discredited.

Passing standardized tests turns out not to be a reliable guide to employability or performance, let alone satisfaction. As has been



*Whereas our cultural landscape is a rich and varied tapestry of heritage and new creation; and  
Whereas the right to culture—to honor those who came before, express ourselves and take part in community life—is a core human right; and*

*Whereas we cherish equal opportunity to contribute to and benefit from cultural life for all community members, whether our families are indigenous to this land, have lived here for many decades or just arrived, whether we live in cities or the countryside, and regardless of color, creed, orientation or physical ability; and*

*Whereas equity, fairness and inclusion are the hallmarks of our support, protection and promotion of culture; and*

*Whereas we recognize that every community's cultural fabric is made of shared places, customs, values and creative acts and strengthening that fabric makes it more likely that children will stay in school, businesses will thrive, neighbors will celebrate and learn from each other; and*

*Whereas, when we forget to value cultural fabric in these ways, communities pay a price in loss of culture and conviviality, in alienation and displacement;*

*Therefore be it resolved...*

**THIS IS AN EXCERPT FROM THE MODEL RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A CULTURAL IMPACT STUDY REQUIREMENT WHICH APPEARS AS APPENDIX C TO THIS DOCUMENT. The USDAC stands ready to work with any community willing to explore bringing such a resolution to a city council, planning commission, or other public authority. CALL ON US!**

true for decades, skills deemed cutting-edge and essential at one moment quickly become irrelevant. Consider whether students in the 1980s could have obtained technical training adequate to prepare them for job descriptions that didn't even exist yet in the information technologies of 2000—then apply the same thought-experiment to the present. It has long become commonplace to quote business writer Daniel Pink's idea that "The MFA is the new MBA," identified by Harvard Business Review as one of its breakthrough ideas of 2004. A dozen years later, it is widely recognized that improvisation, creativity, innovation, resourcefulness, and other increasingly essential skills can best be learned through arts-based experience. Indeed, STEM to STEAM—adding art and design to the equation—is gaining traction every day. Offerings are coming from a growing number of groups engaged in this effort: Edutopia<sup>12</sup> has an impressive list of STEAM resources, as does STEM to STEAM,<sup>13</sup> based at the Rhode Island School of Design.

Of course, all such considerations are framed by economic opportunity: can students afford college? Once engaged in higher education, are students who must earn a living while studying disadvantaged by the emphasis on unpaid community placements and internships? Is the growing trend in higher education toward corporate sponsorship pushing curriculum away from creativity and toward subjects narrowly defined as leading to employment? If education is to serve the whole person, culture as well as commerce, how must these economics change?

#### **PROPOSED POLICY AND ACTION:**

**RECOGNIZE AND SUPPORT CREATIVITY AS AN INTEGRAL CAPACITY FOR ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATION.** Understanding and appreciation of arts-based capacities and skills varies greatly across the U.S. Many districts cite budget cuts in continuing to reduce or eliminate classes in visual arts, drama, dance, and music. Others are enterprising despite shortfalls, drawing on resources provided by many excellent arts-in-education organizations to offer students curriculum that develops critical creative capacity as it builds knowledge. To the extent that education is informed by national standards and goals, advocacy at the national level for arts integration and arts-based learning will have an impact—much more so if advocacy succeeds in freeing resources to supplement budgets at the district and school levels. But given school districts' relative autonomy in many states, the sweeping policy change needed here will also require persistent local engagement.

**INVEST IN THOSE WHO WORK AS TEACHING ARTISTS.** Increasing numbers of teaching artists and arts educators understand the centrality of art-making and art experience to a well-rounded education, one that adds to emotional and somatic as well as intellectual learning. Much of this work is being done under the banner of "arts integration,"

12 <http://edut.to/23WuHUP>

13 <http://stemtosteam.org/>

Recently, classical music has been emerging as a ground for community cultural development and arts-based education for both skill-building and cultural citizenship. Eric Booth, who serves as Secretary of Teaching Artists on the USDAC National Cabinet, has recently published a book on the global El Sistema movement. Co-authored with Tricia Tunstall, **Playing for Their Lives: The Global El Sistema Movement for Social Change Through Music** surveys the hundreds of programs in 64 countries that have been inspired or influenced by the ideas of Jose Antonio Abreu, whose aims in starting the intensive and inclusive El Sistema program in Venezuela forty years ago were summarized by Eric in a **recent interview**:

*Its purpose is to inculcate essential social skills that enable kids who haven't had particularly advantageous education [opportunities] to succeed in ways that others in their community have not. But here is the paradoxical part: They recognize that the only way kids can really develop those skills is through high artistic achievement. It's putting the notion of social development and artistic achievement together in a different way. It's flipping the idea that community based work is second rate, which takes community-based arts learning to a new level of ambition.*

Cabinet member Sebastian Ruth, Secretary of Music and Society, founded **Community MusicWorks** in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1997, long before the El Sistema had penetrated the United States. Interviews with young people who'd been deeply involved in the program were posted to CMW's website to mark its 20th anniversary. Here's an excerpt from the story of **Joshua Rodriguez**, age 24:

*I have always seen myself as kind of a shy kid. Thanks to CMW, I started playing some music and playing in front of an audience and playing with different kinds of people - playing in front of white people, playing in front of black people, playing white music in front of black people—and by white music I mean classical, your Beethoven, your Mozart—and then also playing spirituals in*

infusing an entire curriculum with arts-based methods and techniques. Arts activity can't be layered onto conventional curriculum like cake frosting: coloring a scientific illustration won't build creative capacity.

The essential step is to put artists of skill, commitment, and passion into the classroom.

It is critical that public and private educational authorities recognize teaching artists as essential to the quality of education that equips students for full cultural citizenship, and support their work commensurately, not displacing but augmenting classroom teachers.

**INCLUDE CURRICULUM DEVISED BY AND FOR TEACHING ARTISTS AND ARTISTS WORKING IN PARTICIPATORY, COMMUNITY-BASED CONTEXTS IN EVERY HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM ENGAGING ARTISTS.** Too many university arts curricula promote the unrealistic idea that graduates will take places in competitive markets constrained by oversupply, moving from graduation to a repertory theater, a recording contract, or a prestigious gallery. This may be an effective marketing ploy for arts departments, but it promotes a reductive and inaccurate idea of livelihood for artists. Teaching artistry and community cultural development practice require distinct skillsets beyond conventional studio or conservatory education. They offer paths to livelihood that every arts student should experience as essential knowledge enabling informed and satisfying life-choices.

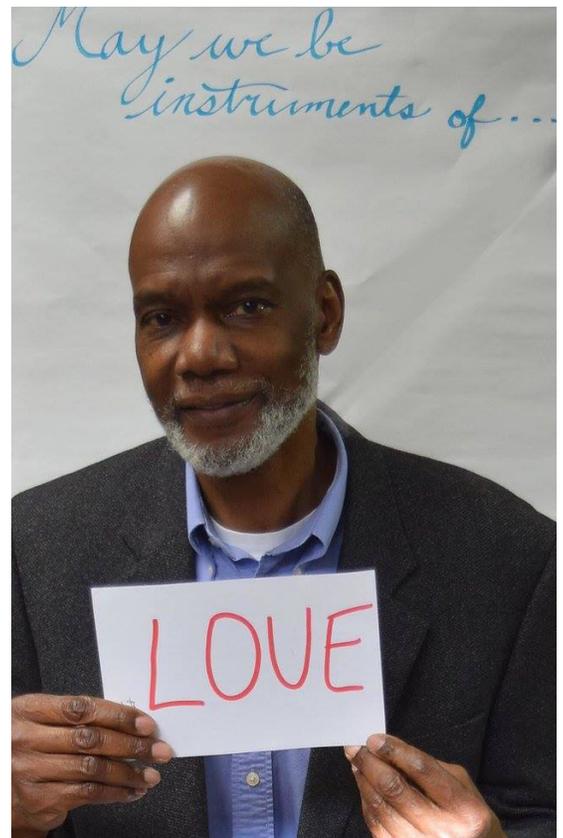
**SUPPORT PURPOSE-BUILT CURRICULUM FOR COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS.** Much of the most impressive efforts to train artists working in community-based, participatory frameworks is being done outside of universities. Recognizing that the classroom cannot fully convey the deep relational and ethical skills the best work requires, these community-based programs combine guided learning with community engagement practice and often, some form of mentorship. Two stellar examples are the **Community Arts Training Institute** of the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission, created under the leadership of USDAC Cultural Agent Roseann Weiss; and the mentoring and training threaded through the annual **ROOTS Week** gathering sponsored by Alternate ROOTS, an organization directed by USDAC National Cabinet Minister of Creative Southern Strategies, Carlton Turner.

## 10. ADOPT A BASIC INCOME GRANT

**BASIC ECONOMIC CHALLENGES CONFRONT WORKERS REGARDLESS OF PROFESSION:** rising costs, falling spending-power, the uncertainty of the economy, macroeconomic policies that have placed corporate success above individual well-being. For artists and cultural organizers as for others, the current system mandates overproduction, often exacerbated by under-compensation. For example, existing subsidy for artists operates almost exclusively on a

*front of black people and then playing those same spirituals in front of white people. Community MusicWorks basically has said, "Screw borders. This is music and this is community and we're bringing them together."*

*When you sing... "We shall overcome," means the same thing to me that it probably means to you, right? You're going to overcome something and there is no other way to understand that. That's why music is so powerful in this way because whether you're playing "Ode to Joy" or you're playing "O Danny Boy" at a vigil, you're feeling a similar emotion that it evokes from you. And that's why music can be so influential, especially in moments of activism. I wish we had more music now to keep us uplifted. I wish somebody would write a new song about police brutality or grieving over the loss of someone from police brutality, something that people can sing and then people can feel uplifted and it will guide them to feel spiritually a sense of ease but also a sense of, "Okay, this can lead me to the next step in something to do in this community."*



project basis, forcing artists who apply for support to constantly seek novelty and conform to arbitrary deadlines rather than allowing work to evolve and emerge according to a more organic timetable. Competition for scarce resources is incredibly intense and hugely discouraging for those who don't fall under currently favored criteria (as well as those who do but fail to rise in a system that receives dozens of applications for every grant). The challenge becomes greater for women artists who typically receive a fraction of the opportunity and subsidy available to male counterparts, and for aging artists who haven't been able to stockpile a surplus to fall back on when the pace of production wanes.

In virtually every field, decision-makers fail to prioritize necessary time for reflection, restoration, and conviviality. It's a challenge to discern, integrate, and act on cultural development needs when competition for survival eats what could otherwise be time for creativity, connection, and pleasure. We long for a future in which overproduction and overconsumption will no longer distort our society, with a universal cultural benefit: the ability to live in balance with each other and the life of this planet.

#### **PROPOSED POLICY AND ACTION:**

**FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS SHOULD INTRODUCE A BASIC INCOME GRANT (BIG) AVAILABLE TO EVERY INDIVIDUAL REGARDLESS OF INCOME FROM OTHER SOURCES.** This stipend should cover basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, medical care) and be made available without a means test or any other conditions.

A universal basic income grant benefits all equally, regardless of their work. We find it especially promising for artists committed to community cultural development and cultural democracy, because so many of them struggle to cover living costs in a society—and philanthropic culture—that typically devalues their work. Workarounds are possible, but problematic. For instance, people say that unemployment insurance is the largest source of subsidy for performing artists, because many dance and theater companies employ artists during the performance season and lay them off later to collect benefits. BIG delivers the same help without the vast expense of bureaucratic enforcers to vet, police, and deny benefits. The major public resource thus saved can be channeled into basic income.

An impressive body of rigorous research and compelling argument for the social and economic benefits of a basic income grant system can be accessed through the international **Basic Income Earth Network** and the U.S.-based **Basic Income Guarantee Network**.



**Y COMBINATOR, SILICON VALLEY'S TOP STARTUP ACCELERATOR, IS RUNNING A BIG PILOT EXPERIMENT IN OAKLAND, CA, PROVIDING STIPENDS FOR 100 FAMILIES:**

*We want to run a large, long-term study to answer a few key questions: how people's happiness, well-being, and financial health are affected by basic income, as well as how people might spend their time.*

*But before we do that, we're going to start with a short-term pilot in Oakland. Our goal will be to prepare for the longer-term study by working on our methods--how to pay people, how to collect data, how to randomly choose a sample, etc.*

*Oakland is a city of great social and economic diversity, and it has both concentrated wealth and considerable inequality. We think these traits make it a very good place to explore how basic income could work for our pilot...*

*In our pilot, the income will be unconditional; we're going to give it to participants for the duration of the study, no matter what. People will be able to volunteer, work, not work, move to another country—anything. We hope basic income promotes freedom, and we want to see how people experience that freedom.*

*If the pilot goes well, we plan to follow up with the main study. If the pilot doesn't go well, we'll consider different approaches.*

## PAYING FOR CHANGE

**MANY OF THE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS WE HAVE OFFERED REQUIRE NEW INFUSIONS OF RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION.** They may touch on differing social possibilities—democratic revival, racial justice, education, and more. But the underlying idea and need are the same, to support art action research and creative innovation in building cultural democracy, addressing climate crisis, bringing about a social compact of justice and equity.

The most serious challenges we face as a culture are extremely convoluted, multifaceted, and resistant to solutions—what are dubbed “wicked problems.” This phrase is used by planners and systems theorists to describe complex and singular predicaments without easily defined alternative resolutions or clear boundaries. They are connected to or embedded in other problems, so that pulling on any thread leads to a Gordian knot of complications. When wicked problems take up residence on the grand scale of a society, they are sometimes called “social messes.” Racism is a social mess; so is climate crisis; so is the polarization of wealth.

To even begin to address wicked problems and social messes, we need holistic thinkers, those who can grasp complex situations, and rather than attempting to parse them into neat conceptual silos (which only increases the overwhelm effect), who can see and enact promising ways to intervene for social good.

Artists committed to cultural democracy are a powerful resource for this type of positive social change. Their skills at improvisation, innovation, resourcefulness, and social imagination are exactly what’s needed to actuate the emerging shift from a passive consumer culture to a vibrant creator culture willing to replace frameworks that have outlived their usefulness, experimenting with fresh new

possibilities. We offer four ways to address the need for focused and adequate resources:

**FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES SHOULD ADOPT A TAX ON ADVERTISING.** Authoritative estimates put projected media advertising expenditure in United States in 2016 at about \$200 billion.<sup>14</sup> Advertising is a public revenue source that is almost entirely untapped in the United States. Purchasers of ad space in publications, on broadcast media, on the internet, and on billboards pay no taxes. Before the digital era, businesses allocated about 80% of total expenditures for production and distribution and 20% for advertising. In many industries, these proportions are now reversed. A tax of only 1% would generate \$2 billion (more than 13 times the current annual National Endowment for the Arts budget).

**A FEDERAL ROBIN HOOD TAX SHOULD BE INSTITUTED.** This increasingly popular new revenue idea calls for a tax of less than half of one percent on financial transactions such as trades in derivatives, stocks and bonds, and foreign currency exchanges. A Robin Hood tax would require banks and

investment firms to pay less than 50 cents for every \$100 they spend. Knowledgeable estimates predict that it would generate more than \$350 billion per year (nearly 2400 times the current annual NEA budget). At that rate, it would still not equal the average burden on individual U.S. taxpayers, who currently pay \$9.64 in taxes for every \$100 spent, while financial transactions generate no sales tax revenue.

**A CREATIVE BREAKTHROUGH FUND SHOULD BE LAUNCHED.** In recent decades, public and private funders have combined forces to address challenges and opportunities no single entity can solve. Now, this country needs a Creative Breakthrough Fund to recognize and support the small-scale arts-based experiments that can lead to expanded support for promising innovations taken to scale. Projects and artists supported by the Creative



14 <http://bit.ly/1KgOuKp>

Breakthrough Fund should reflect the full diversity of U.S. population, directing resources equitably to projects serving disenfranchised communities, migrant communities, indigenous communities, women and others who have been pushed to the margins by mainstream funding systems. Project support should be regarded holistically, with assistance covering not just artistic production but dissemination as well. Investing in multiple projects can function as action-research, with sustaining funding to follow to those with greatest promise.

We would welcome dialogue with any funder who would like to explore this possibility, and would be happy to contribute our expertise.

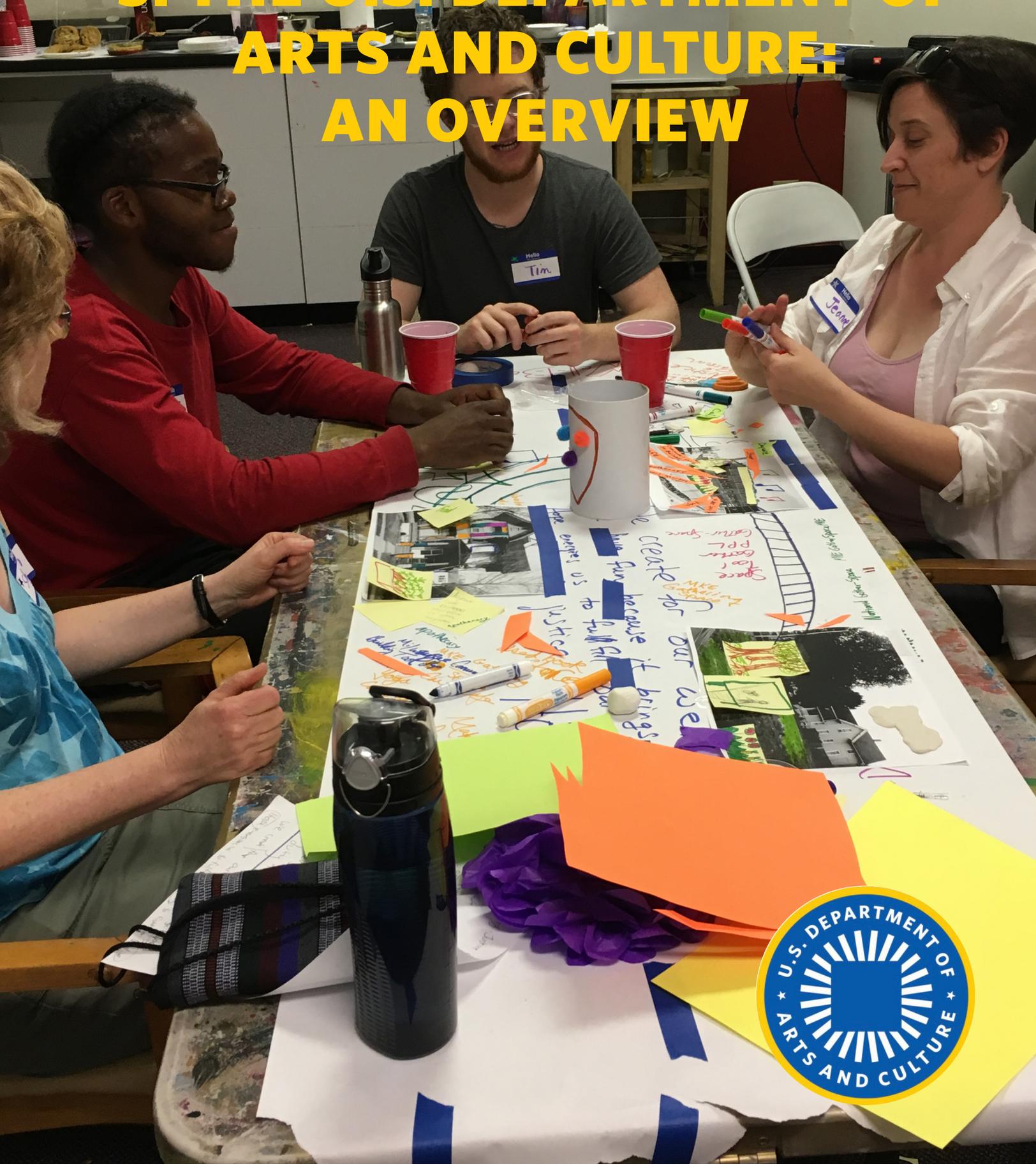
**SOCIAL INNOVATION INVESTING SHOULD BE DEPLOYED.**

“Social impact bonds” (SIBs), a concept first launched in 2010, rely on investors rather than economically challenged local governments to finance action to address social challenges. Typically, a government targets a particular social problem such as homelessness, and then an organization raises bond money from private investors to finance hiring or other interventions that bring constructive action to the challenge. This works best with specific goals where success can be measured: when they are achieved the public entity repays the bond investors with interest. The government’s risk is limited: If the goal is not met, investors do not recoup. Despite the risk to investors, SIBs are multiplying. According to the U.K.-based **Social Finance Global Network**, as of this writing, 60 SIBs have been launched, with more than 100 in development.

Could communities set cultural development targets amenable to SIBs? Eric Booth, Secretary of Teaching Artists on the USDAC National Cabinet, has suggested “a gang membership reduction SIB” or “a school dropout-rate reduction SIB,” relating to platform points such as 1, 6, and 9, with the work of artists driving measurable success. In situations where governments save on the costs of policing, incarceration, unemployment, and delivering social services by meeting such targets and investors see meaningful return on their bond investments, SIBs offer both financial and social profit.



# 3. THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND CULTURE: AN OVERVIEW



# THE USDAC IS A NETWORK OF ARTISTS, ACTIVISTS, AND ALLIES INCITING CREATIVITY AND SOCIAL IMAGINATION TO SHAPE A CULTURE OF EQUITY, EMPATHY, AND BELONGING.

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## **TO CREATE A JUST AND WELCOMING WORLD, ALL OF US NEED SOCIAL IMAGINATION, THE CAPACITY TO ENVISION AND ENACT CHANGE.**

Yet as a society, we've failed to prioritize the programs and policies that cultivate creativity, empathy, and collaboration. Social institutions seldom allow us to show up as whole, creative humans. Too often, the stories we're asked to accept limit possibility, depicting us only as consumers and workers rather than creators and communicators.

Together, we can rewrite these stories. We affirm the right to culture and pursue cultural democracy that:

- Welcomes each individual as a whole person
- Values each community's heritage, contributions, and aspirations
- Promotes caring, reciprocity, and open communication across all lines of difference
- Dismantles all barriers to love and justice.

When the United Nations issued the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the right to culture was included. From Article 27: "Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community." In some sense, all subsequent cultural policies are elaborations of that statement, as explained in The **USDAC's Statement of Values**.

**CULTURE IS A HUMAN RIGHT.** It is our sacred duty to remove impediments to the exercise of this right and to ensure that the means to exercise this right are available to all. In a cultural democracy, we are obliged to monitor the impact of public and private actions with these duties in mind.

**CULTURE IS CREATED BY EVERYONE.** The art, customs, creative expressions, and social fabric of every community and heritage contribute to the vibrancy and dynamism of our common culture. Our cultural institutions and policies should reflect this, rather than privileging favorites.

**CULTURAL PLURALISM IS A SOCIAL GOOD AND THE WELLSPRING OF FREE EXPRESSION.** Its support and protection require equitable distribution of public resources, particularly to correct past injustices and balance an excess

of commercialization. Cultural equity means full inclusion, participation, and power-sharing in all of our communities and institutions.

## **CULTURE IS THE SUM-TOTAL OF PUBLIC, PRIVATE, INDIVIDUAL, AND COLLECTIVE ACTION.**

We seek balance so that no sector dominates or controls cultural expression or access to cultural resources. We advocate an arts ecology in which all sectors work together to support cultural development for the benefit of all.

## **THE WORK OF ARTISTS IS A POWERFUL RESOURCE**

for community development, education, healthcare, protection of our commonwealth, and other democratic public purposes. Indeed, artists' skills of observation, improvisation, innovation, resourcefulness, and creativity enhance all human activity. We advocate complete integration of arts-based learning in public and private education at all levels. We advocate public service employment for artists and other creative workers as a way to accomplish social good, address unemployment, and strengthen social fabric. We support artists who place their gifts at the service of community, equity, and social change.

We hope the USDAC's work so far has contributed to broader understanding of the public interest in culture. Now the task is to expand engagement in acting on it. To advance this vision, the nation's only people-powered department\*:

- Engages everyone in weaving social fabric and strengthening communities through arts and culture
- Builds capacity and connective tissue among socially-engaged artists and cultural organizers
- Generates momentum and public will for creative policies and programs rooted in **USDAC values**
- Infuses social justice organizing with creativity and social imagination.

Art and culture are powerful means of building empathy, creating a sense of belonging, and activating the social imagination and civic agency necessary to make real change. When we feel seen, when we know that our stories and imaginations matter, we are more likely to bring our full

creative selves to the work of social change. That not only makes our work more effective, we have more fun.

Our **National Actions** invite everyone to perform a future infused with the transformative power of arts and culture. Our **local organizing** helps communities dream aloud and turn their dreams into reality. We connect people across regions in an ever-expanding creative **learning community** by sharing vital information, generating inspiring actions, and devising cultural policies and programs to catalyze a profound culture shift in the service of social and environmental justice. Together, we're creating new narratives of our power and possibility and scaling up strategies for equity and belonging.

The USDAC is not an outside agency coming in; it's our inside agency coming out! Radically inclusive and vibrantly playful, the USDAC offers pathways of engagement for any **individual** or **organization** eager to deepen a commitment to creativity and social change. Culture shift is an all-hands-on-deck effort: whether you're already performing this work or new to creative organizing, join the people-powered department today!

**THIS IS AN ACT OF COLLECTIVE IMAGINATION. ADD YOURS.**

\*The USDAC is not a government agency.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE USDAC**

**AT THE USDAC, WE LIKE TO SAY THAT ALL OF OUR WORK IS ACTION RESEARCH, LEARNING BY DOING,** innovating as necessity and opportunity arise. Throughout the more than three years since the people-powered department's public launch, we've engaged countless community members in arts-based activities that elicit their visions of a future shaped by the transformative power of art and culture. More than 7,000 Citizen Artists have signed up, taking a pledge to support USDAC values.

## **LOCAL ACTIONS**

Between October 2013 and summer 2016, we selected, trained, and supported three cohorts of Cultural Agents (volunteer creativity organizers who host arts-infused community dialogues called Imaginings). More than 5,000 people in 30 cities have taken part in Imaginings:

Baltimore, MD  
Boston, MA  
Brisbane, CA  
Carrboro, NC  
Charlotte, NC  
Chicago, IL  
Cincinnati, OH  
Cleveland, OH  
Corvallis, OR  
Decatur, GA  
Des Moines, IA  
Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Germantown, PA  
Harrisonburg, VA  
Jackson, MS  
Lawrence, KS  
Miami, FL  
Milwaukee, WI  
New Orleans, LA  
New York City, NY  
Philadelphia, PA  
Phoenix, AZ  
San Antonio, TX  
San Francisco Bay Area, CA  
St. Croix River Valley, MN  
St. Louis, MO  
Stockton, CA  
Tucson, AZ  
Washington, DC

In recent months, we've launched a new model of local organizing focusing on Regional Envoys, artist-organizers assigned to a multi-state region and trained to provide inspiration, information, networking, and technical assistance to individuals and groups throughout their regions. When the USDAC takes root in a community, we encourage the opening of an outpost we call a Field Office, to spread and deepen participation.

For example, in Lawrence, Kansas, Cultural Agent Dave Loewenstein started with a June 2014 Imagining at Haskell Indian Nations University in which participants stepped through a time portal to convene in the future, then opened a Field Office whose members have been deeply engaged in questions of cultural development. A **May 2016 entry on the USDAC blog** described some of the Field Office's work to address climate crisis:

On a cool spring evening in March, a flood of people gathered for the opening of a community art exhibit called *Heating Up: Artists Respond to Climate Change*. The Lawrence Percolator, a flourishing community art space located in a downtown alley, hosted the opening on a Final Friday, Lawrence's monthly open-gallery night. The exhibit was the first in a series of related events on climate change that took place during the month-long exhibit. The series included a panel discussion, dance and poetry performance, writing workshop, children's art workshop, teen art exhibit, and community workday to help restore the Haskell Wetlands.

The art exhibit and opening event included the work of over fifty artists, poets, presenters, musicians, and spoken-word performers whose work, showcased together, made a strong statement that climate change is an urgent concern in our community. The exhibit presented climate change through the lens of many makers with diverse viewpoints, bringing nuance to the issue beyond simplistic black-and-white portrayals often seen in mainstream media.

**BELOW:** Cultural Agent Betty Yu of the USDAC NYC Field Office stands amidst some of the Citizen Artists who took part in "City of Justice" at the Brooklyn Museum on 2 January 2016, part of the Field Office's powerful work to fight gentrification and displacement.



## NATIONAL ACTIONS

**LOCAL USDAC ORGANIZING IS SHAPED BY LOCAL CONDITIONS. NATIONAL ACTIONS COME IN STANDARD**

## FORMATS, ALLOWING PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN MANY WAYS EITHER IN-PERSON OR AT A DISTANCE.

Individuals and groups can host face-to-face gatherings that contribute to a National Action, and people anywhere can post texts or images directly to each Action's web portal.

**The People's State of the Union (PSOTU)** is our flagship project, an annual civic ritual and participatory art project that began in 2015.

The frame is this: Once a year, the President delivers the State of the Union address, a speech meant to highlight important national issues from the past year and suggest priorities for the coming year. It's a broadcast from one to many. But what if, once a year, we could all speak and listen to each other? What if We the People reflected in our own communities on the condition of our culture and the state of our union locally, nationally, globally? What if we could supplement the President's stories with our own? The People's State of the Union is an invitation to do just that.

The chief mode of group participation is through Story Circles. For 2015 and 2016, more than 120 were hosted across the country, quite a few in the context of large-scale public events incorporating multiple circles. Each PSOTU is shaped by a set of questions serving as story prompts, inviting each participant to share a story from direct experience that reveals something of the state of our union.

A Story Circle is a small group of individuals sitting in a circle, sharing stories—usually from their own experience or imagination—focusing on a common theme. As each person in turn offers a story, a richer and more complex collective story emerges. By the end, people see both real differences and things their stories have in common. A Story Circle is a journey into its theme, with multiple dimensions, twists, and turns. Story Circles are wonderful at creating instant democracy and equality, since everyone gets an equal turn, and all stories are welcome. This freedom sparks ideas, sharing, and the feeling that participants are all in it together.

Whether they emerged from Story Circles or from individuals posting directly to the People's State of the Union 2015 or 2016 web portal, people shared many hundreds

of PSOTU stories online. Young and old, Native Americans and newcomers, individuals in every region, line of work, and demographic category demonstrated their yearning to collectively assess the state of our union, deepening and strengthening the bonds that support our resilience and social imagination.

With such an impressive level of response to the invitation to take part in PSOTU, we had to ask a question: why haven't all of these people shown up before to weigh in on the great cultural questions of our day? We think the answer is simple: previously, no one asked.

As a people-powered department mobilizing art and creativity, the USDAC employs powerful creative tools to spread our National Actions. For instance, at the conclusion of each PSOTU's week of story circles, a remarkable group of invited poets creates a collaborative *Poetic Address to the Nation*. In the first two years, sonnets by diverse and accomplished poets from across the nation—from Luis Rodriguez in Los Angeles to Joy Harjo in Albuquerque to Philadelphia Poet Laureate Yolanda Wisner—alternated with verses composed by writers based in the community hosting the *Poetic Address* performance.

The entire text of each *Poetic Address* can be downloaded (and performed) anywhere, along with videos featuring footage both from Story Circles and the *Poetic Address*. These elements and the public response they have engendered have added to the composite picture we are building of the future people desire and the policies and initiatives that can help to shape it. Story Circles for the 2017 People's State of the Union will take place from January 27-February 5, 2017. The 2017 *Poetic Address to the Nation* will be performed and livecast at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts on 11 March 2017.

Other National Actions have included the October 2015 **#DareToImagine**, in which "Emissaries from the Future" created pop-up Imagination Stations in public spaces nationwide. Supported by USDAC toolkits, technical assistance, and online trainings, more than 120 Emissaries set up shop, representing an array of causes and engaging thousands of passersby in exercising social imagination, envisioning the world we wish to inhabit and—looking back from the future—celebrating the work we did to bring it into being. The resulting texts and images were all loaded to an online platform. A year later, we were delighted to see the

Scottish International Storytelling Forum hosting a national action, **#DareToDream**, inspired by our work!

In fall 2016 and continuing through the election season, we launched **USDAC Super PAC** (Participatory Arts Coalition). Facing the incredible hate and polarization of this election cycle, we decided to put out an RFP calling for creative, replicable public interventions that can move us from debate to dialogue, disrupting narratives of hate and uplifting love, equity, and connection. From nearly 100 applications we chose 9 projects to support with a \$300 microgrant and technical assistance. We then created a Toolkit and short videos about each project so that anyone can step up as an ExtraSuperDelegate and replicate one of the prototype projects or create their own.

## LEARNING & RESEARCH

**LEARNING AND RESEARCH KNIT TOGETHER THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY OF CITIZEN ARTISTS**, building knowledge and community. Key initiatives include:

**CITIZEN ARTIST SALONS:** Beginning with our March, 2016, Citizen Artist Salon on "Creative Placemaking, Placekeeping, and Cultural Strategies to Resist Displacement," the USDAC has sponsored online workshops open to anyone interested in topics such as artists' jobs for the public good and artists working to counter racism and violence. Each Salon features three speakers presenting briefly on important work that resonates with the topic, followed by Q&A and discussion.

**USDAC LAB** is an initiative in development. We created it as a home for partnerships with funders, public and private cultural agencies, and other institutions with the impetus and wherewithal to implement pilot experiments embodying USDAC values and aims. Our first Lab project is a collaboration with three organizations—The San Francisco Mime Troupe, Youth Radio, and the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program—to design, implement, document, and analyze the impact of projects created to demonstrate how artists can help to create a culture of health.

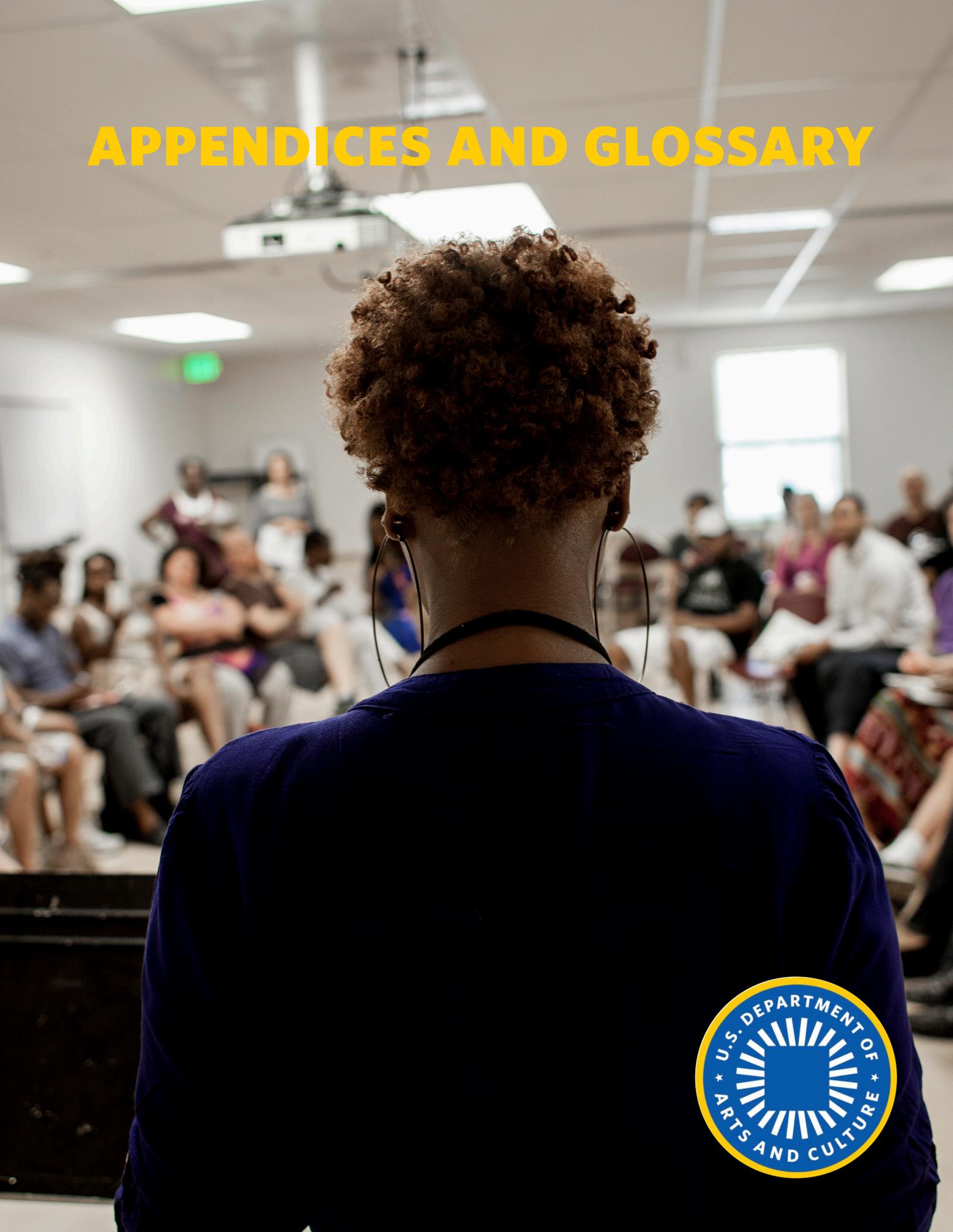
**CULTURE/SHIFT 2016** is the USDAC's first national convening, produced in partnership with St. Louis's Regional Arts Commission. Multiple aims converge in this exciting event: members of the National Cabinet met face-to-face for the first time, and taking advantage of their presence, joined others in offering a wealth of talks, workshops, and interactive experiences. Locally themed sessions created by

activist-artists from the regional grounded the program in place and time. The final day of *CULTURE/SHIFT* saw the launch of this policy and action platform.

Our blog, newsletter, social media, videos, and presentations at conferences, universities, and in community settings help to spread the learning derived from this people-powered action research project, now in its fourth year. **PLEASE ENLIST AS A CITIZEN ARTIST TO RECEIVE UPDATES AND TAKE PART.**



# APPENDICES AND GLOSSARY





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# APPENDIX A: A CALL TO HACK DEMOCRACY WITH CREATIVITY

With politics awash in big money and a media machine that largely ignores the grassroots organizers who raise the critical issues that drive democracy, it's easy to feel like our voices don't count. (And too many literally don't; across the country there are millions who pay taxes but aren't permitted to vote and millions more who are discouraged from exercising that right.) Meanwhile, our recent Presidential debates were opportunities for candidates to spout soundbites and hurl insults. Millions tuned in, watching and squirming, tweeting and fuming. But aren't there better ways to engage with each other, moving from debate to dialogue?

After a volatile election cycle in which the flaws of our electoral system were revealed with remarkable clarity, we have questions:

- What kinds of participatory projects can activate people, reminding us what democracy actually looks like—both within and beyond electoral politics?
- With the airwaves full of polarizing rhetoric, what creative public interventions can disrupt narratives of hate, uplifting love, connection, and equity? With huge sums of money deployed to encourage—and discourage—voters, what can creative people power do to make democracy real for everyone?

Citizen Artists and creative organizers across the country have the answers. They know how to use what's most generative and democratic in our many cultures to enliven serious topics and engage people in sharing what matters most and how to act on it. Therefore...

**THE USDAC INVITES YOU TO HACK DEMOCRACY WITH CREATIVITY**, bringing the powerful methods developed through design labs, hackathons, and other techniques of collective creativity to this challenge.

- What if the campaign period were limited to a few months (rather than stretching on for expensive years) and groups of theater-makers were deployed to collect stories and devise generative performances to kick off real dialogues (instead of canned debates) in church halls and high school gyms across the nation?
- What if there were a participatory competition to create digital stories on themes and issues people care about deeply, and the stories chosen were screened with candidates responding in real time on national TV?
- What would an arts-based redesign of our electoral system look like? How could it reduce the influence of entrenched money and vastly expand the level and diversity of participation?

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We invite all Citizen Artists and allied organizations to adapt this Call to their own contexts, share it, remain in dialogue with those who take it up, and use their own websites, programs, and publications to share as many of the resulting ideas as possible, fomenting a national dialogue on enlivening and strengthening the culture of politics. We can't promise your ideas will be implemented, but they are guaranteed to start a conversation that badly needs to happen. Here's how to take part:

**ANYTIME IN 2017, PLAN YOUR OWN EVENT(S) TO HACK DEMOCRACY WITH CREATIVITY.**

A design lab, hackathon, Imagining, or other event can challenge Citizen Artists to rethink and re-imagine, focusing energy on designing creative alternatives to any aspect of a broken system: campaigning, voting, the Electoral College, and more.

**DOCUMENT THE IDEAS EMERGING FROM YOUR EVENT(S) VIA PHOTO, VIDEO, AND/OR TEXT.**

Share as widely as you wish on social media and in your own communication outlets, but be sure to tag each post with #CreativeDemocracy so that people can find them.

**SHARE YOUR DOCUMENTATION (EITHER ATTACHMENTS OR LINKS) TO US AT HELLO@**

**USDAC.US.** Be sure to include your organization name (if any) and a contact email. If great ideas come through, we'll share.

**Feel free to adapt this call and send it out under your own organizational banner. Let a thousand hacks bloom!**



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# APPENDIX B: MODEL POLICY ON BELONGING

This model policy on belonging can be adopted by public institutions such as municipal or state governments and private organizations such as community centers. Adopting such a policy is the foundation for any action taken to extend and deepen belonging.

**Whereas** the right to culture—to honor those who came before, to express ourselves, to take part in community life as creators of culture, and for our heritages and identities to be treated with dignity, respect, courtesy and kindness—is a core human right; and

**Whereas** we cherish and assert equal opportunity to contribute to and benefit from cultural life for all community members, whether our families are indigenous to this land, have lived here for many decades or just arrived, whether we live in cities or the countryside, and regardless of color, creed, orientation, or physical ability; and

**Whereas** the right to culture has often been transgressed, including (but not limited to) the history of tribal and other community displacement; bans on heritage languages and customs in public schools; hate speech including calls for exclusion from civil and legal society of immigrants, racial or religious categories; the harassment and imprisonment of community members who are targeted for conduct such as gathering on street-corners, dressing contrary to dominant social norms, traversing public thoroughfares, and dancing in public gathering-places; we recognize the need for remedial action to assert and offer belonging to every resident, regardless of race, religion, ethnic heritage, gender, orientation, ability, or other condition or category; and

**Whereas**, equity, justice, fairness, and welcoming are the hallmarks of all authentic support, protection, and promotion of the right to culture; and

**Whereas**, when we sanction or permit unwelcoming speech and conduct, and when we sanction policies that consign some community members to a status of less than full cultural citizenship and belonging, the entire community suffers the consequences of discrimination, the erosion of social fabric, and the resulting tension and conflict between groups;

**Therefore be it resolved** that (the City of, County of, etc., or organization name) \_\_\_\_\_ hereby adopts a policy requiring all public statements and actions to assert, protect, and embody the primacy of belonging to the health of local culture and community, and mandating that all public actions and statements reflect the letter and spirit of this resolution, guaranteeing full belonging to each and every community and resident within our borders, including each of the sections and procedures described below.

**Section 1a.** “The Right to Culture” is asserted, embodied, and protected in statements and actions that mandate welcoming, equality, and inclusion to every resident, including but not limited to respecting

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sites of public memory such as elements of buildings, streets, natural lands, and parks that commemorate events of significance to local communities; valuing and preserving long-lived patterns of association and communication such as open markets, plazas, and other gathering-places of significance to local communities; valuing and preserving embodiments of cultural heritage such as murals, concert venues, festival sites, other aesthetic assets, and sacred sites that support community members' practice of their beliefs, and that support residents in pursuing valued patterns of cultural participation; and valuing and protecting other cultural expressions such as language, music, dance and other performing arts, visual art, customs, and commemorations such as holidays.

**Section 1b.** "Belonging" describes a condition in which each resident and community perceives that the right to culture is valued, preserved, and protected, and that the expressions, customs, traditions, and contributions of all communities are given equal value in relevant policy and practice.

**Section 1c.** "Cultural Citizenship" describes the condition of full and equal belonging for all residents, regardless of legal status, demographic characteristics, or specific heritage.

**Section 1d.** "Policymaking Entity" describes a body authorized to make policy and act for the entity adopting this policy, whether an elected or appointed public governing body or an elected or appointed governing board of a not-for-profit or for-profit organization.

**Section 2a.** A review shall be required for any proposed action undertaken by (the City of, County of, etc., or organization name) \_\_\_\_\_ which may adversely affect local practice of the right to culture, belonging, and/or full cultural citizenship, mandating further investigation.

**Section 2b.** The review may be initiated by any member of the Policymaking Entity adopting this policy; or may be requested in writing in a document signed by no fewer than ten (10) residents of the community the Policymaking Entity serves. In either case, the initiator(s) must specify the actions being undertaken that pose a threat to local practice of the right to culture, belonging, and/or full cultural citizenship; a description of the potential negative impact(s); and a range of acceptable alternatives to the proposed action in order of likely negative impact on belonging. In either event, the Policymaking Entity must respond to the request within thirty (30) days of its being initiated, either authorizing the review or providing specific reasons why it is not necessary.

**Section 3a.** In authorizing such a review, (the City of, County of, etc., or organization name) invite members of the public to comment, allowing adequate time for public review of the written request described in Section 2. In no case shall this be fewer than thirty (30) days from the date on which the review was authorized.

**Section 3b.** (the City of, County of, etc. or organization) \_\_\_\_\_ will complete each review in a timely fashion, rendering a response no later than thirty (30) days following the conclusion of public comment on the review. If thirty (30) days is deemed insufficient with respect to a particular review, a later deadline may be set, providing it is no more than ninety (90) days. Each response will either: reject the proposed action for negative impact on the right to culture, belonging, and/or full cultural citizenship; recommend one or more of the alternatives set out in the request for review or a superior alternative emerging from the review process, indicating approval if the recommended alternative is substituted for the original proposed action; describe mitigating action necessary for resubmission of the proposed action for approval; or approve the action as proposed.

Passed and adopted by (the City of, County of, etc., or organization name) \_\_\_\_\_ at a duly noticed and adjourned meeting held on (day, month, year) \_\_\_\_\_ at (location) \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Authorizing signature/name/date)



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## APPENDIX C: CULTURAL IMPACT

### *Why your community should require a Cultural Impact Study as a precondition for approval of projects that affect community cultural life, and how to do it.*

How would your community be different if new construction and development projects, rezoning decisions, and “Creative Placemaking” interventions had to pass a Cultural Impact Study (CIS)—analogous to an Environmental Impact Study—before approval?

Since the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, federal projects require an environmental assessment, and if that shows possible negative environmental impact, an Environmental Impact Study must be prepared and considered before approval, modification, or rejection of the proposed project. This is one of the most powerful and influential tools of environmental policy, because it forces us to consider the impact of our actions on the environment before we take steps that might do damage.

Right now, for example, if a local authority is asked to approve the destruction of homes, parks, and businesses in a long-lived neighborhood so that a sports stadium or freeway can be built there, NEPA mandates research into environmental harm such as possible destruction of endangered species habitat or potential pollution. If negative impact is found, the project can be disallowed or steps can be required to mitigate the impact before anything can be approved.

But what about the impact on cultural fabric? What about the sense of belonging, the sites of public memory, the gathering-places, the expressions and embodiments of heritage cultures that would also be destroyed? What about the rights of existing residents to remain in their neighborhoods if they wish, partaking of improvements built on years of participation and cultural investment in their own streets, parks, and homes? Every community should be authorized to assess, study, and act on these too. Whether the potential impact is gentrification and displacement or outright destruction of existing cultural fabric, the purpose of a CIS is to help public officials make informed decisions that reflect a deep understanding of negative cultural consequences and the positive alternatives available.

The movement to institute a Cultural Impact Study isn't beginning with federal legislation: there just isn't the demand or representation right now to make that possible. Instead, forward-thinking communities across the United States can act to adopt their own requirements.

Below is model text for a resolution by a board of trustees or directors, a city council, county board of supervisors, state legislature or other authority adopting a CIS as official policy.

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## ***USDAC Model Resolution Adopting a Cultural Impact Study***

Whereas our cultural landscape is a rich and varied tapestry of heritage and new creation; and

Whereas the right to culture—to honor those who came before, express ourselves and take part in community life—is a core human right; and

Whereas we cherish equal opportunity to contribute to and benefit from cultural life for all community members, whether our families are indigenous to this land, have lived here for many decades or just arrived, whether we live in cities or the countryside, and regardless of color, creed, orientation or physical ability; and

Whereas equity, fairness and inclusion are the hallmarks of our support, protection and promotion of culture; and

Whereas we recognize that every community’s cultural fabric is made of shared places, customs, values and creative acts and strengthening that fabric makes it more likely that children will stay in school, businesses will thrive, neighbors will celebrate and learn from each other; and

Whereas, when we forget to value cultural fabric in these ways, communities pay a price in loss of culture and conviviality, in alienation and displacement;

Therefore be it resolved that (the City of, County of, etc., or organization name) \_\_\_\_\_ hereby adopts a policy requiring a Cultural Impact Study (CIS) for every project with potential negative cultural impact, including each of the sections and procedures described below.

Section 1. “Negative cultural impact” describes those actions that damage or destroy sites of public memory such as elements of buildings, streets, natural lands, and parks that commemorate events of significance to local communities, that disrupt long-lived patterns of association and communication such as open markets, plazas, and other gathering-places of significance to local communities, that damage or destroy embodiments of cultural heritage such as murals, concert venues, or festival sites, that disrupt existing community members’ practice of their beliefs, that destroy or damage aesthetic assets of the existing community, or that displace populations that have contributed to the community’s cultural richness and development, making it difficult or impossible for existing local residents in pursuing longstanding and valued patterns of cultural preservation and participation.

Section 2. “Cultural Impact Study” describes an authoritative report on the potential negative cultural impacts of a proposed action involving the removal, construction, rezoning, or other significant alteration of buildings, streets, roadways, public parks, natural lands, and/or other gathering-places or thoroughfares.

Section 3. A Cultural Impact Study shall be required for any proposed action that (the City of, County of, etc., or organization name) \_\_\_\_\_ finds may entail negative cultural impact, mandating further investigation.

Section 3a. Any costs associated with preparing and submitting a Cultural Impact Study will be borne by the originator (or authorized representative) of the proposed action.

Section 4. In requiring a Cultural Impact Study, (the City of, County of, etc., or organization name) will set a deadline at least sixty (60) days in advance for submission of the CIS, will provide the originator (or authorized representative) of the proposed action with notice of that deadline and the required contents of the CIS, and will post public notice of these actions to invite public comment on the day and time set forth for consideration of the CIS. If sixty days is deemed insufficient in any case, a later deadline may be set, providing it is no more than 180 days.

Section 5. Each Cultural Impact Study shall include the sections enumerated below.

Section 5a. An Introduction including a statement of the purpose and need of the proposed action.

Section 5b. A description of the affected cultural environment, including demographic information; a cultural history of the affected community(ies) noting past and present contributions to cultural fabric; and a list of the natural land(s) and water(s), building(s), park(s), monument(s), thoroughfare(s) and other features of the affected cultural environment. This section may cite Census data, ethnographic interviews and oral histories, ethnographic, historical, anthropological, sociological, and other culturally related documentary research, primary source materials such as vital statistics records, family histories and genealogies, community studies, maps and photographs, and other archival documents, including correspondence, newspaper or almanac articles, and visitor journals, as well as video and audio recordings and any other material relevant to a comprehensive description.

Section 5c. A range of alternatives to the proposed action in order of likely negative cultural impact.

Section 5d. An analysis of the negative cultural impacts of the proposed action and each of the possible alternatives, including but not limited to the elements enumerated in Section 1 above.

Section 5e. A cost analysis for each alternative, including costs to mitigate expected impacts, used to determine if the proposed action is an allowable use of (the City of, County of, etc. or organization) \_\_\_\_\_resources.

Section 6. (the City of, County of, etc. or organization) \_\_\_\_\_will review each Cultural Impact Study in a timely fashion, rendering a response no later than sixty (60) days following the conclusion of public comment on the day set forth for consideration of the CIS. If sixty days is deemed insufficient with respect to a particular CIS, a later deadline may be set, providing it is no more than 180 days. Each response will either: reject the proposed action for negative cultural impact; recommend one or more of the alternatives set out in the CIS, indicating approval if the recommended alternative is substituted for the original proposed action; describe mitigating action necessary for resubmission of the proposed action for approval; or approve the action as proposed.

Passed and adopted by (the City of, County of, etc., or organization name) \_\_\_\_\_at a duly noticed and adjourned meeting held on (day, month, year) \_\_\_\_\_at (location) \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Authorizing signature/name/date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Attest: (City clerk or equivalent authorizing signature/name/date)



# GLOSSARY

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**ACTION RESEARCH** describes an approach of learning by doing. In action research, studying conditions leads to collaborating with others to change them. Based on the results of action research, the USDAC's focus and approach are refined.

**CITIZEN ARTIST** describes anyone who enlists in the USDAC, endorsing the Statement of Values. Citizen Artists work in many arenas, media, and locations. It isn't necessary to be a professional artist nor to be a U.S. citizen to be a Citizen Artist.

**COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT** describes a range of initiatives undertaken by artist-organizers in collaboration with other community members to express identity, concerns and aspirations through the arts and communications media, building cultural capacity and contributing to social change. Sometimes abbreviated CCD.

**CULTURAL AGENT** describes a volunteer creative organizer selected from a nationwide open call to enact the USDAC at a local level by hosting Imaginings. Each of the three cohorts of Cultural Agents worked together to help spark a larger national conversation and movement cultivating the empathy and imagination we need to create a future we wish to inhabit.

**CULTURAL CITIZENSHIP** describes a condition in which every person feels at home in his or her own community, in which all contributions to history and culture are acknowledged and reflected in the cultural landscape, in which full inclusion is a lived reality granted to all regardless of identity, legal status, or other characteristics.

**CULTURAL DEMOCRACY** describes a philosophy or policy emphasizing pluralism, participation, and equity within and between cultures. Although it has roots in anti-Ku Klux Klan writings of the 1920s, it did not come into common usage until introduced as a policy rubric in Europe in the 1960s.

**CULTURAL EQUITY** describes the goal of a movement originated by artists and organizers from communities of color and their allies, dedicated to ensuring a fair share of resources for institutions focusing on non-European

cultures. The goal of cultural equity organizing is to redress and correct historic imbalances in favor of European-derived culture.

**CULTURAL POLICY** describes the aggregate of values and principles guiding any social entity in cultural affairs. Cultural policies are most often made by governments, from school boards to legislatures, but also by many other institutions in the private sector, from corporations to community organizations. Policies provide guideposts for those making decisions and taking actions that affect cultural life.

**CULTURAL RIGHTS:** The right to practice one's culture is a fundamental human right enshrined in the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Cultural rights enable freedoms such as expression, association, speech, and worship.

**CULTURE** in its broadest, anthropological sense includes all that is fabricated, endowed, designed, articulated, conceived or directed by human beings, as opposed to what is given in nature. Culture includes both material elements (buildings, artifacts, etc.) and immaterial ones (ideology, value systems, languages).

**CULTURE SHIFT** describes a paradigm shift, as for example from a consumer culture to a creator culture, from a policy based on privilege to a cultural democracy.

**DEVELOPMENT** (with its many subsets such as "economic development," "community development" and "cultural development") describes a process of analyzing the resources and needs of a particular community or social sector, then planning and implementing a program of interlocking initiatives to rectify deficiencies and build on strengths. The community cultural development field stresses participatory, self-directed development strategies, where members of a community define their own aims and determine their own paths to reach them, rather than imposed development, which tends to view communities as problems to be solved by bringing circumstances in line with predetermined norms.

**FIELD OFFICES** are local nodes of the USDAC, established by Cultural Agents and their teammates for continued organizing after Imaginings. Field Offices coordinate and multiply the impact of our collective efforts by promoting, disseminating, and enacting USDAC values in a way that is locally rooted and relevant.

**IMAGININGS** are vibrant, arts-infused gatherings bringing together a diverse cross-section of neighbors to 1) envision their towns and cities in 20 years, when the full transformative power of art and culture has been integrated into the fabric of society; and 2) to identify ways to get there, harnessing latent artistic talent and local cultural resources.

**REGIONAL ENVOYS** help to shepherd and activate the USDAC's regional networking and collaboration strategies and actions across multiple states. At this writing, four have been selected, and the cohort will gradually increase to twelve.

**SOCIAL FABRIC** (also cultural fabric) describes the aggregate of embedded history, customs, modes of gathering and communication, relationships, and institutions that sustain and enliven community life.

**SOCIAL IMAGINATION** describes the capacity to envisage alternatives to existing social arrangements, institutions,

and policies. Social imagination asserts each person's right to a voice in society, helping to shape the future.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE** describes a condition in which equity, inclusion, fairness, and integrity shape social reality. When social justice prevails, entrenched privilege is replaced by full, participatory democracy, and full human rights are guaranteed to all.

**STORY CIRCLE** describes a small group of individuals sitting in a circle, sharing stories—usually from their own experience or imagination—focusing on a common theme. As each person in turn shares a story, a richer and more complex story emerges. By the end, people see both real differences and things their stories have in common. A story circle is a journey into its theme, with multiple dimensions, twists, and turns.

Story circles are often understood as deriving from indigenous traditions. There are many variations. Theater makers such as Roadside Theater and John O'Neal have been central in developing the practice for use in creating original performance and community telling and listening projects.

**TEACHING ARTIST** is a term for artists working in schools and other learning settings. They are not art teachers per se, but working artists who bring their skills and perspectives into classrooms, after-school programs, social service agencies and sometimes other institutions such as hospitals and prisons. Some teaching artists think of themselves as community artists, applying community cultural development values and methods to their work, but this is not universal.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The USDAC gratefully acknowledges the invaluable contributions of Cultural Agents, National Cabinet members, Citizen Artists, the Office of Instigation, and the Action Squad in giving so abundantly of time, energy, commitment, and creativity to this people-powered department. This report is dedicated to you!

The USDAC is grateful to The Compton Foundation, the Hemera Foundation, and many individual donors for supporting our work.

The USDAC is grateful to the many photographers across the nation who uploaded their images of Imaginings and other USDAC actions, and whose photos appear throughout this report.

