

GUILD NOTES



NATIONAL GUILD
FOR COMMUNITY
ARTS EDUCATION



ARTS & ANTI-RACISM

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The Guild strives to ensure all people have opportunities to maximize their creative potential. We accomplish this by developing leaders, strengthening organizations, and advocating for community arts education.

The Guild's national network encompasses community arts education providers, professionals, volunteers, and philanthropic supporters. In concert with this network, the Guild researches and promotes best practices, provides opportunities for professional development and dialogue, and advocates for broad access.

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NEW MEMBERS

The Guild is pleased to welcome these new full members:

Articulture
Minneapolis, MN

Budding Artists
Lynwood, CA

Campanile Center for the Arts
Minocqua, WI

Crayon Collection
Los Angeles, CA

Eastern Illinois University - Music Department
Charleston, IL

Handful Players
San Francisco, CA

Oregon Society of Artists
Portland, OR

Silver Kite Community Arts
Seattle, WA

Statement Arts
New York, NY

Studio in a School
New York, NY

Traveling Players Ensemble
Great Falls, VA

Wyatt's Hours
New York, NY

Yakima Music en Acción (YAMA)
Yakima, WA

Zionsville Center for Art, History and Genealogy
Zionsville, IN

GUILD UPDATE: COVID-19 RESPONSE

While this issue of GuildNotes was produced just prior to the current health crisis, the importance of addressing racism in our work, institutions, and communities is more critical than ever. Recent reports indicate that the impact of Covid-19 reflects ongoing structural inequalities which affect Black, Latinx, and Indigenous populations in severe and tragic ways.

The Guild [recently shared a letter to our community](#) regarding the Covid-19 outbreak. We want to underscore what we said then: *During this unprecedented and uncertain time, we're here to help.* We are seeing the very real and complex impact that the coronavirus outbreak is having on our communities, as well as the risks that many of our organizations are now facing. Because of this, the Guild is urgently ramping up our efforts to support arts education providers in their response to the health crisis. We are inspired by the immediate ways we've seen our community help one another, and we're striving to amplify those efforts and create ways for our field to connect.

Part of our commitment is to provide virtual opportunities for us to connect and learn together that are free and open to the public. We also are offering a “pay what you can” membership option, understanding that many organizations are facing significant financial challenges. For updates and more information, visit our [Covid-19 Response page](#).

Ongoing video chat series

- **Human-Centered Approaches in Times of Crisis**—Please join us for a virtual series on what it looks like to center people and community well-being in our responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Check out [our graphic](#) on what a human-centered response looks like. [Learn more and register here.](#)
- **Transitioning Arts Programming for Shelter in Place Audiences**—This series shares how community arts organizations are redesigning community programming in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. [Learn more and register here.](#)
- **Community Conversations: How are you and how is your organization and community doing?**—Community conversations are designed to be virtual “water cooler” chitchats, an open-ended dialogue for constructive sharing and co-learning. [Learn more and register here.](#)

General online forums

- Facebook: [Community Arts Ed COVID-19 Collective Problem Solving](#)
- Slack: [Arts Ed Forum on COVID-19](#)

Specific online forums

- Facebook group for those navigating programs for aging populations: [Creative Aging Network-National Guild for Community Arts Education](#)
- Slack for those navigating partnerships with K-12 schools: [Arts & Ed Partnerships + COVID-19 Response](#)

“Pay What You Can” Membership Option

We understand that many organizations are losing significant revenue as a result of the coronavirus, and we don't want any to lose access to Guild membership as a result. Because of this, **we are making a “pay what you can” option available for ALL organizations until further notice.** This is something we started at the beginning of 2020 for organizations with budgets under \$300,000, but we're extending it to all members now (including new members)—regardless of which annual budget category your organization falls into.

Especially in this time, we hope that you're able to renew your membership or join the Guild for the first time, so that everyone at your organization can access member benefits and stay connected with our community of members across the country. Please don't hesitate to reach out to our membership team at membership@nationalguild.org if you have any questions.

We appreciate your courage in navigating very difficult decisions in this uncertain time and thank you for being part of this community working to ensure that all people have opportunities to maximize their creative potential.

GUILD NEWS

Registration Open for Free CYD Toolkit Series

The CYD Toolkit Series is a FREE virtual learning series featuring dynamic online conversations with youth, experts, funders, and practitioners to explore new paths forward for supporting youth through creative youth development practice. Topics for the series include: Advocacy and Policy (April 8; recording forthcoming); Preparing Artists and Educators (April 28); Funding, Sustainability, and Partnerships (May 29); and Program Evaluation (June 23). These topics are vital as—now more than ever—we work collectively to support the well-being of young people in our communities. [Learn more and register here.](#)

Three Local CYD Networks Selected for Support

Through a national proposal process, the National Creative Youth Development Partnership has selected three local CYD networks in Austin, TX; Becker County, MN; and Detroit, MI to receive support via professional development and technical assistance from February through December 2020. [Read more.](#)

Guild's Program Team Grows

The Guild is delighted to welcome Ashley Hare as our new Director of Leadership Development, and announce new roles for Ivy Young, now Director of Conferences and Learning, and Lissette Martinez, now Network and Learning Coordinator. [Read more.](#)

Guild Developing Plan to Become Anti-Racist Organization

In Spring 2019, the Guild applied and was awarded funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to conduct a racial equity-based strategic planning process focused on internal structures, practices, and policies. [Read more.](#)

Members Elect New Leaders to Guild Board of Trustees

At the National Guild's Annual Meeting—held at the Conference for Community Arts Education on November 1st—members elected four new field leaders to the Guild board of trustees. The Guild is proud to welcome these individuals to our board. [Read more.](#)

HUMAN CENTERED PEOPLE-FIRST SOCIETY

"Those most impacted know best"

"Our liberation is tied to their liberation"

PROPERTY & CAPITAL CENTERED SUPREMACIST SOCIETY

Moving from a space of being superior to all others in authority, power, or status.

"Those with authority know best"

POWER

Collective and held by everyone

POWER

Hierarchical, held by few, shared with selection

INFORMATION SHARING

Transparent, easily understood with room for dialogue

INFORMATION SHARING

secretive, controlled, coded and selective

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Oral stories, shared narratives, co-created

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Data (Quantity and Numbers), "expert" driven, and didactic

COMMUNITY

Intentional, reoccurring check ins and co-creations with staff, contractors, community partners, and external community members

COMMUNITY

Work siloed into departments, committees, areas, teams, transactional external partners

SPEED OF TRUST

Prioritizing the process of reconciliation, and building relationships without an ask

SPEED OF TRUST

Prioritizing transactional relationships in developing a program, and building audiences

A photograph of Favianna Rodriguez, a woman with dark curly hair and glasses, wearing a colorful patterned jacket. She is smiling and standing behind a podium with a microphone. The background is a blurred stage setting with colorful vertical panels.

CULTURE IS POWER: RE-CLAIMING THE RADICAL IMAGINATION

Favianna Rodriguez is an interdisciplinary artist, cultural strategist, and activist. Her work and collaborative initiatives address gender equality, racial justice, immigrant rights and climate change. Favianna works with cultural movements around the United States bringing together the powerful intersection of art, entertainment, social justice and cultural equity.

The following is an excerpt from Favianna's keynote address at the Guild's 2019 Conference for Community Arts Education.

Culture is Power!

Art is something that we not only need for our own healing and transformation – it is also tool for our liberation. It is what we are going to need in order to save our species and to introduce a new world view not based in domination but in partnership.

I was 16 years old living in Oakland, California when the first anti-immigrant piece of legislation got introduced in my state [Proposition 187], after the 1990 census made it clear that Latinx people were going to be a majority in the state. I learned as a young person organizing against this bill that the people who shape the cultural narrative have the power. I also learned that politics is about storytelling – as human beings, we retain emotional information more than we retain rational knowledge. I learned that culture is power!

Culture is also our behavior and our worldview: what is deemed acceptable and what is not. And those can change very quickly. For example, when I was growing up, we didn't have the practice of gender pronouns. We didn't even have it ten years ago! But now we do. Cultural practices can take hold quickly. And like the ocean when you throw a pebble in the water, it makes ripples. That is the power of culture to create change.

Culture Moves Faster Than Politics

We often think of social change as only happening in the political space, but the political space is actually the last to change. Throughout history, politics is the last to get in line – and of course it is! Our congress is over 80% white. For our elected officials to understand what is truly impacting most people, it just takes longer. Politics is just a manifestation of an idea whose time has come. It is through culture that we first create those ideas.

I'll give you an example. In 2012 the Sandy Hook shooting, many, many children lost their lives, and their parents were speaking out about it. Many massacres would follow. But 2012 was a critical year because it is the year when many Americans shifted their thinking on gun reform, because those parents were telling their stories and talking about the shock of how devastating this was. But was there change in the political sector? No. was there change in the economic sector? No. Dick's Sporting Goods, and Walmart, and Smith & Wesson could have done something then, and they didn't.

Fast forward to 2018, to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, where young people trained in drama and journalism took control of their narrative and their story and were able to impact influencers, many of whom were artists. Their message spread. And within two weeks, Dick's Sporting Goods changed their policy. Walmart not only changed their policy, but also pointed at the government and said they need to make a shift on guns. And the March for Our Lives created a whole slate of candidates who were able to shame other candidates getting money from the NRA. Culture was moving faster and creating pressure because there is nothing like storytelling when people express their lived experiences. This is what art allows us to do.

Another example: Matthew Shepard was killed in 1998 in Laramie, Wyoming. The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act passed 11 years after his death. Ellen Degeneres came out one year after Defense Of Marriage Act [which denied marriage rights to same-sex couples]. By the time that gay marriage was at the Supreme Court in 2015, there had already been over 10 years of queer storytelling on TV. By the time [gay marriage was legal], the idea that queer people exist, and are everywhere, was already normalized. The law is simply getting it done. But culture is moving 10 to 15 years faster, and we have to be able to leverage that. How do we go all in and ensure that we are working on a multi-issue strategy to work on all these stories?

The Cultural Galaxy

You've heard "we have to change the narrative." And I'm going to give you a useful frame to think about this because I think people confuse narrative and culture. Culture is the galaxy. Stories are stars. Narratives are the constellations.

When you have an image, these are stars: Lebron James wearing an "I Can't Breathe" shirt; you have a young woman at Columbia University bringing her mattress to graduation to protest the fact that her sexual assault was not investigated; you have Trayvon's mom; you have the story of Oscar Grant at Fruitvale station. When these stars begin to form and align, you have a constellation and that constellation is a narrative. A constellation allows us to see what we didn't see before. We knew about Cosby and we knew about R Kelly before. But circumstances changed, and we saw an illumination of stories that says: "That's not okay anymore; we have to shift and believe survivors." The power of stories and art is that we can create constellations out of what was previously obscured and we could not see.

The Space of "Yes"

In social justice spaces, a lot of my value was around the poster I could make, or how I could get my musician friend to sing a song at a protest or perform for five minutes until the 'real work' got done. In these social justice spaces, so much of how we work is in urgency: Now. We have to get it done. We have to go against. It's about the 'No'. We are in a reactive stance because we are reacting to dominant narratives and very harsh systems.

However, art and culture offer us the space of the 'Yes'. It offers us a space for the future. And this is why *Black Panther* was so powerful. Wakanda was neither free nor post-colonial. It was untouched by the white imagination. That's what we need. We need fantasy and futurism to show us: What does a world in which prisons don't exist look like?

We know we don't want sexual assault, but what do we want? What is the 'yes'? Where is our culture around consent? Sexual health, sexual agency?

When we think about art activism, we think about how we are reflecting the full human experience, that is what being human is. It's not just about suffering. It's about joy, freedom, liberation. We in the art space are creating an environment where we aren't just being reactive. We are also being visionary – creating the content, the pictures, the stories, the dances, that say 'yes.'

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Forming the Next Generation

My generation was mentored by a lot of people from the Black Arts Movement. A lot of my mentors were trying to get some basic health insurance, they were trying to fight to keep their house, they weren't getting grants to do art. We didn't inherit the wealth from the previous generation. We don't have a Nina Simone School of Music. We don't have the Joan Baez Music Academy. My generation has to create the institutions that will help the next generation fight for cultural power. You can't have cultural power without wealth, pedagogy, knowledge.

It doesn't matter if I work in food justice, or gender equity, or immigrant rights because all those things are interconnected. As Audre Lorde said, "We don't live single issue lives." We are impacted by everything from the air that we breathe, to what kind of access to quality water we have, to our ability to live free from police violence. And what art offers us is a different way of seeing the world and a different way of relating to each other and nature. Art is powerful because it allows us to have complexity in how we are reflected. It allows us to be seen as human beings, to understand our human experience, and to empathize.

CONFERENCE REFLECTION:

Sending A Message to the Arts Community: It's Time for Change

Joyce Drayton is the Founder & Executive Director of the [Georgia E. Gregory Interdenominational School of Music \(GEGISOM\)](#), Philadelphia, PA. She was a 2019 Milestone Awardee, presented at the Conference for Community Arts Education in Austin, TX.

Attending the Conference for Community Arts Education this year was a special moment in my life because I was also a recipient of the Guild's Milestone Award. This Award honored my 20+ years of service to providing arts learning to at-risk youth and marginalized communities in Philadelphia, PA.

The Guild continues to provide a plethora of resources and support for continued program and professional development. I have attended the Conference since 2015 and commend the Guild for bringing together arts leaders to have conversations that stimulate critical thinking and, in turn, enhance diversity, equity and inclusion.

The fact that the Guild presents workshops featuring speakers who are social justice activists and advocates in the arts community sends a message that it is time for change. The Guild wants our voices to be heard and more opportunities for those who struggle to be realized and to exist.

One of the aspects of the conference that particularly resonated with me this year was a half-day workshop on "Setting the Tone and Driving Change: The Board's Role in Advancing Racial Equity." The workshop was led by InSite Consultants, who have developed strategies for dismantling values, beliefs and behaviors that are systemically oppressive. This workshop stimulated conversations and interactions that caused us as participants (largely executive directors and trustees) to dig deep within our instilled beliefs of superiority or entitlement and reflect on how those beliefs affect the boards we serve on and the community we serve.

As an Afro-American founder of an organization, I did not see a real role for attending this workshop at first. But I registered because I was curious how other boards functioned that were privy to many of the benefits, rewards, and recognition that small grassroots organizations often miss out on. I am glad I attended. The workshop shared inspiration and strategies on how I can move thinking, with various stakeholders, to a level where there is respect and appreciation for diversity, opportunities, and inclusion for all people, making sure that

Joyce Drayton at the 2019 Conference for Community Arts Education.

Photo by Mei Makino



the disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable groups are included.

Later that evening, I attended a reception at the nearby Mexic-Arte Museum and a young Asian woman walked over to my table that had also attended the racial equity board training earlier that day. She was quite disturbed over some of the conversations about race and how "white supremacy" was called out for existing in most arts organizations. She did not believe it existed. She and I ended up engaging in a very deep and long conversation with several other conference attendees of different races. Together, we discussed how racial discrimination rears its ugly head in our marginalized and vulnerable communities, schools, cities, and country today. By the end of the night, the young woman remarked how much she appreciated the conversation and said it was a learning experience for her. I thank the Guild for sparking these conversations and creating moments that bring about awareness of inequities and injustices evident in the everyday lives of people of color — youth, parents, communities. The Guild's national conference helps to set the tone for change so that we can collectively improve the lives of the youth and communities we serve.

SETTING THE TONE AND DRIVING CHANGE:

The Board's Role in Advancing Racial Equity

At the 2019 National Guild Conference for Community Arts Education, InSite Consultants led a half-day institute entitled “Setting the Tone and Driving Change: The Board’s Role in Advancing Racial Equity.” InSite’s work focuses on institutional change to impact equitable outcomes. In their conference workshop, they discussed what it would look like for a board not simply to monitor progress on diversity, equity, and inclusion, but to participate actively in—and help drive—the transformational change that is required to uproot inequity and center racial justice as foundational to the work.

We recently spoke with InSite Consultants about the institute and what they have learned through their work with organizations to get board members involved in the work of institutional change.

Can you tell me more about the workshop and how you approach this work?

We were invited to facilitate a daylong conversation about the board’s role in advancing racial equity at the Guild’s 2019 conference. At InSite, we start our work by asking: How do we make visible and audible and powerful those who are most at the margins?

We know that boards are highly racialized and predominantly white. It doesn’t matter how much Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) has been done in recent years – there has been insignificant change in the past 25 years, but only a 2% change in levels of board diversity. Boards have been pouring money into DEI work, but we haven’t seen change. We look at this lack of change and say that we need to address the elephant in the room, which is whiteness. In our work,

we talk about how we can de-centralize whiteness in the board room and make space for other forms of power.

What we have seen in the past 25 years is that the structure of boards is really meant to reproduce and sustain white supremacy [by giving decision-making power in non-profits to boards made up mostly of white members]. That’s why they were started, and that’s what they continue to do. Until we can get that work started, and really look to undoing deeply embedded white supremacist ideology, we are going to continue to reanimate those issues again and again.

Are there ways that organizations try to address this problem that may be ineffective, or actually be causing more harm?

The most common way is to get together with your board and say, “We need to recruit diverse people.” This is basically ‘diversity as cure’: if we just get more people of color on the board, we will be doing our due diligence, and that cures the problem. But what we see is that those new board members last one to two years on the board, and they are silenced during their time there. They come in and they are shy at first, as many of us are in new situations. And then they are rendered silent by the board structure, and then they leave. The diversity as cure method has to go away, because it’s diversity without the acknowledgement that whiteness is toxic. We have to do the preliminary work of looking at whiteness before we can create a safe space for inclusion and diversity, not just bringing on people of color and expecting them to do the work. That’s one of the practices that is not just problematic, it’s quite violent.

A second problematic strategy is sending board members into the community to see what their organization is doing and asking community members to “perform” for them. What we often find is that boards, usually white affluent board members, are coming into a community that is lower income, often a community of color. Those communities are tacitly asked to show what great work they are doing, how well it is going. But it’s not okay to make people who have been systematically marginalized by whiteness be in this strange performance. Communities with whom the board has no real contact and no real relationship are forced to perform gratitude to the board members. That’s a way we place the onus back on people of color so that white board members or white people can feel good about themselves.

These are both very well intentioned, and on the surface I can see why. But with a deeper look, many people in our workshops pause and say, “Oh, I can’t believe I didn’t think about that.” So that’s our work: to get people to think more and act from a more thoughtful place in their work with their board and communities.

What kind of work do you suggest organizations do, in place of those types of interventions?

Deep, ongoing board development work will take about two years to show positive results. That can feel like a long time, but we have learned that you can only see sustainable change in about two years.

In our work with boards and staff, we focus deeply on what is happening that is toxic in the organization. This toxicity comes from a structural place, not generally an individual place (though it can manifest there, too). We work with organizations to identify ways they are already working that are not healthy and detox. It’s really hard work, but we immediately see the positive outcomes in these organizations. It feels good to identify toxic things and work together to change them because we often realize how those toxic things are impacting all of us.

Another suggestion is for organizations to work in tandem with people being impacted by injustice in their communities. Be on the ground with them, in solidarity, learning from them. We recommend this for boards doing racial equity work. You can’t exist on a high-level outside of the day-to-day challenges that the communities you are working with are facing. You need to be in conversation with the politics of what is

happening, the reality of the work. So that’s part of our approach: putting board members in direct, meaningful collaboration with the people doing the work.

How do you move board members, or anyone with power in organizations, to make these changes?

It’s a long and difficult process because we live in a culture where we are trying to look successful! And this work is not immediate or easy or always successful. In this work, you will encounter resistance. It’s not personal – it is a structural response. Most people with power do not want to give that power up at their core level. I would say 40% of people with substantial amounts of power on a board are willing to do that work. 60% are not; they will try to sabotage you. They will fire you. They will kick you out of the room. But you can’t turn your back on 40%. That’s a major wave that is going to crash on that shore. It’s important to remember that you don’t need 100% of the board. If you can shift your calculus and focus on getting 40% of the board on your team, you can move forward. We know that’s enough momentum to push through a significant amount of change.

What are good places to start for individuals who want to start this work at their own organization, but aren’t sure where to begin?

Begin by finding free workshops in your city to build your language and analysis. Learning more and being in spaces where these conversations are happening will help you articulate your needs.

If you are feeling that racial equity needs to be addressed in your organization, so are other people! If your organization’s leadership keeps hearing from different people that this is an issue, there is more likely to be movement to fix it. Find allies in your organization and work together.

CONFERENCE REFLECTION:

The Relational Work of Arts & Justice

Dan Reilly is the Director of Innovation at [RYSE Youth Center](#) in Richmond, CA.

The intersection of race equity, artistic practice, and arts education is a messy place. The conversations are difficult, the landscape remains largely uncharted, best practices are still emerging, and the stakes are high. Yet, there are incredible arts-based practitioners, community organizers, and a number of organizations nationally willing to dive straight into that mess because they are driven by visions of a more just and equitable future. And who better to capture those visions, to illustrate those visions, and ultimately to drive those visions than artists and arts educators?

The Conference for Community Arts Education is emerging as a place for those folks to gather and that was on full display in Austin, TX, this past fall. From the day-long preconference session facilitated by DreamYard (Bronx, NY) and Creative Action (Austin, TX), to the Artists for Racial Equity (ARE) and White Advocates for Racial Equity (WARE) network gatherings, to the plenary speakers Favianna Rodriguez and Amir Whitaker, to the National Young Artists Summit that was created and facilitated by young artists, the Guild is leaning into the mess.

From my experience, this is a national conference where race equity work is centered and space is created for a community of practitioners to convene, to share best practices, and to develop strategies for challenging systems and institutions. I'd like to note, however, that my perspective is undoubtedly shaped by being a fairly new member of the Guild community. Having only been involved in the last three conferences (SF, Baltimore, Austin), my own personal experiences are undoubtedly limited. My understanding from those who have been involved for longer is that this was not always the case. Tremendous leaders both within the Guild

and from member organizations have pushed to move into the mess, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity we have now as a result of their visionary leadership.

So much of the work we do in the field of arts education and the broader movement for social justice is relational. It's about the relationships built between mentors and students, between

educators across various artistic disciplines, between organizations from different parts of the country, and between local initiatives and national struggles to name but a few. It's those relationships that shape our collective vision, guide our practices, provide inspiration, and connect us to something larger than ourselves. At The RYSE Youth Center in Richmond, CA, we are constantly measuring the degree to which young people in our programs feel loved. It's the foundation upon which we base our work, the fuel source for our movements, and the benchmark we use to measure our collective liberation. We hope that inspires others to lead with love. It's with gratitude that I acknowledge the Guild

for its willingness to open spaces, to dive into the mess, and to wade into the waters of the unknown because they too are opening more space for us to speak to one another in the language of love.



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LEADING WITH RACE: What's Joy Got to Do with It?

INDI MCCASEY

In a windowless Austin hotel conference room last October, groups of people bend reverently over scattered tables, cutting out shapes of bright pink glitter paper, rearranging mini plants and quartz crystals, and gluing magazine images into small containers. There's a soft murmuring in the room as people swap glue sticks, ask for opinions about the placement of a shell, and compare the oddity and wonder of the trinkets available for use in their small assemblage projects. In one box someone has written an excerpt from an earlier writing activity: "Eating tacos, huddled around the taquero with a street light beaming...walking from my abuelita's abode, past chickens clucking and vegetables growing from the ground." A former mint tin is now packed with holographic color and explosions of texture. A jewelry box is transformed with neon green moss and images of flowers sprouting out from the inside. Another box looks like a science fiction landscape full of smooth stones, layers of foliage, and gold lamé stars on a pitch black paper sky.

These were Joyscapes, a mini-installation that communicated a reminder to the person who created it of how to find their joy amidst their day-to-day struggles, both personal and social.

Walking into the room at this moment one might do a double take, thinking that they had just stepped into a paper sculpture class rather than a preconference focused on how race impacts leadership in community arts education non-profits. Taking time to center joy at a training focused on race may not seem like an obvious choice, but DreamYard staff see it as central to their work on becoming an anti-racist organization. According to preconference co-facilitator and DreamYard Director of Dance & Music Programs Lisa Green, making art is precisely what people need to do more of when addressing how racism and white supremacy culture show up in our workspaces. "The art making experiences we offered is what we do for ourselves at DreamYard," she says. "It's transformative. On some level there has to be a connection to art in a tangible way in order to do racial justice work."

Lisa was one of seven facilitators of the day-long preconference Leading with Race: Building the Foundation for an Anti-Racist Organization, a collaboration between [DreamYard](#) in the

Bronx and [Creative Action](#) from Austin, Texas. Throughout the first half of the day, facilitators from DreamYard led participants through a series of exercises that utilized the arts to surface stories around personal histories, concerns, and hopes related to race and equity. Prior to making the Joyscapes, DreamYard's Director of the Poetry & Theatre Departments Ellen Hagan led a writing "marathon" activity with multiple prompts that invited participants to thoughtfully and poetically reflect on their "people," those who make up their community and their ancestors, as well as on issues of identity and racism. Later that morning groups of people collaboratively created movements and performed them under the direction of Lisa Green. The group ended the first half of the day reflecting on Renée Watson's poem [Black Like Me](#).

In the afternoon Creative Action staff facilitated conversations around how race and power show up in creative youth development organizations. They led small affinity groups where people of color in the room met with each other in a circle to talk about their concerns related to racial equity and social justice work while white people met in another part of the room to talk about addressing the ways that racism, white privilege, and [white supremacy culture](#) manifest in their actions and their organizations.

Creative Action and DreamYard have each been grappling with moving their organizations towards becoming [anti-racist organizations](#). Both organizations convene staff on a regular basis to explicitly address racial power dynamics that play out within their organizational culture, including their policies, practices, and language. It's a long-term process, but one that staff at both organizations have committed to in unique, but parallel ways. And they're not trying to keep their process a secret. Their commitment also includes making their process accountable and transparent to their communities and the arts education field at large. DreamYard has an [anti-racism commitment statement](#) on their website which spells out their conviction: "We lead with race because we operate in a country founded on the genocide of Indigenous people, the enslavement of African people, and the oppression of countless others. We acknowledge the role this history plays



in perpetuating inequity and dominant white culture.” In order to move this work forward, both DreamYard and Creative Action feel that art, creative practice, and joy must be at the center.

Collaborating on this preconference also led to unexpected insights for both organizations. “It was a big realization when the DreamYard team looked at our materials and said ‘You’re not really leading with race,’” admitted Lynn Hoare, Senior Director of School-Based Programs at Creative Action. “It caused our staff to really reflect on why we aren’t [leading with race] in our social justice work and ask ourselves ‘Is this what we want to be doing and how we want to be doing it?’” Considering this question allowed them to think through the advantages of leading with the concepts of power, privilege and oppression before diving into race and racism in Creative Action’s all-staff trainings. “Ultimately, our work on this preconference has prompted us to create a second required training for all staff that dives more explicitly into race and white supremacy culture,” said Hoare. When asked what surprised him the most, Creative Action’s Out of School Time Program Director Matrex Kilgore replied quickly: “Joy. That really impacted me with the Joyscapes we created with Natalia: the importance of joy in conversations around race and oppression. One of the outcomes of the work we’re doing is a more joyous society. Joy is both a part of the process and a product of the work.”

Staff from both Creative Action and DreamYard noted that the process of facilitating the Leading with Race preconference felt reciprocal, like they were both learning and sharing, not only from each other, but with the participants as well. Hagan

felt like this experience was a first for her at the Conference for Community Arts Education and added, “We need to push ourselves to build community as much as possible through face to face time with each other.” The more we become a community of arts educators and artists, the more we can push into these themes of racial justice and equity with generosity and vulnerability. Rajeeyah Finnie-Myers said in our pre-conference that [racial and social justice] is a continuum. “We’re going to work on this forever, so how do we continue this work and keep community going and strong even after we’re outside of the Guild?”

See the list of additional resources and information on the next page to learn more about each organization’s vision, process, and strategies.

COMMITMENT STATEMENTS & RESOURCES

Examples of statements from organizations detailing their commitment to anti-racism, as well as additional resources for starting and deepening work to become an anti-racist organization.

Continued from page 12

DREAMYARD'S ANTI-RACISM COMMITMENT

At DreamYard, we commit to being an anti-racist organization. We lead with race because we operate in a country founded on the genocide of Indigenous people, the enslavement of African people, and the oppression of countless others. We acknowledge the role this history plays in perpetuating inequity and dominant white culture. We are intentionally building a path toward racial equity by:

- Challenging oppression and its [intersections](#)
- Using art and education as a platform to offer a hopeful vision of the future
- Identifying and uplifting the power and cultural assets that exist within our community of educators, artists, dreamers, young people and life-long learners
- Encouraging the principles of justice, unity, equity, creativity, and joy
- Transforming policies, procedures, practices, and programs (for example: striving for transparency and equity in pay and compensation structures regardless of race, culture, gender, ethnicity, creed, etc)
- Understanding our staff, community members and partners are at different levels on the [anti-racist continuum](#) and embracing that we all have a place in this work

We invite you to join us on this journey.

CREATIVE ACTION'S SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITMENT

Social justice is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities.

Purpose of our social justice work:

A shared understanding of and daily commitment to social justice at Creative Action is essential in order for us to work together to fulfill our mission, realize our vision, and honor our values.

Our vision for social justice at Creative Action:

- Our core organizational values explicitly include an active commitment to anti-oppression, standing up, diversity and justice. These values guide our work as an organization on every level.
- We create and hold space for difficult conversations

and for thinking about systems of oppression and racism.

- We are committed to creating leadership opportunities for people of color.
- We routinely provide continued learning opportunities for all staff to deepen their consciousness of oppression and expand their personal commitment to acting as an agent of social change.
- We support the people who want to work for us but may have systemic barriers keeping them from participation. We are committed to doing what we can to help make it possible and sustainable.
- We are transparent and perpetually self-reflective & evolving: we routinely review and assess our organization including stakeholders from every area of our organization, are transparent with our community regarding internal challenges, and work as a team to refine & improve our policies and actions to best reflect our values and vision.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

- Learn about the work of the National Guild's [Artists for Racial Equity \(ARE\) Member Network](#) and [White Advocates for Racial Equity \(WARE\) Member Network](#) and get involved!
- [Creative Action's Social Justice Overview & Strategies](#): This document shares practical ways that Creative Action is realizing its social justice vision through internal (and paid) ongoing staff education and peer learning circles, internal action, and community partnerships.
- DreamYard's [Nurture & Liberate](#) document: Example of questions organizations and individuals can ask themselves focused on the mutual liberation and support. This document also shares indicators of liberation for teachers, staff, and students.
- [DreamYard Learning Communities Overview: History and Resources](#): This document shares the process of DreamYard's shift towards an anti-racist organization including history and annual responsive structures.
- External Resources: [Undoing Racism](#), [Race Forward](#), [Border Crossers](#), [Restorative Justice](#), [Anti-Racist Continuum](#).

CONFERENCE REFLECTION:

Facing Age:

Reflection on Facing Difficult Dialogues

Annie Montgomery is the Director of Education at [Lifetime Arts](#) in New Rochelle, NY.

*Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*
—Dylan Thomas

This past November the National Guild invited Lifetime Arts to facilitate a mini-institute called, “Age Equity: Combating Ageism to Fuel Creative Aging Programs, Funding, and Partnerships.” I always begin our creative aging training with an exploration into ageism.

The Merriam Webster dictionary’s definition of ageism is, “prejudice or discrimination against a particular age-group and especially the elderly.” What this definition doesn’t say, is that this discrimination is often self-inflicted because of enculturated ideas about what it means to grow older in this country. You would think because I encourage my students to dive deeply into their own embedded ageism, that I must not fall prey to society’s negative messaging about aging. However, during this mini-institute, I came face to face with this question, “Should I, as the facilitator of difficult dialogue about ageism, share my own struggles with aging?”

I believe wholeheartedly that people of all ages are entitled to arts education. Gratefully, through my work, I am an advocate for older adults as creative learners. I promote their inclusion at the table of social equity, and propagate access to barrier free arts learning. However, every time I engage in ageism dialogue, I am struck by my own hypocrisy. Unfortunately, the cultural narratives about aging impact how I perceive myself and my place in the world. I am a 48 year old woman, an actress and theatre maker, arts educator, wife, and mother of three children. My own aging process is fraught with distress, even as I encourage other people to embrace their aging and reimagine what it means to grow older.

My inner ageist often says things like this to me, “I can’t audition for that part - no one sees me as young and beautiful anymore; I can’t submit my play to that festival - I am not relevant; my poems can’t be shared because no one wants to hear my middle-aged point of view; I am too old to be considered an emerging artist; I missed my chance, I am too old.”

These false narratives also ring loudly in the hearts of many of the older adult students I have taught over the years. They

can’t believe that their life story is worth sharing, that they can possibly stand up and perform their original monologue, or express themselves through movement and dance. They are sure they are too old to even try. But then, we work together to shut out those lies and to move beyond them. I am so lucky to witness their transformation - from people who were invisible into artists who are heard, seen, and celebrated. They soar as they embrace their ability to learn, to grow and express themselves in all their uniqueness and glory. So, why do I still allow ageist conspiracies to dictate what I should or shouldn’t be?

However slowly, I’m learning that my own transformation lies in being able to wrestle through the muck in company and dialogue with my students. My hope is that the more honest and vulnerable I am, the more my students will feel safe to articulate their own struggles. As I get better at not placing limits on myself because of my age, and stop beating myself up for not having “age appropriate” dreams - the more I can authentically encourage other people to do the same. We are all aging and none of us should embrace “the dying of the light.” Rather, let’s dance within in, and see how high we can fly!



Participants at the Lifetime Arts workshop at the Conference for Community Arts Education.
Photo by Annie Montgomery

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