



★ ★ ★ *New Community Visions* part of the  
Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts Initiative

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# Arts & Intra-Community Strength

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Excerpted from *Arts & America: Arts, Culture, and the Future  
of America's Communities*

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ESSAY BY

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# An Introduction

*Dear Reader,*

**F**or the last 30 years here at Americans for the Arts, I have had the privilege of visiting and learning about a different community almost every week.

In multiple places in every state, I have witnessed firsthand the magic and majesty of the arts themselves and also their transformative power in helping to tackle social and community issues. Whether in a small town or a major population center, the same breadth of value is present. Magnificent, awe-inspiring performances and museum exhibits exist side by side with arts programs designed to accelerate healing in hospitals; musical performances with the homeless to bring comfort and perhaps new inspiration; hands-on visual and performing arts programs in military facilities to aid returning wounded service men and women in coping with PTSD or recovering from physical injury; or the myriad of other ways that the arts are a part of people's lives.

During my travels, I usually have the honor of meeting hard working local leaders from the government, business, and

education sectors as well as from the arts. When a mayor or county commissioner proudly talks about her home-grown arts treasures—while in the same breath explaining the economic and employment benefits of the arts to her community or the attractiveness of the arts offerings there as a cultural tourism destination—it is clear that the arts are valued as a source of pride and identity and as a positive contributor to growth.

Although the arts have delivered this spectrum of entertainment, inspiration, and transformative value for as long as humankind has existed, they have faced a roller coaster of recognition and marginalization in our country since even before our founding. We are now, however, at a moment where there seems to be an increased recognition of the broad value of the arts. That provides us with an inflection point at which to explore, discuss, and recalibrate what it takes to advance the arts and arts education in America. This book of 10 essays provides an opportunity to look at ideas that might help a community invent or reinvent how the arts fit into it. Our guest authors take a look at the kinds of thinking and mechanisms decision-makers, leaders, and citizens need in order to make the arts more fully part of the quality of experience that every child and every community member gets from living in a particular place.

Americans for the Arts is in the business of helping leaders build capacity for the advancement of the arts and arts education. We work toward a vision that all of the arts and their power can be made available and accessible to every American. The leaders that we help are generating positive change for and through the arts at the local, state, or national levels and across all sectors. Since our founding 55 years ago, we have created materials, management tools, case-making research and data, along with professional and leadership development training to help leaders carry out this important work. About 25 years ago, our publication, *Community Vision*, along with a series of companion pieces, was created to guide the process of expanding capacity for community development through the arts. But a great

deal has changed since then, so we have embarked on the three-year journey to update those tools, look anew at what the arts are doing in communities, and create materials that will help community leaders advance that work today.

In this book, 10 authors focus on just a few of the issue areas that the arts are working in today. These essay topics do not illustrate the only way the arts are working in communities. We are continually looking at other topics in other publications, tools, and discussions to help communities customize their unique approach to involving the arts in addressing their particular needs and goals. Such additional issue areas include: the re-entry of active military service members, veterans, youth at risk, crime prevention, immigration, technology, disease, drug abuse, housing, aging, faith and religion, and perhaps most importantly cross-cultural understanding and equity. This is a partial list of the challenges and opportunities where the arts are playing an important role.

To set some context for the future, we have also included an essay that lays out some thoughts on the history of art in community. My friend, Maryo Gard Ewell, has done more to document the history and sea changes of the last century of arts-based community development than anyone else I can think of. She says that she does it because a field isn't a field if it doesn't know its history. I thank her for her extensive contributions to our database of field knowledge, which Clayton Lord has been able to draw upon for his comprehensive history piece in this book. Maryo is also fond of saying that a field isn't a field without a few heroes in the mix. I count both her and her father, Robert Gard, mentioned in that history, to be among those heroes.

Our field of nonprofit arts organizations and individuals working to advance the arts and to create better communities through the arts is constantly evolving, constantly reinventing an understanding of itself and its role in this great American experiment. But the field

should never waver on the deeply rooted belief in its essential necessity to the world. We are in a period of evolving understanding right now. The broad transformative power of the arts as a means to help create solutions to a broad array of social and economic issues is a big part of the value of the arts in today's American Community.

The rising demand for deeper accountability for what the arts bring to the table in terms of social welfare along with the advent of new sources of data, technology, and processing power to make previously invisible connections visible brings us to a pivotal moment. The arts are poised to be fully integrated into a nuanced, deep, and powerful conversation about who and what is needed to create healthy, equitable communities for everyone.

The arts are valuable. Artists are essential. Arts education is critical to keeping America creative and competitive in order to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The arts are a strong partner in the solution to these challenges and can be even stronger in the future. The arts help transform American communities and the result can be a better child, a better town, a better nation, and perhaps a better world. My hope is that this book of ideas can help in that transformative journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bob Lynch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bob" and last name "Lynch" clearly legible.

Robert L. Lynch  
*President and CEO*  
*Americans for the Arts*



# Arts & Intra-Community Strength

— by *Brea M. Heidelberg*<sup>1</sup> —

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This essay looks at how transformations in the definition of “community” are changing how and where communities find strength and cohesion, as well as the role that the arts may play in positively impacting those changes over the 10–15 years. In particular, this essay proposes the following trends and associated arts interventions:

- As the United States continues to diversify, people will continue to grapple with how to strengthen their geographically based communities while also maintaining and strengthening connections to their identity-based communities. The arts will continue a long tradition of providing

ways for individuals to express the nuance and complexity of this identity.

- Recent and long-standing mistreatment and discrimination against non-dominant groups including African-American populations, women, and the LGBTQ community will continue to have damaging, dehumanizing impacts on how the members of those communities see themselves. The arts, in particular the writing arts, in conjunction with social media and other amplification tools, will allow for an increased control of the narrative and a corresponding re-humanization of those community members who have felt dehumanized.
- As minority communities band together to ward off external threats and, simultaneously, seek to normalize the way other more dominant communities view them by employing a “politics of respectability,” silenced voices inside a community can fester. The arts can work to combat this forced assimilation within communities by revealing and celebrating intra-community difference and development new narratives of understanding.

— *C. Lord*

**H**ow “community” is defined continues to evolve as people act in, and react to, the world around them. Technological advances have significantly diminished the role of geography in determining the boundaries of a community, creating opportunities for new communities defined solely by shared interests and beliefs to emerge.<sup>2</sup> These communities—those set apart by race, ethnicity, or religion, for example—continue to redefine themselves and their needs as they react to external forces such as public policies and their intended and unintended consequences. The next

decade will see significant shifts in the way some groups define themselves in light of a quickly changing American landscape.

The arts can be a very powerful tool for the exploration and communication of group identity. Regardless of the context, the arts often give both creators and audiences a means of critical self-reflection. This essay explores how different communities are strengthened by the arts' capacity to articulate agency among community members through the processes of both expression (on the part of the individual artist) and consumption (on the part of the community). For the purposes of this essay I consider agency to be defined as a “temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past, but also oriented toward the future and toward the present.”<sup>3</sup>

*“At this time when working across communities is a necessary but difficult task, the need for intra-community strength is even more urgent.”*

Demographic, economic, and political changes will inevitably cause conflict across communities. Current rhetoric and policy action demonstrate increasing political polarization<sup>4</sup> with the state and local government, which results in policy paralysis in many areas, notably in social justice policy initiatives. Conversely, democratized spaces like public forums and the Internet see a growing number of calls for equality from marginalized communities. At this time when working across communities is a necessary but difficult task, the need for *intra*-community strength is even more urgent, because strong communities are an important factor in creating both policy and social change.<sup>5</sup>

There are social and political trends that have created a need for new and often unheard voices to speak from within, and on behalf of, their community. These trends are changing the way a strong



community is defined. This essay outlines three such trends, and then highlights a few ways that individuals have responded and will respond through the arts. In particular, this essay focuses on how the arts are being used to strengthen communities by working toward ensuring each member has a voice. This is increasingly important work as communities shift away from thinking that they must speak with one unified voice toward an acknowledgment that a euphonic chorus can be more powerful.

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EMBRACING THE NUANCE OF LIVED  
EXPERIENCES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

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The United States is becoming increasingly diverse. Shifts in property taxes, housing prices, and public school options acting alongside other socioeconomic factors have begun to change the makeup of communities. More diverse neighborhoods are occurring both by circumstance and by choice. As the number of diverse communities continues to grow over the next decade, individuals will have to grapple with how to strengthen their geographically based community while also maintaining and strengthening connections to their identity-based communities. This task is complicated by divisions within identity-based communities that are the result of spillover effects from harmful historical practices.

In the past, glimpses into the lived experiences of other cultures were often voyeuristic. People came to view cultural practices from other communities as a spectacle—something to be gawked at rather than engaged with in a meaningful way. This increased tension between cultures, opening old wounds from a recent past where being made into a spectacle was a common and dehumanizing aspect of everyday life. While incidents of minstrelsy and other racist recreations of minority cultures are far less common than they were a few decades ago, distrust from communities that suffered from these practices remains.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, the legacy of these practices has directly

contributed to internal conflict within minority communities. One way this issue manifests is in the social stratification of cultural expression. Fissures within the community occur when some are judged for the way they choose to express themselves. This issue is seen in the judgment of communication modes, including regional accents and word choices, as well as along the spectrum of gender performance.

To begin mending the aforementioned fissures, individuals have begun engaging with others in their community in more honest ways that encourage movement beyond the internal judgment and malice of the past. Instead of looking at each other's cultural choices as a spectacle, some people have begun to look at the lived experiences of others in their community with a sincere desire to increase their awareness and empathy for others.

The arts have a long tradition of providing ways to express the nuance and complexity of identity. Literature on community-level social benefits of the arts state that the arts help create a sense of community, build social capital within the community, and empower communities to engage in collective action.<sup>7</sup> The most significant aspect of this growing body of literature is that it accounts for a broad interpretation of community that is not based solely on either proximity or ethnicity, two of the most common ways of defining community. This research area continues to grow with the support of places like the Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) at the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Policy & Practice<sup>8</sup> which are committed to measuring the social impact of the arts. While researchers have investigated ways the arts can promote tolerance and celebrate diversity across cultures,<sup>9,10</sup> I argue that these same intrinsic benefits can accrue within communities.

Antonia Opiah, founder of Un'ruly, an online space to celebrate the versatility and beauty of Black hair, curated a hair exhibition in the summer of 2013. *You Can Touch My Hair* gathered Black women with various hairstyles, which also spoke to the diversity of

*“The arts are also being used as a means to explain and confront a complex social and political past in more traditional contexts.”*

experiences within the Black hair community, and gave individuals in New York the opportunity to touch the participants’ hair and converse with them. The purpose of the event was to turn the objectification of strangers asking to touch Black women’s hair into an opportunity to allow people to

sate their tactile curiosity while also educating them on the long and difficult social and political history of Black hair. A stranger asking to touch a Black woman’s hair is a fairly common phenomenon that is met with a wide variety of responses, ranging from acquiescence to outrage. This event was designed to remove heightened emotions that often act as a barrier to understanding.

While this event was designed to facilitate understanding between communities, it actually generated much more dialogue within the Black community; as noted after the fact by the organizers, “Most of the people at the exhibit that were touching and talking and asking questions about hair care and regimens were Black women.”<sup>11</sup> Black women with a variety of hairstyles from relaxers and weaves to afros and locs came and had tactile experiences with hair from their own culture that they had never experienced before. Participants that allowed others to touch their hair noted that they were anxious at first but came to feel empowered by having the opportunity to honestly engage with others from within the Black community about their hair and the ways in which their style choices are linked to their identity.<sup>12</sup>

This event sparked heated debates within the Black community about whether this was actually an event designed to educate or just another example of permitting Black bodies to be spectacles.<sup>13</sup> While the event received staunch support from some, others likened the event to a slave auction block. Opiah was pleased with both

responses; her intent, she said, was to start the conversation: “It’s an uncomfortable discussion for a lot of people, but sometimes we have to get comfortable in being uncomfortable to really break ground.”<sup>14</sup>

The arts are also being used as a means to explain and confront a complex social and political past in more traditional contexts. Generally, history privileges stories from dominant groups, so it is often hard to learn about other cultures and perspectives. This is especially true for communities that favor oral traditions such as Native Americans and Black Americans. This leaves all children without a full understanding of United States history, and, more importantly, leaves many minority communities without a full understanding of their own history. To combat this, history programs in K–12 settings are using arts-based methods and artifacts to share untold stories and investigate the past from perspectives that are often missing from textbooks. This allows community members to have access to elements of their history that have been previously ignored in schools.

The next decade will see the continued increase of biracial children born in the United States.<sup>15</sup> This, along with other demographic shifts such as immigration, will result in the expansion and further diversification of identity-based communities. As the homogeneity of these communities declines, intra-group understanding will play an important role in maintaining cohesion and strength.

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#### THE RE-HUMANIZATION OF DE-HUMANIZED PEOPLE

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Recent deaths of unarmed Black men and women have created an environment in which Black Americans believe they are seen as sub-human. These incidents have reminded many of the Jim Crow era that followed the abolition of slavery in the United States. Civil Rights activists worked during this time to ensure that Black Americans were seen equally in the eyes of the law. Passage of

the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 demonstrated a theoretical shift in the way Black Americans were perceived. However, the recent deaths of Akai Gurley, Tamir Rice, and a number of other unarmed Black boys and men, as well as the deaths of a number of unarmed Black women, including Aiyana Jones, Rekia Boyd, and Yvette Smith, have caused many to question underlying assumptions about the worth of Black bodies. The idea of living in a post-racial society is being discarded in many parts of the Black community. The aftermath of these incidents led to #blacklivesmatter, an attempt to reinforce the idea that Black lives were just as important as the lives of others. The need for such a social media campaign at a time when a biracial president, who identifies as African-American, is in office speaks to the stratification of the Black experience in America.

Recent trends in sexual assault cases on college campuses, coupled with increasing awareness of alarming statistics about domestic violence, have similarly made many women question whether or not they are seen as equal. In some parts of the country, unsuccessful legislation to ensure equal pay for women reinforced these sentiments at the policy level. The female community, although sometimes divided based on the issues at the intersection of gender and race, was unified by their desire for protection from assault as well as street harassment.

Many are speaking out about “rape culture,” a theoretical concept that addresses the normalization of rape in our culture as part of long-standing, problematic societal attitudes about gender and sexuality. Rape culture, and misogyny in general, serve to silence and disenfranchise women. To combat this, #yesallwomen has encouraged women to share their stories and to bring awareness to their experiences. Similarly, #whyIleft and #whyIstayed are designed to share stories and other narratives to bring awareness to the issue of domestic violence. Those two hashtags use creative impulses and storytelling to shed light on the inner turmoil of women who

have been or are current victims of domestic violence, giving these women a voice.

The effects of this type of dehumanization are well-documented, especially in policy issues such as incarceration rates<sup>16</sup> and unequal pay.<sup>17</sup> At the heart of both trends are negative stereotypes about the behavior and value of both groups. While these stereotypes are generated externally, they are often reinforced internally within marginalized communities. Dialogues across communities are a necessary part of rectifying systemic oppression. However, space for communities to explore and break down negative stereotypes encourage different conversations that should act as both prologue and epilogue to the conversations around #blacklivesmatter and #yesallwomen.

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#### RAISING UP SILENCED VOICES IN THE COMMUNITY

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Dehumanization can also come from within, when minority communities, in times of crisis, band together to ward off external threats. This type of community insulation often makes it difficult for individuals to reflect on their own community identities. The arts can facilitate difficult conversations with others, but they can also facilitate difficult internal conversations that are both cathartic and empowering, and are also known as a tool for allowing us to take a closer look at ourselves.

There are a variety of cultural and identity-based policy issues vying for space on the collective agenda. While the quest for equality looks different in each community, many use a concept called politics of respectability to police the actions of others.

“Politics of respectability” is a concept first introduced by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in her exploration of the women’s movement within the context of the Black church.<sup>18</sup> In the practice of politics of respectability, marginalized groups seek to police

themselves in the hopes of creating conditions where they are accepted into the mainstream. This type of community-wide self-policing can manifest itself in everything from family structure to clothing choices and hairstyles. It is done in an effort to assimilate rather than work toward bringing the mainstream to accept the elements of difference presented by their community. It is important to note that assimilation involves unrealistic standards that make respectability essentially impossible to achieve. At best, it is attainable to a select few, but not to the community as a whole. Politics of respectability creates fissures within groups; individuals are categorized as “good” or “bad” as the group seeks to advocate for its “good” members to receive mainstream acceptance.

Politics of respectability demonstrates an internalization of messages about one community’s inferiority. This weakens the community in a much more subversive way than outright, physical oppression. The negative effects are deeper and last much longer as community members repeat these messages within the community—perpetuating a type of mental oppression that manifests itself in a variety of ways. In some communities it is called being “ghetto,” while in other communities it is “slut shaming,” or it may hide in coded language about being “flamboyant.”

Released in 2014, the short film *#blackmendment* taped nine Black men having difficult conversations with themselves and, by extension, their communities.<sup>19</sup> In the film, Philadelphia-based artist Shikeith Cathey asks 15 questions that encourage exploration of the many misconceptions about Black men in America. Despite the fact that the film was released amid outcry about excessive police force used against Black men, the film was actually born out of Cathey’s experiences with dehumanizing stereotyping done by others *within* the Black community. He was prompted to create the film in order to generate a more complex conversation about Black masculinity.

The Feminist Art Project is an international initiative designed to celebrate the impact of women on art history, art practice, and the visual arts.<sup>20</sup> This project was started in response to movements that privileged male contributions to the arts. While this project can serve other communities by providing information, the significance of this project is its role in providing a space for community building among female artists and art historians. The project, which is run through Rutgers University's Institute for Women & Art, applies its global concept locally by connecting individuals to regional coordinators. These coordinators are responsible for furthering the project's mission with consideration of the local context in which they operate. The project connects members of the community and empowers them by supporting their work sharing with other members of the community.

On May 3, 2014 comedienne Leslie Jones delved deep into issues within the Black community with regard to ideas of beauty in a skit on Saturday Night Live. In the skit she lamented the fact that she was single, and lays that fact at the feet of current ideals of beauty and her looks. She then goes on to joke that, as a six-foot-tall, dark-skinned Black woman with a muscular build, she would be considered more attractive if slavery were still active in the United States. Enforced breeding was a dark part of the nation's history, but some elements of the skit are current issues within the Black community. The documentaries *Dark Girls*, released in 2011, and *Light Girls*, released in 2015, discuss the issue of colorism and marginalization within the Black community. Although there were many on social media that attacked Leslie for the skit, others saw it as critical commentary and only lamented the difficulty of having this conversation in front of others outside of the community.<sup>21</sup> Despite the fact that the community wants to present a united front, these issues do marginalize certain people within the group, and difficult discussions that lead to action are going to continue into the next decade.



*Queer and Trans Artists of Color: Stories of Some of Our Lives* is a series of interviews that exist as both an edited edition and a podcast.<sup>22</sup> It is designed as an oral history record of how a variety of artists experience the intersection of race and sexuality. The purpose of this project is to give voice and build community among queer and trans people of color (QTPOC). In the march toward equality in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) community, heteronormative ideals have been only slightly reimagined to include white gay and lesbian couples. Politics of respectability dictate that gay and lesbian individuals conform to restrictive ideals of chastity and monogamy. Additionally, politics of respectability silence the experiences of QTPOC. QTPOC individuals are often marginalized by the larger LGBTQ community who are unaware of the confounding issues with being both a person of color as well as identifying with the LGBTQ community. Hearing QTPOC artists talk about how their work speaks to their experiences within the LGBTQ community empowers other QTPOC and QTPOC artists. It also strengthens the overall LGBTQ community by educating it about a facet of itself that is often overlooked.

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The arts allow us to explore all aspects of our communities and ourselves. While this usually means that we use the arts to celebrate, it also means that we may use the arts to critically reflect or even critique what we see. Artists are pushing back against politics of respectability by discussing difficult truths within their community in order to give voice to those who have been silenced.

Each of these trends will eventually require inter-community action and coalition building. Before they can engage with other communities to make change, however, preliminary work must occur within each community. Community members must be willing to share their experiences with the rest of their community, and

communities as a whole must be receptive to those experiences, even if it puts stress on the community in the short-term. What results are necessary, if difficult, conversations about identity within the community that may lead to long-term strength and increased capacity to engage with other communities to create change.

The arts have always played a central role in social and political movements as a conduit, translator, and a means of giving voice to those who often go unheard. The trends discussed here have the ability to continue strengthening communities by empowering all of its members by carving space for plural voices within the community with artists' tools.

NOTES

1. The author would like to thank Molly Uline-Olmstead, Nyron Crawford, PhD, and Justin D Burton, PhD for their assistance in the refinement of the ideas presented in this essay.
2. Diana Brydon and William Coleman, *Renegotiating Community: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Global Context* (British Columbia: UBC Press, 2009).
3. Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, "What is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 4 (1998): 962.
4. Pew Research Center, "Political Polarization in the American Public," (Research Report, 2014).
5. Many public policy and political science theorists have discussed the importance of strong groups, often conceptualized as interest groups. For an introduction to this line of inquiry see Paul A. Sabatier, *Theories of the Policy Process, Second Edition* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2007) and John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, Second Edition* (London: Pearson, 2010).
6. Recent controversy regarding the continued use of the name Redskins by the Washington DC-based NFL team is a clear demonstration of the long-term impact of cultural stereotyping and ostracization.
7. Kevin F. McCarthy, Elizabeth H. Ondaatje, Laura Zakaras, and Authur Brooks, *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2004, p. 14-15).
8. "Social Impact of the Arts Project," *University of Pennsylvania*, accessed February 6, 2015, <http://impact.sp2.upenn.edu/siap/>.
9. Mark J. Stern, *Arts, Culture, and Quality of Life* (Social Impact of the Arts Project, 2000).
10. Alaka Wali, Rebecca Severson, and Mario Longoni, *The Informal Arts: Finding Cohesion, Capacity and Other Cultural Benefits in Unexpected Places* (Chicago, IL: The Chicago Center for Arts Policy at Columbus College, 2002).
11. Antonia Opiah, "You Can Touch My Hair: What Were We Thinking?!", *Un-Ruly.com*, last modified June, 2013. <http://un-ruly.com/you-can-touch-my-hair-what-were-we-thinking>.
12. Antonia Opiah, "You Can Touch My Hair," *Un-Ruly.com*, last modified October 13, 2013. <http://un-ruly.com/you-can-touch-my-hair>.
13. Julee Wilson. "'You Can Touch My Hair' Explores Fascination With Black Hair, Sparks Debate," *Huffingtonpost.com*, last modified June 8, 2013. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/07/you-can-touch-my-hair-exhibit-black-women-hair\\_n\\_3401692.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/06/07/you-can-touch-my-hair-exhibit-black-women-hair_n_3401692.html).
14. Antonia Opiah, "You Can Touch My Hair: What Were We Thinking?!"

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15. Lauri McCubbin, "Acknowledging the Growing Population of Multiracial Youth and Families," *American Psychological Association* (August, 2013).
16. Marc Mauer and Ryan S. King, *Uneven Justice: State Rates of Incarceration By Race and Ethnicity* (Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project, 2007).
17. Diana Furchtgott-Roth, *Women's Figures: An Illustrated Guide to the Economic Progress of Women in America* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 2012).
18. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1993).
19. Shikeith Cathey, "#blackmendream," *Shikeith*, accessed on January 20, 2015, <http://www.shikeith.com/-blackmendream.html>.
20. "The Feminist Art Project," *Institute for Women & Art, Rutgers University*, accessed on January 20, 2015, <http://feministartproject.rutgers.edu>.
21. W. Kamau Bell, "It Doesn't Get Easier Being Black on SNL," W. Kamau Bell, last modified May 22, 2014, <http://www.wkamaubell.com/2014/05/it-doesnt-get-easier-being-black-on-snl>.
22. Nia King, *Queer and Trans Artists of Color: Stories of Some of Our Lives* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014).

## Arts in Healthy Communities: Additional Discussion and Resources

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The Transforming America’s Communities Through the Arts initiative, of which New Community Visions is a part, is an effort by Americans for the Arts and our partners to explore more deeply the important, symbiotic structure of America’s modern communities and to better understand the role that the arts can play in amplifying the positive impacts of the many sectors that exist inside every community.

This book has focused on 10 sectors, but Americans for the Arts generally has identified 30 sectors that we believe need to be considered when talking about creating and maintaining a healthy community, many of which can be aided by arts and culture.

In the efforts encompassed by Transforming America’s Communities Through the Arts, as well as in the day-to-day work of Americans for the Arts going back nearly 60 years, we continue to pursue an expanded, better appreciated, and better understood role for the arts in healthy community development and maintenance.

For more resources related to the varied role of arts in community development, we recommend exploring the following Americans for the Arts resources—as well as the Americans for the Arts website in general—and the many great resources outlined in the endnotes of each essay.

### **New Community Visions**

Keep track of the progress of New Community Visions by visiting [www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions)

### **Arts and the Military**

Americans for the Arts is a founding partner of the National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military, and hosts the partnership’s website, [www.ArtsAcrossTheMilitary.org](http://www.ArtsAcrossTheMilitary.org), where you can

review full text of reports related to the role of arts in the lives of active military, veterans, and their families along with a list of upcoming events, a national network directory, and more.

### **Arts and the Economy**

For more than 20 years, Americans for the Arts has been at the forefront of measuring the economic impact of the arts on American communities and the United States, most visibly through the Arts and Economic Prosperity reports ([www.AmericansForTheArts.org/AEP](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/AEP)). Americans for the Arts also generates bi-annual Creative Industries reports on all U.S. counties, and is working to launch a new program called the Institute for the Creative Economy as part of the Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts initiative. Find out more about both at [www.AmericansForTheArts.org](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org).

### **Arts and Business**

Americans for the Arts has a robust set of programs and trainings around the role of the arts in the private sector, most notably the pARTnership Movement, which showcases the role that the arts can play in bettering businesses and other private sector organizations ([www.pARTnershipmovement.org](http://www.pARTnershipmovement.org)).

### **Arts and Civic Engagement**

For more than a decade, the Animating Democracy Initiative of Americans for the Arts has been exploring and developing the academic literature, case studies, and general knowledge and vocabulary around arts and civic engagement, social justice, and community health ([www.AnimatingDemocracy.org](http://www.AnimatingDemocracy.org)).

## Arts and Education

Americans for the Arts' arts education programming is a cornerstone of our belief in the role of arts in developing the communities of the future ([www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEd](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEd)). We work with more than 30 other arts education organizations across the country on advocacy, research, policy, and capacity-building. We also implement large-scale programs and partnerships like the Arts Education State Public Policy Pilot Initiative ([www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SPPP](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SPPP)), which seeks to encourage innovation around the adoption or adaptation of core arts standards in education at a state level, and the Arts Education Navigator series ([www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEdNavigator](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEdNavigator)), which creates easy-to-use advocacy plans and tools for parents, students, and teachers, as well.

In addition to these specific areas of work, Americans for the Arts also houses a trove of research, policy, and practice documents for arts organizations, local arts agencies, and others in the arts sector through our website, [www.AmericansForTheArts.org](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org)

# **Arts and America: Arts, Culture, and the Future of America's Communities**

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ABOUT THE NEW COMMUNITY VISIONS INITIATIVE,  
PART OF TRANSFORMING AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES  
THROUGH THE ARTS

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The essays in *Arts and America* collectively form the first phase of an initiative called New Community Visions—a national visioning exercise for local arts agencies, arts organizations, artists, and those interested in better understanding the future role of arts and culture in helping American communities thrive.

New Community Visions is part of a sustained, three-year suite of large-scale initiatives from Americans for the Arts that are together called *Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts*. Through those initiatives, we hope to:

- generate dialogue on a national, state, and local level around the creation and sustainability of healthy communities;
- activate a diverse set of programming and partnerships spanning public, private, and nonprofit sectors;
- lay the groundwork for a collective movement forward over the next decade and beyond;
- and help leaders and the public better understand and celebrate arts and culture as mechanisms for creating and sustaining healthier, more vibrant, and more equitable communities in the United States.

[www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions)

This project is made possible through an ever-growing list of funders, partners, and advisors.



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FORUMS CURATOR AND DOCUMENTARIAN

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Michael Rohd and the Center for  
Performance and Civic Practice  
Margy Waller and the Topos Partnership

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FUNDING PARTNERS

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 **Knight Foundation**



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*Support as of April 30, 2015*

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NEW COMMUNITY VISIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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The New Community Visions Advisory Committee, which has informed the nature and trajectory of the project, includes:

- Jennifer Cole, Metro Nashville Arts Commission
- Deborah Cullinan, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
- Carla Dirlikov, opera singer
- Randy Engstrom, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
- Tatiana Hernandez, Hemera Foundation
- Maria Rosario Jackson, The Kresge Foundation
- Michael Killoren, National Endowment for the Arts
- Ron Ragin, composer and artist
- Holly Sidford, Helicon Collaborative
- Nick Slie, performing artist, Mondo Bizzaro
- Regina R. Smith, The Kresge Foundation
- Katie Steger, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- Carlton Turner, Alternate ROOTS
- Nella Vera, Serino/Coyne
- Laura Zabel, Springboard for the Arts

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## REGIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL PARTNERS

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The regional gatherings associated with New Community Visions would not have been possible without the participation of this growing list of regional, state, and local partners who have contributed thought leadership, proposed the names of participants, and assisted in crafting the regional events.

Special thanks to our national funding partners, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, for their significant support.

### **Regional**

- Arts Midwest
- Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation
- Mid-America Arts Alliance
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- SouthArts
- WESTAF

### **State**

- California Arts Council
- Georgia Council for the Arts
- Minnesota State Arts Board
- New Mexico Arts
- Oklahoma Arts Council
- Oklahomans for the Arts
- Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
- Vermont Arts Council
- West Virginia Division of Culture and History

## Local

- Allied Arts
- Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia
- Arts Council of Oklahoma City
- Burlington City Arts
- Philadelphia Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy
- City of San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs
- City of Santa Fe Arts Commission
- Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences of West Virginia
- Creative Santa Fe
- Cultural Development Corporation
- Flynn Center for the Performing Arts
- Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance
- Macon Arts Alliance
- Metropolitan Regional Arts Council
- Minneapolis Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy
- Norman Arts Council
- Oklahoma City Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs