
LANDMARKING COMMUNITY CULTURAL ARTS INSTITUTIONS:
ACHIEVING CULTURAL EQUITY

THE POCANTICO CENTER OF
THE ROCKEFELLER BROTHERS FUND

Program of the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute
in collaboration with
Voices from the Battlefield, CEG (Cultural Equity Group)

April 3 – 5, 2009

Prepared by: Linda Walton

BACKGROUND

Voices from the Cultural Battlefield: Organizing for Equity is an ongoing twenty-year international conversation about the role of art and culture in the struggle for human rights, including social justice, cultural equity, and a healthy natural environment. Hundreds of activists grounded in the cultural life of their local communities, who represent a variety of fields (including education, art, health, and youth services) and who are from all seven continents, have participated in these conversations.

Cultural Equity Group (CEG) is a coalition of cultural arts organizations and artists in New York City working for the equitable distribution of funds and resources to assure that under-resourced and under-served emerging and mid-sized organizations grounded in the culture and arts of their communities are fairly funded. The objective of the Cultural Equity Group is to stabilize the field, providing necessary technical assistance and program management resources to assure the continued growth of the cultural arts field.

At the forefront of these efforts is the **Caribbean Cultural Center/African Diaspora Institute**, a 33 year old organization with a strong history of creating convening networks comprised of cultural arts institutions that are committed to the ongoing racial and cultural diversity dialogue. The CCCADI serves as a host to a wide range of original cultural programming such as concerts, visual arts exhibits, special lectures, and international conferences. The CCCADI's community-oriented programs exemplify a commitment to celebrating, documenting, and creating community dialogues about the diverse cultures of the African Diaspora.

In 2007 - 2009, six **Voices from the Cultural Battlefield forums** were convened (New York, NY; New Orleans, LA; Amherst, MA; Arden, NC; Los Angeles, CA; Memphis, TN.) These national conversations focused on understanding hyper-capitalism and the impact of unrestricted, global mobility of capital on the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and material features and traditions of people and their societies and, ultimately, on the goal of achieving cultural equity.

The primary points surfacing from this discourse were:

- Existing policy has been putting profit before people and the market before community undermining civil society.
- Voices/CEG organizations serve and represent the majority, yet receive a disproportionately small amount of the people's tax dollars.
- Voices/CEG organizations create knowledge about the work we are doing.
- Voices/CEG are accountable for the work they do and must ensure that this work continues, including preparing the next generation of community arts leaders.
- A vibrant internal Voices critical discourse (building & sharpening one another) is necessary for us to be effective challenging and eventually transforming the present status quo of cultural *inequity* and social *injustice*.

(Also see **Attachment 1** – Dudley Cocke's Opening Remarks)

PURPOSE

The gathering at Pocantico was designed to enable an expanded conversation among advocates utilizing the network structure created to move the work forward and to outline executable next steps toward the goal of building critical mass around the cultural equity issue on local, state, and federal levels.

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

In order for this movement to be successful, it is imperative that there is a shared set of principles and values that guides all efforts. The participating groups are driven by the following principals and values and strive to work to build critical consciousness in our communities, with funders, and with government agencies, presenting a unified, mutually supportive front to the world at large. Further, there is a shared belief that people come before profit, that community takes priority over the market, and that there must be a respect for cultural traditions and practices and an understanding and recognition of aesthetic differences. Participants insist on speaking in the first voice, not allowing others to impersonate them or interpret their message. A key and integral part of the effort is to inspire the next generation of arts leaders. (See attachment 1 for a complete list of values)

Responsibility - Voices/CEG belongs to the community at large. Participants act as trustworthy and responsible stewards, seeking to find and direct resources with wisdom and compassion.

Striving to ensure that our efforts are relevant and effective, we are mindful of the opportunity gap that exists in communities of color, as well as low income rural white communities.

Respect for Others - Value and respect all persons, recognizing that persons of disparate gender, race, age, religion, economic level, sexual orientation, and capacity contribute meaningfully to the arts. All persons are treated with honesty, integrity, and fairness.

Diversity - Recognize that there is a diversity of aesthetics and geography, diversity of organizational structure and size, diversity of race and ethnicity, of gender and sexual orientation

Commitment to Collaboration - Participation of the public, funders, elected officials, and others in order to clarify the issues of our communities, to encourage collegial relationships, collaboration, discussion, debate, and exchange of information.

Educate - Promote learning and convey information to interested others. Create learning opportunities that enhance the well-being of our communities.

Communication - There must be clarity, coherence, and simplicity in our communications. Listen and seek to learn from others in order to function with maximum efficacy.

Integration - Integrate cultural equity in rural, suburban, and urban areas

Achievability - Develop ambitious but achievable objectives and measurable practices that are relevant to our goals and our capacity to contribute. Understand that success is predicated on the presence of social capital and viable partners and on sharing and applying insights learned from previous work in the field.

Leverage - Focus on work that has a multiplier effect; we seek points of leverage, including alignment of interests across the private and public sectors.

Relevance - Regularly and consistently ask our community for information regarding significant challenges collectively facing us, as well as for feedback about the value and effectiveness of our work and the relevance of our planned future directions.

WORKING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In an effort to focus the discussion and reach the goal of identifying executable tasks that would move the work forward, groups were created to address in greater depth, key areas of work.

PLANNING & ADVOCACY

Discussion Leader(s): Abel Lopez/Maria Lopez de Leon

Look at existing models for best practices (Art and Democracy Project)

Place Voices/CEG in a larger framework. The effort should not center on saving our organizations but address the question, how can we have strong communities if the CEG's are not able to do their work? Make the case that economic recovery depends on community vitality and a civil society.

There is a need for a dedicated person to follow up, to respond in a timely manner to questions asked or information requested from Voices/CEG's. Consider supporting the presence of a Washington, DC-based person.

Set up meeting with White House liaison and others* for guidance on how to best secure support for the arts under the Recovery Act. Investigate points of entry through the criminal justice system; better understand the definition of "recovery neighborhoods", recovery trust fund (job training, temporary assistance for needy families), work force development fund, and the educational development fund. Have a conversation with Maxine Waters (oversees the Banking Committee) to investigate monies set aside that could be used for non-profits (bridge loans), Community Reinvestment Act (loan forgiveness)

Create a five year plan

Organizational commitment vs. individual

Develop an internal process

Develop key working groups that take on execution of the plan

*NEXT STEPS FOR WHITE HOUSE MEETING:

- ❖ Prepare a long and short list of Voices/CEG organizations that will attend the meeting
- ❖ Develop talking points for the meeting with Community Cultural Development as the central message
- ❖ Contact the White House to discuss the scope of the meeting.
- ❖ Determine what White House representatives should be at the meeting? How many people to include from Voices/CEG's?
- ❖ Schedule conference call with Planning and Advocacy discussion group to work out details, goals of the meeting. What is the ask? What resources are available? Get guidance and advice on how we should navigate the system.

DECOLONIZING DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

Discussion Leader(s): Sonia Manjon/Jack Tchen

Gather data that support our goals. Investigate the possibility of securing funds from the NEA to publish a case study on cultural equity that include an analysis of 10-12 organizations, their history, where they are now, their principles around inter-generational exchange. Data collected through this study can be extracted for other useful purposes.

Engage Americans for the Arts in the data collection effort utilizing their research capacity. Voices/CEG's will work with researchers to frame questions.

1. Data Collection Process
 - a. Number crunching @ the meta level
 - b. Accessing Americans for the Arts resources
 - c. Quantitative indicators
 - d. Juxtaposed against our values, principles and assets
 - e. Collect information from younger generation (youth movements, young scholars/activists)
2. Historical narratives and case studies (representing both generations)
 - a. Identify organizations and artists w/in the context of their communities (NEA & NEH)
 - b. Focus on endangered organizations as an immediate priority
 - c. Look at the generational movements from the 70s and 80s
3. Educational component
 - a. Community cultural arts university w/out walls inclusive of their community partners at the higher education level
 - b. Educational reform at the secondary level
4. Landmarking of organizations
 - a. Long-term documentation
 - b. Establishing an archival process and location for the archival
5. Model: Latino Cultural Citizenship, edited by Rena del Mayor – CSUMB, UCLA, UCSB
 - a. Latino organization archives – on line access

COMMUNICATIONS

Discussion Leader: Carlton Turner

Develop clear talking points (Voice/CEG's represent the cultural interest of America, Voices/CEG's represent the majority, Voices/CEG's believe that everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of their community.) Use language and narrative in UNESCO and United Nations reports/documents to define the policy issues.

How do we use the media in creative ways?

How do we use the existing site to advance our work?

What enhancements need to be made to the site? Functionality

Links to other websites

Build in mechanism that emulates the Obama approach

How often do we communicate, through what vehicle?

Convenings* – NEA will launch an initiative that provides support for organizations to convene to explore how the field is responding to the economic downturn. Plan convening and case studies that capture the work undertaken by younger generation. It is important to engage young people in the planning process. Create a list of events that we could use as a platform to advance CEG.

*NEXT STEPS FOR CONVENINGS

- ❖ Review NEA Guidelines
- ❖ Set up conference call to strategize around the guidelines
- ❖ Discuss suggestions for convenings (intergenerational dialogue at Highlander Center White Oaks or fold into Alternate Roots event, Intersections Conference
- ❖ Develop master list of other convenings/gatherings

CULTURAL EQUITY IN COMMUNITY

Discussion Leader: Bill Aguado

In order to be effective, our work must go beyond traditional partners and models. In many cases, CBO's and individuals don't reflect the culture or creativity of the constituents they serve. It is important that our work develop a means to infiltrate the management of CBO's to ensure cultural equity and ensure the traditions and practices of their constituents are worked into the scheme of their programs and services. Their work must be grounded in the culture of the surrounding communities. There must be 'give and take' between the goals of CBO and constituents. Examples cited include an ESL program where teachers and administrator began to integrate the values, practices and traditions of the students into the ESL process. Many of the parents of the students were active in the Parent Association and were encouraged to assess how the school curriculum represented their children enabling a new dialogue and level of participation to take place.

The Bronx Council on the Arts received a Rockefeller Foundation Innovation Fund grant which will be used to develop a project in partnership with Hostos Community College. The project recognizes, elevates and validates the creativity that is born out of community cultural practices, creativity that is developed outside of mainstream structures with the goal of bringing the music economy back to the community and empowering the community through music.

The project will identify those musicians that did not go through the conservancy or university music school but were self-taught or learned music at local community centers or through neighborhood music programs. Very few have access to performance opportunities in larger venues. Conservatory trained musicians often have better access and success rates than self-taught musicians. Young people are growing up with multiple cultural music influences, the music that comes out of these hybrid mixes stays in the community with limited or no outlet. The project will identify these artists through word of mouth, referrals and provide performance opportunities in alternative spaces and will have a documentation component.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

Discussion Leader: Caron Atlas

Working within and across sectors to advocate for support for the arts and to investigate ways arts and culture can become an integral part of the work being done in other sectors.

Legislative Caucuses, Civil Rights Organizations, Chambers of Commerce, Department of Education, Department of Energy, Institute for Library Services, Department of State, Unions (1199-Hospital Workers, DC-37-Social Workers), Social Justice and Human Rights entities

Work with arts service organizations, funders and advocacy groups to further advance the efforts of Voices/CEG's

Fractured Atlas, Harlem Arts Alliance, Association of Hispanic Arts, Americans for the Arts, Association of Performing Arts Presenters, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, Freelancers Union, Policy Link, Arts Councils, Departments of Cultural Affairs

Strategies might include letter writing campaigns, townhall meetings, roundtables with representative from Voices/CEG organizations placed on the agenda of local and national gatherings to advance the cultural equity message. Create cultural and educational seminars in conjunction with the various sectors

It is important to not let the cultural equity message get lost in this partnerships/collaboration. Cultural equity message should be articulated by Voices/CEG representatives

Potential Allies for CEG's - Pratt Center, Policy Link, Green for All, Center for Social Inclusion

International Collaboration

Making connections to grassroots organizations in other countries doing similar work
Programs that look at the connections between communities in and outside the U.S.
Explore and understand how traditions are shaped or changed once those traditions are brought to the U.S. and then taken back to the country of origins. What is the impact on the respective communities?

***COMMUNITY ARTS – UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS**

Discussion Leader(s) Sonia Manjon/Jack Tchen

Training of the next generation of arts leaders/workers

Community Arts University (Without Walls), which might include a diversity of higher education institutions that would provide a course or a series of courses that collaborate with organizations that are grounded in our communities and have come out of the civil rights, human rights and social justice movements. Example of a course - Cultural Equity: The Community Arts Imperative is included in the packet.

Students in Community Arts programs were being trained to work in communities where they had no culture grounding. Many are coming out of arts programs at public/private institutions. There is a need to introduce programs that come from a different source that is sensitive to the needs of the community.

There is a need for universities/college to include knowledgeable voices who could provide more relevant input in the development of curriculum

How do we take best practices and integrate them into the University Without Walls model?

Reference: "Decolonizing Methodologies"

What is the beginning structure? Could it operate as its own entity and not be linked to any institution? Use the resources that already exist within the institutions.

Community Colleges like Medgar Evers, Hostos, Boriqua – all come out of the movement that is critical to the grounding that is needed.

Other projects that incorporate the idea of University without Wall include the Story Circle project a partnership between Xavier, Tulane, and Dillard; Urban Bush Women Institute; Appalshop's program. NALAC's Leadership Institute

How do we establish the field (scholarly work, writing, research) and have it recognized? There should be university sponsored studies of alternate models of education (think tanks, gatherings around this concept)

Other Models

Discussion Leader: Sandra Garcia Betancourt

Union Institute in Ohio, Vermont, Florida, Sacramento – University Without Walls – heavy on critical thinking and writing, Masters and Ph.D programs. SGB did a creative writing program with them. Example of an effective structure that produces meaningful results. Guided instruction from advisors

***NEXT STEPS FOR UNIVERSITY WITHOUT WALLS:**

- ❖ Sandra, Sonia, Roger, Jack – continue conversations about furthering this work, how could it happen, where would it /could it happen.
- ❖ Look at non-traditional academic environments.
- ❖ Look at both the Community Arts programs at colleges and universities as well as at community colleges
- ❖ Harvest resources for professional development model while at the same time developing resources/supports for the student. (Use labor resource centers)
- ❖ Develop the philosophy and areas of focus for University without Walls
- ❖ Develop a national Advisory Board to vet programs that we are interested in
- ❖ Consider the development of a certificate program at Wesleyan and Medgar Evers
- ❖ Look at other models (NALAC, et al)
- ❖ Research funding opportunities available (Recovery Act, others)
- ❖ Create a marketing presence on the Voices/CEG website
- ❖ Develop a roundtable for University w/o Walls comprised of younger voices that would take place during alternative spring breaks

OPENING REMARKS – *Dudley Cocke*
Pocantico Voices Retreat
April 3-5, 2009

ATTACHMENT 1

Between June 2007 and February 2009, Voices from the Cultural Battlefront convened six regional and national conversations to advance its goal of achieving cultural equity. In the process, Voices developed a convening methodology using Jack Tchen's 2007 Voices keynote analysis of hyper-capitalism (putting profit before people and market before community) as a lens to focus discussion.

Each forum included:

- Collective reflection about the state of the field of organizations with cultural equity and social justice central to their missions.
- Analysis of current public policy and our field's response to that policy.
- Planning for action.

There was consensus:

- Thirty years of unregulated free market capitalism that has put profit before the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional traditions and lives of people has markedly weakened civic life and community bonds.
- Complementary public and private arts and culture policy over this period has destroyed or substantially weakened nonprofit arts and cultural organizations dedicated to serving the vast majority of Americans.

Persistent questions included:

- How did we who serve the cultural interests of the majority of Americans find ourselves relegated to minority status?
- Did we as a field contribute to our own marginalization and, if so, how?
- What are the opportunities now?

A partial answer to all three questions: As a field, we have allowed ourselves to become fragmented and distracted, consistently failing to rally around our common interests.

I am hoping this weekend we will reinvigorate, broaden, and deepen our critical discourse (sharpen and build one another) in order to:

- Lay the groundwork for an explosion of new knowledge production about the theory and practice of cultural equity.
- Shore-up our internal standards of accountability related to principles and practice.
- Encourage a new generation of leaders in the international movement for cultural equity and social justice.
- Prepare ourselves for the local, regional, national, and international debates about cultural policy which are taking shape everywhere around us.

GROUP DISCUSSION – CORE VALUES

Accountability	Diligence
Artists educated at conservatory/university and the influence on their work	Diversity
Authenticity	Encourage Professional/Creative Development
Awareness	Engagement/dialogue
Belief in the wisdom of the community	Enthusiasm
Bill of Cultural Rights (Right to language, history safe community preserve heritage, relevant education, right to mentor, right to reasonable share of resources)	Equality
Boldness	Ethical
Caring	Excellence
Challenge	Familiarity
Change	Extended family
Change Agent	Family/Extended family
Clarity	Family – disintegration of family, replaced by extended family of non-related individuals
Collaboration	Fortitude
Comfort	Freedom
Commitment	Full range of creativity
Communication	Hard Work
Community	Home-like environment, create comfortable, safe place
Community educators	Honesty
Compassion	Honor
Connect with the next generation (mentoring) ‘Go to them’	How do we operationalize our work
Continuing the legacy	Human Value
Continuity	Humility
Continuous Improvement	Importance of leading by example (recognize and understand the value of the organization)
Contribution	Inclusion
Cooperation	Influence of family on our community, on our thinking and action
Courage	Innovators
Creativity	Inspiration
Critical discourse	Integration – inter connectedness
Cultivation of talent, create safety zone	Integrity
Cultural assets	Inter-generational
Cultural Equity	

ATTACHMENT 2

Investigating	Reconciliation and Reconstruction
Knowledge from elders, community relationship	Recovery and reclaiming our culture
Knowledge/wisdom that comes from the elders/community relationship vs. Education from a conservatory/university	Reflection
Leadership (within our organizations, community)	Relationships
Leadership (hierarchy, where do the arts fall)	Respect and reverence for self-taught artists
Legacy/continuity	Responsibility
Local knowledge	Responsibility for the inherent genius of every cultural community
Meet them (young people) where they are, set an example	Rigorous nature of the work
Modesty	Self-determination, Self-definition, 1 st Voice
Money is not the motivator	Self-sustaining
Mutual respect	Self-worth
Need to follow through	Social assets
Non-violence	Social Justice
Open-minded	Spirit/ritual – present in our work
Personal Growth	Support the process vs the product
Points/language that we agree upon and incorporate in to our conversation	Survivors
Positive Attitude	Teamwork
Power of people to make change	Thinking and action – impacts the work, self-taught
Presence	Transformation
Preservation	Transparency
Preserve integrity – maintain original connections, purity of cultural space	Up-to-date knowledge
Pride in community	Value young and old
Questioning	Visibility
Recognizing the spaces that community recreates	Visionaries/Risk takers
	We are innovators of culture field
	What was passed down?
	Wholistic
	Work reflects the community