

Belonging In Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund 2020 Awardees & Panelists

With deep gratitude to the field, we are honored to present the 2020 Reflect & Reimagine projects. Through these grants, Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund invests in Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) cultural practitioners who are rooted in Oakland, who are in deep relationship with at least one BIPOC community here, and who use their cultural practice to radically imagine justice for Oakland. This cohort presents a dynamic representation of the possible paths to a racially just Oakland.

2020 Awardees

Awardees each received a grant of \$25,000 for one year.

Asian Refugees & Immigrants Reflect on Anti-Black Racism In Our Community

Cultural Practitioner: Dohee Lee Puri Arts

Fiscal Sponsor: Chinese for Affirmative Action Project

Project Description: Often fleeing their own desperate situations, Asian refugees and immigrants come to this country and enter an environment infused with anti-Black narratives and new forms of othering. *Asian Refugees & Immigrants Reflect on Anti-Black Racism In Our Community* will convene leaders from Oakland's Asian communities to explore the wounds from home countries and those both suffered and inflicted through the systems of racism here. Reflection and dialogue that will culminate in a community land ritual will be led by award-winning Dohee Lee Puri Arts and Asian Refugees United with a goal of building an anti-Black racism curriculum for Asian organizations.

Hella Love

Lead Cultural Practitioner: Darren Colston

Fiscal Sponsor: Brothers on the Rise Project

Project Description: Hella Love seeks to reimagine ways the community can engage in the process of film production—from concept to screen—as a way to disrupt the structural erasure, exploitation, and appropriation of the stories of Oakland’s Black and Brown people. Led by 4th-generation Oaklander and filmmaker Darren Colston, Hella Love will work with community members to critically imagine new ways of professional storytelling that are generative, equitable, and healing.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Cultural Practitioner: Regina Evans

Fiscal Sponsor: Lower Bottom Playaz

Project Description: Poet/playwright/actor and survivor Regina Evans will lead *INFRASTRUCTURE*, an excavation of historical/current complicity in slavery/child sex trafficking and how it is manifesting along International Boulevard. Researching slave and abolitionist narratives and the material culture of slavery, Evans with a team of artists will unearth the ancestral wisdom of female slaves to find the “how” of their fight for liberation to inform struggles against the commodification of the Black female body today.

“My hope is that the injustice of child sex trafficking will begin to be brought to its knees here in Oakland, Ca, and that young Black girls being trafficked will receive the care that is necessary as they begin to walk a pathway into freedom. In order to do so, sustained support needs to flow forth from beloved community members, as well as from infrastructure entities (banks, small businesses, churches, hotels, transportation systems, etc) if we are to unify for the sake of the child.”

~Regina Evans

Janga's House

Cultural Practitioner: Ayodele Nzinga

Fiscal Sponsor: Lower Bottom Playaz

Project Description: "If your story is always told from the outside - how can it be your story?" Janga's House will delve into this question along with communal memories of place and narratives of thriving in the post-gentrification "sundown town" of Oakland. Writer and theater artist Ayodele Nzinga, playwright Cat Brooks, and a cohort of Black women film and stage writers will research and develop a theater piece that explores Black voices unmodulated by the gaze of white supremacy. Through community interviews, participatory research, and healing practices, the project centers Black Aesthetics as central to Oakland's past, present, and future.

Loveolution

Cultural Practitioner: [Dame Taylor](#)

Fiscal Sponsor: Eastside Art Alliance/Eastside Cultural Center

Project Description: Loveolution is an interdisciplinary, community-based, music-centered approach that explores what true equity and justice can look like in Oakland. The process includes local music events to center Black joy, a BIPOC artist speaker series, and intra-community dialogues.

"My project gives me as a person of color the unique opportunity to control the narrative. I have always believed the media to be one of the most dangerous components to our society and frontrunner in racial injustice and systemic racism. I am ready to take our power back and control the narrative of just how beautiful, and valuable my people are. In Oakland I have the responsibility of producing content for the sole purpose of edifying my community and being a beacon of a light to the people and powers that take us for granted."

~Dame Taylor

Mak Tuupentak Tirinikma/Our Arbor Awakens

Cultural Practitioners: Corrina Gould, Deja Gould

Organization: Sogorea Te' Land Trust

Project Description: *Mak Tuupentak Tirinikma/Our Arbor Awakens* will cultivate a reciprocal relationship with the land by making communal space for ceremony, regalia making, and Chochenyo Ohlone language revitalization. The project asks "How do we honor and celebrate our traditions in a world that is profoundly different from the one they come from?"

Possibility of Play

Cultural Practitioner: Dania Cabello, Arjuna Sayyeed

Fiscal Sponsor: Oakland Parks and Recreation Foundation

Project Description: *Possibility of Play* centers freestyle, noncompetitive soccer arts in public space as a practice in joy for Black and Brown communities, transforming public spaces into landscapes for a liberated future. The project will co-create a framework for critical play with community partners by documenting practices, tools, testing the model in small gatherings, and by creating a social media campaign to further the reach of radical joy.

SPULU Visual & Performing Artist

Cultural Practitioner: Spencer "SPULU" Pulu

Fiscal Sponsor: Social Good Fund

Project Description: SPULU, a Tongan cultural practitioner, choreographer and organizer dreams of a cultural space designed by and for Oakland's Pacific Islander communities. With a cultural strategist framework, SPULU will convene Pacific Islanders, specifically Tongans, to imagine what it would mean and look like to have a cultural center in San Antonio. What would having a space like this mean for racial equity throughout Oakland?

Town Force One

Cultural Practitioners: Christina Chung, Wahab Algarmi, Jimmie Robinson

Fiscal Sponsor: Oakland Kids First

Project Description: Town Force One is a professionally crafted comic series that amplifies local BIPOC youth stories. The project asserts what it would look like for everyone to feel responsible for Oakland's history and culture. Stories created through interviews with youth will inform the next comic in the series, which will also include discussions topics and curriculum.

"Artists are integral to exploring the opportunity of radical possibilities of a racially just Oakland because we make the imaginary real, and breathe dimension and life into that vision. Our call to action is to share this with others as a means to connect, share, and work together to achieve this!"

~Town Force One

Tu Lucha es mi Lucha (Unity is Power)

Cultural Practitioner: NAKA Dance Theater (José Navarrete, Debby Kajiyama); Mujeres Unidas y Activas

Fiscal Sponsor: Dancers' Group

Project Description: *Tu Lucha es mi Lucha (Unity is Power)* will explore the intersectionality of racism and gender-based violence toward female-identified and gender-nonconforming people, and seeks to build Black/Brown unity to end systemic violence and racism. Through a year-long series of virtual dance, movement, and personal narrative workshops led by NAKA Dance Theater, Black teaching artists, and MUA members, participants will explore ways to heal from trauma and unravel internalized colorism and anti-Black racism.

Whose history is remembered?

Cultural Practitioners: Walter Hood, Linda Yamane

Organization: Friends of Peralta Hacienda Historical Park

Project Description: *Whose history is remembered?* is a collaboration of master weaver and poet Linda Yamane (Ohlone), landscape artist and MacArthur fellow Walter Hood, Peralta Hacienda staff, and community members to animate visions of Native Americans and other Indigenous communities around monuments and historic sites that ignore, deny, or misrepresent their histories and erase their contemporary presence. Imagining a form of "anti-monument" not tied to racist systems the project participants will explore the creation of new symbolism that promotes healing and belonging for Indigenous and other community members of color.

Youth ARTS (Addressing Real Traumas and Solutions) Project

Cultural Practitioner: Leilani Salvador

Fiscal Sponsor: Social Good Fund

Project Description: Youth ARTS (Addressing Real Traumas and Solutions) Project will train Youth Artist Facilitators to lead ART circles, conduct research, and provide them with healing tools and leadership development. The project includes city-wide youth gatherings to assess, address, and envision health, safety, and peace for Oakland youth and families.

"BAY-Peace's Youth ARTS (Addressing Real Traumas and Solutions) is a comprehensive program that combines Community Based Art and Youth Participatory Action Research methods in order to bring about healing and solutions from youth most impacted by violence. We center their leadership and experiences in order to directly address the trauma and develop solutions to transform the circumstances which perpetuate it. Our Youth ARTS collective participates in an internship where we utilize political education, liberation art, vocational training, community organizing and healing/personal transformation work in order to build their leadership and health as the next generation of visionaries who believe in the importance of art within the movement for peace, healing and racial justice in Oakland and beyond. Ultimately, they will facilitate healing-centered focus groups and collect surveys with and for youth in order to generate data that will be used to devise a community based art

project and youth-centered recommendations related to campaigns that will transform violence extending from our schools, to our homes and our streets."

~Youth ARTS (Addressing Real Traumas and Solutions) Project

2020 Panelists

Belonging in Oakland: A Just City Cultural Fund benefited from the voices of community-based cultural leaders and activists in the application review process. We sought and found people with lived experience and knowledge of the historical grounding and cultural practices of a wide range of communities impacted by systemic racism and other forms of injustice. Knowing the weight of the responsibility shouldered by our review panelists, we are honored by their generous contribution of insights to the process and their commitment to justice in Oakland. We wish to acknowledge and sincerely thank them for the diligence, wisdom, and compassion they brought to the task put before them.

Brett Cook is an award-winning artist and educator who uses his creative practice to transform outer and inner worlds of being. For over two decades, Cook has produced installations, exhibitions, curricula, and events widely across the United States and internationally.

CB Smith-Dahl is a Director at Together Pictures, a creative video production agency based in Oakland, California. CB was one of a team of camera operators on 900 Women and Angola Prison Rodeo, which was nominated for an Academy Award.

Jacqueline Garcia-Martinez is a warrior scholar from Oakland, CalifAztlán, "The town". In 2010, after experiencing family separation by the unjust immigration system, she took action and cofounded 67 Sueños alongside her peers and mentor Pablo Paredes.

Jewelle Gomez (Cape Verdean/Wampanoag/Ioway) is the author of eight books including the first Black Lesbian vampire novel, *THE GILDA STORIES*, winner of two Lambda Literary Awards. Her writing has appeared in hundreds of anthologies and she has been a grantmaker with the San Francisco Arts Commission, New York State Council on the Arts, and the Horizons Foundation.

Pianist. Emcee. Producer. Bandleader. Sideman Music historian. **Kev Choice** wears many hats, and all of them fit. Blessed with prodigious talent, plus the skill and dedication to his craft to pull it off, the Oakland-based artist is redefining what it means to be a musician in this day and age.

Leo Esclamado has worked with grassroots communities as a community organizer for over 15 years. With community leaders, he has fought for an inclusive community for all people of color, immigrants & refugees. Currently, Leo practices & uplifts Boogaloo - the original African American street dance from Oakland - and promotes this dance through connecting Oakland's original dancers intergenerationally with the global Popping community.

Malkia Devich Cyril is an award winning writer and public speaker on issues of digital rights, narrative power, Black liberation and collective grief; as well as the lead founder and former Executive Director of MediaJustice — a national hub boldly advancing racial justice, rights and dignity in a digital age. After more than 10 years of organizational leadership, Devich-Cyril now serves as a Senior Fellow at Media Justice.

Born and raised in Northern California, pianist/composer **Ruthie Dineen** studied at UC Berkeley and then at the California Jazz Conservatory. With degrees in music, as well as history and a Masters in Social Work, Dineen is committed to music performance and composition, as well as social justice. Since the fall of 2009 she's been staff/faculty at East Bay Center for the Performing Arts in Richmond, California, where she is currently the Managing Director.