



A Cultural New Deal For Cultural and Racial Justice

We are the artists, the culture bearers, the healers of the spirit, the first responders to the community's soul.

In this moment, we face four major threats to our shared existence: a global pandemic; militarized state and vigilante violence, significantly directed at Black people; environmental degradation; and an economic crisis. All of these have been shaped and exacerbated by racism and white supremacy. Black, Indigenous, Native American, Latinx, Chicax, Arab, MENASA (Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian), Asian, Pacific Islander, and other communities of color, especially those who are Disabled/Deaf and/or LGBTQIA+/Two-Spirit, are dying of these threats – by disease, police/carceral and racial violence, and the health and social inequities that force us into premature death.

The main question that we all confront now is whether we will emerge from this era choosing to maintain the same systems and beliefs that support the current culture of division and death or if we will instead move forward toward a more just, shared future, guided by worldviews that foster collaboration and mutuality.

We come together now to declare that **we refuse to return to the white supremacist narratives of segregation, extraction, and domination that deem some of us worthy of**

sustenance, nurturing, and protection, and others of us surplus, exploitable, and expendable.

In opposition to that worldview, we believe in the power of arts and culture to define and delight, to provoke and persuade, to edify and unite. Our artistic and cultural practices lift up the fullness of our shared humanity, sustain the well-being of all, and lead our social imagination toward transforming our societies and our world.

We recognize that this nation was founded on stolen land and built by stolen labor. Freeing the land means the return of Indigenous lands. We acknowledge that any work we do in the name of justice and healing of this planet must start with respect and support for Indigenous peoples, their knowledge, and their right to self determination and tribal sovereignty.

We also acknowledge our indebtedness to the movement for Black freedom, and to Black freedom culture, which articulates our dreams of liberation and makes them tangible and imaginable. We will not be free until Black people are free. We stand in defense of Black lives.

The violence of racism has gagged us and hidden our hearts. We know that invisibility, underrepresentation, and misrepresentation exacerbate injustice, dehumanization, and premature death. We who have been silenced for so long must be able to tell our stories. We chant down the monoculture of white supremacy with an expansive diversity of voices.

We assert that place matters, and we root ourselves in community. We are stewards of the places in which we live. **We believe in the wisdom of directly impacted communities to be our own storytellers and leaders, to reinscribe history and shape the future.**

We ask ourselves the question: arts and culture for what? We work in culture and the arts because we believe that stories weave together the moral fabric of our societies. We aim to build and sustain our communities, those most impacted by racial and cultural inequity. We believe that art and culture is never separate from the undoing of inequities in health, employment, wealth, detention, incarceration, deportation, housing, and the environment.

We know that we work in an arts and culture ecosystem that not only reflects the inequities caused by racism and white supremacy, but also reproduces and reinforces those inequities. As leaders and philanthropists talk about recovery for the arts and culture sector, we ask what direction that recovery will take: will it rebuild systems that maintain racial and cultural injustice? Or will it begin to reverse the legacies of racism and white supremacy in building a new one?

To unmake these systems that oppress all of us, we fight for *cultural equity*, which we define as the condition that all people are fairly resourced in artistic and cultural expression and fairly represented in systems of exhibition, performance, and decision-making – which will lead to a redistribution of cultural power.

We fight for *cultural justice*, which we define as the healing of the erasure, suppression, and marginalization of people’s artistic and cultural practices. Cultural justice restores and builds for communities of color ways of living, being, and sense-making, and allows all of us to express ourselves and be recognized in our full, complex humanity.

Cultural equity and cultural justice are essential for *racial justice*, which we define as the systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. Racial justice moves us all toward a more

vibrant, multiracial democracy that advances the self-determination and the sovereignty of all peoples.

We know that the health of our communities depends upon the health of our cultures. Arts and cultural ecosystems keep our communities resilient in hard times. Community health and wellness depend upon strong cultural institutions and strong local cultural economies. We are here to redistribute cultural power from those who believe in domination to those who believe in interdependency, sustainability, and the protection of people and the earth. We work to build communities rooted in openness, belonging, and freedom *for all*.

For these reasons, we call for A Cultural New Deal. It is a call to invest in, support, and sustain the builders of our imagination and the keepers of our cultures.

Artists and cultural bearers are never separate from the communities they claim. Their creative ecosystems never exist in isolation. We believe that our work aligns with those of movement-developed platforms, such as those from the Movement for Black Lives, the Poor People's Campaign, Just Recovery, the Women's March, the Green New Deal, Just Transition, the Harriet Tubman Collective, BYP100, the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women, and The People's Bailout, whose agendas broadly advance racial and social justice. We add to those our calls to build a healthy, vital, and just culture so that we can anchor, build, and sustain our communities.

In order to end these four existential threats exacerbated by racism and white supremacy, we must pivot from a culture of division and death toward one that values equity, justice, and life. We are not going back to an arts ecosystem that pretended to be neutral but instead preserved deadly whiteness. That culture has failed us. It is time to reset.

We call upon all who agree with us to join with us to meet the urgency of our time.

A CULTURAL NEW DEAL FOR CULTURAL AND RACIAL JUSTICE

We call for an end to racial and cultural inequity and injustice as Black, Indigenous, Native American, Latinx, Chicanx, Arab, MENASA (Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian), Asian, Pacific Islander, and other people of color. Those embodying the intersection of these identities as also Disabled/Deaf and/or LGBTQIA+/Two-Spirit must be centered in this work. We call for:

I. The support, recognition, and prioritization of the leadership of Black people, Indigenous peoples, and People of Color.

- a. We declare, “No meetings about us, without us.” We should not be a minority at the table.
- b. We call on institutions, organizations, and culture-industry businesses to immediately address inequities in and expand the equitable hiring and promotion of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), especially at the senior leadership level.
- c. We call for the redefinition of “recovery ready” funds to be distributed not according to organizational budget size, but according to measures of community trust and cultural competency.
- d. We call for the building of capacity of BIPOC cultural resource organizations in Black, Indigenous, and communities of color that serve as anchors in our communities.
- e. We call upon historically white-led and white-serving organizations to recognize that, in order to transform themselves, they should be learners of cultural equity from leaders of BIPOC communities.

II. The reversal of long-term inequities in funding, hiring, and resources in the arts and culture sector.

- a. We call for relief funds, stimulus funds, and jobs for artists and arts and cultural organizations for and by Black, Indigenous, and communities of color.

- b. We call upon funders, donors, governments, and businesses to redress severe racial and cultural inequity in funding arts organizations for and by Black, Indigenous, and communities of color.
- c. We call for investment in BIPOC-led businesses in the arts and culture industries and sectors.
- d. We call upon funders, donors, governments, and businesses to divest themselves of investments in companies that do not practice cultural and racial equity and commit to capital investment that uplifts our collective humanity.
- e. We call upon large-budget, predominantly-white organizations to disclose racial demographics of furloughs, lay-offs, and program shrinkage.
- f. We call upon all funders, donors, governments, and culture-industry businesses to establish and be accountable for equity plans, including furthering diversity of professional full-time staff and boards, providing benefits to all levels of staff, implementing community benefit and anti-racism trainings, and paying artists and community members for labor on advisory groups, panels, and other services.
- g. We call upon funders, donors, governments, and businesses to collaboratively develop and implement community benefit agreements that include decision making participants and processes, budget transparency, percentage of dollars spent in the community, % for art, and other specific and ongoing benefits of programs and projects targeting BIPOC communities.

III. Investment in arts and cultural ecosystems for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color.

- a. We call upon all mainstream arts organizations, elected officials, culture-industry leaders, and governments to invest, protect, and sustain arts and cultural spaces for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color.
- b. We call upon funders, donors, governments, and businesses to support and equitably fund culturally-rooted BIPOC arts service organizations, with a demonstrated history of trust in their communities.

- c. We call upon funders, donors, governments, and businesses to support and equitably fund Cultural Community Anchors – arts producing organizations that are based in Black, Indigenous, and communities of color, particularly those leading edge organizations that have survived despite being under-funded for decades.
- d. We call upon historically white-led and white-serving organizations to forge Community Benefits Agreements with BIPOC communities that center cultural equity and redistribute funds and power to them.

IV. Investment in building healthy communities through centering cultural and racial equity.

- a. We call for the support of cultural institutions and local cultural economies in order to build healthy communities.
- b. We call for support for place-based cultural practices directly tied to the intergenerational education of children, both in schools and in community cultural spaces—such as “escuelitas” or Freedom Schools that elevate a community’s history and culture.
- c. We call for the preservation of public spaces as protected spaces for civic expression, congregation, and experience.

V. Accountability, commitment, and integrity in the pursuit of cultural and racial justice.

- a. This Call is intended to support work in local, national, and global contexts and should be adapted to specific contexts to hold leaders, policy-makers, and institutions – and ourselves – responsible, accountable, and transparent in achieving equity and justice. We call for change processes that include metrics of progress, defined lines of oversight, and timetables. Change must be measurable to be meaningful.

Who We Are

This Call was spearheaded by ArtChangeUS, the Center for Cultural Power, First Peoples Fund, the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, Race Forward, and Sipp Culture. It was written by Michele Kumi Baer, Jeff Chang, María López De León, Tara Dorabji, Kassandra Khalil, Lori Pourier, Favianna Rodriguez, Nayantara Sen, Carlton Turner, Roberta Uno, and Elizabeth Webb, in consultation with Sonya Childress, Perspective Fund; Pamela Peters; Randy Reinholz, Native Voices; Lula and Erwin Washington, and Tamica Washington-Miller, Lula Washington Dance Theatre; Dyani White Hawk, and Carrie Mae Weems. It was translated by Yahaira Carrillo Rosales.

Together we have co-created a Call that speaks from and across our locations in Oakland, CA; Jackson, MS; Lakota Territory, SD; New York City, NY; San Antonio, TX; Shakopee, MN; Marmora, NJ; Charlottesville, VA; and Los Angeles, CA, and with your support, connects manifold other points between and beyond.



Our Intention

The Cultural New Deal for Cultural and Racial Justice is a call for us to transform our personal, institutional, and global thinking. We believe that culture moves before policy. We believe that culture endures beyond politics. We wrote this Call because our work in culture and arts is inextricably linked to larger social movements for change. We invite you to adopt and adapt this Call to your specific contexts to hold leaders, policy-makers, and institutions – and ourselves – responsible, accountable, and transparent in achieving equity and justice.

In these unprecedented times, as justice movements converge, many of us have asked ourselves what the stakes are for the culture we want to advance. We concluded that we needed to change the conditions under which we artists and culture bearers labor and live. The Cultural New Deal for Cultural and Racial Justice points us toward new understandings of how we together can build a culture that is inclusive, sustainable, and leads us toward justice and freedom for all. We urge timetables that are immediate and demonstrate change that is not aspirational, but concrete, measurable and visible within 1-3 budget cycles. We offer this Call in the spirit of advancing accountability and collective responsibility, and urge you to activate these ideas within your work and our shared future.