Reimagining the field and driving for systems change nationally

ALAS 2021

FEBRUARY 2021

WESTAF
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“We are always dealing with the promise or construct of what we imagine the fabric of America to be, and in the cultural and creative industries in particular our real practice of making is a constant reweaving of that fabric.” - Cézanne Charles

Panelists

Cézanne Charles, Co-Founder, rootoftwo (Michigan)

Jen Cole, Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University (Arizona)

Abdiel López, Center for Cultural Innovation (California)

Call to action

● Continue to support artist relief funds individually, organizationally, and collectively.
● For those of us involved in grantmaking, support non-501c3 structures like mutual aid societies and abandon extractive grantmaking practices in favor of trust-based philanthropy.
● Include artists in participatory processes including budgeting, particularly within the public sector for example.
● Remember that budgets are moral documents and in that sense pay living wages, consider where and how you procure services, and make decisions about both based on equity.

Moving from inherited models to models we create - putting the (creative) worker at the center

● The model we have inherited centers institutions and systems rather than artists and creative workers. A transformed model needs to center humans and creative workers.
● In a model that puts workers/humans at the center, the public sector, solidarity movements, and communities are all areas in which artists can interact to be agents of change. Artists/creative workers have a role to play, of their own volition, outside of the “arts system.”
● There are many opportunities for our field to learn from racial and social justice movements within public health, housing, and other areas. These domains may provide artists with even more of an opportunity to influence change, because of the evolution of equitable practices in these spaces.
● In terms of readiness, there may be better collaborators outside the arts for those advancing social justice than within the arts.
• We are in a rare moment to influence a better future, and we need to “go where the movement is happening” and support where we find ourselves—as members, allies, accomplices, co-conspirators.

Looking at leadership in a fundamentally different way
• We should consider where artists are leading us, trust, and follow. Artists are leaders.
• We have social change leaders within institutions though we may not recognize them as such—BIPOC women in public agencies are just one example of this. There is a “catalytic class” that in many ways “holds change,” or put another way, has the ability to change rules in existing systems.

Reimagining the social contract with artists/creative workers
• There are three dimensions of reframing the social contract with artists—conditions, resources, and community.
• Part of a renewed social contract being sought (that we also find in larger conversations about a new economic paradigm) are the citizens dividend, portability of benefits, and universal basic income.
• As we use economic arguments like the creative economy to support the arts, we must move from a quantitative model that serves as justification of the arts based on macroeconomic data to a values-driven model based on the real economy that supports living wages, portable healthcare and other benefits, and the day to day realities of creative workers.