Grantmakers in the Arts
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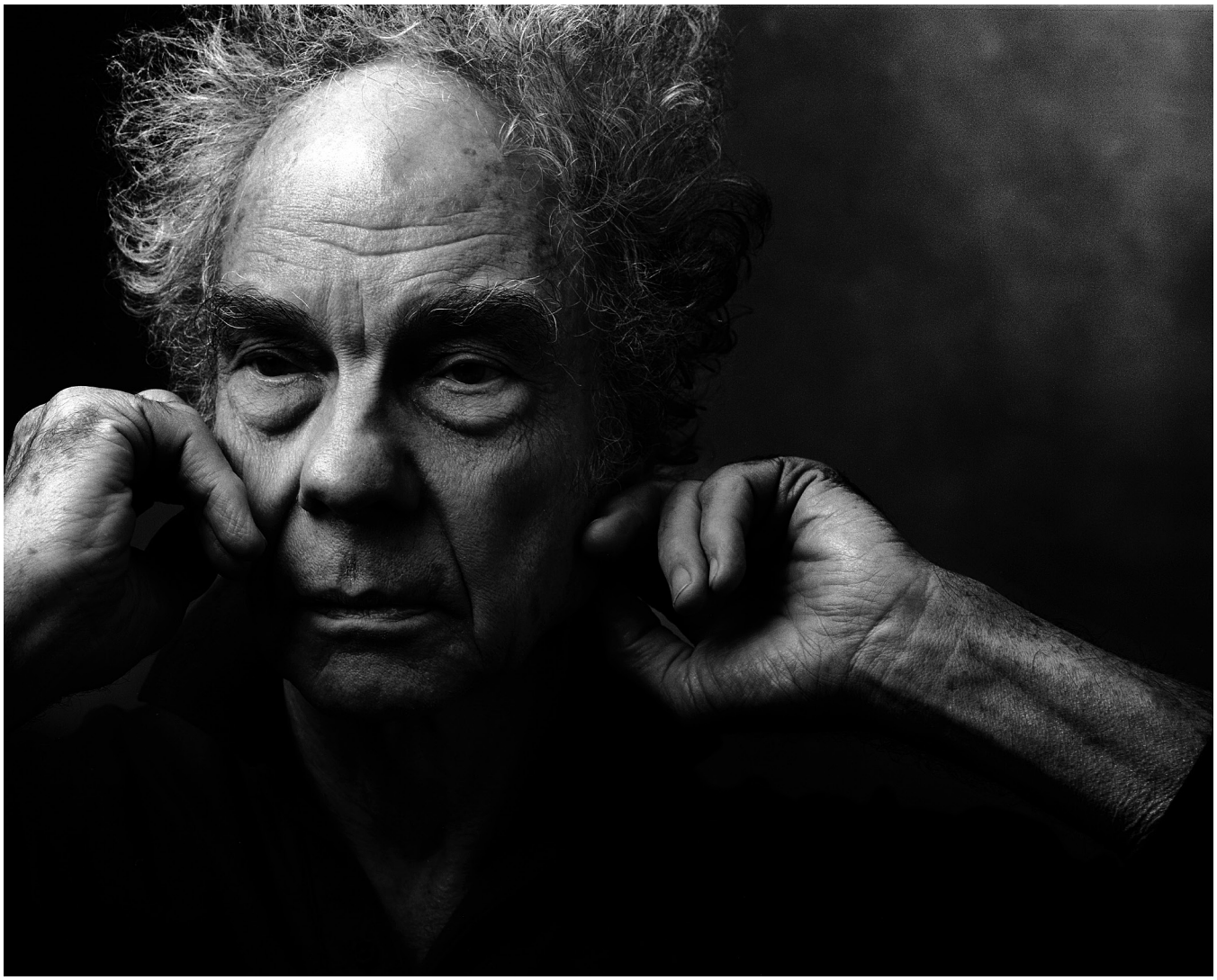
Ideas and Information on Arts and Culture



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Grantmakers In The Arts Reader: Volume 20, No. 3, Fall 2009

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READINGS

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FROM AN EDITOR

These days it appears to be *de rigueur* that every article on philanthropy opens with a short paragraph setting the background of the economic downturn and its effect on our work. So, there you have it. Now that's out of the way.

The recession has brought to mind the work of Charles Darwin. *The ability to adapt to a changing environment* has become increasingly important to the success and survival of nonprofit organizations. Both GIA and the *Reader* are evolving, and this is the first full issue published with our new team in place. Frances Phillips and I continue as coeditors, now joined by Executive Director Janet Brown. We have also added Margaret Todd Maitland in St. Paul, Minnesota, who now serves as our contract copyeditor. Maitland is a former editor of the *Ruminator Review* and the *Hungry Mind Review* and brings a wealth of literary experience to the *Reader*.

Beginning with the next issue, Winter 2010, our editorial committee will also be joined by Claudine Brown, Nathan Cummings Foundation, and Judi Jennings, Kentucky Foundation for Women.

The *Reader* reinforces the connections among our many program offerings. A number of the articles in this issue have direct ties to the themes and topics our members provided for the GIA 2009 conference, *Navigating the Art of Change*, in Brooklyn, New York, October 18–21.

Original research commissioned by GIA in this issue is "Graceful Exit: Thoughts on End-of-Life Issues for Arts Organizations," by Claudia Bach (page 11). This piece examines potential roles and actions for funders facing the inevitable closing of grantee organizations and includes a "checklist" of considerations and recommendations. This topic will be explored further at the conference in a session of the same name.

Other aspects of the challenging economy are addressed in "The Economics of Arts, Artists, and Culture: Making a Better Case," by Ann Markusen (page 18); and "A Conversation between Private Grantmakers and the NEA," by Janet Brown (page 38.)

The voices of individual artists in this issue include choreographer Margaret Jenkins (page 42); and poet Judith Tannenbaum (page 44.)

Art and Social Justice is addressed from some unusual and eclectic perspectives in this issue, including "Just One Dress To Walk 800 Miles," a look at incidents in American history through the voices of Native women, by Pamela J. Kingfisher (page 23); "The Globe," an essay on diversity (and lack thereof) in audiences for the performing arts, by Richard Rodriguez (page 21): and "The Creative Class of Color in New York," research findings by Yasmin Ramirez (page 34).

As in the past, we welcome suggestions and story ideas from our many *Reader* "scouts," a cadre that you are all welcome to join at any time. Just send us ideas for articles or pieces published elsewhere that would be of interest to this audience, and we'll send you the *Reader* scouts' secret handshake.

Tommer Peterson
Deputy Director
Grantmakers in the Arts

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Grantmakers in the Arts

Our Mission
The mission of GIA is to provide leadership and service to advance the use of philanthropic resources on behalf of arts and culture.

Our Vision
- Arts, culture, and creative expression will always be valued as essential to human experience;
- Robust, thoughtful, and diverse systems exist to support artists and arts organizations; and
- The arts continue to inspire lively and engaged philanthropy.

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No Recess during the Recession

Janet Brown

I have visited groups of GIA members and nonmembers in every region of the country this year, from Boston to Los Angeles and Atlanta to Seattle. It has been an interesting first year as executive director of GIA, to say the very least. What I have observed is that grantmakers have not taken a "recess" during this challenging time. In many ways, for private and community foundations especially, there could have been a pulling away from grantees, a kind of "we can't help you" attitude. Instead, what I've witnessed are dedicated program managers attempting to produce as much or more impact from their granting budgets with fewer dollars than before. There is more communication between funders and greater transparency and honesty between granters and grantees. Funders have not hung out a sign that says "grants down: out to recess." Instead, they are working harder with fewer resources, protecting investments made over decades to the cultural and creative communities we serve.

My talks with grantmakers parallel the findings researched and reported by Holly Sidford, who interviewed twenty-two diverse funders for GIA's online summer *Reader* ("In the Face of Recession, What Are Arts Funders Doing?"). Funders are "taking their own medicine." A great many of them are assessing their own relevancy, who they are funding and why, and the effectiveness of their programs. There is also a realization that the field is fragile and under-capitalized and that, in part, funders may have contributed to this situation. The effects of funder-directed programs, changing criteria, boutique projects, and the expectation of grantees to continually grow with new programs are all concepts under the microscope at the moment.

In her *Reader* article, Sidford explains, "adaptation for funders means paying greater attention to the interplay of social and creative purposes, and ensuring that arts groups have a base of community support that will sustain them." Many funders are asking questions about the role of granters in developing sustainability and the financial structure to best accomplish that goal.

Many have moved to general operating support as their answer; many are repurposing grants in reaction to financial crises. Big questions are being raised: Can funding programs be both prescriptive or responsive? Do our criteria and application process reflect the goals of efficiency and accountability we require from our grantees?

This has not been easy work. There have been funders and arts groups that have dissolved. There are still public agencies on the chopping block. Grantmakers in the Arts has stepped up its communication this year, sharing our research and that of our members and providing a respite, we hope, for funders to analyze and share their tough decisions with one another. We will move out of this recession in stages. Some sectors will come back before others. In the meantime, grantmakers will continue to assess their work and how their decisions today will impact the future of artmaking in their communities.

Janet Brown
Executive Director
Grantmakers in the Arts

Hiring for Turnover

A Modest Proposal

Claire Peeps

When I was in college, I had a great work-study job at an organization that placed students in internships with local nonprofits. It was a small outfit and a jack-of-all-trades sort of job. I answered phones, mocked up application forms, stuffed envelopes, filed, ran errands, organized open houses, and learned how to write a business letter. It wasn't the sort of job you'd want to stay in for too long, but it was a fabulous introduction to the nonprofit sector. It gave me practical office skills to boot.

Today, I find myself in a small office again, at the Durfee Foundation in Los Angeles, having worked at a variety of larger organizations along the way. We have a bigger budget and scope than did my college post, but the administrative needs are pretty much the same — filing, database management, correspondence, light bookkeeping, events production. It's still the kind of work that gets stale after a while.

To keep it fresh, I've marketed the job as a two-to-three year executive assistant position "ideally suited to a student who has recently graduated, or who may be between training programs, who wishes to gain practical experience in the nonprofit sector as part of a platform for future studies and work in the nonprofit arena."

Despite the fact that I have to rehire and retrain every couple of years (not so bad, after all), it's been a successful, satisfying, and surprisingly easy strategy, and one I'd recommend to other foundations — especially to smaller operations, where there might not be much opportunity for upward mobility.

I know it seems counterintuitive to hire for turnover — especially right now, when we're all just trying to hang on by our fingernails to any job at all. But careers need to advance, even in a bad economy, and it turns out that billing the more mundane tasks of the foundation's management as a stepping-stone to future opportunities has been a good solution to the dilemma of the office doldrums. Give me a recent graduate who wants to change the world, and I'll give her a crash course on the possible paths to her goal. What better perch, after all, from which to observe the work of dozens, or hundreds, of innovative, change-making organizations?

We've had four "office manager/executive assistants" in the past nine years — Christine, David, Sarah, and Daniel. They all joined Durfee shortly after finishing their undergraduate degrees, and all planned to go on to graduate school, though they hadn't settled on their course of study.

Now, Christine has an MBA and a master's in urban planning, and is working in transportation and land use, at a for-profit company. David, after working in China for two years and then launching an online merchandising company in the US, has co-founded a nonprofit that uses comedy improv as a healing activity for kids, seniors, soldiers, and others suffering from depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. Sarah is due to arrive back in the States after a two-year tour of duty with the Peace Corps in Mongolia and plans to work in the public sector before going on to graduate school and working abroad. Daniel is preparing for the GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test), and exploring business school options. High achievers, every one of them.

We recently got together to compare notes on life after the entry-level Durfee job and to solicit their advice for other foundations who might want to give this "hiring for turnover" a go. One of the keys, they agreed, is for the job to be structured with enough downtime to allow for the pursuit of future goals.

At Durfee, we've structured this admin job as four days per week, and eighty percent pay. The staff have been encouraged to use the fifth day to pursue activities that might advance their aspirations, and it seems to have worked.

"The four-day week gave me time for research and reflection," said Sarah. "I took classes. And in order to apply for the Peace Corps, I had to make a dozen appointments with doctors and with the Peace Corps office — all during normal working hours. I don't know how it would have come together without the four-day week."

Christine also took classes, "and I volunteered a lot. The money was a downside," she said, "but I felt I was adequately compensated for the work I was doing, and there were a lot of other rewards. On a five-day salary, it would be easy to be complacent."

"The four-day week has taught me a lot about time management," added Daniel. "It's a lot of responsibility. There are deadlines, and things have to get done."

"I think about the graduation speech Steve Jobs gave at Stanford," mused David. "He said that you can never connect the dots looking forward, only looking back." With a post-Durfee interlude in the for-profit arena, David is now working at a nonprofit start-up, and sees his Durfee stint as the link connecting his undergraduate campus activism with his current social entrepreneurism.

"It was an ideal job," said Christine. "It gave me so much exposure to so many organizations doing great work. The foundation is uniquely positioned to introduce you to a wide range of practice, from social justice to the arts." As a newcomer to L.A., the job also "gave me a concept of the physical scale of the city, as well as the breadth of needs and opportunities here."

And of course, there's a selfish agenda in all this on my part, too. I am able to be constantly in the company of curious, ambitious, progressive minds who keep me on my toes. They are highly motivated and qualified, and bring fresh eyes to the work. They may move on after a short time, but they are enormously productive before they do.

Durfee is not the first to institute this short-term hiring strategy for entry level staff, nor the most evolved. A recent inquiry posted on the GEO listserv brought responses from several foundations with similar policies, among them the William Penn Foundation, the Duke Endowment, the DC Bar Foundation, the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, and the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. The North Carolina Network of Grantmakers has published an excellent paper, "Cultivating Emerging Philanthropic Leaders: How to Establish a Fellowship Program," which profiles several of these. It's a valuable resource for grantmakers who might wish to add this dimension to their human resource policies.

Something to ponder, though. Durfee's executive assistants — who all were promoted to "program associate" in their second year, with a raise and some added involvement in programs — said they might have had different expectations if they'd come in as fellows.

"I don't think I'd have expected to do the filing," said Christine.

"Filing wasn't that bad," David kidded her. "It was just paying dues to get to do the other stuff."

Claire Peeps is president of the Durfee Foundation in Los Angeles.

Beyond Price: Value in Culture, Economics, and the Arts

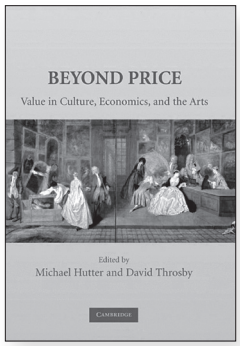
Review by Diane Ragsdale

Beyond Price: Value in Culture, Economics, and the Arts*; Edited by Michael Hutter and David Throsby; Cambridge University Press, 2007, 324 pages*

The art that matters to us … is received by us as a gift is received. Even if we have paid a fee at the door of the museum or concert hall, when we are touched by a work of art something comes to us that has nothing to do with the price.

— Lewis Hyde

While most would probably agree with Lewis Hyde, and perhaps even extend the sentiment to say that the "something" to which he refers is "valuable," arts funders and politicians have increasingly considered this "something" an inadequate justification for financial support and have put demands on arts organizations to justify their efforts in terms of economic and instrumental impacts (e.g., revitalized communities, raised SAT scores, and jobs created).



For the past four years one question has dominated countless reports, meetings, and articles in the GIA *Reader*: *What is the value of art, and how can it be measured?* From my perspective, this most recent round of the conversation (I recognize it's been going on for eons) was largely re-energized by the release of the 2004 Wallace Foundation-funded RAND report, *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts,* and the subsequent article by Alan Brown in the Spring 2006 issue of the GIA *Reader*, "An Architecture of Value."

Now comes *Beyond Price: Value in Culture, Economics, and the Arts,* a new volume edited by economists Michael Hutter and David Throsby, which makes significant contributions to the conversation on value in the arts. It speaks to practitioners and scholars (humanists and economists). Specifically, the book examines the nature of the twin concepts of cultural value and economic value; how they are formed; and how they do (or do not) relate to one another. This work is distinguished from other studies on the topic by its scope (it approaches value in the arts from diverse theoretical and historical perspectives and across a range of artistic disciplines); its commitment to moving beyond the rigid disciplinary confines within which scholars often work; and its encouragement of interdisciplinary communication and dialogue.

In addition to an introduction by the editors, the book is composed of sixteen papers by an impressive group of international scholars and policy makers, which are grouped into five sections.

1. Origins of Meaning
2. The Creation of Value in Artistic Work
3. Continuity and Innovation
4. Appreciation and Ranking
5. Cultural Policies

Each paper in the book is worthwhile and makes a unique contribution to the whole — from Terry Smith's fascinating paper on the relationship between meaning and value in the production and marketing of Australian Aboriginal art to Bill Ivey's bold perspective that valuation in the arts currently rests in two extremes only, the popular ("art-as-commodity") and the precious ("art-is-what-you-need-even-if-you-don't-want-it"). It would be impossible for me to do justice to each of the contributions, but I will highlight just a few.

In his paper, "What Values Should Count in the Arts? The Tension between Economic Effects and Cultural Value," economist Bruno S. Frey goes straight to the heart of the ongoing debate between economists and "arts people" (Frey's term). Frey reports that, surprisingly, "arts people focus more on the economic effects of the arts than economists do" and "arts economists concentrate more on the artistic aspects than arts people do."

He explains that arts people are fond of using economic impact studies as a way of demonstrating impact, in part because they "take the artistic value as given," and in part because, as noted above, politicians and others seem to value them. Economists, generally speaking, prefer *willingness-to-pay* or *contingent valuation studies,* which help put a dollar figure on the value the public places on the arts.

While these two perspectives have tended to become polarized, Frey asserts

that not only are they complementary, both are necessary. Arts people need to recognize that if they want public subsidies, then they need to allow for the accounting of the public's perceptions of the value of art; willingness-to-pay and contingent value studies are one way to do this. Likewise, economists need to acknowledge that the political process must be taken into account; the reality is that economic impact studies are expected and are at times necessary to produce support for the arts (the most recent successful bid to secure economic stimulus money for the arts being a notable example).

Frey is not the only contributor in *Beyond Price* who attempts to bridge diverse theoretical perspectives. Richard Shusterman's "Entertainment Value: Intrinsic, Instrumental, and Transactional," investigates the concept of entertainment and looks at its complex relationship to art. This chapter was compelling to me in large part because funders often place art in opposition to entertainment and promote the viewpoint that art is sacred, entertainment crass, and that if something is enjoyed by the masses it must not be art. Shusterman calls the notion of intrinsic value problematic and challenges the idea that it is dichotomous with instrumental value. He also writes persuasively about the merits and importance of pleasure, its relationship to meaning/understanding, and its value in enhancing or completing the reception of art. He provides an example of this in T. S. Eliot, who wrote, "It is certain that we do not fully enjoy a poem unless we understand it; and on the other hand, it is equally true that we do not fully understand a poem unless we enjoy it. And that means, enjoying it to the right degree and in the right way, relative to other poems."

Several of the essays in *Beyond Price*, including Shusterman's, provide useful historical context for current discussions, some demonstrating that we've wrestled with how to talk about the value of the arts for centuries. In "Art, Honor, and Excellence in Early Modern Europe," Elizabeth Honig examines the period of time when assigning value to art objects shifted from the "gift-reward" or "honor" system (in which it was unacceptable for an artist to ask for a fee and artworks functioned as reifications of social relationships) to the "marketplace" system. Honig describes an "antimarket discourse of valuation" that emerged in art writing from this period. She asserts that this new language was created because writers (correctly) perceived that value making in the arts was threatened by the growing influence of the marketplace.

Honig's essay seems particularly relevant now as arts organizations suffer the consequences of allowing the economic value of the arts to dominate the discussion for years, if not decades. As Oskar Eustis, a leading thinker in the arts and artistic director of The Public Theater in New York City wrote a few years back in a letter to me, "Over the [past] 30 years, the American nonprofit theater has been operating in an economic environment that increasingly has valorized the market as the primary, almost exclusive, way of measuring value. Even when they have been most brilliant and successful, there has been real cost: a narrowing of the social and artistic agenda, and a diminishing of the vigor, bravery, diversity, and importance of the American theater."

Beyond Price demonstrates that no single argument can fully capture the total value/contribution of the arts and that a joint perspective is needed. Arts people may no longer be able to assume that Hyde's "something" that has "nothing to do with the price" can be taken as a given and may need to form stronger "antimarket" arguments for the arts. As counterintuitive as it sounds, it's the economists who may have the most effective methods for doing this.

In their 2009 paper "Measuring Intrinsic Value: How to Stop Worrying and Love Economics," Hsan Bakhashi, Alan Freeman, and Gretchen Hitchen echo this point saying, "Cultural economics strengthens the case for the arts in ways that have not been taken seriously until now." They go on to suggest that the arts "stop insisting that intrinsic benefits cannot be measured, and start demanding that they should be." The value and impact studies that Alan Brown at WolfBrown has done with the Major University Presenters and many other organizations and communities seem to be a great step in this direction.

Having said this, we cannot assume that improved methods for measuring and discussing the value of the arts will cause the arts to be more valuable or relevant to their communities. This is a separate issue, and a critical one. The most recent NEA report on arts participation trends in the US indicates double-digit rates of decline for theater, ballet, opera, orchestras, jazz, and visual arts festivals since 1982; faring only slightly better, museum participation rates are basically on par with 1982, though they have been declining since 2002. Even those who are college educated (a demographic with historically high participation rates) are curbing their attendance.

Better language will not solve our declining participation problem. Intellectual relevance cannot be relegated to the PR department. On the other hand, if we could significantly increase participation, if the arts truly mattered to more people, I wager we would find it less difficult to make a compelling case for the value of the arts.

Questions for David Throsby

In conjunction with writing an essay in response to Beyond Price: Value in Culture, Economics, and the Arts, *edited by Michael Hutter and David Throsby, I had the opportunity to ask David Throsby a few questions via e-mail, to which he graciously responded. What follows is a portion of that exchange.*

— Diane Ragsdale

Ragsdale: David, if you were a funder and needed to assess the value of an arts organization to a local community, or to the field-at-large, how would you do so? Or, put another way, do you have any advice for arts funders who

are trying to assess value? Do we need to change our practices; and if so, how?

Throsby: When we look at arts production/consumption/participation from the funding point of view, I think we have to go back to first principles and ask, what are the objectives of support from government or foundations? Why do they do it? And the reasons are usually multiple but do come down to support for making things happen that the market won't support. That does mean that artistic, cultural, and other non-financial criteria should, in principle, take precedence over purely economic ones. The trend towards boosting the economic contribution of the arts was, as you know, brought on by the arts industry itself during the eighties and nineties, and maybe over the long run it has backfired somewhat in that it has tended to focus the attention of funders rather too much on the monetary. Of course, funders are concerned about the financial sustainability of the organizations they support, but perhaps there's a case for some recalibration of the funding formulae. On the matter of including cultural value in the funding criteria, I'm all for a broad-ranging concept of value, to include things like contribution to social cohesion and community development, and not just a question of "pure" artistic values. On the assessment of value in this broader sense, one has really two sources (a) the well-informed judgments of arts professionals, and (b) the views of the population at large. Different people will put all the emphasis on one or the other — arts professionals themselves will often argue solely for (a) on the grounds that the public doesn't know what's good for them, whilst others claim that (b) is more "democratic." In my view neither is correct, and a balance of the two should ideally be sought as a guide to decision-making.

Ragsdale: When did politicians, funders, and other arts stakeholders begin looking for the arts to have economic and instrumental impacts? Has this been an issue since the beginning of arts funding or is this a relatively recent phenomenon? If the latter, do you think that, in the US, the shift may have been (at least in part) in reaction to declining arts participation (as has been documented in the most recent report from the NEA)?

Throsby: I'm not sure that the US experience of a secular decline in arts consumption is mirrored in other countries. But taking the US case as it is, I don't know that I would want to link declining participation with a shift in objectives or directions of funding I'm not sure how a causal relationship could be specified, though it's an interesting hypothesis that could be tested somehow. What I would say is that in my experience politicians have ALWAYS been interested in the civilizing aspects of the arts and the role of government in supporting the arts for cultural reasons that aren't related to their economic contribution. I really don't think this has changed and that when it is put to the politicians in terms of a public responsibility, like education, they will readily accept it. What has apparently changed is that the arts community has been spooked by the perceived need to talk up the economic aspects and have been much too reticent about arguing the case direct to politicians from a purely cultural point of view. Of course, the whole case may not be made this way; once again it is a question of balance. But I think the arts advocates need to get the balance back on track.

Ragsdale: Over the past few years US arts organizations and their advocates have been increasingly focused on finding the right language to persuade people of the intrinsic value of the arts (after years of focusing on economic impact studies). Is this the way to "get the balance back on track"?

Throsby: I don't think it is so much a question of persuading people of the intrinsic value of the arts, but rather of understanding more about what people can gain from the arts, how they can best be introduced to the arts, how their tastes can be encouraged and developed. This does suggest, from a policy angle, that more needs to be done on the consumption side to foster access and engagement, though this is easier said than done.

David Throsby holds Bachelors and Masters degrees from the University of Sydney, and a PhD in Economics from the London School of Economics. He has been Professor of Economics at Macquarie University in Sydney since 1974. He has authored several books, including Economics and Culture (2001).

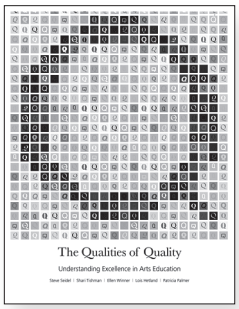
Diane Ragsdale is associate program officer for the performing arts, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Her viewpoints are personal and should not be taken to be those of the Foundation.

The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education

Review by Carol Fineberg, D. Arts

The Qualities of Quality: Understanding Excellence in Arts Education*; By Steve Seidel, Shari Tishman, Ellen Winner, Lois Hetland, Patricia Palmer. Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education (Cambridge, MA), 2009, 121 pages. Commissioned by The Wallace Foundation with additional support from the Arts Education Partnership*

Funders need to pay attention to *The Qualities of Quality,* a brief and highly readable report commissioned by The Wallace Foundation with additional support from the Arts Education Partnership, and published by Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Zero. If funders intend to fund "the best" as a model for other grantees, they can check to determine whether their notions of best practices jibe with what the researchers found. If funders intend to help ratchet up the quality of arts education as taught in schools or communities, the report will help them isolate strengths and weaknesses so that they can be addressed with strategic financial support. If their mission is to help redress educational wrongs of the past or present, they can take warning from this report's calls for cohesive and enlightened leadership and collaboration.



Steve Seidel, former codirector of Harvard Project Zero (HPZ), and his colleagues, Shari Tishman, Ellen Winner, Lois Hetland and Patricia Palmer, offer us a deceptively slim but deeply considered volume that explores three questions about both the arts and education:

How do arts educators in the United States conceive of and define high quality arts learning and teaching?

What markers of excellence do educators and administrators look for in the actual activities of art learning and teaching as they unfold in the classroom?

How does a program's foundational decisions, as well as its ongoing day-to-day practices, affect the pursuit and achievement of quality?

Through conversations with experts in the field; a literature review about quality as it intersects pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment; and site visits to twelve notable programs, the authors have blended theory and reportage to illuminate the issues related to a consideration of quality.

As with much about arts education in schools and community venues, the more one pokes around the issues, the more one sees that determining quality is a daunting task, especially for those who are less knowledgeable about how the whole teaching process works. Judgments must be made, however. So the essential question becomes, how can this book help us as funders and supporters of what we think are best practices?

Whether analyzing what goes on "in the [arts] room" or in the offices of micro and macro policy makers, the authors offer some sage advice regarding the pursuit and attainment of quality arts education in American schools.

In the first place, the Qualities study helps the reader to understand arts education practices in context by identifying the many influences on what arts teachers (credentialed or not) do and how they do it. By understanding the constraints and supports that can influence quality, the observer can make a more thoughtful hypothesis regarding the quality of a program and those who represent it in the classroom.

Second, the study itemizes and explains some of the actions that best elicit from students the genuine thoughtfulness and creative problem solving that we are all so enthusiastic about claiming for the arts. Three indicators of quality particularly reasonate with me:

Engagement. Students are absorbed in such tasks as composing, designing, critiquing, revising, and all the other activities that connote creative work.

Experimentation. Students are exploring ways of seeing and doing the arts; they are tyro researchers delving into the unknown, departing from the tried and trite and searching for new techniques, new materials, new ideas to say something important in their own voices.

Ownership. Students are personally invested in what they are doing; they can tell a visitor what they are doing and why; they take responsibility for their individual work or the work of an ensemble of which they are a part.

Third, the book describes what teachers are doing to make learning come alive, including modeling authentic artistic processes, inquiry, and habits; participating in the learning experience with their students; and making learning relevant and connected to prior knowledge.

Fourth, the authors describe the human interactions (community dynamics) that are in play in a quality classroom or studio.

Adding to the richness of this study is a section containing templates to prompt deep thinking about "Achieving and Sustaining Quality" and using "Tools for Achieving and Sustaining Quality in Arts Education." This and much more are packed into the 121 pages of *The Qualities of Quality*, and I strongly commend our colleagues at The Wallace Foundation for commissioning this helpful investigation.

Carol Fineberg is an arts educator, evaluator of funded programs, and consultant to The New York Times Company Foundation, Inc., for arts education initiatives. She is the author of Creating Islands of Excellence: The Arts as Partner in School Reform.

Lowered Expectations and the "First Global" Generation

Review by Rory MacPherson

The Way We'll Be*: The Zogby Report on the Transformation of the American Dream. By John Zogby; Random House (New York), 2008, 256 pages*

John Zogby, author of *The Way We'll Be,* is best known as a political pollster, and his tracking of voters' opinions during presidential elections always receives widespread attention. But Zogby also investigates and interprets public opinion for a remarkable range of corporations and professional organizations. To develop the ideas in this book, he draws on both his consumer research and his political work, revealing fascinating nuances in the attitudes of US citizens toward the American Dream today and sketching a picture of what's to come.

Written before the November 2008 presidential election, but after the economy had started collapsing, *The Way We'll Be* predicted the national Democratic victory: "Americans have tired of the lone-wolf superpower mind-set that still holds such sway on Pennsylvania Avenue." Zogby also foreshadowed the bankruptcies of GM and Chrysler "GM's jingoistic 'This Is My Country' ad campaign for the Chevy Silverado is the wrong message in the wrong decade to a shrinking demographic." Even without benefit of a crystal ball, it was clear

to Zogby that whether the US economy ended up in a long-term recession or just a dip, average Americans had begun years earlier to adjust downward their expectations about what they could achieve in life.

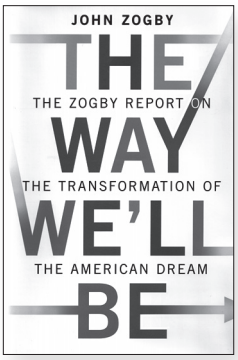
Propelled by economic, technological, and sociological change, the American Dream is being redefined by all the generations of living adults, but most dramatically by today's 18 – 29-year-olds, whom Zogby calls the "First Global" generation. Their attitudes are far different from those of 31 – 44-year-olds, 45 – 63-year-olds or 64 – 83-year-olds, whose attitudes are more closely grouped together. To be sure, "First Globals" still are narcissistic and materialistic, as are all young adults, however they are the most outward-looking and open-minded generation researchers have yet seen.

Each of the early chapters ends with short, insight-filled guides for marketers, helping them respond to the chapter topic. For instance, in the section "A Quick Guide to Marketing to 'First Globals'" it states, "For them, just about everything is in the public domain, up to and including intimate details of their lives." This fact should fill marketers with glee, since it makes "FGs" easy to reach through social networking tools.

Zogby's interpretation of our new version of the American Dream is characterized by four meta-movements:

1. **Living within limits** — moving from a nation of excess to one that accepts limits to consumption, curbed ambitions, and restraints on the unilateral use of military power
2. **Embracing diversity** — not only of race and ethnicity, but of ideas and lifestyles
3. **Looking inward** — seeking not just material goals but personal fulfillment
4. **Demanding authenticity** — reconnecting with the truths of life and rejecting the illusions created by advertisers, institutions, and politicians.

Those who are looking inward for deeper meaning are identified as "Secular Spiritualists," seeking non-monetary goals among their highest aspirations. One way this trend is seen to be influencing consumer behavior is that total Christmas holiday spending has been in sharp decline ever since the mid-1990s. If that trend continues, both retailers and producers of holiday shows may have even more to worry about than recession-driven reductions in disposable income. Another example showing the importance of a new vision



of spiritualism and authenticity is the rapidly growing house-church movement, where people gather in each others' homes for religious services. Zogby asserts that this impulse will one day overshadow the impersonal and hierarchical mega-churches that have proliferated in recent years.

The final chapter includes a psychographic profile of the four dominant age cohorts of our time. It foresees that the middle-aged "Woodstockers" (45–63 year olds) will team up with the "Private Generation" (64–83) to finally force Congress to pass health care reform, "although it might not be anything too radical." "Woodstockers," we baby boomers who have had such attention lavished on us our whole lives, will keep asking "What's next for us?" Maybe learning to live within one's limits will provide part of the answer. "Small is Beautiful" may be the theme for our much longed-for second act. Zogby also surmises that "'Woodstockers' will finally get tired of trying to look and act like their children."

Members of the "Nike Generation" (31 – 44) are the consumer force propelling the popularity of independent films and music as well as alternatives in medicine and education models. Members of this cohort are the most likely to be "Secular Spiritualists." They feel alienated from institutions but hungry for food for the soul.

For "First Globals," all politics is global. Mainly because of their open-minded worldview, "The America of 2020 will be a more tolerant nation." There is an immense gulf between them and the "Private Generation" for whom globalization is a threat to traditional nationalism and familiar traditions. Yet the "Privates" should not be dismissed altogether. Having greater vitality in old age than previous generations, they will constitute a new army of volunteerism benefiting nonprofits. They also will represent an as-yet-untapped consumer market for such services as lifelong learning and educational travel.

The Way We'll Be gives the reader a fascinating summary of the way attitudes are changing about the federal government, race, workplace preferences, global warming, mass transit, and sexual orientation. It also tracks major distinctions in the prevalence of behaviors such as internet use and travel abroad — contrasting the habits of 18–29 year olds with those of the older age cohorts. In the current economic climate, one can't help but wonder if the challenge that the illustrious "First Globals" are having finding gainful employment will dampen their surpassing humanitarianism. One hopes not because, as this book makes clear, this country needs all their collective compassion, and then some.

Rory MacPherson is a senior program officer at The Wallace Foundation, New York.

Graceful Exit

Thoughts on End-of-Life Issues for Arts Organizations

Claudia Bach

The current economic climate has forced many nonprofit arts organizations to confront underlying issues. Tensions mount, dollars are scarce, and unresolved weaknesses or fissures often grow. We have seen heartening examples of artists, donors, audiences, and funders rallying to support the art and organizations that they love. In some cases, streamlined, more focused organizations are forging ahead with renewed determination. But in other cases, the economic downturn may herald the time to close the doors.

> ***"It may not be as exciting to fund the end as it is the beginning, but it is no less critical to the future of clients and staff."***
>
> *— Fieldstone Alliance Report, 1991*

Discussions of arts organization closures invariably include terminology and expressions that parallel those we use regarding the end of life. Dignity. Honor. Respect. Grace. Fear. Compassion. Courage. Ritual. Mourn. Celebrate. These are strong words that remind us of the intensity surrounding the closing down of an arts organization.

Conversations with arts funders and organization staff members reveal some fundamental and distinct dynamics regarding life span and life cycle issues for arts organizations. For some otherwise-healthy arts organizations, the retirement or death of a founding artist means the loss of a centripetal force and heralds closure. But other organizations that close have usually been in trouble of one sort or another for a while. This may be due to diminishing community support, a lack of need for the organization's mission, or shifts in the environment or audience interests. Additionally, the changing demographics of a neighborhood or developments in new technologies and behavior patterns, or exhaustion and burnout, can portend closure. The recession is unlikely to be the full cause of a closure scenario even though the challenges of adequate funding in this financial downturn are certainly not illusory. As one funder puts it "trees with deep enough roots won't fall over." The economic climate is making some of this root system more visible.

For the past few decades the health of arts organizations has been measured in terms of growth and sustainability. Today we are reassessing both the wisdom of growth and the meaning of "sustainability." It is useful to keep in mind that our current 501(c)3 nonprofit structure (with its assumption of corporate life in perpetuity) is a recent historical construct — about fifty years old. It is also instructive to note that the average lifespan of a Fortune 500 company is just 40 years,[1] and that only 44% of small businesses survive for four years or more.[2] This is valuable context for examining both the issues and the logistics of closure for arts organizations.

Crossing the Decision Threshold

Closure can vary from careful intentionality to chaotic dysfunction. Some of the best-known organizational closures are those that occur with the retirement or death of a founding artist, such as the carefully constructed plans for Merce Cunningham's Legacy Plan and Trust, now set in motion with his recent death. The decision to close is ideally arrived at through thorough examination of all options, including dissolution, dormancy (see below), merger or other forms of association. Mergers have been a topic of much recent interest in the funding community, though there is increasing realization that the challenges of a merger are legion. Indeed, merger may essentially amount to a form of closure through the subsuming of one organization by another.

Adequate deliberation and exploration of options is essential, and input from trusted colleagues and advisors is warranted. Without that, we find examples — especially with small and fragile organizations — where expediency has trumped careful consideration, and a board may have jumped to closure decisions prematurely. In other situations, there is often a great deal of fear at exploring the issue at all. Board members are reluctant to have an organization fold on their watch. It can often appear easier to defer the situation in the hope that future boards will grapple with problems, even if the writing is on the wall.

There are fundamental differences to closure situations: An aging artistic founder presents a different scenario than a major institution in financial peril, or a smaller arts organization experiencing burnout. The scale of the organization and the length of its existence are significant factors in the complexity of closure discussions and decision making. A long-standing institution with substantial facilities, permanent collections of artworks, or extensive set and costume holdings faces different challenges from a five-year old nonprofit that has sublet space and whose primary asset is the creative thinking of its staff. Budget size and the depth of an organization's infrastructure suggest differing levels of formality and flexibility, as well as varying stakes related to assets and liabilities.

All of this presumes that closure is a voluntary rather than an involuntary action. Nonprofits have historically filed for dissolution under state laws, but federal bankruptcy courts are seeing more nonprofits recently and frustrated creditors can force an arts organization into bankruptcy.[3]

Organizations may consider filing for Chapter 11 reorganization to buy time for financial or operational reorganization, or for Chapter 7 bankruptcy if there is no chance of coming back from the brink. If an organization enters bankruptcy, then a court-appointed bankruptcy trustee may manage liquidation of property and other aspects of dissolution. This inevitably puts the organization's leadership at a greater distance from controlling the process and the legacy.

Dormancy vs. Dissolution

An organization may be thought of as closed but may live on in a state of dormancy, hibernation, or, as one funder put it, "induced coma." This might be seen as a kind of "Sleeping Beauty syndrome," where the dormant organization awaits the princely kiss of a donor or foundation grant, or some other form of reawakening. While there are examples of intentional dormancy to permit time for artistic rejuvenation and organizational reassessment, such in-between states often appear to result from a lack of completion of the legal requirements for dissolution.

Laws vary by state, but usually an organization can continue on inactive status by filing minimal reports with the state and the federal government.[4] If an organization fails to officially follow its state's dissolution process, it becomes essentially a "ghost" organization. The danger here is that others might try to seize their shell or website; the directors or officers have a continuing fiduciary responsibility if it has not been officially dissolved.

It is important to be clear whether an organization is in a suspended, inactive state intentionally or because of lack of energy, inability to clear debts, or lack of information on dissolution. If an organization has intentionally induced dormancy, there must be provisions for appropriate oversight (e.g., a functioning board) and reporting requirements for the duration of this state. It is also advisable to create a mechanism to revisit the decision annually to assess future steps.

Mitigating Impacts

Closure of an arts organization can send ripples far and wide. Staff, contract artists, board members, and volunteers often feel the impact most directly, but relationships with donors and audiences extend into the larger community and the field. When an orchestra dissolves, musicians leave and that reduces access to music lessons for children or accompanists for dancers or choirs. When arts organizations rally to honor the tickets of a failing organization, it builds goodwill and support for the arts in the community. Conversely, if an organization closes in confusion and audiences feel they've been left hanging with unused tickets, this can erode confidence in other arts organizations and make ticket or subscription purchases feel like a shaky investment.

The value of honoring staff, current and past board members, and other volunteers cannot be overestimated. It is likely that these individuals will resurface in the arts community; reputation and relationships are valuable assets. Breaking the news of intended closure to staff is unpleasant but being clear and honest about the dissolution process and staff roles and options is critical. Recognizing staff, paying severance to employees (within legal bounds and financial capacity), and providing retirement benefits to those who have devoted a lifetime of service are all important considerations. Job placement or career transition services can also be valuable. There may be opportunities to hand off artist contracts to other organizations to mitigate loss of income for artists.

The stress and burden of closure lies especially heavily on staff leadership during closure. The support of trusted advisors, including funders, can be invaluable in making the process less lonely and more carefully considered.

Celebrating and Ensuring Legacies

The period leading up to and including actual closure represents a time of unique possibility to tell the story of an organization. This is a moment for gathering the experiences of those who have been an integral part of its history, and to preserve the organization's knowledge and legacy for those who come after. No organization hopes for anything other than a positive collective memory and, with care, this threshold moment can be one of meaningful acknowledgment and celebration.

Farewell events, memorial services, wakes, farewell tours, funerals, and other vehicles have all been used in distinctly idiosyncratic ways to honor an organization's accomplishments and traditions, and to burnish its reputation. Showcasing the organization's artistic work is central in most celebratory events as is inclusion of a broad spectrum of players, from artists and administrators to supporters and audiences.

The experiences and abilities of a defunct organization are often re-plowed back into the community through the individuals who carry this knowledge with them into new arts-related ventures. Continuing access to artistic archives, however, is key in ensuring that an organization's legacy can be built upon. Most organizations are eager to find ways to try and make a gift of their history to the field to enrich those who follow, but this is more easily said than done. Some communities are fortunate in having appropriate and welcoming archives such as college and university libraries or, for example, the San Francisco Museum of Performance and Design. But for many organizations, there are few options for how to ensure access to their history. There is much interest in web archiving but, to date, such efforts rely largely on the interest and ability of the closing organization, with a limited likelihood of long-term maintenance.

The Role of Funders

There is no shortage of ideas on how funders might help with end-of-life issues for arts organizations. Here, in no particular order, is an array of possibilities and questions that may warrant further consideration.

- **Encourage the examination of closure as an internal measure of vitality and life cycle stage rather than a cause of shame and fear.** Funders may be able to promote healthy discussion of closure. Helping an organization's leadership find the courage to explore the unthinkable — including the extreme of closure — can be a means for clear-sighted discussions about the future. Funders may also be able to provide guidance on how an organization might define benchmarks that would trigger closure or dissolution discussions and how these might be included in governance policies. Funders might consider the value of supporting organizational "exit strategy planning" similar to succession planning.

  > ***"We were permitted dignity and celebration rather than implosion or other tragic ending, in large part due to foundation support."***
  >
  > *— Former managing director of a dance company that closed*

  There are few safe havens for an organization's leadership to talk about the potential of closure. There are examples of a trusted funder playing a key role as a confidential advisor, though the boundary between sounding board and catalyst is murky. Regardless, organizations that enter the closure process with the support of a funder appear to increase the odds of having an orderly end. How might funders provide "closure counseling"? Might public funders, whose funding method reimburses for public benefit rather than investing in future benefit, be best positioned for such a role?

  There is little agreement on whether a struggling organization should broach the subject of potential closure with a funder or await an offer of help. There is understandable concern that a funder's door might close to the organization, or that it might jeopardize future requests associated with those artists and administrators and board members who were part of an organization that closed. How might funders test ways to change behaviors for both funders and grantees so that all parties would be more willing to talk and explore? Would boards feel absolved of guilt? Would fear subside?

- **Provide funding for closure planning, consulting, and other closure costs.** Funders are often uniquely positioned to provide support for closure, though it is not likely to be a funding priority. Support for a strategic closure plan and access to paid or loaned expertise are key areas that can assist in a dignified closure process. The funding community might consider the creation of "closure SWAT teams" of legal, financial, and communications experts. The issue of lingering debt is especially thorny since an organization cannot dissolve without satisfying those debts. Helping to mitigate those debts outright or through matching options may be critical. Organizations face considerable challenges in raising operating funds once closure is announced yet continue to have needs for staff, office space, and storage. Costs for records storage can continue over many years if donated space is not available.

  One might imagine the need for a fund to support sunsetting efforts at every major foundation. San Francisco Foundation's *Nonprofit Transition Fund* was recently created to help underwrite costs for various efforts including dissolution (both voluntary and involuntary), bankruptcy/ reorganization, or closure costs. It is now in its second year of providing grants, though not many arts groups have been recipients to date. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Nonprofit Finance Fund both provided lead gifts for the Merce Cunningham Foundation as part of its Legacy initiative. Foundation staff may face board resistance to funding closure costs. One funder notes how hard it may be to sell a board on funding the paying off of debt obligations. Some foundations are more likely to support consulting that will assure that a facility they supported will transition to a similar use, but might step away from archiving fees or other costs of the closure process itself.

- **Advance options for archiving the accomplishments and lessons of organizations that close.** Arts organizations are faced with daunting challenges, in most communities, to locate an appropriate place to archive their history and artistic records. There may be a fruitful role for funders in supporting convenings around this issue and the ancillary issue of continued access. Such needs might be addressed at a national or regional level, or in virtual space. It must be acknowledged that once an organization dissolves, it falls to the field to assure that such legacies are not lost forever.

- **Support research and tools for identifying, protecting, and transferring intellectual property assets.** There is much work to be done regarding appropriate ways to handle arts organization assets such as artistic copyrights and licenses, methodologies as well as web sites, and other intellectual property. How might the funding community assist in developing policies, standards, or guidelines that can help during dissolution or merger? The arena of ownership and administration of rights related to works of art, especially upon death or closure, warrants additional attention across the sector.

The Logistics of Dissolution

Empirical research, real life experience, and common sense all concur: A carefully considered and strategic approach to closure is critical if an organization is to retain a desirable level of control and create an orderly process. A formal dissolution planning document that outlines tactics and a timeline for closure will contribute greatly to a respectful process. Dissolution is seldom quick. It might be two years or more from initial discussions to actual dissolution. When handled with careful intentionality, dissolution can bring positive closure and an enduring legacy.

The following points outline the key logistical components of dissolution, with the caveat that it in no way takes the place of appropriate legal counsel. Each organization is unique and dissolution, like an organization's operations, reflects the distinctive character of that organization.

1. The governing body of the organization must reach agreement and record the authorization to dissolve.

The board vote must be recorded appropriately since it will be required in the dissolution process.

2. Designate a leader and an implementation team for overseeing the closure process.

This may be a board committee or a combination of board and staff. These individuals should be involved in creating a closure plan document, with timelines and critical dates (including closing the doors and employee termination dates) as well as assigning tasks to implement the closure.

3. Identify and engage professional assistance either as part of the team or as consultants.

Legal and financial expertise is most critical, especially since dissolution requirements include state-specific regulations in addition to federal regulations. Communications consulting may also be desired.

4. A formal filing of the intent to close is required with the state licensing department or secretary of state.

The requirements vary state by state, and the official filing may take the form of Articles of Dissolution and/or a Notice of Intent to Dissolve.

5. Designate one, or at most two, spokespersons for communication with external and internal stakeholders.

Information management is advised since rumors can run rampant at such times. Identify all individuals, groups, and entities that need to be informed (members, donors, funders, audiences, suppliers, etc.) and clarify the appropriate method of communicating with them. Direct all relevant communication inquiries to those designated, while providing talking points to all board and staff for informal conversations. It is also appropriate to remind board and staff of confidentiality issues.

6. Identify all the assets of the organization.

This should include a physical inventory of real property and equipment as well as consideration of the potential value of less-tangible assets such as intellectual property, the organization's name, domain names, web sites, donor or audience lists, copyrights, licensing, or trademarks. Assets in the form of a donor's bequest or future gifts may be of particular challenge in carrying out the donor's intention. Holdings of donated or intended gifts of works of art may have specific stipulations that should be identified. Programs may also be seen as assets, and it may be possible to pass on a specific program, along with related staff, to other organizations. Restricted funds, including grant contracts, may require renegotiation or discussion with the source at as early a date as possible

7. Liabilities and outstanding obligations must be identified, paid, satisfied, or other provisions made, as possible.

These include contract obligations with individual artists, consultants, suppliers and other parties, debts, and leases. Special care must be taken with obligations related to insurance contracts and benefit plans. Employment and contract relationships should be examined carefully to ensure that obligations are handled appropriately; legal advice may be required to avoid any missteps in this arena. Payment of outstanding obligations places employees first in line, followed by taxes, and then any unsecured creditors. It is important to try to pay any and all outstanding local, state, and federal taxes in advance of legal dissolution — and payroll tax in particular — to avoid possible liability for directors and officers.

8. It may be worthwhile to explore "run-off" insurance policies.

Such policies provide coverage for any continuing legal liability following dissolution (as per varying state laws) including directors and officers liability policies. It is important to understand the statutory limits for third parties to bring suit and to plan accordingly.

9. The assets of a nonprofit (those items held in charitable trust) are required by law to be transferred, donated, or "disgorged," to another charitable entity.

This transfer must meet IRS standards and any applicable state laws. Nonprofit by-laws are theoretically required to clarify the distribution of assets in case of dissolution by an organization, though this is not always the case. Most arts organizations seek to transfer assets to other organizations in an allied line of creative work. This intent is often shared by the organization and its funders who want to

ensure that a building, art works, or major equipment whose acquisition they supported continues to serve the community in a similar way. Other assets, including the organization's name, internet domain name, and intellectual property assets (such as copyrights, trademarks, published materials, research, methodologies, licensing, etc) are much harder to generalize about and often murkier to assign value for transfer. Lack of clarity regarding ownership and authorship with artistic works can be especially fraught.

10. Storage of records can be required for up to twenty years, though most records can be held for much less time.

Nonprofits must comply with records retention laws, so it is important to check with appropriate counsel regarding specific state statutes of limitations as well as federal retention requirements. It is critical to establish the location for storage of required records as well as who will hold the responsibility for access and any storage costs. For most arts organizations it is equally critical, if not legally required, to identify where artistic and programmatic records will be archived.

11. Final financial statements and returns must be filed, and some organizations may require a closing audit.

Final W-2 forms are due to all employees, and bank accounts must be closed. The IRS requires that it be given notice of dissolution or merger.[5]

Resources Related to Closure of Arts Organizations

Lee Bruder, "Nonprofit Dissolution: What to Do When Closing the Doors." *The Nonprofit Quarterly*. Spring 2009.

Facts about Terminating or Merging Your Exempt Organization, IRS Publication 4779. May 2009. http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-tege/p4779.pdf

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Robert H. Levin, Attorney at Law. "How to Dissolve a Maine Nonprofit Corporation," http://www.nonprofitmaine.org/documents/HowtoDissolveaNonprofit.pdf

Jan Masaoka, "Closing Down the Right Way," on Board Café, January 13, 2009. http://www.blueavocado.org/content/closing-down-right-way

Jan Masaoka, "Thinking the Unthinkable: Maybe We Should Shut Down," on Board Cafe, September 14, 2008. http://www.blueavocado.org/content/thinking-unthinkable-maybe-we-should-shut-down

Ron Mattocks, *The Zone of Insolvency: How Nonprofits Avoid Hidden Liabilities and Build Financial Strength*. Wiley, 2008.

Merce Cunningham Dance Company, *The Legacy Plan* http://www.merce.org/p/living-legacy-plan.html

Amy Rogers Nazarov, "Death with Dignity: Ethical Considerations for Museum Closures," *Museum*. July-August 2009.

Robin Oppenheimer, "Visions and Hindsights: Seattle's and/or Alternative Art Space 1974– 1984," *A Closer Look/ Hidden Histories,* published by NAMAC, 2005.

San Francisco Foundation's Nonprofit Transitions Fund http://www.sff.org/about/whats-new/nonprofit-transitions-fund-launches-to-support-intentional-change/

"Small Business Exit Strategies," on Small Business Notes.com http://www.smallbusinessnotes.com/operating/leadership/exitstrategies.html

Statement of Financial Accounting Standards No. 164, Not-for-Profit Entities: Mergers and Acquisitions, Financial Accounting Standards Board. http://www.fasb.org/

- **Support development of guides and protocols for dissolution specific to the arts, and perhaps to artistic disciplines.** The National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, DC, and the American Association of State and Local History Museums are currently drafting guidelines to assist with decisions related to closure of historic houses. There is an emerging but dispersed body of knowledge regarding the closure of dance companies. Art museums face closure challenges distinctly different from those of a small theater troupe or a youth arts training program. At this time there are few opportunities to access accumulated knowledge from colleagues who have traveled this path.

"I believe in the ecological metaphor: with every forest fire there is new growth, new birth."

— Former funder

- **Serve as a trusted helpmate.** In some cases, a grantmaker is the right person to extend personal support to the organization's leadership during the period of closure. Funders often have a very deep understanding of the organization and long-standing relationships with directors and may act as a trusted sounding board, especially once it is clear that dissolution is the plan. The funder may also be in a position to encourage operational or emotional support among an organization's colleagues: providing temporary space; squelching rumors; hiring laid-off staff; or simply remembering to provide a friendly comment to the individuals involved.

Closing Thoughts on Closures

Those who have had the occasion to go though an intentional and orderly closure of an arts organization speak of it as an amazingly meaningful experience, much as many of us might refer to the experience of helping a loved one die with dignity and minimal pain. The passion, love, and commitment that are part of working in the arts are in evidence. An organization often dies much as it lived, reflecting its unique characteristics, strengths, and foibles.

Our system presumes that nonprofits will live forever. Today's environment provides an opportunity to look at this unquestioned notion of immortality. The issue of closure is inextricably connected to the current structures for nonprofit arts activity in our country. This may well be the dynamic moment in which we can reconceptualize or reorganize the nonprofit structure to a more nimble and flexible form. Are we to provide the nectar of the gods to assure eternal life for all organizations, or might we explore more earthly and human (and humane) approaches to the final stage in the life cycle of an arts organization?

The information provided here should not be considered legal advice and it is recommended that legal counsel be sought regarding specific situations and questions.

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NOTES

1. Ron Mattocks, *The Zone of Insolvency: How Nonprofits Avoid Hidden Liabilities and Build Financial Strength* (Wiley, 2008)
2. Maureen Farrell, "Risky business: 44% of small firms reach Year 4," Forbes.com article for MSNBC, 2007, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/16872553/
3. The Howe & Hutton Report, "Charities Head for Chapter 11 and Chapter 7 Relief," Volume 2009, Issue 3, March 2009 www.howehutton.com/news-2009-mar.htm
4. For the IRS, exempt organizations with gross receipts below a threshold (currently $25,000 annually) do not need to file an annual return (990 or 990EZ) but will need to file a Form 990-N or e-Postcard.
5. This is usually done by filing a final Form 990, 990-EZ, or e-Postcard (990-N), depending on gross receipts and assets. If the organization is required to file a Form 990, a final return is required with the "Termination" box checked. Following the 990 or 990-EZ, a Schedule N: *Liquidation, Termination, Dissolution of Significant Disposition of Assets,* is required along with a certified copy of the articles of dissolution and other relevant attachments. See IRS Publication 4779 and SFAS 164, issued by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB). Note that the IRS has established new standards that will govern how nonprofits account for mergers and acquisitions, effective December 2009.

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BENSONHURST

Ken Siegelman

Like many
In these fig tree yards
He tended an ungiving vegetable garden
With shovels of measured spilling cow manure;
Cascaded wood stick baroque lattice arcs
Castled for grape vines
As if raising an ancient goblet in a toast
To the memories of Italy in a grandma fire escape song
From a century ago in the Lower East Side...
No one ever seems to hear
The seismic thunder of the El.
Just above New Utrecht Avenue;
Theirs is the stoicism of all the black dressed widows
Gnarling through their rosaries on front stoop chairs
As if the rest of Brooklyn and the City
Had long gone to hell all around them -
Never touching their Sundays -
Stirred into their gravy
With the determination of a chef
Conjuring the secret mix of ingredients
Locked up in the long term memories of the race.
And always,
It was the fathers;
Grandfathers
And all their sons
Conceived in parked Buicks with the passion
Of hot blooded Romeos who never read Shakespeare
Or heard of the Renaissance
But picked their Juliets out of convent homes
Just a few blocks away.

Poem reprinted courtesy of Pearl Siegelman.
Ken Siegelman was appointed Poet Laureate of Brooklyn
by Borough President Marty Markowitz in 2002 and
served in that position until his death on June 19, 2009.

The Economics of Arts, Artists, and Culture

Making a Better Case

Ann Markusen

Like most Americans, you may be baffled by the continued optimism of our President and his advisors about the economy. Every month more people are laid off, unemployment mounts, and thousands of small businesses, including those headed by artists, collapse. More people lose their homes to foreclosure. Economists are beginning to murmur that deepening unemployment could extend the recession and that the federal debt-financed stimulus program is not enough.

It's a wonder that people aren't marching in the streets. Health care is important, but jobs and viable self-employment are the major ways that people support themselves in modern society. If we count people involuntarily employed part-time and those who have given up searching, unemployment approaches twenty percent. Many more have suffered pay and benefits cuts.

The Failings of the Economics Profession

This downturn and the distress that accompanies it reveal, in retrospect, the poverty of economic theory in our times. Academic economics, despite its prestige, is riven by an outdated macro/micro dualism.

As they recycle elegant theories worked out in the nineteenth century, micro-economists celebrate markets as efficient allocators of scarce resources among unlimited wants. Using the concepts of supply and demand and assuming robust competition, micro-economists analyze the problems that bankers, for instance, confront in selling mortgages. If they set the interest rate and points charged too high, people won't buy, preferring to rent or trade off less housing space for other things they want. If too low, the bank can't cover its costs and risks. Financial markets thus ensure that household preferences evoke appropriate use of capital and labor in the housing economy. They aren't supposed to fail, and if they do, government meddling is at fault (Milton Friedman was famous for this logic).

However, many markets are highly imperfect, and if assumptions like perfect information and no degree of monopoly aren't met, a strong case can be made for public regulation. Furthermore, societal values such as equity (in this case the right of all to shelter regardless of income) and stability (protection from sudden homelessness or foreclosure) are often as important as efficiency. But in the late twentieth century, micro-economics prioritized efficiency over other goals and deduced the virtues of market-clearing so rigorously that they concluded regulatory vigilance was no longer needed.

When housing and credit markets did fail, up stepped the long-sidelined macro-economists, with their focus on how the economy works in the aggregate. Macro-economists work not at the level of individual firms or households, but sum up the totals of spending, investment, jobs, and so on in a national economy. Their theories hold that there can be insufficient demand and over-production (not logical in pure micro-economics) and that governments should be responsible for counteracting instability and the periodic crises to which capitalist economies are prone. Following the mid twentieth century's wildly successful prescriptions of John Maynard Keynes, they counsel that government should act as consumer of last resort, borrowing and spending to keep the economy moving. If only the government will step in and start spending where consumers are not, the current stimulus logic goes, we can reverse the downturn and repay the debt from renewed prosperity. And, it doesn't matter what we spend it on (Paul Krugman before the National Press Club in late 2008): construction, energy, health care, transportation, or arts and culture.

This logic is deeply flawed. It matters critically what we spend the stimulus funds on, both for the speed at which the money travels through the economy and for longer-term investment payoffs. But because, in hiring younger scholars, academic economists have prioritized abstraction, rigor, and orthodoxy, few economists now work at the mezzo-economic level, studying how industries and occupations form and operate, how state and local governments fund and supply public services, which kinds of spending have long term growth impacts, and how consumers at different ages, locations, and levels of educational attainment and wealth spend their incomes.

The Mezzo-Economics of Artists

Take artists, for instance. Orthodox micro-economists dismiss concern for artists' relatively low earnings given their high educational attainment as simply a case of market over-supply. The logic goes thus: artists love their work, and so they crowd into this "market," earning lower returns. There are plenty of them, so we don't really need to fund them. In contrast, scientists who are highly subsidized both in higher education and through government research funding, are assumed to be scarce and valued because they enjoy high salaries and low unemployment rates. However, large percentages of scientists work on government projects, from defense to medical research to climate change, so the analogy is inappropriate. Their skills are simply more highly valued in our political system at present.

But vis-à-vis stimulus, artists turn economic orthodoxy on its head. Compared to most other groups of workers, artists are more apt to spend what they make rapidly and on other goods and services in the local economy: ongoing training; space to work, perform, and exhibit; other artists' work. Artists enhance product design, employee relations and marketing in many industries. As human capital investment targets, artists are also worthy, because their creativity

drives cultural industries — media, publishing, advertising, music, and tourism — that are among the most important US exporters. If we had better evidence on these relationships, and more mezzo-economists researching them, arts proponents could make their case more easily.

Arts, Artists and Culture, and Economic Stimulus

The arts and artists received only small scraps of the 2009 stimulus and bailout trillions, compared to banking, finance, housing, energy, autos, health care, transportation and science. Simultaneously, most budget-stretched states are cutting arts appropriations. OK, we got a good bump-up in the tiny NEA budget, confined to nonprofit arts organizations, plus some funding for arts education to employ some artists. And possibly an Artists Corps. Even these modest gains generated lots of heat from skeptics who disparage public funding for the arts.

But why not funding and policy for the rest of the arts ecology? The cultural industries? Resources for individual artists to create and learn business skills? For public art, performance, and new space and services created by arts entrepreneurs? To expand our notion of funding-worthy arts to encompass community-embedded artistic practice?

The Arts Community's Inadequate Economic Arguments

Part of the problem lies with the arts community itself. We haven't been able to articulate the many ways we contribute to prosperity, mental and physical health, innovation, and community vitality. How humiliating (and ineffective) to argue, as we did during the stimulus ramp-up, that artists deserve to be funded because they spend money just like any other worker. Not a strong case. It invites politicians to shrug their shoulders and say, "Well, so why not spend it on construction workers? People like highways."

Infrastructure, medicine, energy, science — these constituencies successfully make their cases to the public (and to politicians through campaign contributions) that their domains are worthy. They do not need to fall back on flimsy re-spending arguments. In contrast, arts advocates rely on economic impact studies that track total spending attributable to arts organizations at national, state, and local levels. Although many arts lobbyists insist that such studies win politicians' votes on arts agency budgets, the studies rely on vulnerable methodologies and logic. Many local people patronizing arts establishments would have spent the same discretionary income on other forms of entertainment or leisure. Many people counted as tourists come to the area not for the arts but for business or family, so their spending cannot be cleanly allocated to the arts either. Also, a lot of the money spent in the arts sectors comes from government to begin with, through NEA and state arts agency funding, local government commitments, and the generous tax exemption for philanthropy.

But economic impact studies do their greatest damage by imposing tunnel vision on the public's understanding of arts economics. For a medium-sized metro, an arts impact total in the $300 million range might seem like a lot. But in contrast to transportation, housing, public safety, or health care, it's tiny. Yet the arts and cultural sector includes artist- and designer-rich industries like advertising, publishing, recording, film and television, broadcasting, internet, software, and commercial music and theatre, none of which are incorporated in arts impact studies. Nor are individual artists' enterprises. Many artists market their work independently, often outside their home regions, but spend their incomes locally. And let's not forget the many community arts and cultural events with their lavish regalia, costumes, music, visual art, and spoken word, all of which involve considerable spending that is recycled within the local community.

Becoming Creative about the Crisis

This crisis presents many opportunities and fronts for change. It demands creativity, a quality in which our sector specializes. Can the hard-hit arts community broaden its vision? Develop a more compelling case? Link arms with its cultural industry and community partners? Insist on new public initiatives? Commission some good mezzo-economic analysis?

Imagine, for instance, if the arts community challenged the national stimulus spending focus on physical infrastructure. Most infrastructure funding goes to construction, an industry swollen from the excesses of the housing and consumer-spending bubble (think shopping malls). Some of it is going to new ex-urban beltways, exacerbating suburban sprawl. Construction workers, whose ranks are similarly swollen and who are now hard-hit by unemployment, will not be any better positioned for career changes when we've burned through the current stimulus funds. Wise public policymakers should plan for a construction workforce the size of pre-bubble days and adapt workforce development policies to help these largely white, male, non-college-educated workers develop new skills.

Imagine if we reconceptualized our constituency to include the cultural industries, asking their managers to join forces with us in making the public case for arts and cultural investments and funding. If we don't, we'll continue to be divided and politically marginal. Imagine if we minimized the walls dividing individualized artists from their communities, and nonprofit from community arts organizations, and developed a much bigger vision of what Americans need in the arts and cultural realm. Instead of asking for small percentage increases limited to nonprofit arts funding, imagine approaching Congress, state legislatures, and the public with the kind of legitimacy that high tech or health care or transportation has, in all cases the result of strong alliances between for-profit, nonprofit, university, and community interests.

Toward a Mezzo-Economics for Arts and Culture

How could good mezzo-economic analysis help such a change of course for the arts? For one, the National Endowment for the Arts could do for artists what the National Science Foundation does for scientists and engineers. Via surveys, NSF conducts (and has for decades) an integrated data collection effort, its Scientists and Engineers Statistical Data System, capturing data on employment, education, and demographic characteristics of US scientists and engineers. Why not an NEA counterpart for artists? The results could reveal how artists are trained, how they move among regions over their careers, and whether and how they work across commercial, not-for-profit, and community sectors. It could ask why they immigrate to the US and where they locate when they do. How new technologies help or undermine their work. How specific public policies have helped (or hurt) them.

What about studies of the cultural industries? Shouldn't the US Department of Commerce research the cultural industries, including nonprofit enterprises, the way it studies and publishes reports on aerospace, auto, construction, energy, health, metals, and textile industries? To inform good policymaking, we need evaluations of payoffs to regulation (e.g., ownership of the airwaves and intellectual property rights), public investments in the training of artists, and the urban revitalization and community health consequences of arts programming and space investments. The US government supports research on alternative energy policies, the success of environmental regulations, and how to regulate drugs, food, and health care. Aren't arts and cultural issues just as pressing?

Our advocacy organizations could be more adventuresome, too. What if Americans for the Arts (AFTA) used its research capability to explore how cities create and manage cultural policy and what works for arts, arts lovers, and arts organizations? Many communities large and small have contracted the creative city fever. Are we exploiting this opportunity? What works best? Most cities can't afford research and evaluation, and few states can either.

On another front, what if, as President Obama has suggested, we eliminate the charitable income tax break? AFTA could research whether the nonprofit arts sector's reliance on tax breaks to induce donor contributions obscures the link between the public (who are foregoing the taxes) and what people perceive as the benefits. Whether, as a result, donors' interests and artistic tastes restrict innovation in the cultural field. If eliminated, what other forms of public support could be put in place of tax breaks and what might be the fallout?

Charting a Mezzo-Economics Course for the Nation

Across the board, what economic policy needs at this point is a good dose of mezzo-economics. For decades, despite being squeezed out by the deepening orthodoxy in the economics profession, some economists have quietly labored in the fruitful fields where institutional knowledge and detailed data analysis yield clear answers to formidable questions. They are the intellectual offspring of greats like John Kenneth Galbraith, whose interpretations of government, industry and labor made him the best-known economist worldwide for decades. Wassily Leontief, whose inter-industry input-output models enabled the Roosevelt administration to direct production investments during World War II and whose progeny are helping us understand how environmental pollution intersects with industry production. Walter Isard, whose work on industrial location and space economies seeded regional science, now a robust interdisciplinary and international field. The arts have had their attentive economists, too, among them William Baumol, James Heilbrun, Richard Caves, the UK's Ruth Towse and Australia's David Throsby among them.

Good mezzo-economics requires collaborations among macro, labor, industrial organization, and regional economists, and other social scientists, too. Macro-economists have long documented that high-income earners spend smaller shares of their incomes than do low-wage workers and people in poverty. So supporting artists would have a stronger stimulus punch than tax breaks for the rich. Applied labor economists have found that higher minimum wages, despite free market logic, do not result in fewer jobs. Urban and regional economists can explain why. Lower-income workers spend their incomes immediately and locally, on food, health care, used cars and car maintenance, rent — relatively labor-intensive activities that put earnings in the pockets of neighbors and other low-income workers. So, spending on health care coverage for the uninsured, on unemployment benefits, and on college students and artists will have faster and more powerful stimulative impacts than spending on infrastructure. Fewer of these dollars will be hoarded, and less will be spent on consumer goods imported into the region.

A second stimulus, if there is going to be one (and it is likely), offers the arts and cultural community an opportunity to present itself broadly and richly. We could craft better arguments for the centrality of arts and culture and the diverse ways they serve our economy, livelihoods, communities, and national spirit. For this we need more voices, more diverse and resonant ideas, and some good old-fashioned institutional and mezzo-economic analysis. Such an agenda needn't require years to craft. Artists and arts leaders should challenge orthodox micro and macro frameworks, demand better intelligence on how our economy works, and propose fruitful government roles in managing and regulating it.

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This piece is an expanded version of "Lessen Stimulus Confusion: Bring on the Mezzo-economists," an op ed that ran in the MinnPost on March 24, 2009.

The Globe

Richard Rodriguez

Before the house lights dim at a production of *Romeo and Juliet,* I look for myself and I am delighted to find myself as I was many years ago: A teenaged boy sitting by himself. I recognize him because he keeps checking the number on his ticket against the number on the armrest. All in all, he is pleased with his seat. He wears a sweater and tie. He reads his program with the intensity I used similarly to scrutinize the actors' biographies, the director's notes, and the advertisements for after-theater dining.

When I was a boy, eager for improving "culture," I pursued any number of worthy experiences; I went to the opera, I went to the symphony, to plays, to lectures — only to find, in middle age, that the defining culture of my era had been blaring on the radio at home. I mean the Beatles, the Beach Boys, the Supremes. Should I have stayed home?

When I saw in the paper that morning long ago that the Kirov Ballet from Leningrad was going to appear at the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco, I sent away for a ticket. I had never been to a ballet. The advertisements in the paper and the lobby posters displayed photographs of bodies suspended in midair; I imagined levitation on a tide of music.

The squeaking and hammering of toe shoes on the wooden stage surprised me. The strained, whitened faces, the painfully distorted bodies, the moribund physicality of the dancers surprised me. Arcs of sweat thrown into the air by an elevated arm reminded me of wrestling, of which I was already an aficionado. I did notice that, despite a narrative thread (the program was Cinderella), the ballet was organized like a track meet, and the form itself taught me to appreciate the emotive capability of bodies. Even love was a competition. Especially love.

It would never have occurred to me to notice my exception at a theater in those days. Most likely mine was the only brown face among the spectators at the Kirov Ballet that afternoon, but my eye was on the stage. Anyway, I assumed my exception. Indeed, the impulse to make of myself an exception was what prompted me to buy a ticket in the first place. Only in that regard was I remotely like Romeo.

As you see, I am now a man with grey hair, attending a play about heedless children. I am well versed in plays. I am an American, born in the forties; my eye has been crudely trained by the conventional American grammar of otherness to look for color when I seek the exception among audiences. Though I recoil from the phrase "people of color," that is — they are — precisely who I am looking for. At my present age, I am always aware of my exception in the hall.

At the time I attended the Kirov Ballet of Leningrad, America arranged itself along a dichromatic color line — black at one end, white at the other, nothing in between (though I was keenly aware of growing up in between). For the last fifty years, fluctuating US immigration laws that no longer favor Europe have combined with what sociologists refer to as the "fertility" of immigrant populations, to create something magnificent: a global America. (I often noticed, during the recent Olympics in Beijing, that whereas Japanese teams looked Japanese, Jamaican teams looked Jamaican, Finnish teams looked Finnish, etc., American teams looked like the world.) America is now a circle, a globe.

We do not yet have a vocabulary adequate to what we have created, except those words of no sex or curiosity — "diversity" and "multiculturalism" — words that ought to suggest seductions but to me only suggest school board meetings, cafeteria tables, folding chairs. We do not yet have a way of imagining ourselves as a city entire — which is, traditionally, the function of art.

Shakespeare wrote plays that needed to appeal at once to courtly patrons and to the groundlings, who were playgoers too poor to afford a seat — who stood, who even leaned upon the stage — who were willing to pay with their legs and their backs for the frights and the consolations of a marvelous story. The crisis for the opera, the symphony, the ballet, the theater in the contemporary American city is that performing arts no longer assume the groundlings in the audience.

The generosity of philanthropists has allowed the construction of large performing arts centers — marble temples set apart from the street — with tickets too high for more than the upper middle class to afford. It is true that the opera and the ballet provide "standing room" for the young and the resolute, and standees are literally if not precisely groundlings. But anyone who administers a theater company or a symphony orchestra or an opera company knows and regrets that audiences look very little like the faces one sees in the new American city.

Where are the groundlings?

The house lights dim. *Enter Samson and Gregory* — two minor relations attached to the House of Capulet. It was Shakespeare's task to move his audience of groundlings and nobles toward tragic awe or comic restoration. Shakespeare would never have resorted to a notion like "universality" to justify his play to his audience. Nor did Shakespeare accomplish his task by producing two plays — one high, one low. Shakespeare wrote a single play for two audiences at once.

The chorus intones:

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene …

Not even Shakespeare imagined Los Angeles. In the last fifty years, in Los Angeles, as in Jersey City or Chicago, people

from all the continents of the earth have met and chafed in the schoolyard and in the assembly line and at the checkout counter at Costco. There has been conflict, of course. How could there not be? And even similarity has sought difference. Norteño and Sureño attempt to divide neighborhoods under separate and equally absurd bandanas. But there is also, everywhere in the American city, a routine acceptance of the confusion of voices and faces.

One of the happiest achievements of the performing arts in America has been the mixed-race cast. Pakistani Emily in *Our Town* and African-American cowboys in the chorus of *Oklahoma* are more than affirmative action hires. It is true and it is wonderful that race no longer signifies on the American stage. Of course there are Asians in *Our Town*. Of course there are Mexicans in Verona. It is our conception of Verona that has changed. How can a city be of only one kind?

Although Americans have come to assume our plurality, we nevertheless do not relinquish the category of "minority." America continues to sort according to fictional islands. During the administration of President Richard Nixon, America created "Hispanics" and "Asians" and "Pacific Islanders" — each from a fabric isle, each fabrication conferring minority status.

The category of the minority allowed for collectivization. The newcomer was grouped with the native born; the middle class was grouped with the immigrant poor. So useful and compelling a political category did the minority become that soon other Americans wanted a share in the noun. Senior citizens became minorities, as did women, as did homosexuals, as did the physically handicapped.

One can reasonably argue that the segmentation of America was a political necessity — each group seeking its share of governmental notice, each group thus finding its way into the majority from the strategy of subdivision. But the language of our political fragmentation has achieved utter nonsense. Demographers predict that America will become a "majority minority" society.

But something else is happening in America. Because humans are curious and practical as well as envious creatures, we begin to borrow from one another. And something else: *Mr. and Mrs. Albert Wong request the honor of your presence at the wedding of their daughter, Juliet, to Romeo Gonzalez*.

I have elsewhere described the blending of American lives, American categories, as a browning. We have arrived at a point in our history when millions of citizens claim no single race on census forms and other government forms, when Americans gladly pay five hundred dollars to discover the racial anomalies among the tendrils of their DNA.

A question for philanthropy and the arts therefore is how to keep pace with the emerging brown city at a time when the city is not aware of itself as a city entire.

Shakespeare's patrons were of the nobility. Nobility was not a virtuous attribute but a hereditary entitlement conferred by the monarch. Nobility was a fiction with privileges. It was in the interest of the nobility to support the play because the play upheld the hierarchical order of the world. But the playhouse upheld more than a political status quo. Shakespeare's plays insisted upon the rightful administration of power. And, appealing to both high and low audiences, the Shakespearian play taught the audience in common what it meant to be alive in 1599, in the city of London. What was funny was funny in common; and what was fearful. The triumph or failure of a king or a fool implicated all.

Philanthropists of our day inherit a task comparable to that of the Renaissance patron — that is, to instill a sense of what it might mean to belong to the city of Los Angeles in 2009. That old Greek prefix, *phil,* from *philos* — love — the same prefix that describes brotherly feeling among the citizens of Philadelphia, should remind us that philanthropy flows from benevolence towards humanity and entails a willingness to endow a stranger as a brother. The most profound expression of fellow feeling must be that extended to someone unlike oneself in some way. The example of philanthropy that Jews extended to the gentile city is a model for what I have in mind now for the brown American city.

I have looked through several published appraisals of philanthropic trends among minority populations, and I have found only bland generalities that could be applied to all Americans of the working class and the middle class, not just to Americans of statistical color. *(Minority donors tend to want to improve the quality of life in communities with needs.)* I remind you it was the contribution of one dime a month by immigrant Irish cleaning women in nineteenth-century New York that built St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue. The institutions of time and eternity — school and church — always take precedence for those who are besieged by necessity.

It is distressing, however, that many wealthy, powerful men and women of my generation still define themselves within the grammar of the 1960s. For example, a Mexican-American lawyer: He is a partner at a major southern California law firm; he calls senators by first names, he drives a good car, wears a good suit, talks a good game. He has worked tirelessly for his community. This man, more than anyone I know, assumes the reality of Latino Los Angeles — assumes Mexican restaurants every two or three blocks, assumes Spanish-language media, assumes instructions in Spanish on all packaging, in all government buildings, at airports, hospitals, in telephone prompts. And yet he persists in calling himself a minority.

How do you pick this man's pocket? How do you persuade him to a cosmopolitan benevolence when his conception of the city is parochial?

To achieve a brown philanthropy on a city-center scale, a generation of Americans will need to wean themselves from

the grammar and logic of the last fifty years. The non-white upper middle class must give up the romance of being outsiders and assume the responsibility of the majority. *Minority majority* means *majority*.

For the moment we are stuck. The other day I read about the artistic director of a large regional theater company — not himself Hispanic — who has announced his determination to devote large resources at his disposal to searching out "Latino playwrights". What is wrong with such a goal is not the intention to encourage new playwrights, but to confuse that goal by chasing a demographic. Is it really true that the only way to lure Hispanic audiences into a theater is by providing Latino playwrights? And likewise and likewise?

Is it not a demoralizing experience to go to plays and to find that American audiences have segregated themselves in the name of integration? *Tonight: David Henry Hwang.* The audience is mainly young, predominantly Asian American. *Tonight: August Wilson.* The audience is middle-aged, African American. *Tonight: Octavio Solis. Tonight: Terrence McNally. Tonight: Caryl Churchill.* And tomorrow night? What I dream of is a night at the theater when Mexican Americans form a majority for an August Wilson play. A night when a play about them becomes a play about us.

I was in Ashland, Oregon, for a conference and I had an afternoon off. I bought a ticket for the matinee performance of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival production of *The Man Who Came to Dinner* — the hit of Festival that year, as everyone told me. Fifteen minutes before curtain, five hundred middle school children flowed into the theater. I regret to say I glowered like an old cat whose treat has been snatched away. This was to be a kiddy matinee. Really, someone should have posted that fact. I cursed the festival directors. What were they thinking? What could these children possibly make of George S. Kaufman's parody of Alexander Woollcott? (I have never been all that fond of the play myself.)

The children screamed with laughter when the actress got locked in the mummy case. For all you could tell, it was the funniest thing they had ever seen. The children were delighted with the escaped convicts and the unseen roomful of penguins. One actor did a dead-on take-off of Noel Coward, and they enjoyed him, too.

I had forgotten that children are accustomed to figuring out the adult world — it is what children do; I had forgotten the depths of appreciation children are capable of. How brilliant of the festival directors, I thought, as I walked out into the benevolent afternoon light.

Richard Rodriguez is the author of Hunger of Memory; Days of Obligation*; and* Brown *— memoirs that form a trilogy concerned (respectively) with social class, ethnicity, and race in America.*

This essay was commissioned by the Music Center of Los Angeles County.

Just One Dress to Walk 800 Miles

Pamela J. Kingfisher

Originally commissioned for publication in Eating Fire, Tasting Blood: An Anthology of the American Indian Holocaust, *this essay is dedicated to the women. Their voices should not be lost, their lives erased because we do not want to know the horrible truth of our shared history.*

— P. Kingfisher

"Just One Dress to Walk 800 Miles" is a powerful and disturbing evocation of Native women's voices through history. Yet for many American Indians, the events related in Pamela Kingfisher's essay are all too familiar. In 1789, four years after the signing of the Treaty of Hopewell between the Cherokee and the US Government, the First Congress of the United States declared: "The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards Indians; their land and property shall never be taken from them without their consent."

The good-faith claim of the US government resonates as Pamela narrates the litany of losses experienced by Native peoples since the 1500s. More than two hundred years later, as she steps out of the Cherokee County Courthouse near her home in Oklahoma, Pamela is nearly brought to her knees: she has obtained the deed to one of the "last original Cherokee allotments." She rejoices as she cleanses her soul in the sacred creek on this land, knowing she is the last woman descendent of Nanyehi (Nancy Ward 1736–1824), a Cherokee leader who negotiated with settlers and their governments in the name of peace and friendship, but was in the end stripped of her political power and right to land ownership. Sadly, four years after Nanyehi's death, the remaining Cherokees were driven off their ancestral homelands by the 1830 Indian Removal Act; 8,000 were forcibly marched out of Georgia alone. One painful detail speaks volumes: "Most women had only one dress to walk 800 miles" writes Pamela, "and many were without shoes."

As a member of the GIA board of directors and chairperson of the GIA Indigenous Resource Network, I encourage all of us to remain cognizant of the authenticity of a First Voice such as Pamela Kingfisher's when we move from place to place for our annual conference. More importantly, I encourage us simply to take a moment to pause, reflect, and honor our shared history.

— Lori Pourier is president, First Peoples Fund.

December 9, 1948, in the shadow of the Nazi Holocaust, the United Nations approved the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This convention establishes "genocide" as an international crime, which signatory nations "undertake to prevent and punish."

The Convention defines genocide as any of a number of acts committed with intent to destroy,

in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group:

a. Killing members of the group;

b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

There are arguments concerning our use of the word *holocaust* vs. *genocide*, but for me, one culture cannot own that word or that experience. I have spent my life pulling the threads of my people into something I could see and understand. My life's path has been to find the women in my family- all those grandmothers I never met. I wanted to discover my history through their stories – to hear their voices. I have found many threads and whispers, mostly in government documents, and I have spent a lot of time in our woods, historical and sacred sites, imagining what they felt.

The Cherokee Holocaust was a long slow process. From our first documented visitors in the 1520s through the wars and land claims, we have stood in the path of a conquering world wanting what was ours. To commemorate other travesties, there are shrines and museums, like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall of names, and the Jewish Holocaust Museum's pile of empty shoes, but what do we have to tell the story for the Cherokees and all Native Americans? We have a few native museums, but there is such a political correctness to them — steering away from the more horrific "American" truths, they make me wonder, what would our symbol be? It can't just be the four thousand plus names from the Trail of Tears; there were so many more murdered over the centuries, many whose names will never be known.

If I were the curator of the Cherokee Holocaust Museum, what would I choose as the symbol of all those lost souls? Would I choose boxes of pearls and temples of corn from 1542; a chunk of gold from 1826 representing the greedy theft of our lands; would I go to 1836 and the wagons of dead trailed by women with just one dress to walk 800 miles; or would I jump to 1932 and a small box of braids representing all the Indian Schools serving up assimilation when annihilation didn't work? I choose the voices of the women who lived and died throughout our Cherokee Holocaust, and the hope of those who live on as the mothers of our nation today.

The Cherokee Holocaust was a long slow process. From our first documented visitors in the 1520s through the wars and land claims, we have stood in the path of a conquering world wanting what was ours.

DEATH BY CONTACT

South Carolina, 1545

Senora of Cofachiqui and Xuala[1] They came through like a swarm of vile creatures — just two visits and we were all dying. My aunt was smart enough to flee ahead of them, but I was excited! I was so young and arrogant; I wanted to meet these foreign men. I accepted their pleas for help and met them with dignity, and then I gave them all we had to share. They wanted gold, but they took our pearls and our corn. And me — stealing me like some slave girl. They know I am the niece of the Queen, but they had no fear and no shame. Desoto was amazed by the amount of corn we had stored in our large temples. His group of 900 men would camp in the surrounding abandoned villages. We showed them our stores of corn, so they ate as much of it as they could, and then they took the rest for their journey. In this way they endangered our people to starvation as well as the diseases spread by his men and the swine they left behind.

Tennessee, 1736

Tame Doe Moytoy My daughter, Nanyehi, was born into the worst smallpox outbreak ever to strike our people. It was said to come from a slave ship that unloaded its cargo in Charles Town harbor in March of that year. A few slaves ran away, carrying the disease and eventually came into a Cherokee Middle town with some hunters. Soon everyone was sick, and any messengers who had left the town had carried the disease all the way to the capital of Chota and the other Overhill towns in Tennessee.

It was a very hot spring and it was dry. The usual rainy season did not come as it should have, and the creeks were running thin and slow. Almost everyone was sick that summer. The center of Chota was choked with thick smoke so it was hard to see or breathe. There was a constant fire on the east side where the bodies were being burned. As you walked in on the main path, you could see that every hut had smoke coming from the hot houses and there were fires outside of the houses for cooking and constant water boiling. The few women who were not sick were washing, gardening, and nursing full time.

People were gripped with a hard fever, chills, sweating, and painful muscles. There was lots of coughing, and the Medicine Priest came and told us to use the hot houses. As they got sicker, the diarrhea and vomiting began to smell very badly, and everything just got worse. Our Medicine Priests threw away their most sacred items sending word to other Priests from the Overhill and Middle towns — fearing the disease as a violation of ancient law. The great eagle

wing and Redstone pipes that had been handed down from father to son for six generations were destroyed — broken, burned and buried.[2]

Then in the late summer, a new trader arrived in town with two barrels of rum to trade for deer hides. He stayed on the outskirts of town, knowing to stay away from our diseased state. That evening, a few men went out to his tent and traded a few hides for the rum and began to drink in their anger and fear. They were so unhappy, they just kept drinking. By the third night some of our bravest warriors were moved to take their spirit in the most tortuous ways: shooting, stabbing or even dancing into the fire and burning themselves alive rather than live with the scars and the public shame of their scorn by Creator.[3]

DEATH FROM WAR

Tennessee, 1755–1775

Most of the smaller coastal tribes have all died or been killed by settlers by now. Cherokee warriors had dwindled to about 2,600 when the French Indian War began to rage. There is another smallpox outbreak and a group of Chiefs were murdered in Charleston, South Carolina.

That same year, Nanyehi's husband, Kingfisher, was killed in one of the last big wars with the Creek Nation. There were very few years between then and our removal in 1836 when we were not at war with someone — the French, the English, the settlers and other Indians. Nanyehi, a mother of two young children became Blooded in the Battle of Taliwa after Kingfisher was killed. Her war cries and violent attack inspired the almost-defeated warriors to beat the Creek and claim the northern lands in Georgia.[4]

Nanyehi, later known as Nancy Ward (1736–1824), was one of the younger women to be so esteemed by our people. She came from a family of Chiefs and Clan Mothers in the White Peace Town of Chota, spending her lifetime in council and negotiations with settlers and their governments. One of the Beloved Woman's duties was to act as peace negotiator, and it is through this role that Nanyehi became known to the settlers as "friendly." Nanyehi learned diplomacy from her uncles and became a shrewd negotiator. She had grown up during a time when continued white settlement on Cherokee lands, in violation of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 in which the British Empire had recognized the rights of Native people, created constant tension in Indian-white relations.

Nanyehi, like many other Cherokee women, married a white Scots trader named Bryant Ward in 1758. This began the dilution of our blood in our children. We didn't know they would change the face of our nation forever, more readily accepting the ways of our white neighbors. Nanyehi's daughter Betsy married a white man who worked for the government, but soldiers eventually murdered her in her yard. At the same time soldiers like Col. Montgomery were busy burning all the Cherokee lower towns, killing many Cherokee. The next spring he destroyed fifteen more towns including all of our fields, orchards, and granaries. People ran to the hills to live in caves and were forced to kill their horses for food.

TAKING THE LAND WITH PAPER

Georgia and Tennessee, 1775–1826

In 1775 at Sycamore Shoals, Cherokee leaders sold the settlers over twenty million acres for 2,000 pounds sterling and goods worth 8,000 pounds. This was the biggest corporate real estate transaction in US history. Over 1,200 Cherokees attended the purchase. In July 1781, Nanyehi entered into peace talks with Tennessee politician and soldier John Sevier at the Little Pigeon River in present-day Tennessee and said the following words:

> *You know that women are always looked upon as nothing: but we are your mothers, you are our sons. Our cry is all for peace, let it continue. This peace must last forever. Let your women's sons be ours, our sons be yours. Let your women hear our words.*[5]

It would never occur to Nanyehi or other Cherokees that English women did not decide matters of war and peace. At the end of the Revolutionary War, lands in Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Georgia were given to the soldiers in military reservations, and the states began to form within these ceded Indian lands.

The Treaty of Hopewell, signed on November 28, 1785, was the first treaty negotiation between the Cherokee with the new government of the United States. Signed by thirty-six chiefs and attended by a thousand Cherokee people, the meeting lasted ten days. Here, the Cherokee leaders acknowledged the supremacy of the United States for the first time.

This was the first Federal and Indian conference, and new boundaries for the Cherokees to stay in were drawn up. Before signing the treaty, Old Tassel requested that the Woman of Chota talk to the commissioners. Nanyehi represented the matriarchy once again at the Hopewell treaty conference. She was forty-eight years old when she offered the following words:

> *I am glad there is now peace. I take you by the hand in real friendship. I have a pipe and a little tobacco to give the commissioners to smoke in friendship. I look on you and the red people as my children. Your having determined on peace is most pleasant for me for I have seen much trouble during the late war.*
>
> *I am old, but I hope yet to bear children, who will grow up and people our Nation, as we are now under the protection of Congress and shall have no more disturbances. The talk I have given you is from the young warriors I have raised in my town, as well as myself. They rejoice that we have peace, and hope the chain of friendship will never more be broken.*

She gave them two strings of wampum, a pipe, and some tobacco.[6]

By June 15, 1789, the United States government's attitude toward the Cherokee had changed and their goal was to obtain all of the Cherokee lands. Secretary of War, Henry Knox, wrote to President George Washington and said, "As the settlements of the whites shall approach near to the Indian boundaries established by the treaties, the game will be diminished, and the lands being valuable to the Indians only as hunting grounds, they will be willing to sell further tracts for smaller consideration" (American State papers, Indian Affairs.) Knox then follows up with a letter to James Robertson: "… the average price paid for Indian lands in various parts of the United States within the past four years does not amount to one cent per acre." In the fall of 1790 President Washington sent 1,900 troops to destroy our towns once again. After intense fighting off and on for one year, only 500 troops went back. Cherokees knew at that point they were fighting for all of their lands.

Nanyehi was the last woman leader in the original matriarchy. She was our Tribe's Beloved Woman and Head Clan Mother when the US Government forced us to outlaw the matriarchy in 1808. The US government knew they had to get the land out of the hands of the women. Ironically, Nanyehi applied for reservation land but was refused. Even after her death, her children could not get land. So it was that Cherokee women lost their traditional political power and ownership of their lands when the ancient Cherokee law of matrilineage was overturned in 1808. A council of headmen (there is no evidence of women participating) established a national police force to safeguard a person's holdings during life and "to give protection to children as heirs to their father's property, and to the widow's share" thereby changing inheritance patterns and officially recognizing the patriarchal family as the norm.

That same year the Women's Council, with Nanyehi at its head, made a statement to the Cherokee people urging them to sell no more land.[7]

But the illegally signed cessions were enforced anyway. Between 1721 and 1819, over ninety percent of our traditional territories had been ceded over to the settlers. Thomas Jefferson knew he wanted to create a new Indian Territory within the new Louisiana Purchase, and planned to move them there. Jefferson warned John Adams in a letter that despite the progress of some Indian nations, such as the Cherokee, to adopt representative government, many Native Americans will relapse "into barbarism & misery, lose numbers by war & want, and we shall be obliged to drive them with the beasts of the forest into the Stony mountains." In a previous August 28, 1807 letter to his secretary of war, Henry Dearborn, Jefferson stated, "If ever we are constrained to lift the hatchet against any tribe, we will never lay it down till that tribe is exterminated, or driven beyond the Mississippi."

ILLEGAL REMOVAL, 1830–1840

In 1830 the US Government passed the Indian Removal Act. Almost simultaneously, *GOLD* was discovered in our homelands in Georgia, in a mountainous northern county of Georgia where mostly full-blooded families lived. These people were driven off their lands and never really compensated for either the land or the gold. Georgia immediately held lotteries to give the land and mineral rights to white men and stopped all Cherokee government functions. The settlers and soldiers moved in quickly. This event sped up the efforts to take all of the homelands and remove the Cherokee people from the whole region. The Cherokee Nation filed a lawsuit against Georgia in the Supreme Court and won. But when President Jackson heard of it he said, "John Marshall has made his decision; let him enforce it now if he can."

Over the strong protest of more than fifteen thousand Cherokees, the US Senate ratified the Removal Treaty or the Treaty of New Echota on May 23, 1836, by just one vote. Our mixed blood progeny were responsible for changing the face of Cherokee society and their descendents negotiated the treaty of cession with the US commissioners. The US government sought out these few who agreed with removal and dealt only with them.

Of the twenty signers at New Echota on December 29, 1835, there were twelve Georgians, four Tennesseans, four Alabamans, none from North Carolina — and very few full blood Cherokees. A few months later in Washington, DC, only nine of the original signers and nine new signers came to sign the final treaty. Of the additional nine, seven of them were from Georgia. There was not one major chief who agreed to this sale of all Cherokee territory east of the Mississippi for five million dollars and new land in Indian Territory, and there were only three hundred to five hundred Cherokee citizens attending.[8]

In 1836 the government built twenty-nine removal stockades in four states. In May 1838 over 6,500 federal troops and state regulators were called into service to move the remaining Cherokee. There were still an estimated 8,000 Cherokees in the state of Georgia alone. The soldiers and volunteers swept through the land and took people as they found them. Children ran to the woods and were lost to mothers. Women out visiting were seized and children dragged off with strangers. All of their belongings and money that weren't on their backs were lost. The settlers were standing ready to seize it all for themselves.

Prodded by bayonets, whipped and exposed, our people were herded like cattle to the camps. Most women had only one dress to walk 800 miles and many were without shoes. They carried babies trembling with cold and their lips blue — alongside old blind men and ancient women who were completely worn out by the travel — to the stockades, everyone broken hearted. In two or three days, every one in the Nation was poor, homeless, and captive.

By that summer three groups had left from Chattanooga, but there were still over fifteen thousand captives in the camps. There were over five hundred people fenced in a wet, muddy pen for days – but this turned to months for many of the people. At Red Clay, the stockade in Tennessee, there were eight thousand Cherokees, many quickly becoming very sick. The Chief pressed for delay in removal and asked that the Cherokee people be able to remove themselves. The delay was granted, but the people remained prisoners. The Cherokee leaders refused the money the government offered them, saying that they were prisoners, not volunteers. They only took food from the soldiers, not money or clothes, saying, "The treaty was not made by the authorities of the nation, so we will not take your money." Even the missionaries were selling Cherokee lands, claiming it as theirs in order to be paid by the government, and then driving away in new buggies.

Babies were born on the side of the roads with the help of the few grandmothers surviving. They would quickly tie the baby on the mothers back in order to catch up with the group. No one was allowed to rest from sickness or childbirth.

The volunteers raped the women and girls at night — even at Brainerd, which was a Moravian mission stockade in Tennessee. When the women's camp called out for help, the volunteers cursed them and called them liars. The murders were all committed on Saturday night after much liquor was consumed. The night woods were filled with drunks, both white and Cherokee. No one could sleep on Saturday nights. Everyone was sick. At Calhoun, Georgia from four to ten people died every day in the camps. There were no toilets or privacy and much dysentery and bloody flux. They had to lie on the bare ground, exposed to rain and wind. One of the doctors was accused by Cherokees of killing Cherokee patients. He admitted he was only a dentist. By July there were twenty deaths a day in the camps. Then the suicides started.

During the roundups, at least half of the babies under one year and most of the elders over age sixty were killed, and at least one quarter of the rest were sick until the move. Reverend Buttrick at Brainerd Mission wrote, "This is a very expensive and painful way of killing people" Even though, in a June 20 letter, the Secretary of War says "Hurry Up! And get them moved," the Cherokees were not removed from Brainerd until September.

In 1838 there were many claims from women for their land, but they were mostly mixed bloods. There is evidence of Cherokee lands being "taken" by settlers long before this. Sallie Hughes was a wealthy ferry operator in Georgia. She was paid for her home before removal but lost her lands. A land speculator saw her thriving ferry business, so he went down the main road a half mile, turned the road and built a new ferry there, thus stealing her business and shutting her down. He then claimed all of her lands, saying she had abandoned them.[9]

Nancy Callahan Dollar hid with her family in an Alabama cave for two years during and after the removal. She had to hunt for food at night to feed the family while their father was in Florida. They lost everything on their small farm. Later in life, she dressed as a man and drove a supply wagon from Atlanta, Georgia, to Alabama and sold to stores along the way. She carried a rifle, smoked a pipe, and lived to be 108 in Alabama, living with her dog and roosters and many memories of Cherokee life before the white settlers came in.[10]

Elizabeth Pack and her mother, Elizabeth (Peggy Shorey) Lowry, who were my relatives, both ran ferries and owned a lot of land and stock in Tennessee. In 1839 they paid attorneys to fight fraudulent claims to their lands in Tennessee. After removal to Oklahoma, Elizabeth was paid with one check for $2,569.75 and her mother received $6,820 for her 650 acres on Battle Creek, and her house, barns, stock and ferry. They also received $1,170.00 for another 95 acres on Battle Creek with five houses and a corn crib. They rode their horses to the bank and back home where they continued to farm their new land in rural Oklahoma.[11]

THE TRAIL WHERE THEY CRIED, 1834–1840

During a cold November, twelve groups of one thousand people began walking west toward this new Indian Territory.

> *Long time we travel on way to new land. People feel bad when they leave Old Nation. Womens cry and make sad wails. Children cry and many men cry, … but they say nothing and just put heads down and keep on go towards West. Many days pass and people die very much.*

Sometimes they went two or three days without food. Most of the troops drank and gambled. The soldiers would force the women to drink liquor and then keep them out all night. They would drag the women around by the arm or hair after they were drunk. After making one woman drunk, they tied her dress over her head and left her in the street that way to shame her. They also taught the women to be prostitutes. One old grandmother tried to save her daughter during a rape and had to fight two soldiers who had knives. Babies were born on the side of the roads with the help of the few grandmothers surviving. They would quickly tie the baby on the mother's back in order to catch up with the group. No one was allowed to rest from

sickness or childbirth. They were driven on as long as they could walk and then thrown in the wagons.

At Lafayette, a woman fainted and fell in the road, so the soldiers drove over her. When the people died, their bodies were left on the side of the road, but sometimes family members could bury them if they knew about the death. Wagon masters reported in their logs how many babies died in their wagons each day. Families would carry sick women on liters even after they died until they could bury them. One woman in childbirth fell at the river, so a soldier stabbed her with his bayonet killing her and her baby. One man tells of his mother, then father, and then five brothers and sisters all dying, "One each day. Then all are gone."

On the four different "Trails of Tears" over sixteen thousand Cherokees were forced marched. No one can really know how many died during roundup and captivity, but there was an estimate by one missionary, Dr. Butler, that over four thousand died along the way. That would be about one-fifth of the nation, mostly elders and babies.[12]

SURVIVING AND THRIVING

Oklahoma

In 1918 Grandma Louella Kingfisher Duffield died from the swine flu epidemic when my mother, Floy, was two years old. Mose Shankle and his daddy drove their wagon up the holler where my grandparents lived, delivering milk and eggs, and they picked up the dead. Mose picked up Grandma Louella and carried her down to the Teresita cemetery where they buried her by a cedar tree.

In 1932 Louella's husband, Grandpa George Duffield, was murdered in Long John Holler and buried at the Moody cemetery, ending the family home at Teresita. Uncle Roy moved in with Grandma Duffield, and Aunt Nancy moved in with grandpa and grandma Kingfisher, but my mother wanted to go to school. Her uncle, Tom Roach, worked at the BIA and helped her attend Chillocco Indian School, way out past Tulsa. She was twelve years old and watched as "they cut our hair and threw our braids in a big box." She worked in the kitchen, laundry, and the infirmary. It prepared her to run a home, but not the many businesses she later bought and operated.

By 2004 I could touch those precious papers deeding this land to my grandmother Louella. It is time to plant some corn and bloodroot. It was time to prepare for my granddaughter. I remember

… it was Wednesday, a hot July in northeast Oklahoma. My people pray by "going to the water," so I drove down to the river to give thanks. Along the way I found one more turtle in the road, for my shakers, which I wear when I dance at Cherokee ceremonies handed down for generations. Then I was ready. It was such a momentous event for me. This was the end of a thirty-year odyssey of loving this land, waiting for this original allotment of 160 acres to pass on to my name; land that has never been listed in the name of a man, never been bought or sold by a white man.

To an outsider, that day in the Cherokee County Courthouse would have seemed ho-hum. The lady at the county registers wrote the transaction in a huge book and asked me for $19. She gave me a receipt and looked at me as if to say, "Well, what are you waiting for? Get out of here." I landed on the sidewalk in two minutes, stunned and giddy. This was one of the last original Cherokee allotment sections! Still in one piece and still in the hands of the same family! I wanted to shout and cry and hug someone. I wanted to dance around crazy and yell to the whole town. But it was just another small act at the courthouse. One more piece of land moved around between names.

I got in my truck and headed north in a state of elation and heightened awareness…. I drove the twenty miles to our land, realizing I had driven this road to work at the hospital for so many years, but that it felt different now. I got out and walked to the creek bed, dropping my clothes along the way, thinking of those Cherokee women of long ago with just one dress to walk 800 miles. Saying a prayer for them, I realized this creek, where ceremonies have been performed for generations, was even more sacred now. I dove straight into the deepest pool of water, shocking my breath and body with the icy waters.

This is what it's all about. Water and land, in the hands of women, being taken care of by women. And now it is my turn, my responsibility to protect this land in the name of all the Kingfisher women, all the women of my DNA. That day signaled a personal revival of the matriarchy for me; it's a continuum of Cherokee women as keepers of the land. It's also the spirit of my mother and grandmothers all touching me. This land was always in the hands of women. We created corn and we knew how to feed our people. We maintained the town's fields and ensured nurturing and health of our people. That is still our role today; we have survived and our population is growing.

So the holocaust of invasion, colonialism, annihilation, assimilation, and absorption put upon us has not been so effective. America's shameful past will be known and healed, because we are alive, because our children are learning the Cherokee language, and because our women are keeping the land. *Wado*.

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Notes continued on page 36

Getting Beyond Breakeven

A Review of Capitalization Needs and Challenges of Philadelphia-Area Arts and Culture Organizations

Susan Nelson, author
Allison Crump and Juliana Koo, contributors

This piece is an abridged version of "Review of Capitalization Needs and Challenges of Philadelphia-area Arts and Culture Organizations," a study commissioned by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the William Penn Foundation and conducted by TDC, a nonprofit research and consulting firm based in Boston (www.tdcorp.org). The objectives of the study were to review the capitalization status, needs, and challenges faced by nonprofit arts and culture organizations in the five-county Philadelphia region; clarify how well these organizations understand these needs; and develop recommendations for how organizations' financial health and capitalization could be improved.[1]

This study was commissioned and conducted in late 2007 and early 2008, before the severe economic downturn in the fall of 2008. In this context, the first question we address is a simple one: Why talk about capitalization, especially now when so many organizations are struggling just to survive? For nonprofits financial performance is not the sine qua non of exemplary overall performance, and balance sheet analysis cannot measure social impact or artistic excellence.

So why should nonprofit arts organizations care about capitalization? TDC posits that financial health and mission impact are linked for a number of reasons. First, undercapitalization is distracting and debilitating, making it challenging to maintain the focus and energy necessary to conceive and produce the highest quality artistic programs.

Second, undercapitalization can chill artistic risk-taking. An organization one failure away from closing has a strong incentive to choose the tried and true over the experimental. Even before the radical downturn in the environment, rapidly changing consumer tastes and habits were challenging the traditional business models of arts organizations. Without adequate capitalization, cultural organizations are hard put to pursue innovative strategies to address the changes in the marketplace.

Finally, undercapitalization puts organizations at risk of failure. The squeeze of straitened resources and narrowing options resulting from the economic downturn has placed the risks of undercapitalization into sharp relief. Those organizations with solid capital structures have the capacity to last through the rainy day. Those that don't are already pressed. The purpose of discussing capitalization now is to grasp the teachable moment and to help viable organizations create realistic plans as they adjust their strategic goals to fit a new, uncertain landscape of funding and audience engagement.

This discussion of capitalization falls into a field primed both in theory and practice. Long-time players in the sector include the Nonprofit Finance Fund and National Arts Strategies and this study has built on their invaluable thinking.

What is Capitalization?

Capitalization is the accumulation and application of resources in support of the achievement of an organization's mission and goals over time. The province of capitalization is the balance sheet, which encapsulates the record of an organization's financial performance as net assets and measures the magnitude of its assets and liabilities. A strong balance sheet evidences an organization's ability to access the cash necessary to cover its short- and long-term obligations, to weather downturns in the external operating environment, and to take advantage of opportunities to innovate. Conversely, an undercapitalized organization often falls short of these capabilities.

Capitalization is the accumulation and application of resources in support of the achievement of an organization's mission and goals over time.

Unpacking the balance sheet. There are six distinct types of capital funds, described in the table below, that managers can use to maintain organizational health. Each of these funds addresses a distinct need.

Not all organizations require all of these funds. The nonprofit sector is plagued with misconceptions about the different types of capital funds and their use. The proper scope and scale of capital structure can only be determined after an examination of an organization's time horizon, core business model drivers, and lifecycle stage.

Time horizon. Time horizon is an essential consideration when matching an organization's mission to a capital structure. On one end of the spectrum are organizations that live in the present day, seeking to address the needs of the current-day population and realizing a single person's innovative idea or artistic voice. They may be low budget, driven with sweat equity of a committed staff. In the middle range are organizations that are invested in a logic model, brand, or regular audience or membership. At the long-term end of the spectrum are institutions that are committed to stewardship of buildings and collections and that are investing to meet the needs of future audiences.

Organizations that are more concerned with present-day needs require more flexible capitalization, while those with the obligation to look to the future need permanence and stability.

Business model drivers. To build our evaluative model for capitalization, TDC defined four basic business model drivers, described in the table on page 31, each of which has an associated time horizon. Few organizations could be confined to only one of these buckets.

What Were the Study's Core Questions and Methodology?

The study's core questions were:

- To what extent are nonprofit arts and culture organizations in the Philadelphia area capitalized adequately to enable achievement of their missions?
- Do local nonprofit cultural leaders understand the relationship between capital structure and achievement of organizational mission, and is that understanding evident in their decision-making and actions?
- Does the system of incentives and technical assistance help to improve the financial health and capitalization of cultural organizations?

TDC used both quantitative and qualitative analysis to answer the core questions. Using the Pennsylvania Cultural Data Project (PACDP) dataset, we evaluated the financial position of 158 organizations.[2] The majority of the available data were drawn from fiscal years 2005 and 2006. We interviewed a subset of 60 organizations to evaluate financial literacy. We researched the funding and capacity building environment by interviewing 12 local and national arts funders, 5 local service providers, and 11 outside experts, and reviewing the literature on nonprofit capitalization and financial health.

TDC designed a classification system that defined four scores, from one being strongest to four weakest. The strongest organizations had the ability to meet their financial obligations, weather downturns, invest in new ideas, and were best positioned to achieve their missions. The weakest organizations were severely constrained. To classify organizations, we conducted a financial statement analysis. Primary consideration was given to the condition of the balance sheet, the levels of liquidity, working capital, and available unrestricted net assets, in the context of the budget size. Special attention was paid to the management of restricted funds and deferred revenue, which is easily overlooked as a risk factor, but is a leading indicator of a strapped organization borrowing from its future operations. Secondary analysis focused on revenue and expense factors, such as proportions of contributed and earned revenue, funding of depreciation and debt service, and patterns and scale of net surpluses and deficits. TDC also designed a classification system for financial literacy, which measured understanding of the balance sheet and financial operations, ability to articulate capitalization needs, ability to project forward, and ability to set the organization's financial structure in the larger context of the sector and the regional environment.

It's important to note that the measures TDC used to judge adequate levels of capitalization are more complex than the two more universally accepted yardsticks in the nonprofit world — a balanced budget with a modest surplus that ties to the stated objectives of an organization, and a positive unrestricted fund balance. This study has asked us to hold organizations to a different — longer range — standard.

This study reveals that if organizations and their supporters want to assure their long-term viability they need to build on current achievements and create a new set of measures.[3]

And yet – this more comprehensive set of measures may not be necessary for the entire sector. Some organizations by their very nature may be created to present a unique artistic voice for the duration of that voice. This study did not cross

Fund	Description of use	Time Horizon
Operating funds	The money that organizations use to pay for their reasonable, planned day to day expenses during the year to run their programs as stated in their current strategy.	Current: Planned operational need
Working capital	Working capital funds are meant to smooth cash flow bumps that arise from predictable business cycles.	Current: Planned cyclical need
Operating reserve	Unlike working capital, operating reserves are held in order to protect against unexpected downturns, i.e. the "rainy day."	Current: Unpredictable, one-time risk
Capital replacement reserve	A cash fund organizations with facilities maintain to realize long-term facilities replacement plans.	Long-term: Planned capital replacement
Endowment	Endowments are meant to ensure the longevity of organizations with long-term time horizons through investment earnings dedicated to ongoing costs, such as maintenance of a collection or historic building. In general, the endowment corpus is legally restricted, although boards can create quasi-endowments not restricted by donor intent.	Long-term: Planned operational need
Risk capital	Risk capital is meant to give organizations the freedom to try out new ideas, such as product extensions, new marketing campaigns to broaden audience, earned income ventures, major growth, or a new strategic direction. Risk capital should be used to address large environmental shifts that demand a change in strategic direction.	Long-term: Strategic risk

Business Model Driver	Description	Time Horizon
Artistic Vision	While all organizations have an artistic vision, an organization with a "pure" artistic vision business model would be one built around the work of a single artist, voice, or method. These types of organizations often operate project to project with slim overhead costs.	Obligation to realize vision in near term
Audience Dependent	Attendance and ticket sales are key drivers of financial health as well as measurements of mission success. Performance based organizations often fall into this category, as do any groups that are dependent on paid attendance. These organizations often invest in brand-building activities to sustain audience interest over time and independent of particular programs or artists.	Obligation to serve audience in near- and mid-term
Facilities	Organizations that require buildings or other extensive fixed assets to operate fall into this group. Requires higher levels of capitalization to achieve stability. Creates pressures on the operating budget that can be outside the control of management.	Long-term obligation to maintain facilities
Collections	Organizations with collections are (or should be) planning for the long-term needs of collections and posterity, balanced with the needs of current audience. Should have or plan to have an endowment as well as a facility to address these non-negotiable needs.	Perpetual obligation to steward collections (care, housing, conservation)

reference the artistic quality of an organization's offerings with its financial condition.

What Were the Study's Core Findings and What Are the Implications?

The results of the study are sobering, even more so when considering the fact that it was completed in spring 2008 before the economic downturn.

Weak financial health. The study confirms what organizations and funders knew already: Arts organizations at all budget sizes and in all disciplines have troubling balance sheets and highly constrained capital structures. We found that 77 percent of the organizations we reviewed fell into classes 3 and 4, the weaker end of the spectrum.

There was surprisingly little variation on these results based on organizational characteristics. There was a slightly higher tendency for financial health at the top of the budget spectrum ($20 million and above), and a slightly lower tendency at the bottom ($150,000 to $250,000). We found that organizations with an audience-driven, performance-based focus were more likely to be weaker, while art and natural history museums were more likely to be stronger. A particularly disturbing finding was the high percentage of organizations currently in capital campaign seeking to embark on major expansions that had weak capitalization structures.

Strong financial literacy. Belying the belief of most academic experts that nonprofit managers do not understand their financial situations, TDC found that organizational leaders were generally articulate about the financial health of their organizations and the strengths and challenges they have faced and continue to confront. Only 10 percent of those interviewed fell into the low financial literacy category, and over half were highly knowledgeable. Financial literacy did not vary significantly by budget size, discipline, or financial health. The majority of those in the weaker financial health categories had mid to high financial literacy scores.

Strong support for capacity building and strategic planning. Philadelphia has the good fortune to have a robust system of resources and incentives to support capacity building that has been built up by regional funders and service providers.

So, why is it that financial literacy and a strong support system do not seem to impact long-term financial health? In TDC's interviews and in our review of the data, it is clear that many organizations have greatly improved their internal understanding of how to balance their yearly budgets. There are many incentives in the system that encourage organizations to break even. While breakeven is an essential goal for achieving adequate capitalization, it is not enough. The focus on breakeven has trained attention on the profit and loss statement, while the balance sheet has been neglected. When the goal is breakeven, there is no avenue through which to build up net assets and capital funds, which can only be accumulated through regular and significant surpluses.

One source of the disconnect may be a narrow scope of planning. Although organizations know that they need a higher degree of capitalization to reach their goals, they are often not realistic in projecting the size of the necessary resources and, moreover, they often don't size the market to see if strategies to garner these resources are feasible. By including capitalization analysis and external market research, strategic planning could become more effective at helping organizations set feasible goals. Benchmarks are only part of the answer, however. Several organizations who had used PACDP data to compare themselves to others commented, "Well, I don't look too bad compared to my

sister organizations." This type of comparison may have unanticipated consequences for the field. If the majority of your peer organizations are severely undercapitalized and posting only modest margins, what impetus does this offer to change behaviors? As one organization's director stated, "I know I don't have enough cash to do anything but no one else does either. Maybe it's just the way it is. And that's what my treasurer thought when I showed him some benchmarks."

Another problem is miscommunication and fear of failure. Many organizations know they are inadequately capitalized and yet feel they have no choice but to assume the risks associated with undercapitalization because they believe that key constituents — including foundations, donors, and boards — do not see this as a prime concern.

Financial Literacy Score, by Health Score

Financial Literacy Score	Health Score					
	1	2	3	4	Total	Percentage
Low	1	0	1	4	6	10%
Mid	2	2	10	7	21	35%
High	4	6	18	5	33	55%
Total	7	8	29	16	61	100%

For example, a common capitalization challenge is the long-term care and feeding of facilities. The problem is often baked into facilities projects from the start. Many of those we interviewed had compromised campaign goals by decreasing the amount set aside for reserves, capital replacement funds, and endowment. A truly comprehensive look at how much capital may be needed beyond the hard costs — such as tweaking or revamping of newly launched products, new branding or marketing messages that last beyond launch, unanticipated operating costs, or unanticipated capital costs — is often lacking. Again, when pushed on these issues, most managers realize the dangers of undercapitalization but are "afraid if we kept hammering on these issues the project would not move forward."

These compromises are played out as an organization lives with a new facility. The majority of organizations with facilities reported an inability to generate enough annual surplus to fund true capital replacement reserves. Even those that budget for depreciation do not always use the excess funds to address long-term capital needs. Boards and staff are fatigued enough from trying to achieve breakeven; adding the burden of capital reserves feels impossible, especially given the limited set of funding vehicles. Without addressing facilities needs on an ongoing basis, organizations fall back on capital campaigns to raise funds when needs become pressing. While there may be some efficiency to this type of fundraising, there are also significant dangers.

A startling finding from this study was that to make these capital campaigns attractive to donors, organizations often plan expansions or remodeling projects that will ultimately increase operating costs, further eroding the organizations' ability to meet routine facilities needs on an ongoing basis.

Many groups interviewed clearly see the world changing around them. Even those who felt stable expressed an awareness of the tenuous position they occupy, the changing nature of the cultural environment, and their fundamental vulnerability. Many organizations are trying to define a response to the impact of rapid change in audience behavior and the crowded field of cultural opportunities now available in Philadelphia. For many the lack of access to risk or working capital stymies their ability to fully define the problem — is it a marketing issue, a product problem, or a question of relevance to mission? — and then respond to the problem in a meaningful or creative way. As one organization's director stated, "I feel as if the arts world is at a critical moment when we need to take some real risks. Yet somehow there is an overall feeling that art groups need to be financially conservative. There is not much reward to taking risks unless you succeed every time — which, of course, is not the nature of risk."

How Can the System Move Forward?

In TDC's view there are three things that appear to advance capitalization:

- Financial literacy that affords managers and boards an understanding of the organization's financial structure.
- Robust strategic business planning that establishes a feasible roadmap to sustainability.
- Incentives from boards and funders that recognize and support the results of robust planning and a common language through which to have an informed discussion about capital needs.

While we found that most organizations can identify their key capitalization issues, they have not been able to integrate this knowledge into coherent plans that tie to a comprehensive and contextual strategy.

As we spoke with organizational leaders, we heard that trustees often are not focused on capitalization and that funders often do not offer rewards and incentives that foster healthy capital structures. The incentives that funders currently do provide do not go far enough. If organizations are not asked for evidence of an integrated capitalization strategy, they fall back to a balanced budget stance, since this is already difficult enough to achieve. Many of the organizations we spoke with were afraid to talk to funders and donors about undercapitalization because they worry about being perceived as weak and, ultimately, "unfundable."

Talking about capitalization in the current economic climate is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it opens up the conversation about financial health — there is no shame

in claiming fragility in these troubled times. On the other hand, TDC worries that the economic crisis will provide yet another excuse to duck the hard questions. Depending on the soundness of an organization's capital structure and the quality of the board and management, the recession means something very different for different organizations. For one group, this is the rainy day for which they have prudently prepared. They have options. While belt-tightening will be painful, it won't change the fact that they will make it through the downturn with their core missions intact. For a second group, the recession will have a profound impact on an organization's growth and development. For those in the middle of a lifecycle change, the economic downturn increases the risk factor tremendously. For those facing the decision to grow or change, they may have to forego their dreams until conditions are more favorable, perhaps sacrificing long-term strategic positioning for short-term financial health, at least temporarily. For a third group, the recession will be the straw that breaks the camel's back. Managing structural deficits and fragile balance sheets through the near term will be a more and more monumental task, and the feasible set of options will narrow. For these organizations, everything needs to be on the table, including strategic repositioning, merger, and bankruptcy.

The key question that management, boards, and funders need to ask at this point is: Which of these realities is mine? If the key stakeholders are not in agreement about an organization's reality, it is impossible to have an honest conversation about workable, effective solutions, and organizations run the risk of a debilitating indecision. If they assume the wrong reality, they may end up making completely inappropriate decisions that do nothing but stave off the day of reckoning a little further. If they can agree on the correct reality, even if it's ugly, there is a hope of crafting feasible solutions or, in the very least, salvaging the core pieces of value the organization retains.

The key question that management, boards, and funders need to ask at this point is: Which of these realities is mine? If the key stakeholders are not in agreement about an organization's reality, it is impossible to have an honest conversation about workable, effective solutions, and organizations run the risk of a debilitating indecision.

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Excerpted from Getting Beyond Breakeven: A Review of Capitalization Needs and Challenges of Philadelphia-Based Arts and Culture Organizations, *by Susan Nelson. The report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the William Penn Foundation.*

SELECTED RESOURCES

Elizabeth Cabral Curtis and Susan Nelson, "The Risk of Debt in Financing Nonprofit Facilities: Why Your Business Model Matters" (TDC, 2007)

Elizabeth Keating, "Passion and Purpose: Raising the Fiscal Fitness Bar for Massachusetts Nonprofits" (Boston Foundation, 2008)

Clara Miller, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Understanding Nonprofit Capital Structure" (*Nonprofit Quarterly,* Spring 2003) and "The Business Roots of Capacity and Mission at Nonprofits" (Nonprofit Finance Fund, 2002)

Susan Nelson and Ann McQueen, "Vital Signs: Metro Boston's Arts and Cultural Nonprofits 1999 and 2004" (Boston Foundation, 2007)

George Overholser, "Nonprofit Growth Capital: Building Is Not Buying" (Nonprofit Finance Fund) and "Patient Capital: The Next Step Forward?" (Nonprofit Finance Fund)

Jim Rosenberg and Russell Taylor, "Learning from the Community: Effective Financial Management Practices in the Arts" (National Arts Strategies, 2003)

Thomas Wolf, "The Search for Shining Eyes" (Knight Foundation, 2006)

Dennis Young (editor), *Financing Nonprofits: Putting Theory into Practice* (Altamira Press)

NOTES

1. TDC interpreted "arts and culture" broadly to include a multitude of disciplines, reaching beyond the traditional fine arts. We sorted organizations into 10 discipline groups: art museums, arts education organizations, arts service organizations, dance organizations, historical museums and societies, humanities organizations, music organizations, natural history and other museums, theaters, and visual arts organizations.
2. The organizations were drawn from grantee lists supplied by the William Penn Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts, and were chosen to constitute a representative (but not random) sample. All organizations had budget sizes above $150,000.
3. It is of interest to note that these conditions are not unique to the Greater Philadelphia area. The Boston Foundation recently published two reports, "Vital Signs" and "Passion and Purpose," that reinforce our findings. "Vital Signs" reported very similar financial conditions for a significant segment of the Greater Boston arts and cultural sector. "Passion and Purpose," which reviews the health of the overall nonprofit sector in Massachusetts, points to the similar weakness in the capital structures of a critical number of organizations regardless of subsector.

The Creative Class of Color in New York

Yasmin Ramirez

Recent studies on New York's creative sector have established that the arts are a key asset in the city's economic portfolio. *Culture Counts: Strategies for a More Vibrant Cultural Life for New York City (2001); Creative New York (2005);* and *The Arts as an Industry: Their Economic Impact on New York City and New York State* (2007) provide ample evidence that the diverse number of cultural institutions, arts-related businesses, and artists in New York generate employment, attract tourism, and enhance the city's quality of life.[1] Cultural diversity is frequently mentioned as a chief component that attracts tourism and maintains New York reputation as a global creative capital. However, missing from these reports are data on artists that can inform us on how well artists of Asian, African, Latino, and Native American descent are faring in New York's creative economy.

Those of us who work in New York's culturally specific and community-based institutions find it ironic that the population of artists who practically embody diversity have not been counted among the city's assets.

Those of us who work in New York's culturally specific and community-based institutions find it ironic that the population of artists who practically embody diversity have not been counted among the city's assets. One reason may be that urban policy makers who draw from Richard Florida's formulas for sustaining a creative city buy into his contention that class, ethnic, race, and gender biases erode as creative class workers interact:

> *The creative class of people I study use the word "diversity" a lot, but not to press any political hot buttons. Diversity is simply something they value in all its manifestations. This is spoken of so often…that I take it to be a fundamental value marker of creative class values. Creative minded people enjoy a mix of influences. They want to hear different kinds of music and try different kinds of food. They want to meet and socialize with people unlike themselves, trade views and spar over issues."*[2]

Florida's observation that creative people value diversity generally rings true. In all my years in the art world I have seldom come across bigots or homophobes and found that male chauvinists could be re-educated. Nevertheless it is hard to ignore that New York's creative class is stratified along racial and ethnic lines.

There is a creative class of color — no actually a creative community of color in New York. Whereas Florida's archetypical creative-class denizen is apolitical and esteems diversity for its entertainment value artists of Asian, African, Latino, and Native American descent have developed networks, organizations, museums, galleries, clubs, clusters, and collectives that operate on the conviction that cultural diversity is a civil right and access to arts is a social good. It goes without saying that artist-run community based organizations of color have been historically under-valued and under-funded in New York City. The economic crises of this last decade coupled with rising costs threatens to shut doors of many who are operating on subsistence level budgets. But our will to survive is strong and new coalitions are forming to sustain our artists and arts organizations because they serve as the connecters between and translators of multiple peoples, heritages, languages and subcultures that reside in our global city.

Launched in 2006, the Urban Artist Initiative (UAI) is the first and only cross-discipline city-wide individual grant program developed for artists in New York that self-identify their heritage as African/African American, Latino, Asian, or Native American. Bill Aguado, Executive Director of the Bronx Council on the Arts and Ted Berger, former Executive Director of the New York Foundation for the Arts, created the conceptual framework for the UAI as a program that would "strengthen the support and infrastructure for artists of color in New York." Foster-ing dialogue, collaboration, and resource sharing among ethnic-specific organizations is one of the UAI's chief objectives. Currently the UAI consortium is composed of the Bronx Council on the Arts, Asian American Arts Alliance, Association of Hispanic Arts, the Harlem Arts Alliance, the Queens Council on the Arts, and the National Museum of the American Indian (Smithsonian Institution).

The UAI motto "embrace diversity within diversity" informed the selection of the grant recipients and public programs. There was a concerted effort to support artists whose modes of self-expression were risky, critical of facile representations of identity, technically innovative. In 2007 ninety artists were awarded grants varying in amounts of $500 to $2,500 each for a total of $125,000. In 2009 fifty artists were awarded $2,000 each, totaling $100,000. Exhibitions of works by UAI visual and media artists were held at the Longwood Arts Gallery in 2008 and Nathan Cummings Foundation in 2009.

Funds for the UAI/NYC Grants Program have been provided by LINC via the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Booth Ferris Foundation, the Buddy Fund for Justice of the Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Starry Night Fund of the Tides Foundation, and the Nathan Cummings Foundation. The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs did not fund UAI.

KEY FINDINGS

Gender Breakdown

65% of the respondents were female; 35% male; 0 transgender

Ethnic Breakdown (respondents were allowed to check multiple identifiers)

- 7.5% African
- 33.8% African American
- 0% Arab American
- 14.8% Asian
- 19.3% Asian-American
- 13.4% Caribbean
- 4.3% Euro American
- 20.3% Latina/o
- 12.1% Latin American
- 7.2% Native American

Time in NYC

- 45% report living in New York City for 10 years or more
- 26% of respondents are native New Yorkers
- 20% have lived in New York City 10 to 5 years
- 8% have lived in New York City less than 5 years

Age

- 40% 30–39
- 29% 40–49
- 15% 50–59
- 10% 20–29
- 3% 60–65
- 1% over 65

Households

- 69 % are single heads of household.
- 11% have households with children.

Education

- 56% College graduates
- 30% M.F.A.
- 30% High school
- 16% Some college
- 2.2 Ph.D.
- 0.0 M.B.A.

Income levels

- 26% $25,000–40,000
- 23.8% $15,000–25,000
- 23.3% $40,001–65,000
- 20% $15,000 or under
- 6.3% $65,000 or more

Percentage of yearly income derived from artistic work

- 47% under 10% to none
- 29% between half and 10%
- 22% all or most

Employment

- 47% self-employed
- 36% employed in education
- 24% employed in not-for-profit arts organizations
- 3% employed in commercial galleries or auction houses.
- 14% directors or founders of not-for-profit institutions
- 37% belong to an arts collective

Housing

- 75% rent
- 69% report that half or more of their income goes toward housing costs

Health Care

- 38% have health insurance through employers
- 17% pay for their insurance
- 33% lack insurance coverage

Disciplinary Breakdown

- 45% identified themselves as visual artists
- 31% media artists
- 24% literary artists

Internet Marketing

- 52% have websites

Exhibition Opportunities

Artists identified ethnic-specific, community-based, and artist-run galleries as most receptive to displaying their work; corporations and commercial galleries were the least receptive.

Participation in Civic Life

- 82% report they are regular voters.
- 63% taught an arts class or workshop
- 59% organized local arts events, giving artist talks and participating in panel discussions.
- 54% donated artwork or labor to benefit not-for-profit organizations; of that number
- 46% report donating to more than 5 events/organizations in the last two years.
- 47% received stipends of $250 or less for rendering services such as exhibiting, performing, giving talks, or sitting on panels.
- 37% received no compensation for services.
- 21% sat on peer-reviewed funding panels.
- 13 % report operating a local business.

Statement of Needs

- 84% of the respondents who are currently looking for workspace cannot find a studio within their affordable price range of under $500.
- 79% report using part of their home as a workspace.
- 53% report needing accounting/business skills.
- 54% report needing website design and management skills.
- 38% report needing entrepreneurial skills.

Top Issues of Concern

- 81% funding for the arts
- 75% housing costs
- 61% health care cost
- 57% employment for artists

The UAI applicant pool, which resembled the "majority-minority" demographics in New York, was ideal for conducting a preliminary research study on the city's creative class of color. Drawing over one thousand applicants, the Urban Arts Initiative awarded individual grants in literature, media arts, performing arts, and visual/interdisciplinary arts — all the major disciplines that make up New York's arts sector. Between July and September 2008, one thousand past and current UAI applicants were invited to complete an on-line survey that I created in collaboration with an interdisciplinary team of artists and arts administrators drawn from the UAI consortium. 325 artists responded.

The survey provided a demographic profile that generated vital information on the socio-economic resources that artists contribute to New York as well as data on their needs. Among the questions we sought to answer were: what are the median age, income, and educational levels of the UAI applicant pool; where are artists finding employment; how many have medical coverage; what networks do UAI artists utilize to display/market their work; how much of their earned income is derived from sales; how are artists coping with the city's affordable housing and/or studio shortage; what types of resources will artists need to sustain their creative enterprises in New York?

Summary of Findings

The findings of the UAI survey indicate that this population is largely (65%) female, between 30 and 50 years old, college educated, civic minded, and active in their local communities. 82% report they are regular voters; 63% taught an arts class or workshop; 59% organized local arts events, giving artist talks and participating in panel discussions.

UAI artists report that ethnic-specific and community-based galleries were most receptive to their work and are not finding similar opportunities to exhibit or find employment in the commercial galleries. 47% describe themselves as self-employed; 38% seek entrepreneurial training; 26% report that they were a founder or director of a not-for-profit organization; and 13% report operating a local business.

This data suggests that there may be unseen economic opportunities for artists to start up local businesses with training and encouragement.

There are several professional development programs in New York that train artists on circulating their work in the fine art marketplace. Notwithstanding the recent economic downtown, it is unlikely that artists will be able to fully support themselves in a centuries-old system that relies on intermediaries like art dealers, agents and museums to find patronage. Marketing of work and seeking employment through the internet is standard practice today. Moreover the results from the UAI survey found that the majority of artists of color were not connected to the commercial gallery circuit. Sectors where artists of color found the most employment were in education, not-for-profits, and social services. A professional development program could be tailored to build those assets and networks that focus on social entrepreneurship and to provide artists with access to existing successful networks of artist-run businesses and not for profits that can serve as models for their own enterprises. Additionally, the UAI professional development program should include training in advocacy and community organizing thus supplying the UAI population with tools and strategies to form productive alliances within their communities on common social welfare issues such as affordable housing, healthcare, employment, environmental justice, and LBGT rights.

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Narcissus Flower

Majid Naficy

My beloved
Has a Narcissus flower in mouth,
Her souvenir from the prisons of Iran.

I know that nightly
From behind bars
One can see the trace of flowers
On the face of the moon.
And mornings
Hear the flapping wings
Of migrating cranes
In the blue sky.
I know that beneath eyelids
And clenched fists
And the gun-less silence
Between two executions
And the stark white of final letters
And the meaning of single taps on walls
And the dewy folds of sorrow
And the stripped-down glimpses of bliss
And the hollow sockets of pain
And the dimbrightness of hope
And the cloud-clad pinnacles of pride,
One can,
Yes one can
Hide away spring.
And yet, I am awed
At how in dark captivity
One can raise a Narcissus flower
Whose purity
Has not been stained by blood.

گل نرگس

دلدار من
گل نرگسی به دهان دارد
که با خود از زندان های ایران آورده است.

می دانم که از پس میله ها
شبها می توان در چهره ی ماه
نقش گلی را دید
و صبح ها در آبی آسمان
صدای بال دُرنای مهاجر را شنید.
می دانم که در پس پلک ها
و قاب مشت ها
و فاصله ی میان دو تیربار
و سپیدی نامه های آخرین
و پیام تک ضربه ها بر دیوار
و گوشه های تر غم
و درزهای برهنه ی شادی
و حفره های خالی درد
و تاریک روشنای امید
و قله های پنهان غرور
می توان
آری، می توان
بهار را پنهان کرد
با این همه در شِگفتم
که در آن بند تاریک
چگونه می توان گل نرگسی پرورد
که لکه های خون
سپیدی آن را نپوشانده باشد.

A Conversation between Private Grantmakers and the NEA

Janet Brown

Patrice Walker Powell, acting chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), hosted a convening of private grantmakers and NEA program directors, communication, research, and administrative staff in Washington, DC, on June 29, 2009. John McCann, president of Partners in Performances, Inc., facilitated the three-and-a-half hour discussion. The meeting grew from a discussion between Ms. Powell and Vickie Benson, president of Grantmakers in the Arts (GIA), who jointly expressed the desire to develop greater communication between public and private grantmakers during the economic downturn. The intent of the meeting was not to develop programming or collaborations but rather to begin a dialogue and share strategies.

Themes of the dialogue centered on the reality of grantmaking in the current environment, curating grants from a new perspective since their impact on organizations could be life sustaining, and fostering new routes for organizations, including mergers, acquisitions or dissolution. NEA staff commented on the recent ARRA (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act) grants, and private grantmakers talked about repurposing funding for grantees, program changes, and the dilemma faced by all of making decisions that could lead to an organization's demise.

This report is not meant to reflect all that was said at the meeting, and statements are not direct quotes. Responses to questions are edited versions taken from a typed transcript and represent a robust discussion held by grantmakers concerned about the preservation and health of the artistic community in America. Those present are listed at the end of the article. Answers to facilitator questions are designated as either NEA or PG (private grantmaker), meaning the respondent was a member of the NEA staff or was present as a private foundation or nonprofit regranter. All members present, including the NEA, were members of Grantmakers in the Arts.

FACILITATOR: Our objective is to discuss the influence of the recession on changing philanthropic patterns. And to better understand how these patterns affect the dynamic relationships between public and private funding for the arts. The questions for today are intentionally broad, allowing for various entry points informed by the diverse perspectives in the room. Sometimes it feels that meetings such as this are more valuable if specific conclusions are reached; yet today we are asking you to actually steer away from conclusions and to place your focus on offering your informed perspective to the collective learning of the group. So let's get started with the first question: How is the current economic environment shaping your thinking about funding?

PG: During this period, we have seen that midsized organizations, with budgets between five-hundred thousand and one million dollars, are doing better than other organizations. The whole problem for many has been compounded by real estate and trying to pay for buildings. It's strangling them.

PG: In my state, the same size organizations are struggling, and we are putting more emphasis on small and service organizations and are putting them in the center of our programs.

PG: We had to rethink making three-year grants when they would go until 2010–2011.

PG: We have to start taking a curatorial role in saying that I believe this organization should stay — we need to take a more public leadership role.

PG: The opportunity to have this conversation helps me be a little more sober about reviewing my next applications. I really appreciate the candor here. Now we must say, "Is it this organization or it is the one down the block?"

NEA: If we are going to get Darwinian about it, then we need to think about the ecology of the field. In folk arts, 72% of organizations have a budget of $150,000 dollars or less. They are resilient but still fragile. It's not just thinking about a level playing field — it was never a level playing field.

NEA: We've heard that this moment (of Darwinism) has arrived. What does this mean? Well, there is a natural culling that needs to happen. Darwinian means not the survival of the fittest but the survival of the most adaptable.

NEA: If we are assuming that a capitalistic system works and continues to work — we need to look at the models we have been using. We are relying on a system where people chose what to buy, but is this a helpful system for us? We should have a sense of who is shutting their doors and why. We have a concept of how capitalism works, but that concept has been shattered, and we need to rethink what we are assuming about the arts. If we go with the capitalistic system, we are telling the American public it's OK for these organizations to die.

PG: We are also looking at opportunities for these organizations to merge — a larger organization to merge with a smaller one that was not making it.

PG: Are you finding in the merger strategy that organizations come to you and ask to merge, or you go out to them and suggest it?

PG: We are finding both.

PG: Sometimes the things that survive are not always the most necessary, they may not be as viable to the constituency that they are serving — thus, we need to be curatorial and advisory.

FACILITATOR: How critical is data to this moment — whether it's more qualitative or quantitative?

PG: I've been most taken by case studies where they drill down and look at funders in local communities, and that data can be extrapolated in many cases to reflect national trends. When you have data, you bring in other voices.

NEA: The falling away of audiences and the notion that we can get into the habit of thinking it's a zero sum game. Even the fact that a dollar will be spent on the arts is a hard thing to ingrain into public thinking. The idea that people develop an appetite and a desire to engage in the arts has to be fostered.

PG: The notion of our curatorial responsibility — there are a growing number of fields and professions that are growing fragile. In some cases, we go to the candidate and in others they come to us. But we can't do everything. We are responsive to services to the field, but we can't do the entire job effectively. We can only do what's in front of us. Do we save this organization again? Or do we decide to say no this time or yes again? Sometimes I have to ask my colleagues. If we are dealing with a DOA issue and the community is not stepping forward after the tenth time, we have to make some harsh decisions.

NEA: Historically, there has always been a relationship between public and private funding. The NEA needs to be more aware of the community and local influences before the grant applications come in and we evaluate them — to learn about the influence before, so we won't be blindsided by issues. So, it's not things have happened and we respond, but instead, we know about them as they are happening.

PG: It's hard to find data addressing the crisis of the moment. However, over time, data gives us great insight to what the structural problems are that those organizations encounter in more stable conditions (not at a time like this). It's a structural problem but not a crisis problem.

PG: What are the ethical issues surrounding these questions? As funders, are we prescriptive or responsive? I believe we need to be more responsive to needs of artists, organizations, and communities. So, let's start the dialogue about what our role is. Those decisions are made based on what is best for a community. When we talk about "excellence" what does that mean for a specific community? Is some art that may not be defined as "excellent" by professional standards better than no art?

NEA: I think it's fascinating that the industry has emerged in different stages. We don't need to have just one investment strategy. When you go down the list, look to see if the grant is just keeping them alive or feeding their portfolio. Thirty years ago we were just investing in growing the arts; now portfolios are much more complex. We are not just developing the institutions like we were thirty years ago.

PG: The Advancement program was wonderful but not perfect — today this program could have many more facets — how does one become smaller, more adaptive rather than bigger. When you move away from only programming — rather than merge or don't merge, a merger can be a single part of an overall plan.

PG: The multiple investment strategy seems to most effectively create a counter to the current moment we've identified and discussed.

FACILITATOR: Even if the economy continues to rebound over the next 18-24 months, what are some of the longer-term (5-10 years) changes you foresee? Among your

Private and Public Funders

Vickie Benson

Within a foundation, it is no secret that programs tend to work in silos. Within a field, the same can be true. It has been true in the world of arts funding for a long time. Although grain silos are important — you want the grain to remain separate and dry — we feel that it is time for the arts funding silos to flow into one another a bit more, at the very least to share our information. The meeting at the NEA was an attempt to learn from one another — for several private foundation officers to share with program directors of the National Endowment for the Arts and vice versa. We are all working toward similar ends; some of us fund regionally, while others nationally. Some public, some private, but we are all grantmakers in the arts.

We discussed the many and varied challenges facing the arts sector across the country because of the economic downturn and ideas that are cropping up in response. We learned about the near-heroic efforts of NEA staffers who mobilized very quickly to manage the $50 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. What follows is a sketch of some of the ideas that were discussed during the meeting. It does not and cannot convey the entire meeting nor the good will that was established simply by grantmakers sitting down together — public and private — sharing our deep concern for our field. This meeting began that dialogue. We know that our new NEA Chair, Rocco Landesman, shares GIA's commitment for further conversation and to breaking down the old silos. We are grateful to Patrice Walker Powell, not only for organizing this meeting, but also for serving as the Acting Chair.

Vickie Benson is president, Grantmakers in the Arts as well as program director, Arts, McKnight Foundation.

grantees (structure, vitality, capacity for risk, etc.); within the field in general (trends, shifting priorities, etc.)?

PG: Strategic alliances — there are a lot of organizations who want to survive, but they don't know about the changes in the game, so perhaps funders could provide space for these conversations to take place.

NEA: I love the idea of questioning the grants system itself, and using this time to look at year-by-year funding, mergers, and strategic alliances. I want to know how these thoughts and ideas come out of the funding discussions. I feel new in the field of philanthropy and giving of resources. I'm feeling hesitancy about our impact in the field — but we have it. I know that many projects that were not successful didn't come forward with a strong message about where we want to go and who we are. I feel that we need to take a more active role in identifying organizations that we feel need more support or others that we feel have gone through their normal life cycle.

NEA: The way information has come into the endowment in the past has not been like it is now — we used to have day-long policy discussions. These discussions came with a whole array of artists, organizations, and panelists involved. I like having the opportunity for the exchange of these ideas — this kind of process is part of what our democratic system is about. Information, so better decisions get made.

NEA: We need to be aware of the real differences in the disciplines. Most dance companies have been bankrupt forever. What is unique about dance is that it's a youth- driven art form — you dance when you're young.

FACILITATOR: There were 2,424 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grants applications to the NEA for jobs. The NEA funded 1 of 4 of them. What did you learn from these applications and the process of awarding the grants? (All responses were NEA personnel.)

- In our field, we have organizations that have maybe one or two employees — we were ultimately making a decision about what organizations to save/fund, not just what jobs to save.
- We saw individuals ready to act. Panelists and readers were so supportive of the work we were doing. The fields are ready to act, whatever you offer them.
- As funders, (we) can be more responsive than we ever imagined.
- Many members of Congress don't understand that these are real jobs.
- There was a pretty big pushback about the advocacy capacity of the field — there was surprising, organized response.
- We saw the same thing in the states — they turned it around on a dime because they already had strategic plans in place — they were ready to respond.
- We saw that some applications hinged on one another — jobs based on previous request for funding. ARRA hinged on a project grant or a fellowship.
- All these groups can benefit from modern forms of communications, collective dialogues to create these strategies — an environment where the entire field can make these decisions. Bottom up rather than top down. Not just … you write a grant and send it in and six months later hear whether or not you receive it.

FACITATOR: What are you doing strategically in relation to what you see? Secondly, what is it you would like to know, or continue to find out, from the private sector and vice versa?

PG: The capacity of leaders to adapt. Thinking differently about what leadership means. The moment we find ourselves in is a good and shocking thing. The foundation is doing very little in capital grants. We are shifting from looking at new building to repairs and maintenance and taking care of what we already have. Also interested in artist service organizations and more specifically artist workspace. Interested in space "capitalization." We are trying to figure out how we can engage earlier in the process for organizations before they get to a point where they can't maintain what they have. Making strategic investments.

PG: Our foundation has been all things to all organizations, including thirty-eight $25,000 fellowships across all disciplines. With the economy tanking and the foundation's commitment in another sector, our arts budget is smaller. Working with a consultant, we are about to launch a program that puts the artist in the center. Working with organizations to re-grant and help the public realize that for artists, art is their job.

PG: We typically help an artist for three to five years. We are now going to offer an exit year, making sure that they have used all of our resources and also get feedback. It's a big leap for us. We are not a national service operation. One emphasis is career development and this has helped us reach a lot more artists. We are interested in expanding and using more affordable practices and technology.

PG: We want to prioritize requests for mergers and acquisitions. Also, repurposing grants and trying to figure out how to do that better. We were encouraging balanced budgets, but not creating reserves. We want to clearly figure out how to provide a grant that succeeds at helping organizations to have a working budget and reserves for stabilization. After the economic downturn, we set up meetings to discuss where they (our grantees) were and tried to come up with solutions.

FACILITATOR: What are these grants being repurposed to?

PG: For example, a company was short operating revenue. We moved their fiscal 2010 into their 2009, their 2011 into

their 2010. They were an excellent staff and board and reinvented their model.

PG: We recently did a study on how organizations are capitalized, which showed that funders are not making capital investments of the kind that actually stabilize organizations. We haven't figured out how to change the way we invest in capitalization projects in response to the study. We have a technical assistance program that we are redesigning to address this need. There's already a high degree of financial literacy in our culture sector and that helps.

We invested in research that redefines "cultural engagement" to include people's own creative practices as well as their participation in professional arts experiences, both live and through the media. One finding is that there is no correlation between education level and personal creative practice, unlike with other forms of arts participation where a greater level of educational attainment correlates with a higher level of cultural attendance. (Alan Brown, year-old study).

PG: At a recent workshop in Atlanta, a common theme was that you don't plan Plan B when it's time to implement Plan B. There is a new interest in using tools: like scenario planning. We are incorporating so many tools from other areas. One thing we've learned: we need to identify partners that can take on things that we don't/can't.

NEA: We are in transition and we are prohibited to start new initiatives. However, we are working to increase funding for existing programs. The tone in which we can articulate data is important. Folk arts awards, jazz masters, opera, national medal of arts are examples of how we have grown to extend to events. There is a strong sense of priorities, but funding is available to the new chairman. It's a difficult place for current staff to be in. So, every week, we have a meeting about what are the priorities. Transparency is important on how we perform and document.

NEA: What we heard was it's important for our constituents to convene, so travel expenses were taken in consideration.

NEA: There will be a reset. Are there any themes that the agency needs to rethink?

PG: Bring Advancement back. I think it was a sad day when most of the fellowships left the agency. I think the NEA still holds influence, but if it lost it, I believe that is why.

PG: I've done a lot of research into cultural exchange. There are barriers between folks at the state department and the arts organization. It's an area that needs more money and closer integration with cultural agencies and the NEA.

FACILITATOR: What is it that you as private funders and NEA staff would like to continue to learn from each other, and how might that happen?

- National overview is invaluable, and being able to come together is priceless.
- Momentum about cultural exchange is happening, and I would want to know what the interest is in the private and public sectors.
- Hear and know more about capitalization and stabilization.
- I'd like to see more common definitions when we talk about culture, and I'd love to see more hard data on the NEA's impact on giving to other foundations.
- Discourse and planning on the bigger issues, like creating more philanthropists for the arts, connecting the commercial and nonprofit arts communities, improving the general perception of the arts to all Americans, and bringing back corporate support at a higher level. For the NEA, we'd like to see leadership in protecting those artforms that are vulnerable.
- I'd like to continue this dialogue around strategies for thoughtful processes allowing organizations to close. How does an organization go out of business thoughtfully and in a celebratory mood?
- I want to thank GIA for encouraging collaboration between its members and arts education organizations. I think it's great to have artists reworking public education strategies and entering into that conversation.
- Learn how we can work to continue to use our collective support around a broad intelligent design — through strategic alignment of all our funding.

Janet Brown is executive director, Grantmakers in the Arts

In attendance:
Margaret Ayers
President, Robert Sterling Clark Foundation
Larry Baden
Deputy Chairman, Management and Budget, National Endowment for the Arts
Vickie Benson
Program Director, The McKnight Foundation
Barry Bergey
Director, Folk and Traditional Arts, National Endowment for the Arts
Janet Brown
Executive Director, Grantmakers in the Arts
Sarah Cunningham
Director, Arts Education, National Endowment for the Arts
Anita Decker
White House Liaison, National Endowment for the Arts
Mario Garcia Durham
Director, Presenting, National Endowment for the Arts
Marian Godfrey
Senior Director, Culture Initiatives, The Pew Charitable Trusts
Sunril Iyengar
Director, Research and Analysis, National Endowment for the Arts
Gar Kelley
Vice President, Mid-Atlantic Region, Nonprofit Finance Fund
Ruby Lerner
Director, Creative Capital
Ted Libbey
Director, Media Arts, National Endowment for the Arts
John McCann
Partners in Performance, Inc.
Jillian Miller
Director, Guidelines and Panel Operations, National Endowment for the Arts
Olive Mosier
Director, Arts and Culture, William Penn Foundation
Bill O'Brien
Deputy Chairman for Grants and Awards, National Endowment for the Arts
Pennie Ojeda
Director, International Activities, National Endowment for the Arts
John Ostrout
Director, State and Regional Partnerships, National Endowment for the Arts
Jon Peede
Director, Literature Grants Program, National Endowment for the Arts
Patrice Walker Powell
Acting Chairman, National Endowment for the Arts
Yosi Sergant
Director, Communications, National Endowment for the Arts
Regina R. Smith
Program Officer, Arts and Culture, The Kresge Foundation
Doug Sonntag
Director, Dance, National Endowment for the Arts
Paula Terry
Director, AccessAbility, National Endowment for the Arts

Keeping On Keeping On

Margaret Jenkins

This keynote speech was delivered by choreographer Margaret Jenkins at the Dance/USA Annual Conference in June 2009, in Houston, Texas in a session titled "Finding the Future: Creative Sustainability in Uncertain Times."

Originally a nautical term, battening down was a procedure to safeguard ships against bad weather. The crew would prepare for an impending storm by fastening canvas over doorways and hatches. Now in the arts, it is a time to take a few deep breaths and batten down the hatches.

The severity of today's climate compels us to pay attention and prepare for trouble, while at the same time demanding that we stay focused on our mission. We must both reignite our determination to continue and revive our commitment to taking risks. We must hold on to our artistic visions so that good work and good people will not vanish. And we must not fall prey to the pressures suggesting that success is predicated on growth.

Although we might need to secure our property — our art — with protective sheeting, we must remain mindful that the way that good and provocative art gets made is to go deeper without much protection. We have to embody not knowing and accept that these unpredictable winds might take us to uncharted and unexplored territories.

In my almost fifty-year career in dance, from high school to Juilliard, then UCLA, New York and Europe, the Bay Area and South East Asia — teaching, and making work, and creating programs for the field, I have had to take cover many times, to shift where I dock and alter how I dock.

Historical perspective:

I have been luxuriously supported in dance, and I have been supported not at all. I have had a full-time company, a part-time company, no company and, currently, a project-oriented company. I have toured around the world. I have stayed home, I have made new work every year. I have made new work every three years. I've collaborated with an extraordinary array of artists including dancers, composers, writers, and visual designers and I've gone to Goodwill for costumes and to my CD collection for music many times.

In the seventies I paid nothing to dancers for rehearsing; eventually a performance here or there earned us $25. We and others performed weekly in my studio à la the early DTW (Dance Theater Workshop) days: a few cans for lights, some soft cushions for chairs. In the late seventies and early eighties, the dance boom offered regular touring and the Company was a recipient of many grants, commissions, and performances at many wondrous places. We toured around the US, and the Company was on a forty-four-week contract until 1993. I owned my own space, had a full curriculum of classes, and a theater in which many others and I performed. I have received numerous awards and have been overlooked any number of times.

What I have witnessed:

- I have seen the NEA touring program go belly up and individual grants cease.
- I have seen the USIA cut back international exchange dramatically.
- I have seen commissions from multiple sources drop to a few.
- I have seen the competition for grants skyrocket from several dozen applications in the nineties up to more than two-thousand for any one grant, with no additional money or at times reduced money to meet the increased demand.
- I have seen real estate for the arts blossom, then the dot-com crash force multiple evictions.
- I have seen repertory companies flourish, then struggle.
- I have seen lines of credit, the mainstay for many, suspended.

In preparation for this presentation, I talked with funders and artists in California, which is in a tumultuous condition at best: San Francisco must cut its arts budget by a minimum of 24%, that most foundations will be reduced by at least 10–22%, and that private donations have dropped by 15%.

I realize it is hard to think of the current and projected cutbacks as anything other than the "sky is falling." But one has to use this crisis as a time to reassess, re-imagine, re-focus and realign. For those of us who have been through these sea changes in the past, prosperity and adversity both look like opportunities: to experiment, court chance and be cautious. We must stay at it — hold on tight, but not so tight that there is no room for something miraculous or unexpected to enter the scene.

The news today, and it will continue for a while, is at once shocking and "what else is new?" Disheartening — yes, but surprising — no! Dynamic adaptability, as John Killacky says, has to be a constant.

In 1996 I saw the then-invisible handwriting on the wall. I shifted my Company to a project company. I went to other countries to dig deeper into my vulnerability and to see what I could learn past just keeping on: Japan, India, Eastern Europe and currently China have become my through-line, making work across borders my thread. My new cross-cultural work, *Other Suns,* with the Guangdong Modern Dance Company of China, premieres this fall and has a four-week tour thanks in part to the National Dance Touring Project.

CHIME, my choreographic mentorship program, has become a place for dialogue, for creative exchange, for building community, for staying focused on the exciting and evocative issues of being an artist. There is no time for

the litany of complaints that can so often derail us from the making of art, the keeping on, the identifying and solving of perceived problems.

Most dance artists of my generation never had support. They might as well have been children of the Depression; they were used to living with many, working three jobs, as well as juggling dancing with many companies. You stayed put — to work and devote yourself to an aesthetic you found compelling. No need to move to another company for better wages.

But there are those who have not survived our culture's demeaning relationship to the arts, who have quietly and sadly stopped or moved to other countries — battened down their hatches and sailed away.

Some dance artists, two decades younger than I am, have found a workable solution in universities: Bebe Miller, Susan Marshall, David Dorfman, Joe Goode, Della Davidson, Tere O'Connor, David Rousseve, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Sara Rudner, Dan Wagoner and Wendy Rogers to name a few.

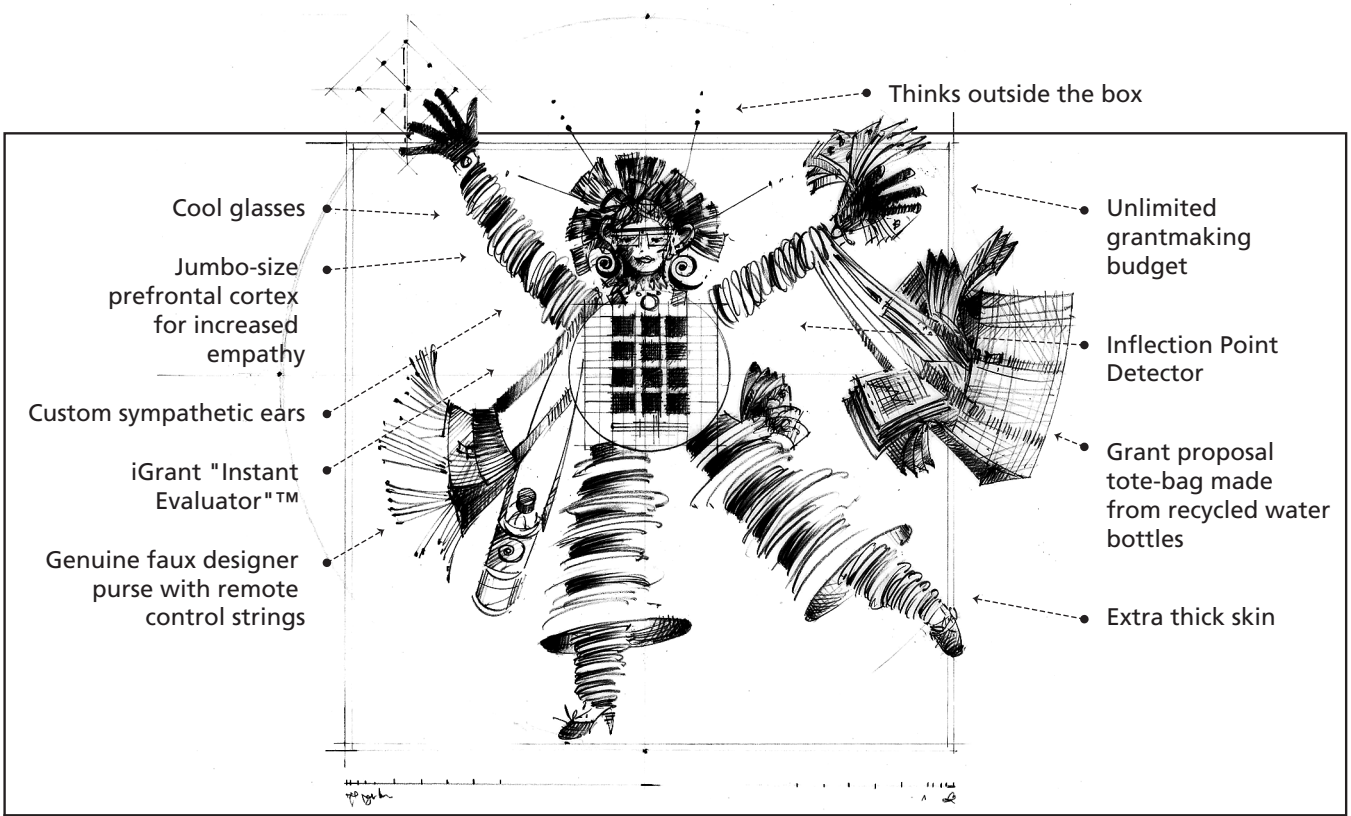
In addition, the numbers of MFA and PhD candidates in universities are up dramatically. Dancers' Group in the Bay Area, our service organization, boasts at least one hundred individuals to whom they are a fiscal sponsor and literally hundreds more who avail themselves of their services. There were 740 applicants to the Multi-Arts Production Fund (MAP) this year, an increase of 25%. Our field is healthy with people at work.

Although there were a few brief years that produced and held the promise of increases in salaries and renewed year-long contracts, the dancers of my Company once again dance with at least three companies, work at least two other jobs, share apartments with many, and continue, as in the seventies, regardless of the lack of recognition or consistent work.

We've learned from earlier crises and are now better able to negotiate our way through times of upheaval. Trying to sustain what we have been doing is not the answer, but reassessing our mission is. We have to do less and make it more.

Einstein was one smart fellow when he said that the "definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." We must think, act, and work differently once again.

So, I point out some of these cycles from the vantage point of someone who has been around for a bit. It isn't so much that "I have been there, done that" and therefore have no interest or concern with what is going on now, but many of my generation have had multiple experiences with this ebb and flow, and we hold stories of recovery. I have felt disillusioned, marginalized, invisible, but also, and sometimes



ARTS GRANTMAKER ACTION FIGURE

Saving the world through strategic initiatives

at the same time, substantially respected, honored, inspired, and, finally and always, fortunate. Moreover, we know not to be fooled by the decoy — the decoy of visibility, recognition, or support. Those are ephemeral at best. The doing must be of necessity and its own reward.

I have adapted, and to some degree consolidated, and I will admit that I have recently shifted to gin when pouring "water" into the half-full glass. But I keep on for the fleeting moments of feeling alive, as Merce Cunningham would say, for the privilege of being able to do this with my life, for the profound entrée into another way of living, of seeing the world, for getting to dive head-, heart-, and body-long into my vulnerability and in so doing be lifted upright and thrust forward, with a deeper understanding and sensitivity to everything around me. We have to learn to surrender to not knowing and to accept and live in the complexity of these moments.

Of course, the minute one says "you should do X and not Y," "cut back" or "consolidate," someone emerges and thrives doing exactly the opposite. There are always those who will surprise and present alternatives, the exceptions to any rule. If you look closely at those who are surviving, or bucking the trend or predictions, notice who is at the helm. I feel strongly that we are a field of visionaries and warriors, and that the capacity to continue has everything to do with leadership. If we pay close attention to the survivors, there are lessons to extract, to apply to our own situations. Their collective tenacity, optimism, and determination can serve as a guide and a reminder.

Whoever is to blame for where we are now, the end result is that art, especially dance, is not a part of everyday American life, and it's up to the artists to remedy the situation. Tony Kushner has said: *"When you don't act, you act; when you don't vote, you vote."* Dance artists have to be proactive; find new ways to make money; insist on being paid for their expertise and knowledge; and continue to reach out to potential audiences for support, for renewal, for affirmation.

When we feel like we've tried everything and have culled from the resources within ourselves, that we've squeezed every drop of blood from every available stone, we can take heart in how the world sometimes changes around us for the better. I sense hopefulness, a kind of promise — that a suffocating feeling has abated. We have a pretty incredible opportunity in America right now, one that was not available just a year ago — a government that seems to be listening in a different way. As we tick off the changes over time that stifled creativity and made our days more difficult, we must acknowledge that we had a horrible government for eight years that waged various consuming wars, both cultural and military, at home and abroad. We have to work harder now to make the world interested in what we are doing, and we have to be more interested in what the world is making. And finally it looks like we may have elected an Arts Partner in Chief, someone who will reach out and let in some air.

The sustaining mantra of many in the field is that they did not choose to be dancers; it is a necessity, like breathing. We just need a little oxygen to continue the journey.

Margaret Jenkins is artistic director of Margaret Jenkins Dance Company. www mjdc.org.

"School Reform" and the "Status Quo"

A Community Artist Looks Forward

Judith Tannenbaum

I began my work life over thirty years ago writing poems with children in my daughter's kindergarten class. At that time, I didn't think of myself as a community artist, the descriptor I'd come to use in a few years. I thought of myself as a mother, a volunteer, a lover of poems, and as someone who had fun sharing imagination with kids. Eventually, funding from a series of good programs — California Poets in the Schools, Arts in Corrections, the William James Association, the California Arts Council — allowed me to develop from an enthusiastic volunteer into a professional teaching artist working primarily in public schools and state prisons. For the past eleven years, I have served as training coordinator with WritersCorps, a program of the San Francisco Arts Commission. No longer the one on the front lines, I'm now able to share what I've learned with those coming into the field.

Because I have long worked with children in schools labeled "under-performing," as well as with people in prison, these days I am particularly concerned about what some call the "school-to-prison pipeline." This phrase has a different tone than does "no child left behind," but both recognize that some of our children are being trained to assume power and others to wind up in prison. I don't like this fact and wonder what can be different.

President Obama has told us that education will be one of the three top foci of his administration. Our new president has made clear that he supports rigorous educational approaches that will lead to college and then on to a good job. He has mentioned charter schools specifically.

The charter schools currently receiving the most notice are those of KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program). KIPP has received lots of media attention, from articles in *The New York Times*, to features on *Sixty Minutes*, and *Oprah*. What has caught the nation's attention is that KIPP students — almost

exclusively poor black and brown children — have consistently and dramatically improved their scores on standardized tests and that a large number move on to college.

Reports also note, often with an amused tone, the somewhat militaristic aspects of the KIPP model. The school day typically runs from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and classes meet every other Saturday, as well as during three weeks each summer. Students do hours of homework each night, and teachers and principals are required to visit families and accept phone calls 24/7. Everyone — children, teachers, parents and principal — signs a contract agreeing to these terms.

KIPP was launched in 1994 by two young Teach for America alumni Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin who designed a "tough love" program they were confident would bring school success to children not used to such success. In 2000 Doris and Donald Fisher, the cofounders of GAP stores, came on board to work toward the goal of opening more KIPP schools nationwide.

Because I have long worked with children in schools labeled "under-performing," as well as with people in prison, these days I am particularly concerned about what some call the "school-to-prison pipeline."

Although much of what I read about KIPP schools made me nervous, I recognized that the model was as much based on concern for social justice as my own work has been. I wanted to see a KIPP school for myself.

The first thing I tend to notice when I walk into a school building is what's on the walls. In some schools the hallways are bare; others feature schedules and rules; still others vibrate with student art, essays, and poems. The main hallway of the KIPP middle school I visited was empty except for one list of graduates moving on to good high schools, posted school rules, and the KIPP slogans that media loves to repeat: *Team Always Beats Individual, Education Decides Everything, There Are No Shortcuts,* and *Work Hard. Be Nice.*

In every class I walked into, the children's eyes were focused — on the teacher, chalkboard, paper, or book. The rooms were quiet, with no side conversations. I couldn't tell the content of any of the classes I visited; all the attention was on process, on making sure that students knew what was needed to do the task they'd been assigned. Although the KIPP teachers didn't read from a script, as teachers are required to do at some schools these days, all used a shared system of nonverbal hand gestures that communicate a range of instructions, and there were acronyms on the chalkboard that reminded students of logistical details such as what material they need for a given project. I've heard the effect of the chants, gestures, and acronyms described as being "KIPPnotized."

I talked with a few children and told them that when I was their age, I needed to stare into space. Actually, I said I *still* need to stare into space. I'm a poet. "You are?" one asked before shaking her head and letting me know, "You'd get in lots of trouble at this school."

I saw no disciplining other than those quick nonverbal cues that quickly brought the whole class to attention. In the TV coverage of KIPP schools, though, there are scenes of children being reprimanded at the side of a classroom. From those clips, it seemed that shaming is intentional. The intervention was quick, not personal in any cruel way, and delivered with a "what you owe to others" team spirit. Still, I found disconcerting the image of a white man in his thirties (one of KIPP's founders) telling black teens what they owe to their people.

So my poet, child-of-the-sixties, community-artist response to KIPP was slight shock tinged by fear. I moaned and groaned in a what's-the-world-coming-to fashion to one of my former San Quentin students, still doing time, and now a good friend. He loves to mention the Birkenstocks I wore when I first came to the prison to teach, so he knew my biases, understood my feelings, and to some extent, shared them. But he's told me over and over about the young black men coming to prison these days, and how their lack of education and ability to think make him worry that his people don't have a future. He told me he's willing to accept some loss of individuality and exuberance to prevent that bleak fate.

I listened and sighed, knowing that he was right: If I let myself stay stuck in the past I'd be unable to see the needs of the present. So I reconsidered.

Yes, KIPP's chants and nonverbal gestures could read as some kind of 1984 Big Brother hypnosis. At the same time, I've visited dozens of schools and hundreds of classrooms over the years, and the long sighs and speeches most teachers — including me — give as we remind everyone to pay attention are certainly no more humanistic or soul-enriching than a quick nonverbal reminder that is consistent from classroom to classroom (and therefore easily understood) and that essentially conveys the same message in a fraction of the time.

I love walking into a class in which the teacher clearly loves her subject; I love watching passion motivate students. I missed that at KIPP. Still, I have to admit that not all teachers are passionate, and besides, passion doesn't necessarily teach one how to get the job done during the stretches when even a loved project becomes mundane. So the emphasis KIPP teachers place on logistics, on being sure every child in the room knows exactly what a given task requires, has a lot to be said for it.

OK then, KIPP deserves the attention it's getting. Still I wonder why — in the current debate between what some label "school reform" (charter schools, merit pay for good teachers, and tough accountability standards) and "the status quo" (smaller class size and more financial support for public schools) — certain assumptions seem not to be questioned. And I wonder how to inform this debate with the values and practice of my generation of community artists.

One unquestioned assumption regards the time demands on KIPP's teachers. Imagine a job that requires a work day of nine and one-half hours on site, followed by a few hours at home doing prep and follow up, and availability by telephone even in the middle of the night. Such a job might be thrilling for a young adult filled with energy, commitment, and excitement — you feel you're saving children's lives, after all. But what happens when the young adult has a friend or a sick grandmother who needs help? What happens when she wants to learn something new that will take a great deal of study, or he's is ready to start a family of his own?

I'm a poet. "You are?" one asked before shaking her head and letting me know, "You'd get in lots of trouble at this school."

The "school reform" advocates castigate the response to charter schools like KIPP made by "the teachers' unions and the members of the Ed School establishment" (as David Brooks described the "status quo" camp in *The New York Times* on December 5, 2008). But these same critics make no mention either of the need for human beings to have a life beyond the job, or of the consequences for children and school communities when teachers don't stick around.

The KIPP principal I spoke with told me that the goal they're working toward is for teachers to remain six years. So far, very few have. Most teachers at his school — primarily men and women in their late twenties or early thirties — stay two or three years. Energetic young teachers are great, but also needed are older folk who have a range of experience, acquired wisdom, and the ability to model how commitment to teaching and youth fit into a full life.

My generation of community artists also began in our passionate youth. Those of us who've stayed with the work are, of course, now older, slower, and grateful for a good night's sleep. No longer can we easily summon the rock 'n' roll energy required to capture and hold the attention of a group of youth who don't yet know us. Big energy serves when doing a performance in a classroom or organizing a poetry slam. But when a teaching artist wants to create a long-term, in-depth residency, other skills are required: a complex knowledge of one's art form, organizational skills, the ability to let real trust build over time, awareness of when the moment is right to ask personal questions, experience recognizing when a young person is ready to be nudged and when to leave him alone, and so on. One has to stick around awhile to develop these gifts.

I think KIPP schools are losing a lot when they lose their teachers every couple of years. Actually, KIPP agrees. And as they develop "from start up to sustainability" — as Public Affairs Associate Debbie Fine, puts it — the program is exploring a variety of approaches, including job sharing, that encourage their teachers to stay put for a while.

Most reports about KIPP mention studies about the different child-rearing approaches of richer and poorer families. One set of studies (done by Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley) looked at the number, and the emotional quality, of words spoken to babies and toddlers.[1] (Little ones in wealthier families hear both more words and more positive expressions).

Annette Lareau's research[2] focused on the "concerted cultivation" style of the middle-class (in which parents create a full schedule of soccer games and dance classes for their children, and in which children are invited to question and negotiate with adults) and the "accomplishment of natural growth" approach of economically poorer families (where children play on their own and with each other, and are expected to treat adults with distance and respect). Lareau found poorer children were happier and more independent, but wealthier children enormously more likely to succeed in school and on the job.

Paul Tough, in "Still Left Behind: What It Will Really Take to Close the Education Gap" (*The New York Times Magazine*, November 26, 2006), describes another KIPP acronym, SLANT: *Sit up, Listen, Ask questions, Nod and Track the speaker with your eyes*. Tough notes that these are skills middle-class children learn by osmosis, whereas KIPP students need to be taught the methods explicitly. He writes, "Middle-class Americans know intuitively that 'good behavior' is mostly a game with established rules; the KIPP students seemed to be experiencing the pleasure of being let in on a joke."

I want poor kids let in on the joke, too. I want all kids to succeed.

And yet I do wonder why there's so little questioning of what we mean by "successful." As a parent whose daughter was born in 1970, and as an artist who has shared poetry with privileged as well as poor children, I'd like to ask a couple of questions. I mean, I get it: Confidence encourages solid test scores, and I myself love children's questions and belief in the value of their own minds and imaginations. But has anyone writing articles about "success" been in a room of entitled first graders lately? Has no one been shocked when noting middle-class teen-agers who wait for rides from parents rather than getting around town on their

own, or college students unable to make a single decision without parental input? One of my questions, then, is: Are we sure the qualities Lareau notes in the middle-class young people she studied are the ones we want to nourish in "successful" adults?

Another question: Are there really no ways for poor children to grow up assured of jobs and a decent life style other than by becoming robots or middle-class clones? For I do read research that is more in line with the experience of my generation of community artists. "Education Is All in Your Mind," by Richard E. Nisbett (*The New York Times*, February 8, 2009):

"Daphna Oyserman, a social psychologist at the University of Michigan … asked inner-city junior-high children in Detroit what kind of future they would like to have, what difficulties they anticipated along the way, how they might deal with them and which of their friends would be most helpful in coping. After only a few such exercises in life planning, the children improved their performance on standardized academic tests, and the number who were required to repeat a grade dropped by more than half."

Nisbett also mentions Geoffrey Cohen, a psychologist at the University of Colorado, who asked teachers at a suburban middle school to give their seventh graders a series of assignments to write about their most important values. "Afterward," Nisbett reports, "the black students did well enough in all their courses to obliterate 30 percent of the difference that had existed between black and white students' grades in previous years."

Osyerman's and Cohen's research speaks to much that's foundational in the work of my generation of community artists. If we had a bill of rights, or a ten-point plan, it would include the belief that our stories — the specific life we've each lived, our obstacles and blessings, the people and places we come from, our individual natures, what we see when we look at the world — are valid and worthy of being claimed and declaimed. We believe what Osyerman and Cohen have shown: asking children about their lives, dreams, and hopes builds connections between themselves and the school tasks necessary to get ahead.

Besides, making art encourages one to become familiar with perception, imagination, and memory, and to recognize the difference between these qualities of mind. We community artists believed that this ability to differentiate helps assess the truth of what we read, hear, see and are told, and therefore makes us less vulnerable to all sorts of Powers that Be, including peer pressure or political manipulation. In a recent group conversation with Lifers at California State Prison-Sacramento, one of the men said: "If anyone in school had ever asked me to put down what I felt in a painting or poem, who knows where I might be now?"

Tara Parker-Pope (*The New York Times*, Well, February 23, 2009) discussed research reported in the journal *Pediatrics*, which suggested that "play and down time may be as important to a child's academic experience as reading, science, and math, and that regular recess, fitness, or nature time can influence behavior, concentration and even grades." This study found that walks outdoors appeared to improve scores on tests of attention and concentration, and speculated that "(t)he reason may be that the brain uses two forms of attention. 'Directed' attention allows us to concentrate on work, reading and tests, while 'involuntary' attention takes over when we're distracted by things like running water, crying babies, a beautiful view or a pet that crawls onto our lap."

In a recent group conversation with Lifers at California State Prison-Sacramento, one of the men said: "If anyone in school had ever asked me to put down what I felt in a painting or poem, who knows where I might be now?"

I didn't see any crying babies or crawling pets at the KIPP school I visited, though Debbie Fine, the KIPP spokesperson, told me that the schools do offer classes in visual art, fashion design, computers, and — on those bi-monthly Saturdays — chess and studying Shakespeare. I'm glad to hear it, although the approach of these classes still sounds pretty step-by-step and follow-the-rules. However KIPP folks are serious about their purpose, and they seem to pay attention to research, so perhaps their long school day will eventually include opportunities for "involuntary attention,"i.e., staring into space.

If we really care about social justice, inclusion, and the success of all children, we must learn and adapt to the needs of the time. KIPP may well be one model that leads the way. Still, I can't imagine a future in which our children — whatever their economic backgrounds — will grow up healthy, happy and productive without developing long-term relationships with adults who themselves have complicated, rich lives, i.e., teachers who stick around for a while – and without opportunities for the unscheduled, indirect attention offered by fresh air and exercise, staring into space, and making art.

Judith Tannenbaum currently serves as training coordinator for San Francisco's WritersCorps program. By Heart: Poetry, Prison, and Two Lives, *a two-person memoir written with Spoon Jackson, will be published by New Village Press in 2010.*

NOTES

1. Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley, *Meaningful Differences in the Everyday Experiences of Young American Children,* Paul H. Brookes Publishing Company (1995).
2. Annette Lareau, *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life,* University of California Press (2003).

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