

AND STILL WE RISE:

Women of Color Creating Community through the Arts

Tuesday, January 23, 2018
University of Southern California

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Brigette Dunn-Korpela** is the artistic director of the B. Dunn Movement/Dance and Theatre Company.
- **Reena Esmail** is a composer who moves between Indian and Western classical music traditions.
- **Marjani Forté** is a cofounder, with Nia Love, of LOVE|FORTÉ A COLLECTIVE. Her choreography explores themes of memory, trauma, recovery, resilience, and spirituality.
- **Leslie A. Ito** is the president and CEO of LA's Japanese American Cultural and Community Center.
- **Charmaine Jefferson** (moderator) is a former executive director of the California African American Museum and the visionary behind Kélan Resources, a consulting firm dedicated to integrating art, history, culture, business, and diversity into education, community, and philanthropy.
- **Jackie Lopez** is a co-founder and artistic director of Versa-Style Dance Company.
- **Ayisha Morgan-Lee** is the CEO and artistic director of Hill Dance Academy Theatre, which she founded when she was 21.
- **Tiffany Rea-Fisher** is a choreographer and the artistic director of Elisa Monte Dance.
- **Christie Rios** is the assistant director of Danza Floricanto/USA.
- **Zanaida Robles** is a vocalist and conductor who advocates for diversity and inclusion in music education and performance.
- **Gemma Sandoval** is the founder, artistic director, and choreographer of Danza Floricanto/USA.
- **Kia Smith** is the artistic director of South Chicago Dance Theatre.

BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ARTS

In a world of art stars and art markets, art can seem like a distinctly individualistic pursuit. But art has been intertwined with and integral to communities throughout history and in cultures across the world. Think of intergenerational folk choruses, community theatres, church choirs, and social dance.



In the late 1960s, the term “community art” began to refer to art made in an intentional collaboration between professional artists and people in marginalized communities. Today, “community art” often refers to public and/or neighborhood-based art making with a focus on social justice and collaboration.

WOMEN OF COLOR, ART, AND COMMUNITY

Women of color have been creating community through art across generations and cultures. Here are just a few examples you may want to check out:

ACROSS OUR KITCHEN TABLES

Across Our Kitchen Tables is an emerging group based in Boyle Heights to support women of color who have food-based businesses in engaging the culinary arts in ways that nurture the business owners and their communities.

MUJERES CREANDO

Mujeres Creando is a Bolivian anarchy-feminist group that uses street theatre and public art to fight poverty, homophobia, and other forms of oppression.

MUJERES DE MAIZ

Mujeres de Maiz is a women-of-color-centered organization that has been building community and solidarity through art in LA since the 1990s.

WHERE WE AT

Where We At: Black Women Artists, Inc. (WWA) was a collective of Black women artists formed in 1971 to counter the marginalization of Black women in both the Black Arts Movement and the largely white feminist art movement of the time. Starting with a group show in New York, WWA provided a space for Black women artists to explore their own artistic concerns, and also used art as a tool for community empowerment and liberation. The group organized art workshops in schools, hospitals, and prisons, and published a widely read pamphlet called *Where We At: Black Women Artists: A Tapestry of Many Fine Threads*.

WOMEN’S CREATIVE COLLECTIVE AT USC

In 2006, USC students Tani Ikeda and Marissa Sellers founded the Women’s Creative Collective for Change. Through weekly potluck dinners, they aimed to provide a space for creative women of color at USC to share ideas and inspire each other to art and action. Though the group is no longer active at USC, it built a thriving creative community and sparked numerous projects, both on and off campus.

WOMEN OF COLOR ARTS LEADERS AT USC

- ◉ Nao Bustamante, vice dean at the USC Roski School of Art and Design and an internationally renowned performance and video artist.
- ◉ Velina Hasu Houston, a playwright and the director of the MFA in Dramatic Writing Program at USC.
- ◉ Robin Coste Lewis, the poet laureate of Los Angeles and a faculty member in the PhD in Creative Writing and Literature Program at USC.
- ◉ Daria Yudacufski, the executive director of Visions and Voices.

VOCABULARY CORNER

Activist Loretta Ross on the origin of the term “women of color”:

“In 1977, a group of black women from Washington, D.C., went to a national women’s conference in Houston ... They carried to that conference something called the Black Women’s Agenda, because the organizers of the conference had put together a three-page Minority Women’s Plank in a 200-page document that the black women thought was somewhat inadequate. ... They wanted the delegates to vote to substitute the Black Women’s Agenda for the Minority Plank ... Then all the rest of the minority women of color wanted to be included in the Black Women’s Agenda. Well, they agreed, except that you could no longer call it the Black Women’s Agenda. And it was in those negotiations that the term ‘women of color’ was created. They didn’t see it as a biological definition; it is a solidarity definition, a commitment to work in collaboration with other oppressed women of color who have been minoritized.”



Across Our Kitchen Tables



Public art by Mujeres Creando



National Women’s Conference in Houston, 1977

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- ◉ What are the intersections between art and identity?
- ◉ What kind of community art project would you like to create or see happen in your neighborhood?
- ◉ Do you think community art should or does take different forms in different communities?

TO LEARN MORE OR GET INVOLVED, CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES:

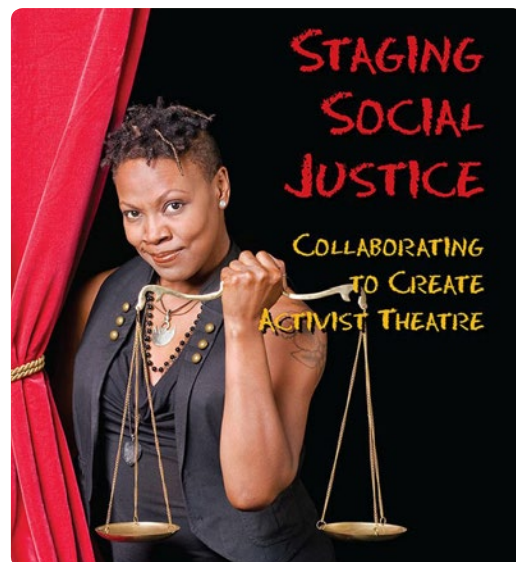
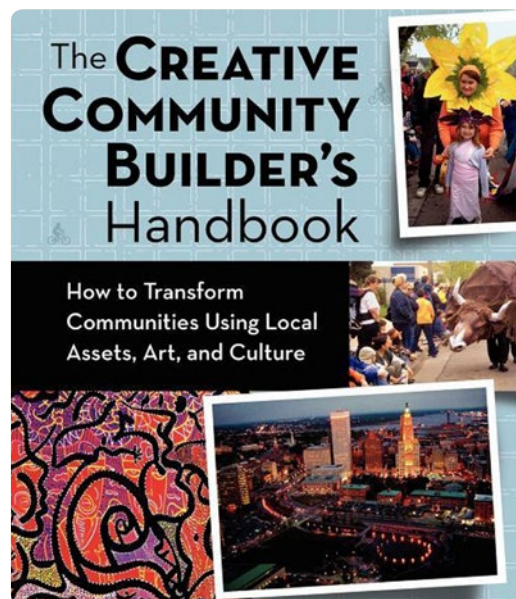
- ◉ Community arts facilities in LA such as the William Grant Still Arts Center
wgsac.wordpress.com/
- ◉ International Association of Blacks in Dance
iabdassociation.org/
- ◉ Viver Brasil Dance Company
viverbrasil.com/
- ◉ Japanese American Cultural and Community Center
jaccc.org
- ◉ *Making Face, Making Soul/Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color*, edited by Gloria Anzaldúa

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

STACY WILLIAMS of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this afternoon's events. Except where a call number is given, these are electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

- ◉ Borrup, Tom, et al. *The Creative Community Builder's Handbook: How to Transform Communities Using Local Assets, Art, and Culture*. Saint Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance, 2006.
Architecture and Fine Arts Library: HN9o.C6 B685 2001
- ◉ Bowles, Norma, and Daniel-Raymond Nadon. *Staging Social Justice: Collaborating to Create Activist Theatre*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2013.
Doheny Memorial Library: PN2o49 .S48 2013
(also available as an electronic resource)
- ◉ Brown, Betty Ann, et al. *Communitas: the Feminist Art of Community Building*. Northridge: California State University Northridge Art Gallery, 1992.
Architecture and Fine Arts Library: N6512 .C5814 1992
- ◉ Burrige, Stephanie, and Charlotte Svendler Nielsen. *Dance, Access and Inclusion: Perspectives on Dance, Young People and Change*. New York: Routledge, 2018.
Doheny Memorial Library: GV1799.2 .D36 2018
- ◉ Fajardo-Hill, Cecilia, et al. *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960-1985*. Los Angeles: Hammer Museum, 2017.
Architecture and Fine Arts Library: NX18o.P64 R35 2017
- ◉ Malone, Christopher. *The Organic Globalizer: Hip Hop, Political Development, and Movement Culture*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014.
Leavey & Von KleinSmid Center libraries: JA75.7 .O74 2014
- ◉ Morris, Catherine, et al. *We Wanted a Revolution: Black Radical Women, 1965-85; a Sourcebook*. Brooklyn, NY: Brooklyn Museum, 2017.
Doheny Memorial Library: HQ1421 .W4 2017
- ◉ Shragge, et al. *Organize!: Building from the Local for Global Justice*. Toronto : Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012.
Von KleinSmid Center: HM831 .O79 2012



RECOMMENDED ARTICLES

- Lampert, Nicolas, and Raoul Deal. "Watershed: Art, Activism, and Community Engagement." *Radical History Review* 116 (2013): 147-158.
- Leaf, Betsy Maloney, and Bic Ngo. "The Importance of "Downtime" for Democratic Dance Pedagogy: Insights from a Dance Program Serving Asian American Youth." *Journal of Dance Education* 17, no. 2 (2017): 65-72.
- Thomas, Etalia. "The Dance of Cultural Identity: Exploring Race and Gender with Adolescent Girls." *American Journal of Dance Therapy* 37, no. 2 (2015): 176-196.
- Pataki, Sherri P., and Scott A. Mackenzie. "Modeling Social Activism and Teaching about Violence against Women through Theatre Education." *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2012): 500-503.
- Shresthova, Sangita. "Bollywood Dance as Political Participation? On Flash Mobs, New Media, and Political Potential." *Convergence* 19, no. 3 (2013): 311-317.

RECOMMENDED DATABASES

Arts & Humanities

This database features hundreds of titles covering Art, Architecture, Design, History, Philosophy, Music, Literature, Theatre and Cultural Studies.

Dance Online: Dance in Video

Contains 500 dance productions and documentaries by the most influential performers and companies of the 20th century.

GenderWatch

GenderWatch features publications that focus on the impact of gender across a broad spectrum of subject areas including media, health sciences, political science, and more.

ProQuest Research Library

ProQuest Research Library is a multi-disciplinary index that covers dozens of subject areas and provides full-text for a significant number of the articles included. It is an excellent starting place for research for a paper.

