



NAS

NATIONAL ARTS STRATEGIES



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Rapid City, SD



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**Laurel Antonmarchi**  
Rapid City, SD

Laurel Antonmarchi is an award-winning graphic designer and artist who is passionate about making the arts more accessible and less intimidating to youth in underserved areas. She grew up with limited access to the arts in a quiet, rural South Dakota town of 700 people. Always one to challenge the status quo, Laurel felt stifled by the conventional characteristics of rural life; nonetheless, it allowed her to better understand that kids need to feel safe enough to be creative.

After receiving a small grant from Arts Rapid City, Laurel organized Doodle Downtown, Rapid City's first ever chalk art competition. She will continue to expand Doodle Downtown into workshops for youth in rural towns and reservation communities throughout South Dakota, therapeutically engaging their imagination and building creative confidence through the friendly and familiar medium of chalk.

When Laurel isn't playing with pixels or chalk dust, she reaches for her camera and skateboard, and loves discovering new trails in the Black Hills.

Adrienne Benjamin is a 32 year old mother of two daughters. She is an enrolled member of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe. She was a part of Cohort 5 of the Native Nation Rebuilders Program, and is also a Blandin Community Leadership Program alum.

She currently works as an Ojibwe Language & Curriculum Coordinator at the Anishinaabe Izhitwaawin (Mille Lacs Band Cultural Grounds).

She loves spending her time doing traditional activities and her secret talent (not so secret now) is singing.

Adrienne's passion lies in working with native youth. She recently co-founded a program called Ge-niigaanizijig (The Ones That Will Lead) that sets vulnerable tribal youth on a path to success by teaching them language arts, tribal governance, leadership, and promoting higher education. She hopes to continue her work with tribal youth by promoting arts and theater in her tribal nation.



**Adrienne Benjamin**  
Isle, MN



**Claro de los Reyes**  
Brooklyn, NY

Claro de los Reyes is a social practice theatre artist and filmmaker who creates work to further build community, encourage cross-cultural dialogue and highlight and explore underrepresented histories.

As an actor, he has performed off-Broadway with various NY theater companies. Additionally, he has had the honor of devising theatre alongside community members in NYC, the Philippines and Rwanda. His short films have been screened in programs for the Anthology Film Archive and festivals at Chicago's Portage Theater. As a proud theatre and media-based educator he serves arts organizations that include the Apollo Theater Education, CUNY Creative Arts Team, and The Filipino School of NY & NJ. Claro is a graduate of Fordham Theatre Program, the Third World Newsreel Film Workshop and holds an MA in Applied Theatre from CUNY School of Professional Studies.

In 2015, as a commissioned artist of the Laundromat Project's Create Change program, Claro worked with local community members in Queens, NY to implement My Baryo, My Borough; a community centered oral-history project documenting the Filipino American legacy in Queens, NY.



**Lori Erickson**  
Encino, CA

Lori Erickson serves as the Manager of Casting at CBS Television Studios where she oversees the casting of television shows such as CRIMINAL MINDS, CRIMINAL MINDS: BEYOND BORDERS and CODE BLACK on CBS and INCORPORATED on Syfy, in addition to several pilots. She previously worked in the television packaging department at CAA and learned the casting ropes as an apprentice to the casting director at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, where she assisted on plays such as the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY.

Lori recently established a collaborative, all-female theater company called The LadyParts Collective with the mission to create parts for women by generating new works about issues that affect women within the Los Angeles community. She graduated from Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri with a BFA in Theatre Arts. Lori volunteers with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society and Young Storytellers Foundation.



**Nimo Farah**  
Minneapolis, MN

Nimo H. Farah is an artist and activist based in Minneapolis who uses language and poetry to express the complexities that come with juggling multiple cultures as a refugee growing up in the Midwestern United States.

Her current undertaking is to develop her skills as an orator who blends Somali and English while helping native Minnesotans build a better understanding of Somali culture. Some of the most interesting aspects to this blending of languages are the messages that are lost in translation but that, through conversation, facilitate profound intercultural understanding and learning. Her poetry and short stories, written in both Somali and English have been published in Water-Stone Review, Saint Paul Almanac, and The Loft Inroads chapter book.

As a storyteller, Nimo has had the privilege to share her words at the Black Dog Café, The Loft Literary Center and Pillsbury House to audiences of all ages and backgrounds. She's a 2014 Loft Spoken Word Immersion Fellow, a 2014 Bush Fellow and a recipient of 2015 Intermedia Arts VERVE grant. She wants to explore the politics of Somali women's dress through photography, poetry and first-person narratives. She's half butterfly and half cat.

Teré Fowler-Chapman is a gender fluid artist, poet and high school educator whose breadth of performances, projects, and publications include TEDxStarrPassWomen, 2015 Black Life Matters Conference, New York's What's Your Issue Project, Poetry Out Loud, Take Back the Night, Literary Orphans Magazine, Green Linden Press and the internationally acclaimed book: A Beautiful Body.

Words on the Avenue is her brainchild. An open mic dedicated to creating a space where all writing forms can co-exist. The organization was founded in 2012, and has recently gained national attention in the Huffington Post. During the Creative Community Fellows program she will be working on solidifying Words on the Avenue as an official organization, and expanding its vision through diverse projects.

Teré is currently seeking a business degree. When she isn't gracing the stage, planning her next project, or engaging classrooms she is spending time with her loving partner and two dogs.



**Teré Fowler-Chapman**  
Tucson, AZ



**Katelyn Freil**  
Akron, OH

Katelyn Freil is the communications coordinator for the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, a non-profit in Akron dedicated to developing the Ohio & Erie Canalway National Heritage Area and Towpath Trail. In addition to her communications duties, she has had the privilege of working on many projects including event planning, trail development, and community engagement projects like iTowpath and Reimagining the Civic Commons.

As part of Creative Community Fellows, Katelyn hopes to continue developing ideas for Reimagining the Civic Commons, a project to enhance civic assets as a gathering place for people of all different backgrounds. The Akron project focuses on connecting three very different assets, all linked by the common Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail.

Katelyn graduated from The University of Akron in 2015 with degrees in public relations and mass media, a minor in environmental ethics, and an excitement to promote positive change.



**Jerrell Gibbs**  
Baltimore, MD

Jerrell Gibbs is a Father, Art Activist and Co-owner of The Incredible Little Art Gallery. Jerrell is 27 years old, born and raised in Baltimore, MD.

Growing up, he knew he wanted a business of his own but he didn't know his true passion. After graduating high school, Jerrell decided to go to college to pursue a degree in business management. During his stay at Morgan State and Bowie State University, he quickly realized college wasn't for him so he withdrew.

After leaving college, Jerrell took away the teachings he learned from his business courses which lead him to his dreams of becoming an entrepreneur. His first attempt at entrepreneurship was managing a local musician. He created a blueprint geared around the musician's talents which allowed him to take his career from amateur to professional. Jerrell's second endeavor which is the most current was the opening of The Incredible Little Art Gallery.



**Torres Hodges**  
Rochester, MN

Torres (aka Earth) Hodges is a musician who has his B.A in Radio, Television, and Film Production from Howard University. His artistic journey has granted him various opportunities to uplift his community through art. With over 20 years of performance experience, Torres most recently was featured as a soloist in the Rochester Minnesota Eagles Cancer Telethon - an annual event that raises money for cancer research. Torres also serves as the director of Armor of God - a community choir that sings at events throughout southeastern Minnesota.

He wants to show the world that music is much more than entertainment. Torres has a passion for utilizing music as a means to inform, inspire, and unify communities. "Statecraft"-Torres' proposed work - seeks to do just that. "Statecraft" will take music to the next level by collaborating with one local artist or group from each state, producing a 50-track album highlighting issues affecting our nation and its communities. By doing so, Torres and his team aim to not only participate in and provide momentum for these changes, but also showcase the profound power of music as a catalyst for social change.

Dulce Juarez, M.Ed, has lived in Arizona for 25 years. She self-identifies as a DREAMer. Her activist journey began at fourteen years old while advocating for the passage of the Dream-Act. She has been a human & migrant rights activist for 15 years. She was impacted by anti-immigrant laws: Prop 300 and SB 1070.

While undocumented, Juarez completed a Bachelor's in Communications Family & Human Development and Masters in Higher Education at Arizona State University.

Now a U.S. citizen, she works at the American Civil Liberties Union of Arizona, as the Outreach & Advocacy Coordinator, where she documented civil rights abuses stemming from SB 1070, the "show me your papers" law.

Currently, she works within the community on cross-movement issues from, Police Accountability, Women's Reproductive, LGBTQ and Immigrants' Rights. She is passionate about street theater performance and using holistic ancestral healing practices to create spaces for community health justice and wellness.



**Dulce Juarez**  
Phoenix, AZ



**Stephanie Kent**  
New York City, NY

Steph Kent is a multimedia producer and writer whose work has appeared in Macworld Magazine, GamePro, Reading Rainbow's blog and Peter Gabriel's site for social change, The Toolbox. She recently launched The Wall Street Journal's first mobile-first news app and co-founded the new literary website Call Me Ishmael where she curates anonymous stories about books and heads up all things editorial.

During her time on staff at TED she built community programs for TEDActive and created brand engagement strategies for TED partners including TOMS, Theory and The Robin Hood Foundation.

Stephanie holds a BA in Playwriting and Literature from Emerson College and is an amateur boxer.



**Hamida Khatri**  
Baltimore, MD

Hamida Khatri is a Baltimore-based artist, art educator, art activist, and a creative arts therapist—originally from Pakistan—pursuing her Master's of Fine Arts in Community Arts from the Maryland Institute College of Art. She is the Founder of 'Creative Therapy Platform', a travel-community project established in 2012, to provide safe healing spaces to underrepresented and disengaged communities.

As an artist her work focuses on feminist ideologies creating drawing, sculptures, puppets, illustrations, hand-embroidered portraits, and quilts. Combining her academic learning and interests with socially engaged art she recently piloted a social justice arts-based initiative, '[i am] Project KALI - Celebration of Womanhood', as part of her residency at the Men and Families Center, Inc. The project aims to focus on the emotional needs and interests of senior women, within East Baltimore, to construct individual and/or communal, fiber-based artworks that include: puppetry, doll making, wall hangings, and quilts.



**Kevin Marchman**  
Denver, CO

A native son of Park Hill, Denver, Colorado, Kevin is a co-founder and producer of the Black Actors Guild. As a classically trained stage actor, he has thoroughly enjoyed the many different hats he has worn with his education and production company. Some of his recent roles have been:

- Teaching Artist (Shakespeare, especially)
- Artist Manager (singer/songwriter, Kayla Marque)
- Certified HIV/HCP tester and outreach
- Poetry Out Loud judge for Colorado state semi-finals

Denver is a rapidly growing city for millennials with a strong focus on the arts. Over the past decade Kevin has been able to experience growth, gentrification and reinvention for a variety of ways. Through the fellowship he wishes to expand the work he has done as a teaching artist, by connecting the many artists flocking to the city with the schools and young people they are sharing neighborhoods with.

The only way to make a boom-town sustainable is to build strong connections; so that the creative energy of one generation is fostered and innovated within the next.



**Jaimie McGirt**  
Todd, NC

Jaimie McGirt hails from eastern North Carolina but has resided in western NC for the last seven years. She attributes her personal formation to her ever-challenged faith, her family and home community, early exposure to wilderness, and college-aged experiences--all of which have shaped her vision for a resilient, fair, and merciful world. In 2013, she graduated from Appalachian State University with a degree in sustainable community, regional, and global development. After traveling the U.S. to explore intentional community living and people's ventures in sustainable agriculture, she served a one-year AmeriCorps term with AppalachianVoices in Boone, NC and later married her husband in Fall 2013.

Today, Jaimie lives and works from home in Todd--an unincorporated hamlet in the NC mountains. There she is a member of an intentional community and serves with Blackburn Community Outreach, an emerging rural community development organization. Her Creative Communities Fellowship project is the Todd Listening Project, an asset-mapping and community organizing initiative to better connect residents of Todd to one another and increase public participation in the community's sustainable development.



**Allentza Michel**  
Boston, MA

Allentza Michel is an artist, urban planner and civic designer with a background in community organizing and youth development. She brings 15 years of diverse experience across community & economic development, education, food security, public health and transportation. Allentza is passionate about social justice and brings that passion to her work. Her goal is to develop practices and design concepts that translate into equitable development and innovation, solution-based and long-term placemaking, just economic growth strategies and inclusive public participation practices that lead to better policy outcomes and quality of life.

Allentza's work has been recognized by the Cambridge City Council and the Princeton Prize in Race Relations. She founded and co-founded nonprofit-organizations and served on many boards of community-based organizations, civic groups and coalitions. In 2013, she was selected as co-chair to the City of Boston's first Participatory Budgeting project, representing The City School.

Her artistic mediums range from prose, painting, poetry and photography. She also has contributed to a number of public art and digital media projects.

Dominic Moore-Dunson, IPAY's 2016 Colleen Toohey Porter Emerging Artists Residency Recipient, is a dancer/choreographer and Rehearsal Coordinator with Inlet Dance Theatre. Under the direction of the Founding Executive/Artistic Director, Bill Wade, Dominic has created numerous works with students in Inlet's Summer Dance Intensive. A highlight of this choreographic opportunity occurred in July 2015, when Dominic collaboratively created a work with the young men of our summer dance camp called "Wary of the Wolves," a poignant work surrounding the injustice of the killings of young African-American men in the United States.

For this Fellowship, he will be working on a community-based, collaboratively built one man show that tackles the issue of racial self-perception and identity. The show will take a comedic examination of the African-American idea of "the black card" and help African-American youth see there is more to life than dancing on beat, rapping, and bouncing a basketball.



**Dominic Moore  
Dunson**  
Akron, OH



**Van Pham**  
Portland, OR

Van Pham is an artist and administrator from Portland, Oregon via Reno, Nevada. Her artwork is concerned with how people occupy space and cooperate to make meaning in them, exploring spiritual practices and ritual through community gatherings and online collections of trends in adaptive reuse. She is often trying to strike a balance as a performer and a programmer - she has toured the U.S. with her band; contributed to the Xchurch artist collective that has exhibited installations along the West Coast; and co-runs the website (and documentary film project) Xchurches, devoted to profiling the secular uses of religious buildings.

Van curates a series of interdisciplinary performances at a church venue and other sites in Portland; assembles artists and scholars to lecture on technology and spirit in modern times as a programmer for the Portland Center for the Public Humanities; and works as the coordinator for the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art's residency program, the Creative Exchange Lab.

She was also recently admitted into the MA program in Cultural Policy, Relations, and Diplomacy at Goldsmiths College of London, where she will be exploring more work around culture, people, and places.



**Emily Puthoff**  
Kingston, NY

Emily Puthoff is an artist who, when not advocating for bees, is traveling the country with her custom-built teardrop trailer with her partner, Elena Snizek, to converse with people about their ideas of progress. She is an educator and accidental bee enthusiast. In 2013, she assigned her students to create a sculpture for bees and invited a local biodynamic beekeeper to her class to speak about bees. She was instantly enthralled with bees and astonished by their importance to our eco-systemic health and food shed.

In 2016, she co-founded the Hudson Valley Bee Habitat (HVBH), an arts organization located in Kingston, NY. The HVBH's mission is to pollinate community engagement with the environment and each other through the arts, bees, and mindfulness. HVBH is working in collaboration with the emerging Kingston Greenline to create the Kingston Bee-Line, a series of artist-designed bee habitats and artist-led community engagements along the Greenline.



**Benjamin Rexroad**  
Akron, OH

Benjamin Rexroad is a theatre artist with a passion for poetry, travel and community. He has trained with John O'Neal of The Free Southern Theater, New York-based SITI Company and was one of 25 international directors selected to participate in the 2014 Directors Lab North in Toronto.

Since establishing Heads Up Productions six years ago (now Wandering Aesthetics), Benjamin has produced or directed over 70 performance events. In 2011, he was presented with the Rising Young Star/Leadership Akron Area Arts Alive Award. The same year, he helped launch Akron's only African-American theatre company and received a grant to tour a role-playing workshop about racism, poverty, class and social status. In 2013, Benjamin and his partner completed a thru-hike of the 2,185.9-mile Appalachian Trail.

Currently, Benjamin is working on a variety of projects designed to help reverse the flow of young professionals and artists who are leaving Akron because they feel a lack of opportunity.



**Erin Salazar**  
San Jose, CA

Erin Salazar is an artist, muralist, seamstress and a public art curator. In 2015, Erin was selected as Emerging City Champion through 8-80 Cities and Knight Foundation. This fellowship equipped her with the networks and resources to help create a healthier, safer, more vibrant San Jose.

In 2014 she put into motion a plan she's had since founding the mural arts club at San Jose State University, the Exhibition District (ExD). Salazar is the Founder and Executive Director of ExD, a nonprofit in San Jose. ExD's first milestone is to create a public street art gallery with 40,000 square feet of fresh artwork in the next 5 years that synchronously stimulates the creative economy. She has led beautification and advocacy projects including three murals totalling 4,000sf of otherwise bland vertical space.

Erin's mission is to remove the word "starving" from the artists industry. Her favorite color is black.



**Usha Srinivasan**  
San Jose, CA

Usha Srinivasan is the founder and president of Sangam Arts, a Silicon Valley 501(c)3 nonprofit whose mission is to promote multicultural understanding through performing arts.

She believes that the increasing cultural diversity in the US demands new modes of social integration. If we are to thrive as a vibrant, harmonious community rather than merely co-exist with uneasy alliances based on economics or politics

alone, we must develop systemic ways to engage with each other in congenial, creative settings that help us see our common humanity while celebrating our differences. This is what she hopes to achieve through Sangam Arts. In addition to managing Sangam Arts, Usha runs a consulting practice providing product strategy and product marketing services to high tech companies in Silicon Valley. She holds a Masters degree in Electrical Engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY and an MBA from Stanford University's Graduate School of Business.

Usha is a trained Bharatanatyam (Classical Indian) dancer and performs with her daughter locally and in India. She is a member of the Cultural Commission of the City of Santa Clara and part of the Multicultural Arts Leadership Institute (MALI) Cohort (2015-16) in San Jose. She has served on the Board of World Arts West, the producer of the famous San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival and on the board of Wildlife Rescue, Palo Alto.

Usha lives in Santa Clara with her husband, two young daughters and a dachshund Milo. She is a fan of British mysteries and an ace solver of cryptic crosswords.



**Tim Syth**  
Milwaukee, WI

Tim Syth is a project-based worker focused on the evolution of work in society. Tim supports organizations and workers as they adapt to the shifting nature of work and income-generation. He believes the activity of work is evolving, and there exists a golden opportunity to reconsider the economics of work for the better.

Tim's interests are collaborative systems and methods that improve organizational operation, heighten worker productivity and wellness, and expand economic opportunity. He has three of years experience running a coworking space in Milwaukee, WI, and is currently working as researcher and a creative placemaking consultant.

Prior to relocating to Milwaukee, Tim worked as a photographer in Berlin, Germany, while completing his Master's degree in the the field of Media & Communications. Tim has a BFA in Art Photography, has lived abroad extensively, grew up in the rural farming community of Greenwood, WI, and is handy with a chainsaw. A balanced life-practice and Nora (his companion) are key to his production.



**Robert Warren**  
New Orleans, LA

Robert Warren is an artist and entrepreneur who arrived in New Orleans in 2011 by way of Teach For America. While teaching 9th grade English on the West Bank he completed a Masters in Education before moving into non-profit as the Director of Program Implementation for Youth Run NOLA.

From this seemingly incongruent mix of experiences came Gigsy.co, a business that books professional event photographers and also mentors, supplies, and employs the next generation of talented youth photographers.

We're disrupting the photography industry and helping break the cycle of youth poverty in New Orleans.

A native of Detroit, MI, Rebecca Willis received her Master of Architecture degree from the University of Detroit Mercy in 2012. She has over fourteen nicknames but most people call her "Bucky". She has volunteered and worked for a number of non-profit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Detroit Future City and the Detroit Collaborative Design Center (DCDC). The heart of her career and research lies at the point where architecture and design meet social issues and emotional impact. This career and research focus inspired her to create the concept of Bleeding Heart Design (b.h.d)- a design movement and non-profit that uses public art, architecture and design as conduits for social change.

Bucky hopes to transform a dilapidated commercial building into a roofless indoor-outdoor hybrid community space in her neighborhood.

She believes that artists, designers and architects should seek to improve humanity and solve social issues through design. Designers who embrace their social responsibilities are what she likes to call "design superheroes!"



**Bucky Willis**  
Detroit, MI



**This program is the result of our partnership with the following incredible institutions:**

