

World Arts West

World Arts West Selected for National Arts Research Initiative Funded by The Wallace Foundation

As part of Wallace's ongoing \$100M initiative focused on arts organizations of color, World Arts West will conduct research on the scope and impact of culturally specific dance organizations in our community. This new information should increase visibility, access to equitable resources, and support systems and policies that serve the interests of culture bears across the nation.

San Francisco, May 18, 2023 – World Arts West has been selected to participate in The Wallace Foundation's Field Studies program, a research component of Wallace's ongoing arts initiative focused on arts organizations founded by, with, and for communities of color. Wallace awarded a total of \$2.96 million to **World Arts West** and seven other organizations forming the initial cohort of Field Studies Grantees: **Arts Administrators of Color Network, Cave Canem, First Peoples Fund, IllumiNative, Mosaic America, South Asian American Digital Archive, and The BIG We**. The grantees, all arts service organizations committed to advancing communities of color, will each receive between \$250,000 and \$500,000 to lead research projects intended to bring definition, depth, breadth, and perspective about the nature of the ecosystem of non-profit arts organizations of color and the communities they serve. Please find more information on the other grantees in the [Wallace Foundation press release](#).

World Arts West Research Project

Over the course of 45 years, World Arts West has presented and provided capacity-building services to more than 450 grassroots dance organizations representing more than 100 cultural dance traditions. Many of these organizations are led by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) artists and culture bearers based in immigrant, and refugee communities with limited access to foundation and public funding.

This study will investigate the needs and interests of grassroots, culturally specific dance organizations and how intermediary organizations like World Arts West can address those needs and interests. These culturally specific dance organizations are often not documented, or underrepresented, in funder and arts service organizations databases. By addressing this gap in the dance field's knowledge base, this study will inform and assist funders, policymakers, and scholars to design better strategies to sustain and nourish BIPOC arts communities.

"This is an unprecedented opportunity for World Arts West to address an important national knowledge gap about the breath, complexity, and impact of our expansive multicultural dance network," said **Anne Huang, Executive Director of World Arts West**.

World Arts West was selected through a request for proposals (RFP) issued last year inviting arts service organizations of color to propose research projects that address important questions related to their work and the communities they serve. The organizations in the first Field

Studies cohort represent a diverse range of artistic disciplines, geographic locations, and communities served. These Field Studies grants are part of a body of more than 30 research projects that Wallace will be funding over the next two years as part of its investment in the arts ecosystem. The studies are meant to both document and advance the contributions that artists and arts organizations make to the communities of color they serve and celebrate.

Other Grantees and Their Research Projects

[Arts Administrators of Color Network](#), Washington, D.C.

Arts Administrators of Color Network (AAC) is a service organization that focuses on networking and community building through the arts. AAC fights for equity in the arts through collaborations, forums, and outlets that provide a voice for arts administrators and artists of color where there may not be one.

As part of its work to support and uplift perspectives of artists and arts administrators of the global majority, AAC's study will investigate two research questions. First, when advocating for the arts, what matters most to arts administrators and artists of the global majority? Second, do differences exist based on demographic profiles? This will be the first research study to center arts administrators and artists of the global majority as assets with critical insights that can inform a national arts advocacy agenda.

"The Arts Administrators of Color Network is honored to be part of this cohort of grantees funded by the Wallace Foundation. We are eager to utilize this opportunity to more deeply understand the legislative advocacy needs of people of the global majority within the arts sector and hope our work serves as a guide towards meaningful change," said **Karla Estela Rivera, Executive Director of Arts Administrators of Color Network**.

[Cave Canem](#), Brooklyn, NY

Founded in 1996, Cave Canem is a nonprofit organization committed to cultivating the artistic and professional growth of Black poets. Founded by artists for artists, Cave Canem fosters community across the diaspora to enrich the field by facilitating a nurturing space in which to learn, experiment, create, and present. Cave Canem develops audiences for Black voices that have worked and are working in the craft of poetry.

Black literary organizations provide essential support to the literary community and model resilience in the face of concentric disparities. However, the organizational systems that drive the impact of these underfunded but vital engines remain under-examined and undocumented. Cave Canem and its research partner, Ithaca S+R, will conduct a study exploring the organizational needs, strategies, and models that enable Black literary organizations in the United States to thrive despite adverse socioeconomic conditions.

"Black poets and literary organizations have made significant contributions to the American and diasporic cultural landscapes. Since Emancipation, communities of Black poets and writers in the United States have organized to nurture and support each other and their diverse art practices, often without the institutional support offered to other artistic disciplines. Today, Black literary organizations continue this tradition and remain a vital part of the arts ecosystem. Cave Canem is excited to delve into this research to understand what has made our community so resilient, the collective cultural impact of the writers we serve, and what will allow us to continue to survive and thrive well into the future," said **Lisa Willis, Cave Canem Executive Director**.

[First Peoples Fund](#), Rapid City, SD

First Peoples Fund honors and supports the Collective Spirit®—that which moves each of us to stand up and make a difference, to pass on ancestral knowledge, and simply extend a hand of generosity—of First Peoples artists and culture bearers. The organization's work recognizes the power of art and culture to bring about positive change in Native communities, beginning with individual artists and their families.

In partnership with NORC at the University of Chicago, Dr. Jennifer Novak-Leonard, Native research scholar Dr. Desi Small-Rodriguez, and Native artists and culture bearers, this study will produce community-informed survey measures that more accurately reflect and capture the ways in which Native peoples engage with and work within the arts and culture sector and tribal economies. Ultimately, the goals of the study are to advance the Native arts and culture field by addressing the lack of knowledge around and lack of visibility of Native people's arts and cultural engagement on the national level, and informing and holding accountable national discourses where decisions are being made based on national arts and culture data.

"In our traditions, the arts produce new knowledge, build relationships, and are vitally important to well-being. We believe the arts may also be functioning similarly for other populations, but the data framework to understand those functions does not yet exist. Identifying the "blind spots" in the data is the first step toward understanding the diversity of artistic practice and how it contributes to our well-being on a global scale," said **Lara Evans, Vice President of Programs at First Peoples Fund**.

[IllumiNative](#), Tulsa, OK

IllumiNative builds power for Native peoples by amplifying contemporary Native voices, stories, and issues to advance justice, equity, and self-determination. Its research, narrative, and culture-change strategies, movement-building, and organizing seek to disrupt the invisibility of Native peoples, re-educate Americans, and mobilize public support for key Native issues.

IllumiNative will conduct an expansion study based on its 2016-2018 Reclaiming Native Truth project, which created a framework for asset-based narratives that build the visibility of contemporary Native peoples and shift public misperceptions. The updated findings will be used to inform Native-driven narratives and creative content that moves hearts and minds in support of Native peoples and fights systemic racism.

[Mosaic America](#), San Jose, CA

A leading Silicon Valley arts service organization, Mosaic America's mission is to cultivate belonging and foster social cohesion through inter-cultural and co-created art.

Mosaic Atlas is an interdisciplinary cultural asset mapping project spearheaded by Mosaic America and San Jose State University to learn about and highlight assets within culturally distinct communities. Mosaic America's research expansion study will build upon Mosaic Atlas, surveying and mapping Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) artists and culture bearers in the urban communities of Santa Clara and San Francisco Counties and the rural communities of coastal San Mateo County. The study's technology-enabled innovative cultural mapping approach is designed to facilitate cultural arts connections across historically siloed communities and promote awareness for greater access to resources and audiences.

"This grant will allow us to extend the geographic scope of the Atlas project and gain valuable insights on the role BIPOC artists and culture bearers play in over 100 culturally distinct communities. By documenting both the processes and the findings, we hope we can help field practitioners embrace and leverage cultural complexity to advance equity, inclusion and belonging," said **Usha Srinivasan, co-founder and President of Mosaic America**.

[South Asian American Digital Archive](#), Philadelphia, PA

The South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) uses the power of stories to create belonging for the more than 5.4 million South Asian Americans.

Archives reflect and enable an organization's agency in deciding how its stories are shared with the public. However, to date, there is a significant discrepancy in archival representation between arts organizations of color and predominantly white arts institutions. SAADA's study will investigate the resources arts organizations of color need in order to best document, preserve, and share their own histories. It will explore how these documentation practices can challenge dominant archival methods and envision new liberatory practices.

"We are thrilled to have this opportunity to create new knowledge about how BIPOC-led and serving arts organizations can create documentation practices to ensure their stories are preserved," said **Samip Mallick, SAADA's co-founder and executive director**. "By empowering

arts communities of color, we can ensure that their stories are included in the archival record and shared widely.”

[The BIG We](#), Memphis, TN

BIG We Foundation uses cultural strategy that contributes to well people, cultures, communities, and the planet where we can all experience sustained safety, joy, love, and abundance. It does this through its three priority areas of Girls and Womxn, Restorative Economics, and Environmental Wellness in the South.

Using community-based participatory research, BIG We Foundation will study how philanthropic and arts organizations can best support Black artists, creatives, and cultural entrepreneurs in Memphis to co-create an infrastructure, economy, and behaviors that build and sustain cultural and economic drivers grounded in Black imagination. The study aims to generate data and information for the organization’s Southern Shift Initiative program, which seeks to employ cultural and economic models for community restoration and healing, and will provide valuable insight on community capital, infrastructure, and technical assistance needs.

About The Wallace Foundation

The Wallace Foundation launched its current \$100 million arts initiative in 2021 with an open call for arts organizations of color with budgets over \$500,000. Last May, Wallace selected [18 organizations](#) for this first phase of the five-year initiative, during which the grantees will carry out individual projects addressing strategic challenges they face, documenting their work with the aim of developing useful insights about the relationship between a deep and foundational orientation toward their community and their own organizational well-being.

In addition to the research conducted with these 18 organizations and the field studies grantees, Wallace is funding several other research studies as part of this initiative, including studies on community development through the arts, research-practice partnerships with arts organizations of color and research focused on smaller-budget arts organizations of color. For more information about the Wallace Foundation’s mission, initiatives, and work, please visit the [Wallace Foundation website](#).

PRESS CONTACT:

Anne Huang, Executive Director
World Arts West
anne@worldartswest.org
510-520-3348

For inquiries about The Wallace Foundation:

Caroline Farrell

Resnicow and Associates

CFarrell@resnicow.com

212-671-5157