



Contact: Kathy DeBrosse,
Vice President, Marketing & Engagement, ArtsWave
937.207.3079

(EMBARGOED TO 8 A.M. JANUARY 18, 2021)

**ArtsWave announces 27 winning projects proposed by Black and Brown artists
on the theme of truth and reconciliation**

January 18, 2021 – As the next in a series of grants meant to uplift the artistry and experiences of people of color, ArtsWave announces a cohort of 27 Black and Brown artists who will receive a total of \$271,638 for their projects on the theme of “truth and reconciliation.” Funding for these grants, which average \$10,000 each, comes from the City of Cincinnati, Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Duke Energy Fifth Third Bank, and ArtsWave’s Arts Vibrancy Recovery Fund.

Twenty-two grant recipients were selected from a competitive applicant pool of 49 artists from across the region. In addition, five master artists, whose work has been supported by ArtsWave over the last decade or longer, were awarded funding for their projects on the same theme. The collection of 27 funded projects reflect a variety of artistic disciplines and approaches to the complexities of “truth” and “reconciliation” after a year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and stark displays of systemic racism, racial injustice and inequities that confront Black and Brown individuals.

Each of the projects has an aspect of public performance, display or showcase, with plans for an exhibition in partnership with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in summer 2021. Many artists are planning for both live and digital dissemination of the work, a reflection of both the potential for wider reach through technology and the ongoing health risks of the pandemic.

Artists are also asked to involve some aspect of collaboration with community members and other partners in their projects, so that the larger public can participate in reconciling the moment and imagining a more just and equitable future for the Cincinnati region through the arts. As a group, the projects advance ArtsWave’s Blueprint for Collective Action and the powerful goals of bridging cultural divides, promoting understanding and empathy, deepening the roots of residents, and improving neighborhoods.

Building on the momentum created by Cincinnati's Black Lives Matter mural and Cincinnati Music Festival's Outdoor Museum, ArtsWave announced the Black & Brown Artist Project Grants in fall 2020. A review panel of 16 individuals representing a cross-section of cultural organizations, civic organizations, and businesses was chaired by Toilynn O'Neal, founder of the Robert O'Neal Multi Cultural Arts Center ("The ROMAC"). The group met to evaluate nearly 50 grant submissions, using a rubric of key criteria, and made recommendations to ArtsWave's Board of Directors which held a special meeting to approve the awards. [Click here for the complete list of recipients.](#)

"The arts are one of our most effective tools for illuminating even the most challenging moments and encouraging dialogue that can lead to positive change and greater understanding," says ArtsWave President & CEO Alecia Kintner. "Knowing that we have much to learn from the artists in our community, ArtsWave is pleased to support the creation of 27 thoughtful and provocative works by local Black and Brown visionaries this spring."

City of Cincinnati Council Member Greg Landsman, who championed the city's funding of this grants program with ArtsWave, notes, "Cincinnati has incredible artists, though too many of them – especially many local Black and Brown artists – don't get the support they need to be successful. This happens, despite the fact that the art they create brings real beauty and meaning to our lives. They enrich our communities, and I was honored to help lead what I hope will be an annual effort to invest, alongside our amazing private-sector partners, in these very talented local artists."

###

About ArtsWave:

ArtsWave, a nonprofit serving the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Region, is the engine for the arts. Its roots stem back to the late 1920s when the Cincinnati Taft family provided initial investment matched by community support. In the late 1940s, it evolved to become the first united arts fund in the nation and in the mid-1970s, the first organization to initiate workplace giving for the arts. ArtsWave continues to innovate while leading, as illustrated by its No. 1 rank nationally in community arts fundraising; coordination of a sector-wide Blueprint for Collective Action; piloting of new technologies to maximize arts engagement; and development of resources for the arts.

Strong funding for the arts has allowed Cincinnati's arts and culture scene to become a national draw and regional asset, creating a wave of economic and community benefits. Each year, ArtsWave supports the work of over 100 arts organizations, school outreach programs, festivals, community centers, neighborhoods and various collaborations through impact-based grants. In 2020, ArtsWave amassed \$13+ million for the arts, through a combination of its 2020 Campaign and a separate Arts Vibrancy Recovery Fund, designed to ensure the solvency and a vibrant return of the region's arts assets in the wake of the unprecedented health and economic crisis.

ArtsWave is focused on helping the Cincinnati Region's arts sector weather the coronavirus crisis. The region's arts sector has an economic impact of more than \$300 million annually and includes more than 225 organizations throughout Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky and Southeastern Indiana that employ 10,000 individuals as artists, performers and staff. The sector was hit at the onset of the coronavirus crisis, when venue and performance closures were announced in early March. ArtsWave has accelerated \$2.4 million in grant payments for 43 organizations which receive operating revenues, expanded its \$10,000 Working Capital Bridge Loans for eligible arts organizations, and has provided Emergency Arts & Culture Organization grants to 47 organizations. It's also administered \$3,700,000 in relief funds at the federal, county and city level to arts organizations and artists. The public can help fund these and additional, evolving efforts at artswave.org/give.



Truth & Reconciliation Project Grants January 2021

Master Artist Commissions

Anupama Mirle's "World Dance Cincinnati" will bring dance traditions of multiple cultures from around the globe together in a festival setting as it has done for the last decade, but this year it will add a virtual streaming component.

Annie Ruth will create 12 mural-size original paintings depicting the experience of Black women. The series, entitled "On Her Shoulders", will be a starting point for cross-cultural dialogue and multi-generational storytelling with community partners including Queens Village, the Links, Cincinnati Arts Association, WordPlay Cincy and past Dada Rafiki honorees.

In a multi-faceted project called "Black Theater Matters," Cincinnati Black Theater founder **Don Sherman** will create a directory of Black and Brown theatrical talent in Cincinnati that can be accessed by all regional stages to add greater racial and cultural diversity to their productions. He will lead workshops, performances and conversations about the significance of Black Theater and African American cultural expression.

Kathy Wade's "Story Quilts" will include discussions and activities centered around immersive experiences, which includes creating individual stories on quilt squares that speak one's truth and moves toward reconciliation and resilience. The initiative is created under the curatorial direction of Dr. Carolyn Mazloomi, Women of Color Quilter's Network founder and a member of Textile Center's National Artist Advisory Council. The program bookends with an exploration of reconciliation through the journey of Jazz with A Black Anthology of Music exploring the origins and history of Jazz and its story of resilience. Story Quilts is part of a national Truth and Reconciliation pilot project in partnership with the Center of Community Resilience, George Washington University and Cincinnati Children's Joining Forces for Children.

Bi-Okoto Drum & Dance Theater founder **Adebola Olowe** will select a play that depicts the experiences of Africans' resistance to the Trans-Atlantic slave trade in connection with how African Americans of today persevered and are poised for "Reconciliation" to

ensure liberty and justice for all. Bi-Okoto will partner with several arts organizations, including but not limited to Cincinnati Black Theatre Company, Know Theatre of Cincinnati, Afrikan Arts Alliance, Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati and individual artists in the community.

Artist Awardees

Brent Billingsley will lead teams of artists, each working with community collaborators including Black Art Speaks, Back2Back Ministries, ArtWorks, Cincinnati Children's Hospital and Fringe Coffee House, in assembling large-scale images of 10 iconic Black leaders from multiple individually painted pieces of paper. Cincinnati high school youth will be invited to participate in a spoken word poetry competition on the theme of 'truth and reconciliation,' with winners selected to perform their work in front of the completed portraits as backdrop.

Revolution Dance Theater founder **David Choate** will create a multimedia piece inspired by the 1619 Project. Using dance, lighting design and video, Choate will explore why inequity and disparities persist for people of color in the areas of economics, healthcare and the justice system.

In "Black Box," **Michael Coppage** will reflect on associations with the color black, such as 'black sheep' or 'black ice', and how this cements implicit bias and negative connotations of Black men in particular. Building on a previous residency at the Contemporary Arts Center, this exhibition and video project will feature 13 large-scale portraits of Black men from different Cincinnati neighborhoods.

Musician **Erin Fung** will commission and organize a concert of new works by local composers of color that deal with racism and stratification in America, with the goal to forge a new shared identity for Americans through music. Both classical and contemporary forms of music will be represented, including hip hop. The concert will be performed by local musicians from the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra and elsewhere in nontraditional, outdoor locations.

"Envision Findlay" is a mural project conceived by artist **Brandon Hawkins** for newly renovated Findlay Park in Over-the-Rhine. Local youth will participate in the design and execution of the mural, conveying the resilience and beauty of the community. ArtWorks and Elementz will partner with Hawkins on this project.

Gee Horton will continue his ongoing work entitled "Project Kurudi" in which he explores the African tradition of 'rites of passage' for young males. He will create a series of 60 close-up portraits of Black men of diverse ages and backgrounds in the style of tintype photography, partnering with Frederick Douglass Elementary; ArtWorks; UC Center for Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation; the Mercantile Library; and West African organization Diasporic Soul.

Desirae Hosley's "Social Therapy 2020: Behind the Zoom Screen" will feature six voices from different races and backgrounds, all focused on healing after a traumatic year. Despite feelings of hopelessness, the project will show how community can be created even in the midst of a divisive pandemic.

Jasmine Humphries ('phrie') will research and document how Black-identifying people came to live in greater Cincinnati, including her family's own journey fleeing the deep south for Northern Kentucky. This project will explore the impacts of this migration on present-day Cincinnati, with an interactive map that details towns and cities that people migrated from and an audio series.

Deqah Hussein's "Cincinnati Communities of Color: Lost Histories Series" will document the histories of Evanston, South Fairmount and Avondale/North Avondale. Scholarly research and interviews with neighborhood residents, in partnership with Invest in Neighborhoods (IIN), will be formatted as podcasts which can be accessed by the general public and featured at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center as a chronicle of underrepresented stories of local minority communities.

Through spoken word, music and dance, **Siri Imani** will design an immersive experience that transports participating audience members to a series of public protests for various causes occurring in a single night in Cincinnati. Confronted by police, protestors find themselves seeking refuge together and ultimately, learning from one another.

Prince Lang will revitalize and enrich the St. James Community Garden in Walnut Hills with large wood sculptures that depict the stories of the underground railroad and serve as fresh food planters for the primarily African American neighborhood. Lang is collaborating with Wave Pool, Arts Connect, Cincinnati sculptor Joel Selmeier and La Soupe, as well as the Walnut Hills Redevelopment Foundation, Cincy Nice and others, to address pervasive inequities in the availability and distribution of fresh food and simultaneously connect the community to African American history and culture.

Artist and University of Cincinnati Professor **Lorena Guadalupe Molina** will create a "Coffee Reconciliation Garden" that both embodies and confronts injustices that led to El Salvador's 12-year civil war over land ownership, coffee crops and political repression. Collaborating with UC students, Wave Pool's The Welcome Project, and the Contemporary Arts Center among others, Molina will create an environment for education, healing and conversation.

Rebecca Nava's The Edge project is an exhibition of mixed media paintings, sculptures, and Mesoamerican alfombra inspired floor installations. The exhibit will operate in part as a visual continuum rooted within indigenous aesthetics extending into our contemporary Latinx culture through themes of perception, iconography and writing/image-making. The works will explore ideas in ancient science, spirituality and

cosmology, including our symbiotic relationship to each other, the earth, and the cosmos, concepts which are of significant relevance today.

Tyra Patterson will extend her "Time Saved vs. Time Served" project with a virtual exhibition of artwork created by women impacted by incarceration, chosen through a juried competition. A prison-issued uniform incorporated into each of five selected pieces will be a powerful, unifying theme. The project will bring attention to work being done in Cincinnati to advance social justice through art.

Darnell Pierre Benjamin will take moments from his radical dance film "13th and Republic", created in collaboration with Walterhoope, and share them in a live, interactive environment. Intended to educate and create empathy, the film explores what it is to live as a Black individual being highly aware of the trauma that comes from existing while Black. Dance pieces from the film will be performed in parks throughout Greater Cincinnati, with specific focus on outreach to suburb and rural communities.

Concert pianist **Awadagin Pratt**, who has been invited three times to perform at the White House, will create an autobiographical film called "Black in America." The film will use music arranged for and performed by Pratt, narration, and still photos to tell the story of his personal experience as a world-renowned classical musician who is also subjected to racism and discrimination based on the color of his skin.

With video, music, narration and spoken word storytelling, **Charles Preston III** will explore the history of slavery in America. Working with multiple civic and neighborhood partners, Preston will trace Cincinnati's own journey through this shared national history.

Dancer/choreographer **Juan Gabriel Martinez Rubio** will create a performance piece that explores the impacts of racism, loss of culture, loss of language and loss of identity on Hispanics, while inviting self-reflection by audiences and participants about empathy and personal responsibility. He will engage the local Latino community through Santa Maria Community Services and Price Hill Will, and promote the project through the Greater Cincinnati Latino Coalition, Cincinnati's Latino Community and the Mexican Consulate of Indianapolis.

Gauravi Shah aims to make culturally diverse comedy part of the new normal, as well as encourage and provide a platform for aspiring comedians of color. The project features a 90-minute collection of short theatrical and comedic sketches written and performed by local, diverse sketch comedians and allies. They will use comedy to explore and confront issues of race and identity, among other topical themes. The performance will premiere at The Carnegie in Covington and travel to other venues.

Kareem "K.A." Simpson will create an original 90-minute stage play called "Bro'kin River" based on the true story of Margaret Garner, a Northern Kentucky slave. The play connects this tragic past with the present-day Black Lives Matter Movement. In

partnership with Cincinnati Arts Association, the play will be premiere at the Fifth Third Theater at the Aronoff. The project also includes an education component which will use Garner's story to explore the Black Lives Matter Movement and implicit bias in local schools.

Derek J. Snow will make a film version of his moving play centered on current and historic racial injustice and violence, "Silas: The Uninvited," using members of local homeless advocacy organization Maslow's Army as extras and production crew. The film will be entered into socially themed film festivals.

TT Stern-Enzi will develop a series of critical essays on the impact of representation (or lack of) in film. These essays will be the basis for structured conversations, both as podcasts and in a public forum setting, about how films have shaped the cultural identities of community members.