



Grantmakers in the Arts
2004 Conference

DANCING WITH DIFFERENT PARTNERS

Proceedings from the Conference

October 17-20, 2004
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel
Cleveland, Ohio

AMPLIFYING OUR VOICES: THE ROLE OF ARTISTS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Artists and cultural organizations sometimes serve communities by providing forums to explore the community's concerns, often stimulating discussion about issues and action for change. The upcoming election has served as a catalyst for organizing in many communities that are often disenfranchised and alienated from the voting process. These communities include youth, people of color, former prison inmates, immigrants, temporary workers, and individuals with low incomes. Some artists and cultural organizations across the country are actively participating in this organizing effort, encouraging participation in the upcoming election and building relationships for coalition work and stronger communities in the future. This session will explore such initiatives.

Session Organizers: Claudine Brown, *program director*
Arts and Culture, Nathan Cummings Foundation
Helen Brunner, *program consultant*
Albert A. List Foundation

Presented by: Caron Atlas, *consultant, National Voice*
Rha Goddess, *1+1+1=ONE*
Mark Ritchie, *national coordinator, National Voice.*

October 19, 2004, 10:00 a.m.

RHA: We wanted to ask the critical questions and to figure out how the local communities were addressing the issues that are important. That was our goal, to have them use their voice, and their voice may be their normal voice, or their artistic voice, to put their issues on the table.

From all around the country, we collected grants, from women between the ages of seventeen and thirty-five. The performance was recently held at the Apollo Theater. These issues that were raised were important issues of all of us.

When I used to tell people about this project, women my age were, how dare she leave us out? *[Laughter]* I would say, we are not necessarily a silent cohort, not that the seventeen to thirty-five year olds are, but I thought that the work was important, and it was important for us to hear what these women had to say.

We're going to let Rha take over.

RHA: *[Sung]* I too sing, America.

[Spoken] I vote when I can because Mississippi left me burning. Got me hotter than a racist Fourth of July when dusty rednecked boots stood on the necks of my elders. Ignorant niggers shouldn't have no hope, so they say.

Fast forward to project niggers shouldn't have no hope, ain't that right, Moses? Not Moses who parted the Red Sea, was outcasted downstream and called to deliver the heed my ten C's, but Mr. Moses. Mr. Urban Renewal, Mr. Displacer of Hopes, Rights and Dreams.

Oh, I'm sorry, was this your community? Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

I vote when I can because my parents rode in the backs of Jim Crow buses and my father knew what it was to be full-grown and called "boy." And you would be amazed to know that in the year 2004 somebody else's daddy is still being frisked. Somebody else's daddy is still being thrown up against the hood of a car, fitting the profile, guilty by association. Somebody else's daddy is questioned by immigration, still being called... "boy."

Maybe that doesn't amaze you at all. Maybe that doesn't surprise you at all. Maybe you are sitting there shaking your head in disbelief. Maybe you are nodding your head because you know exactly what I'm saying.

I vote when I can because somebody died so that I could, somebody bled so that I could, somebody faced fierce humiliation so that I could.

But if you ask me did my vote make a difference, not just to me but in the real scheme of things, a difference, then I will just laugh and say _____. Often when I step in the booth my options are between a devil and a devil in a blue dress. Think fast. Which would you choose? *[Laughter]*

Somebody who calls you a nigger to your face or somebody who swallowed the world while painting a smile in your direction?

Black folk vote overwhelmingly Democrat because the devil in a blue dress seems overwhelmingly less threatening. But what that leaves us is taken for granted.

What that leaves us is taken for a ride. What that leaves us is generation after generation of pasty-faced not-so-gentlemen, who will clench yellow teeth and shake our hands as a customary obligation. Sir, you only need to spend five minutes in Harlem and the black vote is yours! What that leaves us is left with double-digit unemployment. Left forty-eight times more likely to be incarcerated. Left ten times less likely to be educated, jumping up and down screaming that this rapper or that is a threat. And those who are Urban Leaguers who have struggled forty years to build _____ face will stifle the hearts and voices of their own children just so _____.

And what that leaves us is a generation gap so wide, you could drive Lil' Kim through it. *[Laughter]* And what that leaves us is the new black migration, out of the Democratic ghetto and into the Republican player's club, where upwardly want-to-be mobile African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans can lap-dance for the party. "Niggers ain't nothing but hos and chitlin! I smacked John Ashcroft, he's my bitch!"

I haven't been voting much lately because history is no longer enough to keep me inspired, because most of the current black achievement that should make me proud... makes me sick to my stomach. Because beyond the momentary victory of casting a ballot, I realize I ain't got a damn thing to vote for. Not one.

And after years of putting my head in the _____ of the sand, I finally decided to stand up and do something about it. We've...got...issues.

[Applause]

Thank you. The next wave of women in power is a leadership development network that was founded by me in the spring of 2002. Specifically I was interested in understanding what was happening within the movement of young women's leadership in this country. Did we want



power? Were we comfortable using the word? What did we think it meant?

Through our work of beginning to engage young women in this question of power and in this question of leadership, I got an e-mail from Billy Upski Wimsatt. It was an e-mail that was sent to 132 activists in his life. It was very fed-up, this generation needs to do something, and I was like, yeah, yeah, yeah! We really need to organize, I was like, yeah, yeah, yeah! And we really need to look at this election. I was like, no, no, no! [Laughter] Stop right there!

What I came in touch with was how checked-out of the electoral political process I was. As I began to talk to the other young women in my life, I realized that I was certainly not by myself.

We are women who get up every day and work in communities, we take care of our extended families, we are there for the friends in our lives. But in terms of actually making that leap to even considering the concept of being active in electoral politics, it was like, you were talking to the hand.

So I began, within the context of The Next Wave of Women in Power, to really think about, if we consider the possibility of looking at the momentum in terms of what's happening around the upcoming election, what is it that we would most want to contribute to this movement?

What came out of three days of laughing and raging and crying and screaming and acknowledging how afraid you are and acknowledging how invisible we felt when it came to the conversation of electoral politics, came, We Got Issues.

What we decided was that, before we would run around and register a bunch of young women to vote, we needed to understand why. Why do we feel so alienated in terms of the political process? This is not just young sisters from the 'hood, but why do even very affluent young white women get quiet at the dinner table when the conversation turns to politics? To begin to understand what is fundamentally happening with us as young women, that has us continue to be on the outside looking in?

We traveled the country and through ranting – which was what I just did, that was sort of my rant for the project – through rants and through one-on-one conversations, and through hand massages and foot rubs and hair brushings, we got young women from all over this country to start to talk to us.

One of the things that we learned that was surprising in some ways, but really not so surprising when you think about it, was how much permission young women needed, to just be authentic about how they felt, what was on their hearts and on their minds. Understanding for us that not only do they need permission, but they needed rewards. They needed to be affirmed that it was important for them to authentically speak out.

The other thing that we learned was how much young women crave community, and community that is healthy, community that sees them as empowering, sees them as a contribution and also a community that is committed to making a contribution to them.

We traveled around the country for thirteen months, and we were able to talk to almost a thousand young women who contributed to the creating of this performance piece. We then enlisted the support of six amazing young women writers, Suheir Hammad, Sara Little Crow Russell, Stacyanne Chin, Lenelle Moise, Anna Lappe, and Hilda Herrera.

These women, up all night sometimes, many times not sleeping, trying to do justice to the thousand voices that came into this project, created somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty to sixty creative monologues. On September 13th at the Apollo, with a cast of ten young women from all over the country, all walks of life, we mounted the world premiere of this performance piece for a sold-out audience as part of the Vaginas Vote, Chicks Rock event.

What's next? The piece will tour, we anticipate at least a ten to fifteen city tour. Our conversation about the swing states is certainly that we understand the importance of the swing states within the framework of the upcoming presidential election.

We're really interested in what are the young women, what are the young feminist center swing states that we need to be in? Communities where we understand that if we can activate and support and cultivate the leadership of young women in those communities, that there is a tremendous difference that can be made.

The other thing that we understand is being able to plug in together with people who are already on the ground doing amazing work, but don't have networks, don't have community, don't have really strong built-in support systems to forward their work.



The next phase for us as we move around, will actually be to identify twenty to twenty-five young women leaders who will then help us shape a visionary political platform for young women.

From there the goal is to get young women all over the country to cast their ballots or to support this young women's political platform when we now engage with the leaders of our local communities as well as the leaders of our country.

The third step will be to see what we're calling this arts-based model for civic transformation in local communities, where young women will take issues from the political platform and develop it. Create their own We've Got Issues performance pieces using the model that we did to create We've Got Issues.

BRUNNER: I'd like to turn now to Mark Ritchie.

RITCHIE: Two years ago today I lost one of my best friends in a plane crash. He was the first person in my political community who ever shook me up and made me think about electoral politics, and his name was Paul Wellstone.

A lot of things happened around that crash, too many to think about right now, but it wasn't immediately apparent to me that part of honoring what happened, and honoring what Paul and Sheila and everyone else had done, was to figure out where that fit into our lives and our bigger political lives and into our communities more firmly. It gnawed at me. It was on my mind.

It was especially on my mind as the politics of the nation began to unfold after that election. My own state took a turn that didn't make me very happy and a whole lot of other things began to happen.

There were a lot of people who were sharing an overall sense that something was fundamentally wrong and also something was wrong with our strategy, like what we were doing, where we were going with this.

I was fortunate would be the right way to say it, to be out of the country during the first month of the Iraq War because I agreed to do a speaking tour on things very dear to my heart around agriculture and the World Trade Organization.

I came back after about the 30th day of the war, and had an e-mail that said, hey we're having a little emergency meeting outside of Washington to talk about, what can we do? No one really knew what we can do but people were really depressed, especially people in the women's

movement and the peace movement, all kinds of folks.

Although it didn't win me any platitudes at home, I turned around and got on the next plane and went out to a little meeting outside of Washington, D.C. There were representatives there from a lot of the nonprofit and community groups and community-based organizations, NAACP and Women's Voices and Code Pink and Planned Parenthood, a whole lot of different groups, trying to come to grips with what can be, what should be, what could we do.

Out of that meeting, people said, we don't really know what we can do, we're not very hopeful, but we have to do something. It really had that kind of sense of, we have to do something. How can we face our children, how can we face the rest of the planet if we don't try to do something? It really wasn't clear what could and should be done. A little tiny committee was put together to think about what should be done.

About all that we could come up with at the time was that we have to start finding out what's out there in the community and figure out what could help, what people need. Then how to take that and make it a little bit more strategic, what else could happen about that?

Then, especially how to make it feel more united and more tied together, because it felt very much in silos, very much separated.

A small little committee of that group came out to Minnesota which is where I live, and sat down with my board and my senior staff and convinced them that I should be freed up for eighteen months to take the leadership in trying to figure out what this could be. My board agreed and my staff agreed to take over my work eighteen months ago more or less now.

I'd still not thought about this but I started to honor what Paul really meant to me, instead of just talk about it. I had the wonderful opportunity and privilege to begin working with a team of incredible young people, a lot of whom I met through Billy, or who knew each other through the League of Pissed Off Voters.

We began putting a team together to first find out what was going on. We found over a thousand organizations around the country, you can go read them on our website if you want to, who were already doing something, thinking about something, not really knowing exactly what to do, but getting into the process.



Who began asking, what do you need?

People needed some little things, some legal advice, or they needed to help talk to their board about why being involved in voter registration wasn't just legal, it was also really part of a fundamental mission, particularly social service agencies and community organizations.

We began finding ways to get little bits of resources out to people. Sometimes it was a little bit of funding, sometimes it was to be mentored by somebody who had been doing this for awhile, sometimes it was just to have a conversation with others to reinforce. Because I tell you, eighteen months ago, it was pretty grim, it was seeming impossible, it was seeming like a mission that didn't know where it was going to end up. But it was something we had to do.

Then we began to talk about, well how can we be more strategic? It's been important to find out who's out there. It's been very helpful to provide people with resources and things that they needed, but what could be more strategic?

It kept coming back in the conversation that people needed to get together. They needed to find out what they were doing and find ways to work together. And lo and behold, states started meeting, and in cities people started meeting and they said, we meet together for some other things, like somebody tries to cut the social service budget for the handicapped in our state and we'll all go down to the state capitol and beat up on them and do something. Or they start cutting the arts council and we all pile into the busses and head over to the capitol.

Why have we not ever come together and talked about our mutual opportunities to work together on voter registration, voter education and on mobilizing voters on election day? It was like a light bulb went on. In a whole bunch of states people started to meet and they started to form things that we ended up calling "tables" meaning, like a place to sit around.

In a state like Minnesota, 230 groups have come together. In Florida it's an incredible coalition. In Ohio, the people at COHIO, which is an organization working on homelessness and housing, has pulled together an incredible table of people.

In that process of people coming together, other things that we didn't really think about began to unfold. One of them was that it was a mind-altering and life-altering experience for some of the groups to actually come into direct contact and begin working together.

Some organizations have long histories of working on voter registration and getting out the vote efforts, African American organizations, trade unions, some churches. They were very interesting partners and mentors and coaches, and really supportive organizations for a whole bunch of the folks who were just coming in or who had only recently realized that the law does allow and encourages this process. That was one thing.

The second thing was that people began to think about neighborhoods and communities. We talk about it as a national election, but in fact it's not. It's fifty states and a couple colonies. We have precincts, and precincts have people, they have addresses. You can now go on the Web, and look in your precincts at how many new people have been registered and a whole lot of other things. We began to realize that we had to think in different kinds of spatial ways and different kind of relationships. It just transformed.

In the process of doing that, and I was paying a lot of attention to these thousand groups, I began to notice that about a dozen groups were registering about 90-some percent of the new registrants. For all but six states who have election day registration, registration is closed. So we can say with a fairly clear picture right now, that nonpartisan groups, 501(c)(3) and community-based organizations registered somewhere between 2.7 and 3 million new voters, and about 600,000 in Florida.

I began paying a lot more attention to those organizations. A group like ACORN that registered about half the vote. U.S. Action about another quarter, and all of their affiliates, NAACP National Voter Fund, another 10 percent of those, and so on and so forth.

We began to pull together those large organizations into a national working coalition, so that we could take precincts and divide them up and deal with the question of overlap. Some amazing, amazing breakthroughs have occurred in that process. You can go up on the Web, look at your precinct and find out which group took responsibility, and also look at names of the new registrants, the infrequent voters, and look at the names of all the voters. You can actually track the progress.

Those big groups began working together, because converting 2.7 or 2.8 million new registrants, and an equal number of infrequent voters who live in the same block or the same neighborhood, that universe of over five million people, is a lot of work to turn out on election day.



It's a lot of money to raise and we had to collectively work together to raise money. It's also a lot of just turf and territory, there's thirty to forty years of struggle over territory out there. Like Florida is the real incredible example where the group sat down and divided up 1,800 precincts.

That kind of coordination is going to have an incredible effect coming up in a couple of weeks, and of course none of those people are ever polled. They're not likely voters, they're not frequent voters. I'm always happy when I see these polls.

Let me tell you the final problem of how to make this go from being silos to something that connected with people on the level of values is really complicated. I have to say, it drove me crazy. I didn't know what it meant. I had an assignment to work with the media, didn't really know what that was all about.

I did know that values were what were connecting people and that we had to find some way to hook people together. I had the good fortune to hire a special school inside of a huge advertising agency called Wieden Kennedy. Wieden Kennedy does Nike and ESPN and Starbucks and AOL and they're geniuses at what they do. Very, very, very good at what they do.

The creative director there, who is the genius behind a lot of what they do, got sick of advertising and sick of promoting sneakers or whatever, and convinced them to let him create a school. He went out and found a dozen of the most talented people in advertising and media around the country and they all came to Portland for the year. They got paid to come to Portland for the year to be in this school. They signed up and agreed to work with two or three organizations and we were fortunate to be one of them.

The creative director said, Oh, I've got the perfect campaign, it'll be what you need. I said, okay, come on out.

He came out to Minnesota, and he popped up this computer screen, and it said, "November 2." I said, great, let's see the campaign. He said, no. [Laughter]

Wait a minute how am I going to explain this? I don't know anything about this, but if you can convince my young staff. I've got an organizer for African American voters and Hispanic voters and young voters and Native American voters, and Asians. These people had been out there raising all the expectations about how great this

media campaign's going to be and you're going to love this. And I thought, oh boy.

So Jelly, the guy who created this, from Louisville, went in and showed it to these young people, and they just went, Yes! I mean they took this into a thousand directions. I knew then what I didn't know before. Raise money and give it to young people and just let them go! [Laughter]

So Jelly went out to New York, rented two big buses, got on buses with a film crew and started in New York with the Newark and Hip Hop convention and went to Pittsburgh, Columbus, Detroit, Chicago, Des Moines, St. Louis, Little Rock, New Orleans, Montgomery, Tallahassee and Miami. And filmed and photographed 680 people, some of whom are up there.

The only instruction was, show me what you want to say about these coming elections. For those of you who had a chance to see the video or who had seen these pictures or had just seen people on the street, you could see that in people's eyes and in people's faces they made a statement that none of my clever little one-liners that I wanted to put on T-shirts would have ever said.

Jelly was absolutely right, and my young staff was absolutely right. What was going to be needed this year was a message that allowed people to reach across and to do it. So in that process we built this campaign.

The fun part has been the way it has helped us link to arts organizations. In Minneapolis right now there's three art exhibits on election art at the Minnesota Center for Arts and Design and the Minnesota Institute of Art and in the County building.

We learned a lot of other things. I had no idea how digital imagery now could just flow. We found a service that feeds campuses and student unions on Jumbotron, and those ads have been shown a million times on campuses already. There are so many different things that I had no idea about.

Now people are being transformed about how they think about this in the future. These state coalitions are going to go forward. The discussions that have happened inside of different constituencies are going to go forward. I'm really interested in November 2, but I have to say, I am really interested in November 3 and beyond and I hope that the involvement of the arts and cultural community begins part of that transformation, and that we don't go back, that we never go back to the way it was before.



We all have work to do. We've still got crummy schools, and we've still got people trying to stop us from expressing our point of view. But we can't go back, we've got to do it together in this process. We've got a hell of an opportunity to do it.

ATLAS: I'm Caron Atlas, I'm a long-time cultural activist and also worked for foundations. I've been dancing with another partner this year, which is Mark, and, as you can see, it's very inspiring. This is where I'm getting my energy this year.

I heard about National Voice and the amazing work that's going on with these organizations around the country. Some people describe it as awaking the sleeping giants of the nonprofits and saying, yes you can get involved in this work. It is possible to do it!

In the midst of hearing about this, I wondered where were arts organizations and artists in this big coalition of work? I'm always asking that question. What I do for a living is to say, where are the artists in this?

Often I'm working with other groups that are not arts groups, saying, what if artists were involved in this work? Maybe this could be richer.

This is what I did with National Voice. A lot of times when I do that, people do the polite eye-roll. Instead, National Voice said, what do you want to do? When we work with constituencies, one of the first things we do is map what everyone's doing. Let's do these big conference calls and just see where everybody around the country is.

Mark gave us the ability to do a couple of big conference calls. People said, this is what we're doing, or this is what we need.

As a result of those calls, National Voice asked, what did you learn? What do they need? And one of the biggest things that people in the arts said they wanted was legal advice, because people were very concerned about their nonprofit status.

So National Voice had been doing regular calls with a lawyer where people could get legal advice. Arts people often have their own spin on that, so we did a call that was specifically geared to arts people. People could come with whatever question they had, and the lawyer would give them advice. It was very helpful.

I kept nudging and saying, if you're really serious about this, you need to embed it in your staff. So they hired me as a cultural organizer.

One of the extraordinary things is that the work I did around arts and culture for National Voice was not marginal. It wasn't we're doing all our key work, and then Caron's doing the arts work over here. It was completely integrated into the other work that they were doing.

I wasn't marginalized as a consultant with them. I was doing arts work, but I was also doing core work with them around assessing their other programs. I wasn't seen as somebody who got the arts. That is an unusual experience for me, to not be marginalized when I'm working with a non-arts organization. I just want to say that's amazing.

Now one of the things that happened to me in working with National Voice, is I came in saying, where's the arts in all this? How come you're not dealing with the arts?

I learned so much from them and their organizers too. Their organizers stayed at my house for a week, the one working in the Latino community and one working in the Native American community. And they are fierce! They are young, they're energetic and they are fierce, and I learned so much from them staying at my house.

One thing I learned is that art and culture is infused through everything they do, it's just a natural part. It isn't like I have to come and say, well, let me bring you the arts and culture. It was there and it was just our recognizing that and figuring out how to work together.

In this work, I made it my business to learn about a lot of work going on around the country so I'm going to talk bit about some of the landscape.

One of the powerful things with Urban Bush Women and with Rha's work is that it's not just about doing projects, but it's a very long-term project of civic education. It's saying, what does it mean to really be an artist concerned about democracy? What are the skills you need?

And you described your work as a leadership project. It's really about building a leadership for democracy and saying that cultural people can be part of that leadership.

Another part of the work is in the other session when we were talking about George Lakoff's research which has affected a lot of people. Mark talked about being driven by values, that people make up their minds based on values. What we know in the arts community is that one of the powers of art is that it reaches people at their deepest cultural values and that it moves you!



Some of the wonderful things about where Mark and the Urban Bush Women were, is that somebody described a piece of Urban Bush Women as moving them like a river. I love that image because I think about the connection between that and social movements, and how you need to be moved by your cultural values, to really make a difference in terms of social movements.

Some of the ways that I think the work has gone really well is when artists are working together with organizers. Alternate Roots is here, and they did work with the Center for Community Change, ACORN and other groups in the South, that with National Voice. These are available for anybody who's interested.

There's a project called Voting in America. It was a competition for filmmakers around the country to create very short documentaries about why people don't vote, and why they should. Each one is targeted towards different communities that are disenfranchised. A lot of them are based in culture, so the Native American woman's got her Native rock band that's working with young people. They're really powerful pieces.

It was created to be on TV, on PBS. PBS decided they would broadcast it after the election, which kind of defeated the purpose. So the question was, how do we get it out? PBS is not necessarily the best way to get it out to the disenfranchised communities. How do we get it out to those communities?

Filmmakers may not know how to do that, and it may be a whole learning process for them. Community organizers already have those contacts. One of the things that we were able to do at National Voice was to put this in the hands of the Native American organizers who could get it everywhere and use it as an incredible resource. They were giving these away for free. These are incredible resources in the hands of organizers that go all over the country.

Another area is reaching new people that have been left out of the discussion, and you talked a lot about that. I'm intrigued with this notion of a third space, which at the Imagine Festival in New York during the Republican National Convention, they said, we could be in the convention, we could be out protesting. But here's another alternative, we could be in the third space, where we have a chance to have a dialogue using art and the humanities.

Theaters are making themselves into third spaces. They're registering people. They're being polling spaces. Galleries are having exhibits.

SPARC in L.A. did a show called "Elect This!" They had never had a show with so many people coming and a more diverse group coming.

The Internet is becoming a third space. "America and the Globe" which is a project connecting journalism and art is on the Web and in galleries, opening up that third space for discussion.

Another thing is this notion about breaking down apathy and cynicism, and the sense of hopelessness that a lot of people feel.

So Malika Sanders, who is an amazing organizer in Alabama and part of the hip hop generation, and whose parents were civil rights leaders, shows that continuity. She tells an amazing story about Selma, Alabama, where there had been an entrenched racist mayor.

People had given up hope. That's the way it is. That's the status quo and there's nothing we can do about it. Then young people got involved and artists got involved who weren't willing to accept that. They shifted the way of looking at things and they were able to bring the mayor down.

It was this incredible power of youth activism, whether we're talking about the civil rights movement, or the hip hop activism that's going on now.

Another example of participation as a way to break through apathy is the RFK project. It's RFK in EKY. This was a very creative project done in eastern Kentucky by John Malpede, who did it together with Appalshop. Appalshop was created thirty-five years ago as part of the War on Poverty.

John wanted to recreate the tour of Robert Kennedy when he went to Kentucky in 1968 to talk about poverty, and recreate it with a cast of hundreds of local people, and use it as a way to stimulate discussion about now.

There are amazing parallels because there was a war going on then, and certainly the issues of poverty haven't gone away. I was just going to show a couple seconds of video about this project.

"On February 13, '68 Kennedy arrived at Bluegrass airport in Lexington, and then drove to eastern Kentucky. The first stop in eastern Kentucky was at Vortex, Kentucky which is just south of Campton, off Route 15. He stopped at a one-room schoolhouse which today has been knocked down, and there's a private home on that site."



"Sometimes when _____ we didn't have bread. We didn't get enough. And I think that our government should do something to help."

"And then they went on to Hazard and visited Liberty Street, which was an African American neighborhood. He stopped at a Yellow Creek strip mining site. And it was a contentious moment, when finally he and his entourage were allowed to gain access to the site.

They then went on to Alice Lloyd College at Hindman. The next day he gave an early morning speech on the courthouse steps at Weisberg, and then went on to a long hearing in the gym at the High School.

After many stops along the road, conversing with different families in different 'hoods in Hanville and Haymond, he went to Prestonsburg and again gave an address at the community college. Getting into his private plane, he then jetted off to Louisville where he had a dinner at the home of the Bingham's, who were the editors of the Courier Journal.

The ambition of the performance is to recreate all aspects of the original 1968 tour, including hearings, speeches and roadside talks with local people playing all of the roles, including Kennedy and his entourage. A cast of hundreds will follow the original 200 mile route, covering all the original sites over the course of two days, using a script constructed from transcripts, news accounts, itineraries gathered from his aides, and recollections of those who were there."

[Inaudible] "Does anybody want to be Kennedy?"

"As I go around, I didn't have. I recognize the great wealth that exists in this state. I recognize the great wealth that has gone out of this state, going to all parts of the rest of this country and then all around the world. And I've seen people by the thousands with not enough to eat. And obviously there has not been proper distribution of that wealth to the people of eastern Kentucky.

I... That's you."

"I do thank you for..."

"I've become really interested in the notion of citizenship, and normal people as citizens. And this is a circumstance where I'm creating deals at the moment when people work on change as active citizens, and theater creates the opportunity for the citizenry of today to provide their own analysis of the relationship of that moment to the current moment."

ATLAS: That's exactly what happened for two days, including the trip to the strip mine and all of these things. Hundreds and hundreds of people participated as performers and as citizens.

This whole question of citizenship, there's some amazing scholarship around the notion of cultural citizenship by Latino scholars and others. I like that because it looks at the questions of social justice connected with citizenship, and it says, who gets to be a citizen and who doesn't? And what are our notions of democracy and are they about broadening the participation or narrowing it?

One of the things that all this work does is it shifts the frame. That's really important. To change the status quo, we can't just react to it. We need to shift the frame and talk about it differently. By shifting the frame, start to imagine what could happen instead of reacting about what we don't like. There's a real power of the arts that happens in these programs.

I'm going to just leave with some challenges that I see for this dancing with other partners work. What's really important for organizers and for funders is to understand that art isn't just a tool or a tactic, but it's part of an ongoing, in-depth collaboration of mutual goals, and that when you integrate artists and cultural organizers, it's really integrating those with the creativity they bring to the table and it's over the long-haul.

For artists it's important to think that you're not always in the center of everything. The art is important, but it isn't always the entire situation, and that when we talk about advocacy, it's not just about arts advocacy. To really be effective together we need to develop a new skill base together.

To reiterate what everybody else said, democracy is a work in progress. It isn't just about voting and it's not just about November 2, and we're going to have just as much need for imagination to make social change after the election as before.

BRUNNER: Before we launch on to questions I'm just going to ask you to clap again and acknowledge this amazing panel.

I know many of you in this room have been actively engaged in this work, and some of you have been involved in funding it. Others of you maybe are new to the arena of even realizing that it is possible and legal to fund civic engagement work, and not only legal but imperative.

I want to open it up for discussion, questions, comments either about work you've already



done, or questions you have for the panel and the incredible experts and organizers sitting up here.

AUDIENCE: I have a question for Mark about Florida. I am amazed to read in the newspaper this morning that after all of the successful voter registration drives that we did in Florida, the registration has been equal on both sides, among both partisan voters. I find it a bit hard to comprehend. Can you explain this?

RITCHIE: Yes. Thanks for asking the question. There's a wonderful AP story that says they didn't include the big counties in Florida in their numbers. I can tell you, it ranges between three to one and seven to one.

There are problems with this. Number one is, I'm nonpartisan so I can't really talk about this. Number two, in Florida, you have the opportunity to register nonparty and others. So you have to be a little careful about how you interpret those numbers.

We have 600,000 names of individuals registered by ACORN and others, largely who registered because they're going to vote for raising the minimum wage, and there are about 90 percent in precincts that will be heavily majority Black or Hispanic communities.

So in Florida, we won't be able to sort out until after the election. Of course, because we're nonpartisan, we have to be quite careful about this, but it's something like three to one, and it might be five to one.

I thought that article this morning was kind of outrageous. Because in the other states it also didn't include the big cities. It did not include the big cities! It's kind of unbelievable.

I'm actually fine by it, at one level. There's that balance between discouragement and how you encourage them. I thought it was poor reporting. I have the AP article if anyone wants it. At least AP reported that fact.

END

