Introduction

On May 12th, more than 60 artists and creative organizers engaged in civic participation, community development, education, social justice activism, and philanthropy came together for a White House briefing on Art, Community, Social Justice, National Recovery.

This meeting combined the interests of several groups addressing intersecting issues. All are interested in the power of the arts to build communities and create change. Arlene Goldbard requested a meeting with community cultural development practitioners and thinkers to talk about how the remarkable mobilizing power of community arts can be used by the Obama administration as a tool and a pathway for national recovery.

Claudine Brown of the Nathan Cummings Foundation, arts organizer Billy Wimsatt and Caron Atlas working with the Pratt Center for Community Development and State Voices, requested a meeting with policy makers, artists and organizers. Their intent was to identify existing efforts within the cultural and social justice movements that are in alignment with the national agenda and to discuss our common pursuits and possibilities. This diverse group includes Hip Hop organizers, green designers, creative communicators, social networkers, and other visual, performing, and media artists committed to social justice from both the non-profit and for-profit sectors who are working on such issues as green jobs, health care and economic justice.

Each of the sponsors of this meeting had been in contact with Yosi Sergant who was then an Associate with the White House Office of Public Liaison (and is now Communications Director of the National Endowment for the Arts.) Once we understood that a larger meeting would enable us to access more advisors and policymakers, it made sense to combine forces and invitation lists.

The Washington DC meeting had three parts: 1) a meeting at the Kaiser Family Foundation to prepare for the briefing, 2) the two-hour White House briefing at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, and 3) a post-briefing meeting at Bus Boys & Poets to interpret and respond to what we had learned and to engage in small-group strategy sessions including: cultural policy, green jobs, immigration, public/private space, healthcare reform, organizing power on behalf of community artists, and a department of alternative thinking.

This report includes notes from the White House briefing and from the post-briefing strategy session. The latter includes a summary of the small group discussions and the full notes submitted by each group, including contact information. Our intention in issuing this report is to ensure transparency for colleagues who were not at the meeting, so that they can weigh in on what was learned from the White House and respond to it. Thanks to Meghan McDermott for her extensive notes and great first draft.

As our White House hosts repeated throughout the briefing, this is the beginning of a conversation. We hope that this report extends the conversation throughout the field and that it continues and expands wherever people care about art, community, social justice and national recovery.

Caron Atlas, Claudine Brown, Arlene Goldbard & Billy Wimsatt

Report on White House Briefing On Art, Community, Social Justice, National Recovery

12 May 2009, Eisenhower Executive Office Building

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White House Briefing

Eisenhower Executive Office Building
Tuesday, 12 May 2009

More than sixty artists and creative organizers convened in a third-floor conference room at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building for a briefing introduced and moderated by Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President, who serves as White House Liaison to the arts. The briefing was structured as a series of opportunities to listen and learn about administration policies, programs and priorities, headlined "Grassroots Arts Groups and Organizations." Some speakers took a few questions, some had time only to speak and run.

Two themes ran through all the presentations by administration officials:

First, almost every presenter spoke of personal experience in the arts as a student, performer, consumer or supporter (e.g., Mike Strautmanis was a theater major before law school, Kareem Dale acted in Chicago with the Black Ensemble Theater and later served on its Board of Directors, etc.).

Second, almost every speaker assured us that the administration "gets it" when it comes to the importance of arts and culture to organizing for positive change.

This is encouraging, and as we understood going in, the opening exchange in a continuing conversation. After the briefing, we recognized there was ample room for mutual education, for artists and creative organizers to learn more about public policy and program development processes and how to work most effectively with the public sector; and for the administration to learn more about how artists and creative organizers can work with many public initiatives, including areas like job creation, education and labor, which were not represented at the briefing.

Overall, we came away feeling that there would be room at the table for artists and creative organizers to take part in conversations about relevant policies and programs; and that we were being challenged to come up with promising and attractive ideas about how artists can work for the administration's agenda and how artists' work can be integral to national recovery.

What we learned is summarized below in the order we heard from the seven speakers who addressed us.

Mike Strautmanis, Chief of Staff for the Office of Public Liaison

Mike Strautmanis welcomed us warmly, declaring that we have many friends at the Office of Public Liaison (formerly the Office of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs). He explained that the office is the "front door to the White House," fulfilling and realizing the essence of President Obama's career, his philosophy of political change, and his presidency. He declared the administration's willingness to bring in stakeholders, receiving input and advice to ensure that decisions are relevant, effective and based in lives lived as they are today. He explained that the Social Secretary's work, the First Lady's efforts and other White House initiatives demonstrate that the administration wants the arts to affect the whole person. People are motivated, lifted and moved to do important and world-changing things by science, he explained, which is being restored to its rightful place. Others are motivated by issues and by expressing themselves through the arts.

Mike Strautmanis directed our attention to key people with whom to foster relationships: Kareem Dale, who was appointed to deal with the arts specifically; and Valerie Jarrett, a close confidante and advisor to the First Family, who connects directly to the Oval Office.

He also introduced Yosi Sergant, who was instrumental in arranging the briefing. Yosi had just left the Office of Public Engagement to serve as Communications Director at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), noting that he represents the commitment to bring in people not traditionally part of the political process to share their talents and skills. He recognized that Yosi's efforts had made the campaign soar with arts work beyond what could have happened with traditional political consultants. With Yosi and Anita Decker (Director of Government Affairs at the NEA) in place, he explained, people very close to the President are involved in the effort.

Questions to Mike Strautmanis:

Q: William Cleveland, Center for the Study of Art & Community, noted that he appreciated Strautmanis's words about seeking advice, input and connections. He suggested the people in the room equaled a think tank to serve the administration's aims, and asked how in practical terms we could connect to the administration's policy work.

A: Mike Strautmanis described two paths. First, there are formal, set pieces of work such as the healthcare debate, efforts to reduce energy costs and the commitment to community service. In these areas, the administration wants to bring people in informally to advise and offer perspectives and to receive updates on impact. The administration wants to know what's missing or doesn't make sense, and will reach out periodically as issues come up.

Second, through Kareem Dale, there is a conduit to the White House and the Obama Administration, to initiate contact and stay in touch via email and phone. The administration has an agenda, but there are things activists know and are involved in that the administration can't know directly, such as ways to communicate with people and how to motivate them culturally.

Q: Dee Davis, Center for Rural Strategies, described the challenge of constant threats to net neutrality, of threats to introduce licensing charges that block access. What assurances do we have from the White House that community and local voices that are locked out can find a foothold?

A: Mike Strautmanis noted that net neutrality is a hot issue, and that Professor (Lawrence) Lessig, a colleague from the University of Chicago, has been talking to President Obama about his perspective on this. He stated that briefing participants should be at the table with the FCC (Julius Genachowski, President Obama's choice to run the agency, is an advocate of net neutrality), Phil Schiliro (Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs) and Congressional relations, all of whom need this perspective. The issue of media consolidation, he said, is the next question affecting the entire media industry as we remake many parts of society, including media. He shared the administration's openness to creative solutions and new ways of thinking, noting that the Department of Justice is reenergizing its anti-monopoly division, which is especially important now, during an economic downturn.

Q: Sally Kohn, Center for Community Change, declared that "We love a White House that loves organizers!" Regarding the open-door metaphor, she noted, folks are being invited in to help, but it also takes a movement to create a climate for change, banging down that door. She asked Mike Strautmanis to share what he has learned about how people have been effective in helping to creating the political space needed for change.

A: Mike Strautmanis: He explained that the administration must be comfortable with messiness: real engagement is messy and people need to be comfortable with some conflict and raised voices, a natural part of change and of bringing competing interests into the room. Ground rules for trust are also needed: don't slam each other in the media from private conversations. Don't come to the table only to complain, have solutions too. Be willing to demonstrate, be prepared

and be willing to compromise with competing interests. He noted that organizers are not always used to political processes. Some are approaching with old tools, projections and biases, but what's needed is to trust the process of change. Instead of protest signs on the fence, he urged, think about what it means to be inside the fence. He noted that this could also be instructive to the traditional participants in political gamesmanship, who know the system but aren't yet invested in the process of creating real change.

Buffy Wicks, Deputy Director, Office of Public Liaison

Buffy Wicks began by noting that service is a huge priority for the Obamas, embedded in both their life stories. She explained that the White House was preparing for President Obama to launch a call for participation in a "Summer of Service," offering average Americans opportunities to participate as volunteers in economic recovery. She asked briefing participants to think through how their networks and organizations can participate in areas such as the arts in education, healthcare and preventative care, energy and environment, or economic opportunity. Do you use volunteers, she asked, and are there ways you a can expand service for volunteers?

She explained that the administration will be launching a National Day of Service on September 11. People will be able to learn more at www.serve.gov. She explained that the President and the First Lady will be engaging all of the resources of the White House to think through how the arts can be a space where Americans can engage in service, and noted that Kareem Dale will have more information as the project is built across the country this summer.

Buffy Wicks did not take questions.

Joseph Reinstein, Deputy Social Secretary

Joseph Reinstein explained that the Office of the Social Secretary is all about White House events. Every event at the White House is managed through this office, including briefings, dinners, and those that involve arts as a major strategic platform. He said the arts are essential to maintaining and encouraging a U.S. global competitive advantage, which comes from our creativity and ideas, and those are a direct result of our children's arts education. It's not a luxury, he said, but a necessity, critical to economic recovery and our long-term economic role in the world. He told us that the administration is reinvesting in arts education, increasing money for the NEA, supporting healthcare and tax fairness for artists, demonstrating that a commitment to the arts is a commitment to the country's vitality and recovery.

Joe Reinstein invited participants to talk with him about White House events needed to communicate to the country, to the world and to Congress. He said the administration wanted to make the White House a place to celebrate democratic ideals, common values, ingenuity and diversity, to strengthen ties that bring us together as Americans. The President wants people coming together to solve old problems with new ideas and putting aside differences to work together, so events at the White House should remind them of what we can do together to celebrate the American spirit. They should make people feel good about our values and America.

He offered several examples, including a bipartisan Super Bowl party that "sent shock waves" through Washington; the Library of Congress Gershwin Award to Stevie Wonder, where President Obama, the First Lady and Stevie Wonder all talked about what music meant to them personally; summer music series once a month featuring jazz, classical music, pop, and folk; opera events in September on the South Lawn; a film festival planned for fall; and dance events to celebrate American choreographers and companies. A poetry slam was planned for the same night of the briefing. The First Lady described it, he told us, as sending an important signal that democracy demands many voices, that all are welcome there, that the administration believes the arts play a critical role beyond arts education in saying what a democracy is. Arts and culture, spoken word,

film, science and technology, innovation, poetry, literature and debate are all welcome at White House events.

He closed by noting that everywhere administration representatives go, they are greeted by the arts community's delight, but everything depends on artists offering answers and ideas, on patience and determination to work with the administration. He asked participants to flood him with ideas via sarmbruster@who.eop.gov.

Questions for Joseph Reinstein:

Q: James Kass, Youth Speaks, asked whether there a direct link between arts policy and the Department of Education.

A: Joseph Reinstein said yes, noting that President Obama has asked for greater cohesion and collaboration between agency work and departments, such as the Department of State, Department of Education, the White House and man others. He explained that a group dedicated to working on creating cohesion is just now taking shape.

Q: Loris Taylor, Native Public Media, asked whether over the administration's eight years, there will be Native involvement in bringing films and storytelling to celebrations at the White House.

A: Joseph Reinstein was enthusiastic about the idea, repeating his email address.

Q: Aaron Rose, independent artist, writer, musician and director, said he loves to hear that education initiatives are a priority, because arts are often the first thing to be cut. He asked how much community involvement is wanted with White House events. He was grateful for the honor of being asked, but he doesn't want it to be just a dog and pony show for politicos. So how will the White House bring community in to be involved?

A: Joseph Reinstein noted that the Office of Legal Affairs has sometimes been annoyed at the Social Secretary's office restricting the number of politicos who can come to events to make room for others. Music students and faculty from Berkeley, Julliard and Oberlin attended the Stevie Wonder tribute, for instance. Part of delivering on the promise to be the people's house, he told us, is to be responsive to the community and public, so inclusion is a major objective and criterion for every event. The guest list is no longer just VIP and white.

Q: Doria Roberts, touring singer/songwriter and spoken word artist, asked about grants for individual artists: how open will administration policy be to grants for individuals?

A: Joseph Reinstein noted that he couldn't personally speak to this issue, but others in the room might be able to answer or follow up.

Q: Arnold Aprill, Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education, noted that we have to make connections between separate agencies that have power over our lives, so we need information on how to give direct, effective input, rather than do it piecemeal. He asked about not just outreach through things like diverse and inclusive events at the White House, but *inreach*. In this room are exciting, socially engaged, democratically engaged organizations, he said: how do we serve with the White House?

A: Joseph Reinstein restated the need to create cohesion across the federal landscape and create a centralized place for people to get information.

Q: Liz Lerman, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, said that since we can't all perform here, and the arts are sometimes treated as dismissible, how can we help you regarding enlarging access to events here, for instance by creating aligned events in other venues?

A: Joseph Reinstein noted that the administration was new. He said that Year one will be laying a foundation and framework for the future. He likes the idea of not only access to the White House but also community engagement through events that align with White House gatherings, creating synergy.

Q: Matt Revelli, *Juxtapoz* Arts and Culture Magazine, brought up the question of international access for artists, noting that creative minds have had difficulty getting into the United States. He asked if the administration planned to facilitate access for international groups and artists, who have been stopped at airports and sent home, causing resentment toward the U.S.

A: Joseph Reinstein said the administration wants to offer cultural exchanges with organizations and talent to bring artists here and vice versa.

Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President

Kareem Dale supplemented and clarified a few points. He noted that he is also the Special Assistant to President Obama for Disability Policy, pointing out that no one at the White House works on just one issue. At the poetry event that evening, local students are invited from Gallaudet College, from the only college dedicated those who are deaf and hard of hearing. He said the administration is working to have every constituency represented.

He noted that administration officials have met with several arts organizations to talk about cultural exchanges. The administration is busy, but definitely listening to what they had to say and committed to fostering cultural exchanges. He reported that at the State Department dinner for the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies, Secretary of State Clinton spoke about how important the arts are for diplomacy. She has been a champion of arts, he said, and wants them to be included at the State Department. He stated that across the board, the administration is committed to the arts: the arts are back, truly back. He told us that he stands before us as the point-person for arts at the White House and knows where we are coming from: he is passionate about it.

Trooper Sanders, Deputy Director of Policy and Projects, Office of the First Lady

Trooper Sanders summarized the three principal areas and policy priorities of the Office of the First Lady:

National Service: He described the challenge as engaging people of all generations and talents and abilities in solving social challenges in their communities. The First Lady's own history includes developing a public service organization focusing on social innovation. The aim is to connect people in practical ways with their own communities.

Work/Life Balance: He explained that family and career support is part of President Obama's political leadership. For example, the First Lady has begun a conversation with executives across the country to build employer engagement in this issue through government policy. The goal is to change the discussion about work/life balance, especially the challenges faced by women in always giving a 120% but never feeling they are meeting standards.

Military Families: The First Lady's office is focusing on the spouses of service members, recognizing the unique stresses placed on them and their families. The administration is making some new investments in military family services to expand career support for military spouses, for example. They are also reaching out to communities beyond bases to build connections with families on the bases. They recognize the need to think creatively: how to help a child who has not seen her mom or dad for a few years and is struggling in school to find an arts program or mentor, to develop a greater sense of balance? He said the White House may be calling on nonprofits to help shape this in the next few months. For example, the Sierra Club has a national program supporting military children, connecting children to the outdoors, to camping with their peers, a creative way of connecting the environmental sector with the military.

Questions for Trooper Sanders:

Q: Milly Hawk Daniel, PolicyLink, noted the importance of using arts and culture to organize, inform, engage and sustain community. She asked how the administration is connecting the people in this room to other policy people involved in community development.

A: Trooper Sanders explained that the administration is trying to open up the White House to different areas of focus, a matrix approach. For example, military families are one lens: there's a role for arts and culture within that; and similarly with work/life balance, from education and health care to therapy and support, wellness and prevention, creative treatment. He said that President Obama has to address big questions like public safety and keeping the lights turned on, but also has a unique opportunity to blend beyond the silos, for example, in health care reform. If one goal is slowing the growth of costs, for instance, are there things arts and culture can do to produce better outcomes than traditional treatments? Can palliative care be blended with arts and culture to improve care down the line? It's tricky, he said, but we can mix it up and try stuff. He offered his email address for thoughts about how participants' work can be helpful: tsanders@who.eop.gov. He will also be reaching out regarding military family issues.

Mario Garcia Durham, Director of Presenting, National Endowment for the Arts

Mario Garcia Durham opened with thanks for everyone's work and to the administration, for the recent increase in the NEA's budget. He acknowledged that people in the arts continue to work under any conditions, but there has been a break in the clouds! He noted that NEA programs can evolve; what the NEA supports and emphasizes comes from artists and organizations. He encouraged people to apply to the NEA, despite the effort entailed, noting that many requests from a field or area demonstrates need. He stated the NEA's commitment to the new Administration's goals and the Summer of Service program. He applauded participants' work and persistence, restating his accessibility and willingness to working with people as the NEA develops into new areas.

Questions for Mario Garcia Durham:

Q: Jacqui Woods, Skylight Gallery, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, said that we need to hear a paradigm shift to the understanding that artists are workers who contribute to the economy, not just rarefied people, but workers who should be part of workforce development. She said the NEA can fund regional events identified with special events at the White House; and stressed workers' housing as a priority issue.

A: Mario Garcia Durham agreed.

Q: Diane Fraher, Amerinda, asked what the administration is doing to enforce the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, passed to protect indigenous communities from fraud. She offered to work with the administration to enforce this legislation, preserving traditional arts.

A: Mario Garcia Durham suggested contacting Kareem Dale who can make a connection with Jodi Gillette, a Deputy Associate Director of Intergovernmental Affairs who is a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. He shared his own email: durhamm@arts.gov

Q: Andy Shallal, Busboys & Poets, asked if it will be possible for the arts to have a cabinet-level position, as has been proposed, noting that the U.S. is the only country without it.

A: Kareem Dale responded that no one had spoken with him about this, other than a little discussion during the transition. As briefing participants are agents of change, he advised us to keep pushing for what's appropriate and necessary. He emphasized the need for patience, saying that the administration believes in the ideals but just got here.

Q: Anne Pasternak, Creative Time, was inspired by this occasion, noting that the Obama legacy is already full of innovation and experimentation. She encouraged thinking about arts policy that way, too. She wants local and federal government to say yes to creativity and action, with new

thinking and trailblazing ahead about how artists function in society, with artists' engagement in real time and real action.

Q: Wendell Pierce, actor and producer, noted that those present come from different walks of life, and know arts and culture, its role in society and as a forum for community as a whole. He encouraged all departments at the White House to add to their missions explaining the role of arts in society, how art plays a functional, concrete role. Art is policy, not just performance.

A: Mario Garcia Durham agreed, noting that that is the beauty of this group. Government and its policies should be shaped by participants' voices in connection with the NEA. We can change, he said, but it depends on your activism and voice with us.

Q: James Kass, Youth Speaks, addressed the military family connection, asking if the NEA can support a program for young artists, creating pathways to college towards arts careers, and jobs for disconnected youth instead of enlistment. The military is fine if you have a choice, he said, but too many have had none.

A: Mario Garcia Durham said that was a great idea, noting that there aren't specific NEA program tracks for this, but now is the time to come forward with such ideas.

Q: Rha Goddess, creative organizer and spoken word artist, said that we are needed at the table around arts and healing, to offer the integrative approaches developed by artists working in community as a way to augment and strengthen concepts of healing with creative models and to share all community concerns and issues. This is a moment of inspiration, she said, but folks in this room are also doing work on the ground, concrete practical work to move the needle.

Q: Davey D, hip hop historian, spoke of the need for high visibility. The Army is always there on the streets, he said,. He asked for a commitment to underwrite urban expression in a comparable way. Why not seed an urban peace corps or green corps to redirect attention? Money coming from taxpayers shouldn't only be for the military. What about commitment to the elderly? How can art be a major part of what they do? It's not just a young thing.

A: Mario Garcia Durham said these points resonated and restated his availability.

Tina Tchen, Director of Public Liaison

Tina Tchen said her office is charged by President Obama to resonate with what this group is interested in. She noted that previously in its 50-year history of outreach, the public liaison office had been focused on one-way communication with national organizations that have DC offices, but President Obama wants a two-way street and real public engagement. She said her office is re-visioning and re-branding, looking forward to being publicly engaged. She thanked briefing participants for their ideas and programs that can be highlighted and taken to scale, and for their roles in amplifying the administration's message in their communities.

She encouraged arts organizations to participate in the Summer of Service program Buffy Wicks mentioned earlier, helping to generate opportunities for people to do more in their communities and hoping they will partner with the White House in this effort. The administration wants to sustain energy from the election process and turn it toward the agenda. She acknowledged that participants' organizations are facing hard financial choices right now, and that President Obama is engaged in a tough process with the budget, health care reform, green jobs, and education that are necessary to righting the economy in this first year. Innovation will restore us, she said, and education is the only way to ensure that we are competitive in the future. There is great promise in artists' creativity, she said, and the administration needs to hear those ideas. She advised participants to stay in touch with Kareem Dale, the East and West Wing teams and the NEA, closing with special acknowledgment to Yosi Sergant. Stay engaged, she said, the administration is not afraid of you disagreement or challenge: healthy ideas come from dialogue.

Tina Tchen did not take questions.

Kareem Dale, Special Assistant to the President

Kareem Dale closed the session by emphasizing engagement in the Summer of Service. Across the country, he said, this will be a way to provide service to participants' organizations and communities, and to offer a concrete way to engage with the Obama Administration.

He encouraged participants to engage with the administration, with White House parties, on the policy front through Kareem Dale's office and the First Lady's policy person. For events, participants should reach out to Joe Reinstein, for policy to Kareem Dale, whose job with respect to the arts is to ensure that arts get raised on equal footing and as an equal partner in this work. He explained that arts and culture is a $160 billion industry, which is why the administration brought briefing participants in and will bring in others. He repeated that the arts are back, ending with thanks.

Post-Briefing Meeting

Busboys & Poets

Directly after the May 12, 2009 White House briefing on Art, Community, Social Justice, National Recovery, participants met for small-group strategy sessions about cultural policy, green jobs, immigration reform, public/private space, healthcare reform, organizing power on behalf of community artists, and a department of alternative thinking. The following are summaries of longer reports from each group. For more information, a contact person is listed for each group.

Toward a Cultural Policy Framework

Contact: Arlene Goldbard
arlene@arlenegoldbard.com

Summary: The group started with a framework of cultural policy issues proposed by Arlene Goldbard and Jeff Chang: a flexible set of points around which to draw unity among all the diverse work going forward. In the larger movement for art, community, social justice and national recovery, we can work with the public sector to find opportunities to advance our goals, and also with other people to build a constituency to help move the public sector along. A framework can help with both. Points included:

1) Protect and Expand Cultural Equity and Cultural Rights;
2) Include Artists In National Recovery and Building Sustainability;
3) Advance A New Works Progress Administration;
4) Assess Cultural Impact on Communities; and
5) Restore Public Interest and Media Justice In the Culture Industries.

The group felt developing a framework was a worthy goal. Challenges include hitting the right balance between the general and specific, valuing first voice, and finding fresh language that people could understand and connect with, so we don't fall into the arts advocacy trap of sounding like a special interest pleading for itself or turn people off with strange jargon. They recognized that it's not only about coming up with the right language, but about being flexible and creative in getting the framework out and making it useful. They formed a Google group to facilitate discussions, and created a smaller committee to take the draft further before the whole group discusses it, and turn together to questions of strategy.

Department of Alternative Thinking

Contact: Kim Hastreiter
kimh@papermag.com

Summary: There is a huge role for creativity in the White House. Artists think differently (and with a different side of their brain) about problem solving than the typical person working for the government (whether

politicians, lawyers, lobbyists or policy experts). Creativity and innovation—in all aspects of the public and private sectors—are what gives our country an edge. This group was inspired to further develop an idea that struck them during the briefing: the establishment of a new "Department of Alternative Thinking." The DoAT would be a volunteer brain trust/think tank made up of the country's most creative and maverick minds (thinkers, artists, innovators, and inventors). It would be set up as a free, public service to the White House and other government departments. The purpose of the DoAT is to integrate creative brain consultation (sideways thinking) into every aspect of governmental decision-making (whether it is the arts, the economy, healthcare, energy and environmental policy, international policy, national security, infrastructure, NASA, education, etc).

Modeled loosely after the Armed Forces Reserve and jury duty, the DoAT "fellows" would volunteer for service on a revolving but continuous panel. Fellows would be selected by the White House and a body of peers and enlisted for periodic, short tours of duty in Washington, DC in order to ensure a healthy turnover of ideas while allowing participants to continue their own work. The DoAT fellows would help government insiders see things from a different perspective, helping to foster innovative solutions to government issues and policy…all of which would be incredibly valuable in keeping America one step ahead.

How to Organize Political Power on Behalf of Community Artists?

Contact: Michael D. Nolan
Communications, Contacts & Concepts
mikeyno@mikeyno.com

Summary: In developing political and educational strategies, we need to reframe ourselves and utilize tools of engagement—involve the media through strategic planning, strengthen communication channels throughout the White House, and develop cross-sector collaborations. While there are varying levels of our organizational and individual capacities to develop advocacy effectiveness, focusing on the most efficient ways to educate the public and policy-makers would lead to the most desired widespread results. Writing legislation, finding places in the Stimulus Bill where Community Arts organizations can insert themselves, teaming up with the Ad Council to show examples of successful projects that transform communities, and having Community Arts advocates and artists as regular guests on news stations are methods for how to leverage voice and acquire support. One proposal is to create a media campaign on September 12th of 2009, the day following the end of the Summer of Service.

In the next White House meeting, this group would like to make sure that highly positioned Administration representatives are present to address various issues in connection with Community Arts and Cultural Development such as Van Jones (environment/green jobs), Janet Napolitano (immigration), and Arne Duncan (education). There is an educational gap between us and the White House coming from both sides. A decision should be made as to the focus of next steps- developing our infrastructure or concentrating on the implementation of advocacy actions. Either way, clear messaging is the key to successfully educate the public and policy-makers while gaining support for our important work, which helps to weave the social fabric together.

Green Jobs

Contact: Alli Chagi-Starr
Green for All
allistarr@gmail.com

Summary: The Green Jobs work group had a varying array of interests and goals. Among them were activists focused on digital storytelling as a form of alternative media, transitioning "arts values" into "US values", engaging youth in issues, defining green "art" jobs, transformational and life coaching work through the arts, and the revitalization and cultural healing of disenfranchised urban centers decimated by "natural" disaster and/or economic inequity. Their primary query was "How do we connect disparate, transcontinental communities into a cohesive, working activist unit in order to fulfill the need and demand for Green Jobs and Green Living in general?"

Suggested solutions included:

1) Developing, highlighting then standardizing certain life skills as integral components in personal growth that also, in turn, benefit the community at large.
2) Branding and redefining "green" the word and "green" the movement and ultimately diversifying mainstream media's current consumer heavy rhetoric.
3) "Green is a Given": Requiring that federal, state and local funding policies for social projects only invest in green projects or have "green goals".

The secondary query was "How to implement these solutions with a core collaboration of art based and green strategies?" Examples given included: Green for All's "Dream in Action" Tour, In New Orleans, the Pontchartrain Park Community Development Corp and "Waiting for Godot", (for the first time with an all African American cast) in the lower 9th Ward, and "Searching for Martin," a multimedia project featuring stories from over-burdened communities along Martin Luther King blvds and thoroughfares across the US.

Healthcare Reform

Contact: Michelle Miller
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Michelle.Miller@seiu.org

Summary: This group discussed the multiple roles that artists can play in support of health care reform. Artists can:

- Join with policy makers to help create a narrative about the current health care system. There is an ongoing need for stories from inside the health care system, both stories of patients and providers. Artists can facilitate the development of these compelling stories by partnering with health care workers in hospitals/community health centers and helping people tell their stories on an ongoing basis. These stories serve to highlight the need for health care reform but can also be used to demonstrate the existence of communities who rely on public hospitals/community health centers that are often under threat of closure. For example, Los Angeles Poverty Department's work on Skid Row in Los Angeles.
- Create a counter narrative to the Luntz memo/Republican talking points designed to destroy health care reform. They can offer creative, humorous voices that can think outside of white papers or New York Times op-eds to communicate effectively about the importance of health care reform and diminish the increasing attacks on our movement for reform. For example, the satirical webisodes SEIU is producing with comedy writers with content from Lutz memo.
- Work with health care workers in skills sharing sessions. Artists provide ideas, strategy etc. for using the arts in medicine. Health care workers to provide care in return. Eg: Artist Access program at Woodhull Hospital in Brooklyn, NY.

- Participate in the Sarah Jones Health Equality tour: invite artists from other parts of the country where health equality work is growing to performances on the Sarah Jones tour (Nashville July 7 / Minneapolis, July 11) to develop storytelling, arts and culture projects around building awareness and action connected to health care equality.

Immigration Reform

Contact: Sally Kohn
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Summary: In 2007, comprehensive immigration reform failed to pass because proponents were "out-called" (i.e., calls to the legislature) 100 to 1 by a vocal minority of opponents of the legislation. In 2009, there will be another historic opportunity to pass this landmark legislation that will bring 12 million people out of the shadows of this country and onto a path to citizenship. Artists and cultural organizers can play a critical role this year on helping advance the legislation, as well as over the coming years helping bring the humanity and personal/family stories of the issue to light. A "coordinated cultural campaign" was the clearest vision articulated in this session of what this involvement might look like. One that makes room for moderate voices, but helps people put faces to the issue, and to understand that it is their neighbor who might be deported next, their family torn apart.

HBO's upcoming documentary about the failed legislative campaign of 2007 is one opportunity for generating discussion and insight. CCC's "Ideas and Innovation Team" has organizing strategies in key states that people can all join, and the State Voices (www.statevoices.org) tables in each state will be places artists and organizers can engage with these fights, both generating critical calls and helping change the public impressions, fears and grow understanding. Global Action Project helps young people make media and tell their own stories. One video is "America's Next Top Immigrant" that uses satire to reframe the American Dream. Active Voice has initiatives focusing on those "just beyond the choir" of allies, with showings of "The Visitor" and PBS documentaries, putting a human face on public policy. Urban Bush Women talked about "collaboration laboratories" or "collab labs" in Brooklyn that could be used to foster a more unified approach to immigration, and not let African American and Latino/Arab/Asian American communities be divided on immigration reform.

Public/Private Space

Contact: Marc Schiller
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Summary: The conversation began with the call for reclaiming of Public Space that would bring forth legitimacy, support and reframing opportunities for artists and communities. US communities don't view public art as a treasure as compared to the international community. As an example, international visitors travel to and throughout the States to specifically view "unsanctioned" public arts such as graffiti, murals, etc. In light of this, we discussed how might public art and identified spaces be utilized by municipalities and local areas to generate tourism, public education and economic benefits (especially given the proliferation of advertising in public space.) Public art, in multiple forms including sculptural installations and temporary performance-based arts, could aid in changing public space usage patterns. Current government regulations that restrict access and use of public spaces are more detrimental to spontaneous development of creative ideas and their execution within the public sphere. Decreases in federal/state arts budgets as well within arts

education have created a creative vacuum and public space may have served as an "informal arts education classroom" and mentoring programs.

Actionable Items:

- Emphasis placed on removing impediments with projects
- Tolerance encouraged for spontaneous acts of public art and recognition of the contribution public art makes to the culture of urban environments.
- To support community development and engagement, Community Foundations should be held accountable to support art and culture projects within the public space.
- Government and local communities' recognition of artists' contributions to the economic success of local, regional and national economies as a necessary step in shifting the balance of power in the use of public spaces for art.
- Explore new, broader definitions and contexts for "public art."
- More attention placed on how local communities are using public space in creative, new ways and how public space could become part of the global conversation on The Commons.

Resources

- *Washington Post* coverage: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/12/AR2009051203327.html
- Video of President Obama announcing the Office of Public Engagement: http://www.whitehouse.gov/ope/
- PRI/WNYC's The Takeaway: James Kass and Jeff Chang were interviewed about the White House poetry jam with Youth Speaks/Brave New Voices, but also spoke about the White House briefing and the state of arts, creativity and social justice. See link and note from host Farai Chideya (audio is under the youtube video): www.thetakeaway.org/stories/2009/may/13/youth-speak-at-the-white-house
- SPARC Mural briefing site: http://www.sparcmurals.org/sparcone
- Google map of participants by Joe Lambert, Center for Digital Storytelling: http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=104723253661494481557.000469ec791467c1e87e9&ll=43.127549,-88.013535&spn=0.245055,0.4422&z=11

Participants

- Arnold Aprill, Founding and Creative Director, Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE)
- Caron Atlas, Cultural Organizer, Pratt Center for Community Development and State Voices (Meeting Organizer)
- Judith F. Baca, Founder/Artistic Director of SPARC and the UCLA/SPARC Cesar Chavez Digital/Mural Lab
- Robert "Biko" Baker, Executive Director, League of Young Voters
- Nick Behunin, HOPE Campaign
- Matthew Brady, Creative Director, Global Inheritance

- Claudine K. Brown, Director, Arts and Culture Program, Nathan Cummings Foundation (Meeting Organizer)
- Denise Brown, Executive Director, Leeway Foundation
- John Cary, Executive Director, Public Architecture
- Alli Chagi-Starr, Community Partnerships & Events Manager, Green For All
- Jeff Chang, Writer
- William Cleveland, Center for the Study of Art & Community
- Dudley Cocke, Artistic Director, Roadside Theater, Appalshop
- Michelle Coffey, Executive Director, Lambent Foundation, Starry Night Fund Donor-Advised Fund of Tides Foundation
- Duffy Culligan, The Directors Bureau
- Davey D, Hip Hop historian, Journalist, Deejay, Media and Community Activist
- Milly Hawk Daniel, Vice President for Communications, PolicyLink
- Dee Davis, President, Center for Rural Strategies
- Maria Lopez De Leon, Executive Director, The National Association of Latino Arts and Culture
- Amalia Deloney, Activist and Cultural Worker
- Kate Emanuel, Senior Vice President, Non-Profit & Government Affairs, The Advertising Council
- Diane Fraher, Director, American Indian Artists Inc. (AMERINDA)
- Ryan Friedrichs, Executive Director, State Voices
- Rha Goddess, Creative Organizer, 1+1+1=ONE
- Arlene Goldbard, Writer and Speaker (Meeting Organizer)
- James Bau Graves, Executive Director, Old Town School of Folk Music
- Kim Hastreiter, Editor, Publisher and Co-founder of PAPER Publishing Co.
- Liz Havstad, Senior Vice President, Strategic Partnerships and Programs, Hip Hop Caucus
- Ian Inaba, Co-Executive Director, Citizen Engagement Lab
- Gayle Isa, Executive Director, Asian Arts Initiative
- James Kass, Founder & Executive Director, Youth Speaks Inc.
- Bakari Kitwana, CEO, Rap Sessions
- Sally Kohn, Senior Campaign Strategist and Director of the Movement Vision Lab, Center for Community Change
- Joe Lambert, Founder and Executive Director, Center for Digital Storytelling
- Brad Lander, Senior Fellow, Pratt Center for Community Development
- Liz Lerman, Founding Artistic Director, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange
- Rick Lowe, Artist, Founder, Project Row Houses
- John Malpede, Los Angeles Poverty Department (LAPD)
- Liz Manne, Founder, Work in Progress
- Meghan McDermott, Executive Director, Global Action Project
- Michelle Miller, Manager of Popular Media Organizing, SEIU
- Alyce Myatt, Executive Director, Grantmakers in Film + Electronic Media
- Michael D. Nolan, Independent PR Consultant
- Anne Pasternak, President & Artistic Director, Creative Time
- Maria Teresa Petersen, Founding Executive Director, Voto Latino
- Wendell Pierce, Actor/Producer, Founder, Pontchartrain Park CDC

- Erin Potts, Co-founder, Air Traffic Control
- Nick Rabkin, Senior Research Scientist, NORC at the University of Chicago
- Matt Revelli, Founder & Creative Director, Upper Playground Enterprises and Editor of Juxtapoz Arts and Culture Magazine
- Doria Roberts, Singer/Songwriter and Spoken Word Artist
- Aaron Rose, Artist, Writer, Musician, Film Director and Independent Curator
- Donald H. Russell, Executive Director, Provisions Learning Project
- Marc Schiller, The Wooster Collective
- Ellen Schneider, Executive Director, Active Voice
- Michael B. Schwartz, muralist
- Anas "Andy" Shallal, Busboys and Poets
- Loris Taylor, Native Public Media
- Anasa Troutman, Senior Fellow, Movement Strategy Center
- Carlton Turner, Alternate ROOTS
- Roberta Uno, Ford Foundation
- Clyde Valentin, Executive Director, Hip-Hop Theater Festival
- MK Wegmann, President and CEO, National Performance Network
- Jonathan Wells, Co-founder, Flux
- Billy Wimsatt, Senior Strategist, Growth & Partnerships, Green For All (Meeting Organizer)
- Jacqui D. Woods, Arts Administrator, Community Organizer, Skylight Gallery, Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation
- Jawole Zollar, Urban Bush Women

White House Briefing: Art, Community, Social Justice, National Recovery

On May 12th, more than 60 artists and creative organizers engaged in civic participation, community development, education, social justice activism, and philanthropy will come together for a White House briefing. During the campaign, powerful narratives, compelling images, and creative activism moved people from all walks of life to get involved in civic participation and public service. Every day, artists and organizers apply our knowledge and creativity to the actions that make democracy concrete. We perceive this as a favorable moment to catalyze broad public support for a bold and forward-looking national agenda and we look forward to discussing how we might work together toward that end.

Our purposes for this White House briefing are:

(1) To learn about key Obama Administration initiatives that might be advanced through the long-term engagement of artists working with communities;

(2) To connect the creative community with campaigns and other action opportunities involving important national issues;

(3) To share the exemplary work of our diverse field;

(4) To facilitate the inclusion of dynamic cultural strategies as an integral part of the administration's agenda for economic recovery, community renewal and civic engagement.

Our work encompasses both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. Our group includes individuals working independently and with a range of organizations and networks, in new and old media, including hip hop activists, green designers, creative communicators, arts educators, social networkers, and visual, performing, literary and media artists. While we work in many different ways, we share a common dedication to the power of the word, music, and image to capture moments of triumph, struggle, and transcendence. Within our group we:

- Honor unheard, authentic and diverse voices;
- Reach the hearts and minds of Americans who often are not included in organizing campaigns or town hall meetings, transcending the polarization that marks so much public discourse;
- Cultivate social imagination, helping people to envision positive changes in their communities and the nation, to see past differences to common purpose and see themselves as part of the change;
- Engage the earthshaking power of creativity in the service of national recovery.

Some of us focus on the arts' power to call attention to possibility and generate hope. Some of us focus on cultural development as a process that cultivates democracy through art and imagination, through shared stories and an experience of our own creativity. Some of us focus on cultural recovery, putting artists to work for the common good in communities across the country.

As artists and organizers we are interested in advancing public policies, generating ideas, raising the visibility of key issues, and working collaboratively with the administration in support of its long-term goals. We have a deep passion for social justice and experience in carrying out successful programs and campaigns. We see this as a special moment of opportunity to be of service and advance the administration's goals for national recovery.

That the briefing is taking place is unprecedented acknowledgement from the White House that our work's value is being perceived, which we receive with gratitude and hope. We look forward to using our creative muscle in collaboration with the Obama administration, making our mutual vision for change a reality. We will meet after the briefing to immediately begin drawing on what we have learned to inform our strategies for future action.

Caron Atlas, Claudine Brown, Arlene Goldbard & Billy Wimsatt