



International cultural exchange is fundamental to a healthy and progressive civil society. By fostering diversity and respect for different cultures, cultural exchange builds a bulwark against growing xenophobia, racism, nationalism, and the authoritarianism of this troubled historical moment. Unfortunately, at this time when cultural exchange is more essential than ever, international exchange is in crisis; over the last decade financial support has been dramatically cut while there has been a massive increase in the costs and complexity of working across borders. Grantmakers concerned with promoting civil society in the U.S. and the intersection of culture and of justice issues urgently need to prioritize cultural exchange and the international movement of artists.

### **Key Ideas & Definitions**

**VISA:** In almost all situations, foreign artist's needs a work visa to perform in the U.S. Getting a work visa typically costs thousands of dollars and can take months to obtain, and even the most renowned artists can be denied.

**USCIS:** *US Citizenship & Immigration Service* (formerly "The INS") determines an artist's visa eligibility through an extensive "petition" process, typically requiring substantial legal assistance. After thousands of dollars of fees and months of work, many legitimate artists with contracted engagements in the U.S. are still found ineligible for visas.

**DOS:** *Department of State* adjudicates an artist's potential ineligibility at an interview at a U.S. embassy. Artists are frequently denied visas because a consular officer subjectively believes an artist is not a "real" artist, or that they will illegally emigrate. The "Travel Ban," and "Extreme Vetting," have created new hurdles, especially for artists from the Global South.

### **Action Steps for Grantmakers**

1. Commit to short and long term increases in funding for international cultural projects. Also, commit to multi-year grants as well as an increase in support for core administrative costs.
2. Prioritize supporting projects that feature artists from regions that lack resources to support costs of international travel and touring.
3. Proactively and collaboratively work with other funders to help rebuild the international cultural exchange sector.
4. Work together to provide the funding flexibility needed by arts programmers to navigate unexpected legal and administrative costs created by increased visa difficulties and other bureaucratic barriers.
5. Leverage your influence to advocate for progressive reform of the bureaucratic burdens that inhibit international cultural projects.

### **Cultural Mobility Sessions:**

- October 14: **Grantmakers in the Arts Conference**  
*International Cultural Exchange, Mobility, and the Future of U.S. Civil Society*
- October 29: **Alliance of Artists Communities Conference**  
*International Cultural Exchange, Mobility, and the Future of U.S. Civil Society*
- November 13: **CEC ArtsLink Assembly**  
*International Cultural Exchange, Mobility, and the Future of U.S. Civil Society*
- January 12: **Association of Performing Arts Professionals Conference**  
*Global Priorities: Funders, Presenters, and International Cultural Exchange*

### **Artists Mobility Resources**

- **Tamizdat** ([www.tamizdat.org](http://www.tamizdat.org)) provides pro bono legal assistance to the international performing arts community.
- **Artists From Abroad** ([www.artistsfromabroad.org](http://www.artistsfromabroad.org)) is the definitive online resource for U.S. artist visa information.
- **On the Move** ([www.on-the-move.org](http://www.on-the-move.org)) is a network of national artist mobility information sources, primarily in Europe.

### **Panelists for October 14th Grantmakers in the Arts panel:**

#### **International Cultural Exchange, Mobility and the Future of U.S. Civil Society**

- **Michelle Coffey**, Executive Director, The Lambent Foundation
- **Matthew Covey**, Executive Director, Tamizdat
- **Sunny Jain**, Musician, composer, founder of Jainsounds Agency, bandleader of Red Baraat
- **Emily Johnson**, Dancer and choreographer
- **Barbara Lanciers**, Director, The Trust for Mutual Understanding

"What is happening to the world lies, at the moment, just outside the realm of common human understanding. It is the writers, the poets, the artists, the singers, the filmmakers who can make the connections, who can find the ways of bringing it into the realm of common understanding. Who can translate cash-flow charts and scintillating boardroom speeches into real stories about real people with real lives. Stories about what it's like to lose your home, your land, your job, your dignity, your past, and your future to an invisible force. To someone or something you can't see. You can't hate. You can't even imagine."

— Arundhati Roy

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