

Creative Community Fellows

New England

2024-2025

Meet The Fellows

The logo for the National Arts Summit (NAS) features the letters "NAS" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is centered within a white, diamond-shaped graphic that is tilted slightly to the right. The entire graphic is set against a solid purple background.

NAS

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Meet the Fellows

Click on a fellow
to learn more



Elaine Alder
New Bedford, MA



Jeanette Bradley
East Greenwich, RI



Jeanika Browne-Springer
East Hartford, CT



Matthew Cumbie
Waterville, ME



Sophie Davis
Rockland, ME



Bo Dennis
Monroe, ME



Jean Dolin
Attleboro, MA



Paul Gambill
Montpelier, VT



Anna Harris
Boston, MA



Alastair Huntley
Sunapee, NH



Jessie Laurita-Spanglet
Brunswick, ME



Shanta Lee
Manchester, NH



Guy Mendilow
Roxbury, MA



Cliff Notez
Medford, MA



Chisom Nwazojie
Stoughton, MA



Veronica A Perez
Westbrook, ME



Parker Silver
South Burlington, VT



Nydia Simone
Oak Bluffs, MA



Shelton Walker
Shaftsbury, VT



Karen Young
Roslindale, MA



Elaine Alder

New Bedford, MA

They/Them

Elaine is a community- and self-taught textile artist, sculptor, ceramicist, printmaker, painter, and designer. They were raised in the Appalachian foothills of Georgia, where they first learned textile crafts and art from their grandmother. They have a B.A. in cultural anthropology and wrote an ethnographic thesis on Appalachian textile hand craft traditions. Over the years they held many jobs and service positions, including AmeriCorps VISTA, seasonal trail crew and wildland firefighter work with the US Forest Service, and youth outdoor education. Working closely with the environment and with youth in their community, they became increasingly concerned about pollution and the climate crisis. They started thinking more about the role their art could play in changing our discourse and culture around these issues. Since 2020, they have attended several

artist residencies and explored a range of natural and salvaged materials. In the past year, they have been using loom weaving and basketry techniques to make art from marine debris, bringing attention to the issue of plastic pollution. Right now Elaine is working on a sculpture of North Atlantic right whales made from marine rope which will be installed in the national historical park in downtown New Bedford.

About Stem the Tide

New Bedford, MA, used to be the world's largest commercial whaling port. Today, it is the highest value fishing port in the USA. The local fishing industry generates tons of plastic waste, while dense coastal populations accidentally or carelessly release a constant stream of single-use plastic into the sea.

Art can change the culture around the consumption and disposal of plastic products, including industrial fishing waste. Since September 2023, I've been organizing plastic pollution resistance through beach cleanups and makers' days. Participants make art and outfits from marine debris to display in local institutions or wear to political demonstrations.

Find Me @
babbletuck.com



Jeanette Bradley

East Greenwich, RI

She/Her

Jeanette Bradley has been an urban planner, an apprentice pastry chef, and the artist-in-residence for a traveling art museum on a train. Now she writes, draws, and makes books for kids. Her books include *Something Great*; *No Voice Too Small*; *No World Too Big*; *Love, Mama*; and *When the Babies Came to Stay*. Jeanette also organizes the We Are ALL Readers festival celebrating diverse children's literature. She lives in Rhode Island with her wife and kids.

About We Are ALL Readers

We Are ALL Readers works to create a more empathetic world by increasing access to diverse children's books, celebrating and supporting the work of historically marginalized authors and illustrators, and encouraging young people to share their own stories and visions. We host an annual diverse children's books festival, comics and writing workshops for kids, and StoryWalks® around Rhode Island.

Find Me @
jeanettebradley.com



Jeanika Browne-Springer

East Hartford, CT

She/Her

Jeanika Browne-Springer (she/her) is Connecticut native, multidisciplinary teaching artist, and creative economy organizer. She has a Bachelor of Arts from Trinity College (Hartford, CT) in Theater & Dance, minoring in Studio Arts and Urban Studies and Masters in Education from the University of Saint Joseph (West Hartford, CT) in the Multiple Intelligences. Her career started as a Hartford public elementary schoolteacher, transitioned into grant writing, marketing, and educational programming at an arts education non profit adjacent to the public school district. She is now the Director of LifeLong Learning at HartBeat Ensemble, a social justice community-based theater company. She is also an artistic collaborator and Board President for Night Fall, a member of the Artists of Color Unite! advisory group for Hartford

Foundation for Public Giving, part of the National Leaders of Color Fellowship's second cohort, and an advisory board member of the Connecticut Children's Office for Community Child Health. Jeanika is a coach to emerging teaching artists, leads professional development for arts integration, is an emerging scenic painter, and an emerging youth play director & dramaturg.

About Evolving Night Fall's Artistic Collaboration

Night Fall is a free annual October production held in one of Hartford's parks, celebrating seasonal change, community, and unique artistry. Now under the vision of a newly formed Artistic Collaboration of local artists, choreographers, musicians, and directors, Night Fall is entering its next era of artistic envisioning. This project focuses on building a yearlong culture of care for the artists, engaging deeper with the community beyond the production, and beginning to understand a longer term mission for impactful arts in Hartford and everywhere. This project is about finding the essence of Night Fall, learning what artists need to feel inspired, what the community needs from us, and how to hold on to joy in times of change.

Find Me @
nightfallhartford.org



Matthew Cumbie

Waterville, ME

He/Him

Matthew Cumbie (he/him) is a collaborative dancemaker, writer, and artist educator. His choreography and dancemaking - considered “a blend of risk-taking with reliability, [and] a combination of uncertainty and wisdom,” - weaves together a physical vocabulary of momentum and clarity, moving imagery, and a commitment to relationship-building and community participation. He has danced in the companies of Christian von Howard, Keith Thompson, Jill Sigman, Paloma McGregor, and Dance Exchange - founded by Liz Lerman - where he became an Associate Artistic Director and the Director of Programs and Communications. With Dance Exchange, he collaborated on and performed in works ranging in topic from the human genome to prayer and protest, on the highest point of the Great Smoky Mountains during a total solar eclipse, and with

community organizers and activists after years of research and work in response to structures of racism and erasure in Dallas, Texas. His creative work has been commissioned and supported by places like Dance Place, the Kennedy Center, Herman Melville’s Arrowhead, and Harvard University, and by the NEA, NEFA, the DC Commission for the Arts and Humanities, and the Arcus Foundation. Matthew has an MFA in dance from Texas Woman’s University and is on faculty at Colby College.

About Of This Place

Of This Place is a community-based performance project that weaves together community-specific performances and programming to explore notions of belonging and surface stories - past and present - of the communities connected to Waterville, ME, and Colby College. We leverage the imaginative and generative capacities of dancemaking to bring our bodies into action and conversation as we reflect on the many different ways we relate to and shape this place we call home. This work began in 2018 and, over the past 6 years, has gathered momentum and cultivated relationships to launch into an iterative, multi-year community-connected project.

Find Me @

matthewcumbie.com



Sophie Davis

Rockland, ME

She/Her

Sophie Davis is a Maine-based violinist, climate change artist, and the Artistic Director of Halcyon, an artist collective that strives to inspire environmental stewardship through music and the arts. Sophie received degrees in violin performance and environmental studies from Oberlin College and Conservatory where she studied with David Bowlin. Playing and sharing music are integral to Sophie's creative and professional practice and she has performed at festivals throughout the United States and in India, Jordan, Australia, and Samoa. In 2017-18, Sophie was awarded a Fulbright Grant to the South Pacific island nation of Samoa where she researched how music and the arts raise awareness of climate change. As a violinist and core member of Halcyon, Sophie frequently collaborates with other musicians, artists, activists, and scientists to create multimedia

performances that combine live music with film, story, and art. Her creative practice combines the honesty of science and statistical fact with the emotional qualities of film and music. Recent projects have led her to pursue coursework in stop-motion animation; research the internal documents of the Exxon Corporation; build a contact microphone to record the sounds of ice-out; and record humpback whale song aboard a tall ship in the Lesser Antilles.

About Reimagining Tomorrow - a Halcyon Education Initiative

Halcyon is an artist collective and string quartet that designs and presents collaborative multimedia performances that celebrate Maine's landscapes and communities. Having established partnerships with libraries, research labs, art museums, land trusts, and schools, community is at the heart of our work. This project expands on our current partnership with Medomak Valley High School (Waldoboro, ME) to create an 8-month art lab in which a cohort of 6-12 students will work closely with Halcyon to create art and ultimately a multimedia performance that imagines what resilient, transformed, and sustainable communities look like in the future.

Find Me @

halcyonstringquartet.org



Bo Dennis

Monroe, ME

He/Him

Bo Dennis is a farmer, floral designer, and community organizer based in rural Maine. He has been farming for 16 years. In 2019 he started Dandy Ram Farm, a queer and trans flower farm and floral design studio specializing in wedding florals and installations utilizing sustainably grown flowers. Through Dandy Ram, Bo organizes for land justice and queer liberation in community with other LGBTQ+ farmers. In addition to growing and making, he works for the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association supporting farmers and farmworkers. He is passionate about supporting equitable access to hands on farming education especially for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ beginning farmers who have been marginalized in Maine agriculture.

About Let Every Pansy Bloom

“Let Every Pansy Bloom” celebrates trans bodies through floral design. While our floral farm started in 2019, this projects body of work started in 2023. “Let Every Pansy Bloom” is originally a slogan from the gay liberation movement of the 70’s. The goal of this project is to celebrate the beauty and joy of trans people when they see their bodies as empowered and part of artistic creation. As trans people in rural Maine we are often forced to hide ourselves, asked to blend in, out of safety. This project will give community members an opportunity to be seen and fully represented in community through floral art.

Find Me @
dandyramfarm.com



Jean Dolin

He/They

Attleboro, MA

Jean Dolin is the Founder, President, and CEO of the Boston LGBTQ+ Museum of Art, History & Culture. A passionate social impact entrepreneur, Jean champions equal and equitable rights for immigrants and the LGBTQ+ community across Massachusetts. His decade-long career spans politics, nonprofit work, advocacy, community engagement, arts, and entrepreneurship. Starting with the American Red Cross in 2015 and interning for US Senator Elizabeth Warren, Jean's dedication to public service was cemented during the Clinton-Kaine presidential campaign in 2016. As a Public Health Ambassador for the Boston Alliance for Community Health and an AmeriCorps service member, he played a pivotal role in electing Randolph's first woman of color as an at-large councilor in 2017. In 2021, Jean founded the Dolin Impact Group,

focusing on community relationships and inclusivity. He also launched Portraits of Pride, a public art exhibit featuring influential LGBTQ leaders, and established the Boston LGBTQ+ Museum in 2023. As Chief Curator for the Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce, Jean bridges entrepreneurship and the arts, ensuring underrepresented voices are heard. He also serves on the Harvard University Institutional Review Board and the Board of Directors for LGBTQ+ Senior Housing in Hyde Park, continually advocating for equity and inclusion.

About Boston Queer Arts Festival

The Boston Queer Arts Festival is a new multidisciplinary three-day art festival that aims to create space, and experience for the LGBTQ community and opportunities for local artists to showcase their talents all the while elevating Boston as a diverse queer destination and creating economic opportunities for local queer art administrators and local lgbtq producers.

The Boston Queer Arts Festival has been a long time coming. In the past, the elements of the festival were independently hosted and produced as pilot projects. For instance, I partnered with the Museum of Science to cohost a live speaker series- which we intend in including as part of the festival.

Find Me @
bostonlgbtqmuseum.org



Paul Gambill

Montpelier, VT

He/Him

Paul Gambill is Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Community Engagement Lab, based in Montpelier, Vermont. Gambill began his career as a public school music teacher in Minnesota, and quickly gravitated toward a career as a French horn player, conductor and arts administrator. He has held Principal and Third Horn positions with the Nashville and Huntsville Symphonies and Grant Park Orchestra. He served as the founder, Music Director and Executive Director of the Nashville Chamber Orchestra for twenty years, and Music Director of the Nashville Ballet for six. With the Nashville Chamber Orchestra he has recorded with major labels, including Warner Brothers, Naxos, and Angel Records, which have been streamed over 10 million times, GRAMMY nominated, critically acclaimed in reviews by the New York Times and Classics Today,

and received the Parent's Choice Foundation Gold Award for excellence in children's media. In 2011, he co-founded the Community Engagement Lab with arts educator and teaching artist Eric Booth. The Community Engagement Lab serves teaching artists and PreK-12 educators with professional learning and planning retreats that develop school/community teaching artist residencies that bring people together to activate their creativity to imagine and build more just and thriving communities.

About New England Teaching Artist Collaborative

The purpose of my project is to build regional capacity to develop thriving communities by preparing teaching artists to serve as catalysts who activate creative potential and foster partnerships with educators, organizations and community groups.

Find Me @

communityengagementlab.org



Anna Harris

Boston, MA

She/Her

A violinist and vocalist, Anna Josephine Harris is an active soloist, teacher, chamber and orchestral musician, and has performed in venues such as Benaroya Hall, Boston Symphony Hall, and the Brevard Music Center. Born into a musical family, Anna started her musical studies at age four on the piano, and chose to play the violin at age seven. Anna graduated from Boston University with a major in Violin Performance and a minor in English. During this time, she served as an Artist-in-Residence at the Boston Medical Center, where she created moments with music that contributed to the well-being of many facing extraordinary challenges in their lives. Anna found that much of her artistic work breached into the nonprofit arts sector, community development, and organizational leadership. After tenures at the Boston Public Library Fund as Development

Associate and New England Foundation for the Arts as a Contract Development Professional, Anna founded the organization Music on the Hill Roxbury. Anna currently serves as Development Manager for the Grammy Award-winning ensemble and social impact organization, Silkroad, founded by Yo-Yo Ma and led by Rhiannon Giddens. In addition, Anna teaches privately from her home studio in Roxbury and performs throughout the Greater Boston area.

About Music on the Hill Roxbury

Music on the Hill Roxbury (MOTH) provides music programming to families with children ages 0-5 in Fort Hill and the surrounding neighborhoods of Roxbury. Providing an inclusive musical experience that is free to all, including sing-a-long and use of age-appropriate instruments, MOTH works to build elements of rhythm, enhance freedom of movement, and strengthen personal identity, expression, and well-being for every child. MOTH offered its first 12-week session in spring 2023 and has since reached over 200 children. By offering free programming, MOTH aims to bridge divides for families who have traditionally been underrepresented and underserved in the Roxbury community.

Find Me @

musiconthehillroxbury.org



Alastair Huntley

Sunapee, NH

He/Him

Alastair Huntley, an AmeriCorps alumnus, serves as a EMT at Dartmouth College where he is also a post-baccalaureate premedical student and a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Program, concentrating in Creative Writing. He is deeply involved in harm reduction efforts in New Hampshire and Vermont, notably through his work with To The Point: Connection to Cure (TTP), a project he enhanced by developing a mobile phlebotomy program that facilitates HIV and Hepatitis C testing and treatment in non-clinical settings.

Prior to Dartmouth, Alastair earned his Bachelor of Arts at Norwich University and spent seven years in New England's film industry. Alastair's work in visual storytelling and harm reduction has received support from the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts, the Ben and Jerry's Foundation, and the Hypertherm HOPE Foundation. Alastair aims to blend his creative and academic skills to tackle public health inequities.

About Survivor Story: An Artistic Approach to Harm Reduction Education

In rural New Hampshire and Vermont, we're merging visual storytelling with harm reduction to tackle the opioid crisis. Through interactive art exhibits at the TLC Family Resource Center in Lebanon, N.H., we bring to life the journey of a pregnant teenager from substance use to recovery, as depicted in Alastair's impactful short story. This initiative is enriched by our partnership with the HIV/HCV Resource Center, offering harm reduction strategies and Narcan training alongside the exhibits. Our approach intertwines the power of art with practical solutions, creating a holistic response to this critical challenge.

Find Me @

alastairhuntley.com



Jessie Laurita-Spanglet

Brunswick, ME

She/Her

Jessie Laurita-Spanglet is a dance artist and educator based in Brunswick, Maine. Jessie's work at the intersection of movement and health has led her to her current role as Intervention Coordinator on a cross-disciplinary dance and neuroscience research team at Wake Forest University. In addition to her work at Wake Forest, Jessie has taught courses on the topic of Dance and Health at Colby College and the University of Southern Maine, where she is a Lecturer in the Department of Theater. Jessie holds an MFA in dance from the University of Maryland and a BFA from the NC School of the Arts.

About Arts for Maine (AFM)

AFM is an Arts on Prescription project that centers the therapeutic and protective nature of arts and cultural experiences for Maine communities. Arts on Prescription is a practice in which healthcare professionals are enabled to prescribe arts, culture, or nature experiences to their patients. The practice is grounded in research that tells us that the arts can positively impact our mental, physical, social, and emotional health. The focus of AFM is to act as a link between healthcare organizations and arts, culture and nature resources already available in our Maine communities.

Find Me @

creativeground.org/profile/jessie-laurita-spanglet



Shanta Lee

Manchester, NH

She/Her

Shanta Lee is a writer across genres, a visual artist and public intellectual actively participating in the cultural discourse with work that has been widely featured. Winner of the Abel Meeropol Social Justice award, she was the creator and producer of Vermont Public’s “Seeing...the Unseen and In-Between within Vermont’s Landscape.” Shanta Lee is a regular contributor to Ms. Magazine and Art New England. Shanta Lee is also the author of several poetry collection, GHETTOCLAUSTROPHOBIA: Dreamin of Mama While Trying to Speak Woman in Woke Tongues, winner of the 2020 Diode Editions full-length book prize and the 2021 Vermont Book Award. Within this latest illustrated poetry collection, Black Metamorphoses (Etruscan Press, 2023) illustrated by Alan Blackwell, is a work that Shanta Lee describes as a 2,000+

year-old phone line opened to Ovid as well as an interrogation of the Greek mythos while creating her own new language in this work. Her current multimedia exhibition, Dark Goddess: An Exploration of the Sacred Feminine, which features her short film, interviews, and photography, and other items has been on view at the University of Vermont’s Fleming Museum of Art, the Southern Vermont Arts Center, and is currently on view at The Bennington Museum. Shanta Lee’s forthcoming book, This Is How They Teach You How to Want It...The Slaughter: A Field Guide for the Hunted & the Hunter, The Dead-Alive, The Live-Dead Ones, The... (Harbor Editions, 2024) is in direct communication with the ancient mythology of the wild hunt — Wilde Jagd , Wild Hunt or Chase in German — in which supernatural/ghost riders are pursuing a target. To learn more about her work, visit: Shantalee.com.

About Foodstories -We Are What We Eat: Intersections Between Food, Memory, Identity and Our Stories

Foodstories will implement the idea that food can be a bridge into who we are individually and collectively. This project has several origin points I’ve kept revisiting for years as evidenced in the application. Elements will include a community based steering community for co-ownership and project accountability, direct community engagement through story collection that makes it accessible for community members and events, and a lasting artifact for the community that is a short film that features the intersection of food, memory, and identity. This fellowship would allow an opportunity to bring all the elements together in a unified way.

Find Me @
shantalee.com



Guy Mendilow

Roxbury, MA

He/They

Guy was raised in an academic immigrant family devoted to crafting environments in which others are treated as respected equals worthy of full regard. For example, Guy's maternal grandparents smuggled Jews out of WWII Hungary and founded a humanist home for "at-risk" youth premised on full societal integration, defying norms of institutional dependence. Likewise, when Jerusalem dismissed elders as irrelevant, Guy's paternal grandmother formed an organization striving for Jewish and Arab elders' dignity and inclusion, led by convictions that ongoing sense of purpose is vital for wellbeing, and that societies cannot be whole without both elders and youth. Such values lead to original productions Guy writes/directs/performs, touring nationally/internationally since 1998. These explore people's real-world stories through live riveting scores,

narration blending memoir and poetry, and theatrically projected sand animation. Guy's shows have received multiple funding awards from foundations such as the National Endowment for the Arts and The Boston Foundation on the basis of artistry, cultural preservation and the strengthening of communities through the arts. Leadership/music/social belonging research since 1996 informs residencies Guy designs/facilitates, from the Navajo Reservation to universities across the US. A citizen of Israel/UK/USA, Guy now calls Boston home.

In Our Words: Community Portrait Live Documentaries

Every community is made of people whose stories matter, but many go unheard. Sharing and listening to these stories can be transformative: They open windows into human courage, what people have learned about moving through loss, love and laughter. They offer constellations by which we navigate challenges and opportunities with greater humanity, imagination and possibility.

In Our Words (IOW) is driven by the conviction that everyone's story matters and that we vitally need to hear more of one another's stories.

First devised to strengthen one community's connections after the pandemic's ruptures, IOW is a moving multimedia performance of real-world stories, candidly told by the people who've lived them through theatrical projections, together with live original narration, score and musical segments. IOW builds stirring community portraits made with, of, and for specific communities.

Find Me @

guymendilowensemble.com, artsforsocialcohesion.org



Cliff Notez

Medford, MA

They/Them

Cliff Notez is an artist, leader, entrepreneur, and creative activist utilizing their skills in media, art, and story telling to create stories and futures that will hopefully lead to a brighter future and imagining of that future for marginalized identities. Cliff is often deep in thought or deeply engaged with the work that they create, hoping to challenge what is normal and re-contextualize what our society deems as wild.

About We Black Folk

A Boston-based movement encompassing interactive performances and conversations, providing platforms for marginalized stories and music of traditional Black Folk arts.

We define folk as being the tradition of Black American music, storytelling, movement and other forms of Black American traditions expressed through this lens.

Find Me @
thehipstory.com



Chisom Nwazojie

Stoughton, MA

He/Him

Chisom Nwazojie is an IT Consultant based in Boston, Massachusetts, bringing a wealth of expertise and a deep commitment to community development and service. Originally from Nigeria, Chisom holds a degree in Electrical Engineering, providing him with a strong foundation in technology and problem-solving. In addition to his professional endeavors, Chisom is deeply engaged in community organizing and advocacy, particularly within the Nigerian and African diaspora communities. He currently serves as the Secretary for the Igbo Organization of New England, where he plays a key role in fostering unity, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. Chisom finds joy and fulfillment in his role as a husband and father. He is married with two lovely kids, and he cherishes the opportunity to instill in them the values of

compassion, empathy, and service to others.

About Nigerian/African Cultural Heritage

Nigerian Igbo Day, organized by the Igbo Organization of New England, has been a cherished community event for the past decade, celebrating the vibrant arts and culture of the Igbo people of Nigeria. It's a longstanding commitment to showcasing the rich heritage and traditions of the Igbo community in New England. The presentations are done in partnership with over 20 community organizations from different parts of Nigeria.

It is critical we design programs and advocate for resources to sustain the talents of artists in our community in order to preserve the cultural heritage for generations to come.

There are various aspects of our cultural preservation that can be addressed but one that can be addressed immediately is the area of music. The "Oja" flute is a musical instrument that is a traditional instrument that is played to accompany traditional event. There is currently an elderly person in the community that performs this instrument. Part of the project is use existing resources to start after school programs to train our children on this tool and other musical instruments.

Find Me @
igbonewengland.org



Veronica A Perez

Westbrook, ME

They/She

Veronica Perez is an artist whose work is deeply rooted in the community. Through her braiding circles workshops, they explore themes of erasure, identity, and interdependency. In 2020, they were awarded the Ellis-Beauregard Visual Arts Fellowship, followed by the inaugural fellowship at the David C. Driskell Black Seed Studio at Indigo Arts Alliance in 2021. In 2022, they were a fellow at the Lunder Institute at Colby College, and subsequently had their first solo exhibition titled voices, whispering at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art. In 2023, Perez was awarded the St. Botolph Club Foundation Emerging Artist award and the Amelia Peabody award for sculpture excellence. In the summer of 2023, they had their second solo show at the University of Southern Maine Art Gallery in Gorham, shadow / echo / memory. Recently, the Maine Arts

Commission named her one of the Maine Artist Fellows for 2024 in fine arts. Currently, Perez works as the Administrative Assistant at the Black-led arts and residency organization Indigo Arts Alliance in Portland, Maine. They are also on the Southern Maine Workers' Center Board of Directors and the Policy Committee for the Opportunity Alliance. Veronica Perez resides in Westbrook, Maine, with their partner and child.

About braiding circles

Since 2021, braiding circles have been community workshops focused on crafting three-strand braids from artificial hair and textiles. Through this creative process, participants engage in candid conversations about identity, life experiences, and the profound notion of belonging, particularly from a Black, Brown, and Indigenous perspective. Initially aimed at producing braids for sculptures, these gatherings have evolved into safe spaces for open dialogues, doubling as an oral story archive to foster empathy. To date, I've hosted 21 workshops across Maine, with plans for more this year, including out-of-state sessions. These circles serve as vital platforms for community engagement and cultural exchange.

Find Me @

veronicaaperez.com



Parker Silver

South Burlington, VT

They/Them

Parker is a dedicated scholar and advocate for the arts, with an MLitt in Museum and Heritage Studies from the prestigious University of St. Andrews, Parker's academic background enriches their approach to art curation and heritage preservation. As a Board Member of the BCA and VTIFF they actively contribute to the cultural landscape of the Vermont community. Parker's leadership extends to the City of Winooski, where they serve as the Chair of the Inclusion and Belonging Commission, fostering a sense of unity and diversity. Beyond their community involvement, they are a multidisciplinary artist, known as Grimm Noir, as a member of the Generator Makerspace they collaborate and create works focusing on canvas and wood arts. They also have been a burlesque performer and emcee since 2018.

About Grimm's Domain

Grimm's Domain is a third space network crafted by and for the QTPOC and Disabled community. We exist to provide accessible third spaces that break down barriers, nurture growth, and celebrate the diverse expressions within our community.

Find Me @
grimmsdomainvt.org



Nydia Simone

Oak Bluffs, MA

She/Her

Nydia, a trailblazing Panamanian-American filmmaker and curator, has dedicated over a decade in Hollywood to championing Afrolatinx, Caribbean, and African American narratives. As the visionary founder of Blactina Media, she has been instrumental in amplifying these vital stories through film, television, and art since 2017. In 2022, her focus expanded to include the rich heritage of Gullah Geechee communities. Blactina Media's impactful work has garnered attention from prestigious outlets like The New York Times, Oprah's Online Magazine, People En Español, Vice, and Forbes. Nydia's passion lies at the intersection of Black history within Latin America and the United States, creating a unique and compelling tapestry of cultural narratives. In 2023, Nydia transitioned Blactina Media to offer in-person experiences and food storytelling, fostering

intergenerational connections through the celebration of Black history in Martha's Vineyard, where she now resides. Her innovative approach continues to bridge gaps and bring communities together, underscoring the importance of preserving and celebrating Black heritage.

About Dorothy's Corner

Our project, inspired by Dorothy West's legacy, celebrates Black artists of the past and fosters inter-generational connections through Inter-generational Black leisure activities. By offering engaging experiences centered on Black history and food storytelling, we aim to unite generations and combat the loss of Black heritage on Martha's Vineyard and Cape Cod. Additionally, we strive to promote the utilization and support of local venues and vendors. Despite our brief history, we have supported local filmmakers and enhanced the value of cultural institutions across multiple towns on Martha's Vineyard, while introducing compelling free children's programming.

Find Me @

blactinamedia.com/dorothyscorner



Shelton Walker

Shaftsbury, VT

She/Her

Shelton Walker is an artist, educator, and leader with a service-oriented and entrepreneurial spirit and two decades of experience in arts-focused nonprofit and educational institutions. She has joined HatchSpace, a nonprofit woodworking workshop and makerspace in Brattleboro VT, as Executive Director. Prior to joining Hatch, Shelton has most recently served in leadership roles within higher education organizations including Bennington College as Chief of Staff and Vice President for Strategic Initiatives; University of the Arts in Philadelphia as Chief of Staff and Associate Vice President for Strategic Initiatives; and Montserrat College of Art as Director of Continuing & Professional Studies. She has co-led community-driven strategic planning processes, stewarded partnerships, and overseen creative centers, gallery

spaces, buildings and grounds divisions, human resources, information technology, and marketing and communications, as well as youth and adult arts education programs. Shelton has also held roles as a faculty member, educator, advocate, and administrator at institutions including Robert Miller Gallery, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, the Guggenheim Museum, Mercy Corps, New York Public Interest Research Group, Glasgow School of Art, and Pratt Institute. As an interdisciplinary artist, she has exhibited internationally in Scotland, Berlin, New York and Vermont, and was an Artist-in-Residence at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Art. She holds an MFA from Glasgow School of Art and a BFA from Pratt Institute. Originally from Virginia, she is now loving life in Vermont with her husband, Damien McCaffery.

About Rural Renewal through Maker-Driven Spaces Grounded in Woodworking

HatchSpace is transforming lives through animating our imaginations, improving cognitive and emotional capacities, and unlocking economic mobility through innovations in craft and woodworking. A nonprofit 501c3 organization founded in 2019 by voice actor, author and woodworker Tom Bodett, HatchSpace is an emerging leader for rural renewal strategies within our region through maker-driven spaces grounded in woodworking. My goals as the new Executive Director are to develop a financially sustainable model for HatchSpace, expand access to those historically marginalized from woodshops and affiliated industries, and develop a scalable model for centers like Hatch within other rurally situated communities.

Find Me @
hatchspace.org



Karen Young

Roslindale, MA

She/Her

Karen Young is a cultural organizer, taiko player, and teaching artist based in Boston, MA. Influenced by Japanese-American taiko activists of the 70s, Karen combines taiko and creativity with community organizing strategies to empower, engage, and inspire people into action. She is a Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture/Boston AIR alum, Brother Thomas Fellow, and Live Arts Boston awardee. She has founded and helped launch many creative projects on a local, national, and international level including Taiko and the Parks, The Genki Spark, the Brookline Cherry Blossom Festival, and Older and Bolder as well served in an advisory capacity for the Radical Imagination for Racial Justice regranting program and the Emerald Necklace Conservancy's Olmsted Now Parks Equity and Spatial Justice grant. She deeply values joy and is passionate about building an

equitable, diverse arts ecosystem in Boston.

About Taiko and the Parks: Centering Elders, Sharing Taiko, and Honoring the Lands

In 2022, Taiko and the Parks launched as one of 16 BIPOC-led projects funded by Olmsted Now, an initiative focused on parks equity and spatial justice. This three-part series, led by an intergenerational team, highlights Boston's BIPOC elders, the art of taiko, and an honoring of the lands. Elders convene in green spaces for dialogues on climate, public safety, and aging. Taiko compositions evolve from community discussions, showcased as works-in-progress at a concluding event. Attendees embark on a rhythmic walk, fostering connections with the land. Taiko and the Parks exemplifies community engagement, cultural celebration, and environmental mindfulness in public spaces.

Find Me @

karensusanyoung.com

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