

Event Transcript

January 14, 2021 – *Who Is Diversity For?*

Sara Reisman:

Welcome, everybody. Thank you for joining us tonight for, *Who is Diversity For? A conversation with Diana Abouali, Andy Chiang, and Salem Tsegaye, moderated by Sinéad López*, co-presented by the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, and the Asian American Arts Alliance. My name is Sara Reisman. I'm the Executive and Artistic Director of the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation based in New York City, where we've supported art and social justice through grant making for the last 25 years. And since 2015, at The 8th Floor, where we've been organizing exhibitions and public programs that address themes of social justice and political import.

Before we begin, please note this event has closed captioning by Bonnie Rothermel and ASL interpretation by Carly James and Ayesha Simpson. Instructions are available in the chat section. For those who would like to access closed captioning, when the captioner starts writing the CC button appears for viewers. Typically this is visible at the bottom of your Zoom pane. Viewers can then click on subtitles next to the CC button to display captioning, and then choose Show full transcript to have the full transcript appear on the side of the screen.

In the meantime, please set your sound to mute until we open the conversation to questions. If you have questions, we ask that you use the chat function to submit your query. At that point you'll be called on and asked to unmute. If you prefer to have your question read by one of us, please make a note alongside your question in the chat section to indicate that. Also note this event is being recorded and will be available early next week for distribution.

Tonight's conversation, *Who is Diversity For?*, will reflect on current philanthropic practices, featuring Diana Abouali of the Arab American National Museum, Andy Chiang of Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, and Salem Tsegaye of New York Community Trust, moderated by Sinéad López from the Nathan Cummings Foundation. This conversation has been conceived to question who diversity serves and how diversity in the arts can truly be achieved at a time when culturally specific organizations have been forced to compete against their own communities for seemingly limited resources.

As the cultural sector has historically underrepresented and underserved communities from all sociocultural backgrounds many race and ethnicity specific organizations like the Asian American Arts Alliance were founded with the aim of realizing equal representation opportunities in the arts. This panel is the third and final program in a three-part series co-presented by the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation and the Asian American Arts Alliance.

I'd like to take a few minutes for a land recognition to acknowledge our respective relationships to place. We are gathered virtually in many locations at once. Some of us are in Manhattan, others in other boroughs of New York City, places that are mostly, if not all, unseeded lands. As this event is co-organized by the Rubin Foundation and Asian American Arts Alliance, I'll

address the specific sites where offices are located near Union Square and in Dumbo, Brooklyn, as well as the other boroughs of New York City therefore acknowledging the Muncie [Mannakee 00:03:03], Canarsie, Matunuck and Wappinger communities past and present, as well as future generations.

Sara Reisman:

The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, and The 8th Floor acknowledge being founded on exclusions and arrangements of indigenous peoples, including those whose land is where our offices are located. This acknowledgment verbalizes a commitment to a process of working to dismantle the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism and white supremacy, a commitment that's become all the more poignant and urgent in this time of political resistance and upheaval across the United States.

To this land acknowledgement, I will add a paraphrase virtual land recognition using language devised by Jill Carter, who's a professor in the Indigenous Studies and Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies departments at the University of Toronto. So, Carter writes, "Zoom has erected its headquarters in San Jose, California, while Skype has erected one key arm of its operations in Palo Alto, California, which is traditional territory of the Muwekma Ohlone tribal nation. Current members of this nation are direct descendants of many missionaries tribal groups from across the region. As we continue to connect with each other via Zoom and Skype and other virtual forms, we're indebted to the Muwekma Ohlone people as the lands and waters they steward now support people, pipelines and technologies that carry our breath, images and words across vast distances to others. Thank you."

Now it's my pleasure to introduce Lisa Gold who is a longtime friend and colleague, and since 2018, Executive Director of the Asian American Arts Alliance, which I'll now refer to A4. In the most recent cycle of Rubin Foundation grant making, A4 was awarded support for an anti-racism program geared towards culturally specific communities to counter the standard practices of anti-racism training, in which a white centered orientation can often overlook the forms of racism that take place within and between specific communities of color, for example, anti-blackness and the Asian community and xenophobia toward immigrant communities.

Given the conditions resulting from the pandemic we at the Rubin Foundation thought, this could be valuable to collaborate with A4 to expand this conversation through virtual means. Having been privy to discussions leading up to tonight, I'm extremely excited to listen in with the whole group together. I hope you'll join me in welcoming Asian American Arts Alliance and our panelists and welcome Lisa. Thank you.

Lisa Gold:

Thank you so much Sara and William for the opportunity to present this series. And of course, thanks to the team at A4, Priscilla Son and Theresa Vu for their support too. I'm Lisa Gold, the Executive Director of A4. A quick accessibility check, I am a hapa woman, half Korean, half white with dark brown hair pulled up wearing a black sweater. I am speaking to you from unseeded Lenape and Canarsie lands on the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

For those of you who are not familiar with A4, we are a 37-year-old nonprofit service organization dedicated to ensuring greater representation, equity and opportunities for Asian American artists and arts organizations. We offer events that builds our community, such as our bi-monthly Town Hall events and monthly Asian American Pacific Islander arts leader calls, we provide professional development programs, and access to cultural gatekeepers through career roundtables and other skills building workshops, and we create a platform to discuss issues related to Asian American identity through our conversations series of which this is an example. I just want to say that it has been just tremendous, illuminating, inspiring to present this series, this reimagining diversity series with The 8th Floor. And honestly, I'm a bit sad that this is the last of the three discussions. But it's certainly not our last ever on the topics addressed here. And we plan to continue working with other BIPOC artists and organizations on programs to build allyship and mutual understanding in our communities, and across our communities, and to support and learn from each other through challenging and uncomfortable conversations.

I'm trying to condense my remarks here so we can spend as much time as possible hearing from our amazing panelists tonight, and from you, our audience. And on that note, I want to let that we'll be sending out a post-discussion survey via email. So please respond to help us understand what you'd like to discuss further, or learn about or take action on for future programs. And also, of course, I'll be fielding your questions in the Q&A portion of the event tonight, and I'll attempt to get to as many as possible.

And now, with great pleasure and gratitude, I present tonight's panelists, Diana Abouali, the Director of the Arab American National Museum, Andy Chiang, Executive Director of Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, Salem Tsegaye, Program Officer for Arts and Culture at New York Community Trust and the Manager of the Mosaic Network and Fund, and our amazing moderator, Sinéad López, Senior Program Associate at the Nathan Cummings Foundation, Sinéad .

Sinéad López:

Thank you, Sara and Lisa so much. It is such a tremendous honor to have been invited to moderate tonight's panel and to have the opportunity to be in community with our dear audience and our esteemed panelists, especially during a week such as this. As Lisa mentioned, I'm Sinéad López, my pronouns are she, her. And for accessibility reasons, I'm a Chicana woman with light skin, dark hair, dark eyes and wearing a navy blazer, and there's a white background behind me. I have the privilege of serving as senior program associate at the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and National Social Justice Foundation. Our work addresses the two of the most pressing issues of our time, inequality and climate change. We do that through four programs; waste creativity and culture, racial and economic justice, corporate political accountability and inclusive clean economies.

People can go to our website if they want to actually, we'll just direct you there to Nathancummings.org. Thank you. So when the panelists and the team and I spoke this week, we thought about how we wanted to hold this space collectively together for this conversation. We're in the direct aftermath of an insurrection on the Capitol, indeed, violence across the

country, the second impeachment of President Trump yesterday, and we're in the lead up to an inauguration where there is, actually expected to be violence and there is a ramp up of security and law enforcement, which we know can have significant impacts for our communities. So we just wanted to acknowledge the conditions of this particular moment and to also just invite however brief a moment of peace and tranquility.

So wherever you're at, you can see us, we cannot see you. We invite you to pause wherever you are, to drop down into your body, and to just take a breath for yourself, and to just connect to any sensations you might be feeling, to your inherent capacity to generate warmth, to the aliveness of your being and your whole self, to your presence and intention. And to also just release any tension that you might be feeling. It's just a single moment, but we hope that it can help to ground you during times when we are all carrying so very much, and during a year that's been like no other for everyone. All right, beautiful. Thank you so much for indulging that moment.

So for tonight, I'm going to begin with just some framing context. And then we're going to open up our conversation with panelists, in order to talk about, we're going to do some storytelling at the start, we'll move into a little bit of truth telling about grant making and grant seeking experiences, we'll have a moment to actually build some analysis and think about strategy together about where we go from here, and to also have a moment of imagination and inspiration for how we imagine change for our sector around these issues of diversity. So if you'll bear with me, I'm going to offer my framing remarks now.

On the surface of things, this is a conversation about diversity. But at a much more profound level, this is really a conversation about underlying systemic injustice and inequity, that requires us to even talk about diversity in the first place. In the US, and indeed, around the globe, we are witnessing a vast and widening racial wealth gap. And we're seeing black indigenous and people of color, who I'll refer to with the acronym BIPOC throughout this conversation, we're seeing them disproportionately impacted by unjust systems in every dimension of life, the devastation of which we are collectively witnessing in ways that are both new and familiar with the twin pandemics of the Coronavirus and the state violence and police brutality against black lives, as we witnessed through the racial justice uprisings over the summer in response, and indeed now into 2021, with the most recent events in Kenosha.

Therefore, we can and should understand this moment as one of political, economic and social resegregation. That was a term that was uplifted in the event description as you might have seen, and it's a term that one of our ... An idea that one of our foremost cultural critics of color, Jeff Chang, who was on one of the previous panels in this series, has written extensively about. In one of his books, he writes, and now I'll quote here. "Even as we have come to celebrate diversity, resegregation is happening all around us, in our neighborhoods, and schools, our colleges and universities, even in culture. The culture wars have obscured and exacerbated these facts. Worse, they have left us without a common understanding or language that might help us to understand them and end them. Like climate change the culture wars have become an enduring feature of our daily lives, the permanent fog of a country that repeats the spectacle of fire in every generation. The culture wars continue through justificatory in a sense, and willed inaction. They allow the structures that produce inequality and segregation to persist."

And of course, since this conversation is about philanthropy in the arts, we know that they are not separated from this pattern of inequality, but are deeply implicated within it and have historically contributed to these problems that are both national and global in scale. So, we know folks are coming to this conversation from so many different places. So I'll just give a little bit of historical context about institutionalized philanthropy, if you'll allow it.

Institutionalized philanthropy, which is the subject of this conversation, has existed for a little over a century. There is a growing understanding among foundations, and this includes Nathan Cummings where I work, that the vast majority of wealth controlled by philanthropy, historically originated from extractive and exploitative industries, like during the industrialization era, the Gilded Age for any historians out there and that these industries have historically negatively impact BIPOC communities most. There are many critics who today see philanthropy as a tool to consolidate white wealth and to hoard resources. And it is increasingly common for folks to call for a reparations framework to be applied to philanthropy to redistribute wealth to communities of color at whose expense that wealth was generated from a historical perspective.

For those who might not be aware, foundations at a minimum are required by the IRS to pay out 5% of the money that they control the grant making for charitable purposes, and that's mostly what foundations are doing. That means, that about 95% of the wealth that foundations control is actually put aside, an endowment that are actually taking that money and reinvesting it often in industries that continue to be extractive that continue to negatively impact communities of color and maintain status quo power relations.

So that's philanthropy overall. Right? And now about arts philanthropy. The data since 2017, has exposed stark inequities in arts philanthropy that reflect decades of disinvestment and undercapitalization of BIPOC arts organizations. Let me break it down. We know that, of all the wealth that exists in philanthropy, only 5% is really available to nonprofits, for the grant making purposes. Within that 5%, arts funding accounts for somewhere between like eight and 10%, it has not really grown over the years, it's pretty much stayed static or has decreased. Within that 10%, only 4% of arts funding is going to organizations whose primary mission is to serve communities of color. The overwhelming majority of arts funding is actually going to support the top 2% of arts organizations with budgets over 5 million. And those tend to be predominantly white institutions that have, for decades, actually retained the vast majority of resources, right?

In this conversation about competition for resources, we really need to look at that funding structure as setting up a presumed scarcity of resources that groups are competing for. So as a result of this inequitable funding landscape, our cultural landscape today does not reflect the diversity of our multiracial, multicultural society, but rather preserves the dominant white patriarchal culture in America.

Meanwhile, there are other historical factors that have contributed to racial inequities and cultural patronage that are sadly still relevant to the conversation of diversity today. These include the legacies of slavery, white settler colonialism, scientific racism, imperialism, orientalism and academic fields like cultural anthropology that have fetishized, exoticized and otherwise non-Western European cultures seeing them as "primitive, backwards, savage, less sophisticated, and actually proof supposedly, of the superiority of white European culture and the

inferiority of other races and ethnicities." Of course, we know these are socially constructed categories, but they, nonetheless have material life and death consequences, as we're witnessing today, for people due to racism.

Indeed, cultural views such as these have been used to justify oppression throughout history. So in addition to creating significant bias in all these processes for seeking grant funds, and misunderstanding, not to mention unspeakable violence throughout history, all of this has contributed also to a narrow construction of who can be considered an artist, and also who can be recognized and who can receive support within the category of art. And of course, when it comes to representation in arts and culture, we're not just talking about nonprofits, we see similar patterns and inequities in pop culture, media, entertainment, music, corporations government, and we see that there are whole industries that have been set up to systematically exclude and marginalized BIPOC communities as well as other identities, right?

As a sector, we're in a moment of reckoning and deciding what we need to do to address the inequities. Many in the field are rightfully fed up and disenchanted with philanthropy, tired of being extracted from but not meaningfully included or supported. Others are optimistic about the potential this moment provides for transformation and the emancipatory potential of philanthropy to bring about collective liberation, not just for marginalized communities, but for all. And meanwhile, COVID has had a devastating impact on communities of color and also the arts sector, which is facing precarity if not near collapse, for some within it, driving home renewed urgency for action.

There's been new energy in philanthropy to address inequities and some new investment but it remains to be seen what the impact will be and the results of these new initiatives and interventions for changing funding strategies from the past year in response to unprecedented crisis. The last few points, I promise then we'll move to our dear panelists. At this moment in time, we are witnessing, and we are in the midst of unprecedented political, economic and cultural crisis. So I just want to underscore what the stakes might be for diversity and for diversifying arts and culture in American life today, for our multiracial, multicultural democracy.

So, while demographers show that the country is becoming more diverse than ever, with whites no longer necessarily being the majority of the population before the mid-century mark, which has elicited lots and lots of fear, and has also contributed to the rise of white supremacy and white nationalist movements, as we saw at the Capitol, and all over the country, just last week, this week, as well. Sorry, one moment, we know that even though demographics are shifting, that that doesn't inevitably mean that our cultural landscape will become more reflective of the diversity of the American people, not without structural change.

So, we're clearly in a moment of deciding who we are, who America is, who gets to belong, and who gets to be represented in our cultural imaginary. So, we are in a democracy in a country that is more divided and polarized than ever before, and I just think it's so crucial for us to understand what the stakes are right, what are the risks as well as what are the opportunities.

This may be a little bit controversial to say, but just the other day, I was reading an article by Ai Weiwei, one of our foremost artists working today, and he wrote an article where he was

addressing something called culture-cide, that is the systematic destruction of one culture that is presumed to be inferior by another culture that is presumed to be superior, right? And we see this playing out, he mentioned in the [inaudible 00:22:03] population in China, and then also in the context of Nazi, Germany, right? I'm not sure if those are the stakes here in America, but at a time where there is growing authoritarianism, white nationalism, white supremacy, and a solidification of the myth, that being American means being culturally and racially white, and we have systems across industries that are set up in order to perpetuate that myth, are we at risk of the vast destruction of other cultures and cultural eraser at a scale that we've maybe never seen before.

So those may be some of the risks. I think, right now, if we continue to allow these systems to perpetuate inequities. But I also think there are tremendous opportunities in this moment to build a much more inclusive and just sense of the collective we, and also, really create a cultural landscape that represents the richness of American life and the perspectives of people who are contributing to our society. So thank you for bearing with me through all of those introductory remarks. I want to now move towards introducing our panelists.

So too often conversations about diversity can actually tokenize people of color. And so I really don't want to speak for our guests, I want them to be able to feel like their voices are in their own words. I had a colleague this year say that when somebody tells their story, that it creates sacred space. And I found that to be such a resonant and wonderful and beautiful idea in these times. And so that's the spirit with which I'd like to invite our panelists to introduce themselves, and to tell us how did they come to this conversation about diversity? And can you tell us, both your story and the story of your institution. Andy, let's start with you, and then Salem and Diana. We'll go in that order. Thank you. And Andy, I know you have some slides. So, William, thank you for pulling those up.

Andy Chiang:

Thank you, Sinéad . Wonderful introduction and really help us to frame and think about the present situation. My name is Andy Chiang. I'm the Executive Director of the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company. I want to let you all know that today, at the Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, we are working very hard. We just finished a new year, the Western New Year just finished, but we're planning on welcoming the coming of the Chinese Lunar New Year, for those of you who are of Asian descent, we are sending away the rat together. And you know, it's an orange rat, right? William, you can click on that rat, and we'll see what that rat looks like. And then, we're also welcoming the sacred ox or the sacred water buffalo, really in the Asian culture, and the water buffalo is a sacred symbol in the Indian tradition. So, this year is full of meaning for us as Asian Americans. Next slide, please.

Who are we? I am the Executive Director of Nai-Ni Chen Dance company. Of course, it is started by artist at Nai-Ni Chen. She's a culture bearer, because she's a student of a first generation of artists who moved to Taiwan from the Communist Revolution. And since the Cultural Revolution altered the landscape of China's history and culture quite a bit, she has followed that lineage and she's now one of the, I think, few people who are still practicing it, teaching it to our next generation. And many of our immigrant community artists look to her and

work with her regularly to develop work, to reflect what that tradition is, to really show the contemporary spirit of that tradition. Because the tradition is not only the movement, the clothing, the objects, the property, but it's something in our hearts.

Nai-Ni Chen came to study at NYU with these luminaries, Doris Racco, Bertram Ros are all original members of the Martha Graham Dance Company. And of course, Marie Lewis and Nicola have their own schools as well. Nai-Ni began in 1988, and today, we have eight diverse dancers, four of them Black, three Asian and one European. And we've been touring the US for over 30 years. We're not in York City area too much, because we're out there a little bit more. It is a fully professional dance company rehearsing and practicing every day.

Around the Chinese New Year, we become a quite traditional dance company. And we work with most of the well-known artists within the community. We work with each other. People ask us, how do we work together? We work by moving together. It builds a foundation of trust, and honesty. And as Martha Graham says, "Movement does not lie." And when you're working together in this community and we were able to build that we really have an embodied understanding of how culture blend and work together. Next slide, please.

About myself, I have been the Executive Director since the beginning. But for a very long time, I've had a alter ego managing Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company, because I graduated from MIT as a computer technology manager and consultant. I've had a fairly extensive career in computers. And for my cross cultural understanding of both the arts and technology. I was invited to be a board member of the Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. And just a little digression, to let you know what is Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation. For those of you who do not know, the National Endowment of the Arts, obviously, is the grant overarching federal agency that handles the arts for the government.

The NEA has six regional organization that does most of its most important work to make sure that the arts reach every citizen. The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation manages these states; the New York, New Jersey, Maryland, DC, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware and the US Virgin Islands. Of course, they're also counterparts in Arts Midwest which handles the Midwest, West Arts, handles the western states and Mid-America and New England Foundation for the Arts for those who are in dance, will know that very well. And, I believe the NEA sets the standard. Many people say that to have the funding from the NEA is the seal of approval from the good house. It's really the most important step for our organization, which I believe is true.

And for that reason, it also sets the standard for certain systemic practices that's happening in the field. There's a process of RFP, there's response, there's expert panel evaluation, there are recommendations upon the panel, then the staff allocates the funds based on the panel recommendation and the priority of the foundation. And then finally, the award is given. This is the system that we're looking at that are created, as Sinéad says, as a way to distribute funds, but also is a way ... Many of these parts are not transparent. So when we talk about systems, well, I'm giving a background of the structure, and also the processes. That is what's going on in the philanthropy, and that's what was the practice.

When I was at Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, I was privileged to start the program for US artists

in the International Arts Festivals, which is still going on today. And after that, from the recommendation of my colleagues, I was able to have the privilege to serve on many of the NEA panels, and participate in the creation of a major study on regional arts.

In New Jersey, I was a board member of Art Prime, I'm off now. And I'm on the legislative action committee. So I know a little bit about advocacy. For my cultural background, I'm a black belt in karate, and I'm a member of the Wu Tan, which is a Taiwan based martial arts organization. In Wu Tan I studied Northern Shaolin style. And now I'd studied the Chen Style Tai Chi. And I also play a Chinese instrument called dizi, which is a bamboo flute. So that's a little bit about myself. Next slide, please.

Sinêad López:

Andy, one second, we're going to move on pretty soon to having the other panelists introduce themselves. So please wrap up soon. Thank you. This has been wonderful.

Andy Chiang:

Thanks.

Sinêad López:

Okay, Salem, would you like to introduce yourself? And thank you, Andy, for sharing all of that wonderful information about insight into how systems of philanthropy are set up and how to navigate them, the company and your own personal background.

Salem Tsegaye:

Thanks, Andy. Good evening, everyone. My name is Salem Tsegaye, my pronouns are she, her, hers. I am a Program Officer for Arts and Culture at the New York Community Trust. The New York Community Trust is a community foundation for New York City and we make grants across different areas, including arts and culture, but not limited to it. So education, health, youth development, human justice, and other areas as well. A quick disability check, I am a brown skinned black woman, I have a pretty tight band right now, I'm wearing glasses with brown frames and a fuzzy black turtleneck.

So I would love to respond to your perception of aid, and bring a little bit of the personal into my professional perspective, if I may. So I am a sister, I'm an aunt, I'm a daughter of Ethiopian immigrants. And I grew up in Northern Virginia, which is part of the larger Washington DC metropolitan area, and also a home to the largest Ethiopian diaspora community in the United States. So it was really an incredible upbringing, in that I was very much connected to my heritage, my Ethiopian heritage, but also, in many ways, I got to experience culture from the more institutional perspective, with school visits to the National Mall, and monuments to the Smithsonian museums, even trips to the White House, for instance. And so you can understand maybe how, in my earlier years, how that shaped my understanding of culture and then what would it meant for institutions to house culture.

I would also want to just mention that as great as my upbringing was, I think part of it is also a negotiation, where being first generation you're in this position where you're dealing with, I think what I think of now is more of like a dualism where you're trying to preserve your heritage and really acknowledge and value that but also thinking about your Americanist, and what it means to be American and how those two things come together, sometimes neatly, often not.

So, I think that all of that shifted for me when I went to college. And Sinêad, you mentioned this in your introduction, I actually studied cultural anthropology, the discipline is commonly referred to as “The Handmaiden of Colonialism.” So it really just completely turned my world upside down to be frank. But the other benefit of it is that it really allowed me to think a little more introspectively of what culture even means. So fundamentally for me, it boils down to belonging, right? And how that manifests and I think that I became fascinated with questions around how we come to understand ourselves, understand others, how we form our identities, or how we attach to particular social groups, how material objects and practices and traditions and expressions reify culture, and then also from the institutional perspective, how housing some of those expressions and lifting them up as valuable, really, I think, signals, you belong, or it doesn't. And I think that's where I started to ask the bigger questions and really started to interrogate all the things that I loved about some of the cultural institutions that I visited when I was growing up in DC. So that's one perspective, I think that was really critical to my coming into arts and culture, and also thinking about diversity, but also beyond that equity and justice. The other piece to this too, is well being. I think that that is a central driver for me, and why I came into arts and culture. I actually did not start my career in arts and culture, I was working primarily in health and often with marginalized communities, even more specifically, HIV AIDS prevention, but also treatment for people living with HIV AIDS, that often do not have financial resources that would allow them to access that treatment. So a lot of my work was technical support, and also needs assessments to inform policy that could help change that.

And then I just realized, obviously, there are basic needs that need to be met for people. But creative expression, is so important, I think, for health and well-being. I also think it's a really important means of exercising agency in the world, despite all the compounding effects of systemic oppression that a lot of marginalized communities face. So, well-being is an essential driver for me and why I came into arts and culture. And I just want to say, in terms of my work, I think of myself as an arts and culture advocate, and I think that that advocacy manifests in a lot of different ways in the different jobs that I've held, and these days, it's as a grantmaker, I'm at a community foundation. Thank you.

Sinêad López:

Thank you so much for sharing all of those different dimensions of your identity and your professional experience, that have come to [inaudible 00:38:29]. We all come to this from such personal places, and our identities are so nuanced and complexed and often more so than what the conversation will allow. So I appreciate you inviting some of that in. Diana, we'd love to hear from you. Thank you for being so patient.

Diana Abouali:

My pleasure. Good evening, everybody. And thank you, Sinêad. I just want to thank Lisa and Sarah, for also inviting me and giving me this opportunity to be part of this great event. My name is Diana Abouali, I'm the Director of the Arab American National Museum, my pronouns are she, her, hers. Again, for accessibility reasons, I am a woman, I have brown gray hair, shoulder length, I am wearing a gray sweater and I have a whitish background behind me.

Yeah, like I said, I'm the director of the Arab American National Museum. We are located in Dearborn, Michigan, which is arguably the capital of Arab America. The museum was founded in 2005. So we're relatively new. We are the first and only museum that is dedicated to telling the Arab American story. So basically, our mission is to promote, preserve, document, the history, culture and contributions of Arab Americans. So, what is an Arab American, we basically can say, you have to self-identify, obviously, as an Arab American, but usually what could be considered Arab Americans is anyone whose national origins or say, are in one of the 22 Arab states that comprise the Arab League.

This is a large swath of territory that spans North Africa and Southwest Asia. So it's very difficult to represent all of the diversity that we have in the Arab world. We are trying to be more reflective and representational of the diverse backgrounds of Arabs in the United States. Just a little bit about my background and my journey, I am Palestinian, but diaspora Palestinian. My parents met in Kuwait, I was born in Canada, they immigrated, and I spent part of my childhood in Canada, part of my childhood in Kuwait.

Part of this larger Palestinian diaspora never having a sense of home and place. But also being immersed in this narrative of what does it mean to be Palestinian? What is our issue? What is our course? And this is a narrative that has often been marginalized or even erased. And when you talk about culture side as a Palestinian that resonates with me. But I'm also a historian by training and I think my approach to culture is really one that tries to look at culture, even diversity, identity, from a historical perspective, understanding that identity and diversity have a history of in and of themselves. Identities change, diversity can be situational, identity can be situational as well. So, that's how I approach culture, how I approach my work at the museum just trying to tease out these narratives, find nuance to move away from these flattening centralizing narratives, but try to find the richness in them. I'm going to stop here for the sake of time, but that's, yeah.

Sinêad López:

Thank you. And again, apologies that the intro took so long. But yes, it's so beautiful to hear your stories. And I'm getting so absorbed, actually, there is a part of me that just adores story and hearing about what makes people tick is just ... I'm forgetting my sense of time, actually. So that was very transporting. And I just appreciate the level of vulnerability from all of you, and your willingness to show up in your full selves and your full humanity in this conversation.

So the event description really wants us to delve into this question about competition and grants seeking experiences. And so I would love for us to try to share some of your experiences on both sides, right? Salem you are being a funder and then of course, Diana and Andy your being on the other side of grant making processes. I want to be clear that there has been lots of research and

lots of input from the field about what kinds of changes might be needed. And that has called attention to these issues. And so, I'll refer folks to some of the reports like the Helicon Collaborative, for instance, Yancey Consulting's report about what it takes for arts organizations of color to thrive. There's lots of research out there. And so none of this is new, but it's still so valuable to hear about what your personal experiences with these systems and how they've impacted you, for better or for worse.

So, Andy, I'd love to pass it off to you, so you could share a little bit about what the grant seeking experience has been for Nai-Ni Chen Dance Company. As an organization, I know that you actually are situated inside the ecosystem of other ... It's pretty typical, actually, for most arts organizations and arts organizations of color to have budgets under 1 million and to be competing for resources. And again, we heard that that's only 4% of arts funding, right? So I imagine that it's been quite, quite challenging in that ecosystem, to try to seek grants and fundraise. So could you share about what that's been like in the past 30 years of the company's history?

Andy Chiang:

I think I'll speak both from a panelist evaluator point of view, which I have played, and also as a grant seeker. I have to say that I think for most grant seekers, they're always wondering, when you didn't get a grant, you wonder why the other guy get the grant. And is never really that transparent. In fact, sometimes you say, "How come that person got the grant or that organization got the grant and I didn't? And clearly in the guidelines or statement saying here's the purpose and I fit the purpose better than the other one." So this kind of thing happens.

But for Asian American organizations, I have to say, that in the beginning, I had the most difficulty because I had a technical training. For me, everything is logical. And also, my writing may not be as good as someone who was an English major. And I have heard from grant officers saying, "If the grammar is not good, I really don't want to see it." Of course, over the years, my writing got better. And fortunately, I also had other a lot of other help. But I have to say that, I think the first difficulty for a lot of community based organization that are serving very deeply in the community, the language is the first barrier. And that is quite difficult to pass. So that's one thing. And the culture barrier is also great, because as I said, before, these RFP, these things are based on certain perceptions of what the community needs, the truth may not be the case at all.

The other thing is, I would call it the charismatic factor. And that was my last slide, which was, there is a factor I call the charisma, somehow certain organization gets funding and the other doesn't. And it has to do with certain culturally based charismatic look at the organizations. And it may not have to do just with budget size or anything else, it simply has to do with that sense of, is that organization on the right trend, or train. And none of these things has anything to do with the real set mission of I believe, intended meaning for the money to be spent. And oftentimes it happens. So, that's what I wanted to say first.

As far as stories, I heard stories which are just heartbreaking for another organization that we know, for example, certain government organization requiring insurance that costs actually more than the grant itself. That's just the legal department requiring something that they feel is legal,

and the cost of insurance keeps on rising, as we know. And maybe there's a maximum grant amount of \$5,000. And most of these days, insurance cannot be bought under \$5,000. So there are these very, very real issues.

The other barrier, which is internal competition, is that we are all looking at each other and say, who got the money? But there's very seldom encouragement from foundations, to say, "How can we change the system so that we can know each other better? Why is it that other organization got that money?" There may be very good reasons. But we never learned. We just saw that the other guy got the money.

So for me, there's always a problem of saying, "Can we learn something from an experience of failed or successful attempts?" And share those experiences. And that's where I really feel that that's ... In the last 10 years, I've been managing the Nai-Ni Dance Company. For a long time, I've been thinking about this issue, I believe those are the crux of the issue, that plaque our community. We need ways to appreciate each other, to see each other's value, and understand how we meet different needs in different RFPs. And that's what I have to say. Thanks.

Sinêad López:

Thank you, Andy. And you're right, there is such a language barrier, there is a language justice movement, I'm not sure it's really hit philanthropy quite as squarely as maybe in other places. And certainly philanthropy does have a worship of the written word, which has often been seen as being part of white supremacist culture. Right? So while we talk about the rise of white nationalism, white supremacy, and we see visible signs of that in the Capitol, and elsewhere around the country, we also know that there's an ideology of whiteness that has actually infused all of our institutions, including philanthropy, which is predominantly a white institution and that also is working through its own diversity and diversification efforts.

So in terms of thinking about who you might be interfacing with in a process and the kinds of cultural bias and lack of cultural competency that might also be they are embedded in processes that can be quite significant. So thank you for sharing about that. Diana I'd like to pass it up to you because, I know that your organization actually, just was the recipient of a major award an initiative led through the Ford Foundation for America's Cultural Treasures. This kind of money is something that often predominantly white institutions, actually they donate like national attention in this kind of investment, but often, it's really not seen for organizations that are for communities of color. So can you just share about what it's meant to you to receive that funding? What does it mean for the organization's future? And also for people who might be asking why you and not us? How can you demystify how it came to be that this opportunity arose?

Diana Abouali:

Yes, we're really lucky and very thankful and happy to be chosen by the Ford Foundation. It was also a consortium of other foundations that we were thankful that they awarded us this grant. And we were one of 20 organizations, all BIPOC organizations that received a substantial award. This award came out of the blue, in terms of, we didn't apply for it, they had done research, asked around, I guess, they knew about us, they've had relations with ACCESS, which is the

parent organization of the museum. So I don't think we were an unknown entity, they were familiar with our parent organization and the museum.

What's wonderful about it is that this is unrestricted money. When we talk about philanthropy, usually, a lot of the times organizations like us have to apply for grants that are very project specific, and you try to cover operations costs through that grant. But that's not the reason for the grant usually. So the act of them giving us this amount of money to do whatever we wanted with it, unrestricted, is a phenomenal gift. And really helps us get over the setbacks that we faced this year with COVID and the crashing the economy.

I want to say that I've only received positive feedback and congratulations from other Arab American organizations, and I think what this means for us also is that there's now a responsibility to do something really meaningful with the gift, and to use that to push us, not just to push us forward, but also to, as much as we can, to share the wealth if possible. We always collaborated, but we really did a lot more collaboration this year, because funds were short, I think this will allow us to do more collaboration.

Some might think, "Why not us?" I would argue that we've been pretty successful in winning awards this year. We did a very aggressive grant running campaign, but I think, unlike many other Arab American organizations we have a sort of infrastructure in place. We're part of a larger organization that can help us ... We have a financial accounting team and the finance team that can help us create our budget, and a solid budget, I have a grant writer who can sit and write. I'm used to writing grants. So I think these are the difficulties that maybe other organizations like Arab American organizations or BIPOC organizations don't have the skill sets in their staff to do the hard work of applying for grants.

Ironically, the foundation grants have been a little easier to get in that there's always a conversation with them, there's a relationship you build, but with NEA and NEH, and [inaudible 00:54:13] agencies, which again, are generous, but they're very, very difficult grants to apply for. If you don't have a certain stuff in place to do that, I don't know how organizations that don't have that in place can get them and if they do, then that really speaks to how phenomenal they are. The disparity is that it's difficult also just to get a grant to be part of that system. And I wonder if that could be something that could be changed or modified or maybe it has nothing to do with what, you called it the worship of the written word. There's a different way in which grants or money can be allocated to different organizations.

Sinêad López:

Absolutely. And there are a lot of creative ideas that I think many different foundations, a lot of community foundations, for instance, are moving towards in order to actually figure out how to do grant making in a really different way and to reimagine what that looks like. But I appreciate you raising the point that oftentimes it takes having a professionalized staff that actually is working in development and fundraising in order to help an organization get to the next level, where it's able to have more sustainable sets of funding. And often with the smaller organizations they're working part-time staff, their budgets are as thin or tiny, and they're not able to employ people full-time to be able to add that kind of capacity despite doing tremendous and exemplary

work. So thank you for raising that as a barrier.

So I would love to hear about your experience on the other side, especially about the Mosaic Network and Fund and of course, it's a grantee of the Nathan Cummings Foundation. This is a collaborative effort among many funders that actually emerged in response to research in 2017, that showed that inequities in the arts were actually getting worse, which was really depressing at the time. So go ahead and talk to us about these considerations that you have to weigh around diversity and representation and the tensions of that that work.

Salem Tsegaye:

Sure. So yes, The Mosaic Network and Fund, it's a learning network and a collaborative fund that is housed at the New York Community Trust administered by the New York Community Trust, but we have so many different stakeholders involved. And I think part of the beauty of this initiative is that it is extremely participatory. Our learning network, I think, is composed of about 280 people representing upwards of 150 BIPOC arts and cultural organizations in New York City. We also have close to 50 philanthropic representatives, and folks from intermediary organizations, and also funds that are part of this community. And the real intention there is to really build trust and to foster dialogue and communication and also build relationships that over time, at least, our hope is that that will lead to the increased investments that we all want to see.

From individual funder portfolios, its longer term work. But the fund portion of what we do, which is the collaborative fund, we have 23 foundations that contribute and essentially we have pooled resources to make awards to BIPOC organizations. That is really a way of providing immediate support. And so, we did make a round of grants in late 2019. And to Andy's point, is an extremely competitive RFP, right? In the recent RFP, we had raised, I think, somewhere around \$4 million to make these grants. And these were additive funds, right?

So folks that were contributing their money to this pool, it wasn't coming at the expense of grants that they would make through their individual portfolios, let's say two BIPOC cultural organizations, it was additional money that was being put into the pool, and the idea is to really just try and explore a different way of making grants. Again, the beauty of it was that it was a participatory process, and that we had a proposal review committee that was composed of both funders and BIPOC arts practitioners, and these had to be folks that weren't conflicted out of the process. So they couldn't be affiliated with any of the applicant organizations. But in many ways, a lot of them have had experience working with them, or have gotten support from them. For the artists, at least there were some folks that were consultants that have supported some of these organizations. So they're very familiar with the landscape.

We made a round of grants, we ended up making 27 grants, but the reality is that we had close to 200 proposals, right? So, in no way did it meet the need. And I think that's something that we expected, because it's really what drove the creation of the learning network because it gave me ideas to foster that exposure in learning and making sure folks know about groups that they didn't know about before, building those relationships, and also experiencing work that you may not have experienced before, because I do think a lot of arts and culture grant making too is driven by what you know and what you've experienced, and also seeing how audiences respond

to work, even if it's not something that you have experienced before. All of that, I think is so important and needs to supplement a written proposal. It can't just be a written proposal. So that's The Mosaic Initiative.

The New York Community Trust, of course, like we also do our own arts and culture grant making, and some of the considerations that we have there are really around increasing transparency. So one of the things that we did for Mosaic, it's not something that's typically done is that we actually did have follow up calls with all of the applicants that did not get a grant. I think part of the issue too, is time, right, and how we think about our time, and really I think a lot of times don't understand that our investment in doing these types of things is actually what leads to different behaviors and practices. But that time that we spend, actually having those conversations, again, it's a different level of exposure. You have better insight into the people that are behind these institutions, that again, you may not know about.

So that's been an interesting practice that I think we're bringing into my grant making through the individual portfolio at the Trust. And also a lot of conversations before our proposals are submitted, being open to that, as Diana said. It's so important because people have questions, sometimes guidelines aren't even clear, or they just might seem really cumbersome. How do you break that down for folks and really ensure that they feel good about what they're putting in, but also, the conversation doesn't end there, right?

Once you put a proposal in, it doesn't mean that it's the last time that you'll ever hear from up under again. I think it's just being open to the fact that it's an ongoing process. So even if you're not getting funded this year, maybe it's next year. But I think it's just an openness to that whole process where it's less rigid. And I think we need to be more generous with our time, too. So, those are some of the considerations around how to improve grant making for BIPOC cultural organizations. I think I'm going to stop there. I think you might have some other questions for us, I'll let you.

Sinêad López:

Absolutely. And Andy, hang on one second, really quickly, I just want to make sure I pull out a few things from what Salem said, and then I'd love for us to actually get to the next set of questions. We have a lot planned, we won't get to it all. So I just wanted to underscore what you're saying Salem about how many resources, actually, we can tap into beyond just financial in terms of how we think about supporting the field and helping to build up these organizations and to structurally change some of the norms and the behaviors that have actually proved so problematic and detrimental for communities.

So I appreciate your raising the time as a resource and generosity in that way. And I also just want to underscore the tremendous need that was demonstrated through the process, right? Having so many organizations apply, and realizing that actually, there really wasn't enough funding for all of them through what had been fundraised for that initiative. So I just appreciate that. Andy, go ahead and make your comment, and then we'll move into a motive of criticality around the diversity framework actually. I'm really excited about that part.

Andy Chiang:

Yes. I just want to tell you the story that my first large grant was actually given by Scott McVeigh, who is a legend in the Influency. And he was the Executive Director of the [inaudible 01:03:26] Foundation. And he came to visit me personally. And we had a three hour conversation. And he was sure that I knew what the community needs are. But from the conversation that you heard, I have to say that there's a capacity limit for all of you, it's impossible for somebody to be able to visit all 280 Mosaic members. I think these are the issue, that after all these Mosaic Network Meetings, I come to the conclusion that we in the field, I will say less charismatic, by Western definition, organizations needs to find a way to advice foundations who wants to serve that purpose. So I would like to throw that challenge out to see how we can increase that capacity and change that equation.

Sinêad López:

That's such a great point, Andy and I don't think anyone would have found anything lacking in your charisma from the Mosaic Network Meetings over the summer, for those who may not be aware of the effort. In addition to the Mosaic Fund, there was a network of 200 organizations that met through three learning exchanges over the summer, funders and BIPOC arts organizations alike. And the theme of all the conversations was redistribution of wealth. It was really an amazing moment here for the New York community to come together to talk about a lot of the challenges and to really also think about building cultural power in the sector between arts organizations, not just between arts organizations and philanthropy. So it was really amazing to behold, and I really commend the Trust, and Doris Duke as well it's a joint partnership between those foundations for making space for that during such a moment of crisis.

I mentioned that we wanted to move into a space, really examining this question of diversity as a framework for having these conversations, right? And the reason for that, is because sometimes diversity can actually, I think, in the language of it, make us a little bit complacent about what change we want to see in the world, for instance. If we diversify organizations, and all the problems will be done, and we'll have solved the system, right? And yet, we understand that there are a lot of barriers and challenges beyond just getting to a place of greater diversity, often spaces that actually do have diversity efforts, still continue to have challenges retaining staff of color, for instance, and we know that systems are not necessarily set up in such a way that they're leading to massive transformation out there in the world.

Salem you've talked about justice and equity, those are two terms that are also I think, pretty central to the work that we do at Nathan Cummings. So what are the advantages, as well as the limitations of using this diversity framework is a way of thinking about change in this sector. We'll just go around the room. And Diana we'd love to hear from you first, feel free to also answer the question, who is diversity for?

Diana Abouali:

Everyone benefits from diversity. Diversity in and of itself, unless we push diversity to its full potential, I don't think it's that effective. So we live in a very diverse country, United States, the

land of immigrants, we have the indigenous population. People who came here, either by their own will or were forced here. So yeah, a very diverse country, that unless we have systems in place to allow for that diversity to manifest itself to allow these different perspectives to be heard. Basically, without equity, I don't think diversity will serve us much, as good as it is. So, I think we can all benefit from diversity. But I think systems have to change, things have to change and allow that diversity to really manifest and for all of us to benefit from it.

Diana Abouali:

And also diversity is I think relative as well. We need to define what diversity is, for instance, in our organization at the Arab American National Museum, someone might walk in and see our staff and think we're diverse, other areas might think we're not diverse at all. We could be more representational of the Arab American community as it exists in the United States. So again, it's also a relative thing. We need to think about what we mean by diversity, and how we can really benefit and make use of the diversity that we have in this country in our respective regions.

Sin ead L pez:

Thank you, Andy. Go ahead.

Andy Chiang:

So I can tell you a story. Maybe 15 years ago, we had one black dancers. I think it's because, when dancers come to audition, they don't think they'll come to dance for Asian American. They don't know who Nai-Ni Chen is, they can't even pronounce the name right. So one Black dancer who's very good, we really are fond of him. And he's been there for a year. And later on, we had some other addition, he brought a friend over and he was very good, and we accepted the friend. And we also had a few Asian dancers. And the Asian dancer sometimes because they speak Chinese, they would talk to Nai-Ni in Chinese, they would talk to each other in Chinese, and the Black dancers will be on the side and so forth.

And one day, the Black dancer came to Nai-Ni and said, "Are you guys talking about me? I hear the word n***** all the time." And then Nai-Ni says, "We're just speaking Chinese. I have no idea what you're talking about." So she came back and talked to me as she said, "That's weird talking about the N word." I said, "Oh, that's because you're pointing to other things saying the word in Chinese, that." That, T-H-A-T in Chinese is [N  01:10:12]. So he's hearing this all the time for one year, and have not speak out. And finally, we resolved it with each other.

It's a very, very interesting experience to me, because I think diversity is a embodiment of understanding, you need to create a circumstance, create an environment of encouraging and trusting and understanding, you can't have diversity in numbers, that means nothing, you have to have built ways to be able to build that trusting relationship. As I said, before, our dancers trust each other, they dance with each other, they have built in a working, trusting relationship. And even that it took a year for someone to come forward and said, "Oh, I was hearing something strange." So, I hope that that story helps you to understand how we feel about diversity, diversity is action.

Sinêad López:

Thank you for saying that. And I had such a visceral reaction to you using that word, and I understand it was in the context of the story where you were quoting a Black dancer, and I appreciate also.

Andy Chiang:

[inaudible 01:11:28].

Sinêad López:

No, no. I understand what you were trying to evoke and bring forth and I hope our audience did as well in the story and certainly we are actually moving beyond language, and you're working as bodies, and you're figuring out the complexities of embodiment representation and communicating through other forms that are not language. There are so many other opportunities to connect across difference and to also find new ways of relating, new ways of being. And I appreciate you raising that, that language itself is a challenge, even when you have bodies that are communicating at that level. So thank you for that. And I also just want to say we're not going to use language like that for this panel in this space at all again.

Andy Chiang:

[crosstalk 01:12:14].

Sinêad López:

No, no, I understand the intention was good. Salem go ahead and answer the question about diversity. And then I'm going to ask us just one question probably about collaboration, and we'll move into Q&A.

Salem Tsegaye:

Yeah. I guess, from the perspective, that I have and the position that I sit in, there is an important distinction that needs to be made between diversity and equity. And I think, particularly when it comes to funding and how we actually see dollars being allocated towards each. In this present moment, we are seeing many, many organizations that are making very good attempts, I would say, to diversify, right? Thinking about how their staff, their boards and the artists they serve, and the audiences that they serve, aren't predominantly white, I'll say that. And those are good efforts and that needs to happen, it needs to happen. However, I think there is incredible urgency in redressing historical underinvestment in organizations that are created by for and about Black, indigenous, and communities of color.

So, in philanthropy, and I think this is one of the things about mosaic that is really special, that I

love, at least is that it is a space exclusively for BIPOC organizations, and thinking about how resources are distributed more equitably, to those groups that have really suffered from that disinvestment that you talked about earlier in your context setting, Sinéad .

I don't know if it's the role that I sit in, but I have a different reaction when I hear diversity these days, because it is important. And I think, fundamentally the meaning of the word, like, you're talking about difference, right? And experience and perspective in values and beliefs. All of that is important. But in the cultural sector, I think how it's being used, which is mainly around diversifying predominately white institutions. I think that that's important, but that's not the emphasis right now when we talk about equity and justice. So I think that that distinction needs to be made and it needs to be considered constantly in how we make grants.

Sinéad López:

Thank you. And you've raised a point that actually the field debates and raises a lot about how there are all of these organizations of color that have always been diverse and that have been doing anti-racist anti-oppression work for a long, long time, either by nature of their identities or through like their ethos around social justice, and that they have not received a lot of funding. And yet now, as there are more calls for diversity, you also see that there are predominantly white institutions looking to raise additional money above what they already received, in order to diversify efforts inside of their institutions, which is necessary. But there have been many folks who have actually said that, "Well, why don't you use your existing resources in order to do that work and allow the other funding to go towards these organizations that have never received it." And that is certainly a really strong approach towards building equity in the field, because we have to free up new resources for folks who have been historically disinvested.

Thank you for that. And so in the political arena, this is my last question, then we'll get to Q&A. We're almost at the end of our program. In the political arena, one of the most inspiring things in 2020, even 2021 in Georgia is, the incredible validation that people power and movement building, especially in BIPOC communities creates change, right?

Like in battleground states across the country, we saw mostly people of color, Black women, Native women, other women of color, really, really organizing, and disorganizing and grassroots organizing has been happening for a long, long time. And it led to political winds, right, that has actually changed the direction of this country. And so we are really inspired on my team, at least, by all of that people power work, and organizing.

And so it got me to thinking about, well, what organizing might be happening either for you and your organizations and your communities, between organizations, as the field starts to become even more connected during this time of crisis and relying on each other and becoming interdependent. In philanthropy, we've imported the concept of organizing, and we actually talk a lot about donor organizing as a strategy. And so I'll start with you, and then Diana, Andy, and then we'll go to Q&A. So let's keep it a little bit brief. Thank you.

Salem Tsegaye:

No problem. So with regards to organizing, the New York Community Trust, as a community foundation has a really long history actually of establishing funder collaboratives, or I would say, I guess, donor collaboratives. And the effort really there, is not just to pull resources, but also there's a huge educational component to it, and that you're really focusing on a particular topic that's often timely, and then trying to address it, right? It's like a huge influx of energy and resources in that topic at that moment, and lasts as long as it needs to. So a great example of one that was created decades ago, the fun for new citizens, which supports immigrant rights advocacy, and used to do endless capacity building for immigrant led groups. That was created almost 30 years ago, in response to federal policy, and it's still relevant fund, it still exists.

Sometimes they go away, depending on what the issue is really focused on, and sometimes they last a lot longer. And with Mosaic, given that we're talking about racial equity in arts and culture it's been envisioned as a time limited initiative. But I think we're learning in the learning exchanges and the network activities that this is really generational, durational work that needs to happen over a longer term period. And so, really important questions have been raised around how long that will last as well.

Sinêad López:

Thank you. And we know that strategies for change that are top down, and that only happen in philanthropy are not going to get us to the place where we need to be. And so we definitely want to think about not just like what could be considered inside strategies and philanthropy for change, but also outside strategies. That's a little bit too simplistic, but we want to hear from our folks who are with [inaudible 01:19:03] day, Diana and Andy about other efforts outside to create change.

Diana Abouali:

I mean, one of the ways that we have dealt with this kind of philanthropic landscape or the funding landscape is to pool resources and to collaborate across organizations. So for instance, the museum collaborated with three other Arab American organizations involved in film, we put on a collaborative film festival that was phenomenal. I think that the reach that we had, we couldn't have done individually. So pulling resources, each organization has their own strengths, we brought them together, and we created a really wonderful program and event. So I think that's one way to counter or to deal with the current landscape. Another thing that I think is interesting to mention is, so like I said, the museum is part of a larger organization called ACCESS which is the American Center for Economic and Social Services it's a 50 year old Human Services Agency. They have few institutions, we are one of them, but they also have something called the Center for Arab American Philanthropy.

And what they do is not just work with Arab Americans and get them start thinking about philanthropy, strategically, the communities are very generous and charitable one, but it's not necessarily strategic. And what they're trying to do is create funds to get people on board to think about what courses or issues are meaningful to them, and fund accordingly and create funds and support other Arab organizations or anything else. I think that's one way, is to create our own foundations, the community itself taking care of its own. That's a limited solution, but it's one

way in which our community can [inaudible 01:20:55] each other, if there's a landscape where we're pivoted against each other.

Sinêad López:

Yeah, I think shifting the paradigm, right? And recognizing that it's a divide and conquer type strategy or colonial, like inheritance and resisting that is really important. Andy, if you could just offer one minute of an answer to this, and then we'll take one or two questions and do some closing remarks.

Andy Chiang:

Sure, I'll let you know that throughout this pandemic, we have invited guest artists to come online to teach the public, a program that is growing, that has over 1000 subscribers now to teach virtual classes. And this group of artists are the artists that we during our tour we've come to appreciate, to admire, they practice in their language specific communities. They're Filipino, they're Indian, they're Chinese, there's all kinds of Asian American, also, African American, who come online who practice with us. We want to appreciate each other's art, so that we can vouch and support each other. And we hope that the Asian American contingency will be a strong part of A4. And that may be playing in some role when people are seeking evaluators or input of how grants and monies are being spent in these communities.

Sinêad López:

Thank you. Lisa, I will leave it to your discretion about the Q&A. I know we have a hard stop at 7:30. So if you'd like to hop on and field a question, or if you'd like to offer some closing remarks, we'd really love your advice and expertise here. You're on mute.

Lisa Gold:

Well, thank you all so much for that. We did have a number of questions. And we only have three more minutes. So before we leave, I want to just thank everybody for the very honest discussion and for your time and for your thoughts. I'll say, the first question we got was from Ann Delaney, I'm sorry. Ann, do you want to ask your question about situational identity?

Ann Delaney:

Hi, this is Ann, it came at the very beginning of the conversation, and I think it was something that Diana spoke about. It was in context of how we maybe present ourselves in different groups and things and if you want to comment on it, that's fine. If it's not your main move to the next question.

Diana Abouali:

I'll quickly just say, I'm thinking also historically, so identities change across time and across

space, but also it's where you're at, I think, your self-identity and how people perceive you as well. That can change depending on where you are. And just to give some nuance to diversity and identity, and when I was just talking about how I think, and I think as a historian, that's my training and it's a shifting and sometimes a slippery thing identity and constructed or not, always fixed.

Sinêad López:

Yeah. And I think that actually, sometimes more than thinking about identity we can also think about like embodiment, right? And Andy brought up this concept of embodiment, right? Embodiment is about how we're connected to time and space and place and to history. And sometimes that can actually help us to reckon with conflicting identities. I'm Chicana. So I have like mixed ancestry and deep history in the United States, or not even just the United States before then. And so I'm often thinking about shifting identities over time and history, and I think it helps inform my grant making practice, as well. Lisa any more questions, or should we close? I think we have one minute.

Lisa Gold:

We only have one minute. I'm sorry, because we had a few questions, but I will ask people to please fill out the survey. And if there's an opportunity that we can see if we can get your question answered that way. It's 7:30. So I just want to say thank you all so much, I hope you will stay connected to A4, we have some amazing programs coming up. So check out our website, AAAartsalliance.org and of course, you will stay connected to the Eighth Floor and their programs. So thank you all, to the panelists, to the Eighth Floor, to our interpreters and our captioner. Thank you all so much.

Diana Abouali:

Thank you.

Lisa Gold:

Thank you everyone, enjoy Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend. And maybe we could do some applause and come off mute and celebrate. All right, stay safe. Bye, everyone.

Sara Reisman:

Bye. Thank you.