

# Report on the Animating Democracy/Working Capital Fund Exemplars Convening December 7 – 9, 2005 Santa Fe, New Mexico

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## BACKGROUND

The Animating Democracy/Working Capital Exemplar Program is supporting 12 small to mid-sized arts and cultural organizations nationwide. These groups are being recognized for outstanding cultural work in their communities and in the field, based on their participation in the Animating Democracy program of Americans for the Arts and the Working Capital Fund of the LarsonAllen Public Service Group. Supported by the Ford Foundation, the two-year Exemplar Program will enable the selected organizations to sustain and advance their extraordinary work.

Animating Democracy supported cultural organizations to develop artistic activity that encourages civic dialogue and engagement on important contemporary issues. The Working Capital Fund helped mid-sized African-American, Latino, Native American, and Asian-American arts groups to build sustainable organizations that support their artistic and community missions. The joining of Animating Democracy and the Working Capital Fund in this Exemplar Program aims to foster a holistic and integrated approach to organizational health, institutional growth, civic engagement, and aesthetic investigation. Americans for the Arts, with the LarsonAllen Public Service Group, is implementing the Exemplar Program.

The Exemplar Program provides core support to be used for operations and programs that sustain and advance outstanding work. Additional resources enable grantees to define special initiatives outside of their regular work that build organizational knowledge and/or capacity or enhance approaches to creative, civic engagement, or organizational work in the long term. The Exemplar Program also facilitates collective and collaborative learning that will include and benefit the broader field while also supporting the learning interests of Exemplar participants.

## THE CONVENING

From December 7–9, 2005, the Exemplar Program cohort met in Santa Fe, New Mexico, at the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA), one of the cohort members. (See Attachment 1 for a list of convening participants and Attachment 2 for the full meeting agenda.) The purpose of the convening was “to help lay the groundwork for dynamic exchanges and connections among Exemplar organizations that can advance creative and institutional practice for participants and the field.” Its objectives included:

- Introducing each organization;
- Exploring synergies among peers related to aesthetic investigation, institutional health and capacity, and civic engagement; and
- Orienting grantees to the goals and possibilities of the Exemplar Program to support organizational and field advancement as well as maximize leadership from within the cohort.

On the first day of the convening, each organization gave a brief presentation, framed by the program as “a creative snapshot to help peers understand the essence of the organization in terms of artistic/cultural, organizational, and civic or community engagement dimensions.” As part of the presentation, participants from each organization shared a question that they are asking within the organization. Some of these questions included:

- How do we grow and operate a more complex organization and maintain our value of community empowerment?
- How do we honor our history while creating and planning for the next 20 years?
- What is the way that our organization can have a circle that isn’t built around an individual but around a body of knowledge and a philosophy?
- How do we free ourselves of the dependency of project-to-project funding and grow an endowment?
- How do we consider the relevance of traditional forms to contemporary expression, build in depth producers of art, and translate across perceptual systems so young people engage as individuals and as members of communities in constant flux?
- How does our organization formalize our relationship with a large performing arts presenter where we maintain our own aesthetic and art form without being dominated by the major organization?
- In this time of competition with corporate interest, how do you save civic space?

On the second day, participants began to generate ideas for field advancement activities. An Open Space Technology format facilitated participants in defining and discussing interests and concerns they held in common. Since the Animating Democracy and Working Capital programs had convened their grantees over time, many of the participants had already been involved in discussions with one another. This enabled them to hit the ground running and quickly define key needs, concerns, and suggested next steps. Small group discussions raised such topics as leadership transition/passing the torch, training, creating value, first voice museums, developing mutually beneficial partnerships with larger institutions, appropriate structures for community-based work, and the tension between depth and breadth in creative work.

Art, culture, and creative dialogue were central elements of the convening design. A visit to the IAIA Museum on opening night of the convening offered an opportunity to talk with artist Bob Haozous. His retrospective exhibition, *Indigenous Dialogue*, served as a reference point throughout the convening, particularly in relation to challenging imposed frameworks and creating an appropriate context for one’s culture. The power of art and culture continued throughout the meeting with the singing, dances, and prayers offered by IAIA students, and with participatory sessions led by several cohort artists. On the first morning, Sandy Agustin of Intermedia Arts had the group create gestures describing what they do. The evocative gestures and the words attached to them – gathering, balancing, running, reflecting, embracing change, wearing many hats, swimming upstream, focusing and deepening, stepping away – provided a creative format for introducing cohort members and became poetic touchstones in the time to come.

The following key point summary identifies themes that resonated throughout the convening. It does not, however, imply that the groups are homogenous or all have the same issues and concerns. The cohort, in fact, reflects a wide range of contexts and experiences, and its diversity contributed to the richness of the convening.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES**

### **What's an Exemplar?**

The Exemplar cohort is diverse. The youngest organization is less than five years old while the oldest is over 40. Budget sizes, at the time that groups applied, ranged from under \$100,000 to over \$10 million. They are museums, touring dance and theater companies, cultural centers, a festival, book publisher, performing arts school and center, and arts institute. They are located in Atlanta, GA; Houston, TX; Brooklyn, NY; Chicago, IL; Los Angeles, CA; Takoma Park, MD; Minneapolis, MN; Portland, OR; Richmond, CA; Santa Fe, NM; Seattle, WA. (See Attachment 3 for profiles of the cohort organizations.)

The convening illuminated some of the shared qualities of the groups. As values-based organizations, they are purposeful and have a sustained commitment to fundamental values related to cultural responsibility, ethical practices, and respectful relationships. They are groundbreakers, however, they remain firmly rooted while breaking ground. Attuned to significantly changing demographics, they honor both cultural legacies and future possibilities, understanding them as a continuum, not a contradiction. With a dynamic sense of culture, aesthetics, and community they are creating a body of knowledge and passing it along through collaborative processes of inquiry and discovery.

Cohort members are responsive and catalytic. They are resourceful, turning discomfort and challenge into opportunity. They often work in partnerships that cross silos and sectors to connect art organically with other areas such as health, community development, humanities, and social justice. While functioning as hubs within particular cultures and communities, they also bridge diverse groups—be they the multiple Asian/ Pacific Islander groups engaged by Wing Luke Asian Museum or the rabbis, lawyers, or shipyard workers engaged by Liz Lerman Dance Exchange. They are multi-lingual in more ways than just language, and their social networks run broad and deep.

### **Validation, self-definition, and the loss of public space for independent voices**

“Our communities are being defined from the outside.” Nicolás Kanellos of Arte Público Press described how this is exacerbated through the consolidation of media ownership. “We’ve been totally erased by ownership of the media by major corporations.” Large media conglomerates even own much of the Latino press, leaving little space for independent voices. Arte Público is working hard to get these voices heard—be they contemporary writers, or writers before the 1960s who are included in its Recovery of U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage program—and to be part of the “re-formation of national culture and identity.” Judy Baca of SPARC echoed Kanellos’ concern when she spoke of “the struggle for real public space when the cultural commons is lost.” Stephanie Hughley of the National Black Arts

Festival (NBAF) described the challenge of a “duality of existence—to promote and maintain one’s cultural identity while sharing it, to be recognized by the majority without being swallowed up by it.”

Urban Bush Women’s (UBW) mission underscores the importance of creating respect through a first voice understanding of history. The company seeks “to bring the untold and under-told histories and stories of disenfranchised people to light through dance.” The title of UBW’s community engagement program, “When the Lions Tell History,” is drawn from the African proverb that explains how when the lions tell history it is different than the history told by the hunter.

In her opening remarks, Roberta Uno of the Ford Foundation urged groups to claim their own language and reclaim language such as “excellence” that had been taken from them. “We need to own our own language as well as reappropriate language that should belong to us.” With reference to Arte Público’s Piñata Books imprint, Kanellos refers to this as “authenticity of language and culture.”

First voice museums—Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum (MFACM) and Wing Luke Asian Museum—also addressed the appropriation of programs. They concluded that, “As white museums get more money to do us, *we* need to do us.” To avoid becoming an “endangered model” the group called for a national dialogue of first voice museums to “identify our importance, role, and strategies.” For the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, this means being able to “value our right to preserve traditional Mexican culture,” in spite of being pressured to be a Latino museum.

### **Shifting the paradigm of mainstream and major**

The Mexican Fine Art Center Museum’s Carlos Tortolero urged the groups to claim their space as mainstream organizations. Cassie Chinn of Wing Luke agreed, “ We’re not lesser than, a step to, or cute, quaint groups that grew out of the civil rights movement.” Wing Luke is the only Pan Asian museum in the country. IAIA is the only American Indian arts institute and its museum is one of the foremost exhibiting facilities for contemporary American Indian art. MFACM is the largest Latino arts organization and Arte Público is “the oldest and most accomplished publisher of contemporary and recovered literature by U.S. Hispanic authors.”

SPARC has created the longest mural in the world and a state of the art digital media lab. *Theater Journal* described Cornerstone Theater as “probably the closest entity to a National Theater that the United States may ever have.” Sojourn Theatre was invited by the Portland mayor’s office to participate in the city’s visioning process. Throughout the convening participants spoke about the need to redefine “mainstream” and “major” and to take the leadership responsibility that is implicit with being designated an exemplar.

### **Leadership and transition**

IAIA outgoing President, Della Warrior embodies the Hawai’ian concept of *kuleana*, as described by Native Hawai’ian colleagues to Diane Espaldon of LarsonAllen. It is a sense of responsibility and obligation, not as a burden, but rather as a path in life and a gift to your community and the world. When IAIA was struggling to survive, Warrior rose to the occasion and led the organization past its considerable challenges to develop a thriving institution.

In Swahili the word *kuleana* means “to nurture one another.” This is also an apt characterization of the approach to leadership of many of the Exemplar groups. Debra Padilla of SPARC spoke of the need to “create a new generation of stewards for the work.” Several of the groups in the cohort described how they nurture leadership from within their organizations.

- Jordan Simmons was a student at the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts (EBCPA) before becoming its director, and fully expects one of his students to follow in his footsteps.
- The ensemble approach of Cornerstone Theater Company and Sojourn Theatre joins the leadership of their artistic directors with that of their ensemble members.
- Dance Exchange commissions dances from company members.
- MFACM supports the leadership of the youth who program their radio station and have even testified in front of the FCC.
- Wing Luke values and empowers Asian-American leadership by nurturing the skills and leadership of its volunteers and interns. Both staff members representing Wing Luke at the convening began in this manner; Program Director Cassie Chinn was an intern and Associate Director Beth Takekawa, a volunteer.

Leadership transition is a shared concern among the cohort groups, many of whom have recently or currently are experiencing transitions or are planning for transitions in the near future. The question of indigenous, first voice leadership arose at the convening with respect to IAIA’s non-Native museum director and academic dean and the current leadership transition of its outgoing Native American president. Because of its explicit mission and as part of its federal charter, IAIA has a legal preference to hire Native Americans. The search team has determined that it would be better, but not required, to hire a Native American president. Students have made known their preference for indigenous leadership through letters. For Della Warrior, “It has more to do with cultural knowledge and experiences than race. Native people know what it means to be part of a Native community.”

Like IAIA, Cornerstone is experiencing the transition of a key leader. Artistic Director Bill Rauch is one of Cornerstone’s two founders and had been leading and guiding the company for 20 years. The company went through a deliberate multi-step search process that resulted in the hiring of Michael John Garcés. The transition leaves the company “excited and worried” and asking the question: “how do you honor history while creating and planning the next 20 years? Dance Exchange has also been undergoing leadership transitions that have shifted roles for founder Liz Lerman and for current Artistic Director Peter DiMuro. As DiMuro describes it, part of this process is an “externalization of a person’s methodology into the value system of an organization.”

One of the Open Space discussion groups had a rich conversation about passing the torch. It brought forward the points of view of different generations of artists and administrators from Dance Exchange, UBW, SPARC, Intermedia Arts, and Cornerstone, including founders, second-generation leaders, and young artists taking leadership roles. The group framed their discussion around what it means to make a transition in a values-based organization. They named challenges such as how to involve senior members of companies while making space for new leaders and how to address funder and presenter expectations that are tied to the founder, “when the second generation isn’t trusted that we own the

original story.” They also discussed the importance of recognizing that founders bring their weaknesses as well as strengths to organizations and being able to critique founders’ methodologies while honoring the essence of their work. The group recommended documenting founder and transition stories to create resources to be used within the organizations and with the broader field.

### **Values-based organizations and ethical practice**

John Borstel’s description of how Dance Exchange is “focusing and deepening” its work to reveal the company’s essence or underlying values resonated with others in the cohort going through a similar process. Dance Exchange’s Animating Democracy project was an inventory of civic engagement practices with the intent “to share the body of knowledge developed by Liz Lerman Dance Exchange since its beginnings in 1976.” However, before this resource could be created, the company had to identify its essence, or “DNA” in order to “make the integral overt, the organic concrete, and the intuitive intentional.” In Urban Bush Women’s case, the company wrote down its principles in order to better facilitate transition within the company. Open Space session discussions shared the recommendation that identification of values is the first step in groups’ various forthcoming proposals for field learning.

Values are infused throughout the Exemplars’ work and institutions—including a valuing of community and a valuing of the artist. Intermedia Arts embodies both of these values. The organization is committed to community building and recognizes the central role of the artist in this process. Artists not only work in communities, they also participate in community development and help to shape a community’s future. Intermedia Arts’ Immigrant Status program and collaboration with the Midtown Greenway Project demonstrate how artists and arts organizations can play a leadership role in the discussion of issues related to immigration and community development.

For Debra Padilla, “we are family-based organizations, about making a life, not just about making the work.” She described SPARC as “a business with a soul” and spoke of the importance of teaching ethical practice. This includes paying artists and crafting covenants that ensure fair and mutually beneficial partnerships. Another ethical practice includes respecting historical legacies and cultural contexts. This was exemplified by the 2005 National Black Arts Festival program entitled “Generation to Generation: Master–Mentor–Muse,” which celebrated the creative continuum in African Diaspora culture.

Padilla also refers to a “social justice bottom line,” which goes beyond a sense of personal ethics. Many of the groups in the cohort grew out of or were influenced by social movements and value social justice. Baca describes SPARC’s work as “art as a tool for social change and transformation.” Arte Público was the creative part of the Latino Civil Rights Movement, and East Bay Center for the Performing Arts was founded following the assassination Martin Luther King with a mission to “build social reconciliation, social justice, and social change.” Sojourn Theatre is interested in building bridges in polarized times, and believes that theater can function as such a bridge; offering “spaces for illumination, recognition, and above all else, dialogue.” The groups’ valuing of social justice is reflected in the content of their creative work as well as their partnerships with civil and human rights advocates, community organizers, and groups working on issues ranging from AIDS, to peace, to education reform.

However, the social justice basis of the creative work can be mischaracterized or misunderstood. Amy Cassello of Urban Bush Women noted that she is regularly asked, referring to artistic director Jawole Zollar, “Is Jawole still angry? Does the work still need to be made?” The implication is that somehow, the time for being angry has passed, that it makes the creative work dated, or that work about resistance and claiming one’s identity is always about anger. UBW runs into this question in the dance world, not in its community engagement.

## Aesthetics

### *First Voice*

“Big Mama’s coming home”  
—From UBW’s *Batty Moves*

First voice aesthetics draw on the diverse histories, cultures, and imaginations of the artists and organizations. These aesthetics reflect a value for self-determination, an acknowledgement of context, and a reclaiming of “beauty” and “excellence” beyond a limited Western European canon.

At the convening, UBW artist/educator Chanon Judson performed a sample from the piece, *Batty Moves*, an homage to the female form. (In the Caribbean, “batty” is the word for buttocks.) Using techniques honed through the company’s *Hair Parties*, Urban Bush Women has created Batty parties to expand its civic dialogue practice to discuss positive body images. *Batty Moves* celebrates being comfortable in your own skin and in your way of moving. This is a message that UBW choreographer Jawole Zollar did not herself receive in much of her dance training; instead she was told to “hold back” the traditional and contemporary moves that she had learned through the African Diaspora.

In his IAIA exhibition, aimed at sparking dialogue within the Native American community, Bob Haozous challenges how the European context has influenced an understanding of Native Americans. He uses humor and irony as “a serious tool,” creating images of an “Ozone Madonna,” a “New Age Apache,” and an “Indian Bank.” A lodge at the center of the exhibition is covered with barbed wire and contains four chairs for elders, each with the question - East/who? West/where? North/why and South/what? The questions, Haozous explained to participants, are at the core of the indigenous dialogue reflected throughout the exhibition. He writes, “Current definitions and identifications of being Native American must be challenged and reevaluated before a genuine contemporary and meaningful identity can emerge. The infrastructure of this self- definition must use an honest portrayal of our contemporary human condition and a reliance on traditional philosophical knowledge as a guiding reference.”

Vanessa Whang underscored the lack of understanding about the relationship between traditional and contemporary work that can result in a false dichotomy, or a mischaracterization by funders of contemporary work as a folk art. To further understanding in this area for Native American artists, Della Warrior proposed creating a body of knowledge about the evolution of contemporary Indian art from a contemporary perspective that validates Indian art as a field.

She also shared the experience of IAIA students’ dissatisfaction with having their work judged by criteria external to their cultures. In response, the students wrote their own standards that include cultural significance, context, honor, and relationships, as well as mastery of the media, freedom of

expression, and creativity. Their list rejects stereotypes. The standards include “Go beyond the label of Indian art” and advocate “re-definition of genres—people [Native Americans] defining who THEY are instead of being defined.” It also names what they are striving for in their expression:

- Understanding (seeking personal understanding and for others to understand us);
- Liberation from external/internal colonization, oppression
- De-objectifying American Indian identity
- Having an impact on others
- Speaking to a community and they understand
- As a student body: should want to produce work that brings respect to IAIA—so we are held in high regard as an ART institute
- Art for the community, not just IAIA

### *Challenging conventional canons while respecting cultural legacies*

In its mission statement Dance Exchange asks the following questions: Who gets to dance? Where is it happening? What is it about? Why does it matter? In answering these questions, Dance Exchange, like UBW, questions many of the norms in the dance world including what a dancer should look like, how and where they should move, how work is created, and what its aesthetics are. Peter DiMuro explained how Dance Exchange’s interest in collaboration, and embedding an approach throughout the company, runs against the value of originality in the dance canon. Rather than limiting its focus to individual innovation, Dance Exchange, as John Borstel put it, hopes to create “a circle that is not built around an individual but rather a body of knowledge and philosophy.”

Sojourn Theatre holds Brecht as a cultural reference along with eastern European theater ensembles that raised questions about conventional approaches to the creation, content, and politics of theater, and its relationship to the audience. Judy Baca noted how the canon for visual arts emphasizes a 19<sup>th</sup> century notion of artists working alone in their garrets. She is interested in collaborative approaches to creation that are more in keeping with the Mexican mural movement, the tradition on which she draws.

### *Aesthetics of community collaboration*

Dance Exchange, UBW, Cornerstone, and Sojourn have developed aesthetics based on community collaborations, in addition to studio-based works built on company collaboration. The community-based works often draw on material growing from workshops such as UBW’s Batty and Hair Parties and Cornerstone’s story circles. The aesthetic of this work draws on the power of the stories and movements coming from these workshops and, at times, the involvement of community members in the performances. Community collaboration is also a key component of Wing Luke’s aesthetic. Community members curate Wing Luke’s exhibitions with support from the staff. This is an extremely time consuming process, but one that reflects Wing Luke’s community-based mission and aesthetic interests.



Wing Luke is also working with community members to design its new building. Like the Mexican Fine Art Center Museum and IAIA it wants building design to reflect the aesthetics of its culture and the needs of its community. It was important for the MFACM building to draw on Mexican motifs and be “beautiful and comfortable” as well as state of the art. IAIA’s campus has at its premise “the connection of Native People to the environment.” Artists, religious leaders, and tribal leaders all contributed to the campus concept and design. The Hogan building, for example, is based on traditional Native design. All the materials for this building were donated, and it was literally raised by the community.

Community collaborations also connect artists’ work with popular culture. In the case of Arte Público, the thriving genre of New Americans’ stories has a “distribution life unto itself through immigrants in California.” For UBW, popular African-American culture, such as stepping and bugle corps, is celebrated in its work.

### *Risk taking*

Being so closely aligned with the community does not prevent the artists from taking risks. In many cases it inspires risk taking in terms of challenging who is an artist; what art should look like; and how it can break down disciplinary, geographic, and content boundaries.

- SPARC presents political exhibitions that many other arts organizations have avoided, for example, dealing with the 2004 presidential election and the murders of the young women in Juarez.
- Sojourn is creating a piece about war asking the question, “Am I a killer if my nation kills?”
- Arte Público takes the risk of publishing writers that most commercial presses won’t go near, whether because of their politics, sexual orientation, or the fact that they write in Spanish.
- The National Black Arts Festival risked crossing Atlanta’s “unspoken barriers” related to race to create a citywide festival where 90 percent of the arts and cultural organizations got involved.
- Cornerstone risked a five-year project about faith that often took on issues of sexual orientation; one result being new creative forms that combine theater and dialogue.

How do the groups keep from becoming ossified as they mature and codify their work? Young staff members at MFACM continually renew the organization. For Cornerstone Theater’s Laurie Woolery, “the community keeps you real.” In Cornerstone’s case, community is not only defined as neighborhood but also by age, occupation, faith, and in many other ways. Its community collaborations continually challenge the company in its creative work.

### *Bridging cultures*

One of the Open Space discussions considered the question raised by Jordan Simmons and CK Ladzekpo of East Bay Center for Performing Arts about how pedagogical practices in organizations providing arts training can go deep to reinforce one’s culture while translating an experience about culture across cultures. Simmons framed this question another way: “How do you train youth to be open to a pluralistic society?” This includes “establishing a standard that values skill within a particular form, but also puts work in the broader context of other cultures.” John Borstel was attracted to the notion that depth and breadth were not mutually exclusive, and wondered at what point you need to choose between them. Della Warrior offered IAIA, which works with 90 different tribes, as a model for translation

between cultures. While the Institute honors individual tribal distinctions, “the core values of Native people become a common ground.” Simmons spoke about “cognitive training,” and “the root skill bases that exist in every form,” that if recognized, can provide a quicker route to understanding. Ladezekpo offered as examples how gravity plays into dance or the tonal qualities of language. The group recommended convening institutes and other organizations that have successfully engaged issues of translation, to share models of working and creating across cultures.

### *Validating knowledge*

The creative work and aesthetics of cohort members are informed by a democratic valuing of knowledge from diverse sources. Warrior described how the challenge for Native people is to “create respect—to validate our own knowledge and ways of knowing so it’s on the same level as the dominant culture.” For Bob Haozous, this means rejecting “Euro-American linear concepts of history” and instead reaffirming and embracing “an indigenous way of looking at the earth.” Cultural and community knowledge informs Wing Luke and MFACM programs, gained through knowledge of history and significant social networks. Through their community workshops Cornerstone, Sojourn, SPARC, and others benefit from the diverse experiential knowledge and testimony of community members.

Dance Exchange has a “culture of inquiry,” where multiple truths can co-exist, and the process of exploring a question can be as important as arriving at an answer. Not only do questions make up the company’s mission statement, they are also integral to its aesthetic, which is based on “the art of the question.” Questions such as “How do we define families?” and “What are you in praise of?” are often the sources of dances, and “how do we work more at home,” the spark for new projects.

Knowledge and understanding for several of the groups, and Animating Democracy, is created through dialogue. Intermedia Arts’ mission “to serve as a catalyst to build understanding” is often fulfilled by using art to spark civic dialogue. Sojourn’s poetic documentary approach to theater reflects the multiple perspectives of its community dialogues and “intentional and unintentional” audiences. UBW built its skills for “dialogic learning,” as part of its professional and creative development.

Accreditation, for MFACM as a museum, IAIA as a college and masters degree program, and SPARC for its community cultural development institute at Antioch, is an important source of pride and validation. However, as described by IAIA’s Dean, Ann Filemyr, it can also add pressure for standardization by accrediting agencies, which can conflict with IAIA’s focus on goals to uphold indigenous cultural knowledge. “IAIA wants to pull from our own cultures and not have to sacrifice on the table of higher education.”

### **Community-engaged work: balance, structure, and change**

Many of the groups at the convening are balancing their commitment to community-engagement with other interests and experiences. For the artists this includes their own studio-created, as well as community-created work, or the stress between touring and working at home. UBW’s Amy Cassello asked, “how to maintain a connection with community while we’re on the road; how to make sure that the infrastructure of art doesn’t inhibit community engagement work and community engagement doesn’t inhibit art.” Institutions such as Wing Luke, MFACM, and IAIA balance their commitment to the local community with their national and international reach. Asked Wing Luke’s Cassie Chinn,

“How do we grow and operate a more complex organization and maintain our value of community empowerment?”

One of the small group discussions focused on appropriate structures for community-based work and noted that these structures and practices are rarely taught in school. This includes letting the creativity of studio practice inform administrative work, and connecting administrators to creative work. Cornerstone does both with Managing Director Shay Wafer serving as a member of the Cornerstone ensemble. Throughout the convening, participants noted the value of learning from structures outside of their disciplines. Judy Baca noted how the performing arts ensemble structure might be more appropriate to her mural work than conventional visual arts approaches where the artist works alone. Transparency and permeability are valued by community-based organizations in facilitating relationships between the organization and community members. Intermedia Arts is exploring how to increase its permeability by, not only opening up its space and developing community partnerships, but also by social networking through the Internet. Consensus decision making, empowering the leadership of youth and volunteers, and recognizing differences in approach between the generations were also discussed.

Dynamic communities require cohort members to continually redirect and redefine their community engagement strategies. Baca noted the “giant demographic changes” that are taking place in many cohort members’ communities, and asked how groups that were ethnically founded and grounded in community are changing the way they do their work to address new waves of population. At one point, Wing Luke’s board and staff faced this question when they identified two possible roads forward: to stick with its traditional Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino base, or to expand to reach out to new Asian/Pacific Islander communities as well. They chose the latter road and broadened Wing Luke’s base to over 26 separate and distinct ethnic groups.

## **Education and training**

Through a range of educational and training programs, the cohort groups look beyond their individual survival to invest in the future of their respective fields and communities. These programs are often built from a process of identifying and codifying an artist or group’s values and methodologies. The training programs address a concern that “traditional training is unaligned with the reality of the modern world.” Said Padilla, “We need to become the model and be looked at in a more rigorous way.” From his teaching experience, Rohd observes “the hunger for this kind of [community engaged] work” and the need to let students know about the organizations and opportunities that exist, so they can get involved in it.

Some of the education and training programs include:

### **Artist-led programs outside of colleges and universities:**

- UBW offers a summer institute that connects “concert professionals and community-based artists together in a learning experience to better maximize the possibilities of the arts as a vehicle for social activism and civic engagement.”
- Cornerstone Theater’s four-week institute “offers multidisciplinary professional training in community-based theater using Cornerstone’s Theater Company’s unique collaborative

methodology.” The company’s intensive workshop condenses training into two days.

- Sojourn Theatre offers a Summer Institute for theater artists, educators, and community workers “to share the techniques the company uses to create participatory processes and new performance in professional, community, and educational settings.” Education programs with young people include mentor-based playwriting residencies.
- Dance Exchange holds weekly dance classes for adults and teens, classes in the Critical Response Process, and “two to four institutes in the summer with topics including Community Crossover, Text and Movement, Dance Intensive for Senior Adults, and Dance Exchange Immersion.”
- Intermedia Arts, in collaboration with The Center for the Study of Art & Community, offers the Institute for Community and Cultural Development, which provides cross training to connect artists and community developers.
- East Bay Center for the Performing Arts’ Intensive Summer Institute “takes 25 of the most promising, culturally diverse youth in the Bay Area through a five-week, 150- hour program that emphasizes cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural learning.” The Center also offers a diploma program, “Leadership Through Art and Social Change.”

#### **College- and university-based programs:**

- The objective of Arte Público’s major national research program, Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage of the United States, is to “identify, preserve, study, and make accessible tens of thousands of literary documents of those regions that have become the United States from the colonial period to 1960.” Nicolas Kanellos has created a course of study based on Arte Público and the Recovery program through the University of Houston’s Department of Modern and Classical Languages. “Graduates can receive the only Ph. D. in the United States on Hispanic literature, language and culture through this program. An MA also specializes in these areas.”
- SPARC has developed a digital media lab with UCLA, and is creating a low-residency masters degree program in Community Cultural Development with Antioch College that will combine on-campus learning with field experience to provide “an ethical base for what it means to work in community.”
- IAIA is a four-year accredited college and is developing a Masters of Fine Arts program focusing on indigenous arts.
- Many exemplar participants, such as Judy Baca, Jawole Zollar, Nicolas Kanellos, Michael Rohd, and Liz Lerman teach or are in residence at universities.

Cohort members also develop the field by nurturing young artists through apprenticeship programs, residency programs, and commissions and by incubating company members when they move on. The Open Space group that discussed training recommended mapping the resources available from the Exemplar cohort, analyzing the gaps, learning from and supporting one another’s programs, and joining efforts to publish and distribute curricula and create workshops.

## **Technology**

Cohort members engage technology in diverse ways. Intermedia Arts is seeking to embed the Internet in all of its operations and to use it to “increase the flow of ideas and people inside and outside of the space.” The Internet is a key tool for Arte Público’s book distribution, and an accessible venue for its extensive archive. SPARC uses the Internet for dialogue and collaboration. Its digital media lab has changed the way it creates murals, making the work reproducible and affordable. Baca also recognizes the limitation of the technology and has created an aesthetic that combines the digital and the hand painted. Jordan Simmons suggested that a technology plan could have a similarly significant impact on his organization, as did the business plan EBCPA developed during the Working Capital program.

## **Growing and expanding, gathering and focusing**

Carlos Tortolero of MFACM asked, “How do you keep everything going when you’re growing and expanding?” The museum has expanded from 15,000-68,000 square feet and has a strategic plan for further expansion. Arte Público describes on its website how, in the past five years, the Press “has experienced a surge of growth. Sales have increased by nearly 200 percent and the Press has spilled out of its offices in the basement of the university library into two additional buildings on campus. Two-thirds of its staff is new and new positions continue to be created.”

At the same time convening participants marveled at “how much is done for so many with so little.” Groups are resourceful and resilient, with the ability to ride out hard financial times and turn difficult moments into opportunities. A “sea change” in dramatically fewer resources required East Bay to cut its budget from \$2.2 million to \$1 million over two years and halved the size of its faculty and full-time staff. According to Simmons, this involved “focusing on our best, deepest, most sustainable work.” East Bay staff members double as teachers, and members of the resident companies take on the role of mentors. As it focuses its work so as not to be “something for everyone,” the Center is concerned about remaining responsive to its community. Intermedia Arts is also focusing its work, asking the question, as stated by Daniel Gumnit, “how can we bring the greatest value to our community?”

Wing Luke has been resourceful in its use of volunteers and interns who feel ownership in the museum. During the “Great Roof Disaster of 1998” volunteers came to the museum and asked what it needed and how they could help. For Wing Luke, community engagement may be labor intensive for its staff, but it is also a way to expand its human resources.

Sojourn, the newest and smallest group in the Exemplar cohort, has doubled its size in a few short years. Now the company questions how to sustain this growth. Asked Rohd, “How do we define success? We have three operating grants that will end at the same time. We’re growing really fast. What is the model that we need to find between now and then to make us sustainable going forward?”

## **Sustainability**

Sustainability is both a key achievement (many of the groups are in their third or even fourth decade of existence) and a critical question. Several groups depended in previous years on significant public support that has all but disappeared. Foundation funded initiatives, like the Animating Democracy,

Working Capital, and Exemplar programs, come and go while the long-term work of the groups they have supported continues.

Kanellos asked, “How can we free ourselves of the dependency of project-to-project funding and grow an endowment?” With the help of Working Capital and other programs, some of the groups have begun, and several are also looking at how to increase their permanence and sustainability through increased earned income, individual donations, and by increasing philanthropic practices in their ethnic communities. For Cornerstone, whose budget depends on 96 percent contributed income, its intensive weekend workshops are a strategy towards increasing earned income. In SPARC’s case, commissions from Verizon and others have significantly increased the organization’s earned income, helping it replace lost public support. Developing and owning buildings and permanent collections also contribute to a group’s sustainability and serve as an investment in its geographic community and its communities of artists. As Tortolero said, “We buy art and make sure that the artists get paid well.”

### **Institutional Partnerships**

The topic of mutually beneficial institutional partnerships was of considerable interest. Cohort members had a range of experiences to share and a small group discussion offered several recommendations in this area.

The National Black Arts Festival has received an anonymous gift of \$500,000 to work with a large art center. Stephanie Hughley sees this as an important opportunity to build stability and sustainability into the festival, but is also concerned about “how to formalize a relationship where we maintain our own aesthetic, art form, without being dominated by the major organization? How do we get under that umbrella but not lose control?”

Negotiating power is a key part of the process and is different in a project partnership than in an institutional one. The relationships need to move from individual to organizational ones and the partnership can’t just be leadership driven. The challenge is that the groups are negotiating values-based practices that can be very different between partnering institutions. Juana Guzman of MFACM described, “We do inreach, they do outreach.” It is important to identify the motivations and acknowledge the obvious and hidden assets each group brings to the partnership. In the case of the cohort groups, these assets include knowledge of the culture, the trust of community, relationships with artists, and a base of volunteers and alumni. Sometimes it makes more sense to consider collaboration across like groups, rather than with institutions with different goals and values.

SPARC has negotiated with Antioch in a manner that is “honorable” by agreeing to partnership covenants and paying for Baca’s intellectual currency in designing the program. However SPARC also recognizes that, while universities have the potential to help sustain programs, mid-sized nonprofits like SPARC can end up putting more resources into the program than the university. Baca is concerned about the potential for such institutional support to keep the organization from doing politically challenging work. Kanellos noted that it has been important for a tenured position at the University of Houston to be part of Arte Público’s partnership, to ensure that the work is respected. In terms of his partnerships with commercial entities, he noted, “The line between integrity and being exploited is fuzzy.”

Hughley and others recommended sharing case studies of institutional partnerships, successful and not, and convening a small group of people from the different sides of the partnerships to explore effective approaches and challenges.

### **The collective power of the cohort**

As the convening advanced, so did the cohort's sense of its collective power. Said Cassie Chinn, "We become richer and stronger as we come together, and bring more than any of us could have come up with individually." Participants suggested ways they can strengthen each other's work and advance field learning. Their recommendations include:

- Visiting one another to learn from each other's experiences and best practices, for example, how Cornerstone is managing the transition of its artistic director, how Arte Público has worked with the University of Houston, and how Wing Luke is designing its new space with the collaboration of community members.
- Learning from each other's creative processes such as the ensemble, or approaches to cross-cultural training and creation.
- Building cross-disciplinary curricula around shared values, distributing the curricula and offering joint workshops in field conferences.
- Using each other as resources, as in the case of SPARC referring students in its Community Cultural Development program to Exemplar groups as field placements.
- Advocating for the importance of first voice and community engaged work and becoming a stronger voice in policy making. Strategizing for a national dialogue about first voice museums.
- Holding a values retreat for peer organizations to clarify how they define values, whose value system they are a part of, and what others value in their work
- Developing language for the field and asserting it.

On the final morning of the convening an IAIA student shared a song of struggle and survival that had been given to her family as a precious gift. The song rose deep from her heart and moved throughout the room, joining the group in the power of art that is inseparable from culture and from life. The day before, Jordan Simmons had described the challenges in his community and asked how to build something strong enough to make the noise on the outside quieter. This song accomplished the task, not by ignoring the challenges, but by embracing them. As the cohort draws on its "cumulative voice," its members' assets and the assets of their communities, it too will embrace challenges. Speaking out and claiming space, taking leadership and shifting paradigms, the Exemplars will continue to rise to the occasion.

**Attachment 1**  
**Participants at the Santa Fe Exemplar Convening**  
**December 7-9, 2005**

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Attachment 2  
 Animating Democracy/Working Capital Fund Exemplar Program  
 Agenda  
 Santa Fe, New Mexico  
 December 7-9, 2005

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8	
9:00 – 9:30	<p><b>Introduction and Welcome</b>            Diane Espaldon, Program Manager, Working Capital Fund, LarsonAllen Public Service Group            Della Warrior, President, Institute of American Indian Arts</p> <p><b>Mapping “Exemplars”</b>            Sandy Agustin, Artistic Director, Intermedia Arts</p> <p><b>Program At-A-Glance and Snapshot of the Day</b>            Pam Korza, Co-director, Animating Democracy, Americans for the Arts</p>
<p><b>Cluster 1</b>            9:30 – 10:00</p> <p>10:00 – 10:20</p>	<p><b>Liz Lerman Dance Exchange</b>, John Borstel, Humanities Director; Peter DiMuro, Artistic Director</p> <p><b>Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum</b>, Carlos Tortolero, President; Juana Guzman, Vice President</p> <p><b>Cornerstone Theater Company</b>, Shay Wafer, Managing Director; Laurie Woolery, Associate Artistic Director</p> <p><b>DISCUSSION</b></p>
10:20 – 10:30	<b>BREAK</b>
<p><b>Cluster 2</b>            10:30-11:00</p> <p>11:00-11:20</p>	<p><b>Arte Publico Press</b>, Nick Kannellos, Director; Marina Tristan, Assistant Director</p> <p><b>Urban Bush Women</b>, Amy Cassello, Managing Director; Chanon Judson, Artist/Educator</p> <p><b>Intermedia Arts</b>, Daniel Gumnit, Executive Director; Sandy Agustin, Artistic Director</p> <p><b>DISCUSSION</b></p>
11:20 – 11:30	<b>BREAK</b>

<b>Cluster 3</b> 11:30 – 12:00	<b>SPARC</b> , Judith F. Baca, Founder/Artistic Director; Debra Padilla, Executive Director  <b>National Black Arts Festival</b> , Stephanie Hughley, Executive Producer; Judith Service Montier, Director of Corporate Sponsorship  <b>Institute of American Indian Arts</b> , Della Warrior, President; Ann Filemyr, Dean of the Center for Arts and Cultural Studies; John Grimes, Director of IAIA Museum
12:00-12:20	<b>DISCUSSION</b>
12:20-12:30	<b>Reflect and Process</b>
<b>12:30– 2:15</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>
1:15	<b>Optional walk around the IAIA campus.</b> For those who'd like an informal guided walk around campus, Barbara King, IAIA Development Director, will walk and talk with you!
1:40 – 2:05	<b>Optional movement session!</b> Led by Chanon Judson, dancer with Urban Bush Women
<b>Cluster 4</b> 2:15 – 2:45	<b>East Bay Center for the Performing Arts</b> , Jordan Simmons, Artistic Director; CK Ladzekpo, Faculty  <b>Wing Luke Asian Museum</b> , Cassie Chin, Program Director; Beth Takekawa, Associate Director
2:45 – 3:05	<b>Sojourn Theatre</b> , Michael Rohd, Artistic Director; Alisha Tonsic, Managing Director  <b>DISCUSSION</b>
<b>3:05 – 3:20</b>	<b>BREAK</b>
<b>3:20 – 5:30</b>	<b>Exemplar Program Nuts &amp; Bolts</b> , Barbara Schaffer Bacon, Co-director, Animating Democracy Goals, Core Support, Knowledge/Capacity Building Opportunity for questions  <b>Field Advancement</b> , Barbara Concept and vision for a self-determined program; how it will work Introduction to Artography, Vanessa Whang, Artography Program Director, LINC

	<p><b>WHERE IS YOUR ENERGY?</b></p> <p><b>Creative Transition!</b> Peter DiMuro, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange</p> <p><b>Open Exchange: Collective Inquiry Begins Here</b>  What are you motivated to pursue with others in this room that could advance your work and the field?</p> <p><b>Introduction to Open Space</b>  <b>Charge for the morning</b></p>
5:30	<b>A Closing Art Moment</b> , Nick Kanellos, Arte Publico Press
7:30	<b>Have a wonderful dinner!</b>
<b>FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9</b>	
9:00	<b>Art Wake-up Call!</b> Jordan Simmons and CK Ladzekpo, East Bay Center for the Performing Arts
9:10 – 9:55	<b>GENERATING A FIELD ADVANCEMENT AGENDA: OPEN SPACE</b> <b>Organizing for Open Space</b>
10:00 – 10:50	<b>Open Space session 1</b>
11:00 – 11:50	<b>Open Space session 2</b>
	<p><b>Frame for discussion:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe the issue/ topic/ practice (etc.).</li> <li>2. How would you address/investigate it?</li> <li>3. How could information get out to the field?</li> <li>4. General comments, hot points! useful resources</li> </ol>
11:55 – 12:30	<b>LUNCH</b>
12:30 – 2:10	<p><b>Report outs and Discussion</b></p> <p>Brief reports  What is an emerging agenda for inquiry/field advancement?  Field Advancement team  Next steps</p>
2:10 – 2:30	<p><b>Creative Go-Round</b>, Michael Rohd, Sojourn Theatre</p> <p><b>Thank you</b>, Roberta Uno, Ford Foundation</p> <p><b>Closing</b>, Della Warrior, IAIA</p>

## Attachment 3

### Animating Democracy/Working Capital Fund Exemplar Organization Profiles

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Note: The original affiliation of each organization with either Animating Democracy (AD) or the Working Capital Fund (WCF) is indicated at the end of each description.

**Arte Público Press** in Houston, TX is the nation's largest and most established publisher of contemporary and recovered literature by U.S. Hispanic authors. Its imprint for children and young adults, Piñata Books, is dedicated to the realistic and authentic portrayal of the themes, languages, characters, and customs of Hispanic culture in the United States. Based at the University of Houston, Arte Público Press, Piñata Books and the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project provide the most widely recognized and extensive showcase for Hispanic literary arts, history, and politics. (WCF) [www.artepublicopress.com](http://www.artepublicopress.com)

**Cornerstone Theater Company** of Los Angeles, CA is a multi-ethnic, ensemble-based theater company. It commissions and produces new plays, both original works and contemporary adaptations of classics, which combine the artistry of professional and community collaborators. By making theater with and for people of many ages, cultures and levels of theatrical experience, Cornerstone builds bridges between and within diverse communities in its home city of Los Angeles and nationwide. (AD) [www.cornerstonetheater.org](http://www.cornerstonetheater.org)

**East Bay Center for the Performing Arts** in Richmond, CA is an educational institution that unites the rigor of a nationally recognized arts training and producing center with a commitment to the people and integrity of its community. It recognizes the arts as a vehicle for social reconciliation and social change. The Center's programming is informed by the art forms of the new majorities and immigrant populations that make up its diverse community. (WCF) [www.eastbaycenter.org](http://www.eastbaycenter.org)

**Intermedia Arts** of Minneapolis, MN is a multidisciplinary, multi-media arts center. It is a gathering place where stories are shared through visual arts, theater, dance, music, media arts, and literature -- from folk arts to hip-hop culture. Acting as a focal point for collaborations among artists and organization since 1973, Intermedia Arts has helped develop new art forms that are artistically, socially, and politically challenging. Intermedia is expanding its digital resources for arts production and presentation, and community dialogue. (AD) [www.intermediaarts.org](http://www.intermediaarts.org)

**Institute of American Indian Arts** in Santa Fe is a multi-tribal center of higher education dedicated to the preservation, study, creative application, and contemporary expression of American Indian and Alaska Native arts and cultures. Since 1962, IAIA has empowered Indian People as they strive for education, economic self-sufficiency, and the expression of their artistic and cultural traditions. The Institute offers four-year degrees in Studio Arts, Visual Communication, Creative Writing and Museum Studies. (WCF) [www.iaia.edu](http://www.iaia.edu)

**Liz Lerman Dance Exchange**, based in Takoma Park, MD has pursued a broad definition of dance as a multi-disciplinary art form that encompasses movement, music, imagery, and the spoken word since its start in 1976. Founded by Liz Lerman, the Dance Exchange is known for groundbreaking new dance works performed by a cross-generational company on major stages internationally as well as local and national projects that engage individuals, institutions and communities in making and performing dances. (AD) [www.danceexchange.org](http://www.danceexchange.org)



**The Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum** in Chicago stimulates and preserves knowledge and appreciation of Mexican culture through events and exhibitions that exemplify the rich variety of visual and performing arts in the Mexican culture. Now the largest Latino cultural organization in the United States, it maintains a 4,000-piece permanent collection of Mexican art, presents festivals, runs youth programs including the Yollocalli Youth Museum and a youth radio station, and develops culturally based programs addressing social and civic concerns in its local Pilsen/Little Village community of Chicago. (WCF)

[www.mfacmchicago.org](http://www.mfacmchicago.org)

**The National Black Arts Festival (NBAF)** in Atlanta brings together visionaries from all arts disciplines and in traditional and contemporary forms, to incubate, commission, and present groundbreaking ideas that give voice to the collective challenge and triumph of people of color, particularly those from the African Diaspora. Through the annual festival and year round educational and humanities programs, the festival aims to advance the work of emerging and renowned artists of African descent working in all artistic disciplines while exposing and educating local, national, and international audiences to their work. (SCF)

[www.nbaf.org](http://www.nbaf.org)

**SPARC (Social and Public Art Resource Center)** in Los Angeles, led by cofounder and artistic director Judith Baca, is an arts center that produces, preserves and conducts educational programs about community-based public art works. SPARC promotes public art as an organizing tool for addressing contemporary issues, fostering cross-cultural understanding and promoting civic dialogue. Working within this philosophical framework, over the last 28 years, SPARC has created murals and other forms of public art in communities throughout Los Angeles and increasingly in national and international venues. (AD and WCF)

[www.sparcmurals.org](http://www.sparcmurals.org)

**Sojourn Theatre** of Portland, OR is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual ensemble-based theater company, led by artistic director Michael Rohd, that develops original work and bold adaptations of classic scripts and stories with an aesthetic that is history conscious, politically inquisitive, and strikingly physical. Committed to practices of partnership and community engagement, Sojourn Theatre creates work that locates artfully on stage local and national conversations on critical issues of our times. In doing so, Sojourn aims to bridge urban, suburban, and rural communities and make theatre that is accessible and meaningful to all. (AD)

[www.sojourntheatre.org](http://www.sojourntheatre.org)

**Urban Bush Women**, based in Brooklyn, NY, led by founder and artistic director Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, is an internationally recognized performance ensemble that creates and performs dance-theater works inspired by women's experiences, African-American history, and the cultural influences of the African Diaspora. UBW's educational and community programs address social issues and difficult historical truths while seeking to build community and leadership in communities through art. (AD) [www.urbanbushwomen.org](http://www.urbanbushwomen.org)

**Wing Luke Asian Museum**, Seattle, WA, is a multidisciplinary institution that engages the Asian Pacific American communities and the public in exploring issues related to the culture, art, and history of Asian Pacific Americans. The museum has pioneered the use of artwork and artmaking as a component of community-based exhibitions and consciously integrates and empowers its target audiences into the development of exhibitions and programs. (WCF) [www.wingluke.org](http://www.wingluke.org)