

Press Release

The Brooklyn Museum and the Joe and Clara Tsai Foundation's Social Justice Fund Launch the Brooklyn Arts Leadership Collaborative

The Collaborative aims to boost Brooklyn's arts and culture ecosystem by supporting programs and leadership development in eight BIPOC-led organizations

The Brooklyn Museum and the Joe and Clara Tsai Foundation's Social Justice Fund (SJF) today announced a new ten-month program, the Brooklyn Arts Leadership Collaborative, to support the leaders of eight small and midsize BIPOC-led arts organizations in Brooklyn. The eight organizations are:

- ARTE (Art Resistance Through Education)
- Black Girls Sew
- Brooklyn United Music and Arts Program
- Kyoung's Pacific Beat
- ¡Oye!
- Black Trans Femme Artist Collective
- Rooted Theater Company
- Redhawk Council

Leaders of Brooklyn nonprofits have long struggled to sustain their organizations due to a lack of investment in the sector. BIPOC-led nonprofits in particular have operated at the margins of sustainability, and some have ceased operations due to economic hardship. A [2021 study](#) showed that only fifty of the more than four thousand arts organizations in Brooklyn were BIPOC-led. The pandemic exacerbated the issue and has continued to widen this gap.

The Collaborative, which kicks off in October 2023, will provide critical support to the inaugural cohort of arts organization leaders, including holistic leadership development and assistance in building programs to achieve their social equity goals. Each organization will receive a grant of \$25,000 from SJF.

The selection process prioritized organizations with operating budgets of \$500,000 or less. It also considered each organization's community impact efforts in Brooklyn, commitment to advancing social justice through arts and culture, emphasis on local BIPOC communities, and community representation among its leadership.

Anne Pasternak, Shelby White and Leon Levy Director, Brooklyn Museum, says, “Our Museum has long been invested in uplifting the many voices and perspectives of our borough. We are thrilled to partner with the Joe and Clara Tsai Foundation to launch the Brooklyn Arts Leadership Collaborative, which will support the cultural vibrancy of Brooklyn and build important connections between the Museum and critical local organizations.”

“Our goal with this Collaborative is to create a sustainable framework of support for art leaders across the borough,” says Clara Wu Tsai, founder of the Social Justice Fund and owner of the Brooklyn Nets, New York Liberty, and Barclays Center. “Brooklyn is home to a vast and rich history of art in every form. Supporting the institutions that grow, honor, and sustain these artists is critical to ensuring that Brooklyn continues to be a renowned creative hub.”

The cohort will be led by Robyne Walker Murphy, a veteran educator and administrator in the field of art and social justice. Murphy was previously Executive Director at Groundswell, a social justice-oriented youth development program, and held key leadership positions at the Billie Holiday Theatre, Cool Culture, and DreamYard Project. She has also consulted for the Ford Foundation, Cricket Island Foundation, and Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

Murphy will design and facilitate the Collaborative based on the cohort’s needs and priorities. Along with workshops addressing the challenges disproportionately faced by BIPOC leaders, covering topics such as strategic planning, fundraising, financial management, program development, and board governance, the Collaborative will go beyond traditional training with sessions dedicated to health and wellness practices. Participants will also discuss best practices for building support for diversity and inclusion initiatives and social action priorities across Brooklyn’s cultural sector.

Recognizing the critical need for community building, the program will provide opportunities for cohort members to cultivate peer networks of their own. Guest speakers will include experts in nonprofit leadership and philanthropy, such as Liz Sak, President of the Cricket Island Foundation; Jocelyne Rainey, President of the Brooklyn Community Foundation; Kemi Ilesanmi, former Executive Director of Laundromat Project; Chiwoniso Kaitano, Executive Director of MacDowell; Brooke Richie-Babbage, a nonprofit strategist; and Ama Codjoe, an award-winning poet, cultural worker, and activist. The Collaborative will also bridge the cohort’s connections to the philanthropic community via funder roundtables.

“Through this program, participants will have the opportunity to connect with speakers, trainers, funders, and other arts leaders to build a community committed to rigor, inspiration, imagination, and joy,” says Murphy. “By conducting a deep analysis of the challenges and opportunities leaders of color collectively face, they will have time and space to discover healthier, more meaningful approaches to effective leadership, while also lending their perspectives and expertise as advisors to the Brooklyn Museum.”

The Brooklyn Museum will not only support local organizations through the Collaborative but also benefit from community leaders' input. Cohort members will serve in advisory roles, reviewing the Museum's framework for its own multiyear commitment to social action and providing critical feedback and recommendations for successful, sustained impact. Participants will also have access to the Museum's vast collections and will be encouraged to activate them in service of their organizations' programmatic goals.

"As a museum with historic collections reflective of Brooklyn's diverse communities, we and other encyclopedic institutions must develop new models for meaningful, reciprocal relationships with local leaders," says Adjoa Jones de Almeida, Deputy Director for Learning and Social Impact, Brooklyn Museum. "We must also recognize the unique expertise these leaders bring to the table because of the intentional, community-based approaches they've historically centered. The Collaborative is a pilot program, which we hope will evolve and grow, expanding opportunities for more and more Brooklyn-based organizations."

"The Collaborative is designed to foster skills and knowledge building, and provide networking opportunities to help cohort members build and sustain thriving, impactful organizations," says Laval Bryant-Quigley, Director of Community Engagement and Partnerships, Brooklyn Museum. "These organizations have managed to consistently punch above their weight even with the obstacles and inequities they confront, including a scarcity of resources. We're excited to work with them to identify ways we can all do even more to achieve our goals."

"Art and culture are part of who we are as New Yorkers, and it's essential that our cultural institutions and their leadership reflect the immense diversity of people and experiences in our city," says NYC Cultural Affairs Commissioner Laurie Cumbo. "As the founder of a Brooklyn cultural organization, I know firsthand how important it is to be plugged into networks that foster professional growth and training opportunities. So I applaud the Brooklyn Museum and the Joe and Clara Tsai Foundation's Social Justice Fund for launching the Brooklyn Arts Leadership Collaborative, which will provide thoughtful training to the cultural leaders who are doing amazing work in neighborhoods across Brooklyn, helping to ensure that their organizations can remain hubs of social connection and economic vibrancy for their communities."

About the Brooklyn Museum

The Brooklyn Museum is home to one of the nation's most comprehensive and wide-ranging collections, enhanced by a distinguished record of exhibitions, scholarship, and service to the public. The Museum's vast holdings span five thousand years of human creativity from cultures around the globe. Highlights include the ancient Egyptian holdings, renowned for objects of the highest quality, and the Arts of the Americas collection, which is unrivaled in its range—from Native American art and artifacts to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American painting and sculpture. The Museum is also home to the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art, which is dedicated to the study and exhibition of feminist art and is the only curatorial center of its kind. The Brooklyn Museum is both a leading cultural institution and a community museum dedicated to serving a wide-

ranging audience. Located in the heart of Brooklyn, the Museum welcomes and celebrates the diversity of its borough and city.

About the Social Justice Fund

The Joe and Clara Tsai Foundation launched the Social Justice Fund in 2020 in Brooklyn, New York, with a commitment to fight for racial justice and plan for the economic recovery of the borough in the post-COVID era. Driven by a \$50 million commitment over ten years, the Social Justice Fund has provided small-business loans to local BIPOC-owned businesses impacted by COVID and provides grants to community leaders working to combat racial injustice.