



**CITY OF  
NEW HAVEN**

# **CULTURAL EQUITY PLAN**

**20**

**22**

# CULTURAL EQUITY ACTION ITEMS

Welcome to New Haven's Cultural Equity Plan. This document is a collection of ideas, questions and activities about culture in our city. It also includes a list of action items for the City and other cultural leaders in our communities.

You can read the whole Cultural Equity Plan at <https://togethernewhaven.com/culturalequity>.

RECKONING WITH HISTORY	1	Create community gatherings for New Haven residents, governments and institutions to reckon with histories of both cultural oppression and success throughout our city.
	2	Expand institutional definitions of culture and where culture happens.
	3	Create a redistribution plan for wealth and power gained through centuries of exploitation.
NEIGHBORHOOD CULTURE	4	Fund cultural organizers in Black and Brown neighborhoods.
	5	Support neighborhood gathering spaces and events.
	6	Make historically unsupported New Haven residents co-creators in the design and implementation of arts programming.
FUNDING & RESOURCES	7	Support independent artists, creatives and culture holders through direct funding and other means.
	8	Allocate resources to increase accessibility at the New Haven Free Public Library.
	9	Create and strengthen partnerships between major arts nonprofits and the City.
CONTINUED PRACTICES & ACCOUNTABILITY	10	Create ongoing spaces for residents to discuss and make decisions about cultural equity in New Haven.
	11	Create spaces for young people to engage with, create, and lead culture in our city.
	12	Create a citywide Cultural Equity Accountability Team and a funded position to support them.

To the people of New Haven,

It is my deepest honor and privilege to present to you the Cultural Equity Plan for the City of New Haven. Over the last year, I have had the pleasure of working alongside an amazing team of artists, arts activists, leaders, organizers, consultants, and residents of our community who believe in the power of arts and culture in our city. I am a firm advocate that art is not just nice, but necessary. It is necessary for our economy, for driving social innovation, and most of all as a conduit to propel us toward diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

The beauty of New Haven is that there is already so much culture here screaming for an opportunity to be elevated and celebrated. We stand in the footsteps of the Native people who are the original culture bearers of this land. To the Wappinger, Paugussett, and Quinnipiac people, we honor you. I believe that in order to know where we are going, we must acknowledge and reconcile with our past. The plan that you hold in your hands or on your screen is our humble attempt to do just that.

New Haven is a culturally diverse city with 72% of residents being Black, Latinx, Asian, or another non-white race. Most of the city's major arts institutions are downtown where a majority white population convenes or resides. We knew that this plan represented an opportunity to undo inequities in the arts and inequities that prevent people from participating in arts and culture in every corner of our city.

We all know that this past year and a half we have experienced the most unprecedented moments of our time. The COVID-19 pandemic, which is still ongoing, exacerbated the inequities that have existed in marginalized communities for hundreds of years. We also witnessed the unjustified murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, as a painful reminder that racism is deeply embedded and upheld in the systems of our society. From Asian American hate crimes on a rampant rise to the insurrection that took place at our nation's capital, now is the time for immediate and transformational change. We need solutions to combat hate and injustice; the arts are not exempt.

Over the last year, as history was being made in the streets through protests, an uproar was happening in the creative sector. Racial injustice and anti-white supremacy solidarity statements from arts and culture institutions began to flood our emails and social media platforms. While it is great to see arts organizations want to begin to do this work, it is important that we are looking at accountability and commitment to new, equitable systems change.

What I have come to learn is that cultural equity is less about a plan and more about action. Too often, we get caught up in planning and fail to act on important issues. The time has come for all of us to take a deep and truthful look in the mirror and see our role in complicity and blindness to racism. As we continue to pick ourselves up from the blow of the pandemic, we have an immense opportunity to not go back to being the same as before, but to do better. We will get through this pandemic eventually, but racial injustice in this country will continue to exist and it's up to the arts to decide how we will help to eradicate it.

With love and gratitude,



Adriane Jefferson  
Director of Cultural Affairs  
City of New Haven



Donnell Durden photo.

Dear New Haven Residents,

The past 18 months have seen the nation turn its collective attention to systemic inequity. This began when the COVID-19 pandemic exposed the structural racism embedded in so many systems and institutions and continued and accelerated after the murder of George Floyd.

Here in New Haven, we've responded to this moment by working to identify some of the most pervasive areas of inequity in our community and working collectively to fix them. Within city government this includes:

- Joining GARE — the Government Alliance on Race and Equity. This group helps governments identify and fight systemic racism within their institution.
- Creating the Crisis Response Team — an alternative first responder model that will ensure the properly trained professional will respond to the correct 911 calls.
- Tiered PILOT and Housing reform as our top legislative priorities at the state capitol that will contribute significantly to reducing inequality in our city.
- And, finally, we commissioned the city's first-ever cultural equity plan.

New Haven is the cultural capital of the state of Connecticut. Our theaters and venues, designers, and musicians are the best around. However, the concentration of these assets is downtown — away from the highest concentrations of Black and brown communities in our city.

New Haven is going to continue to be the cultural capital of the state. And, by enacting our first ever cultural equity plan we're to expand the footprint of our cultural institutions to every corner of our city. We're going to provide the resources and opportunities for Black and brown artists to thrive and the opportunity for Black and brown residents to enjoy the assets our city has to offer.

Sincerely,

*Justin Elicker*

Justin Elicker  
Mayor  
City of New Haven



*Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.*

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# PART 1

# Welcome.

In this section we will share our reasons and process for writing this document, the values we bring to this work, and how we hope you will use this plan as a tool and a resource.

## What is this document?

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This plan is a collection of ideas, stories, and questions about culture in our city. It is a tool to identify opportunities for equitable change, and to better understand each of our roles in creating a new future. It also includes a set of activities and specific action items we can each use to practice equity in our day-to-day lives and to weave equity into our systems.

"This plan is for us. How do we go forward in our lives and networks with cultural equity?"

Anderson Curtis  
Co-Creation Team Member

This plan is an ever-evolving document. It is the beginning of a conversation that we, the residents of New Haven, the institutional leaders, and the creatives, artists, and culture holders must continue to have.

The responsibility of creating an equitable future for New Haven does not live with any single person. Instead, we each have work to do as we move toward this vision together. Whether you are a policy maker, an institutional leader, a philanthropist, a community organizer, a creative professional, or someone else with the power to influence culture in our city, we hope this plan helps you identify your next step, create a pathway to accountability, and take action.



Rafael Ramos, *New Haven Green*, 2018.  
Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.

## How do I use this plan?

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This plan was designed to help you, the reader, take the next step toward cultivating equity in your life and your community. That might look like creating change within the City of New Haven, within your organization, or within yourself. It is vital that we practice equity at each of these levels as we work toward a future where all cultures thrive.

To that end, this plan is not meant to sit on a shelf in City Hall. It is meant to help you identify your unique role in a citywide movement for cultural equity, to jump start your imagination about what an equitable future might look like, and to take action in the places where you hold power. Each section of this plan includes activities that you can use to dig deeper, on your own or with a group. We hope you take advantage of them.

In this plan, we will:

- Investigate how cultural equity impacts all New Haven residents, and highlight where cultural inequity shows up today;
- Illustrate the vast network of cultural power holders in our city, so you can begin (or continue) to build and deepen relationships with other individuals committed to cultural equity;
- Compile a list of action items raised by New Haven residents, culture holders, and cultural leaders throughout the planning process;
- Help you identify and use your specific power to carry out these steps;
- Uproot the idea that culture is a separate issue or something that exists on its own, and plant the idea that culture intersects with everything we do and everything we are;
- Provide some activities that you can use to engage your community and clarify your own next steps.

**"How do we use this plan to do some big imagining, and to create some concrete, right now practices? How do we turn this information into action?"**

- Tagan Engel  
Co-Creation Team Member



## How do I use this plan?

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While we hope this document is a useful resource, there are also things it cannot do. This cultural equity plan is not a replacement for:

- Your expertise. There are many people in New Haven already fighting for cultural equity and experiencing inequity in their daily lives. This plan is not meant to replace your knowledge, but to document the wisdom of as many experts as possible. We hope that you bring your voice to future iterations of this plan.

"We will never be able to capture the whole beauty of this process on paper. It lives in us."

Steve Driffin  
Co-Creation Team Member

- Organizing, relationship-building, and accountability practices. At the end of the day this document is just a piece of paper. While it captures some of the ideas, stories and questions that exist in our city, it will not create change by itself. That responsibility lives with each of us, and we hope this document makes it easier for us to take the necessary steps forward together.



Legend Drag Show, New Haven Green, International Festival of Arts & Ideas 2021.  
Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.

# How was this plan made?

This plan was commissioned by the City of New Haven’s Department of Arts, Culture, and Tourism. It was written by a group of creatives, culture holders, facilitators, and lifelong residents from across New Haven. The teams that came together to write this plan include:

### Co-Creation Team

Salwa Abdussabur  
Isaac Bloodworth  
Hope Chávez  
Luis Chávez-Brumell  
Anderson Curtis  
Lizzy Donius  
Patrick Dunn  
Tagan Engel  
Paul Bryant Hudson  
Annie Lin  
Shamain McAllister  
Rafael Ramos  
Fatima Rojas  
Puma Simone  
Ratasha Smith

### Civic Impact Lab

Elizabeth Nearing  
Eric Rey  
Johnny Shively

### Hester Street Collaborative

Nisha Baliga  
Lillian Cho  
Kim Ochilo

### Arts Council of Greater New Haven

Daniel Fitzmaurice

### City of New Haven

Dzidedi Azumah  
Kim Futrell  
Adriane Jefferson  
Corinna Santos  
Typhanae Williams

### Funding Partners

City of New Haven  
Arts Council of Greater New Haven  
Tremaine Foundation  
CT Office of the Arts  
Private Donations



Cultural Equity Co-Creation Team at City Hall, 2021.  
Lucy Gellman Photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.

# How was this plan made?

We created several opportunities for public participation as part of our plan-writing process. Overall, we incorporated input from:

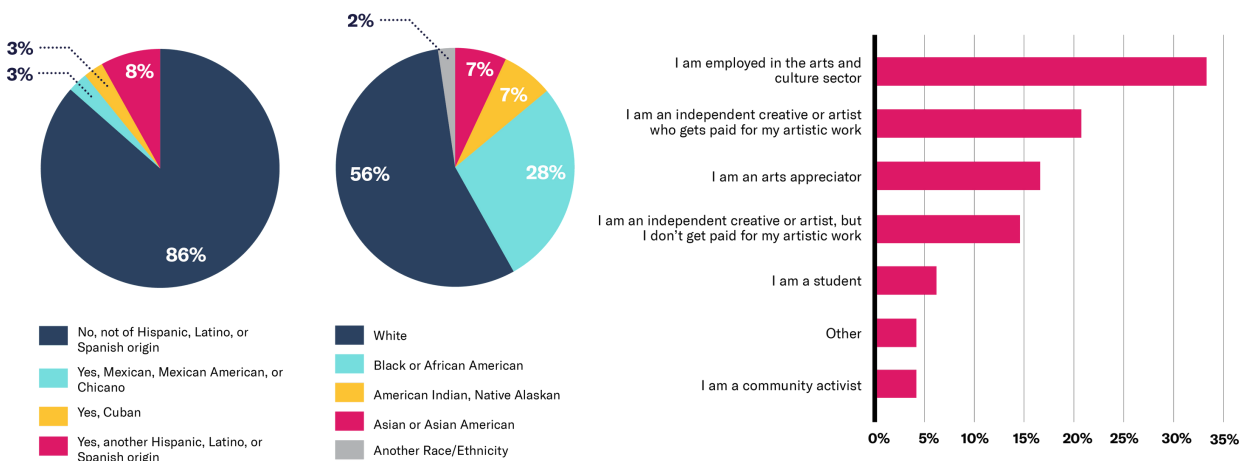


In May 2020, we held two public imagining sessions for New Haven residents to define cultural equity, to discuss how culture shows up in their lives, and to identify action items that should be included in this plan.

Two focus group conversations held during this process also allowed us to hear from individuals within New Haven's AAPI and Hip Hop communities.

Finally, we distributed a survey to New Haven artists, creatives and residents asking a wide variety of questions about cultural experiences and needs. As seen in the table below, survey respondents were disproportionately white compared to New Haven's demographic composition, and many respondents were employed in the arts & culture sector. While the results of the survey are still informative, it is useful to keep this in mind while interpreting the survey data provided throughout this report.

## Survey Participant Demographics



# What does "historically unsupported" mean?

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This document specifically aims to lift up the voices and perspectives of artists and creatives who identify as **Black, Brown, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, Disabled, Neurodivergent, Queer, Immigrant, Young, Elderly, Poor, and English Language Learners**. These identities have been historically under-represented and under-supported by arts and culture policy and institutions. However, we also underscore the importance of centering race, the foundational system of discrimination, exclusion, and oppression in our society, in cultural equity work.

While there is risk involved with placing these diverse identities into a single category, we will use the phrase **"historically unsupported"** throughout this plan to highlight events and conditions that have impacted many intersecting communities. We will name specific identities when referring solely to those identities throughout this document.

While we did our best to include many diverse voices in the planning process, this plan did not include every New Haven resident and does not represent every resident's voice. In order to imagine and create a future where all cultures thrive, we must continue to center the voices of people and communities most directly impacted by generations of systemic cultural violence, including those described above and those not listed here.



"I'm here because I believe this purpose can be shared by and with community."

- Public Imagining Session Participant

Yex Diaz, Make Music Day 2021.  
Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.

# Values

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**Cultural equity is not a finish line that we can cross or a permanent condition that can be achieved. It is a set of values that we must live into every day.**

Here are some of the values that we centered in this process. We hope they inspire you as you embark on (or continue) your own journey toward cultural equity.

- ***Cultivate belonging.*** Cultivating a culture of belonging is about how we are in relationship to each other. It is a way of being that honors our individual and collective humanity. We did this by offering moments of mindfulness and joy, music, storytelling and gratitude. We designed a process with very broad guidance and asked our partners to lead us in ways that would deepen their connection to one another. We respected their labor and time by paying them and starting and ending our sessions on time. We endeavored to communicate clearly and make the process as accessible as possible.
- ***Center many kinds of expertise.*** We created a process that relied on both lived and learned expertise to create a well-rounded vision for cultural equity in our city. This meant moving toward conflict with gratitude, creating space for many kinds of expression and knowledge, and understanding that there is much to be learned through disagreement.
- ***Apply an anti-racist and anti-oppressive framework.*** This team acknowledges that racism and many other forms of systemic oppression shape the culture of our city. We made it a priority to utilize anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices wherever possible, and to change course when our process did not align with this value.
- ***Value both process and product.*** There were many points throughout this process when our facilitation team made the decision to slow down and create space for the humanity of our participants and co-creators. Although it was not always clear how these moments would factor into our final plan, they were always invaluable in allowing participants to heal, to create or deepen relationships, and to bring their full selves to the table. Ultimately, this made our cultural equity plan richer and more complete.

## Activities

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Throughout this document are activities crafted to help you identify and carry out a set of next steps toward a culturally equitable future. Here are a few tips for helping you use these activities.

- Each activity can be done alone or in a group. We hope that these activities open up dialogue about cultural equity in places where that conversation is not already happening. We recommend working through each question in a group of 3-5 people.
- We recommend spending 3-5 minutes for group members to complete each writing prompt, and then providing time for each group member to share their responses.
- Conversations about equity can be tricky, especially in groups that aren't used to having them. If possible, we recommend hiring a facilitator specifically for the purpose of having these conversations.

"I'd love to connect this cultural equity plan to the actual changing of lives and the liberation of people."

Paul Bryant Hudson  
Co-Creation Team Member



Community organizers paint signs at the New Haven People's Center, 2019.  
Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.

# Activities

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Take three deep breaths. How do you feel reading the document so far? Why?

What values do you bring with you into this work?

What communities and identities do you bring with you in this work?

What do you hope to personally take away from this document? If you are engaging with this plan as part of an organization or institution, what do you hope your organization/institution takes away from this process?

List three people who will help you hold yourself accountable for implementing the ideas, lessons, and commitments you take away from this document.

## PART 2

# What is cultural equity?

In this section we will share what we heard about why culture matters to New Haven residents. We will also discuss what cultural equity is and why it matters, and how cultural inequity shows up in our city right now.



## What is culture?

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Through this process we asked people how they define culture. A few recurring definitions included community, connection, belonging, history, people, expression, and celebration.



Other recurring themes included:

- "Culture is knowledge passed down through generations. It's the color, flavor and sounds of our lives. It's our connection with mother earth."
- "Culture is a connection to a collective way of being."
- "Culture is the way we represent ourselves, whether it is through food, language, art, dress, or something else."
- "Culture is how we imagine alternative futures, grow, and deal with change."
- "Culture is everything we are. It's our identity."
- "Culture is how we be with other humans."
- "Culture is made by people."

## What is culture?

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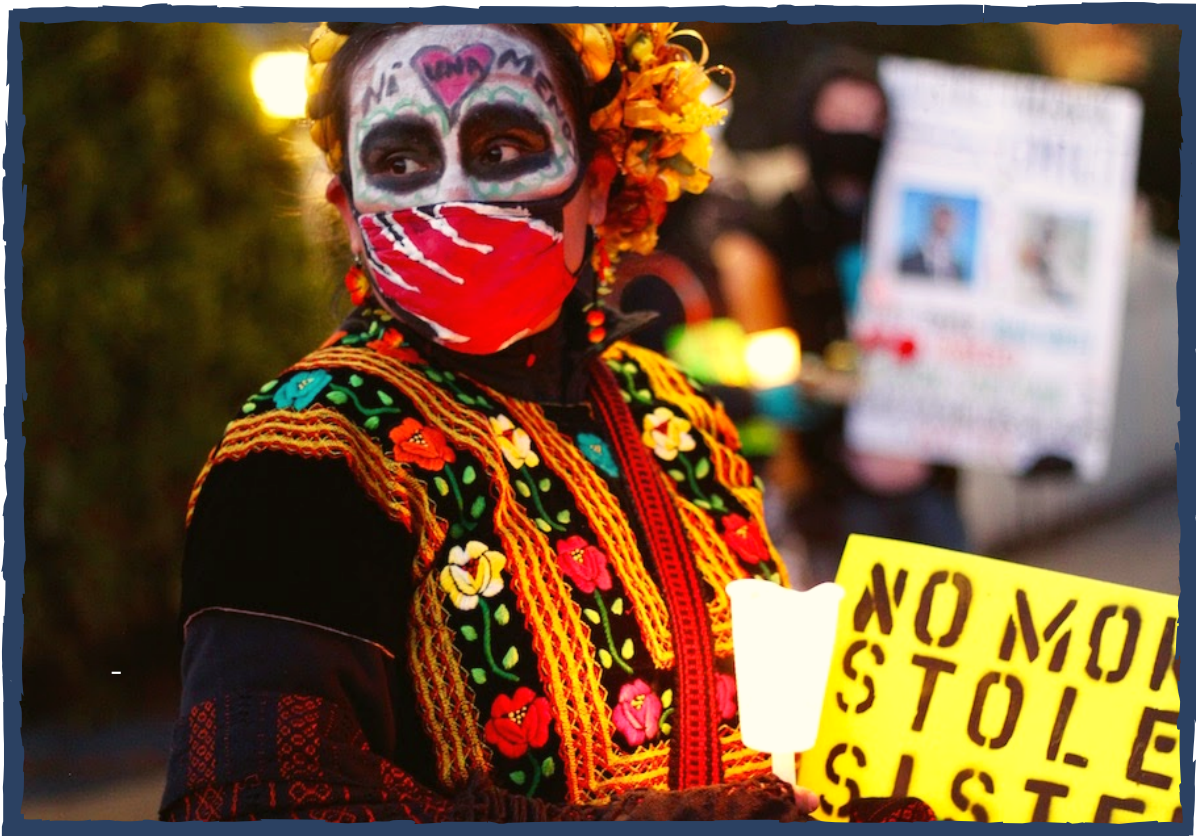
We also heard participants and collaborators challenge assumptions and expand definitions about what culture looks like, who creates culture, and where culture happens. Often in our city, the kinds of culture that get recognized and funded are created by people who are wealthy, white, straight, English-speaking, and able-bodied.

However, culture is made every day by people in our city who do not fit within this narrow set of identities. Communities gather on porches to make music and share news. Drag queens and other independent artists perform at local bars. Families pass down stories and recipes in their kitchens.

"There's no culture to create in New Haven. There's a culture that is here, a history that is here. There's nothing to create, there's something to create space for."

Puma Simone  
Co-Creation Team Member

Expanding our imagination about what culture looks like, who creates culture, and where culture happens is a necessary step as we work to support a more diverse network of culture holders.



Enedelia Cruz at Day of the Dead rally, Fair Haven, 2020.  
Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.

## What is cultural *inequity*?

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New Haven communities have found ways to thrive culturally throughout our city's history. Inequity and oppression have not stopped this city's residents from expressing themselves culturally, and this resilience should be noticed, remembered, and celebrated.

There is a long history of cultural inequity that has allowed white and Eurocentric cultures to be lifted up while others were actively oppressed.

Cultural inequity is when certain cultures are recognized, funded, and supported while other cultures are ignored, undermined, or intentionally harmed. Our city and its institutions have a history of oppressing culture holders who are Black, Brown, queer, poor, disabled, neurodivergent, immigrant, foreign-language-speaking, too young or too old.

Here are some ways **cultural inequity** manifests in our city right now:

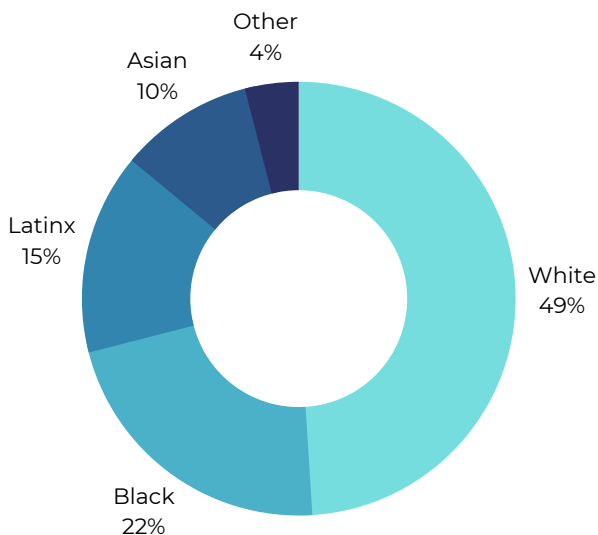
- The prioritization of cultural offerings designed to attract Yale students, tourists, and new professionals at the expense of New Haven residents;
- The prioritization of new cultural offerings at the expense of culture already being created by existing communities;
- A lack of discussion around this city's cultural histories, both its rich cultural successes and its histories of oppression;
- The marketing of New Haven as a "pizza city" or a city full of Eurocentric artistic venues, rather than a city with a thriving Bike culture, Queer culture, Hip Hop culture, and many other subcultures;
- The failure of governments and institutions to identify and take responsibility for creating and upholding histories of harm;
- The level of assimilation required by historically oppressed peoples to survive in large cultural institutions;
- The prioritization of cultural offerings downtown, an area that is far from many neighborhoods of color and is made unsafe by over-policing;
- Cultural offerings that segregate groups by race and income instead of bringing people with diverse race and class identities together;

# What is cultural *inequity*?

- Financial investment by donors and philanthropists into large institutions at the expense of programming led by independent neighborhood creatives and smaller community groups;
- Wealth hoarding, and the segregation of New Haven residents by wealth and class throughout this city;
- The underpayment and exploitation of artists, creatives, and culture holders, especially those who hold historically unsupported identities;
- A lack of resources for creatives holding historically unsupported identities, including a lack of access to housing, food, and healthcare;
- The disproportionate representation of white and non-local people in positions of power in municipalities, philanthropy, and nonprofits;
- An underfunded library system, which is a local institution most successfully applying cultural equity practices;
- A lack of performance and practice spaces available to creatives, and especially creatives of color;
- A lack of accountability among cultural institutions in our city for implementing transparent and equitable practices.

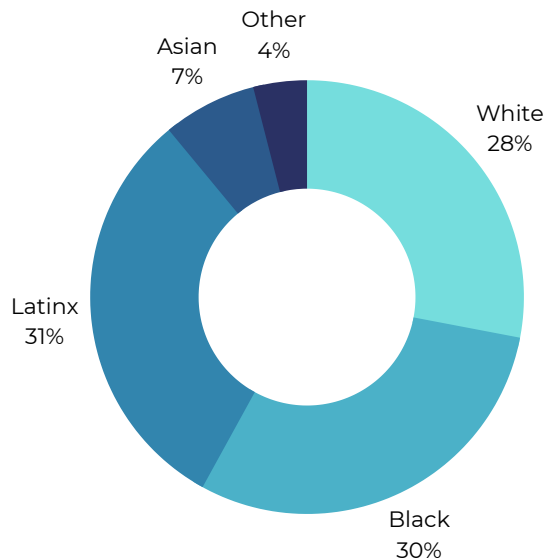
## City Funding by Race

Department of Arts & Culture | 2000-2019



## City Population by Race

US Census Data | 2020



# Activities

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On the list of ways cultural inequity manifests in New Haven, put a star next to each example of cultural inequity you've witnessed. Circle examples that you've personally experienced or participated in.

**Journal about the following questions:**

Where do I see myself in this list?

How have I supported cultural inequity?

How can I change the circumstances or behaviors that led me to support inequity in this way?

## What is cultural equity?

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Culture includes the practices that connect us with other people, with our own humanity, and with the world around us. With this definition in mind, cultural equity means:

- Creating the conditions under which all people can express their culture fully;
- Changing existing cultures, especially within institutions, that do not recognize and lift up the humanity of all people;
- Redistributing resources and power to people systematically under-resourced by our society, and supporting vibrant cultural expression in every community.

Equity is not the same as equality. Because historically unsupported groups have experienced cultural exploitation and systematic cultural oppression in this city, these are the folks we're focusing on serving through a cultural equity plan.

"Cultural equity looks like not having to ask who's missing, or is everyone accounted for. It's already part of the plan."

Shamain McAllister  
Co-Creation Team Member



Lunar Fest, 2018. Lucy Gellman photo.  
Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.

# Why does cultural equity matter?

There are many reasons why individuals, institutions and governments should commit themselves to the cause of cultural equity. Throughout our process, these four rose to the top.

*Cultural equity is a quality of life issue.* Culture is not just a luxury or something that is “nice to have”. It is a core aspect of the human experience and part of what makes life worth living. Culture and the arts are often talked about as something only wealthy people should have access to, but everyone should have access to arts and culture where they see themselves represented. Access to culture is a human right.

*Cultural equity is an economic issue.* Culture and the arts are an enormous part of New Haven’s economy, and connect deeply to other aspects of the economy that may at first glance seem unrelated. By maintaining a culture of inequity we are also maintaining a legacy of economic inequity in our city. As we consider how to build a culturally equitable future, we must do so without displacing existing New Haven residents.

## Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences

Greater New Haven Area FY 2015



**5,667**

Full-Time Equivalent  
Employment



**\$92,553,000**

Household Income  
Paid to Residents



**\$134,689,811**

Total Industry  
Expenditures

This economic impact assessment shows that New Haven's arts and culture sector possesses the potential to create economic justice as well as cultural justice.


Source:  
[https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/by\\_program/reports\\_and\\_data/aep5/map/CT\\_GreaterNewHavenArea\\_AEP5\\_OnePageSummary.pdf](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2017/by_program/reports_and_data/aep5/map/CT_GreaterNewHavenArea_AEP5_OnePageSummary.pdf)

## Why does cultural equity matter?

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*Cultural equity is a survival issue.* As racial justice discourse grows in the United States, audiences, donors, and voters are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of equity in all aspects of our society. People of a global majority will surpass the white population in the US, with Asian and Latinx populations growing most quickly. Culture will adapt around these trends, and for governments and cultural institutions to survive they will need to demonstrate a commitment to cultural equity through their budgets, policies, and the implementation of recommendations outlined later in this plan.

*Cultural equity is an ecosystem issue.* This means that when one person or group in our community suffers, we all feel the ripple effect even if it's indirect. As noted earlier in this document, the ability to experience and express culture is a fundamental aspect of who we are as people. If everyone can experience their culture fully, we will all benefit. If certain sections of the population are separated from their cultures, we will feel that too. As a cultural city, our fates are interconnected.



"Without papers nothing else matters if not protected against deportation and family separation. How are efforts in support of artists also in support of welcoming all humans, including the participation and pay if you do not have immigration papers?"

- Cultural Equity Plan  
Survey Participant



# Activities

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## **Map.**

Write your name in the center of the space provided above. Around your name, map the ways in which you've engaged with local culture over the past year. This might include the names of places, people, institutions and events.

Draw lines showing how these cultural moments connect with you and one another. Create markings or illustrations showing how those cultural moments made you feel.

**Write.**

**In the space below or on a separate piece of paper, journal about the following prompts.**

How are you impacted by the cultural moments you mapped on the previous page? Do they teach you something new? Do they bring you joy? Do they put you in contact with people like you? Do they put you in contact with people who are unlike you?



Using your cultural map, show or write about the places where cultural equity and cultural inequity show up. How do they manifest? What do they look like?



What is your personal stake in cultivating cultural equity? How are you impacted in a world where cultural inequity persists? How are you impacted in a world where cultural equity exists?



## PART 3

# Who creates change?

In this section we discuss who possesses the power to make change, how to identify your power to create change, and how to identify change-makers who can support you in your work.

# Who has the power to make change?

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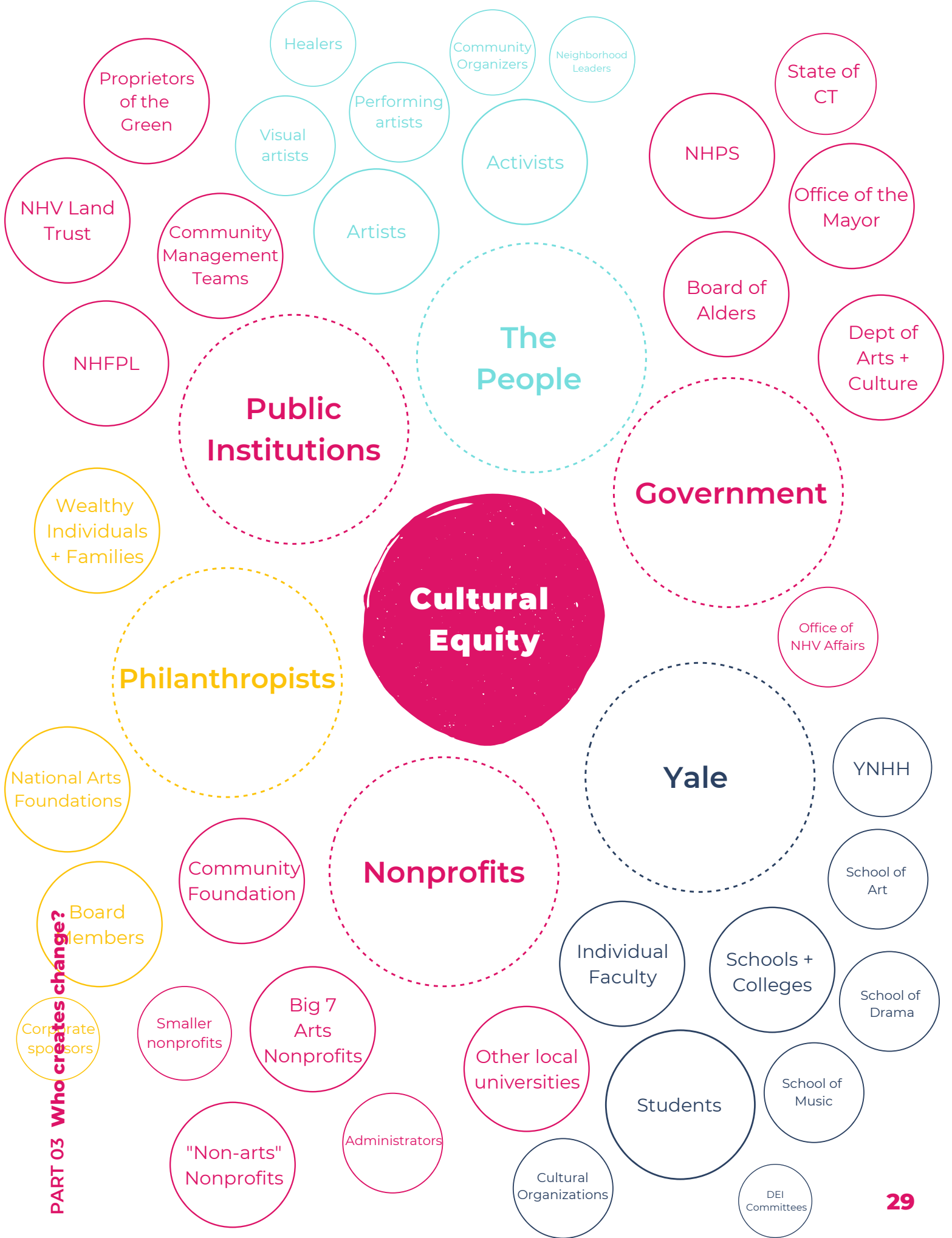
Every person has some power that can be used to create change. Cultural equity is not something one person can achieve alone. It requires us all to work together by creating change in the places where we hold power.

The power to create change takes many forms, and recognizing the power we hold is vital to using that power consciously and responsibly. Without realizing it, you might hold the power to:

- Redistribute power, leadership, and decision-making to a much more diverse population by race & ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, and to artists and grassroots community organizers;
- Treat budgets as moral documents, and use budgets to reflect values of justice and equity;
- Pay artists and creatives equitably for their services;
- Provide physical space for artists, creatives and culture holders to cultivate and express their culture;
- Provide artists and creatives with the resources they need to thrive, like food, housing, healthcare, and education;
- Influence culture within a specific institution or group;
- Allow historically unsupported communities to make decisions about an organization's programming;
- Craft equitable policies within government agencies and large organizations;
- Carry out the specific action items outlined within this document.

While the City of New Haven commissioned this document and holds the power to create change in many areas, the city cannot create a culturally equitable future by itself. Instead, the task of furthering cultural equity lives with an interconnected network of individuals and institutions holding the power to create change.

The Cultural Equity Plan co-creation team mapped out some of the stakeholders in New Haven who possess the power to create change. We documented these stakeholders in a "power map" to help us understand which entities must be engaged in the work of cultural equity.



PART 03 Who creates change?

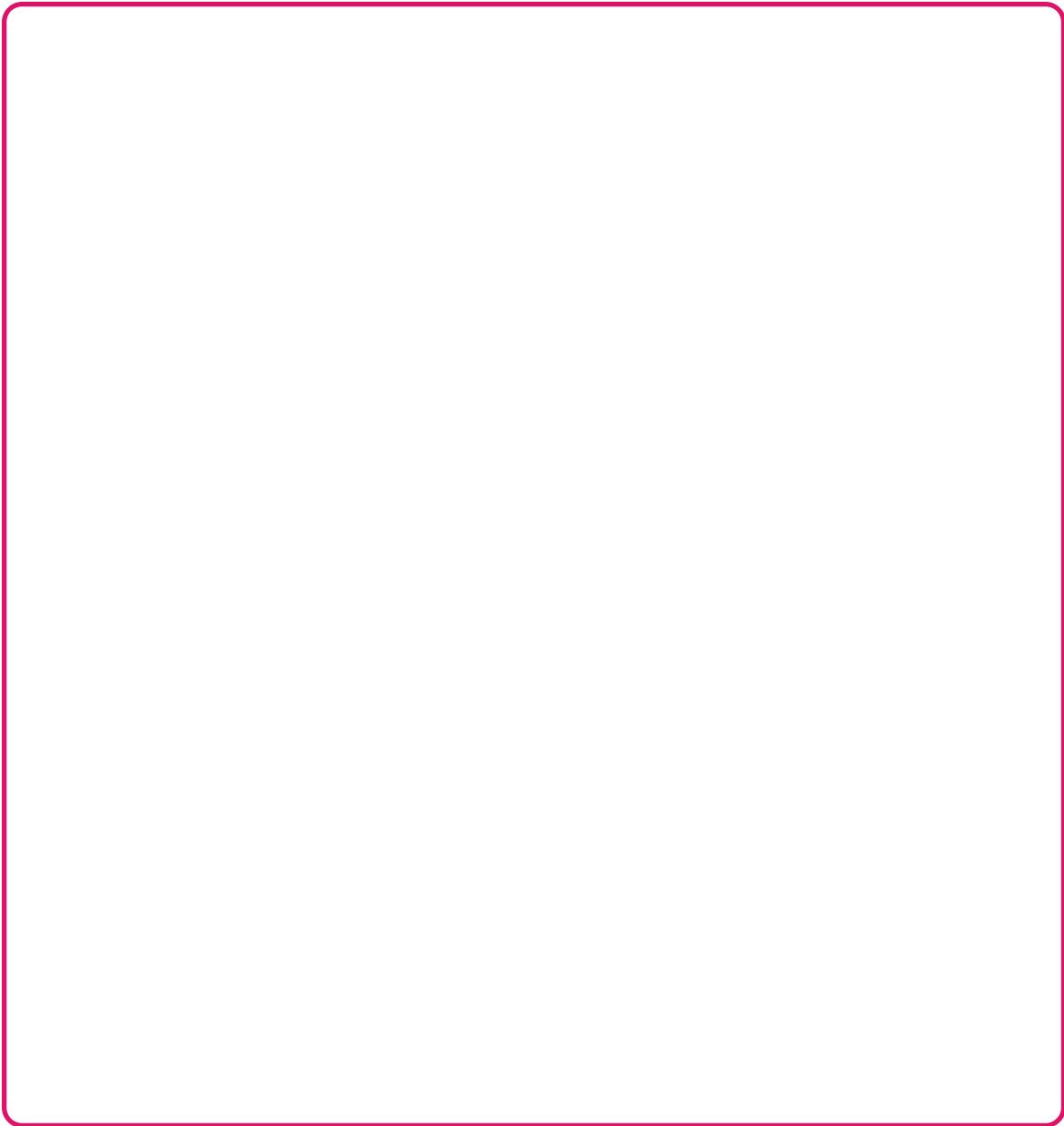
# Activities

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## Draw.

Using the space provided below, create your own cultural equity power map of New Haven. What sections are missing in the map we provided? What individuals can you identify within each area of the map?

Mark where you and/or your organization exist on the map. It may be in multiple places.



# Activities

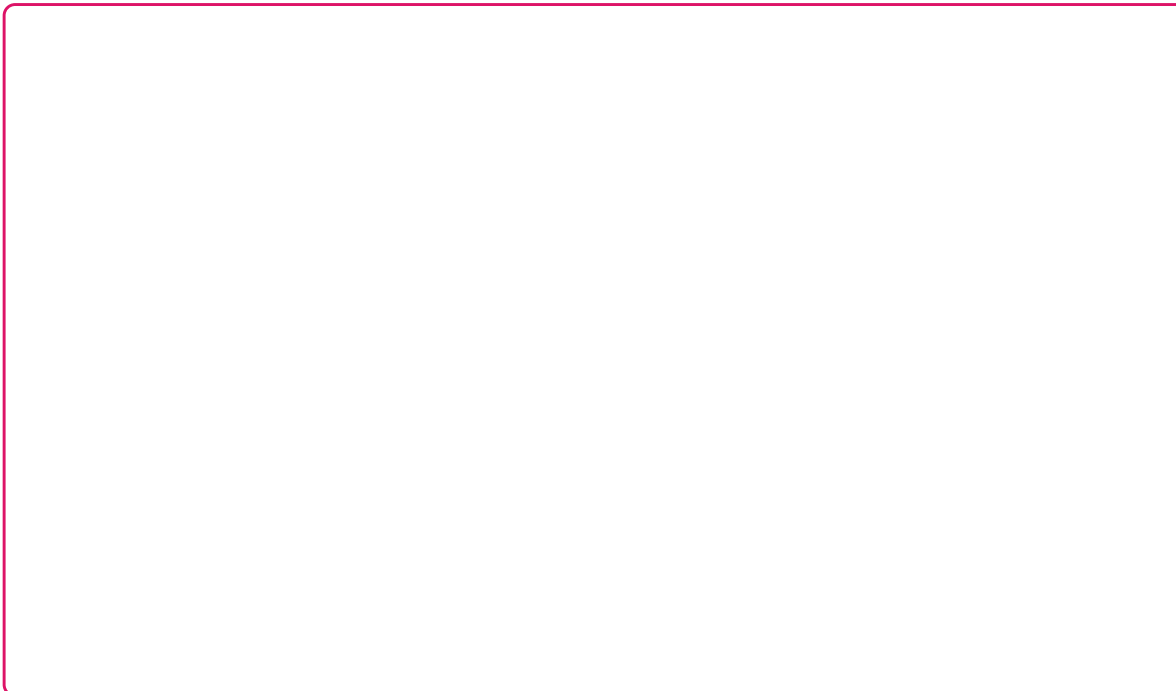
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## Write.

Journal about what forms of power you hold. If you feel powerless within your organization or are not part of an organization, how can you live into cultural equity in your daily life?



From the power map you created, identify 3-5 individuals who can support you in your accountability as you work toward cultural equity. How will you connect with these people?



## PART 4

# Action items

In this section we will outline steps you can take immediately and in the years to come.



## Action Items

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Our process has led us to a series of recommended actions. They fall into four major categories:

- Reckoning With History
- Neighborhood Culture
- Funding & Resources
- Continued Practices

"How do we use this plan to practice cultural equity every day? How do we create an accountability process that people can report back to?"

Tagan Engel  
Co-Creation Team Member

Each recommendation will be presented in the following format:

- **The recommendation.** What needs to be done.
- **The challenge at hand.** Why it needs to be done.
- **Who is best positioned to create change?** Who is responsible for making the change. This is not a comprehensive list of entities that can create change, but an initial set of recommended actors.
- **How this action looks in practice.** How these actions will take place.
- **Implementation timeline.** When this needs to be done. Some can happen immediately, and some will happen over time.



Addys Castillo of Movimiento Cultural Afro-Continental at Vaccinate Fair Haven, 2021.  
Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.

Group 1

# Reckoning with History

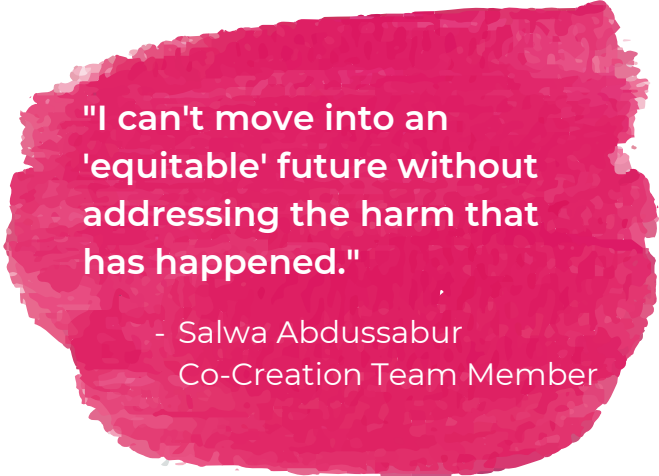
# Action Item 1

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**What: Create community gatherings for New Haven residents, governments and institutions to reckon with histories of both cultural oppression and success throughout our city.**

**Why:** Many of the conversations around culture that take place in New Haven do not intentionally address our city's cultural histories, both histories of cultural success and oppression. Understanding and discussing our city's history is a vital part of moving toward a different future.

**Who:** The City of New Haven, philanthropists, Yale, and arts nonprofits



"I can't move into an 'equitable' future without addressing the harm that has happened."

- Salwa Abdussabur  
Co-Creation Team Member

**How and when:**

Immediately:

- Create a practice of acknowledging stolen and unceded land at all gatherings.
- Hold trainings for city employees on reckoning with harm and holding accountability.

Over the next two years:

- Bring cultural histories of New Haven's historically unsupported communities into the New Haven Public Schools' curriculum.
- Pay historically unsupported to create programming that tells complete histories of New Haven and its neighborhoods.
- Create gatherings and community forums to specifically discuss the cultural contributions of New Haven's historically unsupported residents.
- Map the history of culture in each neighborhood and create walking/biking tours along these routes.
- Create and commit to a long-term reparations plan for the harms identified by local Black and Brown communities.

## Action Item 2

---

**What: Expand institutional definitions of culture and where culture happens.**

**Why:** In many conversations, especially where funding and other forms of support are concerned, “culture” refers disproportionately to European art forms, cultural offerings located in wealthy white neighborhoods and institutions, and culture created to attract new residents rather than to uplift lifelong New Haven residents.

**Who:** The City of New Haven, philanthropists, Yale, and arts nonprofits

**How and When:**

Immediately:

- Ensure that historically unsupported people are well-represented in every institutional decision-making body.
- Conduct an audit to determine whether programs are inclusive and accessible to historically unsupported communities. Make sure that they are and paid to lead these audits.
- Revisit funding guidelines to accommodate a wider definition of culture, and increase the number of grantees reflected in this expanded definition.
- Prioritize the creation of spaces where historically unsupported residents can define culture and decide where they’d like culture to happen.
- Fund institutions actively increasing accessibility and inclusivity of their spaces to engage, involve, and support historically unsupported communities.
- Don’t assume that people will be safe and welcome when events and programming take place downtown.

**"I want to see a history of culture created in Black and Brown neighborhoods. I want to see porches recognized as cultural hubs."**

- Public Imagining Session  
Participant

## Action Item 3

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**What: Create a redistribution plan for wealth and power gained through centuries of exploitation.**

**Why:** In our city, wealth has been accumulated in the hands of a few individuals and institutions through the exploitation of others. Today, this results in the location of extreme poverty next to extreme wealth throughout New Haven. While conversations about the redistribution of wealth can create a feeling of “us versus them”, institutions can play an active role in determining how to redistribute their wealth in collaboration with grassroots community groups.

**Who:** Yale, The City of New Haven, arts nonprofits and philanthropists

**How and When:**

Immediately:

- Work in collaboration with other CT cities and towns to transform the state’s allocation of taxes and other resources.
- Use the City of New Haven’s lobbying power to get Yale to pay its fair share.
- Establish relationships with local, grassroots community groups to devise responsible redistribution plans on an organization-by-organization basis.
- Provide funding directly to people who need it, without making them jump through hoops.



*New Haven Rising street painting, 2021. Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.*

Group 2

# Neighborhood Culture

## Action Item 4

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### **What: Fund cultural organizers in Black and Brown neighborhoods.**

**Why:** Artists, creatives, and cultural leaders working in New Haven's neighborhoods, especially Black and Brown neighborhoods, face disproportionate barriers to success. Funding cultural organizers in each of these neighborhoods will reduce logistical, relational, and financial challenges to creating cultural offerings.

**Who:** The City of New Haven and donors/philanthropists

**How and When:**

#### Immediately:

- Fund a new full-time position within the Department of Cultural Affairs to support a team of neighborhood cultural organizers, improve cultural communications at the neighborhood scale, and eliminate barriers for residents seeking to provide cultural offerings.
- Provide this position with a budget with which to support neighborhood culture.

#### Over the next two years:

- Hire at least five part-time neighborhood advocates to build relationships and build up the cultural offerings that already exist in their communities. This team will work directly with the new full-time staff person located in the Department of Cultural Affairs.

"When I lived in Canada, we used to celebrate so many different cultures, through parades, educational library programs, festivals. Eid. Southeast Asian Lunar holidays. Ramadan fasting. Hajj."

- Cultural Equity Plan  
AAPI Focus Group Member

## Action Item 5

---

### **What: Support neighborhood gathering spaces and events.**

**Why:** Currently there are not enough spaces for independent artists to practice and host performances and shows. When spaces do exist, they are too difficult or expensive to access, or they are not located in Black and Brown neighborhoods.

**Who:** The City of New Haven, philanthropists, Yale, and arts nonprofits

**How & When:**

#### Immediately:

- Fund practice and performance spaces in Black and Brown neighborhoods.
- Open existing practice and performance spaces to the public free of charge, and provide artists with in-kind support (marketing, lighting, etc.)
- Work directly with neighborhood artists and residents to find out how to create a sense of belonging within existing venues. Just because a space exists, do not assume that residents feel safe and welcome there.
- Remove logistical barriers to putting on neighborhood events and performances, including permit fees and other administrative and financial hurdles.

#### Over the next two years:

- Invest in the preservation of existing cultural enclaves as identified by neighborhood residents.

**"It's natural for human beings to be in cliques. You add a lack of space to that, and it just makes things worse."**

- Cultural Equity Plan  
Hip Hop Focus Group Member



## Action Item 6

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**What: Make historically unsupported New Haven residents co-creators in the design and implementation of arts programming.**

**Why:** Well-funded cultural institutions have significant capacity to provide cultural offerings in our city; however, these offerings are often created by and for people with historically supported identities. A culturally equitable approach means engaging historically unsupported communities as both audiences and collaborators.

**Who:** Arts nonprofits, The City of New Haven, and Yale

**How & When:**

Immediately:

- Recognize that people have many kinds of expertise, and don't talk down to people who don't fit the white supremacist mold.
- Remove barriers for artists and audiences by asking people what they need.
- Fund organizations that work equitably with New Haven residents to co-create arts programming.
- Invite historically unsupported residents to take the lead in creating the structures they are personally involved in.

Over the next two years:

- Invite and fund artist involvement in construction and infrastructure projects.
- Build relationships with residents long-term. For arts nonprofits, this means:
  - Hire locally.
  - Allocate funds in their budget to pay local artists.
  - Diversify boards of directors to include majority people of color representation and remove give/get requirements.
  - Actively recruit local artists to serve on nonprofit boards.
  - Embed communities in long-term planning processes.
  - Compensate community advisors and committee members for their local expertise and/or perspectives as people of color.



Group 3  
Funding &  
Resources

## Action Item 7

---

**What: Support independent artists, creatives and culture holders through direct funding and other means.**

**Why:** Right now, a significant amount of cultural funding goes to institutions that have been consistently funded for decades. Meanwhile, independent artists, creatives, and cultural leaders, as well as new organizations led by historically unsupported people, have a much harder time navigating complex funding streams and accessing resources.

**Who:** Arts nonprofits, Yale, The City of New Haven, and donors/philanthropists

**Who and How:**

Immediately:

- Use funding as a way to share strength, instead of a way to hold power over others.
- Increase transparency around all budgets, and especially how much artists are paid.
- Stop asking artists, storytellers, and community members to provide free labor, and work with creatives and culture holders to determine fair pay rates.
- Prioritize funding for institutions that pay artists equitably for their work.
- Center artists in specific conversations about how funding should look, both within institutions (i.e. in a consulting capacity) and in public settings (forums, panels, and community conversations).
- Fund workshops put on by artists who understand particular industries and what it takes to succeed in those industries.
- Provide inclusive programming by offering language (Spanish, Chinese, etc.) and disability (ASL, CART, etc.) access and by working with disability community partners on outreach.
- Provide technical assistance and other public workshops for artists/community organizers to help navigate government programs and access public funding.
- Offer accessible and public workshops on how to support yourself as an artist or creative.

Over the next two years:

- Create and publish a directory of spaces that offer live music and feature other kinds of artists.
- Create more virtual and physical spaces for artists to connect.
- Simplify and address barriers in grant application processes that keep out independent artists and communities of color. Create public information sessions that demystify the grant writing process, that deeply engage communities of color as co-creators, and that help independent creatives of color to apply for funding.
- Develop paid school internships and workforce programs in cultural arts industries.
- Fund the development of artist cooperatives that provide affordable housing, community and work space for neighborhood creatives.

Over the next ten years:

- Create democratic funds that ensure the basic needs (housing, healthcare, food) are provided for creative sector members.

**Desired Support by Artists and Creatives**

- 1 Opportunities to connect with cultural organizations**
- 2 Opportunities for cross-sector relationships**
- 3 Living wage for my labor**
- 4 Affordable space to create art**
- 5 Marketing, business development, or financial training**
- 6 Affordable healthcare**

This information, compiled from data gathered through our cultural equity survey, illustrates the types of support needed by local artists and creatives.

# Action Item 8

## What: Allocate resources to increase accessibility at the New Haven Free Public Library.

**Why:** The New Haven Free Public Library was referenced again and again throughout this process as an organization already implementing culturally equitable practices. Providing additional funding to the library will make it easier to provide additional services and build new relationships that help all cultures to thrive.

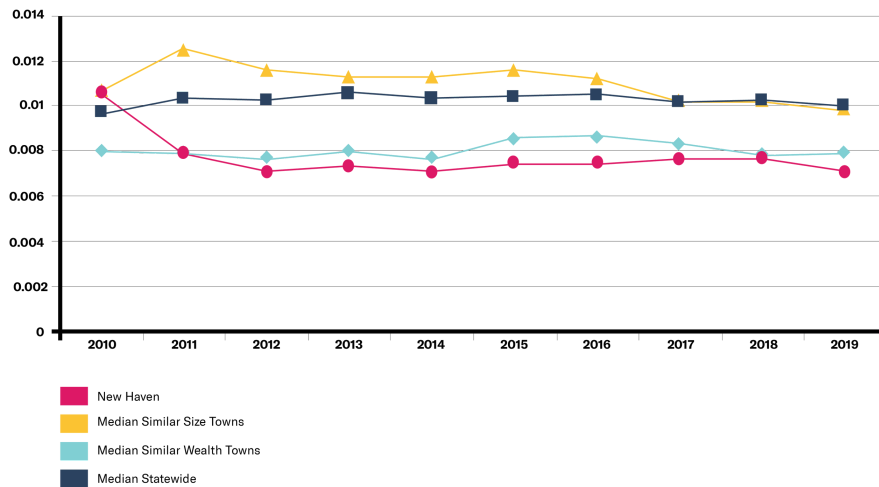
**Who:** The City of New Haven, arts nonprofits, Yale, and donors/philanthropists

A comparison of the NHFPL's budget against libraries in similar cities shows a consistent decline in funding since 2010.

### Library Funding

Library's Municipal Appropriation as a Percentage of All Municipal Revenue

Funding Goal of  
**1%**  
of Municipal Revenue



Source: [https://nhfpl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NHFPLBudgetPacketFY21\\_04.13.20FINAL.pdf](https://nhfpl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NHFPLBudgetPacketFY21_04.13.20FINAL.pdf)

**When & How:**

**Immediately:**

- Follow the Mayor’s Transition Plan recommendation to phase the public library to 1% of New Haven’s General Fund. Speed up this process by using some money from the American Rescue Plan.
- Using existing data and gathering new data where necessary, determine what library hours would be most desirable for local communities and fully staff all libraries during those times.
- Increase resources and access to community program rooms as an existing space for neighborhood-based artist communities.
- Increase funding for new books and multi-media materials that reflect the diversity of people and identities in the New Haven community.

## Action Item 9

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### **What: Create and strengthen partnerships between major arts nonprofits and the City.**

**Why:** The City of New Haven is full of large arts organizations and nonprofits. While these organizations create jobs and meaningful artistic experiences, they are also in frequent competition for funding.

In order to create more equitable practices, these organizations must work more closely to better take care of people. Through partnerships, they can better share resources (financial and otherwise) and better support New Haven artists and creatives.

**Who:** The City of New Haven Department of Cultural Affairs and Department of Economic Development, large-budget arts & culture nonprofits

**When & How:**

#### Immediately:

- Incentivize more and better collaborations among performing arts organizations.
- Promote, mentor, and learn from lesser known artists and small arts organizations.
- Begin speaking with current individual donors and institutional funders about how to build equity into funded organizations and projects.
- Pull together larger arts institutions to mount an equity challenge to individual and institutional funders at the state and national level.
- Re-examine pay structures and ensure an equitable compensation policy across all levels of the institution.



Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.

Group 4  
Continued  
Practices &  
Accountability

# Action Item 10

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**What: Create ongoing spaces for residents to discuss and make decisions about cultural equity in New Haven.**

**Why:** This cultural equity planning process is a beginning to the ongoing work of cultural equity in our city. Space must continue to be made for New Haven residents, and especially members of historically unsupported communities, to talk about history, discuss and plan for alternative futures, and heal from harm.

**Who:** The City of New Haven, Yale, arts nonprofits, and donors/philanthropists

**When & How:**

Immediately:

- Sign on to the City of New Haven’s Arts for Anti-Racism Pledge (linked at the end of this document).
- Complete the provided activities and continue the practices in this document, and make your responses publicly accessible.
- Fund spaces for public dialogue in locations where people already gather, such as schools, churches, and community spaces. Provide food, childcare, financial compensation, and translation services at these gatherings.

Over the next two years:

- Connect with New Haven’s Department of Cultural Affairs to plug into emerging programs designed to support institutional accountability.
- Lobby for state and federal funding to support additional citywide cultural equity forums.
- Create spaces specifically for historically unsupported affinity groups to discuss their visions for cultural equity in the city.
- Co-create these spaces with the people they are meant to engage to cultivate an atmosphere of belonging and healing.
- Hire experienced, local facilitators to convene more public forums, and to cultivate an atmosphere of belonging and healing.



# Action Item 11

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**What: Create spaces for young people to engage with, create, and lead culture in our city.**

**Why:** Currently, young people in our city are not presented with enough opportunities to engage with, create and lead culture. More spaces designed specifically by and for young people must be created and resourced.

**Who:** The City of New Haven, Yale, arts nonprofits, donors/philanthropists, and New Haven Public Schools

**When & How:**

Immediately:

- Create and fund more opportunities within existing arts programming for young people to express their ideas.
- Increase arts education opportunities both in and outside the classroom.
- Create and fund arts activities that center young people.

Over the next two years:

- Host an annual Youth Cultural Equity Forum in partnership with local youth-led organizations and public schools.
- Work with WTNH and WYBC 94.3 to give young people a forum to express their creativity.



Children's March at Elm City Montessori 2021. Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.

## Action Item 12

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**What: Create a citywide Cultural Equity Accountability Team and a funded position to support them.**

**Why:** Currently there is no individual or body designated to track and evaluate this plan's recommendations, nor ensure that commitments made by the City and its cultural leaders are carried forth. The creation of a citywide Cultural Equity Accountability Team will provide a new resource and a pathway to accountability.

**Who:** The City of New Haven

**When & How:**

Immediately:

- Create a paid team of residents, much like the co-creation team who helped shape this document, to ensure accountability to this plan and commitment to cultural equity across the city.
- Fund citywide antiracism trainings available to City Staff.

Over the next two years:

- Create an additional newly funded position within the Department of Arts and Culture to support cultural equity initiatives throughout the city.

Over the next ten years:

- Revisit this plan every two years to evaluate successes, failures, and next steps.



*Black Lives Matter protest 2020. Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.*

# Activities

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- On the list of action items provided in this section, draw a star next to each action item where you possess some (not necessarily all) power to create change. Don't worry if they seem too difficult, simply mark the items where you hold power.
- From the list of action items you starred, arrange these items in order of least difficult to most difficult.
- Under the first three action items on your list (the three easiest), write the first step necessary to begin this action.
- Under the last three action items on your list (the three hardest), write the first step necessary to begin this action.
- Under the remaining action items on your list, write the first step necessary to begin this action.
- Share your list of action items, including next steps, with three of the accountability partners you identified through earlier activities.



*Ice the Beef in rehearsal. 2020. Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper*

# PART 5

## Continuing the work

## Continuing the Work

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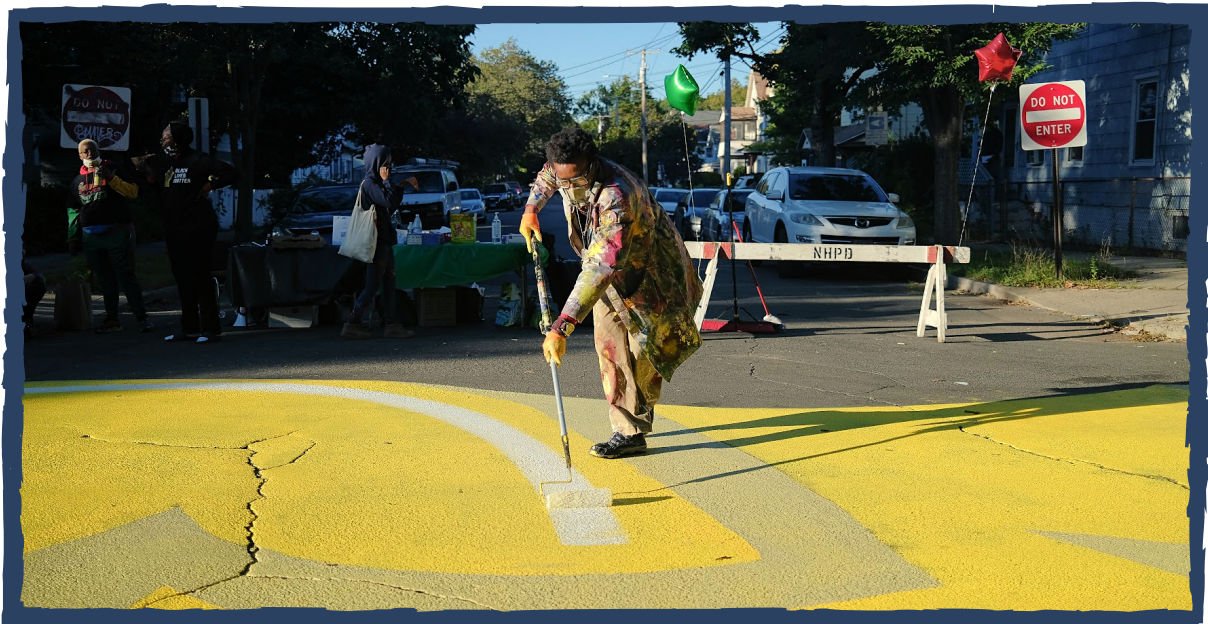
**Congratulations! You made it to the end of the cultural equity plan!**

The work of cultural equity, however, does not end with this document. In order to move towards a future where all cultures thrive, each of us must identify the power we hold and use that power thoughtfully and responsibly. By creating our own lists of action steps and sharing those steps with others, we can help ourselves be accountable for the work that only we can do.

Just as this plan is not a replacement for the work of cultural equity, it is also not a replacement for the expertise of local artists, creatives, and cultural leaders. In this planning process we were not able to hear from every creative of color, every queer artist, or the countless cultural leaders holding other historically unsupported identities. The perspectives of these experts must continue to be counted, in whatever form they come.

If you want to contribute to future conversations about cultural equity in New Haven, please reach out to one of the individuals listed at the beginning of this document, or to the city's Department of Arts and Culture.

**Your voice matters in this work.**



*Kwadwo Aday, 2020. Lucy Gellman photo. Image courtesy of the Arts Paper.*

# PART 6

# Resources

# Diagram: Expanding the Office of Cultural Affairs



The purpose of this diagram is to illustrate specific recommendations included in Action Items 4 and 13 to create two new full-time positions within the Department of Cultural Affairs. These two new staff members would also coordinate with a team of paid neighborhood cultural organizers and a cultural accountability team.

-  Existing staff positions
-  Proposed staff positions
-  Proposed teams

# Together New Haven Arts for Anti-Racism Pledge

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The pledge and its accompanying list of tools, activities, guides, and events are tailored to the work of arts organizations—helping you make this change both in your public programming as well as internally.

Take the pledge at  
[www.togethernewhaven.com/pledge](http://www.togethernewhaven.com/pledge)

There you will also find a collection of resources, including:

Anti-Oppression Toolkit:

Activities and workshops to initiate dialogue about the importance of anti-oppression principles. From the National Campus and Community Radio Association.

Diversity Toolkit:

A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power, and Privilege: activities to initiate productive discourse on these issues, discussing the historical context of identity and building self-awareness in groups of 10-60 people. From the USC Master of Social Work program.

Planning and designing arts-based civic engagement projects:

To help organizations and artists design civic engagement and dialogue projects. From Animating Democracy.

Cultural New Deal:

An initiative from artists and cultural bearers to end racial and cultural inequality and injustice, with comprehensive goals directed specifically towards those who work in the arts and cultural sectors.

Why “Where”? Because “Who”:

An introduction to using place as a vehicle to engage new participants. From the James Irvine Foundation.

Participatory Action Research:

A framework for PAR, which is an approach to research and learning that uses different methods to address issues or possibilities identified and defined by the community. From the Animating Democracy Initiative.

Dismantling Racism Works Web Workbook:

A variety of educational resources and tools, including updates for the current movement for black lives and COVID-19. From Dismantling Racism Works.

Using cultural assets:

The benefits of using community cultural wealth in social change work. From Beautiful Trouble.

Awake to Woke to Work; Building a Race Equity Culture:

A plan for nonprofits to follow a cycle of change as they transform from a white dominant culture to a Race Equity Culture. From Equity in the Center.

Participatory Arts:

A crowdsourced guide and platform to projects that enable a shared ownership of decision-making processes. From Participedia.



## Activities

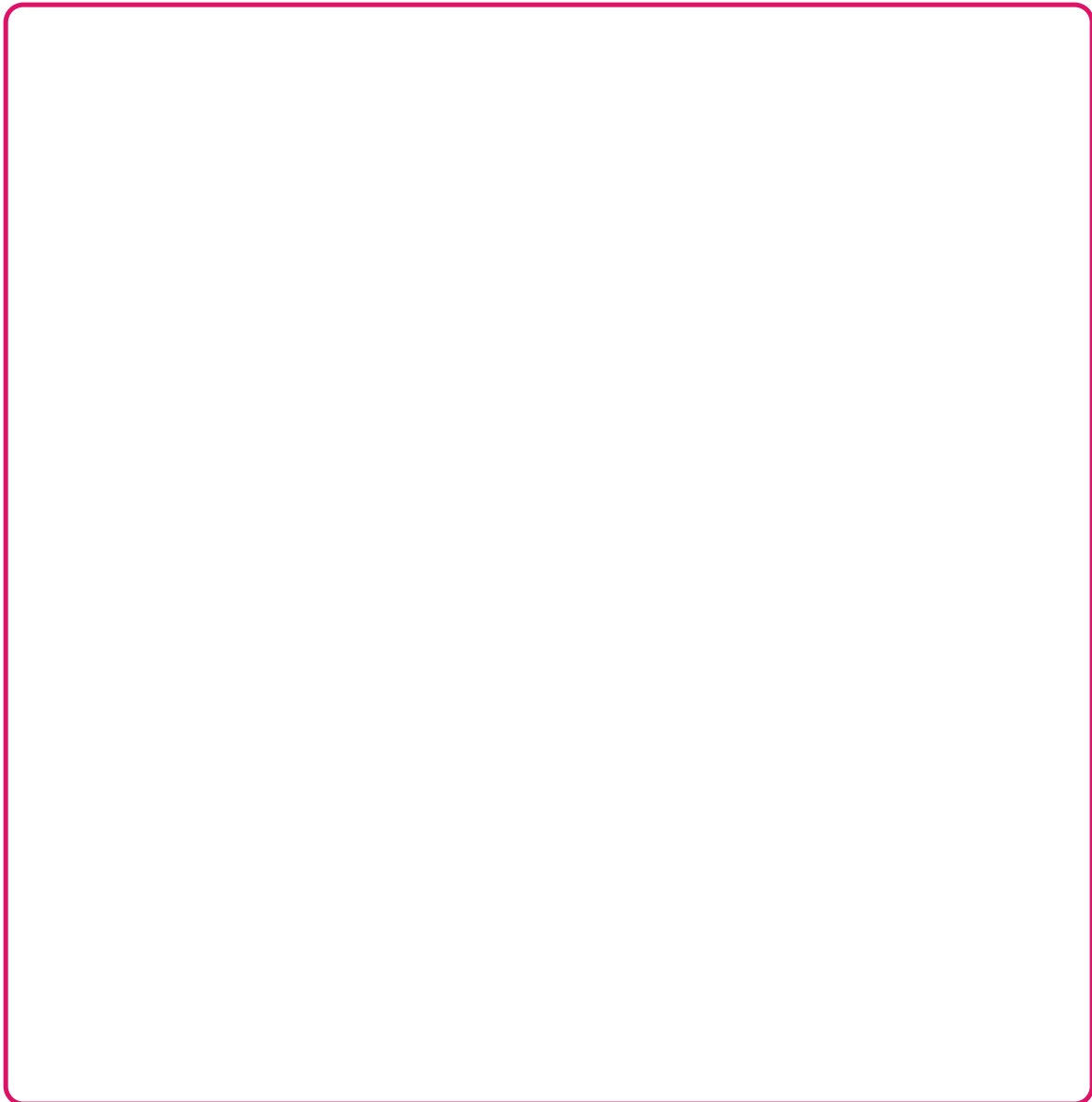
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Every gathering in this process began with breath and ended with time for appreciation and gratitude.

This is a space for you to write down your appreciations. These can be ways you appreciate yourself, members of your community, or the people who support you in your cultural equity work.

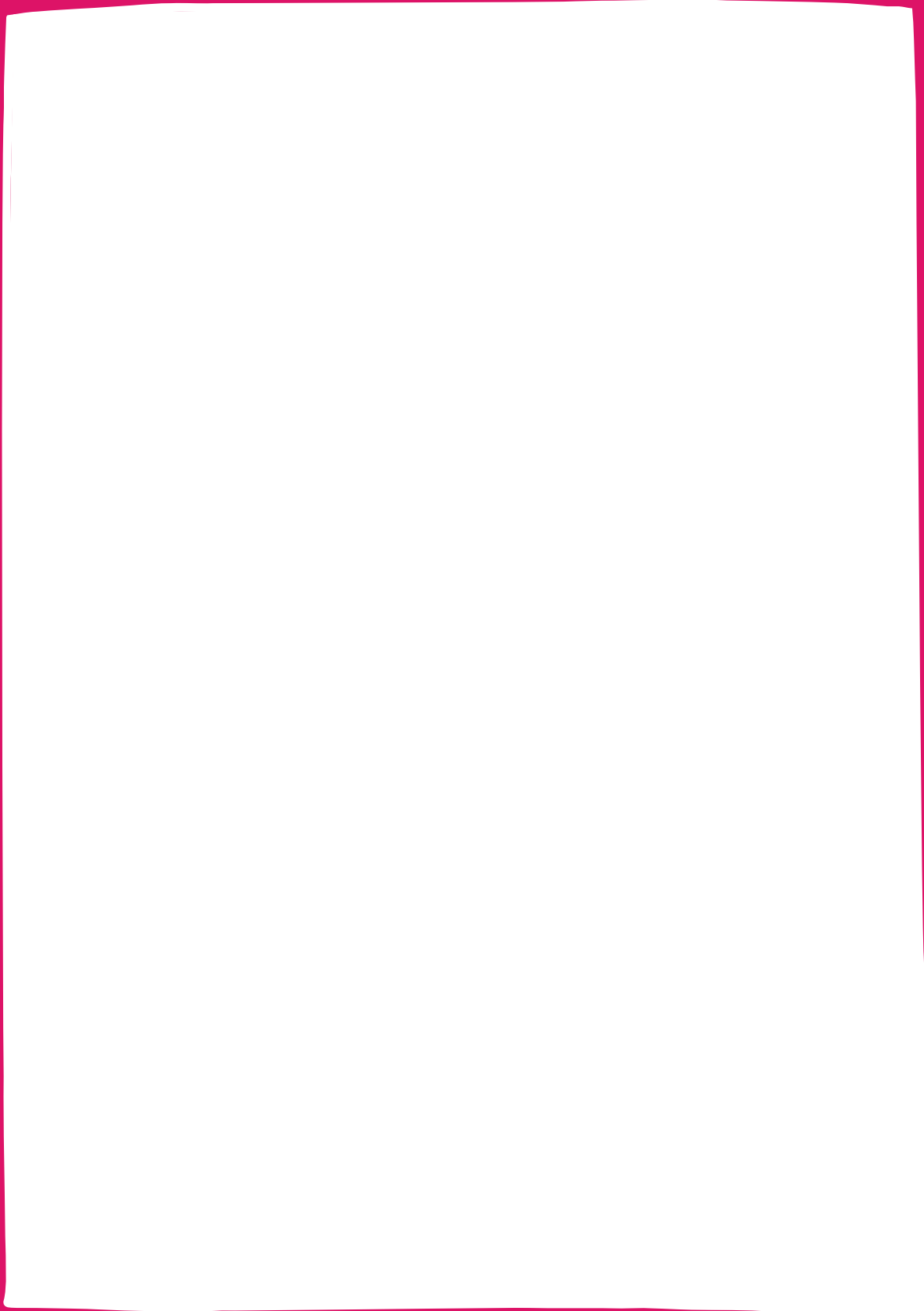
We invite you to be specific. Think about who has taught you something new, who supports you, who challenges you, who shows up and how.

Come up with at least 10 appreciations in the space below.



## Notes

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# CONTINUE THE WORK



**2022  
CULTURAL  
EQUITY  
PLAN**



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