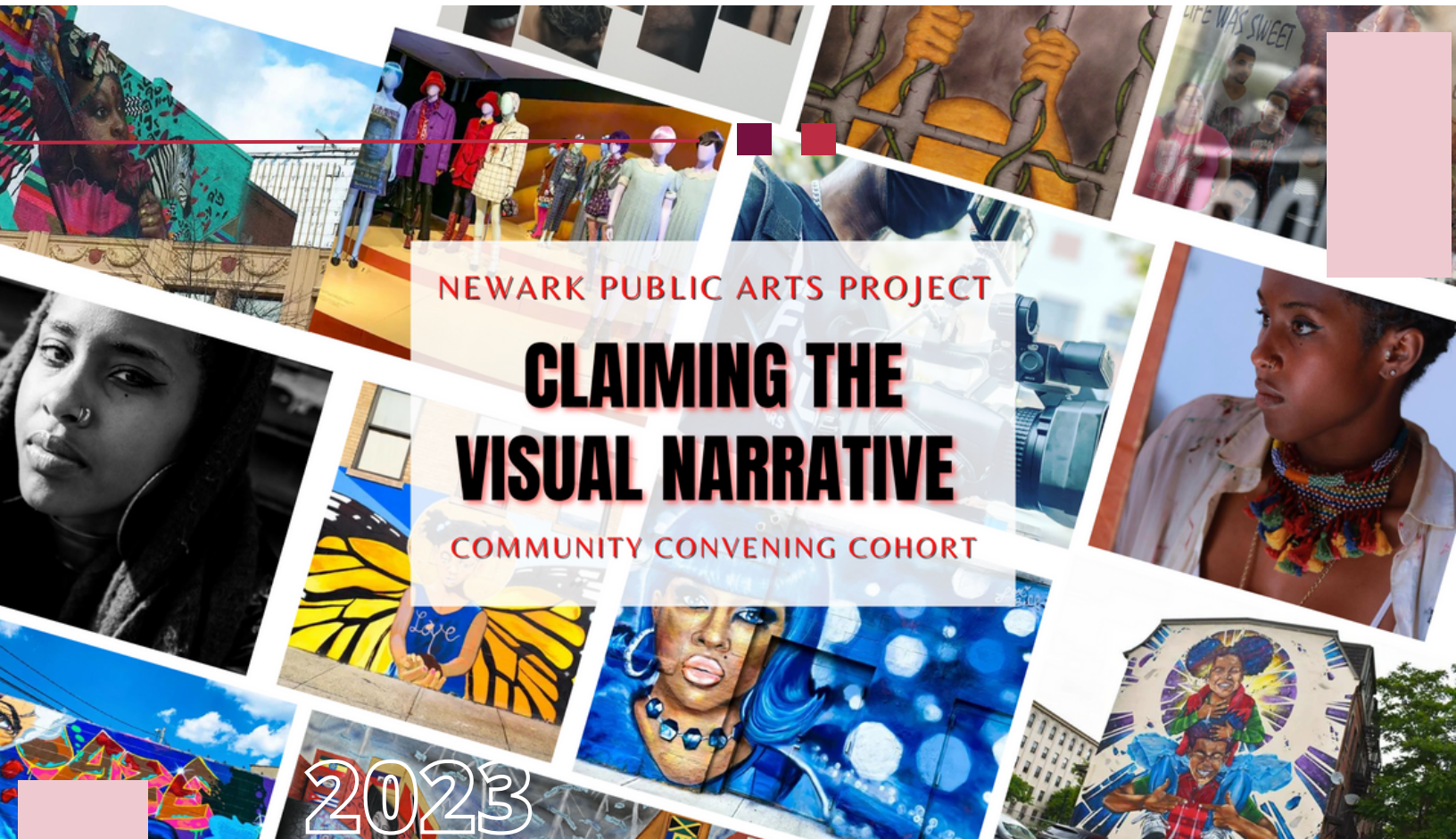


THE CONFINED ARTS



NEWARK PUBLIC ARTS PROJECT

CLAIMING THE VISUAL NARRATIVE

COMMUNITY CONVENING COHORT

2023

PROGRESS REPORT

Prepared For
(But not limited to):

**OPEN SOCIETIES
FOUNDATIONS**

Prepared By:

ISAAC'S QUARTERLY LLC



The Confined Arts (TCA) is a community-based, charitable program developed by Isaac's Quarterly, LLC. TCA is fiscally sponsored by Fractured Atlas and by Another Choice Youth and Family Outreach Inc.



CLAIMING THE VISUAL NARRATIVE

PROJECT DEVELOPER

From Spring 2020 - December 2022 I held a fellowship at the Center for Institutional and Social Change at Columbia Law School. In April 2021 The Foundation to Promote Open Society (“FPOS”) awarded The Trustees of Columbia University in the City of New York (the “Grantee”) a grant in the amount of 49,486.00 USD, understanding that I would be the person responsible for administering the grant on the Grantee’s behalf through a project developed by The Confined Arts. The purpose of the grant was to support the Grantee to counter the racist narratives of the drug war through artistic collaboration in New Jersey. This progress report outlines honest and transparent updates about the progress, systemic challenges, and necessary deviations from the original proposed project. Please note that the views opinions, and experiences expressed in this progress report are my own and do not necessarily represent the views of the entire project team or our partners. These reflections are offered as a means of providing transparency and insight into the progress of the project .

Isaac I Scott

Program Director, The Confined Arts

Isaac I. Scott is an award winning Multidisciplinary Visual Artist and Journalist. He is the Chief Executive Officer of Isaac's Quarterly (IQ), LLC, a production, design, and consulting company. Isaac has an Associates degree in computer networking technologies from Taylor Business Institute and a Bachelors degree in visual arts from the School of General Studies at Columbia University. Isaac was ordained in 2018 at God's Touch Healing Ministry, where he served for three years as the Associate Pastor. Isaac is currently a member of the African Methodist Episcopal church, where he is pursuing Itinerant Ministry and carries a Certificate of License to Preach.

Isaac is the The Executive Director of The Confined Arts at Another Choice Youth and Family Outreach, which is located at Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church, and is a U.S. Prisons Program Advisory Council member for the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. Scott is also the Chairperson for the Human Services Committee for Manhattan Community Board 11, which advocates for community equity for East Harlem, El Barrio, Spanish Harlem, Randall’s Island, and Ward’s Island.

BIOGRAPHY





PROGRAM INTRODUCTION



ABOUT US

The Confined Arts (TCA) is a program that cultivates and showcases the talents and creative voices of artists directly impacted by mass incarceration and intersecting social justice issues. TCA enables artists to express their voices through the visual and performing arts, poetry, and music as a means to abolish inhumane narratives and socially degrading stigmas that are used to describe the past experiences and limit the futures of individuals impacted by incarceration. Through artistry, collaborative activism, research, education and training, TCA equips artists to influence policy change, and use their artistry and knowledge to advocate for a world anchored on empathy and saturated with healing and prevention-based policies.

MISSION

(1) Foster public programming and storytelling projects that use narratives that enable the imagination to counter the dehumanizing narratives that are driving criminal justice policy, and act as catalysts for the implementation of scenarios and solutions transcending the stigmatizing and unjust status quo.

(2) Provide free strategic arts engagement education to artists who are formerly incarcerated, teaching artists, practitioners, and legal advocates who want to learn more about how they can use the arts to mitigate the imprints of economic and social inequality.

WHAT WE DO

- **Art exhibition**
- **Storytelling projects**
- **Artistic Advocacy**
- **Coalition Building**
- **Professional Development**
- **Artistic Literacy Training**



PROJECT OVERVIEW AND PROGRESS

With the primary goal to map, galvanize, and support arts organizations and programs focused on community healing, racial justice, restorative justice, transformative justice, and criminal justice reform, TCA created a community arts project to promote the development of representative imagery and messaging in Newark, a community in New Jersey that continues to be extremely vulnerable to racially unjust narratives of the war on drugs, as one of primary targets for true drug policy reform and holistic rehabilitation. This public arts project centers our coalition building efforts to provide framing tools, leadership, and guidance to address the project's prompts:

- **HOW CAN PUBLIC ART AND MEDIA INFORM BETTER DRUG POLICY IN NEWARK? WHAT VISUALS NEED TO BE INCLUDED AND WHAT VISUALS NEED TO BE ELIMINATED?**
- **HOW CAN PUBLIC ART AND MEDIA HELP TO DECRIMINALIZE PEOPLE WHO ARE IMPACTED BY DRUG POLICY IN NEWARK. WHAT VISUALS NEED TO BE INCLUDED AND WHAT VISUALS NEED TO BE ELIMINATED?**

**PHASE 1: RESEARCH,
RELATIONSHIP
BUILDING, AND PROJECT
PLANNING**



**PHASE 2: COMMUNITY
CONVENING COHORT
(CCC) MEETINGS,
WORKSHOPS, AND ART
INSTALLATION**



NOV. 2020-MAY 2021

- Newark's history, community make-up, legal procedures and arts landscape.
- Planning Meetings.
- Public Community Meeting (Virtual).

JUNE 2021 - JULY 2022

- Recruitment through public call for artists.
- Concept meetings for community preferences.
- Facilitated workshops at My Brothers Keeper Newark offices for Great Oaks Legacy HS. and Lead Academy.
- Mural workshop completed at Great Oaks, where one mural was completed.



COMMUNITY CONVENING COHORT

The Claiming the Visual Narrative Initiative executes its mission of targeting and undoing systemic oppression in popular culture in the form of community misrepresentation by forming Community Convening Cohorts. The CCCs are designed to be made up of different community stakeholders with its primary function to collaboratively conceptualize, fabricate, and install public art and media that represents the values and experiences of community members. The CCCs are designed to be formed in different spaces amongst different groups of people with the goal of using art in whatever preferred form to change public attitudes about individuals and communities impacted by the criminal legal system and inform representational policy solutions.



ANDRECE BRADY



GARY CAMPBELL



MONIFA KINCAID



**JEWEL
SINGLETARY**



RED



MAALIKA DAVID



TESS HANSEN



AKINTOLA HANIF



BIKIER HAYES

[**CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE NEWARK COMMUNITY CONVENING COHORT**](#)

**PHASE 3: COMMUNITY
DEBRIEF AND
EVALUATION &
FINALIZATION OF
TOOLKIT**

AUGUST 2022 - PRESENT

- WE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY FINALIZED THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE TCA TOOL-KIT LOGIC FOR COMMUNITY MURALS AND OTHER PUBLIC ART PROJECTS.

TCA TOOL-KIT LOGIC FOR COMMUNITY MURALS AND OTHER PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

RESEARCH

Survey and document fact sheets on topics pertaining to history of neighborhood, community make-up, legal barriers, and arts landscape.

SURVEYS AND EVALUATIONS

Conduct interviews with community organizers and potential cohort partners to learn more about community needs, community arts, and community involvement.

PLANNING MEETINGS

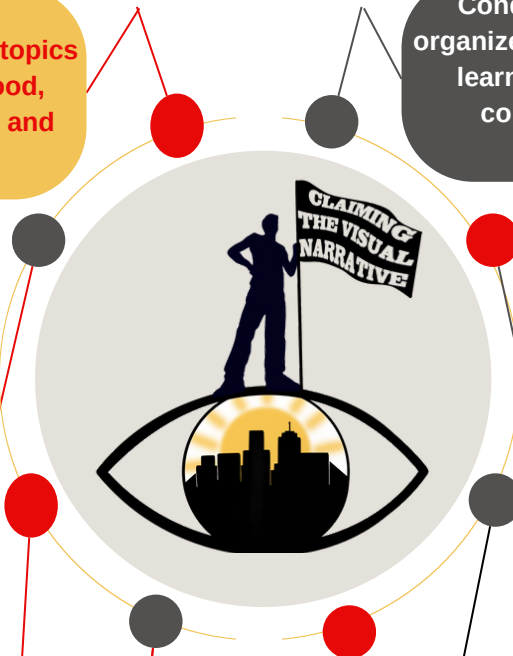
Conduct planning meetings with partners to collaboratively create framing and decision-making tools to ensure full participation in planning process and throughout execution of the project as a whole.

**WORKSHOPS WITH
CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS**

Identify challenges and problems related to your project prompt. Ensure artists understand goals and objectives of the project. Share previously obtained feedback and research.

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS

There is a way to include more voices! Incorporate ways to engage the larger network of community stakeholders to contribute through visual art, spoken word, or live discussion.



FABRICATION

Conceptualize art piece with the artists using the conversations and desires expressed in the CCC meetings. Artists should draft a blueprint for the piece and present it to the CCC for feedback and to vote for final approval of the design and location approval (considering fee, permits, and licenses).

**ESTABLISH YOUR
COMMUNITY CONVENING COHORT**

CCCs are designed to be made up of different community stakeholders with its primary function to collaboratively conceptualize, fabricate, and install public art and media that represents the values and experiences of community members.

TOOLKIT

After presentation of final project, pay it forward! Share knowledge and a process for maximizing and deepening community engagement in the fabrication of neighborhood art and media.

PROJECT PARTNERS



Center for Institutional and Social Change at Columbia Law School (CISC)

The Center undertakes multi-method, collaborative research projects with innovative institutions and individuals pursuing full participation and institutional citizenship goals, within and across specific institutional settings.



Jay Holder

Director of the National Executive Council (NEC) at the Center for Justice at Columbia University

The National Executive Council (NEC) at the Center for Justice is an entity of educators, researchers, and conflict resolution practitioners who support communities impacted by unhealthy outcomes correlated with the conditions of poverty.



YENDOR, LLC

YENDOR is a boutique arts organization founded in New Jersey's largest city, Newark. Founded in 2003, as the brainchild of the illustrious Rodney Gilbert, YENDOR was created to address the need for integrated public art in the city of Newark.



ANDRECE BRADY

Resident Lead Artist, Newark Public Arts Project: Claiming The Visual Narrative, The Confined Arts



LORILEI W.

Lorilei W. (they/them) is a queer, trans non-binary Korean-American abolitionist, artist, and attorney dedicated to teaching legal advocates on how to engage in trauma-informed and antiracist advocacy in their individual capacities and collectively as movement advocates using an interdisciplinary approach informed by systems theory, design thinking, and management science.



OBSTACLES INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

EXTERNAL OBSTACLES

This project received funding during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, a period characterized by substantial challenges in conducting location scouting and obtaining necessary site permits for executing a mural project. Despite facing significant delays, our dedicated community partners at Yendor, LLC, demonstrated exceptional resourcefulness and determination in successfully securing an appropriate site for the mural.

INTERNAL OBSTACLES

TCA initially proposed this project for Harlem, but at the request of Open Societies program officers, it was relocated to Newark as part of the global drug policy program. Recognizing the potential challenges of an external organization working within a local community, TCA's team worked diligently to establish trust with community partners, ensuring that the project truly reflected the voices, leadership, and priorities of the Newark community. Building strong relationships with existing community-based organizations in Newark was a central focus at every stage of the project's execution. The project's design deliberately prioritized relationship-building and community-driven decision-making to address this potential obstacle. It also required significant research and organizational support, which was not provided in accordance with the project's outline.

One of the primary challenges faced was the lack of active participation from the the Center for Institutional and Social Change at Columbia Law School (CISC). During the application process, all parties agreed that the Center's role would encompass strategic planning, legal research, public policy analysis, communications strategy development, and impact assessment research for toolkit development. As the host organization, the Center's mandate included developing organizational capacity in areas such as systems thinking, transformative leadership, assessment and evaluation, and community building.

Unfortunately, for reasons that seem to stem from a combination of limited capacity, expertise, and perhaps a lack of concern, none of these roles were fulfilled under the direction of the Center's director. Consequently, I had to manage the project with the assistance of TCA volunteer staff and limited resources.

OBSTACLES **EXTERNAL CONT.**

In addition to these challenges, payments to CCC participants and project staff were not made in a timely manner with some payments taking longer than four months and other payments not being disbursed at all. The project's financial management was further complicated by inconsistent information regarding equipment and supply purchases, invoicing, and purchase orders. Additionally, restricted access to the remaining project funds raises concerns about the appropriateness of financial handling by the business office.

Despite expressing my concerns to the Center's director and senior administrators at Columbia Law School, no resolution was achieved. This led to multiple extensions and an inability to access the remaining \$4000, which was crucial for project completion. The potential damages incurred due to these internal obstacles encompass decreased morale and productivity, reputation harm, decreased loyalty, participant turnover, heightened stress levels, and potential legal liability.

At the core of TCA's operations lies the crucial foundation of cultivating and sustaining robust relationships with community members, local organizations, professionals, and various stakeholders. This cornerstone principle is non-negotiable and must be upheld under all circumstances.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS FOR PROGRAM PRODUCTIVITY

While engaged in both work and studies at Columbia University, an institution with a documented history of racism, I took the initiative to establish a community arts program specifically tailored for Black and brown community members vulnerable to the impacts of mass incarceration. Following the fulfillment of my academic responsibilities in May 2023, I completely transitioned the program to Another Choice Youth and Family Outreach Inc, located in Harlem—an area deeply affected by gentrification.

At our new site, we've exemplified heightened program productivity with the successful launch of the Strategic Arts and Education Initiative, generously funded by a 2022 grant from the Ford Foundation. The transition of our community arts program from Columbia University to Another Choice Youth and Family Outreach Inc. in Harlem brought about several significant benefits:

- **Increased Relevance and Accessibility:**
 - Relocating the program ensured that it was more directly accessible to the Black and brown community members it was designed to serve. This proximity facilitated greater participation and engagement.
- **Cultural Alignment:**
 - Moving the program allowed for a stronger cultural alignment with the community it served. This enhanced resonance and connection between the program and its participants.
- **Mitigation of Historical Context:**
 - By relocating from an institution with a documented history of racism, the program's new home in Harlem represents a positive shift away from that historical context. It demonstrates a commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive environment.
 - Being situated in Harlem, a community deeply impacted by gentrification, provides an opportunity to actively address and respond to the challenges faced by local residents. The program's presence serves as a resource for those navigating the impacts of gentrification brought on by the expansion of Columbia University throughout Harlem.
- **Community Engagement and Trust:**
 - The transition to Another Choice Youth and Family Outreach Inc. resulted in increased community trust and engagement. Being embedded in the local community fosters a sense of ownership and investment among participants.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS FOR PROGRAM PRODUCTIVITY CONT.

- **Strengthened Community Partnerships:**
 - The move facilitated new or strengthened existing partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and community leaders. This network can provide additional resources, support, and opportunities for program growth.
- **Diversification of Perspectives:**
 - The transition allowed for exposure to different perspectives, challenges, and strengths within the Harlem community. This broadened understanding and has significantly influenced program development in a positive way.
- **Enhanced Program Impact:**
 - With a more direct connection to the community's needs and realities, TCA is experiencing an increase in its overall impact and effectiveness. Tailoring the program to the specific context of Harlem and neighboring communities is leading to more meaningful outcomes for participants.

Overall, this transition served to amplify the program's effectiveness, deepen its impact on the community, and demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity and cultural sensitivity in its mission. I have full confidence that by 2024, we will not only successfully conclude this project but also do so from a significantly fortified foundation compared to our initial starting point.

NEXT STEPS

Under my leadership, TCA is in the process of creating a comprehensive toolkit designed to mobilize community stakeholders in utilizing public art and art programming as powerful tools for combating racism, shifting public perceptions, cultivating meaningful relationships, and promoting authentic representational storytelling through strategic arts engagement initiatives. Our toolkit will include but not be limited to information in the following areas: contextual background, case studies and success stories, key principles and strategies, engaging stakeholders, budgeting and resource allocation, legal and regulatory considerations, community engagement and outreach, artistic selection and curation, evaluation and impact assessment, sustainability and long-term planning, additional resources and references, contact information and options for individualized support.