



THE CHANGING FACE OF CREATIVITY IN NEW YORK

Sustaining NYC's Immigrant Arts
Ecosystem Through Crisis and Beyond

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Center *for an* Urban Future

Center for an Urban Future (CUF) is a leading New York City-based think tank that generates smart and sustainable public policies to reduce inequality, increase economic mobility, and grow the economy.

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Cover: "A Call to Prayer," from PROJECT TAG by Hussein Smko, performed at the Battery Dance Festival. Dancers: Mizuho Kappa (Japan), Maggy Van Den Heuvel (Netherlands) Valérie Louise (France) Xavier Townsend (USA), and Hussein Smko (Kurdistan, Iraq)

Photo credit: Steven Pisano

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THE CHANGING FACE OF CREATIVITY IN NEW YORK CITY

Each new decade brings a fresh wave of concern that New York City risks losing some of its cultural spark. Even before the coronavirus pandemic hit, New York's soaring cost of living and the lure of cities from Baltimore to Berlin had threatened the city's position at the apex of global culture. At the same time, a powerful, growing force of cultural vibrancy has reenergized the city in recent years and sharpened New York's creative edge: immigrant artists.

Foreign-born artists have long been here, birthing world-altering movements from abstract expressionism to hip-hop. More than any previous era, however, immigrants have become pivotal to the success of the arts in New York. The number of immigrant artists has grown 69 percent since 1990, compared to a 30 percent increase in U.S.-born artists. The ranks of immigrant producers and directors, writers, and photographers have all doubled since 1990, while the number of immigrant actors has grown by almost 150 percent. Today, the city is home to 12 percent of the nation's immigrant artists, far more than any other U.S. city. Across multiple disciplines, immigrants burnish the city's global reputation for artistic excellence, from the nine New York-based, foreign-born artists who were featured in last year's Whitney Biennial to the five 2019 Bessie Award-winning immigrant dancers and choreographers, to hip-hop superstars like Trinidad-born, Queens-raised Nicki Minaj.¹

But now the livelihoods of countless immigrant artists—and the survival of the cultural organizations that champion their work—are facing major threats. Without the benefit of endowments or large donor bases to help cushion the blow, many immigrant-led and immigrant-serving arts organizations are facing fiscal catastrophe, reporting revenue losses amounting to 50 percent or more of their annual budgets. These organizations were particularly vulnerable to financial shocks before the pandemic hit, with the average ethnic arts nonprofit bringing in just one-third the government funding and less than 7 percent of the board contributions received by mainstream peer organizations. Meanwhile, many immigrant artists have struggled to access government relief, even as income from exhibitions, performances, and side jobs has all dried up.

While city support for immigrant arts had increased in recent years, that funding is now in jeopardy: the city's 2021 budget cuts more than \$23 million from the Department of Cultural Affairs and slashes funding for Council discretionary initiatives by \$79 million—funding that many immigrant-serving arts organizations rely on.

Absent a new level of support, New York risks losing its status as a beacon of cultural exchange and innovation, and jeopardizing its prospects in a daunting economic recovery. To continue attracting and sustaining brilliant creators from across the world—and keep pace with cities like Los Angeles, Houston, and Miami that are now experiencing far faster growth in their immigrant artist communities—city policymakers and cultural leaders will have to do far more to help immigrant artists and arts organizations to survive the current crisis and weave new strength into the cultural fabric of New York City.

This report provides a new level of detail on the landscape of immigrant arts in New York City—and what’s needed to sustain immigrant arts communities across the five boroughs. Funded by the New York Community Trust, the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund, and Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the report builds on the Center for an Urban Future’s previous research about the vital role of the arts in New York’s economy, including the 2015 *Creative New York* study. The report documents the essential contributions of immigrant artists to New York City, identifies the core challenges facing immigrants in the arts both before and amid the current crisis, and advances more than a dozen specific recommendations to support immigrant artists and immigrant-serving arts organizations and strengthen the city’s creative future. It was informed by extensive data analysis and interviews with over 100 New Yorkers, including immigrant artists, directors of immigrant-led cultural and social service organizations, leaders of other cultural institutions, art critics, creative professionals, and government officials, among many others.

Since the coronavirus pandemic hit in March 2020, arts organizations of all kinds have experienced tremendous financial hardship. But our research finds that many of the city’s immigrant-serving arts organizations and working immigrant artists have taken the greatest hit. Galleries, performance venues, and community spaces that champion the work of immigrant creators have gone dark indefinitely, with few financial resources to cushion the blow.

New data from immigrant-serving arts organizations reveals the scale of the crisis. Flushing Town Hall, a multidisciplinary global arts venue in Queens, has lost more than \$400,000 in earned income through June—over 17 percent of its annual budget—and projects losses up to \$500,000 for the late summer and fall, including lost income from weddings, events, ticket sales, and government contracts. The Nuyorican Poets Cafe has been closed since March with zero earned revenue and projects losses of between \$400,000 and \$450,000 for the year—more than half of its annual budget. The Bronx Academy of Art and Dance has lost over \$20,000 in revenue from canceled events and rentals since March, and has spent more than \$40,000 on continued rent payments for its shuttered space.

For many immigrant artists, the impact of COVID-19 has been particularly devastating. Dancer and choreographer Hussein Smko saw the premiere of his autobiographical dance work postponed by several months, and he lost a potential \$40,000 grant and had to cancel a fundraiser, both due to the pandemic. His future plans to tour in his native Kurdistan have also been placed on indefinite hold. Without live events, Colombia-born musician Johanna Casteñada has lost her main source of income and is surviving on unemployment and micro-grants. But in her band, Grupo Rebolu, “We’re nine musicians affected. And that’s only in my band.” Artists from New York’s Himalayan communities have lost income from canceled weddings and festivals, says community activist Nawang Gurung. But most of these artists actually make a living working under the table in particularly hard-hit industries like restaurants, nail salons, and childcare: “They don’t get unemployment because they were paid in cash,” says Gurung. “It’s been a challenge for seven months just to pay the rent, and groceries are not cheap in New York City.”

Immigrants have experienced the steepest financial losses of any New Yorkers, with more than half of all immigrant workers in many communities losing their primary source of income. The impact of this crisis is compounding the financial challenges already affecting immigrant artists, who earn just 88 cents on the dollar compared to U.S.-born artists. Given the challenge of earning a living from art alone, many worked in the city’s hardest-hit industries to support their artistic practices—from art handling and performance venues to restaurants and nightclubs—and a large share of these jobs have either disappeared or been dramatically scaled back. In addition, the deep economic pain afflicting immigrant communities, coupled with struggles accessing federal cash relief or unemployment insurance, has forced immigrants to cut back drastically on spending, resulting in patronage of artists and arts organizations all but disappearing in recent months.

Given the vital, growing role that immigrant artists play in cultivating the city’s broader creative ecosystem, these dislocations and disruptions pose a major threat to the city’s long-term economic health and cultural vibrancy.

“We Need to Survive” COVID-19 Threatens the Careers and Livelihoods of NYC’s Immigrant Artists

Sirène Dantor Saintil is the lead vocalist and founder of Fanmi Asotò, a Haitian song and drum group and cultural organization rooted in Vodou traditions. For Saintil and her husband, master drummer Jean Guy “Fanfan” Rene, Fanmi Asotò’s performances and workshops are the sole source of income for their family, and since COVID hit, they’ve had no work and no income. “My husband and I are both immigrants, both artists, this is the way we live our life, and now we’re stuck and don’t know what to do. Nobody calls us to perform. I usually have a contract for a year, and now everything has stopped,” says Saintil. “Right now to survive, to feed my family, I have to go to food banks.” Beyond a \$500 emergency grant from the Brooklyn Arts Council and the occasional small donation for a free outdoor performance, Saintil has received no relief. “Make people understand us as immigrants, performers, artists,” she says. “We need to survive. This is our life.”

We interviewed a Lebanon-born multimedia artist who asked to be identified as “**Sophia**.” She currently lives in upper Manhattan with her partner, also an artist and immigrant, and two children. Her work has been exhibited at the Brooklyn Museum and Dumbo Arts Festival. As a result of the pandemic, both she and her partner have lost all of their income from their art practices and they have been unable to access any relief grants. “There is basically zero happening in terms of shows or speaking engagements or anything like that. It’s like our career has come to a standstill,” she says. “In terms of money in our pocket there is really absolutely nothing.” Sophia’s partner is unable to work his side job as an Uber driver to avoid exposing their family to the virus. Their family is now relying on her day job, which generates a fraction of their previous income.

Dancer and arts educator **Aeilushi Mistry** was born in Gujarat, India, and is now based in Bay Ridge. For the past eight years, she has led a traditional Arti, a Hindu lamp ceremony, on the shores of the East River in Brooklyn, connecting hundreds of New York families with the culture of India and receiving coverage in the *New York Times*. This year, her life’s work has ground to a halt. “My calendar is completely empty right now,” she says. “In a normal year, I’d have two or three residencies in schools in both spring and fall, teaching students about Indian culture through dance. I would lead movement workshops and seminars and give performances in the community several times a month. And I’d be performing at festivals. But those were all completely canceled or really scaled back.” Mistry estimates that she’s lost at least \$15,000 to \$20,000 in income from her work as an artist this year and is having doubts about her future in New York. “Artists are essential, but there’s no work for us,” she says. “It feels like one door after another is closing.”

Tijay Mohammed is a Ghana-born artist based in the Bronx who has organized community-based projects at the Brooklyn Museum and Studio Museum in Harlem. With a full calendar of exciting projects scheduled, Mohammed anticipated that 2020 would be his breakout year. As the pandemic intensified, however, he sustained one setback after another. He had been invited to teach workshops and organize projects at several institutions throughout the year, all of which were either canceled or scaled back to online-only programs. Mohammed estimates he lost about \$12,000 in income due to cancellations alone. In addition, sales of his work have suffered. “I had one piece priced at \$15,000 that was going to sell, but it didn’t because the buyer lost her grandmother to COVID and was struggling,” he says. “My community relies on me, but I was struggling myself.”

Colombia-born **Lina Montoya** is a muralist, teaching artist, and designer based on the North Shore of Staten Island since 2010. Since her first commission for the NYCDOT in 2014, her work has centered on public art that engages the community, celebrates Staten Island’s diversity, and creates a sense of belonging. But her work relies on public commissions and community participation, which have all but vanished. “Everything fell apart,” says Montoya. “All my projects with the DOE were canceled. The four pieces I was supposed to do in 2020 never happened. I haven’t been able to start any projects remotely or through distance learning.” With no source of income and public schools closed, Montoya left New York City to stay with family in Colombia in the spring. She recently returned to New York, where she is trying to rebuild her career and find work again.

Immigrants are driving the growth and success of New York’s arts sector.

New York City’s artistic relevance, from the 19th century through today, is greatly owed to the passion and creative vision of international newcomers. “Immigrant artists and their work have been foundational to the city’s cultural make-up,” says Michael Royce, executive director of the New York Foundation for the Arts, a nonprofit supporting artists and emerging artists and arts organizations in New York State and beyond.

Immigrants to New York like Roberto Matta from Chile and Arshile Gorky from Armenia paved the way for New York’s groundbreaking abstract expressionist movement led in part by other immigrants like Mark Rothko from Latvia and Willem de Kooning from the Netherlands. Lithuanian filmmakers Jonas

immigrants now comprise a growing share of the city’s artists—and, our research shows, play a lead role in pushing technical and creative boundaries, preserving cultural heritage, and anchoring New York’s position as a global leader in contemporary culture. CUF’s analysis of Census data finds that New York City is now home to 50,964 immigrant professional artists, a 69 percent increase from just 30,139 in 1990. The share of New York City–based artists who are immigrants has also grown—from 24 percent in 1990 to 29 percent today. What’s more, the share of immigrants who are artists has grown by more than 25 percent. Since 1990, the number of immigrant artists grew faster than U.S.-born artists in every occupation we examined.⁴

Growth in immigrant artists can be seen across every artistic occupation since 1990, with the largest increase among designers, up from 12,068

New York City is now home to 50,964 immigrant professional artists, a 69 percent increase from just 30,139 in 1990.

and Adolfas Mekas became leading figures of the New American Cinema movement, while fellow Lithuanian George Maciunas created the experimental Fluxus movement, involving artists like Yoko Ono and Shigeo Kubota from Japan and Nam June Paik from Korea. A lifetime of work by the French immigrant Louise Bourgeois influenced the development of feminist-inspired body art and installation art.²

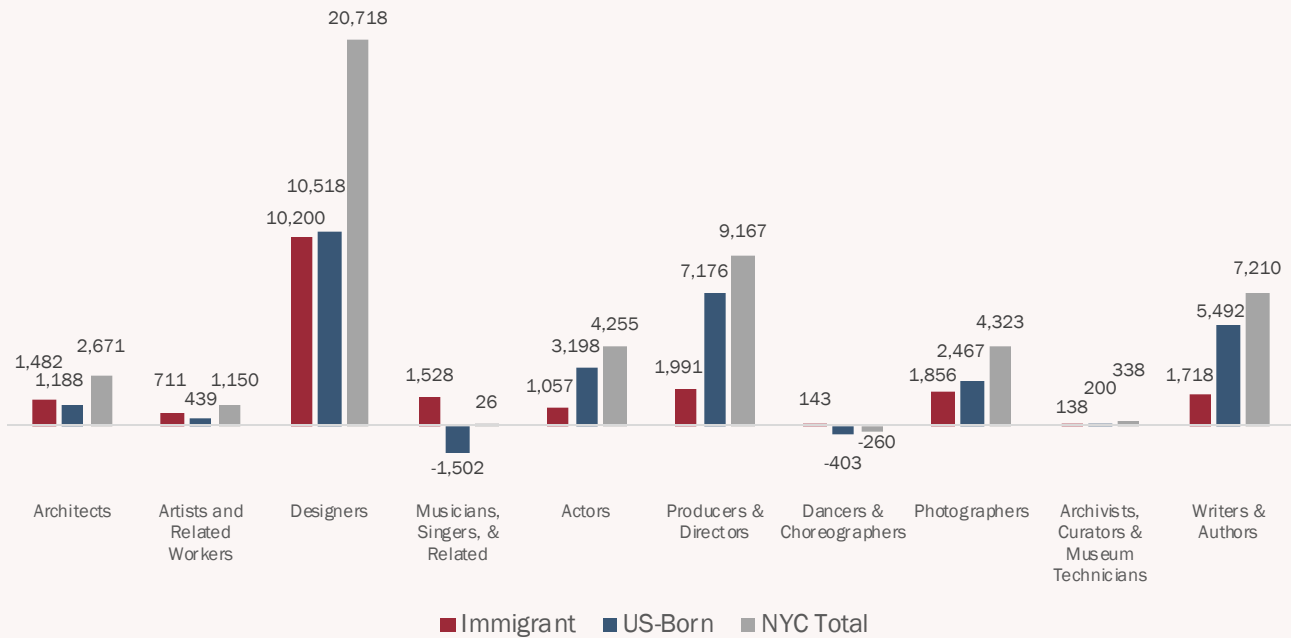
Immigrant Caribbean musicians are arguably responsible for the birth of hip-hop—people like Bronxite hip-hop founders DJ Kool Herc from Jamaica and Grandmaster Flash from Barbados. Puerto Rican migrants have also made immeasurable contributions to the sounds and flavors of the city, with theater companies like Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater leading the nation in bilingual theater, and Boricua musicians like Tito Rodriguez and Tito Puente popularizing Cuban styles like mambo, giving rise to the distinctly New York sound that became known as “salsa.”³

But while immigrants have always made vital contributions to the arts community in New York,

immigrant designers in 1990 to 22,268 by 2018, a gain of 10,200. Fashion design in particular has been driven by immigrant contributions: a recent survey of fashion industry employers found that 85 percent said international talent was important to the growth and success of their business and 67 percent employed international talent.⁵

In some cases, immigrants are driving the growth even while the number of U.S.-born artists has declined: since 1990, the city recorded a net loss of 1,502 U.S.-born musicians and gained 1,528 immigrant musicians. This is no surprise to Bronx musician and co-artistic director of the Bronx Music Heritage Center Bobby Sanabria, who teaches music at New York University (NYU) and the New School. “Every semester,” Sanabria says, “I sign these recommendation letters for people applying for their O-1B visas”—visas for extraordinary ability in the arts—explaining that many of his students hail from the Caribbean, Central and South America, China, Russia, Israel, and other parts of the world. “That’s why immigration is so

Growth (#) in NYC's Artists, 1990-2018



Source: CUF analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2014-2018, and the 1990 U.S. Census

“We’d be lost without the immigrant artists in New York”

important—because it reinvigorates culture, it reinvigorates all of the arts.”

But there are many more skilled immigrant artists who are not reflected in these statistics, such as those who practice in community settings. “We’ve got some of the world’s best artists here driving cabs in Brooklyn and digging graves in Queens,” says Peter Rushefsky, executive director of the Center for Traditional Music and Dance (CTMD). In fact, the tremendous growth in foreign-born, professional artists captures just a fraction of the enormous world of immigrant arts in New York City—from the steel-pan bands on Eastern Parkway every Labor Day to the nail salon worker who performs Chinese opera at night.

Immigrants are increasingly essential to the city’s global leadership in arts and culture.

Though many foreign-born artists do still operate on the margins of New York’s art world, more than

ever before immigrant artists are being recognized for their excellence. Of the 78 artists and collectives shown in last year’s Whitney Biennial, 24 originate from outside the fifty states. Of those 24, nine live at least partly in New York City, including Wangechi Mutu from Kenya, Olga Balema from Ukraine, Meriem Bennani from Morocco, and others. “We’d be lost without the immigrant artists in New York,” says Andrew Russeth, art critic and former executive editor of *ARTnews*.⁶

Immigrants are also having a profound impact on the city’s music scene. “If you want to have a global presence you likely have to come to the U.S. and more specifically, New York,” says Justin Kalifowitz, CEO of Downtown Music Holdings. “If immigration is prevented, you lose that edge. New York City is home to some of the most culturally relevant musicians. Contemporary artists like Nicki Minaj who was born in Trinidad and raised in Queens are pushing the boundaries of popular music.”

From playwrights like Romania-born Saviana Stanescu, Poland-born Martyna Majok, and Korea-born Hansol Jung, to companies like Ma-Yi Theater Company and the Pan-Asian Repertory Theatre, immigrant artists and immigrant-serving groups are energizing the theater scene. Immigrants are also crucial participants in the New York dance world. Of the 13 dancers who received Bessie Awards in 2019, five were immigrants: nora chipaumire of Zimbabwe, Tania El Khoury of Lebanon, Shamar Watt of Jamaica, Alice Sheppard of Britain and Daina Ashbee of Canada.⁷

Immigrant artists are reshaping the film world in New York City. Of the 24 feature film directors presented by MoMA's 2019 New Directors/New Films festival, which highlights emerging filmmakers from throughout the globe, twenty-one were born outside the United States, among which at least two are based in New York: Alejandro Landes and Lucio Castro. Of the 16 film directors who won Tribeca Film Festival awards in 2019, the majority were from other countries, including Brooklyn-based Rania Attieh.⁸

According to Barbara Schock, chair of NYU Tisch's graduate film program, the program's international diversity is crucial to its success. "There are two things that [immigrants] bring: they bring stories from other places and other ways of understanding the world, but they're also bringing their new existence as an immigrant to our culture," says Schock, "and it's this duality that is incredibly vitalizing." Schock points to the Taiwanese graduate Ang Lee and his film *The Ice Storm*, set in a quintessential American suburb, as well as the China-born graduate Chloé Zhao and her film *The Rider*, set in South Dakota.

Meanwhile, immigrant designers have perhaps the most substantial presence of immigrants in any arts sector. Of CultureTrip's ten NYC-based fashion designers to know about in 2018, half were born outside the country: Canadian Chris Gelinas, Norwegian Eleen Halvorsen, Belgian Tim Coppens, and Australians Ryan Lobo and Ramon Martin. "I can't imagine our industry or any of the arts industries in America existing without the rich cultural heritage [brought by] everybody that comes to the U.S.," says Sara Kozlowski, director of education and professional development at the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA).⁹

New York City-based immigrant artists are also among the nation's literary giants, including Korea-born, Queens-raised Min Jin Lee, author of the acclaimed novels *Pachinko* and *Free Food for Millionaires*; Mexico-born, 2019 MacArthur "Genius" grant award-winner Valeria Luiselli, author of *The Story of My Teeth* and *Lost Children Archive*; and Peru-born Daniel Alarcón, author of *Lost City Radio* and *At Night We Walk in Circles*. That's not even counting Salman Rushdie, a New Yorker since 2000.

The impact of New York's immigrant artists extends far beyond accolades and awards. Immigrants are pioneering innovative, interdisciplinary practices. In both the 2018 and 2019 cohorts at NEW INC, the New Museum's cultural incubator for artists, designers, technologists, and creative entrepreneurs, over 40 percent were immigrants. And by melding genres and cultural traditions, immigrant artists collaborate to develop completely new styles. "All of these art forms need rejuvenation," says David Johnston, executive director of Exploring the Metropolis (EtM), a nonprofit that supported access to workspace for performing artists for almost 40 years, before circumstances tied to the pandemic forced the organization to cease operations in June. "They all need these shots of something new, and a new story and a new perspective."¹⁰

More than ever, that rejuvenation comes through the contributions of immigrant artists, many of whom are anchors in their communities, sharing traditions, mentoring the next generation, and performing in community settings. When they are not touring internationally or performing at premier venues like Lincoln Center, immigrant artists and groups like the New York Crimean Tatar Ensemble of Borough Park and the Queens-based Mariachi Real de Mexico lead arts and cultural organizations dedicated to supporting and serving immigrant artists and audiences.

Immigrant arts organizations sustain and uplift the city's most vulnerable communities.

New York City's immigrant arts organizations greatly enrich the communities they serve, preserving traditions and bringing different generations together to celebrate shared culture. In a time of crisis, these artists form a supportive ecosystem

that sustains New York’s immigrant communities through even the darkest times. In this report, we use the term “immigrant arts organizations” to encompass a diverse mix of arts and cultural organizations that are led by immigrants, serve immigrant populations, focus on specific ethnic and cultural arts practices and expressions, and/or support and interact with immigrant artists and audiences in other ways.

Immigrant arts organizations create safe spaces for undocumented families, single-parent youth or youth whose parents work around the clock, monolingual new arrivals, and people needing space to process and heal from traumas like war, displacement—and the COVID crisis. Executive director of Calpulli Mexican Dance Company Juan Castaño describes the atmosphere of trust in the company’s community classes: “We’ve had families come to us and say, no matter what’s happening, whether it’s at our job or in the news or in school, we always know that we can come here.”



Students learn guitar at the Mariachi Academy of New York. Photo courtesy of Ramon Ponce.

Immigrant arts organizations and their leaders are also crucial facilitators of civic engagement. Founder and Executive Director of Napela, Inc. Adama Fassah invites immigration lawyers and other informative visitors to her cultural festival in Staten Island. Shelley Worrell, founder and chief curator of CaribBEING, a Brooklyn-based organization that promotes Caribbean culture, served as Head of Caribbean Partnerships at the U.S. Census to help increase the Caribbean community’s awareness and participation in the 2020 census.¹¹

And art can be a powerful means for immigrants to express political demands. New

Sanctuary Coalition often employs art as a tool of protest: in 2017, activists carried blocks of melting ice to a detention center to protest against U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The following year, the coalition and other groups organized a march in which attendees were each asked to bring a 25-pound suitcase in imitation of the small suitcases that families are allowed to provide to relatives facing deportation.¹²

Undocumented, temporary worker, and persecuted artists face major barriers.

For New York’s many undocumented artists, simply living in the city and practicing their art form is politically charged: Due to legal status, they arguably face the greatest difficulty in learning and pursuing their craft.

Undocumented New Yorkers are ineligible for federal tuition grants, face barriers to employment, and are often ruled ineligible for residencies and fellowship requiring work authorization. “There are a lot of undocumented artists who are doing really great work, and important work, that we would have loved to be able to support,” says Suzy Delvalle, former executive director of and current advisor to Creative Capital, a nonprofit that supports innovative and adventurous artists nationwide. “Understanding how we could get to that point would be really helpful.”

Radical changes to federal immigration policy and enforcement are also having harmful ramifications for New York’s international students, artists on temporary worker visas, and persecuted artists seeking to resettle here. According to interviews with students and faculty at New York’s art schools and MFA programs, in recent years many graduating international art students who might have settled in New York have been returning to their home countries or seeking out other global arts hubs. “In the past few months within my close community, everyone’s leaving,” says Yasi Alipour, an Iranian artist and graduate of Columbia University’s MFA program in visual arts, who was interviewed shortly before the pandemic hit New York. New York-based arts groups that collaborative with foreign groups are also finding it more difficult to secure visas for their partners.¹³

“That puts us in a very perilous position as a nation,” says Tina Kukielski, executive director

Immigrant-serving arts organizations have been hit especially hard by the coronavirus pandemic

The coronavirus pandemic and ensuing economic crisis has hit immigrant artists and immigrant-serving organizations especially hard. Many artists have lost all income from performances and exhibitions, and others are facing months without supplemental income from work in restaurants, bars, museums, galleries, and performance venues. For immigrant-run and -serving arts organizations that were already financially vulnerable before the pandemic, the loss of earned revenue is proving devastating, and there is little sign of relief.

Flushing Town Hall has lost more than \$400,000 in earned income through June—over 17 percent of its annual budget. With a \$2.3 million budget, the organization projects up to \$500,000 in additional losses for the late summer and fall, and no endowment to cushion the blow.

Nuyorican Poets Cafe has been closed since March and estimates a loss of more than \$400,000 compared to last year—more than half of its annual revenue.

More than 40 percent of the \$220,000 budget for the nonprofit **Bangladesh Institute of Performing Arts** comes from revenue raised from its classes teaching Bangla music and dance, which are canceled for the foreseeable future.

Centro Cultural Barco de Papel in Jackson Heights, a Spanish-language bookstore and arts venue, is facing the prospect of closing for good, as the space's majority-immigrant patrons have been deeply affected by the crisis. "We are surviving based on the immigrant population, who are the ones that are being hit the most," says Paula Ortiz, the organization's executive director.

and chief curator of Art21, a nonprofit presenter of contemporary art. "To not be seeking out individuals who have exceptional talent, that have something unique they can offer to the cultural landscape of New York City."

The livelihoods of immigrant artists are threatened by rising rents and income disparities.

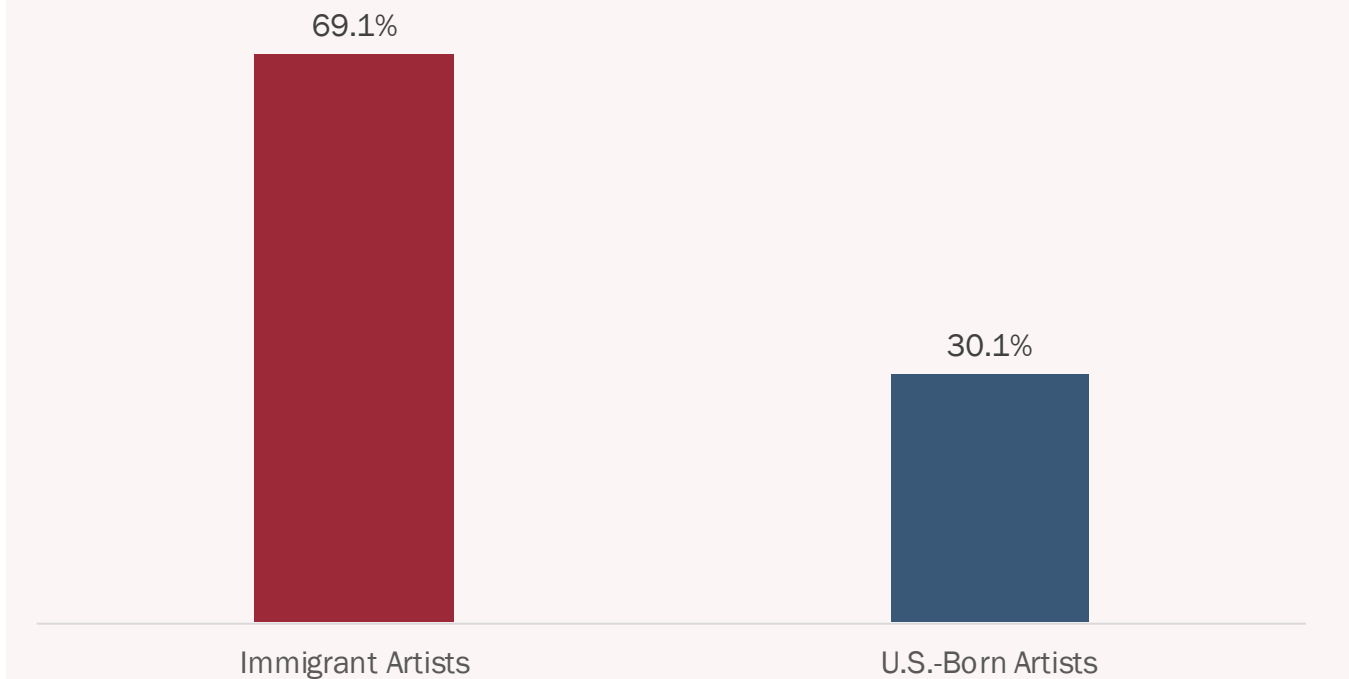
While the pandemic is worsening economic disparities between immigrant and non-immigrant New Yorkers, even prior to the crisis. Foreign-born New Yorkers made a median of nearly \$15,000 less than U.S.-born New Yorkers—the undocumented, almost \$23,000 less—which means that for many immigrant creatives, the daily struggle to survive leaves reduced time for artistic pursuits. Likewise, professional immigrant artists are out-earned by their U.S. born counterparts: from 2000 to 2018,

foreign-born professional artists in New York made an average income of about \$41,000 annually, less than the \$46,600 annual income of U.S.-born artists.¹⁴

Lower incomes and rising living costs may be hampering the ability of the city's immigrant artist population to grow to its full potential. While the number of professional immigrant artists grew by 35 percent, over 10,676 artists, from 1990 to 2000, growth in the 18 years since 2000 has been more modest, increasing by fewer total artists (10,149), an uptick of 25 percent. Meanwhile, the number of U.S.-born professional artists grew by less than 2 percent from 1990 to 2000, and then shot up by 28 percent from 2000 to 2018.

These economic conditions have made it so that other cities may now be better poised than New York to attract immigrant artists. While New York City still has the lion's share of the nation's immi-

Growth in Immigrant and U.S.-Born Artists, 1990-2018



Source: CUF analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2014-2018, and the 1990 U.S. Census

“It’s critical that if we want to maintain that New York City that we all know and love, that we sustain immigrant artists”

grant artists, this share has declined. In 1990, New York City was home to 11 percent of the nation’s immigrants and 14 percent of the nation’s immigrant artists, while today the city is home to 7 percent of the nation’s immigrants and 12 percent of its immigrant artists. Over the past two decades, Los Angeles added more immigrant artists than New York, and cities from Austin and Houston to Minneapolis and Miami all saw their immigrant artist populations grow faster than New York’s. “It’s critical that if we want to maintain that New York City that we all know and love, that we sustain immigrant artists,” says Annetta Seecharran, executive director of Chhaya Community Development Corporation, a nonprofit focused on the economic well-being of South Asian and Indo-Caribbean New Yorkers.

Immigrant artists often struggle to get attention, and to get paid fairly when they do

For the immigrant artists who call New York home, garnering attention from audiences, media, and funders is a challenge. This is especially true for immigrants who arrive here with limited economic means or under challenging circumstances. “Some artists are able to immigrate to the U.S. via a degree program in the arts, developing connections as well as experience with institutions and advancement in the sector,” says Sami Abu Shumays, deputy director of Flushing Town Hall. “Unfortunately, many others immigrate without any formal connections to the cultural sector, and often find themselves lost, having no idea how to market themselves or even to find arts organizations

Immigrant Artist Growth in Select U.S. Metro Areas, 2000-2018

Metro Area	2000	2018	Growth (#)	Growth (%)
Austin	1,398	3,970	2,572	184.0%
Minneapolis	1,427	3,497	2,070	145.1%
Houston	5,060	10,231	5,171	102.2%
Miami	17,610	24,415	6,805	38.6%
Los Angeles	48,846	64,551	15,705	32.2%
NYC (5 boroughs)	40,815	50,964	10,149	24.9%
USA	293,169	413,086	119,917	40.9%

Source: CUF analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 2014-2018, and the 2000 U.S. Census

that might be interested in presenting their work.” Black and Latinx immigrants remain seriously underrepresented in the arts, making up only 26 percent of the city’s immigrant professional artist population, though they make up 53 percent of the city’s immigrant population.

Even immigrants who obtain support from a local institution or cultural organization might still struggle to gain mainstream recognition, especially if they live and work far outside Manhattan, or their work doesn’t conform to western notions of what constitutes art. “It’s a constant uphill battle,” says Catherine Peila, director of programs and artist services at the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning. “How to get the audience in, how to have the audience to pay, how to get funders to support it as a professional art form while respecting the artist and paying the appropriate amount through funding.”

When they do have an opportunity to perform, immigrant artists often find themselves underpaid, or not paid at all. “No one would think of paying a cellist at Lincoln Center those low fees or expect something for free, yet some institutions would offer that to a percussionist from the Bronx,” says Elena Martinez, City Lore folklorist

and co-artistic director of the Bronx Music Heritage Center. A 2019 study by Dance/NYC found that 22 percent of the immigrant dance workforce surveyed do not receive any form of income through dance-related activities.¹⁵

Immigrant-serving arts organizations struggle to find and keep affordable space.

Like individual artists, immigrant-serving arts organizations also strain to cope with economic realities. The city’s soaring rents have caused groups to lose original spaces and made it only harder to maintain makeshift, temporary solutions. Even prior to the pandemic, organizations like Local Project, Centro Corona, and Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance (BAAD!) had each been displaced from a prior location. Some hubs for art and culture had shut their doors completely, including Librería Lectorum and Librería Macondo in Manhattan, and Century Dance Complex in Staten Island.¹⁶

Immigrant-serving arts organizations are particularly vulnerable to rising rents because they possess fewer assets. Of the 27 small cultural organizations led by or working with immigrant communities that we interviewed, only one owned its

own space. Furthermore, our review of 557 New York City arts organization profiles in the DataArts database from 2016 to 2019 found that organizations not serving a particular ethnic group possessed an average of \$10.5 million in fixed assets, while organizations affiliated with a particular ethnic group possessed only \$1.4 million in fixed assets.¹⁷

Some groups have found resourceful ways to adapt to a shortage of affordable rehearsal space—renting school gymnasiums, practicing in parks, or using the back rooms of restaurants during off-nights. Yet these adaptations constrain the ability of immigrant-focused arts organizations to build capacity, increase their impact, and create lasting connections with the communities they serve. “If the school closes, then of course we can’t rehearse,” says Luz Soliz, founder of Wabafu Garifuna Dance

pared with only \$891,000 for ethnic groups, according to a review of over 1,300 DataArts profiles.

With a lack of connection to wealthy donors, fundraising is a particular challenge, which can be exacerbated by preexisting neighborhood inequalities. According to our analysis of the DataArts profiles, non-ethnic cultural organizations obtain about 14 times the average earned revenue of ethnic organizations, along with about six times the average corporate revenue, and 15 times the revenue from trustees.

Immigrant-serving arts organization can get trapped in a vicious cycle, where a lack of mainstream attention precipitates a lack of funding, which in turn means an organization is unable to build capacity and garner the recognition it might deserve. With smaller budgets and fewer staff than other cultural organizations, those who work or volunteer for immigrant-serving arts organizations often juggle

Non-ethnic cultural organizations obtain about 14 times the average earned revenue of ethnic organizations, along with about 6 times the average corporate revenue, and 15 times the revenue from trustees.

Theater Company, whose group preserves Garifuna culture through dancing, singing, and drumming, on rehearsing in a school building. “Naturally, we don’t have a key. And there’s not enough space to leave our costumes and drums on site.”

Immigrant-serving arts organizations face unique challenges raising revenue and accessing philanthropy, which in turn limits growth.

As with other arts organizations, immigrant-focused groups need revenue to survive, but because they often are dedicated to serving lower-income communities, raising money—whether from audience attendance or from wealthy donors—can be a challenge, leading to major disparities in revenue. Our research found that on average, non-ethnic arts organizations in the city bring in \$4.8 million in total revenue, com-

many responsibilities. “The team works together to do the grant writing, but it’s also the same team that produces the event, sometimes the same team that’s performing,” says Juan Aguirre, executive director of Mano a Mano: Mexican Culture Without Borders. Of the 27 immigrant-serving organizations with budgets of less than \$1 million (or not available) that we interviewed in-depth, seven did not have 501(c)(3) status, and of the 20 that did, only four had a salaried staff member dedicated to development.

Immigrant artists and immigrant-serving arts organizations depend on public funding, and yet receive far less than mainstream counterparts.

Immigrant-serving arts organizations and immigrant artists disproportionately depend on government funding, despite receiving far less support. Non-ethnic organizations profiled by DataArts receive an average of about \$438,000 of their revenue from government sources (about 9 percent of their total revenue), while ethnic organizations receive an average of \$148,000 of their revenue from government sources (about 17 percent of their total revenue).

But federal funding for arts and culture has waned in the 21st century. The National Endowment for the Arts received just \$162 million in the 2020 budget, down from \$176 million in 1992 (well over \$321 million when adjusted for inflation).¹⁸

Given declining federal support, the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) play an increasingly important role in supporting the arts. But programs that support immigrant artists often make up mere fractions of the budget. For example, NYSCA's lauded Folk Arts program constituted 2 percent of NYSCA's total grant allocation to the five boroughs in 2019. And major geographic disparities exist in overall spending: NYSCA allocates \$13 per capita in Manhattan, compared with less than \$1 in the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island, though some Manhattan-based organizations serve all five boroughs.¹⁹

Similarly, despite significant efforts by the de Blasio administration to reach smaller organizations in low-income communities, most city grant-making dollars continue to be spent on mainstream and Manhattan-based organizations. Of the DCLA grant dollars listed in NYC Open Data for FY 2018 (not including City Council discretionary initiatives), 62 percent went to Manhattan and 19 percent to Brooklyn, leaving 8 percent for the Bronx, 9 percent for Queens and 2 percent for Staten Island. Strikingly, while per capita DCLA grant funding citywide is about \$4.79, and an outsize \$15.37 in Manhattan, per capita spending in the ten neighborhoods with the highest immigrant populations was just \$0.74. Our review of DCLA grantees listed in Open Data found that just 14 percent of the organizations funded indicated in their DataArts profile that they served a specific ethnic group.²⁰

DCLA's requirement that arts groups hold non-

profit status often poses an additional barrier to funding. Thankfully, individual artists and collectives without 501(c)(3) status can apply for funding from NYSCA through fiscal sponsorship, and from the city's five borough councils. However, funding levels are not equal among the five councils: while about twice as many immigrants live in Queens than in Manhattan, the FY 2018 budget of the Queens Council on the Arts was just 40 percent the size of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's.²¹

To their credit, the de Blasio administration and City Council have made substantial new investments in the arts in recent years—and directed some new support to immigrant artists and arts organizations. Since 2014, Mayor de Blasio and the City Council had increased DCLA's operating budget from \$157 million in FY 2014 to a record high of \$212 million in FY 2020. Likewise, the City Council has increased support in recent years for immigrant artists and organizations, including funding the Cultural Immigrant Initiative (CII). Just last year, the New York City Economic Development Corporation and DCLA announced plans to build a performing arts center focused on the immigrant experience in Inwood. DCLA has also convened city policymakers, community-based organizations, artists, and other stakeholders to develop the CreateNYC cultural plan, which provides a roadmap to make the arts and culture sector more inclusive. From FY 2018 through FY 2020, DCLA committed an additional \$8.2 million to cultural organizations that support low-income neighborhoods and underserved communities, and has invested over \$1.2 million in a new language access fund.²²

But the current economic crisis is jeopardizing that progress. The FY 2021 budget slashes funding for DCLA by \$23 million—with the bulk of those cuts aimed at cultural programs funding, on which many smaller, immigrant-focused arts organizations rely. Additionally, major reductions in councilmembers' discretionary budgets—enacted in response to the city's bleak fiscal state—will have a serious impact on funding for smaller, community-focused arts groups, including \$9 million in cuts to the Cultural Development Fund, and a \$1 million cut to the CII program.²³

Despite the progress made in recent years, including increased funding for immigrant-serving cultural organizations and the launch of several new programs, many of the challenges facing immigrant arts have gone largely unaddressed. As a result, New York risks

losing the cultural diversity and creative spirit that make it a global icon—and cement the city as a beacon for the world’s most innovative and exceptional artists. To ensure New York City’s immigrant artists and immigrant-serving arts organizations are able not only to survive but to thrive, city leaders will have to redouble support for immigrant creative communities across all five boroughs—and the responsibility cannot fall to DCLA and NYSCA alone.

To strengthen these vital communities, city leaders will have to do much more to provide immediate relief from the ongoing pandemic, address the persistent affordability crisis, rectify the damage of the Trump administration, and help artists and organizations to overcome the many obstacles they face in earning revenue, handling bureaucracy, obtaining in-

stitutional funding, and navigating the immigration system. Even at a time of drastic fiscal constraints, the city can get creative in supporting immigrant artists—by launching new initiatives to connect immigrant artists with vacant storefront and commercial spaces, opening public spaces for immigrant arts performances and exhibitions, building space for immigrant arts into future neighborhood development plans, helping New York’s immigrant creative entrepreneurs to grow, and strengthening the reach and effectiveness of the borough arts councils. Together, policymakers, cultural leaders, government officials, and philanthropists can uplift and sustain the immense contributions of its immigrant artists and ensure that New York City maintains its position as a global hub of creativity.

NYC’s Immigrant Artists Step Up to Support Communities in Crisis

Across all five boroughs, New York City’s immigrant artists are using their work and platforms to support immigrant communities in crisis.

In early 2020, Filipino-American artists **Jaclyn Reyes** and **Xenia Diente** launched Bayanihan Arts in Little Manilla, Queens. Intended as a series of public art activations celebrating the Filipino diaspora, the project took on new meaning during the pandemic. “When COVID hit, we adjusted our project to create a mutual aid network between Little Manilla businesses and healthcare workers, many of whom are Filipino immigrants,” says Reyes. The project has worked with local restaurants to provide free meals to frontline workers, and collaborated with local artists to paint the neighborhood’s first mural dedicated to the Filipino community.

Ecuador-born, Bronx-based artist **Francisco Donoso** launched an “immigrant-powered shop” in August, with a goal of leveraging his burgeoning career to generate financial support for immigrants who are struggling during the pandemic. He has partnered with organizations that provide direct cash assistance to undocumented New Yorkers and advocate for immigrants and refugees, contributing up to 30 percent of the proceeds from his sales. He also employs “two younger, at-risk, undocumented artists that I can pay and mentor.”

Mexico-born arts advocate and curator **Eva Mayhabal Davis** sees immigrant artists using their creativity and problem-solving skills to help the communities hardest hit by the pandemic. “Some of the most successful mutual aid networks serving communities of color and immigrant communities are being led by artists,” says Davis. “People like Guadalupe Maravilla, who works with Bay Ridge Mutual Aid; the Indigenous Kinship Collective; and the creatives who work with Bed-Stuy Strong and Bushwick Mutual Aid. I’m proud to say that I’ve seen a lot of artists working in mutual aid networks, whether it’s setting them up or helping to promote them.”

Methodology: Counting Immigrant Artists

CUF tracks changes in New York City’s artist population by analyzing census occupational data. To define “artist,” we employ a modified version of the National Endowment of the Arts’ definition, excluding “announcers” and “entertainers and performers, sports and related workers, all other.” For the pre-2000 era—after which the Census revised its occupational classifications—we use eleven occupational categories: “architects,” “designers,” “authors,” “musicians and composers,” “actors and directors,” “photographers,” “dancers,” “archivists and curators,” “art, drama, and music teachers,” “painters, sculptors, craft-artists and artist printmakers,” and “artists, performers and related workers, n.e.c.”²⁴

To define artist for 2000 and after, we use ten categories: “architects, except naval,” “designers,” “writers and authors,” “musicians, singers, and related workers,” “actors,” “producers and directors,” “photographers,” “dancers and choreographers,” “archivists, curators, and museum technicians,” and “artists and related workers.”

With these modifications, our definition of artist for the later era (2000 to present) is the same as that used in Creative New York, with two changes: the exclusion of “editors” and the addition of “archivists, curators and museum technicians,” which we think better captures the landscape of artist occupations. We do not attempt to draw categorical comparisons for two pre-2000 categories, “art, drama and music teachers,” (because they are subsumed in the new category “postsecondary teachers”) and “artists, performers and related workers” (who have become split among numerous categories).

Altogether, our review suggests that our pre-2000 definition of artist includes about 148,000 people nationally who are not included in the later definition, and our 2000-and-after definition of artist includes about 225,000 people nationally who are not included in the earlier definition. This means our figures for 2000-and-after period are slightly inflated relative to the pre-2000 period.

In this report, our definition of immigrant includes everyone born outside the 50 states who is living in the fifty states, regardless of current citizenship status. We also spoke with individuals who identify as the “second generation,” children of immigrants, as well as organizations that serve both immigrants and second-generation children. Many New Yorkers’ experiences do not fall neatly into one category or the other, such as those born in the United States but who spend their childhoods between two countries. While our data queries focus on those born outside the 50 states, we have sought to be more broadly inclusive in our qualitative research.

We struggled with the question of how best to include Puerto Rican migrants in this study. Many Puerto Ricans understandably reject the label “immigrant” given their status as born United States citizens. That said, Puerto Rican New Yorkers have also faced many of the same barriers as the foreign-born, from negotiating a history of colonialism and displacement, to confronting racism and language barriers in this country. They have also played a crucial role in creating the cultural infrastructure that today sustains a multiplicity of non-white, non-English-speaking communities. For simplicity’s sake, our use of the term “immigrant” and “foreign-born” in this report and in our data includes Puerto Rican migrants and others born in the U.S. territories of Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Step up city funding and support for immigrant arts organizations

Launch a major new Immigrant Arts Relief Fund to address the ongoing COVID crisis

Expand access to public open spaces for immigrant arts organizations

Partner with technology firms to provide infrastructure and know-how to support virtual programs

Strengthen the power and reach of Borough Arts Councils by increasing direct support for artists, raising the cap on regrants, and expanding outreach

Make Cultural Development Fund grants more flexible to reach immigrant arts organizations

Expand the Language Access Fund, with increased translation support for immigrant-serving organizations

2. Establish Immigrant Arts Centers in all five boroughs as part of a long-term recovery plan.

3. Launch a citywide initiative to help immigrant artists and arts organizations fill the growing number of storefront and commercial vacancies.

4. Create a NYC Immigrant Artist Film, TV, and Theatre Fund with seed money from the industry.

5. Leverage underutilized city-owned spaces to provide immigrant artists with affordable work space in their communities.

6. Expand legal assistance programs to support immigrant artists and arts organizations.

7. Take advantage of the downturn to help immigrant-led arts organizations band together to secure permanent spaces.

8. Expand NYC Community Land Trust Initiative to artists and arts organizations.

9. Market immigrant arts organizations and programming to New Yorkers and visitors as part of the city's tourism recovery efforts

10. Help immigrant creatives start and grow their businesses

11. Increase support for rehearsal space subsidy programs.

12. Strengthen partnerships between immigrant-led arts organizations and city schools.

13. Mobilize philanthropic support for a CUNY Creative Careers Impact Fund.

14. Address funding inequities across the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG).

15. New York's leading cultural institutions should implement sanctuary space training and deepen ties with local immigrant arts groups

A VIBRANT FORCE: THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRANT ARTS ON NYC

Immigrant artists by the numbers

Today, with immigrants constituting a greater share of the city's population than in over a century, immigrant artists play an ever more important role in New York City.

According to the Census, the population of artists born outside the 50 states has swelled from 30,139 people in 1990 to 50,964 today, a 69 percent increase. Even as New York's foreign-born population grew by 907,718 during that time (immigrant New Yorkers now number 3.4 million, or 41 percent of the total population), the growth rate of immigrant artists has far outpaced overall immigration.

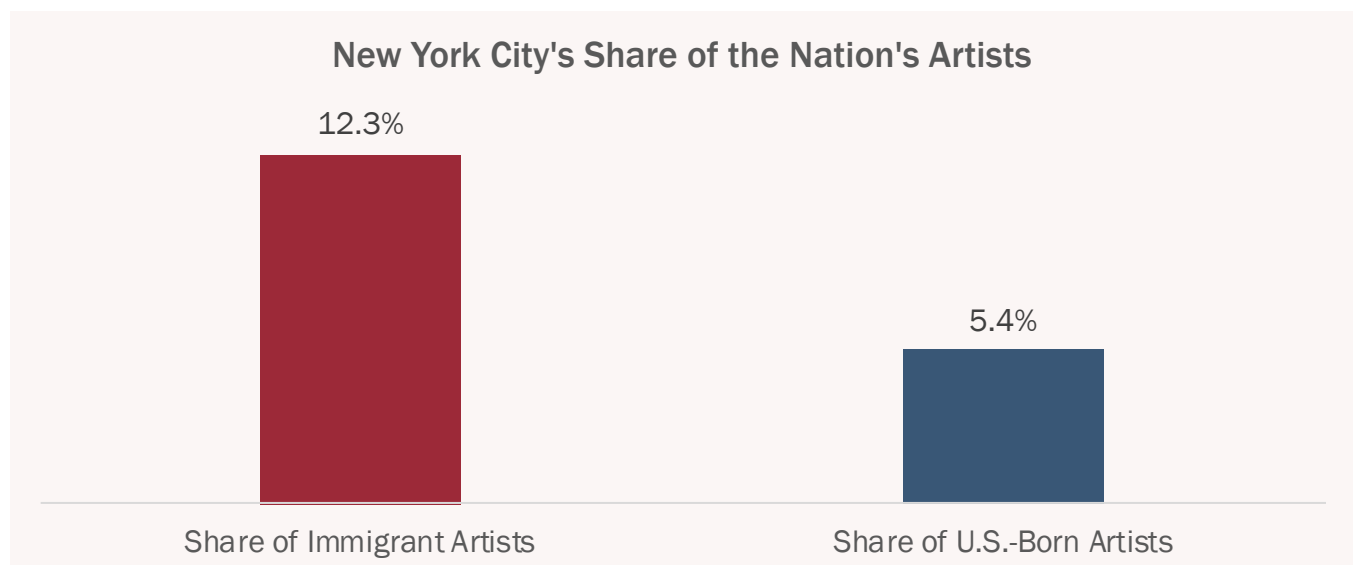
The number of immigrant artists in New York City has grown across all occupational categories. The populations of foreign-born producers & directors, writers & authors, and photographers have each more than doubled since 1990. The largest growth has been among designers, nearly doubling from just 12,068 in 1990 to

22,268 by the last census. Immigrant designers now make up 38 percent of all professional designers working in New York today.

In some cases, immigrants are driving the growth even while the number of U.S.-born artists has declined: since 1990, the city lost 1,502 U.S.-born musicians and gained 1,528 immigrant musicians. The city also lost 403 U.S.-born dancers and gained 143 immigrant dancers.

More than 50 years after the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 remade the U.S. immigration system, leading to new waves of migration from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, New York City's immigrant artists are increasingly diverse, representing over 120 countries and territories. The greatest share of these artists come from China, Korea, Canada, the Dominican Republic, and Japan, while in 1990 they originated from Russia, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico.

Considering all of the city's artists, the share who are immigrants has also grown, though



Source: CUF analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2014-2018, and the 2000 U.S. Census

with ups and down—rising from 24 percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 2000, then declining to 29 percent today. These statistics do not take into account second-generation artists who may identify as immigrants, such as the 3 percent of American-born artists in New York City who are children of immigrants and the 10 percent who have at least one immigrant parent.

More immigrant artists live here than in any other U.S. city: New York City is home to 7 percent of the nation’s immigrants, but 12 percent of the nation’s immigrant artists. In some specific arts occupations, New York City’s share of the nation’s immigrant artists is even larger: New York is home to 16 percent of the nation’s immigrant actors, 16 percent of all immigrant producers and directors, and 13 percent of all immigrant dancers and choreographers.

Where do these immigrant artists live? Their numbers have increased in every borough, but Brooklyn absorbed much of the growth, with the population of immigrant artists increasing from 6,218 people (21 percent of all immigrant artists) in 1990 to 17,438 people (34 percent of all

not participate or do not identify themselves as artists on the census. We spoke with a passionate teacher of traditional dance who earned all her income as a nutritionist; an actor and singer who spends his days delivering for Caviar and DoorDash, and a musician who also worked as a civil servant, airplane cargo loader, and more.

The growing impact of immigrant artists on New York City

Immigrant artists, whether professional or amateur, make tremendous contributions to the city’s cultural life. “Immigrant artists are critical to every discipline and every level of the cultural ecosystem, from community-based organizations providing vital educational and social impact programs to world-class museums and theaters that draw millions of visitors from all over the world,” says Ronni Reich, director of public information at the New York State Council on the Arts.

New York City is home to immigrant dancers and performers who simultaneously push aes-

“Artists really are at the forefront of helping us navigate these uncertain times. We look to immigrant artists to provide their additional lens and experience to help us rethink how we make this country a better place.”

immigrant artists) in 2018, while Manhattan’s share decreased from 47 to 36 percent. This trend applies to all artists: 17 percent of U.S.-born artists lived in Brooklyn in 1990 and 25 percent by 2018. The share of immigrant artists living in Queens and the Bronx (together, 28 percent) is equal to the share of U.S. born artists living in those two boroughs (28 percent).

Census data doesn’t capture the many immigrants who are skilled artists but who do

thetic limits and explore themes of deep import. These include dancers like Zimbabwe-born nora chipaumire, a three-time Bessie Award winner, whose work “challenge[s] and embrace[s] stereotypes of Africa,” and “challenge[s] traditional rules of dance performance” as well as Pelenakeke Brown, an interdisciplinary artist from Aotearoa (New Zealand) of Samoan descent, and recipient of the Dance/NYC Disability Dance Artistry Award; she recently created and performed new



Nariman Asanov of the NY Crimean Tatar Ensemble performs on violin. Photo courtesy of Nariman Asanov.

work using her medical record as source material, which interrogated the nature of the archive and who has the power to write it.²⁵

Some of the world's masters of rare or endangered musical forms are based in New York City—like the Brooklyn-based NY Crimean Tatar Ensemble, the only U.S.-based performers of traditional music from the Crimean Tatars. At the same time immigrant and non-immigrant musicians alike are creating wholly original sounds, working with multinational partners to fuse a multitude of genres and world traditions, as demonstrated by Flushing Town Hall, which has expanded beyond its initial focus on jazz to feature global music. Its March 2019 “Global Mashup” series included a jam session between the Grammy Award-winning India-born vocalist Falu, who blends Indian classical music with rock, and Hazmat Modine, a band that merges the sounds of multiple American genres with global influences. Mashups between different cultures, explains Lisa Gold, executive director of the Asian American Arts Alliance, are “how new traditions and new art forms are born, and that’s what New York City keeps alive and vibrant and relevant.”²⁶

Immigrant visions are also crucial to the field of design. The CFDA and The Accessories Council’s Elaine Gold Launch Pad program has supported China-born Rui Zhou’s brand of unique knitwear—best described as “a second layer of skin”—along with Russia-born Leonid Batekhin, who transforms traditional Russian scarves into blouses, jackets, and other pieces, and Lucy Jones, from Wales, who melds fashion with accessible design, creating wearables for people with disabilities. “[Fashion] thrives on the energy of people from all around. It brings new perspectives, it brings new ways of doing business, new opportunities for types of clothing,” says Eileen Karp, assistant professor and chair of the Fashion Design Department at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT).²⁷

The presence of foreign-born artists is integral to the excellence of New York City’s visual arts scene. “To have an interesting art world, you need people coming from a variety of backgrounds, with a variety of life experiences and viewpoints,” says critic Andrew Russeth. “The more international, the better the art scene.” Last year’s Whitney Biennial included

Chinatown-resident and Thai artist Korakrit Arunanondchai's dreamy film *with history in a room filled with people with funny names 4*, which "interweaves autobiographical elements, allusions to current events in Thailand and the United States, and hypnotic post-apocalyptic visions." In Spring 2019, the New Museum featured a lifetime of work by the sculptor Nari Ward, a longtime Harlem resident from Jamaica whose work is known for its use of scavenged materials and for its powerful social significance. In 2019, the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning presented work by Anthonia Akinbola, a textile artist from Nigeria, who used the traditional form of batik (a cloth dyeing method) to create a painting exploring themes like slavery, migration, and xenophobia in America.²⁸

"Artists really are at the forefront of helping us navigate these uncertain times," says Suzy Delvalle of Creative Capital. "We look to immigrant artists to provide their additional lens and experience to help us rethink how we make this country a better place."

Immigrant artists are also making important contributions in the world of film. MoMA's New Directors/New Films festival, which features an international set of groundbreaking directors, in 2019 included at least two foreign-born directors who have settled in New York—Alejandro Landes and Lucio Castro.

Foreign-born writers and playwrights are also transforming the American cannon. New York is home to writers like India-born poet Vijay Seshadri, whose collection *3 Sections*, exploring human consciousness "from birth to dementia," won the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry in 2014. New Yorker Moisés Kaufman, founder of Tectonic Theater Project and the first Venezuelan to receive the U.S. National Medal of Arts, is known for *The Laramie Project*, about the 1998 murder of gay student Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, while in 2003, Cuban-born writer Nilo Cruz became the first Latino to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his play set in a Cuban-American cigar factory.²⁹



Ceremonial performance by Cetiliztli Nauhcampa at Mano a Mano's Day of the Dead celebration. Credit: Nelson Aguirre

Weaving the social fabric: Immigrant arts organizations uplift and unite communities

Immigrant artists' contributions to New York extend far beyond their individual works. The cultural organizations led by immigrant arts professionals offer a variety of benefits to the city's ethnic communities. These include tangible economic benefits, including the revenue generated by food and craft vending, hospitality industry purchases, transit use, local business traffic, and staff overtime, such as during the annual Crown Heights West Indian American Day Carnival. While no agency has evaluated the festival's impact since 2003, organizers believe it's now way over \$300 million annually.³⁰

Immigrant arts organizations also offer a range of intangible benefits to the communities they serve. Many organizations create opportunities for immigrant populations to celebrate and preserve their cultural traditions. "They feel proud of their costumes, where they're coming from," says Bibyanna Corona, executive director of Organización Mexico Americana de New York, describing the Mexican dance groups Ballet Folklórico Mexicano de Nueva York, Tecuanes de San Gabriel, and Chinelos de Morelos.

Cultural activities can help facilitate communication across generations and geographies. "These groups are connectors. They connect the group with their homeland; they keep them up to date with what is going on in the homeland as far as music and culture," says Jared McCallister, senior production editor and Caribbeat columnist at the *New York Daily News*.

The connections made through arts participation strengthen immigrant youths' sense of identity and belonging. "Growing up I was always searching for who I was, for my identity, and the way that I found it was through the arts, but the more I fell in love with Mexican culture and Mexican art, for me it was easier to become an American," says Juan Aguirre, of Mano a Mano. Sources also emphasized that participation in the arts allows immigrant youth to build a variety of transferable skills, including public speaking, creative problem-solving, and project management.

And in a nation where immigrants are increasingly under threat, immigrant arts organizations

also serve as safe spaces where English fluency and legal status is not required. El Museo del Barrio has partnered with centers that accommodate migrant children who have been separated from their families, offering art therapy to provide a safe space for youth to express themselves. Canvas Institute of Arts, Culture and Civic Engagement opened its doors to the Liberian refugee community of Staten Island when President Trump threatened to end the Deferred Enforced Departure program.³¹

As safe spaces, immigrant-serving arts organizations serve as conduits for social resources and civic engagement. The community hub Centro Corona has used arts and culture to organize around a range of topics relevant to neighborhood residents, from misogyny to the Amazon HQ2 bid. The Queens Public Library partnered with a Nepalese performance group to host an event that offered immigration information related to the Nepalese community.³²

Immigrant artists also help to foster cross-cultural communication between different communities, encouraging empathy and compassion in an age of rising xenophobia. For example, when the teaching artists of Mano a Mano presents to public school students, they emphasize how the art of China, Japan, and the Arabic-speaking world influenced Mexican culture—helping students from Asia and Latin America to explore their connections to one another.

Karesia Batan, executive producer of dance and production company The Physical Plant and founder of the Queensboro Dance festival, brings together traditional and contemporary dancers from a variety of communities with the intention of exposing participants to new dance forms. "The more we can foster a sense of unity and understanding and compassion for our difference," she says, "even just from a dance perspective, I think that's a contribution that we can give our society."

CHALLENGES AT THE IMMIGRANT-ARTIST INTERSECTION

Foreign-born visual artists, dancers, musicians, actors, filmmakers, and arts professionals fuel the creative energy of New York City, sparking innovation, preserving heritage, and empowering communities. Yet for all the growth and success of New York’s immigrant artists, far too many are struggling to make a living through their craft. For those fleeing hardship and establishing a new life in the United States, pursuing a career in the arts—with all the economic risks such a path usually entails—is often not an option. This may be part of why just 2.2 percent of working immigrant New Yorkers work as artists, compared to 4.9 percent of working U.S.-born New Yorkers.

Unequal access to arts education for immigrant youth in public schools may also be preventing many budding artists from pursuing an arts career. A 2016 study by CUNY Graduate Center’s Center for Urban Research found a correlation between schools with high percentages of English Language Learners and those that receive less arts education opportunities in grades 1–4. A 2018 study by the CUNY Institute for State and Local Governance found that nonparticipation in arts activities in or out of school is higher for children of immigrant-born parents (31 percent) compared to U.S.-born parents (19 percent).³³

Racial disparities persist among immigrant artists, as well. New York City’s working immigrants are 53 percent Black and/or Latinx, but only 26 percent of the immigrant artists identified by the Census are Black and/or Latinx.

To its credit, the de Blasio administration has made major commitments—and significant progress—in tackling these disparities by increasing equitable funding, promoting inclusivity in the cultural sector, and expanding access to arts education under the direction of the CreateNYC cultural plan, released in 2017, and the updated CreateNYC Action Plan, released in July 2019. But there is still more to be done to ensure that New York remains a beacon for immigrant arts. In the

following sections, we highlight key challenges facing immigrant artists, from the specific barriers faced by artists of precarious immigration status, to challenges around affordability, breaking through, and navigating bureaucracy that affect nearly all foreign-born artists in New York today.

Undocumented, temporary worker, and persecuted artists face serious barriers.

Undocumented artists face some of the greatest barriers to making it in New York. Lack of employment authorization can make undocumented artists ineligible for many cultural work opportunities. Undocumented freelance workers who obtain an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) number may be able to secure some opportunities, but bureaucratic barriers and misinformation hinders some workers from applying for an ITIN. Undocumented students are also not eligible for federal aid, and some fellowships and residencies are limited to people with green cards. Furthermore, the Trump administration’s anti-immigration policies have contributed to even greater uncertainty about what health care and housing benefits undocumented immigrants can access.

A number of cultural organizations have found ways to support undocumented artists. Off the record, these organizations told us about strategies like reimbursing undocumented artists with cash, passing money through an artist’s colleague or spouse, or reimbursing an artist’s production budget to avoid direct payments. Yet it often takes an undocumented artist’s willingness to make phone calls and disclose their status to find out what opportunities are available to them.

Immigrant artists with temporary worker visas, such as the O-1B visa for individuals with extraordinary ability in the arts or extraordinary achievement in motion picture or television industry, also face eligibility restrictions when applying for some opportunities. For instance, while

the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program and the BRICworkspace Residency are both open to artists of any immigration status, the Artist Studio program at Brooklyn’s Smack Mellon is only open to U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents. Until recently, only U.S. citizens and green card holders could apply for a Creative Capital award; in 2018 the organization opened up to O-1B visa holders as well. Many organizations choose to stay “safe” by restricting eligibility to legal permanent residents.³⁴

Furthermore, temporary worker artists do not qualify for some federally funded housing resources, and face barriers to affording healthcare. Many people with O-1B visas are paid on contract and cannot obtain health insurance through their employers. “I had a girl who had a panic attack and ended up in the emergency room; she had to pay \$5,000 of medical bills,” recalls Kika Espejo, executive director of The Espejo Organization, which

demonstrates that the applicant has received major awards or performed in distinguished productions, among other possible criteria. The 2018 CFDA survey found that 89 percent of fashion industry professionals would like to see increased support for employers to navigate the immigration system, and 85 percent hoped to see increased resources to guide graduating international students.³⁶

Art schools often do not adequately prepare international students for the process ahead of them, Espejo says, and employers are frequently unwilling to sponsor the visa due to legal costs, with some even afraid to get involved by writing letters of support. Applicants can work with a sponsoring agent and take on the expense themselves, but sometimes predatory lawyers will charge as much as \$10,000 to assist with an application, she says. “A lot of employers these days are not as willing to

New York City’s working immigrants are 53 percent Black and/or Latinx, but only 26 percent of the immigrant artists identified by the Census are Black and/or Latinx

assists international artists in navigating the visa process, among other activities. “It’s kind of scary. You have no family here, health care is difficult to access, there’s not a lot of support in general.” The opportunity to join a union is also, in some cases, restricted: while musicians with O-1B visas can join Local 802, the New York local of the American Federation of Musicians union, without a green card it’s much more complicated to be a member of the Actors’ Equity Association, the actors’ and stage managers’ union.³⁵

While the O-1B visa has its frustrations, most artists seeking to immigrate to the United States—or to stay in the country after they’ve finished a degree—find the O-1B visa is their only option due to the difficulties of winning a visa through the capped H1-B lottery. Securing and renewing a O-1B visa, however, is both difficult and expensive. The process involves assembling a portfolio that

sponsor as in the past, so we lose a lot of this talent in having them go back to their countries,” notes Karp of FIT.

Another group of foreign-born artists, those persecuted for acts of expression in their native countries and who seek safety in the United States, are also in need of even greater support due to changes in federal immigration policy. After leading the world in resettlement for decades, the United States under the Trump administration is now accepting far fewer refugees, with the cap on refugees in the U.S declining from 232,000 in FY 1980 to 111,000 at the end of the Obama administration and to a new low of 15,000 refugees for FY 2021. Furthermore, many persecuted artists who do obtain some kind of visa to resettle here are likely to need other supports to successfully transition. A number of organizations in New York City—ArtistSafety.net, Artistic Freedom Initiative, Residency

Unlimited, Pen America Artists at Risk Connection (ARC), Fordham University, Tamizdat, and Westbeth Artists Housing—have built a coalition to assist at-risk artists and provide them with the holistic support they need, but as of 2019 they could only host three to five artists per year in their residency program.³⁷

Many immigrant artists are hit hard by the city's affordability crisis

Rising cost of living makes other cities more attractive

Populations of immigrant and U.S.-born professional artists have grown in roughly the same neighborhoods in recent years and experienced some of the greatest rent increases citywide over the past decade. Williamsburg saw the sharpest numerical rise in both immigrant and U.S.-born artists since 2000, and the greatest percentage rent increases of any neighborhood, with median rent rising from \$1,064 in 2008 to \$2,000 in 2018, after adjusting for inflation. Other neighborhoods landed in the top ten both for growth in immigrant artists and rent increases, including the Brooklyn Heights/Fort Greene, Central Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, and Bushwick.³⁸

As New York has grown less affordable, other cities are benefiting from an influx of immigrant artists. Since 2000, New York's share of the nation's immigrant artists has decreased by 2 percentage points, while other cities are rapidly becoming home to larger immigrant artists populations. Over the past two decades, the number of immigrant artists in Los Angeles has grown by almost 32 percent, or 15,705 people—the largest numerical growth of any metro area. Austin and Minneapolis experienced booming immigrant artist populations, expanding by 184 percent and 145 percent, respectively. In Houston, the immigrant artist population has more than doubled since 2000, increasing by 5,171 people. Foreign-born artists now make up 21.9 percent of all artists in that metro area, an increase from just 15.2 percent in 2000. Miami is home to 6,805 more immigrant artists than in 2000, an increase of over 38 percent. Today, a whopping 46 percent of all Miami-based artists were born abroad.

Limited supply of affordable work and rehearsal spaces

Immigrant artists also struggle to afford work spaces. Responding to Dance/NYC's 2016-2017 survey, immigrant dancers ranked affordable artistic development space and affordable presentation space as their top needs. The Clemente Soto Vélaz Cultural and Educational Center Inc, a Lower East Side Puerto Rican/Latinx cultural center in operation since 1993, offers subsidized spaces for visual and performing artists, but at the time of interview in 2019, there was a formal waiting list of 50 to 75 people.³⁹

But the problem is not necessarily a physical shortage of space. Even at subsidized rates, studios at nonprofit cultural facilities are often still more expensive than what artists can afford, and affordable spaces are lacking in many heavily immigrant neighborhoods. The SpaceFinder database—a service listing artist workspaces in New York City—included 348 rehearsal spaces in New York City renting for \$20 or less, and 1,584 spaces renting for more. About two thirds of the 1,932 total spaces are in Manhattan—centrally located, but far from the homes of the 85 percent of immigrant New Yorkers who live in the four other boroughs. Only 25 of these spaces are in Flushing and eleven in Washington Heights/Inwood, the two neighborhoods with the highest number of immigrants. (Fractured Atlas, the organization that ran SpaceFinder, announced that the service would be shutting down on October 1, 2020.)⁴⁰

Spacefinder also listed 302 studio art spaces, of which a mere eleven rent for no more than \$20 an hour. 132 studio spaces, or 44 percent, are in Manhattan. There were no spaces listed in Washington Heights/Inwood, and just one in Flushing.⁴¹

“There are some foundations and the state that have done good jobs with subsidizing rehearsal space,” says Johnston of Exploring the Metropolis (EtM). “I think they need to subsidize it beyond dance, I think they need to subsidize it for other art forms. I think they need to subsidize it even deeper and I think the subsidies needs to be even more focused outside of Manhattan.”



Gaohu musician Yi Zhuo Wu performs on the West 4th St. Subway platform

Difficulties breaking through, gaining attention, and finding steady work

Simply put, our research finds that many immigrant artists struggle to make a living through their art. Ildiko Nemeth, founder and artistic director of New Stage Theatre Company, says immigrant actors are often turned away by directors who deem their foreign accents ill-fitting for the roles they wish to play. Taiwanese visual artist Szu-Wei Ho notes, “It’s hard to connect with the contemporary art world here because of the language barrier and also because when people look at your work, they want to see your culture, they want to see your tradition, but if they don’t see it, they can hardly connect.”

In addition, artists living on the margins of the city—such as participants in the EtM residency programs in Jamaica, Queens (continuing as Redtail Artist Residencies, following EtM’s recent shutdown)—have difficulty attracting attention from Manhattan-based newspapers, funders, and audiences. “I’ve got

to beg people to come out there and see these people—for free,” says Johnston.

Artists who haven’t received media attention struggle to obtain the gigs they need to build a following. Sam Saverance, co-founder of Bunna Cafe, an Ethiopian restaurant and music venue in Bushwick, believes that small venues frequently lack interest in “world” musicians, assuming they will fail to draw a large enough crowd. Bunna Café can support world musicians in part because it doesn’t rely on ticket sales. But other strictly performance venues cannot afford to risk the time investment. “The time you need to build a following . . . is the time you need just to pay the rent already,” Saverance says.

When immigrant artists do secure an opportunity to perform or showcase their work, they are sometimes underpaid. In some cases, immigrant artists go without wages because they are working for a small, immigrant-led collective that can’t afford to pay; in others, mainstream cultural institutions may expect that immigrant artists will be grateful for the publicity, and do

not offer the wages they might offer to a well-known performer. “Even now, people will contact us and say, ‘Do you want to do this free performance? It will give you exposure!’ [But] artists don’t live off publicity,” says Castaño of Calpulli Mexican Dance Company. According to a 2019 study by Dance/NYC, 22 percent of the immigrant dance workforce surveyed do not receive any form of income through dance-related activities.⁴²

In the face of limited opportunities to make an income through art, immigrant artists often have to work multiple jobs at once. We spoke with artists who work in the gig economy, hold jobs in restaurants and retail, or work for small nonprofits, among other jobs. Gaohu musician Yi Zhuo Wu, now retired, made his living in New York as a constructor worker and jeweler. Annie Ferdous, co-founder of the Bangladesh Institute of Performing Arts, is a public school teacher. Her fellow co-founder Selima Ashraf held a job in IT before retirement, while co-organizer Nilofer Jahan works in a grocery store.⁴³

Beyond grant funding, city resources to support immigrant arts are limited

Spearheaded by the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), city support for immigrants and immigrant communities has become a higher priority. New investments in free legal services, literacy, and connecting with city services have had a major impact. But understandably, given the focus on legal protections and social and economic integration, the efforts of MOIA are often limited when it comes to outreach, programming, assistance, and publicity specifically around the arts. MOIA’s resource and referral guide includes information on topics like workforce development, tax assistance and housing, but nothing about cultural resources beyond the cultural benefits offered by IDNYC. Immigrant Heritage Week, sponsored by MOIA, highlights over 100 events around the city, but relatively few of those events are located in areas with the largest immigrant populations. For instance, in the spring of 2019, just nine of the festival’s 103 events took place in Queens.⁴⁴

Beyond MOIA and DCLA, there are other

agencies with arts programming that could take additional steps to support immigrant artists. The MTA, for instance, welcomes musicians of all genres to audition for its Music Under New York program. The program, which is currently on pause due to the pandemic, gives accepted musicians the ability to play in the New York City subway system. Yet the program’s orientation is in English, and musicians must communicate regularly via phone or e-mail in order to participate, which is not easy for all immigrants. Yi Zhuo Wu, a non-English-speaking musician without a computer who had gained admission to the program over a decade ago, explained he hadn’t had communication with the MTA since that time. We found he was not receiving the information from the program and was listed as “inactive” in the MTA’s internal database, even though he was eager to follow the rules. Prior to the pandemic, he played in the subway almost every day of the week.⁴⁵

Organizations Supporting NYC's Immigrant Artists

New York City is home to dozens of organizations dedicated to elevating immigrant cultural arts. Here are just a few of them:

Bangladesh Institute of Performing Arts (BIPA) was launched 27 years ago by a small group of working immigrants from Bangladesh who joined together to nurture their passion for Bangla arts by teaching the music and dance of their homeland. Starting with just six students in Astoria, BIPA has grown to four locations in Queens, Brooklyn, and Long Island City, incorporated as a nonprofit, and taught hundreds of Bengali youth, several of whom now serve as board members. A roster of 25 volunteer teaching artists offers instruction in classical and folk singing, guitar, tabla, as well as dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Kathak and Manipuri.

Border Project Space is a Bushwick-based gallery dedicated to presenting immigrant artists alongside U.S.-born peers. The space was founded by Colombian-born artist and curator Jamie Martinez, who came to New York via Florida in 2001. Many immigrant artists lack opportunities to show their work, and cope with other challenges like poverty, language barriers, and lack of legal status, which makes it difficult to get a foothold in the arts. In addition to exhibitions, Martinez tries to foster connections among immigrant artists and uses his blog to feature artists who need press to renew their O-1B visas. Yet the pandemic required Martinez to close the burgeoning space from March through June. Border Project Space struggled to sell any art and Martinez worries that mounting rent costs may force its permanent closure.

Bronx Academy of Art and Dance (BAAD!) champions performance by LGBTQ artists of color, including the work of many immigrant artists. The organization has worked for decades with queer Latinx artists, and now includes in its ranks South Asian, African, and other queer immigrant artists, reflecting the growing diversity of the Bronx's queer community. In the late 90s, Arthur Aviles and Charles Rice-González, with the support of Hunts Point leaders, dancers, gay activists, artists and drag performers, cleaned up the former American Bank Note Company factory and turned 3,500 feet of warehouse space into a home for Aviles' dance company. The organization was displaced in 2013, when developers bought the Banknote and raised rents, prompting BAAD! to relocate almost four miles away to Westchester Square. BAAD!'s budget has since grown from about \$475,000 to \$800,000 in the past few years, and was seeking a bigger space and new technology to expand programming and performances before the pandemic hit. With their space closed since March, BAAD! has lost at least \$20,000 in revenue while paying \$40,000 on rent, but they have been able to smoothly transition to virtual programming and continue to employ their staff and dancers with the help of a PPP loan and funding from the New York Community Trust and others.

Center for Traditional Music and Dance (CTMD), an organization established in 1968 helps New York City's immigrant communities to preserve and present traditional cultures. CTMD has worked with over 20 diverse New York ethnic communities under its Sustaining Cultures programs, has helped 21 leading artists to be recognized with National Heritage Fellowship Awards

from the National Endowment for the Arts, and has founded seven 501(c)3 organizations. It assists 37 arts organizations to present a full calendar of programs each year, organizes national tours, employs over 20 teaching artists, and serves thousands of New Yorkers through programming and arts education programs.⁴⁶

Centro Cultural Barco de Papel was founded in 2003 by Ramón Caraballo, an immigrant from Cuba who sold books on the sidewalk, who saved enough funds to rent his own storefront. Librería Barco de Papel, or Paper Boat bookstore, opened on a side street in Jackson Heights/Elmhurst, a few dozen feet from where the elevated train rumbled over Roosevelt Avenue. Over time, Barco de Papel evolved into a nonprofit cultural center that hosts open mics, readings, concerts, and other events that frequently sprawl out of the storefront onto the sidewalk outside. The Pan-Latinx space offers an opportunity for Jackson Heights' residents and their children to connect to their cultural heritages and celebrate the rich literary and intellectual traditions of Latin America.

City Lore, established in 1985, documents, presents, and advocates for the city's grassroots culture. Its multifaceted programming includes initiatives to support community anchors and document community landmarks, arts education programs in more than 20 New York City schools, professional development programs for educators, along with a variety of other initiatives to promote urban folklore and traditional cultures, from exhibitions to the "People's Hall of Fame" to poetry series and much more.⁴⁷

Creative Capital launched Taller profesional para artistas, a program that provides professional advisory services in Spanish to Latinx artists, while **Dance/NYC's** Immigrants. Dance. Arts. Initiative has hosted networking events, created an immigrant dancer directory, and produced three reports on immigrant dancers, among several other projects.⁴⁸

New York Foundation for the Arts' (NYFA) Immigrant Artist Program, launched in New York City in 2007, includes a newsletter, resource directory, and the Immigrant Artist Mentoring program. Now available in additional cities, this program provides individual immigrant artists with mentors to help them achieve their artistic career goals and gain broader access to the New York cultural world. The program also includes peer and group meetings, workshops and panels with cultural gatekeepers and an opportunity to meet and learn from NYFA's fiscal sponsorship team. It has served 347 New York City-based immigrant artists since 2007 and another 143 artists in other cities.⁴⁹

Wabafu Garifuna Dance Theater preserves and reimagines traditions from the Garifuna people—the Garinagu. The Garinagu, descendants of both Africans and Arawaks, are originally from the Caribbean islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Artistic director Luz Soliz founded the dance theater in 1992, which is now co-directed by her daughter Catherine Ochún Soliz-Rey. The theater plays an important role in New York City, which is home to the largest diaspora community outside Honduras. For years, Wabafu has operated as a collective without any government support. Soliz is trying to change this: a few years ago she incorporated a 501(c)(3), Garifuna Heritage Center for the Arts and Culture, and she is hoping to build out a board, find assistance to apply for grants, and secure a space for Wabafu. Prior to the pandemic the group rehearsed in a school building, but would like their own space to provide a hub for the Garifuna community.

CHALLENGES FOR IMMIGRANT-LED ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

Immigrant-led arts organizations have often had to make do with less, but with the city becoming increasingly unaffordable, a number of challenges become more pressing. Our research found that immigrant arts organizations particularly struggle to secure space, generate sufficient revenue, reach their communities, and attract mainstream attention.

Shortage of affordable spaces, temporary or permanent, holds back immigrant arts

Immigrant-led arts organizations rarely own their own space. Our analysis of 557 New York City arts and culture organizations in the DataArts database found non-ethnic New York City cultural organizations had an average of \$10.5 million in fixed assets, while ethnic organizations possessed only \$1.4 million in fixed assets. Of the 27 cultural organizations with total revenue of less than \$1 million (or not available) led by or working with immigrants that we interviewed for this study, only one owned its own space. Without their own space, immigrant-led arts organizations are far more exposed to rising rents and the affordable space crunch. “It’s a lot of money they are charging for the rental space,” says Dhammika Navinna of the Sri Lankan Dance Academy of New York. “If we could find something for less rent, or if we could get a grant to pay for our place, we could have more time to rehearse.”

To keep up its class offerings, the Bangladesh Institute of Performing Arts (BIPA) moves between two school cafeterias and two private homes. “We used to have a place rented which was our own thing, but it was too small,” says Selima Ashraf of BIPA. “And we used to practice weekdays, weekends, whenever we wanted to—but here time is limited . . . and it’s very expensive.”



Sri Lankan Dance Academy performers behind the scenes at Lincoln Center. Photo courtesy of Sachindara Navinna

Some immigrant-led performing arts groups face unique barriers to securing space. Two groups said they’d been rejected from rehearsal spaces by venues that feared their percussive footwear would damage the stage floor or make too much noise. In addition, facilities often charge a higher rate for classes than for rehearsals, which can be a hardship for practitioners of traditional forms, who often face a shortage of skilled performers and need to host classes.⁵⁰

Immigrant artists and art collectives are often resourceful in the face of space shortages. Wabafu Garifuna Dance Theater Company rehearses in a school, while the Mexican dance group Nuu Davi Staten Island uses a park. “Artists know how to adapt,” says Bill Aguado, former executive director of the Bronx Council on the Arts and executive director of En Foco, Inc., which supports contemporary photographers of color. “During the summer, [musicians] will rehearse on roof tops, or in basements, or, Monday or Tuesday evening when a restaurant closes and there’s no business, they rehearse in the back.” But makeshift solutions come with limitations. For instance, the organizers must cart their materials between four different spaces.

It's also become challenging for immigrant-led arts organizations to satisfy space needs through the self-sufficient strategies of the past, including reclaiming underutilized lots for rehearsals. In the past, the steel pan orchestras and masquerade camps of Crown Heights' West Indian community would rent open spaces like car lots for rehearsals, and also sell food and beverages to cover rent. "Now as those spaces become less and less [available], sometimes the city will say, 'Why don't you use the public-school parking lot?' But the problem is, there are use-restrictions," says Christopher Mulé of City Lore and the Brooklyn Arts Council.

Whether earned, fundraised, or board-contributed, steady revenue is hard to generate

Immigrant-serving arts organizations, particularly those located in low-income immigrant communities, face significant challenges when trying to earn revenue, especially through the channels used by mainstream cultural institutions.

Our review of DataArts profiles found that, per year, ethnic organizations earned an average of less than \$140,000, while non-ethnic organizations earned more than \$1.92 million, almost 14 times as much. This is partly because the communities they serve include many low-income families who lack the discretionary income to pay for memberships, program fees, or performance tickets. To ensure they are serving their communities, organizations often charge very little—or nothing—for their services and programs. Opera performances by the Chinese American Arts Council are free. Similarly, the directors of BIPA are careful not to ask for too much: "The rent, mostly, we try to cover with the student admission. They pay a little money—very little because we don't want to overcharge [our students]," says co-founder Selima Ashraf.

Fundraising is also a challenge. Our DataArts analysis found that cultural organizations affiliated with specific ethnic groups receive an average of \$739,000 in revenue contributed from trustees, individual, corporate, foundation, government, and other sources, amounting to 83 percent of their total revenue. Meanwhile, non-ethnic organizations received an average of about \$2.1 million in contributed revenue—yet just 44 percent of to-

tal revenue. This means that while ethnic organizations receive far less in contributions, they are far more reliant on them.

Disparities in individual giving are often rooted in the fact that the low-income residents served by immigrant-led arts organizations rarely have disposable income to give to charity. "It's very challenging out here in Queens to raise money, and we're serving a community that's not wealthy," says Sami Abu Shumays of Flushing Town Hall. Nonprofits, he explains, are "desperate for donations all the time, and the model is very effective if you're a mainstream organization serving a wealthy community with a wealthy client base."

In addition, a few immigrant-serving arts organizations reported that local business leaders and private donors are sometimes hesitant to offer contributions, perhaps due to unfamiliarity with the nonprofit model. Non-ethnic cultural organizations receive about \$176,000 in corporate revenue on average, compared to under \$30,000 for ethnic organizations. "Even local businesses are really hard to get funds from," says Paula Ortiz, executive director of Centro Cultural Barco de Papel, a Latinx cultural organization based at the Spanish language bookstore Librería Barco de Papel in Elmhurst.

This can make it difficult for some nonprofits to form a robust board of directors with roots in the community the organization serves. Joe Dugbo, board chair of Staten Island's Napela Inc., says their organization has found it hard to find board members. "Sometimes you want to recruit the best and sometimes you find the best, but they're very busy doing something else. You want people who can be committed; you want people who understand that they're not coming on the board to get a stipend." In turn, this leads to massive disparities in revenue from trustees: over \$381,000 on average for non-ethnic cultural organizations, compared to just \$25,000 for ethnic organizations.

Immigrant-focused arts organizations face specific challenges with audience development

In addition to other factors limiting revenue, immigrant-focused arts groups sometimes struggle with attracting an audience, which dampens revenues directly (as a result of low ticket sales), as well

as indirectly (because the media, donors and funders are less likely to pay attention).

Sometimes, the problem is that the community familiar with and devoted to the art form remains relatively small. “There isn’t enough of a concert-going public to be able to have regular concerts with a high-enough ticket coverage. The market isn’t big enough, basically,” says Johnny Farraj, a Queens-based Lebanese musician of Palestinian descent, describing the difficulties faced by Arabic musicians and Arabic music venues.

In addition to small markets, organizations cite challenges around marketing and outreach. “We haven’t found a right channel to be able to reach more people other than [through] Staten Island Arts and the *Staten Island Advance*,” says Lina Montoya, Staten Island artist and founder of the La Isla Bonita festival. “We don’t know how to find other communities because we don’t have a Latino newspaper or a Sri Lankan newspaper.”

While marketing methods such as digital and print advertising may not solve all outreach problems, local arts and ethnic media could be crucial partners for immigrant arts organizations. Yet with *El Diario* forced to lay off much of its New York City staff, the *New York Daily News* shrinking Caribbeat, its Caribbean beat, from a supplement to a column, and outlets like DNAinfo out of business, the crisis of local news journalism has diminished opportunities for neighborhood-based artists and arts organizations to receive coverage.⁵¹

Certainly, some immigrant-focused art nonprofits have developed ingenious methods of attracting audiences. Pregones/Puerto Rican Traveling Theater welcomes its vendors to watch rehearsals for free. En Foco holds themed exhibitions in apartment buildings throughout the Bronx and Harlem. Calpulli Mexican Dance Company has used word-of-mouth and performances at community functions to build a reputation within the Mexican community.⁵²

Some immigrant-focused arts organizations seek to broaden their base by reaching out beyond their own communities, but organizations can also face challenges when it comes to attracting an audience of the wider public and the attention of the media. The problem of reaching audiences grows even more complicated in historically immigrant neighborhoods racked by widespread displacement. “None of these organizations exist in a vacuum, and

on the Lower East Side in particular, the changes to the neighborhood have an impact on the work that’s done in the arts,” says Helene Blieberg of Helene Blieberg Associates LLC, and former interim executive director of The Clemente, explaining that as a result of demographic shifts, local immigrant artists must reconsider their audience and strategize how to gather displaced members of a community together to experience new artistic work.

Artistic excellence is often equated with media exposure, but visiting groups and immigrant-led organizations may only have reviews from non-American presses that are unfamiliar to American audiences and funders. Or, they may be deeply valued and well-known within a community, but lack marketing materials. “Even today, I got a marketing person ask me, ‘Well how do you know they’re good? Where are the newspapers articles from the *New York Times*?’” says Catherine Peila, formerly of Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning. “And I’m like, ‘They’re from Haiti! They have newspaper articles from their culture’s respected newspapers. It’s the trust and honor given by the community that I believe gatekeepers overlook and dismiss.’” The Loisaida Cultural Plan, for instance, calls for new ways to measure excellence that reflect an organization’s relationship with the communities in the area they serve.⁵³

Limited resources exist to support immigrant cultural entrepreneurs and non-incorporated groups

In immigrant communities, cultural activities often find expression in spaces other than arts institutions, such as social clubs, religious groups, and small businesses for whom the time-consuming process of obtaining and maintaining 501(c)(3) nonprofit status doesn’t make sense. Those we spoke with cited a variety of reasons, including the desire to avoid the heavy administrative burden of maintaining a 501(c)(3) and larger qualms with the model’s structure.

“I’m not ready to stop performing, you know? I do want to scale—in terms of getting enough funding to pay a staff—but I’m not sure yet if that will necessarily mean having my own 501, because of all the administrative work,” says Karesia Batan, the child of Filipino immigrants and founder of the Queensboro Dance Festival. Mei Lum, fifth-generation Chinese-American owner of the Chinese

porcelain shop Wing on Wo & Co and founder of The W.O.W. Project, a community initiative that nurtures Chinatown's creative culture and history through arts, culture and activism, is applying to become a 501(c)(3) but adds, "We're being very cautious about it because of the bureaucracies that exist within nonprofits." W.O.W. has feared needing to follow the dictates of an out-of-touch board, and also wants to make sure they do not lose the chance to continue doing political work.

Yet non-incorporated collectives and community-based groups often have trouble garnering philanthropic and government support, while creative entrepreneurship among immigrants and people of color is often constrained by a lack of start-up investment and real estate assets. "When I was in Missouri, I was working for myself; I had my own business; I had a shop . . . I had everything I needed to be successful . . . I have not been very successful with my business coming to New York," says Anthonia Akinbola, a Nigerian artist and master of the traditional dyeing technique of batik. In New York, she is not able to afford rent for a shop—and certainly not in locations where her hand-crafted, specialized art form would sell at an acceptable price. Instead, she sells her work on Etsy, but finds this hurts sales because her handcrafted work is listed alongside less specialized work. Akinbola would love to see more partnerships between local business and artists, as well as investments in a Queens-based space controlled by artists where artisans could display and sell their work.

Finding start-up investment can be especially challenging for immigrant entrepreneurs facing structural barriers linked to race, class, language, and gender. U.S. Virgin Island-born Rasu Jilani and his U.S.-born cofounder Daoud Abeid used their own funds to launch Coup d'état, a Bedford-Stuyvesant-based socially conscious clothing brand, but initially struggled to find outside investors. "You almost have to be somewhat of an anomaly, and well connected to get venture capital funding. It can be challenging to hurdle over structural barriers when you are an immigrant, and even harder when you are an immigrant of color," Jilani says.

Laura Callanan, founding partner of Upstart Co-Lab, a field-building organization that connects impact investors with the creative economy, says there may be opportunities to direct additional

capital investment to creative enterprises, with an emphasis on backing entrepreneurs who are often overlooked and under-estimated. "Many immigrant-led creative economy businesses have an environmental and social purpose as well as creative and financial goals. Capital from socially-responsible investors could go a long way to scale and sustain businesses like these," she says.

Barriers to performing in public disproportionately affect immigrant-led arts groups

Immigrant-led arts groups also face particular bureaucratic challenges when seeking to host a festival or performance in a public space. One problem is simply the expense of acquiring permits: if a group holds a festival, it's often cost-prohibitive for local vendors to comply with all the city's requirements. Another barrier is the complexity of the application process. "The level of bureaucracy that it takes to facilitate a city like New York is a barrier for immigrant artists and grassroots organizations and small organizations in general," says Maureen Loughran, former deputy director at CTMD. The problem, she says, is both "capacity issues and lack of knowledge of how these issues work—and lack of connections on the inside who help facilitate a better understanding of how these things work . . . The process feels purposefully byzantine." Christopher Mulé notes that some applications require deposits or various sorts of insurances, and the triggers for some costs aren't always clear. Furthermore, since some applications lead to follow-up questions, it can be very difficult for immigrants without access to a computer to complete all the necessary paperwork. Mulé also said that Parks Department staff is well-intentioned but often swamped.⁵⁴

CTMD staff tried to help a group in Staten Island obtain a permit for a festival, but were themselves sent on a chase—first walking to one police precinct, then told to go to another, where they were still not able to make contact with the person to which they needed to speak. "Naomi and I can walk into those environments and navigate them in a way that might not be possible for some of the communities we work with—and that may be prohibitive for some of the communities we work with," says Loughran.

Strategies to Protect and Nurture Immigrant-led Arts Groups

Arts organizations, community-based organizations, and others have recognized not only the great importance of immigrant-led cultural organizations for the communities they serve, but also their precariousness when it comes to space, funding, and publicity. Here, we gather together innovative strategies that community and nonprofit leaders have put forward to protect immigrant arts practice.

Cultural Mapping and Coordination

One strategy to ward off displacement is the creation of “asset maps” that highlight the people, groups, and places that are of value in a community’s cultural and social ecosystem. City Lore, for instance, has created a “Census of Places That Matter” mapping tool. The Loisaida Cultural Plan also calls for such a project, while the Bronx Council on the Arts and the Bronx Culture Collective, a coalition of mostly arts organizations and some independent artists, are working on similar efforts. “We want to really be equipped with information so that we can advocate for workspace, for more livable space, for more public art space,” says Viviana Bianchi, executive director of the Bronx Council on the Arts, “and the way that we’re doing that is we’re creating a tool—a cultural mapping tool.” The map—now live—includes information on population density, demographics and real estate development applications to help inform advocacy decisions.⁵⁵

The Bronx Culture Collective (BxCC), which launched with funding from DCLA’s Building Community Capacity initiative, is “a network committed to preserving and amplifying the cultural community and legacy of the South Bronx.” It advocates for new programs and policies that benefit South Bronx artists and collectives and seeks to coordinate local groups to become a united front against displacement. Most significantly, it has launched South Bronx X South Bronx (sbxsb.nyc), an online portal that includes a South Bronx cultural calendar, community resource map, and the Bronx DNA Project, which aims to showcase the area’s history. The map illuminates community resources, as recommended through submission by community members, of a variety of types, from health and housing to culture and faith-based resources. “When people come in and try to gentrify, the first thing they do is try to make it seem like there’s nothing there,” says Edwin Pagán, program manager for the collective. “Part of BxBC’s job is to remind people there are incredible accomplishments here that have already taken place.”

Stewarding New, Long-Term Affordable Spaces

Across the city, activists and artists are also galvanizing around the creation of community land trusts that could include affordable housing as well as commercial and nonprofit space for arts organizations and other entities. For instance, in the South Bronx, the Mott Haven-Port Morris Community Land Stewards (SBXCLT) is working to obtain ownership of the vacant Lincoln Detox Center and convert it into a home for local organizations that have long served the area and are now facing displacement, along with a culinary arts kitchen, classrooms, and performance spaces. The project has support from multiple sources, including \$46,250 in the latest City Council budget allocated to Hester Street Collaborative, which is providing

assistance to the project. SBXCLT has completed a feasibility study and financial plan, and aims to create a “H.E.ARTS center”—for health, education and the arts. “There’s no place that our children can really come to bring forth their desire to really engage in their need to celebrate their cultural and artistic desires,” says Mychal Johnson, a board member of the land trust, explaining that putting the H.E.ARTS center on a community land trust will “take it out of the speculative market forever” and ensure the space is “owned by the community in perpetuity.”⁵⁶

Other advocates seek to increase collaborations with existing, underutilized institutions—such as houses of worship, schools, or NYCHA buildings—to create space for artists. For instance, diversity catalyst and West Indian American Day Carnival Association (WIADCA) member Anne-Rhea Smith suggests that steel pan band groups can partner with schools, providing musical classes in exchange for rehearsal space.

Some policymakers look to correct for a shortage of cultural spaces in disadvantaged neighborhoods by encouraging new, private development, often with the cost of such spaces partly cross-subsidized by the income earned from apartment rent. WIADCA, for instance, will have a new affordable office space in the forthcoming, mixed-income Bedford Union Armory development in Crown Heights. In Harlem, the National Black Theater teamed up with L+M Development Partners to redevelop its site with a 20-story building that included a new home for the theater. When the city rezoned the neighborhood of Inwood, it allocated \$15 million toward the construction of the city’s first Immigrant Research and Performing Arts Center.⁵⁷

Yet many residents, including immigrant artists, are wary of depending on housing development projects or neighborhood rezonings to secure cultural investments in low-income neighborhoods that have suffered from prolonged disinvestment. Artists are among those who have joined the chorus to express their concern with this strategy. “Artists can no longer accept the crumb of ‘affordable housing for artists’ that allows further luxury development, resulting in higher costs of living for everybody else,” states The People’s Cultural Plan, a document created in 2017 by a diverse group of artists and art workers.⁵⁸

Putting Immigrant Arts on the Tourism Map

The city can take steps to promote awareness of immigrant-focused arts organizations. Of the more than 90 attractions available through the Go New York sightseeing pass, the closest one can get to immigrant cultural life are neighborhood walks conducted by tour companies. In the NYC & Company product directory, 70 of the 102 site-specific “Museums & Galleries” are located in Manhattan, while of the 80 site-specific music, dance, theater and concert hall venues listed, 69 are in Manhattan. Despite important efforts in recent years to expand tourism marketing and promotion to the four boroughs outside Manhattan, the city can do much more to shine a light on immigrant cultural centers and venues citywide, and help boost visitation from New Yorkers and tourists alike.⁵⁹

CITY FUNDING HAS GROWN, BUT ACCESS BARRIERS REMAIN

Our research finds that New York City’s immigrant-serving cultural organizations and immigrant artists are disproportionately reliant on government funding as a share of total revenue. Our analysis of DataArts profiles found that cultural organizations affiliated with specific ethnic groups receive an average of \$148,000 from government sources (about 17 percent of total revenue), while non-ethnic organizations receive an average of \$438,000 from government sources (9 percent of total revenue). For the nine immigrant-serving organizations with detailed tax profiles we interviewed, government grants constituted 33 percent of revenue, on average. But even while public grants are essential supports for many immigrant artists and immigrant arts organizations, barriers still limit organizations’ and artists’ access to this critical source of funding.

A decrease in federal arts spending has greatly impacted immigrant arts, requiring the city and state to step up

Federal support for the arts has declined dramatically in the past few decades, with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) receiving just \$162 million in 2020, down from \$176 million in 1992 (over \$320 million in 2020 dollars). In addition, specific programs that support immigrant artists, like the NEA’s Folk & Traditional Arts program, have not kept up with the growth in the nation’s immigrant population as a whole, and New York City in particular. New York City received an inflation-adjusted \$545,000 in grants through the NEA’s Folk & Traditional Arts program in 1998, but only about \$365,000 from the program in 2019. New York City received about an inflation-adjusted \$219,000 in 2001 through the Challenge America grant program, but only

\$50,000 through that program in 2019. It’s no surprise, then, that city and state government have become increasingly important sustainers of art and culture in New York City.⁶⁰

As the NEA budget has dwindled, city government has increasingly taken charge of sustaining the artistic life of New York City. The city’s cultural budget now exceeds that of the entire NEA, and under the de Blasio administration, support for the arts has only grown. The budget of the Department of Cultural Affairs increased from \$157 million in FY 2014 to a record high of \$212 million in the FY 2020 adopted budget. The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) is a crucial partner in sustaining the arts in New York City. NYSCA awarded \$51 million grants in 2019, \$30 million of which went to organizations and artists in the five boroughs. But support from the state is down considerably from 2000 levels, when over \$40 million in grants went to artists and organizations based in New York City.

Despite increased overall support, immigrant-serving CIGs receive far less than larger institutions

CIGs located in areas with large immigrant populations do not receive as much funding as larger CIG institutions. According to adopted budget figures for FY 2020, the six institutions located in one of ten neighborhoods with the highest immigrant populations—Flushing Town Hall, Queens Theatre, the Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning, the Queens Museum, the Queens Botanical Garden, and the New York Hall of Science—received a combined total of \$6.6 million in funding from DCLA. This was, predictably, a fraction of the funds designated for the Metropolitan Museum of Art (\$27.5 million), but also less than that received

A Selection of City and State Programs Supporting Immigrant Arts

NYSCA is well known for its **Folk Arts Program**, which supports organizations' operating and project costs, apprenticeships, county and regional folk arts programs, and regranting and partnerships. In collaboration with City Lore, the program launched the NYSCA Living Traditions website, and in 2020 it's supporting Long Island Traditions' launch of a statewide folk art tourism app. Immigrant artists can also receive assistance through each of the agency's other grant categories, including the **Special Arts Service (SAS) Program**, which supports underserved and vulnerable populations; the **Literature Program**, which includes support for translation; and fellowships for members of underrepresented communities in the arts, through the **Regional Economic Development Council (REDC)** initiative, among others.⁶¹

DCLA administers numerous programs supporting immigrant artists and ethnic cultural organizations, most notably the **Cultural Development Fund (CDF)**, and in FY 2020 provided over \$51 million in grants to 985 nonprofit cultural organizations. It also administers the five-year-old **Cultural Immigrant Initiative (CII)**, which provides city council discretionary funding for programming focused on the cultural history and traditions of immigrant communities. The CII budget has grown steadily from \$1.5 million at adoption in FY 2015 to \$7.4 million in FY 2020. To improve cultural access for immigrants and other non-English speakers, DCLA launched the **Language Access Fund**. The fund supports non-English and bilingual cultural programming as well as multilingual learners in schools, and has increased investment in cultural nonprofit projects from \$197,500 in FY 2018 to \$725,000 in FY 2020.⁶²

In addition to DCLA, many other city agencies participate in initiatives that support immigrant arts. The three-year-old **Mayor's Grant for Cultural Impact (MGCI)** enables partnerships between cultural nonprofits and city agencies, such as the DREAMing Out Loud program, a partnership between PEN America and the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME) which provides undocumented New Yorkers with a tuition-free writing workshop taught by leading authors. The **Public Artists in Residents** program, launched in 2015, embeds artists at city agencies to develop creative solutions to civic problems, while the **IDNYC** program extends access to free memberships at numerous cultural institutions, regardless of immigration status. The **Affordable Real Estate for Artists (AREA)** initiative, a partnership between DCLA, the NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC), the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and the Mayor's Office, aims to create 1,500 affordable housing units for artists and 500 affordable art workspaces.⁶³

The five **Borough Arts Councils**, also play a crucial role supporting immigrant artists and non-incorporated collectives through their annual regranting programs, which redirect DCLA, NYSCA, and other sources of funding to local artists, groups, and smaller organizations. Recognizing the power and reach of the arts councils, DCLA has quadrupled its support for their regranting programs from less than \$1 million in FY 2015 to nearly \$4 million in FY 2020. For example, in Brooklyn, where 26 percent of professional artists identify as immigrants, the Brooklyn Arts Council directed a significant portion of its 2019 Brooklyn Arts Fund to immigrants: of the 158 grantees, our research identified 41 artists who said they were from another country, and another 11 partnerships with at least one member from another country.⁶⁴

by the Brooklyn Museum alone (\$8.2 million). The disparity has changed little since FY 2017, when those six institutions received \$5.6 million; the Met \$27.3 million; and the Brooklyn Museum \$7.7 million.⁶⁵

Public arts funding is concentrated in Manhattan, leaving too little for artists and groups in neighborhoods outside Manhattan with large immigrant populations

While recent years have seen greatly increased funding and promising new initiatives at the city and state level, much of the arts funding is still funneled to organizations in Manhattan. Though many of these Manhattan-based nonprofits have a presence in the other boroughs, their hold on funding often means cultural organizations in neighborhoods with large immigrant populations, like Flushing and the South Bronx, struggle for adequate recognition and support. At the state level, NYSCA spent \$13 per capita in Manhattan, compared with less than \$1 each in the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island in 2019; allocations have decreased in every borough since 2000. And just 37 out of the 1,258 NYSCA grants to the five boroughs in 2019—2 percent of the \$30 million allocated—were made through the folk arts program. Another 107 grants—7 percent of the \$30 million—were awarded through the Special Arts Services program. Compared to inflation-adjusted 2000 funding levels, NYSCA allocations for the Folk Arts program have decreased by almost \$200,000, while Special Arts Services program funding has decreased by \$2 million.⁶⁶

There are also disparities in city funding. To its credit, the de Blasio administration has taken important steps in to ensure cultural organizations in low-income neighborhoods obtain greater support, including committing an additional total of \$5.7 million to cultural organizations that support low-income neighborhoods and underserved communities in FY 2018 and FY 2019. But considering the organizations listed in Open Data’s “DCLA Program Funding,” DCLA still allocated \$15.37 per capita in Manhattan, compared to just \$2.95 per capita in Brooklyn, \$2.25 in the Bronx, \$1.55 in Queens, and \$1.86 on Staten Island in FY 2018. Strikingly, CDF spending in the

ten neighborhoods with the highest immigrant population was a mere \$0.74 per capita.⁶⁷

Similarly, disparities among the five borough arts councils’ budgets limit support for the city’s immigrant artists and immigrant-serving arts organizations. In FY 2018, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council had a total expense budget of roughly \$3.5 million, Brooklyn \$3.0 million, the Bronx \$1.3 million, Queens \$1.4 million and Staten Island \$965,000. They also received varying contributions from DCLA. While the immigrant population of Queens is over twice that of Manhattan’s, the budget of the Manhattan borough arts council is nearly three times the size of Queens’s. Increased funding for the arts councils could make a huge difference. A bigger cultural budget for Staten Island’s arts council, says Staten Island artist Lina Montoya, would allow for “more staff that will take care of other projects, [and] more diversity—meaning more people in the organization that will be able to reach more of the public.”⁶⁸

The City Council’s Cultural Immigrant Initiative (CII) provides crucial new support, but lacks coordination

Because no portion of CDF or Borough Council grant funds is specifically earmarked for immigrant arts organizations, the CII is a welcome intervention. The six-year-old DCLA-administered grant initiative provides funding for programming focused on the cultural history and traditions of immigrant communities, and its budget grew steadily from \$1.5 million in FY 2015 to \$7.4 million in FY 2020, though it has seen a \$1 million budget cut in FY 2021.⁶⁹

But despite the program’s admirable intentions, our research found that because grants are allocated at the discretion of councilmembers, there is little oversight or coordination around how funds are distributed. In some cases, funds have gone to organizations that are not explicitly immigrant-led or focused. In general, the total funds allocated under CII varies greatly from one district to another. While it is understandable that more funds would go to areas with a large number of arts organizations and spaces, our study illuminated the degree to which the CII

funds are rarely going to organizations actually headquartered in areas with high percentages of immigrants. Of the 14 council districts that received the least amount of funding through the initiative FY 2019, a remarkable number of them were neighborhoods in Queens and Brooklyn with the largest immigrant populations including Jamaica, Flushing and Bensonhurst.⁷⁰

Differing city and state rules result in uneven access to public funding

Our research found that city grant funding restrictions present major barriers to struggling immigrant arts groups, but the state offers solutions. For instance, DCLA's CDF grants are limited to nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organizations, while NYSCA's fiscal sponsorship program opens the door to individual artists and non-incorporated groups. Similarly, city grants do not support general operating costs (except for the CIGs, and to cover energy costs for organizations on DCLA property) or small equipment purchases, while NYSCA programs do. These restrictions on city grants mean that despite dramatic increases in DCLA funding, many bootstrapping immigrant arts groups are unable to access the support they need.⁷¹

NYSCA's fiscal sponsorship structure points to how the city might better reach and support immigrant artists and collectives. Of the 80 New York City artists who received fiscal sponsorship through NYSCA's "Individual Artists" program in 2019, at least 29 artists (or 36 percent) were born outside the fifty states.⁷²

Advocates would like to see more opportunities for fiscal sponsorship and more guidance from the city and state on how to find a fiscal sponsor. Fiscal sponsors noted that with greater support for administrative tasks, including translating artist materials, they would be able to sponsor the application of more immigrant artists. "They may be amazing artists but they're not able to give you a bio, they're not able to give you basic information in English in order for them to do the work they need to do," says Juan Aguirre of Mano a Mano.

But while NYSCA does offer equipment grants and general operating support, that support is

not reaching all groups in need. In FY 2019, of the 37 Folk Arts grants awarded to New York City organizations, only four provided support for general operating costs. NYSCA also awarded eleven equipment grants of under \$50,000 to New York City organizations in 2019, including one to Ildiko Nemeth's New Stage Theater Company, which draws from traditions of Eastern European theater and often works with immigrant artists.⁷³

Borough Arts Councils face obstacles to meet growing demand from immigrant arts groups

With a greater presence in immigrant communities, New York City's borough arts councils are uniquely positioned to support immigrant artists and collectives. The city has recognized their potential, quadrupling funding for council regrants to nearly \$4 million. Through this major new funding from DCLA, the Bronx Council on the Arts' Bronx Recognize Its Own award, for example, was able to grow from regularly funding 25 projects with rewards of \$3,000 to funding 39 artists in 2017, 35 artists in 2018, and 43 artists in 2019, now with awards as large as \$5,000.⁷⁴

But despite increased dollar investment in the arts councils, our research found that the councils face obstacles to further progress. Through larger regrants, improved outreach, and application supports, the borough councils could improve on their recent success.

First and foremost, DCLA still caps borough council regrants to individual artists at \$5,000. In Queens it's even lower: individual artists can only receive grants of up to \$3,000. "A lot of immigrants I know don't even bother with the granting system because it's so much work for so little money," says Malini Srinivasan, a Bharatanatyam dancer and a teaching artist at City Lore.⁷⁵

But increasing the regrant cap alone won't help the councils support more immigrant artists. The borough councils can fill in outreach gaps by boosting staff capacity. Of the five councils, only Brooklyn and Staten Island employ a Folk Arts Specialist dedicated to assisting traditional artists preserve and perform folk art. More dedicated outreach positions would help the councils ensure immigrant artists and communities are aware of funding opportunities. "We're still going

to different parts of the borough, and you'll have artists who have lived in Queens for fifteen years, and they didn't know that DCLA had a grant program like this," says Daniel Bamba, former grants and residencies director at the Queens Council on the Arts.

Language barriers continue to be a major impediment for artists and collectives applying to the council regranting programs, and each council would like to improve its language services. Some advocates would also like the councils to try new application processes that would be more accessible to non-English speakers, like inviting live performances or accepting recorded and translated interviews. "We're all about traditions—music, dance, that are passed down orally. Yet I sit there and have to ask someone to write a narrative about what it is they do," says Christopher Mulé of the Brooklyn Arts Council.

In addition to the borough councils, other cultural organizations possess deep connections within immigrant communities and are often well positioned to redirect funds to the artists and collectives most in need. To leverage these deep connections, in 2006, Bill Aguado, then executive director of the Bronx Council on the Arts joined with several partners to launch the Urban Arts Initiative, which directly funded artists of color through an application process adjudicated by artist professionals of color. The initiative was funded for three years and received 1,000 applications the first year and 800 the second year, far exceeding expectations. Inspired by this earlier success, today a coalition of intermediaries led by Aguado's En Foco, Inc. have come together to form the Urban Arts Cooperative, which aspires to reach artists of color, especially those not reached through council regrants.

EXPANDING THE ROLE OF CULTURAL ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS IN SUPPORT OF IMMIGRANT ARTS

New York City's unparalleled network of large cultural institutions is making strides toward greater inclusivity. Artists of color, including a number of immigrant New Yorkers, make up the majority of participants in the most recent Whitney Biennial, and over 40 percent of NEW INC.'s last two cohorts were born outside the United States. Lincoln Center now has a hall dedicated to a diverse array of free performances, and 24 percent of the musical performances featured immigrant artists in 2018.⁷⁶

"The dialogue has changed so substantially in the last year and a half," says Tina Kukielski of Art21. She says she and her curatorial colleagues "are much more conscious about these kinds of decisions now than we were even a couple years ago."

But there's still work to be done beyond curation. For example, the city's major cultural institutions can take additional steps to ensure that high school and college-aged youth of all backgrounds have equal access to opportunities in museums and the arts. The city made notable progress on this front, launching the CUNY Cultural Corps, a partnership between the Department of Cultural Affairs, CUNY, and the Rockefeller Foundation, which offers paid internships at arts and culture institutions to CUNY students, over a third of whom were born outside the fifty states. The program has been growing and placed over 100 students in paid internships in FY 2020. There is still, however, room for growth; Angie Kamath, university dean of continuing education and workforce development at CUNY, says that with additional sources of funding, the program could easily be serving 500 or 600 students a year.⁷⁷

There are also opportunities for large cultural institutions to improve and deepen their partnerships with immigrant cultural groups. Cultural institutions are often returning to the same, well-

known artists and groups—often from lack of knowledge about who else deserves attention. "In certain communities, we're using the same person over and over . . . It would be nice to give someone else a chance," says Fred Gitner, assistant director of new initiatives and partnership liaison, New Americans Program at Queens Public Library, who says it would be helpful if there was a directory of immigrant artists that would allow the library to reach beyond the usual names. Institutions can also work to ensure that all partnerships are equitable by taking steps such as committing to pay the artist, respecting the larger cultural context of an art form, and considering ways to make the performance accessible to an immigrant artist's fan base, including by scheduling the performance at an appropriate time and marketing in the artist's native language.

Welcoming and protecting immigrant communities

In the past few years, spurred by opposition to the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the White House, many New York City cultural institutions have placed a new focus on the theme of immigration. From the Carnegie Hall Migrations Festival to the "What Can We Do? Immigration Summit for Cultural Organizations" hosted at BRIC by MOIA, DCLA, Artspace Sanctuary, and No Longer Empty, cultural organizations are investing time and energy to strengthen their relationships with immigrant communities and immigrant cultural makers.

The risk of inaction is clear: without significant outreach, immigrant artists and audiences may continue to withdraw from public participation at mainstream cultural spaces. Notably, while the city mandates that public schools do not let Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers into

school buildings without a warrant, no such equivalent policy has been issued for museums, concert halls, zoos and other such organizations.⁷⁸

The Art Space Sanctuary movement is calling on cultural institutions to commit to serving as sanctuary spaces by at a minimum taking four steps: providing a safe space for people of all identities and backgrounds, making a public commitment to protect information about the immigration status of all institution members, staff, artists, and visitors; disseminating resources to support the undocumented and other vulnerable populations; and refusing to allow immigration enforcement officers to conduct searches without a court-issued warrant. Further steps, Art Space Sanctuary explains, could include offering the institution as a site of refuge, and advocating for government policies that protect vulnerable populations. Laura Raicovich, former executive director of the Queens

Museum, adds that creating a sanctuary space could also mean ensuring an institution's administration works with city agencies or immigrant rights organizations to provide resources to staff, or sets aside funds to help undocumented staff file DACA reapplications. A number of organizations have begun undertaking sanctuary trainings with Art Space Sanctuary and the New Sanctuary Coalition, and according to Art Space Sanctuary's website, 48 organizations have officially pledged themselves as sanctuaries, though only one CIG, the American Museum of Natural History, has made the pledge. While some have raised valid concerns that cultural institutions should not oversell the protections they are able to offer vulnerable immigrants, all these strategies deserve greater consideration by the cultural sector.⁷⁹

Learning from the Queens Museum

In recent years, the Queens Museum has played a leading role in creating opportunities for immigrant artists and programs that support immigrant communities. The museum was compelled in part by its unique mission to serve one of the most diverse large counties in the country, but also by a recognition among museum staff that “even if they had art careers in their countries of origin, many new immigrant artists either had aesthetic languages that weren't fully appreciated in Western contemporary art or simply didn't have the social networks that would help them connect to art institutions and performance venues,” says Prerana Reddy, former director of public events at the Queens Museum. The biennial Queens International exhibit, which is curated from an open call to all Queens-based artists, creates opportunities for local artists who are not necessarily on the radar of galleries and museums to gain institutional access and prestige, ensuring that those who participated “wasn't just based on who the curators already knew,” says Reddy.

One of the most promising Queens Museum initiatives is the New New Yorkers program in partnership with the Queens Public Library. The program offers free, multilingual courses in the arts, technology, and English language. The courses are often rigorous and can lead to major opportunities to exhibit and participate in cultural festivals. Some participants have even gone on to professional arts careers.⁸⁰

The Queens Museum has also devoted significant resources to supporting community organizing. It became one of the first museums in the country to have full-time organizers on staff, and the organizers worked with the Corona community to tackle important neighborhood issues. This collaboration led to the development of Corona Plaza and Immigrant Movement International, now run independently as Centro Corona, a volunteer-led, intergenerational community space serving immigrant working-class families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Step up city funding and support for immigrant-serving arts organizations. New York City's FY 2021 budget cuts pose enormous challenges for immigrant arts organizations. The budget slashes more than \$23 million from the Department of Cultural Affairs and cuts City Council discretionary spending by \$79 million—sources of funding that many immigrant arts organizations rely on. At the same time, New York City's immigrant arts ecosystem has been devastated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and relief is needed urgently. But the city's bleak fiscal outlook means that policymakers will need to find creative ways to boost support for immigrant artists by expanding access to public spaces, eliminating restrictions on current funding, scaling up volunteer efforts, tapping the private sector and philanthropy, and taking advantage of the unique opportunities that an economic downturn presents.

Launch a major new Immigrant Arts Relief Fund to address the ongoing COVID crisis. Immigrant-led arts organizations, especially those which are unincorporated and/or operating within historically marginalized communities, were already struggling before the pandemic hit and face multiple barriers to accessing public funding. To ensure that the city does not lose a significant share of its immigrant-serving arts organizations, a major relief effort will be needed. Mayor de Blasio and the City Council should work with philanthropic foundations and business leaders to launch a new \$10 million Immigrant Arts Relief Fund, partnering with intermediary organizations that have deep reach and trust within immigrant communities to distribute the funds. This initiative should include legal technical assistance for organizations administering relief funds to ensure that grant recipients are not put at risk with regard to immigration status. As the economy recovers, this program should

convert into an ongoing Immigrant Arts Development Fund, focused on institutional advancement, capacity-building grants, and general operating support.

Expand access to public open spaces for immigrant-serving arts organizations. After months without any earned revenue, many of the city's small, immigrant-run and -serving arts organizations are on the brink of fiscal collapse. One way that the city can help is by opening up public spaces—from parks and streets to the parking lots under the BQE and the Metro-North—for paid performances, workshops, screenings, and events. With most venues closed and the looming threat of a second wave of infections, immigrant artists need outdoor spaces to work, perform, and earn income, and the city has no shortage of spaces to make available. This initiative should tap the ingenuity of the city's architects and designers—many of whom are themselves immigrants—to design windbreaks, temporary shelters, outdoor heating solutions, portable stages, and other structures that can allow outdoor spaces to be used by artists throughout the year.

Partner with technology firms to provide infrastructure and know-how to support virtual programs. Many small arts organizations struggle to pay for technology like laptops, projectors, and other equipment that facilitates both creative work and important administrative tasks—as well as the shift to virtual programming demanded by the pandemic. However, the city only supports equipment costs through a capital grant in which the equipment must cost no less than \$50,000. The city should launch a new program in partnership with leading technology firms to help small arts organizations create income-generating virtual

programs, build capacity to reach audiences digitally, and document cultural traditions through digital media.

Strengthen the power and reach of Borough Arts Councils by increasing direct support for artists, raising the cap on re-grants, and expanding outreach via trusted intermediaries. Our research found that borough arts councils are well-positioned to support immigrant arts, especially through their regranting programs and specialized outreach. However, despite increased overall funding, council re-grants are capped at just \$5,000. By raising the cap to \$10,000, councils could greatly increase support to individual immigrant artists and collectives who cannot directly access other city grant programs. Lack of awareness and language barriers also prevent many immigrant artists and collectives from participating in council regranting programs. The city, state, and philanthropy should work together to ensure that all five arts councils are funded to operate a standalone Folk Arts program and hire an administrator dedicated to immigrant community outreach. In addition, each borough's council should partner with at least one local intermediary organization focused on immigrant arts to assist smaller organizations with fiscal sponsorship, grant writing, and other technical services.

Make Cultural Development Fund (CDF) grants more flexible to reach immigrant arts organizations. DCLA's requirements for CDF grants limit the program's ability to reach many of the city's most vulnerable immigrant arts groups. Cultural projects in immigrant communities often work outside the 501(c)(3) structure—a requirement for CDF funding. The program's requirement of two years of financial documentation poses an additional barrier, and recently incorporated organizations must wait two years just to apply. DCLA should relax these requirements, expand eligibility to fiscally sponsored projects, and provide groups with guidance on finding a sponsor. Launching

more flexible, responsive CDF funding will enable DCLA to better reach vital organizations that lack the resources to formalize.

Expand the Language Access Fund, with increased translation support for immigrant-serving organizations. Nearly half the population of New York City speaks a language other than English at home. By making the Language Access Fund a stand-alone program, DCLA has recognized its great potential to improve access to cultural programming for New Yorkers whose primary language is not English, but it funded just 36 grantees in FY2020, compared to over 900 organizations funded through the Cultural Development Fund (CDF). DCLA should preserve and ultimately expand the Language Access Fund so that more arts organizations, especially immigrant-led and primarily immigrant-serving organizations, can improve access through multilingual programming, translated materials, and interpretation services.

- 2. Establish Immigrant Arts Centers in all five boroughs as part of a long-term recovery plan.** Neighborhoods with large immigrant communities often lack permanent, affordable arts spaces. Recognizing the need for dedicated space for arts and culture for Inwood's large immigrant community, DCLA and NYCEDC committed \$15 million in funding for the design and construction of the Immigrant Research and Performing Arts Center (IRPAC). DCLA and NYCEDC should develop plans for Immigrant Arts Centers in historically underserved, predominantly immigrant communities in the Bronx, Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, which could form the centerpiece of a long-term economic recovery strategy.
- 3. Launch a citywide initiative to help immigrant artists and arts organizations fill the growing number of storefront and commercial vacancies.** While the growing number of vacant storefronts presented a policy challenge—and an opportunity—even before the COVID crisis hit, the continued fallout from the

pandemic's economic impact is likely to further increase the supply of storefront and commercial spaces for the foreseeable future. New York City should launch a new initiative to connect artists and arts organizations with vacant commercial space in their communities—focusing on underresourced and immigrant-serving arts groups and working artists. New York should develop a standardized temporary lease agreement, work with a partner organization to develop a simple online application and map of available spaces, and incentivize landlords to participate by providing a property tax credit through the duration of the residency.

4. Create a NYC Immigrant Artist Film, TV, and Theatre Fund with seed money from the industry.

In 2018, the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment (MOME) launched the \$5 million Women's Fund, a major new investment supporting film and theatre projects by, for, and about women. The fund, designed to address the underrepresentation of women in film, TV, and theatre, has already invested \$1.5 million to support more than 60 women-led projects with cash grants of up to \$50,000. MOME should replicate the fund for foreign-born creatives, with the analogous goal of addressing underrepresentation of immigrants in the film, TV, and theatre industries by providing much-needed financial support. Given the huge fiscal challenges facing the city, such a program could be seeded with funding from major content studios and distributors, or funded by a small surcharge on film and tv production permits.⁸¹

5. Leverage underutilized city-owned spaces to provide immigrant artists with affordable work space in their communities.

As New York City's affordability challenges have grown in recent years, many artists and creative professionals report struggling to find space to practice their craft. The city should look to extend affordability initiatives with specific focus on immigrant artists. To get creative in a time of fiscal constraints, the city should leverage underutilized, city-owned spaces, most notably in city schools. Many schools in neighborhoods with growing populations of immigrant artists

have arts spaces, such as visual arts rooms, music rooms, theatres, dance studios, and even film production facilities, that go unused in off-hours and over the summer. These spaces could provide much-needed work space to immigrant artists while strengthening and diversifying arts education and exposure. A partnership between DCLA and city schools could be an important component of a citywide strategy to support immigrant artists, tackle the affordable space crisis, expand access to arts education in multiple languages, and help connect artists with their communities. In addition, the SU-CASA program, which places artists and arts groups in residence at senior centers across the city—enhancing arts programming for older adults and promoting community arts engagement while providing artists with much-needed workspace—provides a proven model that the city can build on. But this program's budget was slashed by nearly \$2.3 million in FY 2021—a roughly 70 percent cut—and should be restored.

6. Expand legal assistance programs to support immigrant artists and arts organizations.

Undocumented artists confront perhaps the greatest barriers to making a living as an artist in New York City, facing significant eligibility restrictions when it comes to funding and work opportunities. Temporary worker artists and artists fleeing persecution also face legal difficulties—and expenses—in securing visas to stay in the U.S. and practice their art. DCLA should partner with the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) to launch a new program specifically designed to support immigrant artists, including but not limited to undocumented artists, foreign-born arts students seeking to stay in the city upon completion of their degree, and artists who have faced persecution for creative expression in their home countries. DCLA and MOIA should also develop a new training program to help major cultural institutions as well as smaller arts organizations hire and/or work with undocumented or temporary status individuals.

7. Take advantage of the downturn to help immigrant-led arts organizations band together.

er to secure permanent spaces. Because immigrant-led organizations are much less likely to own their spaces, they have been especially hard-hit by rising rents and the disappearance of affordable rental space for production, rehearsal, and performance. The city should take advantage of a softer real estate market and mortgage rates that are near record lows by bringing together small immigrant-led cultural institutions that can pool resources to purchase buildings and establish permanent, shared office, rehearsal, and performance space. In addition, government can help by establishing a new program to provide help with closing costs for arts organizations seeking to purchase space, potentially by forgiving the mortgage recording and/or transfer tax or a portion of future property taxes.

8. Expand NYC Community Land Trust Initiative to artists and arts organizations.

In 2019, the City Council pledged \$870,000 in funding to support the creation of community land trusts (CLTs) across New York City. This major investment in technical assistance, educational outreach, and organizing will give communities control over the development of permanently affordable housing, commercial space for local worker cooperatives and small businesses, and space for community organizations. But with focused leadership, the CLT model can be expanded to support the development of more community arts and culture spaces, as well as spaces where immigrant artists can both live and work.⁸²

9. Market immigrant arts organizations and programming to New Yorkers and visitors as part of the city’s tourism recovery efforts.

As New York begins the long process of rekindling the city’s devastated tourism economy, immigrant arts should play a leading role. While the city’s tourism marketing agency, NYC & Company, has taken several steps in recent years to direct visitors to more off-the-beaten-path attractions and locations, the bulk of the city’s tourism promotion has remained focused on Manhattan and major cultural institutions in the other four boroughs. The city should set a

goal of greatly expanding the representation of immigrant-focused arts experiences in tourism marketing efforts and use the “All in NYC” campaign as an opportunity to encourage New Yorkers to visit and support immigrant-run and -serving galleries, performance spaces, festivals, public art projects, creative small businesses, tours, parades, open studios, and other events. These efforts could be bolstered through the creation of an Immigrant Arts Week, as well as expanded public support for cultural festivals from Diwali to the Lunar New Year.

10. Help immigrant creatives start and grow their businesses.

Immigrant creative entrepreneurs face specific challenges in running successful small businesses—from language barriers and difficulties accessing capital to challenges building a customer base outside their communities. The Department of Small Business Services (SBS) and NYCEDC should build on current initiatives intended to aid immigrant entrepreneurs, including the Immigrant Business Initiative and the Etsy Craft Entrepreneurship Program, and ramp up support for immigrant creative businesses. The city should work with social impact investors to provide seed funding to 500 immigrant-run creative business ventures as part of the city’s economic recovery efforts; launch new spotlight programs focused on immigrant creators during NYCxDESIGN, the New York Film Festival, New York Fashion Week, and major art fairs like the Armory Show and Frieze; partner with a technology company to provide digital marketing grants to immigrant creative businesses; and expand the Craft Entrepreneurship Program to more immigrant communities through partnerships with the city’s public libraries.

11. Increase support for rehearsal space subsidy programs.

Despite recent declines in artist rehearsal and work spaces, there are still many facilities available—they’re just not affordable to the vast majority of artists and performers. This affordability crunch can be alleviated in part through targeted subsidies. Successful initiatives such as NYSCA’s Dance Rehearsal Space Program, which provides grants to facilities of-

fering 1,000 hours of subsidized rehearsal time at \$10 or less per hour, should be replicated for music, theater, and studio arts. The city should also fill the void left by the recent closures of Spaceworks and Exploring the Metropolis and the loss of the SpaceFinder website, and launch new partnerships with landlords, educational and cultural institutions, and real estate developers to provide affordable work and rehearsal spaces at below-market rates, with a focus on immigrant communities.⁸³

12. Strengthen partnerships between immigrant-led arts organizations and city schools.

As part of CreateNYC's goal of providing high quality arts education to all public school students, the city pledged to connect public schools to local cultural organizations, with the goal of providing culturally resonant and responsive curricula. But so far, the pilot has been limited to one Department of Youth and Community Development program with the American Museum of Natural History. DYCD and DOE should work together to expand opportunities for bilingual, indigenous, and immigrant teaching artists from non-Western traditions to acquire certification to teach in city schools. City agencies should collaborate with borough arts councils and grassroots intermediaries to connect schools with artists and arts organizations in their neighborhoods, bringing immigrant artists and collectives into classrooms and DYCD-administered Cornerstone and Compass centers.

13. Mobilize philanthropic support for a CUNY Creative Careers Impact Fund.

In 2016, CUNY, DCLA, and the Rockefeller Foundation launched the CUNY Cultural Corps, placing 85 CUNY students in paid internships at 32 cultural institutions throughout the city. In 2019, the program placed over 100 students at more than 45 cultural nonprofits, increasing opportunity in the cultural sector and helping to create a more diverse and inclusive cultural workforce. With additional philanthropic support in the form of a major new impact fund, the program could support paid internships at smaller organizations, host art meetups, and bring more

cultural career support onto CUNY campuses, strengthening bonds between CUNY and the city's cultural community.⁸⁴

14. Address funding inequities across the Cultural Institutions Group (CIG).

Immigrant-serving cultural institutions, including those in the Cultural Institutions Group, receive significantly less funding than more mainstream peers, greatly impacting their ability to expand outreach into the communities they serve. Of the ten CIGs that received less than \$1 million in city funding in FY 2020, two are located in neighborhoods with large immigrant populations (Flushing Town Hall and the Queens Theatre), while another two are located in neighborhoods with large non-white populations (Bronx County Historical Society and the Bronx Museum of the Arts); a fifth, the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, serves a population that both has a large immigrant population and is largely non-white. While DCLA funding mechanisms such as the CDF have broadened cultural funding, the city should set a goal of doubling funding for smaller CIGs in communities of color.

15. New York's leading cultural institutions should implement sanctuary space training and deepen ties with local immigrant arts groups.

In today's political climate, fear is keeping many immigrant artists and audiences away from mainstream cultural institutions. Even if they cannot commit to serving as sites of refuge, museums, theaters, and other cultural institutions can still adopt policies that make their spaces safer for immigrant audiences and staff and should work with local advocates and organizations to do so. In addition, the city's flagship cultural institutions can support an inclusive recovery for the arts by seeking out programmatic partnerships with the city's thousands of community-based, immigrant-serving arts organizations and committing to increasing the representation of immigrant curators, artists, performers, and staff across all levels of the institution.

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