

Northwestern University +
The Block Museum Of Art
Present

ARTISTS' CONGRESS

A PUBLIC FORUM
FOR ART AND
SOCIAL CHANGE

MAY 17, 2014
BARBER THEATER

WELCOME

Susy Bielak
Nicole Garneau
Michael Rakowitz
Anthony Romero
Daniel Tucker

PRESENTATIONS

"On the History of the American Artists' Congress"
"On the Central Artists' Union of the USSR"
"Haymarket at 125"

John Murphy
Christina Kiaer
Paul Durica

Q&A

"SEIU's 'Take Back Chicago' "
"On the Mayoral Tutorial"

Anonymous
Eric Triantafillou
Don Washington

Q&A

BREAK

Musical Interlude
Refreshments and gallery viewing

Michael Kramer

PRESENTATIONS

"The Place of Artists' Speech"
"Counterpoint"

Romi Crawford
Baraka de Soleil

Q&A

OPEN SESSION

Facilitated By

Nicole Garneau
Anthony Romero

A participatory workshop focused on topics and revelations that have emerged from congress proceedings. While the open session may include prepared topics, it will also serve as a platform for Congress attendees to share their own contributions and questions. Through the course of the day, please consider what you'd like to discuss, and where and how our collective voices can come together.

CLOSING RECEPTION

Refreshments and gallery viewing

PRESENTERS

ROMI CRAWFORD

"The Place of Artists' Speech": addresses the significance of voice, language, and orality in the historic Artists' Congress meetings. Romi Crawford will consider the key locations and settings for artist speech acts as well as her upcoming "Let Me Clear My Throat" project.

Romi Crawford is an associate professor of Visual and Critical Studies and Liberal Arts at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her research revolves primarily around ideas of race and ethnicity and their relation to American visual, aesthetic, and popular culture. She has published in *Art Journal*; *Cinema Remixed and Reloaded*; *Black Women Film and Video Artists* (University of Washington, 2008); *Black Light/White Noise: Sound and Light in Contemporary Art* (Contemporary Art Museum Houston, 2007); *Frequency* (Studio Museum in Harlem, 2006); *Art and Social Justice Education: Culture as Commons* (Routledge, 2011); and *Service Media* (Green Lantern, 2013).

PAUL DURICA

"Haymarket at 125": addresses the challenges of presenting labor history in such a way that it feels accessible and relevant to the contemporary moment (while avoiding the danger of nostalgia). In 2011 Durica staged a participatory reenactment of the Haymarket bombings, marking the event's 125th anniversary. This reenactment coincided with mass protests in Madison, WI against Governor Scott Walker's plan to eliminate collective bargaining for public employees, thus creating a narrative line between past and present.

Paul Durica started "Pocket Guide to Hell," a series of public history programs, in 2008 in the belief that everyone is an educator. These free talks, walks, and reenactments dealing with Chicago's past encourage interaction and improvisation among participants and are often the result of collaboration between local artists, writers, and musicians and various cultural institutions, including the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum, Newberry Library, MCA Chicago, and Chicago History Museum among others. Most recently, Paul was currently the programmer for "Let's

Get Working: Chicago Celebrates Studs Terkel," a three-day festival held at the University of Chicago's Logan Center for the Arts in May 2014.

BARAKA DE SOLEIL

"Counterpoint": a symbolic performance diptych. considers who is seen and what is revealed within the act of "coming together."

Baraka de Soleil fluidly moves between social, civic, and live arts practice, from museum to stage to site-specific settings, and has done so for the past two decades; curating, consulting, and crafting consciousness along the way.

CHRISTINA KIAER

"On the Central Artists' Union of the USSR": Northwestern Art History faculty member Christina Kiaer will present on the Artists' Union in Russia, highlighting a lesser-known history, positioning the John Reed Clubs and American Artists' Congress in a global context, and drawing a through-line to the present moment.

Christina Kiaer teaches twentieth-century art history at Northwestern. Her book *Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (MIT Press) was published in 2005. Her recent essays "Lyrical Socialist Realism" in *October* (Winter 2014) and "Collective Body: The Art of Aleksandr Deineka" in *Artforum* (November 2012) form part of the book she is completing on Soviet Socialist Realism. She consulted on the 2009 exhibition *Rodchenko and Popova: Defining Constructivism* at the Tate Modern, London, and the 2011 exhibition *Aleksandr Deineka: An Avant-Garde for the Proletariat* at the Fundación Juan March in Madrid. Kiaer earned her BA from Harvard and her PhD from UC Berkeley.

DESCRIPTIONS + BIOS

JOHN MURPHY

"On the History of the American Artists' Congress": this talk will give a brief overview of the context in which the American Artists' Congress arose. Taking the concept of the "popular front" as a departure, it will also consider what issues could potentially galvanize a renewed sense of common purpose among artists today.

John Murphy is a PhD candidate in Art History at Northwestern University. His dissertation investigates the socialist-utopian dimensions of early 20th century American Arts & Crafts communities. A Mary & Leigh Block Museum Fellow in 2012-13, he curated *Black-listed: William Gropper's Capriccios* in the spring of 2013. While conducting research for Blacklisted, he reexamined works in the Block collection that led to the *Left Front: Radical Art in the "Red Decade," 1929-1940* exhibition (January - June 2014). He is currently a Dissertation Fellow at Winterthur Museum in Delaware and will be a 2014-2015 ACLS/Luce Fellow in American art.

ERIC TRIANTAFILLOU

"SEIU's 'Take Back Chicago' ": Eric Triantafillou, artist and critic, will focus on his experience as the art director for SEIU's "Take Back Chicago" campaign during the Occupy protests in the Fall of 2012, in particular his role as a paid overseer of propaganda production (messaging, forms of media, dissemination in public space). He will also discuss "Topple the Pyramid" linking up with Occupy's "We are the 99%," and how its underlying notion of class struggle produced a tension within the union, which is of course oriented toward electoral political reform.

Eric Triantafillou studies and writes on the relationship between aesthetics and politics. He has more than twenty years of experience as a graphic artist and printmaker and is the co-founder of the San Francisco Print Collective and the Romanian art activist network Mindbomb. He is currently a graduate student in socio-cultural and linguistic anthropology at the University of Chicago.

DON WASHINGTON

"On the Mayoral Tutorial": community and political organizer Don Washington will present "What Do You Know About the Mayor's Agenda?," in the format of his 2011 Mayoral Tutorial, an interactive, investigative, agitational and educational program, re-tooled to present prevailing concerns of the present moment in Chicago politics.

Don Washington has served as a community and political/issue organizer, political and media strategist, campaign director, opposition researcher, and field director. He was once a well-regarded stand-up/improvisational comedian, radio voice talent, and playwright before becoming an activist, advocate, and change agent for social justice. Presently his practice includes research, investigative, training, political strategy, and public policy/organizational development on issues of human rights, civil rights, and labor rights both here and abroad. He is the Front Man for the volunteer public policy blog/website the Mayoraltutorial.com where you can Get Dangerously Informed. He is still not afraid of ninjas and reminds you that as bad as things are they are as good as they have ever been.

MICHAEL KRAMER

Musical Interlude.

Dr. Michael J. Kramer teaches history, American studies, digital humanities, and civic engagement at Northwestern University. He is the author of *The Republic of Rock: Music and Citizenship in the Sixties Counterculture* (Oxford University Press, 2013). His new work focuses on hybrid, multimedia book-digital-exhibition projects, including a study of the relationship between culture and technology within the twentieth-century folk music revival and, beginning in fall of 2014, a large-scale, collaborative digital investigation of the history of dance performance in Chicago. He serves as dramaturg for The Seldoms Contemporary Dance Company and blogs about arts, politics, culture, and history at Culture Rover, www.culturelover.com.

FACILITATORS

NICOLE GARNEAU

Nicole Garneau is an interdisciplinary artist making site-specific performance and project art that is directly political, critically conscious, and community building. She is currently completing a book about the five-year (2008-2012) UPRISING project. UPRISINGS are "public demonstrations of revolutionary practices." She also teaches, makes ceremonies, throws parties, and does healing work. www.nicolegarneau.com.

ANTHONY ROMERO

Anthony Romero is an organizer, performer, and writer. His works have been performed nationally, most notably at Links Hall and The Hyde Park Art Center in Chicago, NADA Art Fair in Miami, and as part of the Itinerant Festival of Contemporary Performance in New York. He has published poetry and criticism through Ugly Ducking Press, Poetry Quarterly, *The Huffington Post*, and *Performa Magazine*, among others.

ORGANIZERS

SUSY BIELAK

In her work as an artist, writer, curator, and educator, Susy Bielak is interested in projects with collaboration, experimentation, and research at their core. Bielak joined the Block Museum in September 2013 as the Curator of Public Practice and Associate Director of Engagement. Prior to that, she served as the Associate Director of Public and Interpretive Programs at the Walker Art Center. Since 2000, Bielak has created and produced local, regional, national, and international arts programs, approaching museums as civic spaces and cities as studios. www.susybielak.com and blockmuseum.northwestern.edu

MICHAEL RAKOWITZ

Michael Rakowitz is an artist based in Chicago. He is also a Professor in the Department of Art Theory and Practice at Northwestern University. He does not trust biographies, nor should you.

DANIEL TUCKER

Daniel Tucker works as an artist, writer, and organizer developing documentaries, publications, and events inspired by his interest in social movements and the people and places from which they emerge. In addition to his work on the Never The Same oral history and archive project with Rebecca Zorach, he is currently at work on editing the book *Immersive Life Practices* with the SAIC Sullivan Galleries and teaching an affordable adult education seminar on Chicago Political Art at the Newberry Library. www.miscprojects.com

ABOUT THE CONGRESS

Over the past four months, artists, activists, and educators have been gathering to discuss and debate what an Artists' Congress should grapple with in Chicago in 2014. We've been asking: What are the stakes for artists invested in social change today? What are the possibilities and impediments of this moment?

The impetus for this project began with the Block Museum's current exhibition, *The Left Front: Radical Art in the "Red Decade," 1929–1940*, which revisits a moment in U.S. cultural history when visual artists joined forces to form a "Left Front" and make socially conscious art. In the wake of the 1929 stock market crash and at the start of the Great Depression, artists and writers banded together to found the John Reed Clubs and ensuing American Artists' Congress.

In developing public programming related to *The Left Front*, we came across the Call for the American Artists' Congress, signed by hundreds of artists in 1936. The Call charged signators to come together against fascism, considering the impact of what it had done to living standards, civil liberties, workers' organizations, science and art, and peace between nations. Interested in updating this Call in a local and contemporary context, and inspired by the format of a congress, Susy Bielak, the Block's associate director of engagement/curator of public practice, invited colleagues Daniel Tucker/*Never The Same* and Michael Rakowitz as collaborators and co-curators in imagining an Artists' Congress for 2014.

Rather than curate a program *a priori*, we organized a series of planning sessions around Chicago. Our intention was to have artists, activists, and scholars identify urgent issues from which to build the event's framework. In planning meetings at the Block Museum, the Chicago Cultural Center, and Intuit: The Center for Outsider Art, stakeholders coming from a range of perspectives, disciplines, and geographies joined us to help the day's program take shape.

We thank the many voices and perspectives that have made this program possible, including planning meeting attendees listed on the following page.

PLANNING MEETING ATTENDEES

David Andres Ayala Alfonso	Michael Kramer
Hamdi Attia	Lisa Lee
Susy Bielak	Damon Locks
Maggie Borowitz	Faheem Majeed
Mimi Brody	Nicole Marroquin
Jill Bugajski	Trevor Martin
Romi Crawford	Patric McCoy
Susan Mango Curtis	Brianne Miske
Jack Doppelt	Onye Ozuzu
Paul Durica	Claire Pentecost
Steven Eisenman	Heather Radke
Harris Feinsod	Michael Rakowitz
Hannah Feldman	Jennifer Reeder
Nicole Garneau	Elliot Reichert
Maria Gaspar	Lane Relyea
Corinne Granof	Dieter Roelstraete
Heidi Gretchen Gross	Mark Rogovin
Jamie Hayes	Anthony Romero
Andres Hernandez	Penny Rosemont
Samantha Hill	Ellen Rothenberg
Brian Holmes	Baraka de Soleil
Jessica Kaswiner	Fereshteh Toosi
Rebecca Keller	Eric Triantafillou
Christina Kiaer	Daniel Tucker
Alice Kim	Don Washington
Irena Knezevic	Kate Hadley Williams
Barbara Koenen	Ivy Wilson
Judy Koon	Jessica Winegar

PREFACE TO OPEN CALL

In February 1936, hundreds of artists signed the call for the American Artists' Congress (AAC). The brief text urged artists to consider their own economic plights, attacks to their freedom of expression, and lessening support for artists by the state and art market. Asking artists to realize that "the cultural crisis is but a reflection of a world economic crisis"—the Call to action charged them to come together against the growing threat of fascism, at home and abroad, and its global impact on living standards, civil liberties, workers' organizations, science and art, and peace between nations.

The AAC was an organization founded as part of the Popular Front of the Communist Party as a vehicle for uniting artist in projects helping to combat the spread of fascism. Non-sectarian, the American Artists' Congress of the 1930s was fighting a singular enemy—fascism—by taking up a host of issues including class struggle, censorship, and the lack of state and market support for artists. While the AAC dissolved in the early 1940s, it remains an important predecessor for contemporary artists concerned with social change.

Global and local sociopolitical orders have shifted from the 1930s. Contemporary artists concerned with social change face the polemics of plurality: there is not a monolithic target, but roving targets, from looming global climate change and global wealth inequity, to the prison industrial complex and gun violence, to gender disparity, and the intrusion of surveillance into the private realm.

In the collaborative spirit of artists from the AAC, the co-organizers of a 2014 Artists' Congress have co-authored a contemporary draft "Call" and invite your edits and additions. While inspired by the Call of 1936, this is not a gesture to redeem communism or recuperate the charge against fascism. With this Call, we invite you, as artists and thinkers across fields, and as a growing group of stakeholders, to help us identify the looming "emergencies" of our day around which we might band together. In the collaborative spirit of the historical Congress, and our current project, this is a means to collectively craft a call to action for what we should stand for today. We invite you to insert your own perspective.

CALL TO ARTISTS

This is a call to all artists: from the front lines to the hilltops. If you are aware of the conditions corrupting social relations in cultural, ecological, economic, and political spheres and feel the necessity of collective discussion, planning, and action – please join us.

This is a call to those who may make art with others or by themselves. You may make art about crisis or live within it. You may wonder what art can do, and what artists can do. The increasing commodification of creativity and professionalization of art demands that those who claim to be artists find ways to both utilize marginality and push away from it through participation and social critique.

The market often determines the value of our art and work, the form our art/work takes, as well as the nature of our relationships with one another. Economic forces and larger societal trends have shifted stakes for the structures of exchange (interpersonal and commodity driven), structures of labor (how we work, where we work, and what kind of work we do), and structures of time (the 24 hour work day and blurring divisions between labor and leisure).

There are daily reminders of the uneven distribution of power and privilege that haunt our contradictory existence. War, deportations, wrongful incarceration, homelessness, police brutality, and inequality in education, healthcare, and city services are among other ills that contribute to a fragmentation of our social bonds. A picture of what these oppressive forces have done to life should arouse every artist to action. We invite you to help us hone in on these and other looming "emergencies" of our day around which we might band together. We artists must act collectively. History gives us powerful examples of the relationship between productive political struggle, social change, and artists working together.

We must look for alliances where we have failed to look before. There is a need for organization on a larger scale, starting in Chicago. Building on the traditions of the American Artists' Congress, the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, the Black Artists Retreat, the Chicago John Reed Club, the Chicago Women's Liberation Graphics Union, the Department of Space and Land Reclamation, the Interracial South Side Cultural Conference, Ladyfest Midwest, the Wall of Respect, Women's Action Coalition, and We Want More – we come together again. Please add your comments, thoughts and perspectives online: www.artistscongressopencall.com

THE POLITICS ARE NOT OBVIOUS

SOUNDTRACK FOR AN ARTISTS' CONGRESS

MICHAEL J. KRAMER

...popular music can be the social glue for creating and maintaining diverse communities; ...these communities support several distinct forms of collective political action including intracommunal disagreement and debate as well as assertion in external public arenas; and...music can increase the capacity, or power, of relatively marginalized people to choose and determine their own fate.

— Mark Mattern, *Acting in Concert: Music, Community, and Political Action*

The question this collage of popular music addresses is not “what should revolutionary music do now?” It is not a parallel sonic project echoing Louis Lozowick’s 1930 inquiry into “what should revolutionary artists do now?” Rather the sounds here turn the question on its head: what would it mean, I wonder, for revolution to incorporate all that music has to offer? And I mean music in the fullest sense: feeling and thought, corporeal experience and deep intellectual inquiry, individual perspectives and collective actions, questions of economy and commerce as well as culture and civic life, all the pain of the past as well as the rootedness musical traditions can provide, all the hopes and reaching for breakthrough, newness, for the unprecedented that music can evoke, music as a code for living, music as a flexible medium for making sense of the world, music as a modality for both experiencing and expressing what it means to be human—everything right down to what sound is at its core, *vibration* itself.

To ask this question is to shift from the long history of song as protest that includes the period chronicled in *The Left Front: Radical Art in the “Red Decade,” 1929–1940* exhibition. It is to move, instead, out across time and space and people more broadly—and a bit more wildly and chaotically. It is to let the sounds unfold and flow, evolve and turn (Turn, turn, turn, in fact) toward more unusual directions. And to do so keeping in mind that it might help us better feel our way toward revo-

lution. It is to see where music can go in registering, and sometimes shaping, the human experience both microscopically and *writ large* (actually *sonus large*).

These mixes start with some of the standard-issue music of the Popular Front—union songs by the likes of Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and the Almanac Singers—but they go to other genres quite quickly, without order: soul and New Orleans second line music, riot grrrl and punk, rock steady and ska, calypso and afropop. My mixes do, admittedly, tilt toward the popular music I know. And they also lean toward the *function* of these songs for the social “breaks” in the living mix of the Artists’ Congress itself—its presentations, performances, questions, and conversations (there could be more classical, jazz, country for instance, but those genres didn’t quite feel right functionally here). The mixes most of all try to connect the soundtrack of the Popular Front to other sounds, artists, and styles that, to me, approach the legacy of the best aspects of the PF ethos—democratic, radical, pluralistic, militant, inclusive, patriotic, tolerant. They do so from a multitude of perspectives, sonorities, elaborations, redirections, and even, at times, rejections. In making the mixes, I also became intrigued by unusual versions of anthemic songs. When we hear something familiar anew, does that provide an opportunity for rethinking what revolution might be? Can revolution include not only ruptures and breakthroughs, but also re-familiarizations and reminders of what matters? In the cover song and the reinterpretation, sound takes us away from ourselves toward others, but it also bounces back, off the walls, helping us know where we stand. At all these levels—historically and leaping across time, touching the familiar and pushing toward the disoriented—the mixes try to probe what revolutionary music might sound like if revolution were enacted musically, across the full soundscape of society *and* the full sociotyscape of sound.

To hear the mixes in order, visit the Spotify playlist, <https://play.spotify.com/user/culturelover/playlist/7djOX0T9lNfw0l04vVkcBt>.

ARTISTS' CONGRESS RECOGNITIONS

In recognition of the work of artists collaborating with social justice organizations, the organizers of the Congress reached out to six such organizations working throughout Chicago to offer the names of artists making meaningful contributions to their work. The nominating organizations include: Teachers For Social Justice, ARISE, Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, Grassroots Collaborative, Southside Together Organizing, and Community Justice for Youth Institute.

ELLEN GRADMAN AND
JENNIFER JUAREZ

NOMINATED BY **TEACHERS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE.**

JAMIE HAYES

NOMINATED BY **ARISE.**

TOYIN ABOYADE COLE,
MIKE SIVIWE ELLIOTT, AND
SARAH WILD

NOMINATED BY **CHICAGO ALLIANCE AGAINST RACIST AND
POLITICAL REPRESSION.**

SARAH JANE RHEE

NOMINATED BY **GRASSROOTS COLLABORATIVE.**

VERONICA MORRIS-MOORE
AND DARRIUS LIGHTFOOT

NOMINATED BY **SOUTHSIDE TOGETHER ORGANIZING
FOR POWER.**

DOROTHY BURGE

NOMINATED BY **COMMUNITY JUSTICE FOR YOUTH INSTITUTE.**

TEACHERS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

WWW.TEACHERSFORJUSTICE.ORG

Teachers for Social Justice (TSJ) is an organization of teachers, administrators, pre-service teachers, and other educators working in public, independent, alternative, and charter schools and universities in the Chicago area. We have come together based on our commitment to education for social justice. We are working toward classrooms and schools that are anti-racist, multicultural / multilingual, and grounded in the experiences of our students. We believe that all children should have an academically rigorous education that is both caring and critical, an education that helps students pose critical questions about society and "talk back" to the world.

ARISE

Arise Chicago builds partnerships between faith communities and workers to fight workplace injustice through education, organizing, and advocating for public policy changes. The Arise Chicago Worker Center (ACWC) is a membership-based community resource for workers, both immigrant and native-born, to learn about their rights and organize with fellow workers to improve workplace conditions. Since opening its doors in 2002, ACWC has collaborated with nearly 2,500 workers to recover over \$5 million in owed wages and compensation. ACWC's workplace justice campaigns train workers to know their rights, file complaints with government agencies, organize direct actions, and access legal representation.

GRASSROOTS COLLABORATIVE

The Grassroots Collaborative is a coalition of membership-based organizations in Illinois who are united in creating policy change on local and statewide levels. This alliance spans diverse ethnicities and a variety of organizing networks, including: low-wage service employees, the homeless, senior citizens, immigrants, peace activists, faith leaders, and residents of poor and working class neighborhoods. They are driven by the notion that disenfranchised people, despite their differences, have broad common interests and can come together to improve all of their lives. By bringing together organizations across movements, especially labor and community, they have built a broad and deep base necessary for fighting the corporate interests working against all of their constituencies.

SOUTHSIDE TOGETHER ORGANIZING FOR POWER

WWW.STOPCHICAGO.ORG

STOP works to nurture young people's visions for change by supporting Fearless Leading by the Youth (FLY). Through FLY, youth members plan and carry out their own campaigns to help bring impactful change to Woodlawn and surrounding communities.

CHICAGO ALLIANCE AGAINST RACIST AND POLITICAL REPRESSION

The Chicago Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression (CAARPR) was established 41 years ago to fight for the freedom of political prisoners. First called the National Alliance Against Racist & Political Repression, it grew out of the movement to free Angela Davis, who served as the organization's first chairperson. Today the CAARPR focuses on exposing police crimes and establishing a democratically elected Citizens Police Accountability Council to replace the ineffective Police Review Board's "investigative body".

ARTIST NOMINEES



ELLEN GRADMAN

WWW.SPARKYOURART.COM

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE NOMINATING ORGANIZATION AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO WITH THEM?

My parents met teaching at CPS. My father taught at Lane Tech for thirty-five years and was on the picket line in 1969. I taught for thirty years, beginning in elementary education, teaching second grade for a few years and then after receiving a Masters in Art Education, I taught art for the majority of my career. I love teaching, but the actual work of teaching in a school, day after day, can be extremely toxic. Teaching is a hard job for so many reasons. So, even if I'm not formally teaching right now, I understand what teachers go through every day.

This week is the 60th anniversary of the landmark 1954 Brown v. Board of Education. The ruling opened the door to the possibility of educational equity for Black and Latino children. However, Chicago's educational system perpetuates separate and unequal access to education.

Our entire education system is archaic and we need an education revolution! However, the neoliberal reform that is happening, with Chicago as the "golden child," is the destruction of public education and free thought! This is my reason for being involved in this fight and creating images to further the message.

The best part of being an activist in the education movement in Chicago is that there are many groups that are working together to move our agenda forward. It is a very Chicago way of organizing: through hard work, ideologies, and collaboration.

WHAT KIND OF ART DO YOU MAKE? AND WHAT DRIVES YOUR WORK?

My art work is a combination of my visual work, my teaching, my activism, and whatever else is happening in my life. There is no separation between my art work and everything else. The type of work I create is mixed media and filled with stuff! The past few years, I have been very interested in using my work in installations that include viewer participation. The images I have been creating for the fight for education are available for free downloads, for sharing and creating. The images are used as signs at rallies, Facebook profile pictures, t-shirts, and other uses. I also have been creating art experiences – "rigorous creativity" at events like the Neighborhood School Fair and other protest events.

WHAT DO YOU THINK AN ARTISTS' CONGRESS SHOULD GRAPPLE WITH IN CHICAGO IN 2014?

Using the arts in ways to engage the public in thought, dialogue, change, and protest. Provide experiences that allow everyone to have a voice!



Meltin' Pot

JENNIFER JUÁREZ

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE NOMINATING ORGANIZATION AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO WITH THEM?

I got involved with TSJ in 2011 while I was in graduate school at the College of Education at UIC. During this time, I was organizing marches in Chicago regarding undocumented issues and was going to participate in a civil disobedience – so I felt that TSJ was a space where I could expand my knowledge

ARTIST NOMINEES

regarding education and that their work jived with the work I was doing around undocumented issues. That same year, I traveled with TSJ to Wisconsin to protest around the collective bargaining issue and volunteered at their annual curriculum fair. Currently, I sit on the TSJ leadership committee and help organize the curriculum fair. My current job as an academic adviser at the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services program (LARES) at UIC has allowed me to focus my work with TSJ on issues in higher education. Much work is being done around school closings and charter schools – my purpose in TSJ is to create links between the issues happening in elementary/high schools and universities.

WHAT KIND OF ART DO YOU MAKE? AND WHAT DRIVES YOUR WORK?

I focus on photojournalism. My intention with photography is to document the emotion and lived experiences of people of color. My dad is a photographer and a journalist and I grew up with his style of documenting families and concerts. I feel that documenting history is very important and my contribution to certain movements is by documenting the experiences – to have something to look back on and analyze people's emotions during the social movement process.

WHAT DO YOU THINK AN ARTISTS' CONGRESS SHOULD GRAPPLE WITH IN CHICAGO IN 2014?

Folks should grapple with the way artists interpret their view of society, culture, and politics. Art is so fluid and it allows for much interpretation and I think that's the beauty of it; art allows folks to interpret their own analysis of certain things artists might be experiencing at a personal or social level – to document all of those emotions in an art piece is powerful. Additionally, I believe that art is a form of healing from the emotions of everyday life and a way to cope with the complexities of society. It will be beautiful to see how each artist interprets their own world.



UNIFORM: Solar Power, Jamie Hayes and Paula Wilson in collaboration with Chi Chi Tailors, machine stitching on cotton poplin with solar panel, photo montage by Damon Locks. 40 x 16 inches, 2013

JAMIE HAYES

JAMIELHAYES.COM

PRODUCTIONMODECHICAGO.COM

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE NOMINATING ORGANIZATION AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO WITH THEM?

After ten years of work in the garment industry, in 2009 I began a masters program at the University of Chicago's school of Social Service Administration. I focused my studies on labor rights, specifically within the garment industry. I began work as an organizer for Arise Chicago as part of an externship for my masters work, then stayed for an additional year post graduation. I was drawn to Arise because of the organization's mix of theory and practice, and advocacy and on-the-ground organizing and agitation.

While the work I did at Arise was not art work, the work of organizing can and should be creative, and the ultimate goal of the expansion of human and labor rights is to give everyone – regardless of class, gender, race, sexuality, and citizenship status – the time, security, and freedom to do things like make and enjoy art in its many and varied forms.

WHAT KIND OF ART DO YOU MAKE? AND WHAT DRIVES YOUR WORK?

I am first and foremost a fashion designer. I am currently developing a line of ethically made clothing for men and women called Production Mode that will launch in July of 2014. It is my goal that transparency in the supply chain and consciousness about the environ-

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mental and labor impacts of the production of fashion be considered the norm rather than the exception in the industry.

My advocacy work is currently focused on a campaign led by Chicago Fair Trade to pass an ordinance in the City of Chicago ensuring that uniforms and other apparel procured by the City be manufactured without the use of sweatshops. The ordinance includes monitoring and enforcement mechanisms which require vendors to make their supply chains transparent and that they submit to labor audits ensuring that work is performed by adults, and that workers are paid a living wage, have the right to organize, work in a healthy and safe environment, and have access to anonymous reporting mechanisms to report any labor rights violations.

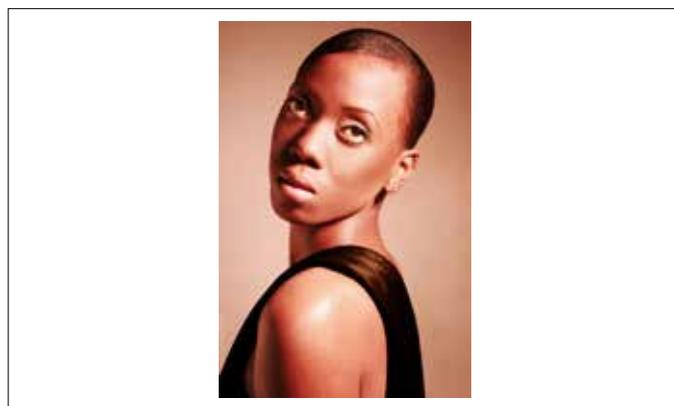
The subject of my artwork is the social meaning of fashion, e.g. Why do we wear what we wear? What are we trying to say with our clothing? How do others read our appearance and are we in control of these readings? For my most recent project, I worked collaboratively with participants to design a uniform, with each participant writing about why they chose their given uniform. This subject allowed me to draw on my labor organizing background and also to get to the heart of the questions listed above, as uniforms are typically used to classify, identify, segregate, and/or control groups of people, but can also be used to erase differences and equalize individuals. Participants' responses included homages and subversions of uniforms – both archetypal, formally coded uniforms as well as the informal, unspoken dress codes that exist within a given profession or culture. The pieces were made to measure, subverting the dictates of fast fashion and mass production that often reinforce pressures to mold our bodies to ready-to-wear sizing rather than molding our clothing to fit us. The work was shown in a runway presentation with participants modeling their own uniforms.

WHAT DO YOU THINK AN ARTISTS' CONGRESS SHOULD GRAPPLE WITH IN CHICAGO IN 2014?

Artists are typically fiercely independent and not apt to join groups or work as an organized entity. Yet social movements need the creative ideas and labor of artists in order to succeed. For a true Artists' Congress to develop, trust and common ground must be found amongst the group. Making matters more challenging

is the fact that our enemies are no longer as clear cut as the anti-fascist sentiments that united the original Artists' Congress. We work on different issues and are constantly inundated with messages of scarcity of resources. We are pitted against one another to obtain a meager slice of the pie.

For me, the goal is to make connections between our seemingly disparate issues. The rhetoric of the Occupy movements was effective for me in that it united many disparate movements against a common enemy of unmitigated Capitalism – a power structure that values profit over people and perpetuates inequalities of gender, race, and sexuality in a myriad of ways that diminishes all of us. Similarly, it's also important to acknowledge that we live in a globalized world that requires an equally globalized, transnational approach to organizing.



TOYIN ABOYADE COLE

WWW.TOYINCOLE.COM

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE NOMINATING ORGANIZATION AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO WITH THEM?

Ted Pearson was referred to me for print work on an upcoming event on a 2013 Call to the National Forum that the CAARPR was putting together. Post-event, I have continued to work on several brochures, flyers and print work for their upcoming events and campaigns. Working with them has been a great accomplishment – helping assist in such a powerful and motivating cause that denotes substantial grounds to take action.

ARTIST NOMINEES

WHAT KIND OF ART DO YOU MAKE? AND WHAT DRIVES YOUR WORK?

I am a graphic designer and photographer. I do a lot of print work and branding by formulating designs tailored to display the identity of my client. As a photographer, I do fashion, portraits, events, and I'm just getting started in real estate. My love for art is limitless and I am always looking at different genres, styles and collaborations to stimulate my creativity. I am visually motivated daily, by almost anything I encounter. The world is a very interesting place and my perception of it transmits into the art I create, giving it many possibilities.

WHAT DO YOU THINK AN ARTISTS' CONGRESS SHOULD GRAPPLE WITH IN CHICAGO IN 2014?

To bring more attention from the local press and the national art magazines to Chicago art, Chicago artists, and galleries.



Taken during the May 1 Immigration March: Mothers mourn for deported loved ones, which features mothers holding lists of deported Latinos.

MIKE SIVIWE ELLIOTT

WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/USER/DIGITALASSET1

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE NOMINATING ORGANIZATION AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO WITH THEM?

I became involved with the CAARPR, because the organization had an intelligent and effective approach to resolving police torture and violence in communities of color. My involvement has been as a video activist who records and posts videos online and I take photos

of our activities. I am also the Labor Secretary and I serve as the liaison to labor unions and organizations.

WHAT KIND OF ART DO YOU MAKE? AND WHAT DRIVES YOUR WORK?

I create videos and capture photos related to our cause. I am driven by love of humanity and my disdain for injustice.

WHAT DO YOU THINK AN ARTISTS' CONGRESS SHOULD GRAPPLE WITH IN CHICAGO IN 2014?

I think that the Artists' Congress should create works that reflect the concerns and challenges facing communities of color. Most importantly, the Artists' Congress should focus on developing programs that teach various forms of creative expression to children of color, to enable them to channel their amazing energy in positive directions.



Jon Burge Torture Victim banner being carried by people attending the Stop Police Crime's March on City Hall, August 2013.

SARAH WILD

WWW.NAARPR.ORG

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE NOMINATING ORGANIZATION AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO WITH THEM?

Most of my involvement with CAARPR has been with their Stop Police Crimes campaign (SPC). Chicago has a dense, dark history and ongoing present of police crimes against its African American and Latino communities, predominantly those also facing the violence of poverty (though this city is not an exception but a particular example of systemic nationwide racist police oppression that supports our capitalist global economy). SPC has actively involved police

ARTIST NOMINEES

crime victims and their loved ones fighting together for justice, with very concrete demands being fought for by the Civilian Police Accountability Council.

I am very honored to be working with them – the fight for systemic change of policing practices and policies is a real call of justice for all. As a white middle class person who will never experience firsthand our systemic racist policing of existence, I do refuse to accept this unjust world of injustice and inequality that we live in sitting down – by sitting I mean remaining in the dead neoliberal comforts of a gallery or striving for the rewards of a well-heeled art resume.

I am a member of CAARPR's SPC media committee – we work on images and language for flyers, banners, social media, e-newsletters, and the website. We use video and photography documenting the testimonies of police crimes victims and their family members, SPC events and actions.

WHAT KIND OF ART DO YOU MAKE? AND WHAT DRIVES YOUR WORK?

I have not been, what the art world calls a practicing artist, for a long time – I was originally trained as a painter but ended up using a whole range of media, from video/film to sculpture, drawings with various performance events thrown in. I worked in an arts collaborative for a while working on a sort of documentary project studying bathroom graffiti in Knoxville, TN. With another art comrade here in Chicago, I played both the back and front end of a pantomime horse playing at being a parked car. I then studied philosophy for a long time – trying my hardest to have a thought ... it's really, really hard.

WHAT DO YOU THINK AN ARTISTS' CONGRESS SHOULD GRAPPLE WITH IN CHICAGO IN 2014?

How to not be an artist that, in the name of art, supports our world staying as it is – structured by socio-economic violence expressed and supported by police crimes!



CTU Rally Day, 2012.

SARAH JANE RHEE

WWW.LOVEANDSTRUGGLEPHOTOS.COM

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE NOMINATING ORGANIZATION AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO WITH THEM?

My relationship with Grassroots Collaborative grew organically from my work documenting local grassroots struggles, especially around education justice. I have photographed actions that they have organized or participated in, including the historic march and rally that they helped organize on Day 4 of the 2012 Chicago Teachers Union strike.

WHAT KIND OF ART DO YOU MAKE? AND WHAT DRIVES YOUR WORK?

I am a photographer, documenting local struggles mostly related to economics, education, and racial justice. I also document the more personal, sometimes mundane parts of those within my chosen community/family who engage in these struggles (that would be the "love" part of Love + Struggle Photos).

My primary motivation for doing this work is the desire to create a more just world in which I can live in community with others based on loving, healing relationships. I have been fortunate to meet so many people in Chicago who share this vision, and many of them are deeply embedded in the everyday struggle to make the phrase "Another World Is Possible" a reality – whether it is fighting for quality schools for all children, demanding a trauma center on the South Side, interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, challenging gender-based violence, providing an intersectional lens to queer/trans issues, or creating avenues of healing

ARTIST NOMINEES

through restorative and transformative justice-based community accountability. Their stories have taught me that love and struggle are interdependent in many ways, and that there is beauty and meaning in this dynamic.

WHAT DO YOU THINK AN ARTISTS' CONGRESS SHOULD GRAPPLE WITH IN CHICAGO IN 2014?

Some concepts I would be interested in exploring with other artists are:

- Art as community struggle
- The relationship between art and the commons in the context of settler-colonialism and in a deeply segregated city like Chicago
- How can we center those who have been historically marginalized without tokenizing?
- How can transformative justice be incorporated into our praxis as artists?
- What do we want to build, and what do we want to dismantle?



Still from "Fearless Leading by the Youth fights", 2013.

VERONICA MORRIS-MOORE & DARRIUS LIGHTFOOT

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE NOMINATING ORGANIZATION AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO WITH THEM?

I got involved with FLY in 2010 after the death of our cofounding member Damian Turner. I was amazed by the impact Damian's work had on his community. His leadership inspired young people to continue the movement work that he was so passionately dedicated

to. Weeks after his passing FLY launched the Trauma Center Campaign. Hundreds of victims of trauma have to travel too many miles north when injured on the South Side. FLY is demanding that the University of Chicago reopen its level 1 Trauma Center and provide trauma care to the violence plagued South Side of the city.

WHAT KIND OF ART DO YOU MAKE? AND WHAT DRIVES YOUR WORK?

I am a writer. I create poetry and rhymes that tell my story and others that I can relate to. I am inspired by my peers and motivated by my beliefs that are rooted in justice. I am supported by elders that encourage my visions of a healthy black community for young black people to grow in.

WHAT DO YOU THINK AN ARTISTS' CONGRESS SHOULD GRAPPLE WITH IN CHICAGO IN 2014?

I think too often the voices of young artists are misunderstood by adults even within the artistic community. I think there should be more intentional intergenerational spaces that provide opportunities for young people and elders to build together.



Travon Quilt

DOROTHY BURGE

WWW.CINCYMUSEUM.ORG/TRAVELING-EXHIBITS/AND-STILL-WE-RISE/HOST

WHY DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE NOMINATING ORGANIZATION AND WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU DO WITH THEM?

In my family we always had a strong sense of community. We had a strong sense that you should give back to community, too. My undergraduate

