

Local Arts Network Newsletter

ARTS & CULTURE FOR ALL

By the time you read this newsletter there will be 65 days or less until the 2024 elections. From the hyper-local level to the American Presidency, our communities will have the opportunity to participate in something so core to our identity as Americans, democracy. As a DC resident, my participation in democracy has shifted. Heeding to calls to reach out to senators and representatives was core to my activation in the past. It wasn't till I moved to DC, over 6 years ago, that I noticed the gratification I got from participating in democracy in creative ways. Art nights creating banners and signs, sing-alongs during demonstrations, neighborhood beautification projects--these all had creativity and art at their core. Art infuses in democracy the fostering of critical thinking, encouragement of diverse perspectives, and promotion of freedom of expression. It allows people to question societal norms and imagine alternative futures, which is essential for a thriving democratic society.



Image Descriptions left to right: three posters lying on the ground with messages about housing; mural on a brick wall of a young person in a mask holding up "I love you" hand sign and wearing a shirt that says Douglass Commonwealth 51st state; poster about Giving Black Women Their Flowers exhibit honoring female Black activists in DC; a crowd outside of the supreme court hold up signs about access to healthcare.

Art also plays a role in social movements, helping to convey powerful messages and mobilize communities. By reflecting and challenging cultural and political realities, art can influence public opinion and inspire civic engagement, making it a vital component of democratic life. Amanda Gorman's poems are a beautiful reflections of that impact.



Image Descriptions: Video thumbnails of Amanda Gorman, a Black woman in her 20's, reciting her poems at the 2024 DNC (left image) and at the 2021 presidential inauguration (right image)

Democracy goes beyond the voting booth. Democracy and culture are intrinsically tied, blurring the lines of which one is shaping the values, norms, and identities that influence political behavior and institutions. Movement leaders like Fannie Lou Hamer were inspired by democracy and used it to promote social cohesion by providing a shared sense of identity and belonging. Cultural expressions can challenge power structures and inspire social change, enriching democratic discourse, and leading to more inclusive and representative governance. To quote Michelle Obama to energize our persistence--"Hope is making a comeback!"

Resources just for YOU!



UPDATED

Arts + Political Activation and Arts + Civic Dialogue Arts Impact Explorer Fact Sheets

The Arts Impact Explorer (formerly known as the Social Impact Explorer) is a great case-making and inspiration tool. Fact Sheets are being updated based on projects added to the local projects database. This summer our Grinnell College intern, Liv Hage, spent her time researching and updating the Arts + Political Activation and Arts + Civic Dialogue fact sheets to activate local arts agencies and their communities during this election cycle.

Through her research, Liv was able to discover great local examples like:

Sugarland Civic Art Program: Combines public art and community engagement to facilitate civic dialogue. Through incorporating community responses and priorities into their comprehensive plan, the program aims to integrate accessible art into every day life.



Boulder County Arts Alliance: Acts to inform the creative community about legislative decisions impacting the arts, while encouraging voter registration and contact with policy makers.

Chicago Artists for Action: Nonprofit that uses performance and song to support social justice initiatives and change. Besides providing voice training year-round to Chicago residents, the organization aims to use their collective voices for justice.

Center for Performance and Civic Practice: Supports place-based project teams comprised of an individual artist and a civic partner to conceive and execute a small-scale, local, arts-based project, created in response to an expressed need by the community.

Check out the fact sheets for impact points, examples of practice and research, plus other organizations to learn about!

Arts Impact Explorer Fact Sheet
ARTS + POLITICAL ACTIVATION

OVERVIEW

Protestors and political activists come to their rallies and marches armed with banners and signs, often displaying creative slogans to give visuals to their cause. When political activism intersects with the arts, it finds expression for the passions of those seeking justice and social change.

We've seen such cohesion between the arts and social justice in people who have risen to fight for the rights of immigrants, responsible gun legislation, LGBTQIA rights, racial justice rights, and more. Historically, art has been used to amplify and clarify the goals and messages of both political and social movements.

Art-goers in general are far more likely to vote, and those who work in the arts even more so. In addition, people who engaged in participatory arts felt differently about their rights afterward, with more wanting to continue to engage in local community projects.

IMPACT POINTS

Low-income students with a high level of arts experience in school are **more likely to attend college, vote, and volunteer** in their community.¹

97% of arts administrators vote

People who lead arts agencies locally are 2x as likely to have voted in a federal election, and 4x as likely to have voted in a local or state election, as the general population.²

Art inspires action

The use of the arts to illustrate complicated issues related to the environment can inspire thousands of people to take action who would not otherwise.³

Arts participants are more than **twice as likely to volunteer** in their communities, independent of education, age, gender, or ethnicity.¹



Arts Impact Explorer Fact Sheet
ARTS + CIVIC DIALOGUE

OVERVIEW

When individual and collective actions identify and address issues of public concern, we've entered into a civic dialogue. As engaged citizens, we develop the knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make a difference in the civic life of our communities.

Communities in which residents socialize with and trust each other have higher livability scores than communities with lower social trust, and the arts are a driver in building that trust. In addition, cultural participation leads to wider community participation and to increased volunteerism and increased tolerance.

The role of the arts in civic processes manifests in many different directions, but focuses on the power of the arts to bridge gaps in understanding, offer new and innovative ways of thinking about challenges, and to catalyze change.

IMPACT POINTS

86% INCREASE IN CIVIC INVOLVEMENT

Arts activities increase residents' interest in getting involved in local issues and projects. Eighty-six percent of civic engagement participants want to be involved in future projects, and after their involvement, people living where projects occurred were more than twice as likely to be civically engaged as those whose blocks did not have projects.¹

Art making experiences encourage civic engagement more so than experiences as an audience member.²

Cities with high concentrations of art have increased civic engagement.³

Arts Increase Community Satisfaction

Arts and cultural activities emerge as very important for about 40% to 60% of residents across communities and the nation. People who say their neighborhood has easy access to quality arts and cultural activities tend to be more satisfied, identify more with local lifestyle and culture, and invest more of their time and resources in their communities.⁴

Correlations between arts participation and the motivations and practices of civic engagement are substantial and consistent

There are statistical correlations between arts participation of any kind, and volunteerism and social tolerance — two important indicators of civic engagement — in largescale, representative databases. These correlations are significant, but they are not evidence that arts participation is a cause of civic engagement.²

Image Description: first page of arts and political activation fact sheet with overview and impact points

Image Description: first page of arts and civic dialogue fact sheet with overview and impact points

MORE Resources just for YOU!

ARTSVOTE 2024



Image Description: ArtsVote 2024 banner features the logo designed by Artists Committee member Shepard Fairey of a fist proudly holding up a flower with a paint brush as its stem

Join the **ArtsVote 2024: Make Your Vote Count** campaign to maximize voter turnout among artists and arts advocates. The Arts Action Fund has launched the [ArtsVote 2024 Election Resource Hub](#), featuring everything from customized state election factsheets to engaging social media graphics. Election laws are different in every state and *many have revised their laws since the last big election*. Unfortunately, some states have made it harder to vote, thereby suppressing voter turnout. Together, we can prevent this! ✨

Explore our new [ArtsVote 2024 Election Resource Hub](#) to find the ArtsVote Pledge, customized State Voter Factsheets, state voter deadlines, social media toolkits, the Arts Action Fund's Federal Candidate Arts Survey, the draft of the DNC Arts & Humanities Platform, ArtsVote Store, and more. We will be continuously adding more resources for you to use and share, so stay tuned! You can start by taking three actions to make your vote count.

Action 1

TAKE THE
ARTSVOTE PLEDGE
TO MAKE YOUR
VOTE COUNT

Action 2

DOWNLOAD YOUR
ARTSVOTE STATE
VOTER FACTSHEET

Action 3

SHARE THE
ARTSVOTE MESSAGE
WITH YOUR
NETWORKS*

*When you post on social media, tag the AAF on all platforms @ArtsActionFund and #ArtsVote.

Register for Upcoming Free Arts Action Fund Virtual Events:

[ArtsVote 2024: How to Make Your Vote Count Webinar](#)
Thursday, September 5, 2024 @ 3:00 p.m. ET

[Arts Insider Political Briefing](#)

Monday, September 30, 2024 @ 3:00 p.m. ET

[Office Hours with Nina](#)

Friday, October 4, 2024 @ 11:00 a.m. ET



Artist At Work in Democracy

Lisa Hicks-Gilbert is the first Black, and first elected female Mayor of Elaine, Arkansas. She is also an artist. As part of the 2022–2023 Mississippi Delta region Artists at Work, she was one of ten artists inspired by the power of storytelling and artistic interventions as tools for preserving cultural heritage and providing progressive and inclusive platforms for community building.

Lisa's commitment to democracy and justice intertwines with her art. As a descendant and founder of Descendants of the Elaine Massacre of 1919 (DOEM1919), Lisa has focused on educating, protecting, and preserving the history and stories of the Elaine Massacre. During her time with Artists at Work, Lisa used her writing and poetry to combat injustices related to education, health, environment, digital, food, and economics throughout the Arkansas Delta.

Artists at Work is a workforce resilience program that employs artists to work with a social impact organization and focus on their artistic practice for a year.

Lisa launched the "Silent No More" multi-media exhibit on the anniversary of the Elaine Massacre, September 30, 2022, in Elaine, AR. This two-day event drew more than 200 attendees, including over 100 students. The "SILENT NO MORE" Exhibit is currently being expanded into a traveling exhibit with a 2024 launch date to educate the masses about the Elaine Massacre, and to bring the untold stories of the victims, survivors, and descendants out of the silence.



Image Description: A Black woman with short curly hair and hoop earrings, in a black t-shirt with white writing stands in front of a fence with a sign on it that reads "Turning point park honoring Scipio Jones" and "Park Under Renovations"

AFTACON 2025

Reminder: Americans for the Arts' Convention will be in Cincinnati, Ohio on June 11–14, 2025. Registration* will open on September 23 (and September 9th for members), but you can also get involved today!

1. Sign up for our Convention 2025 Newsletter

- Be the first to find out about all things Convention!

2. Fill out our three question Field Survey

- Help guide the direction of Convention by completing this brief survey.
- **Survey closes on August 31, 2024.**

*Now is also a great time to renew your membership to ensure discount rates on Convention! Stay tuned for more information about Convention 2025 on our Convention Website.

REACH OUT
FOR A CHAT

Let's chat!

GET TO KNOW
US BETTER

mlyonswarren@artsusa.org | hflanagan@artsusa.org

www.americansforthearts.org
