

\$12.6 Million Initiative Offers New Funding for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American-Led Arts Organizations

(Embargoed until May 18, 2021 — Minneapolis, Minn.) — A \$12.6 million regional initiative of [America's Cultural Treasures](#) will provide new funding for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian organizations. The funding, to be distributed in two phases, is made possible by a collaboration of the McKnight, Ford, Bush and Jerome Foundations.

Phase 1: Regional Cultural Treasures \$7 million, provided by Ford & McKnight Foundations

In phase one, ten arts organizations in Minnesota — designated **Regional Cultural Treasures** — each will receive unrestricted grants of at least \$500,000, to be distributed over the next five years or more. The Regional Cultural Treasures program honors organizations that have made a significant impact on our cultural landscape over decades. The ten organizations are:

- American Indian Community Housing Organization Arts Program
- Ananya Dance Theatre
- Indigenous Roots
- Juxtaposition Arts
- Mizna
- Pangea World Theater
- Somali Museum
- Theater Mu
- TruArtSpeaks
- Walker|West

“We use the term ‘Cultural Treasures’ with intention, to honor the diversity of expression and artistic excellence that these organizations contribute to the cultural vitality of our state, despite having historically experienced under-investment,” said Tonya Allen, president of the McKnight Foundation. “As our arts institutions prepare to safely re-open after the pandemic, we’re thrilled to shine a spotlight on these remarkable organizations.”

The following criteria informed the selection of the ten Regional Cultural Treasures:

- Regionally recognized for stewarding and sustaining a cultural/aesthetic tradition rooted in a community of color;
- Regionally, nationally or internationally recognized for excellence in artistic/cultural practice;
- Has had a significant legacy of impact for more than one decade;
- Serves as a training ground for succeeding generations of artists and cultural leaders;
- Recognized as a critical hub for a larger network of allied organizations or efforts;
- Contributes to McKnight Foundation’s mission to advance a more just, creative, and abundant future where people and planet thrive.

The Minneapolis Foundation will administer the Regional Cultural Treasures grants.

Phase 2: Seeding Cultural Treasures

\$5.6 million provided by Ford, McKnight, Bush and Jerome Foundations

In the second phase, the **Seeding Cultural Treasures** program will award grants to grow the future of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American artists and cultural organizations in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and the 23 Native Nations that share the same geography.

“We believe that supporting established Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American-led organizations with impressive track records, as well as individual artists and younger organizations, will make our communities better places to live,” said DeAnna Cummings, McKnight Arts program director. “We also hope this funding catalyzes greater recognition and increased investment in these vital arts organizations and their leaders who are meeting this moment with imagination, persistence, and creativity.”

Propel Nonprofits and the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council will administer the program, engaging artists and community stakeholders to co-create it. These partners will share more information later in 2021 about how to apply for funding.

Funders Unite to Support the Arts

The Ford Foundation launched America’s Cultural Treasures in fall 2020, seeking regional funding partners throughout the country to match its contribution. In Minnesota, the McKnight Foundation [answered that call](#) to serve as the lead regional partner and matched an initial contribution of \$5 million from the Ford Foundation. The Bush and Jerome Foundations contributed an additional \$2.6 million to bring the fund to \$12.6 million. Both programs invite additional funding partners to increase the resources for the arts and culture rooted in communities of color in our region.

“We’re thrilled to partner with the McKnight, Bush, and Jerome Foundations to celebrate arts organizations that are adding to the richness and diversity of the American cultural fabric,” said Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation. “These treasures are a symbol of the excellence present in Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American-led arts organizations and we hope to inspire continued investment in communities of color in the years to come.”

###

Media contact:

Kathy Graves, Parenteau Graves

kathy@parenteaugraves.com, 612-242-3184

ABOUT REGIONAL CULTURAL TREASURES

American Indian Community Housing Organization Arts Program (AICHO) honors the resiliency of Indigenous people by strengthening communities and centering Indigenous values. Since 2012, AICHO has provided a year-round space within Gimaajii-Mino-Bimaadizim for Indigenous artists to showcase and sell their work. Galleries are used by artists, authors, and musicians for art shows, book releases, and performances, which are free and open to the community. AICHO's arts and cultural programming also includes community art classes and workshops, youth art activities, Indigenous artists pop-up events and book readings, and an Indigenous First art and gift shop.

Ananya Dance Theatre (ADT) creates original dance theater drawing on social justice themes inspired by the lives and dreams of BIPOC women, womxn, and femmes from around the globe. In dancing stories where the struggles, triumphs, and transformations of global Black and Brown communities occupy the center, ADT empowers artistic voices, shifts the landscape of mainstream culture, builds relationships, and energizes communities toward equity and beauty. ADT's Shawngrām Institute for Performance and Social Justice is located in St. Paul.

Indigenous Roots is an arts plus organization and coalition of artists, cultural groups, and community partners dedicated to building, supporting, and cultivating space, opportunities, and resources with and for Native, Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples. In 2017, Indigenous Roots opened a space around Imniza Ska (East Saint Paul) that is centered and grounded in multidisciplinary, multigenerational, and multicultural arts and activism.

Juxtaposition Arts (JXTA), founded in 1995, is a youth employment center and community development social enterprise rooted in North Minneapolis. JXTA's programs offer college-level training to teens through a core program known as JXTALabs, which annually employs 70 youth ages 14 to 21 in five revenue-earning art and design micro-businesses. The JXTALabs offer a wide array of high-quality art and design services to local and regional clients while developing the talents of young creatives.

Mizna is a critical platform for contemporary literature, film, art, and cultural production centering the work of Arab and Southwest Asian and North African artists. For more than 20 years, Mizna has been creating a decolonized cultural space to reflect the expansiveness of our community and to foster exchange, examine ideas, and engage audiences in meaningful art. Mizna publishes the only Southwest Asian and North African literary and art journal in the country; produces the Twin Cities Arab Film Festival; and offers classes, readings, performances, public art, and community events, which have featured more than 400 local and global writers, filmmakers, and artists.

Pangea World Theater illuminates the human condition, celebrates cultural differences, and promotes human rights by creating and presenting international, multi-disciplinary theater. Founded in 1995, Pangea's innovative theater performances and arts-based community engagement transcends borders and brings audiences together at the intersection of politics, arts, and human rights to explore the relevant and often divisive themes of our times—racism, exile, immigration, freedom, and cross-cultural expression.

[The Somali Museum of Minnesota](#) is the only museum in North America devoted to preserving traditional Somali culture and art. The museum’s mission is to educate young Somalis and to build bridges through culture to non-Somali Minnesotans. The museum offers an unrivaled collection of traditional artworks and serves as a unique meeting space for Somali artists. After civil war left almost all of Somalia’s museums destroyed and cultural artifacts spread across the world, the Somali community in Minneapolis rallied to make Minneapolis the home of Somalia’s precious cultural inheritance.

[Theater Mu](#) was founded in 1992 to bring Asian American voices to Minnesota stages and has grown to become one of the largest Asian American performing arts organizations in the nation. By producing great performances, community outreach efforts, and virtual programming born of arts, equity, and social justice from the heart of the Asian American experience, Theater Mu provides an unparalleled home for local and national Asian American artists and audiences of all backgrounds.

[TruArtSpeaks](#) is an arts and culture organization founded in 2006 and based in Saint Paul. Its mission is to cultivate literacy, leadership, and social justice through the study and application of Spoken Word and Hip Hop culture. The organization believes that art and culture—especially Hip Hop—inspires connection, growth, and social transformation. TruArtSpeaks provides development opportunities for youth, emerging artists and arts leaders through public events, direct mentorship, workshops, residencies, conferences, statewide initiatives, and more.

[Walker|West](#) was founded more than 30 years ago by African American musicians Rev. Carl Walker and Grant West to provide a space rooted in the cultural traditions they were raised with—where everyone can gather, grow, and explore through music. Walker|West provides music instruction and community programming for students of all ages—from infants to elders—and is committed to a future where everyone has access to the healing power of music.

ABOUT THE FUNDERS

The [McKnight Foundation](#), a Minnesota-based family foundation, advances a more just, creative, and abundant future where people and planet thrive. Established in 1953, the McKnight Foundation is deeply committed to advancing climate solutions in the Midwest; building an equitable and inclusive Minnesota; and supporting the arts in Minnesota, neuroscience, and international crop research. The Foundation has approximately \$2.4 billion in assets and granted \$105 million in 2020.

The [Bush Foundation](#) invests in great ideas and the people who power them in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and the 23 Native nations that share the same geography. Established in 1953 by 3M Executive Archibald Bush and his wife Edyth, the Foundation supports organizations and people to think bigger and think differently about what is possible in their communities. We work to inspire and support creative problem solving — within and across sectors — to make our region better for everyone.

The [Ford Foundation](#) is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than 80 years it has worked with courageous people on the frontlines of social change worldwide, guided by its mission to strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international

cooperation, and advance human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

The [Jerome Foundation](#) was founded in 1964 by artist and philanthropist Jerome Hill (1905-1972). In honoring his legacy, it awards multi-year grants to vocational artists in all disciplines in Minnesota and New York City at early stages in their careers and to those nonprofit arts organizations that serve, develop and/ or present such artists (whether through publication, exhibition, performance or screening). The Foundation centers its grantmaking practice in three core values of humility, innovation/risk, and diversity.

The [Metropolitan Regional Arts Council's](#) mission is to improve arts access for communities in the seven-county metropolitan area through support to artists and organizations. We're committed to advancing inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in all aspects of our work.

The [Minneapolis Foundation](#) drives collective action to realize strong, vibrant communities. The Foundation cultivates generosity by taking action on the greatest civic, social, and economic needs—partnering with nonprofits, facilitating grantmaking, driving research and advocacy, and providing services to donors seeking to make a difference in their communities.

[Propel Nonprofits](#) fuels the impact and effectiveness of nonprofits with guidance, expertise, and capital. This mission is in service to a vision of a diverse network of mission-driven nonprofits building a healthy, vibrant, and more just community. Propel is a federally certified Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and provides capacity-building services that include accounting and finance, board governance, fiscal sponsorship, lending, skills and knowledge sharing, strategic consulting, and training. Propel Nonprofits serves nonprofit organizations in Minnesota and the adjacent states of Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.