



THE CENTER FOR
CULTURAL POWER

NO GOING BACK

A COVID-19 Cultural Strategy Activation Guide for Artists and Activists





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“
And who will join this standing up
and the ones who stood without sweet company
will sing and sing
back into the mountains and
if necessary
even under the sea

we are the ones we have been waiting for
- **June Jordan**”

Art by **M Erazo**

“ Culture contains the seed of resistance that blossoms into the flower of liberation”
- Amilcar Cabral

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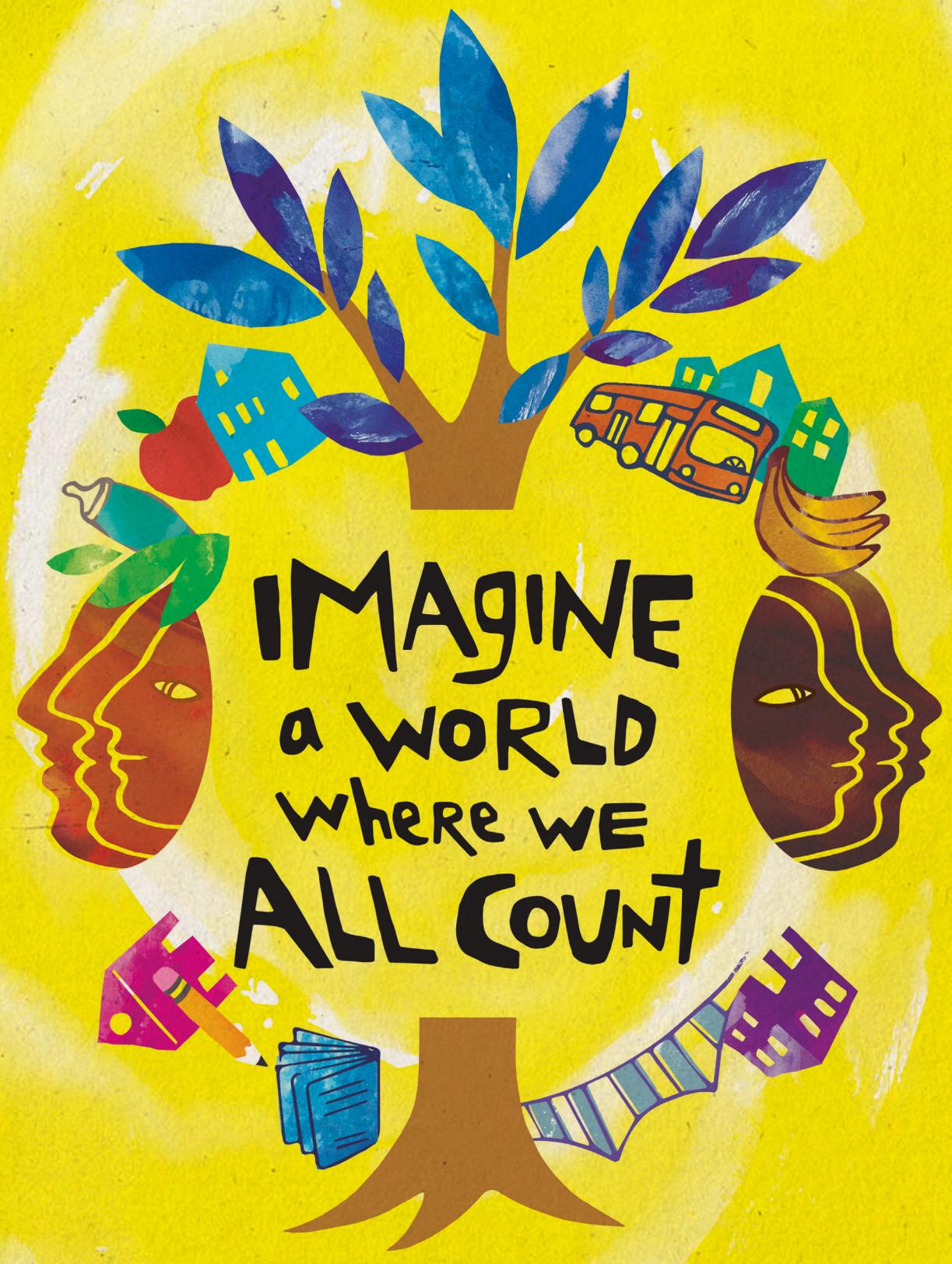


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Dear artists, musicians, writers, poets, culture bearers, DJs, makers, storytellers and all who create art,

We are in an unprecedented moment of tectonic culture shift – a moment of extreme hardship but also of infinite possibility. The role of the artist has never been more important. Artists are the beacons who help us see the light in times of devastation. Artists expose hard truths, inspire new ideas and make the future we want feel possible, tangible, and inevitable. Artists activate the imagination, they soothe, comfort, and move to action.

As a global society, we are mourning the loss of family and friends, as well as the loss of our ability to sustain ourselves. We are feeling the consequences of an economic system that continues to prioritize profits over people and the planet. We face the decimation of many of our art institutions and the spaces where we gathered – theaters, comedy clubs, dance venues, and cultural centers.

Yet in moments of disillusion and fractures, there is also an opportunity to sow ideas for a different kind of future. We are the creators of culture. We are the makers of fairy tales and myths. Our stories and our cultural expression shape societies and policies, and influence our own conceptions of ourselves and the world around us. Culture IS power.

The narratives of capitalism that have propped up our system – narratives of domination and extraction from the planet, from workers, and from animals – are falling apart. This moment offers us an unprecedented opportunity to propagate the stories that will shape a more just and equitable future.

Artists, let's own our cultural power. Let's leverage our songs, stories,

images and creative superpowers to imagine and vision the future that we need. A future in which racism and colonization no longer exist, where we are in a regenerative relationship with nature, where we don't exploit other life because we honor our interconnection and shared destinies.

We created this guide to inspire you to create and to disrupt. This is a guide for makers and doers – it will help you tell a shared story about who we can be in times of crisis and who we want to become. We at The Center for Cultural Power are dedicated to organizing artists to build collective cultural power towards social change and justice. This guide is designed to help you make sense of this crisis in your own terms, through your own unique lens and experience, and to do what you as an artist do best – create and inspire the audiences you are connected to.

We hope this guide will inspire your creations. Together we can create the world we need.



Favianna Rodriguez
The Center for Cultural Power



Art by **Favianna Rodriguez**



Art by **Cece Carpio**

The Narratives We Need

“In times of crisis, seemingly impossible ideas suddenly become possible.” - Naomi Klein

It is inevitable that society will change after this pandemic. But whose ideas will drive those changes? As “normal” life and “business as usual” have ground to a halt, we have a rare opening to build momentum to create the inclusive, joyful, liberated world we need. It will be artists who paint the picture of a new normal that will allow us to wake up to a better version of ourselves and our communities, where justice and compassion are a reality, where we value each other and build a social safety net that holds us all, and where we live in regenerative relationships with each other and with the Earth.

To help us get there, we offer six narratives that we believe are critical in this moment to move us toward the post-pandemic future we need. We have built these from a rich field of narrative research and in consultation with narrative experts. We share the kind of stories needed to illustrate each narrative, and sample projects and slogans to inspire your thinking. We understand that stories look different across artistic mediums and cultural traditions, in different communities, depending on the audience they are designed to reach. You know your creative practice and audience best. We invite you to adapt these ideas according to the strengths and opportunities of your own mediums.

¹ Klein, Naomi. *Corona Virus Capitalism - And How to Beat It*. YouTube. March 16, 2020.

² Ibid.

1 A JUST, SUSTAINABLE, JOYFUL WORLD IS POSSIBLE. AND NECESSARY.

“Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around.”³ Now is the moment to embrace our most ambitious and transformative ideas for creating the world we need. The right wing has already gotten busy pushing their reductive ideology – we must let our inspiring, joyful, and welcoming vision shine through the fog.

We Need	This Might Look Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories of the future we want our kids to grow up in, a future where they can be healthy, happy, and thriving. ⁴ • Stories that make our brightest future feel tangible and possible. • Stories that imagine what our culture, our economy, our politics would look like if it prioritized people and the planet over profit, and valued all life equally. • Stories of real-world solutions and alternative systems that model the world we want. • Stories that reveal the unjust systems that have led to this moment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative actions modeling the people-centered economy we want. • Speculative fiction showing what society might look like if we prioritized health and well-being. • An art poster listing ways people can change their habits to reduce and reuse. • Videos showing people consuming less while supporting small and local businesses, etc.

Potential Slogans:

*Build a brighter
future together*

*A better world is
possible*

*The future we
need is within
our reach*

*If you can imagine it,
you can create it*

*We all have a
hand in building a
better tomorrow*

³ Ibid, quoting Milton Friedman. ⁴ [Story Platform](#). Story At Scale. (n.d.)

2 WE HAVE THE SOLUTIONS WE NEED.

This pandemic has shown us what’s possible when our public institutions and local and state governments prioritize our public welfare. What more could be possible if we decide the role of our government is to uphold the common good?⁵ It’s never been more clear how our destinies are intertwined – our best protection is to take care of each other. In this moment of crisis we must amplify what we need our government to do to allow us to take care of our families, communities, and ourselves. We have the solutions we need – universal healthcare and childcare, paid sick leave and paid family leave, affordable long-term care, a living wage, and [more](#). This is the moment. Let’s get this done.

We Need	This Might Look Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories of success, showing how communities have organized to push their government and public institutions to act for the common good. • Stories of the impact on people’s lives where policies exist to allow people to take care of themselves and their families – paid medical and family leave, universal healthcare, universal childcare, adequate pay for care workers, access to affordable long-term care, etc. • Stories that provide a sense of community around caregiving while also connecting the dots to the solutions we need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fan fiction showing the better ways a pandemic would be handled in other fictional worlds (like Wakanda, Hogwarts, etc). • A day-in-the-life video from the future, showing a young parent taking care of their children and their aging parents, but who has access to affordable childcare, eldercare, and paid medical and family leave. • Artwork to be displayed on windows thanking care workers of all types. • Prank ads announcing the federal government taking responsibility and doing the things we wish they would do (i.e. Transnational Trolley campaign or Chevron hoax), etc.

Potential Slogans: *We have the solutions we need* *It’s time to take care of all of us* *Our best protection is collective care* *Government should be for the common good* *Imagine what we can do together* *Caretaking is the backbone of a healthy society*

⁵ [How to Talk About Government: A FrameWorks Message Memo](#). FrameWorks Institute. March 2006.



3 WE GET THROUGH THIS TOGETHER.⁶

In this time of crisis, we need to inspire people's generosity and community spirit. We need to help people understand our interdependence and embrace an abundance mindset. Caretaking is the backbone of a healthy society. Now is the time to show up for one another.

We Need	This Might Look Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories of mutual aid, of resilience, of how people are helping their neighbors. • Stories of communities sharing resources and of wealth redistribution. • Stories that show we have enough when we share and when we prioritize our collective well being over our individual gain. • Stories that show our interdependence and how our survival depends on looking out for one another. • Stories of intergenerational and community caregiving that establish the culture of care that we need to hold on to even beyond this crisis. • Stories that uplift the value of caregiving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters with supportive slogans that folks can display in their windows. • Virtual dance parties or story hours for kids. • YouTube shows highlighting examples of mutual aid (i.e. Some Good News). • Buddy systems to provide emotional support. • Illustrations showing incarcerated people reuniting with families. • Digital memes offering mutual aid ideas. • An animated video illustrating a future where society centers a culture of care and interdependence, focusing on the story of a person who gives or receives care (i.e. an elder, a new parent, etc).

Potential Slogans:

We pull through by pulling together⁷

We take care of each other

Stronger together

Apart but connected

We need one another

⁶ [National COVID-19 Messaging Document](#). ASO Communications. (n.d.), ⁷ [Represent Together: A Messaging Guide for Wellness and Safety](#). Medium. March 13, 2020. ⁷ [Represent Together: A Messaging Guide for Wellness and Safety](#). Medium. March 13, 2020.

4 WE ARE ONLY AS SAFE AS THOSE MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY WHO ARE MOST AT RISK.⁸

COVID-19 does not affect everyone equally.⁹ This pandemic has exposed the danger of racial, gender, economic and health inequities. [Black Americans](#) and Latinos are dying in staggering numbers; [women](#) comprise the majority of frontline and essential workers while [women of color](#) are taking the biggest economic losses; [detained immigrants](#) and [incarcerated](#) people are unable to keep themselves safe; and the [Navajo Nation](#) is forced to battle a rapid spread of COVID-19 made worse by grave inequities stemming from broken treaties. Now is the time to call for racial, gender, economic, and health equity. Now is the time to join with impacted communities as they demand justice. "Together, we can rise to the challenge."¹⁰

We Need	This Might Look Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories of the women, immigrants and people of color on the frontlines who are saving lives and keep society going. • Stories of their bravery, selflessness and kindness in a time of crisis - and that show their deep ties to their communities. • Stories of the reality of poverty wages, racial profiling, sexism, and other injustices that these workers face. • Stories of the disparate impact on women (especially women of color) who are the majority of frontline workers and carry the majority of unwaged caregiving work. • Stories of the disparate impact of this pandemic on health - stories directly from the communities getting hit with COVID-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portraits of frontline and essential workers with their families. • A daily ritual to publicly support the needs of frontline and essential workers (i.e. howling at 8pm). • Video poem highlighting how we rely on frontline immigrants, women, and/or people of color (like this one). • YouTube dispatches directly from impacted communities. • Animated explainer showing how employers and our broader economic system are failing essential workers, immigrants, women, and people of color.

Potential Slogans: *There is enough for all of us* *The frontline has shown up for us, we will show up for them¹¹* *Essential workers keep us safe; Black health matters¹²* *Women's work runs the world* *Health shouldn't have a price tag¹³* *Migrant farmworkers feed our communities*

⁸ Johnsen, Elizabeth. *Talking About COVID-19: A Call for Racial, Economic, and Health Equity*. The Opportunity Agenda. March 9, 2020. ⁹ Cooney, Sabin, van Dorn. *COVID-19 exacerbating inequalities in the US*. The Lancet. April 18, 2020. ¹⁰ Johnsen. *Talking About COVID-19*. 2020. ¹¹ Excerpted from artwork on *Dear Frontline*. Big Bowl of Ideas. April 2020. ¹² Johnsen. *Talking About COVID-19*. 2020. ¹³ Ibid.

5 WE ARE GREATER THAN FEAR.¹⁴

We are stronger when people from diverse backgrounds work together and learn from each other’s experiences. But politicians have long used racial divisions and xenophobia as political tools, as they are doing even during this crisis. We must help people overcome fear-mongering by linking diversity to strength and healthy communities, and by pointing out when fear is used as bait by politicians trying to divide us.¹⁵

We Need	This Might Look Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories that demonstrate people from diverse backgrounds working together and learning from each other as a solution and a strength.¹⁶ • Stories that call out and reject the use of fear to divide us against each other.¹⁷ • Stories that reveal who benefits when divisions are stoked. • Stories of solidarity across issue areas, sectors, regions and identities that show we’re stronger when we work together.¹⁸ • Stories of belonging—building and organizing strong, safe communities, and families.¹⁹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetry showing solidarity amongst communities. • Video documentaries of communities organizing to protect community members who are being targeted by fear-mongering (i.e. Greater Than Fear in MN). • Photographic series of people working together in spite of divisions. • Online solidarity dance challenge on zoom (ala Thao Nguyen & the Get Down Stay Down’s zoom music video). • Memes showing examples of mutual aid in communities that are hardest hit by COVID-19.

Potential Slogans: *We’re stronger together* *We are greater than fear* *Love is louder than fear²⁰* *Californians [or insert your state] know how to take care of one another - we will not be divided²¹* *This is a time for unity, not division²²* *All of Us or None*

¹⁴ [We Are Greater Than Fear](#). Greater Than Fear. (n.d.) ¹⁵ [Rise Above: Countering Fear-Based Messaging](#). The Opportunity Agenda. 2017. ¹⁶ Ibid. ¹⁷ [Race-Class: Our Progressive Narrative](#). The Race-Class Narrative Project. Demos. May 21, 2018. ¹⁸ Ibid. ¹⁹ [Story Platform](#). Story At Scale. (n.d.) ²⁰ [Design For Democracy](#). INTO ACTION Creative Hub. 2020. ²¹ [Represent Together](#). 2020. ²² [National COVID-19 Messaging](#). 2020.

6 VOTING SHOULD BE EASY, SAFE, AND FOR EVERYONE.²³

As Michelle Obama said, “Everyone should have the right to vote safely... There is nothing partisan about striving to live up to the promise of our country; making the democracy we all cherish more accessible; and protecting our neighbors, friends and loved ones as they participate in this cornerstone of American life.”²⁴ As COVID-19 looms over the November election, we must build public consensus that voting should be easy, safe, and for everyone.

We Need	This Might Look Like
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stories of success – in states where early voting, same day/online registration, and/or vote-by-mail is already allowed – showing the impact on everyday people. • Stories of bi-partisan communities working together to expand voting rights in the face of the pandemic. • Stories of poll workers and others involved with in-person voting who are at risk. • Stories that link histories of voter suppression to the current attempts to prevent the expansion of voting access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flash forward style video (ala A Message From the Future) showing people voting safely in record numbers, showing exciting new ways of doing safe GOTV, and showing the ways that greater participation benefits everyone. • Video dispatches from people in states with mail-in voting talking about what it’s like and what it has meant for them. • Spoof the ubiquitous in-home music videos and make one about online registration and mail-in voting.

Potential Slogans:

*Voting should be easy,
Voting should be safe,
Voting should be for
everyone²⁵*

We choose us²⁶

*Our vote,
our future²⁷*

*Mail-in voting
saves lives*

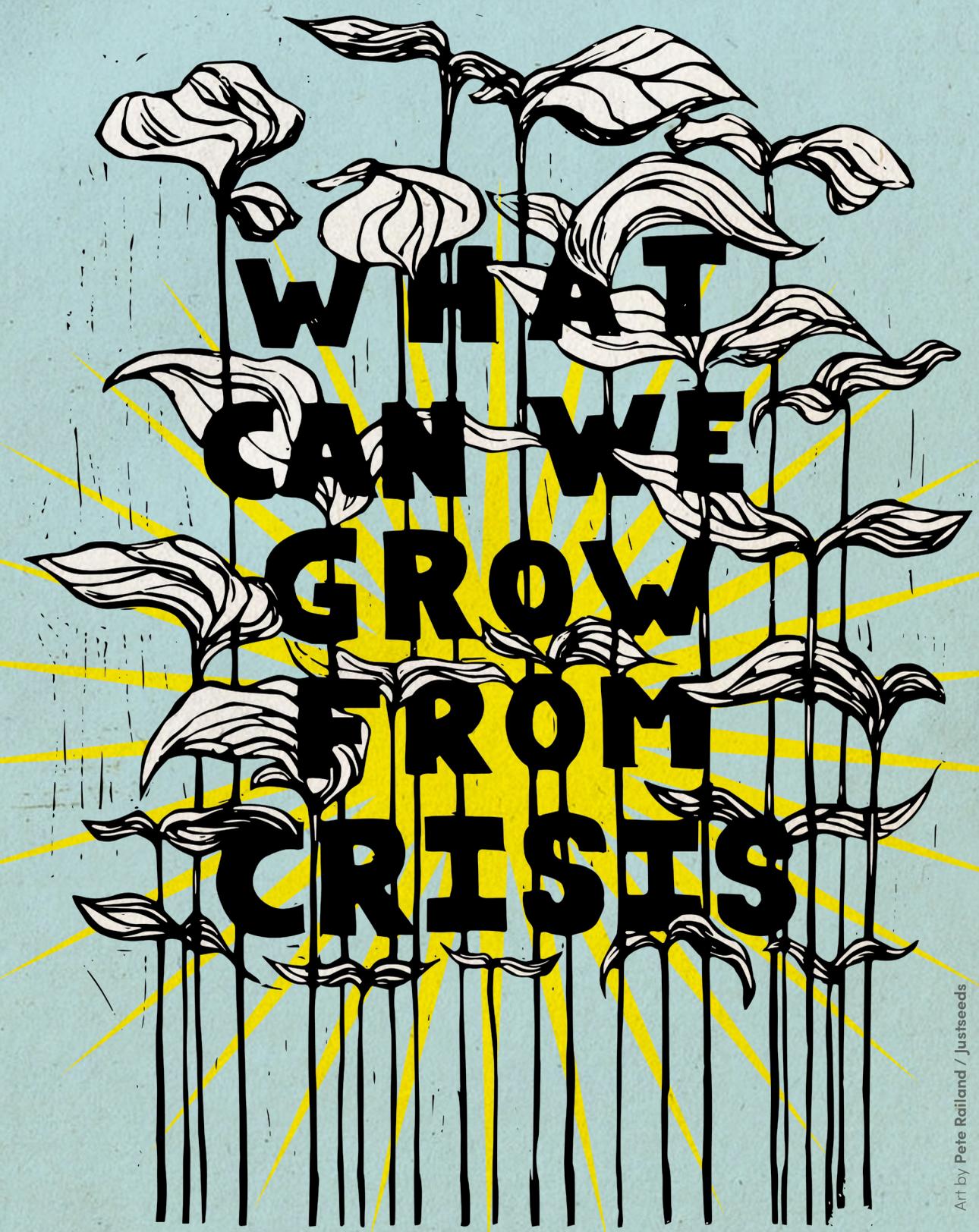
*Protect democracy,
protect each other*

²³ Levine, Sam. *Michelle Obama announces new vote-by-mail push*. The Guardian. April 13, 2020. ²⁴ Ibid. ²⁵ *+1 The Vote*. +1 The Vote. 2020. ²⁶ Phillips. *We Choose Us // Amber*. Midwest Culture Lab. (n.d.) ²⁷ *Our Vote. Our Future*. Alliance for Youth Organizing. 2020.



We Keep Each Other Safe





Art by Pete Railand / Justseeds

Policies For Survival & System Change

“We believe politics is an everyday practice of making and re-making our own lives on our own terms”
 - El Kilombo Intergaláctico

Narratives bring our values to life with the big ideas and stories that lay the groundwork to create a world based on collaboration and interdependence. Policies provide us with the nuts and bolts guidance for how these values are represented in laws, institutions, and resource allocations. In consultation with movement leaders, we have pulled together the policy demands that not only outline the urgent action needed to save lives and address systemic inequalities, but also offer us a visionary re-set of our national and local priorities.

Artists have a unique ability to create art that tells these stories in powerful ways that speak to the heart, inspire resistance, mobilize audiences, and move decision-makers to action. We offer these as concrete, actionable policies that are ready for cultural support. These demands are most powerful when paired with the Narratives We Need, to align nuts and bolts with vision and values. (See the “Putting this Guide Into Action” section for ideas)

We acknowledge that on-the-ground needs are shifting daily and that some of these demands may shift, too (as we win them!). To stay updated on the changes, follow the links in this section to connect directly to the movement organizations whose policies we uplift.

Note: *The People’s Bailout [Five Principles for Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus](#) have provided an important backbone for this section.*



Art by Sam Rodriguez

Principle #1: Health is the top priority, for all people, with no exceptions²⁸

We support the calls of community leaders, public health organizations, unions, and others for free and accessible testing, treatment, and protective equipment; expanded hospital capacity, including in rural areas, territories, and tribal lands; paid sick leave and paid family medical leave for all workers without exception; expanded federal funding for Medicaid; and full funding for Indian Health Service and urban Indian health centers.

We must acknowledge and address the historical and systemic inequities that have led to disproportionately high infection and death rates from COVID-19 in Black communities particularly, but also across communities of color and other impacted communities.²⁹

Critically, the government must ensure such **health protections is affordable and covers all people**, including low-wage workers, health workers, independent contractors, family farmers, Black and Latinx communities, undocumented immigrants, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, people who are incarcerated, people who are homeless or housing insecure, Trans people, elders and others likely to be hit first and worst by COVID-19 and the economic downturn. Now is the time to implement bold, common sense systems like universal healthcare.³⁰

While we push for the policies we need, we must also fight the attempts to use this pandemic to push through right-wing priorities like ending abortion access.³¹

²⁸ Excerpted from: *Five Principles for Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus*. People's Bailout. 2020. ²⁹ This paragraph is not in the original People's Bailout demands and has been added for this guide. ³⁰ Language for universal healthcare and making healthcare accessible has been added for this guide. ³¹ This paragraph is not in the original People's Bailout demands and has been added for this guide.



Art by Brian Herrera

Principle #2: Provide economic relief directly to the people³²

We support the urgent calls to **expand the social safety net by broadening unemployment insurance**, vastly [increasing food aid programs](#), extending **housing assistance**, expanding childcare for working families, [canceling student debt](#), [canceling rent](#), and [halting evictions, foreclosures, and shut offs of water and electricity](#). As with expanded public health measures, these economic measures must be implemented to ensure coverage of workers and communities likely to be hit first and worst by COVID-19 and the economic downturn.

In addition, to counteract the economic downturn, the federal government should immediately [direct sizable cash payments to every person](#). Larger payments should be made to lower-income workers and the poor, who are disproportionately exposed to both COVID-19 health risks and heightened job insecurity. States should immediately create [disaster relief funds for undocumented workers](#) who are [not eligible](#) for federal stimulus payments.³³

One-time payments should transition into a [universal basic income](#) to help people meet the challenges ahead, and be paired with an [increase in the federal minimum wage](#) to a living wage for all frontline and essential workers.³⁴

³² Excerpted from: *Five Principles for Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus*. People's Bailout. 2020. ³³ Language for disaster relief funds has been added for this guide. ³⁴ Language for a universal basic income has been added for this guide.



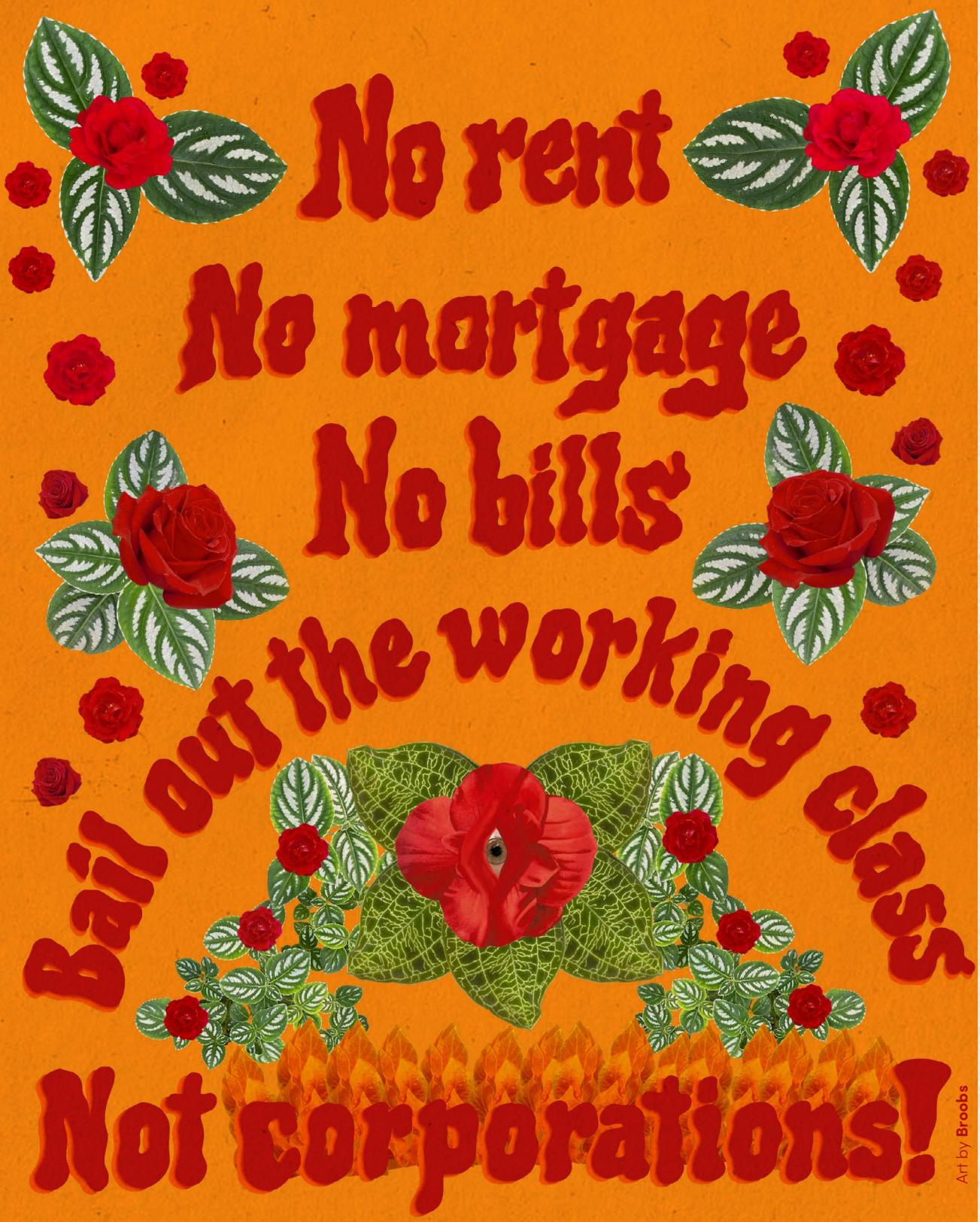
Principle #3: Rescue workers and communities, not corporate executives³⁵

Any financial assistance directed at specific industries must be channeled to workers, **not** shareholders or corporate executives. Specifically, any federal loans must be used to maintain payroll and benefits, not executive bonuses or stock buybacks.

In addition, such funds should come with **pro-worker conditions**, such as requiring worker representation on the company's board of directors, company-wide enactment of a \$15/hour or higher minimum wage, and compliance with high-road labor standards such as payment of prevailing wages, use of project-labor agreements, adoption of a neutrality policy with regard to union collective bargaining, and adoption of a "ban the box" hiring policy to ensure **fair employment opportunities for all**. Any assistance to financial institutions must also include canceling the burden of interest and payments from everyday people.³⁶

Art by Julio Salgado and Sonia Guiñansaca

³⁵ Excerpted from: *Five Principles for Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus*. People's Bailout. 2020. ³⁶ Language for canceling interest and payments excerpted from: *National Demands for COVID-19*. M4BL. 2020.



Art by Broobs

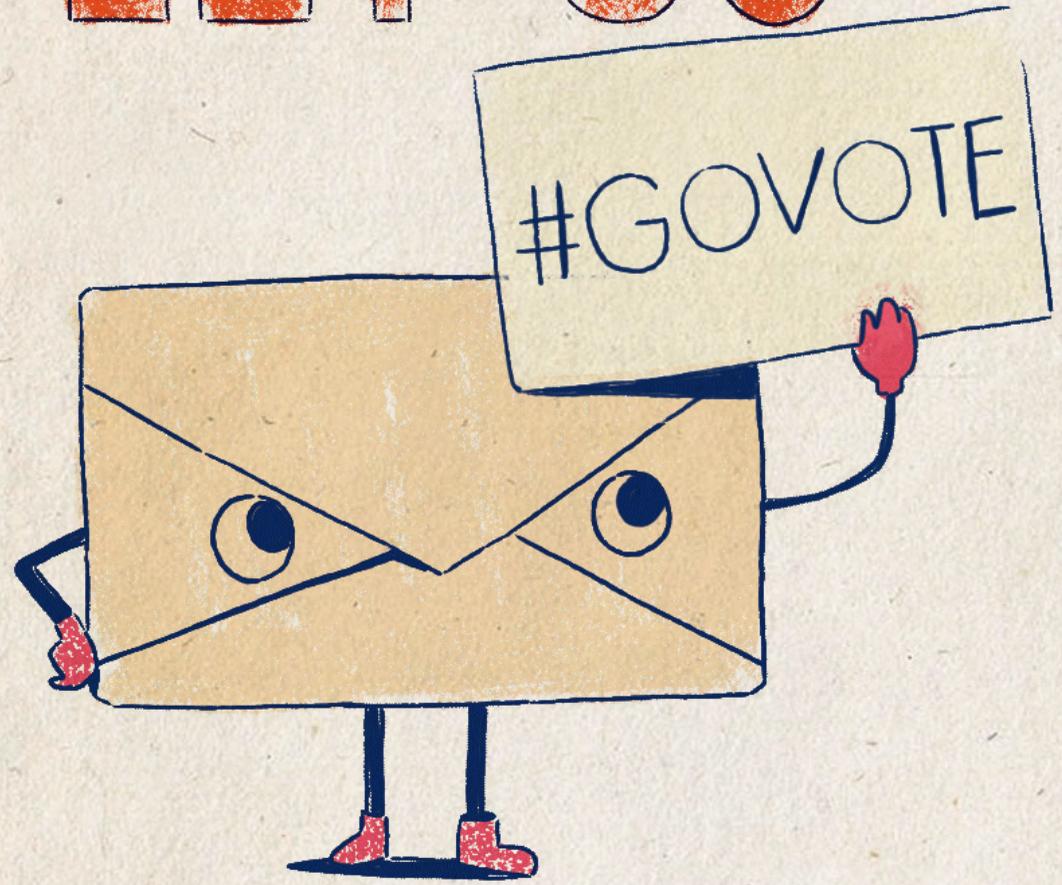
Principle #4: Make a down payment on a regenerative economy, while preventing future crises.³⁷

The climate crisis makes certain communities more vulnerable than others, and is compounding threats to our economy and health.³⁸ While we urgently need a large, short-term [green stimulus](#) to protect the health and economic security of those on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, it is imperative that policymakers **also plan for a large, medium-term stimulus** to counteract the economic downturn and ensure a [just recovery](#). This stimulus should [create millions of good, family-sustaining jobs](#) with high-road labor standards; close the technology and [internet divide](#); counter systemic inequities by directing investments to the working families, communities of color, and Indigenous communities who face the most economic insecurity; and tackle the climate crisis that devastates communities of color and Indigenous communities.³⁹

All three goals can be achieved simultaneously with public investments to **rebuild our infrastructure**, replace lead pipes, expand wind and solar power, **build clean and affordable public transit**, weatherize our buildings, build and repair public housing, manufacture more clean energy goods, [restore our wetlands and forests](#), **expand public services that support climate resilience**, [end factory farming practices](#), and support regenerative agriculture led by family farmers.⁴⁰ Critically, stimulus packages should include conditions for industries to implement high-road labor standards, workforce development, and [reductions in climate emissions and toxic pollution](#). The response to one existential crisis must not fuel another.

³⁷ Excerpted from: *Five Principles for Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus*. People's Bailout. 2020
³⁸ This introductory sentence was added for this guide. ³⁹ Language about the climate crisis impact on POC and indigenous communities has been added for this guide. ⁴⁰ Language for ending factory farming practices has been added for this guide.

LET US



BY MAIL

Art by Into Action

Principle #5: Protect our democratic process while protecting each other⁴¹

People must not be forced to choose between exercising their rights as citizens and protecting public health. The federal government must support states, by providing funding and technical support wherever needed, to ensure that every American can vote safely in primary and general elections.

States should put in place life-saving and democracy-defending measures including expanding vote by mail, early voting, online or automatic voter registration, among others.

The 2020 Census **must be fully supported** and resourced to achieve an accurate and safe count under the new and evolving conditions. **US Congress, state capitals and city halls should not shut down** until they have amended rules to ensure continuity of governance in the case that in-person sessions are suspended.

⁴¹ Excerpted from: *Five Principles for Just COVID-19 Relief and Stimulus*. People's Bailout. 2020



Art by Micah Bazant

Principle #6: Ensure the safety of people in detention centers, jails, and prisons by releasing them.

The COVID-19 pandemic makes clear that the use of detention and incarceration for social problems threatens public safety and public health as the virus rapidly spreads within the carceral system. Reducing incarceration and releasing people from detention facilities across the country would help achieve true community safety.⁴²

The federal government must also suspend all immigration enforcement activities and operations, and **states must refuse to cooperate** with any attempted ICE enforcement. We are all only as safe as those members of our community who are most at risk.⁴³

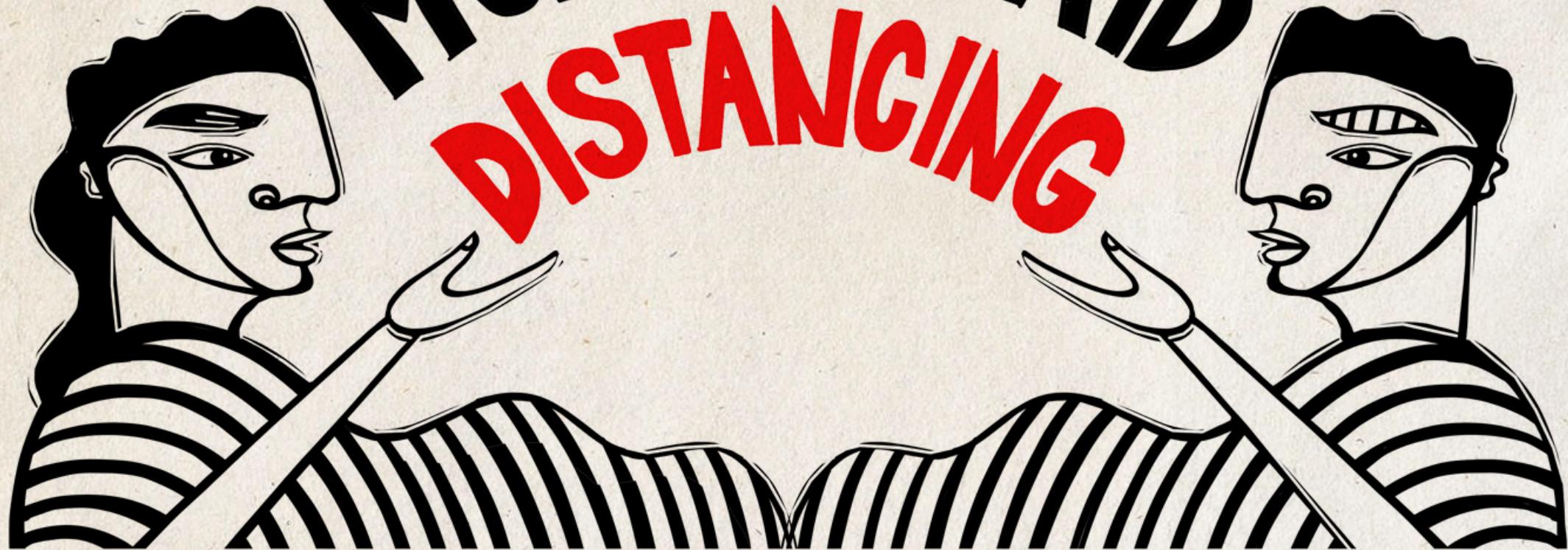
⁴² Excerpted from: *Justice Reform & Human Rights in a Time of Crisis: Releasing People from Detention*. The Opportunity Agenda. 2020.

⁴³ Ibid.

SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

MUTUAL AID

DISTANCING



Art by Favianna Rodriguez



Principle #7: Keep our eyes on the prize

Many of the COVID-19 rapid response demands represent an important leap forward for the issues we care about. But we must connect the dots from the policies we need now to the policies we need in the post-pandemic future. Now is the time to build momentum for the movement platforms we already have as well as the new ideas being introduced. We honor these visionary platforms:

- The [Green New Deal](#) and the New Economy Coalition's [Pathways to a People's Economy](#) and the movement for a [Just Transition](#) re-imagine the economy as a system that redistributes power and resources to workers while ensuring that economic development is in alignment with the planet.
- The Movement for Black Lives' [Vision for Black Lives](#) re-imagines society so that its institutions and resources become tools to repair historical harm, share power, and allow for the full humanity and dignity of all people.
- [People's Action's People's Platform 2020](#) and Caring Across Generations' plan for [Universal Family Care](#) re-imagine our society's priorities to center the common good and create an economy and care infrastructure that allows people to care for themselves and their families.

Putting This Guide Into Action

There's a place where this poem dwells—
it is here, it is now, in the yellow song of dawn's bell
where we write an American lyric
we are just beginning to tell.

- Amanda Gorman

We believe in sharing resources and learning from one another. Here we offer you some of our favorite toolkits, content collections and case studies. We also want to share how we are using some of these tools. If you're looking for guidance in designing a creative intervention, need digital art you can use, or want to see how other artists are tackling these ideas, here are the resources for you.

Case Studies: Here are just a few of the ways that artists and culture makers are using culture in the wake of the pandemic. We chose these examples because they inspire us and represent key narratives or policy demands in action.



Futurist Writers' Room, a project of the Guild of Future Architects, challenged the idea that we should “get back to normal” after the pandemic. They prompted writers to dive into possible futures, to imagine “new normals,” and to co-create a new reality through ten virtual writers' room sessions. The sessions imagined alternate histories as far back as 1920 and invented speculative futures as far forward as 2120 to “help identify design principles and actions to better steward our present.”⁴⁴ We love this project because it invited the creation of literature to depict the “just, sustainable, joyful world” (our narrative #1) that we so badly need to be able to imagine.

Futurist Writers' Room, a project of the Guild of Future Architects, challenged the idea that we should “get back to normal” after the pandemic. They prompted writers to dive into possible futures, to imagine “new normals,” and to co-create a new reality through ten virtual writers' room sessions. The sessions



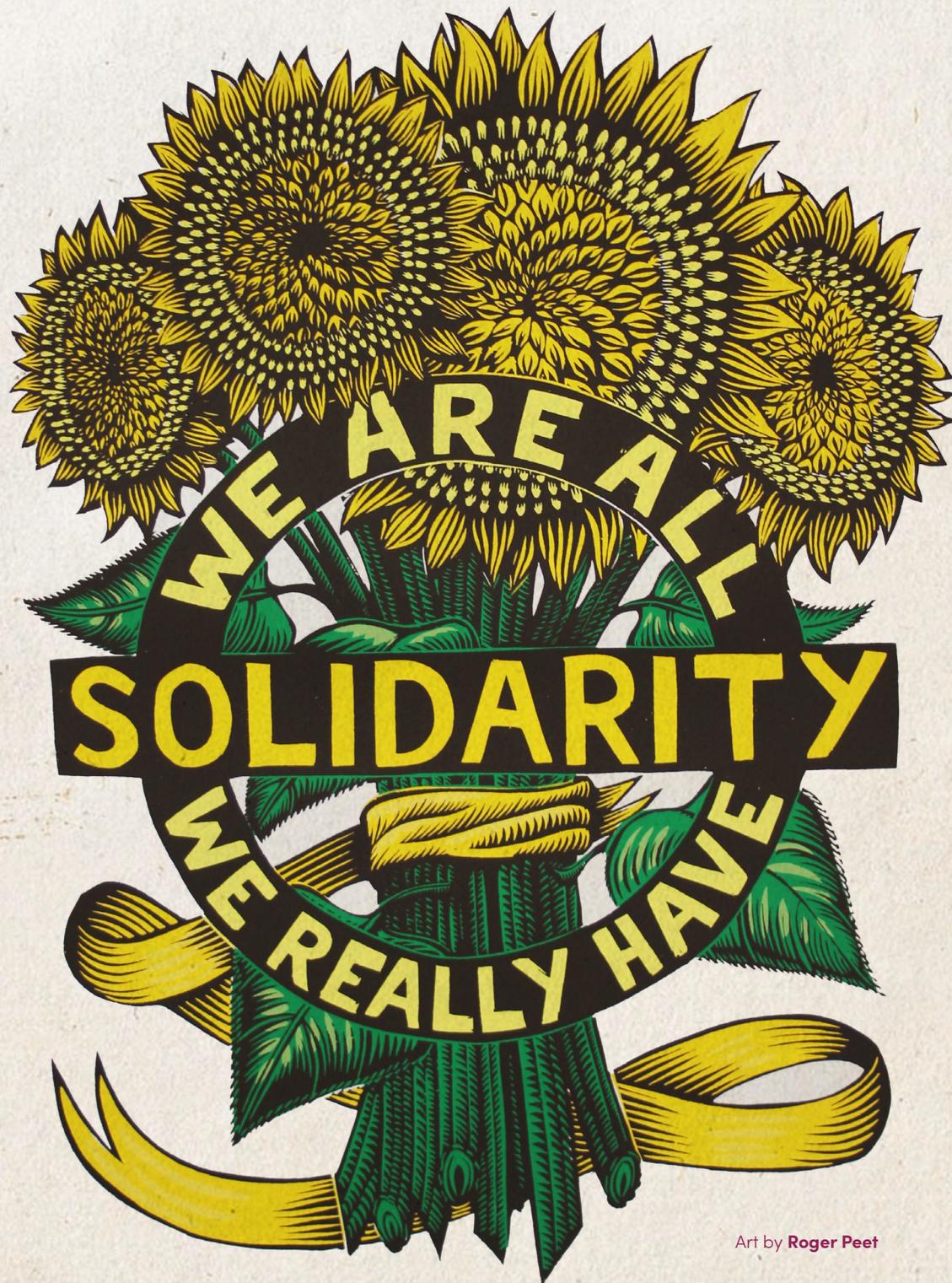
#Free Them All: Artist [Julio Salgado](#), at The Center for Cultural Power, in collaboration with The Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice, organized a call for art to uplift the demands to release and support detained migrants under the banner #FreeThemAll. We commissioned five immigrant artists to create this new work and Julio provided the themes and context for the artists to create compelling pieces. The beautiful results are [here](#). We love how Julio provided the information the artists needed to be able to create images that aligned with movements demands while still being grounded in values and narrative. (The images align with our narratives #2, “We get through this together”; and #4, “We are only as safe as those members of our community who are most at risk”



La Miche jugando a la pandemia 😞

The Storytelling Power of Texts: Photographer Cinthya Santos Briones turned her text check-ins with friends from Mexican and K'iche' migrant communities into a [visual chronicle of untold stories](#). She published a series of photos and snippets of their texted conversations, serving “to amplify the gaze of babysitters, domestic workers, cooks, waiters, delivery people, and day laborers – perspectives that aren't often published in the media.”⁴⁵ We love this project for the way it lets people tell their own stories and the way it underlines our narrative #4: “We are only as safe as those members of our community who are most at risk”.

⁴⁴ [Futurist Writers' Room \(20 Decades of 2020\)](#). Guild of Future Architects. Eventbrite. 2020. ⁴⁵ Santos Briones, Cinthya. [Immigrants are Bearing the Brunt of the Coronavirus Crisis](#). The Nation. April 13, 2020.



Art by Roger Peet

Toolkits for Designing an Artistic Response

[Hype Action Tactics Guide](#) from the Sunrise Movement was created for this pandemic moment, offering smart tactical ideas, slogans, tips, and how-to's for our social distanced reality. Using a choose-your-own-adventure layout, it provides a fun way to explore accessible and creative tactics.

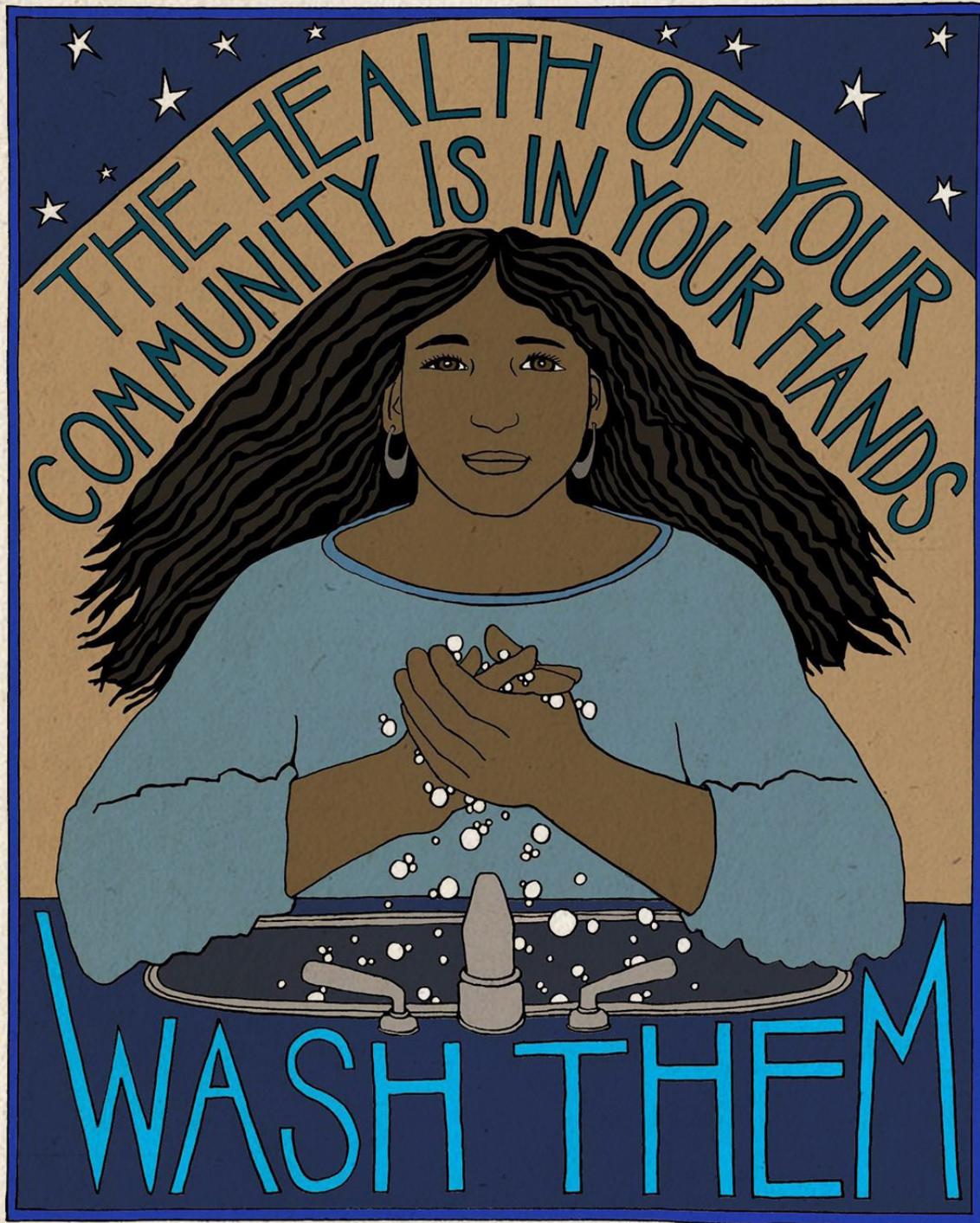
[Art Became the Oxygen: An Artistic Response Guide](#) from the USDAC provides guidance and resources for artists in a time of natural or civil disasters. It offers principles for arts and emergency management, models and approaches for artistic response, and more.

[Cultural Strategy: An Introduction & Primer](#) from Power California provides a framework for understanding and practicing cultural strategy. It looks at what cultural strategy is (and is not), characteristics of cultural strategy, and measuring cultural impact.

[Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution](#) provides a suite of creative tools and trainings to help artists and activists make their campaigns more creative and more effective. Their website has an exhaustive [Web Toolbox](#) of creative action ideas, action design principles and theories, and case studies. The Beautiful Trouble team also put out an irreverent roundup of creative and effective social movement responses to COVID-19: [HOLY SH*T: 7 Things To Do Instead of Horde Toilet Paper](#).

[Stop the Pipeline Art Kit](#) is an art kit that includes guidance on how to organize virtual art builds, chalk a sidewalk, design window signs, and tap into the power of song and music. The kit is designed to help users make actions stronger and more visible. The kit features the work of many artists of color who are confronting the oil industry and offers fun and DIY approaches to collective art making during social distancing.

[Action Strategy Guide](#) from the Ruckus Society is a classic how-to guide for designing and preparing for direct actions. Though direct actions while sheltering in place may look different than the flash mobs and mass protests of pre-pandemic times, the strategy tools are timeless. Ruckus also has a great [Creative Direct Action Visuals](#) manual for folks looking for tips on making banners, stencils, puppets or protest t-shirts.



Art/Content You Can Use

Into Action Lab, a project of TaskForce, is producing shareable, unbranded, and free creative content around COVID-19, civic engagement, and social justice issues for anyone to use. The content is geared for social media and dozens of new pieces are uploaded each day. If you sign up for their [newsletter](#), they'll send new content each week straight to your inbox. If you're looking for voter mobilization content specifically, check out their [#GoVote](#) series.

Amplifier's Global Open Call for Art has amassed beautiful images around mental health and public safety that are available for free downloads. They also have a collection of [free downloadable posters](#) about numerous social justice issues that are available for use.

JustSeeds' Free Downloadable Graphics Section is a collection of downloadable art posters related to COVID-19, healthcare, worker rights, rent strikes and solidarity/mutual aid.

Power to the Poster is a collection of social justice posters that can be downloaded or shared on social media. They have several beautiful posters related to the pandemic and also accept poster submissions for artists who want to contribute.

Resources For Artists

“how do we widen the space within us for the grief and wonder? fear and vision? the surrender, and the creativity, the relief, the humor, the possibility?”⁴⁶

- **adrienne maree brown**

The pandemic has hit artists across the country hard and will have long-lasting impacts in how we create, share, and disseminate our creations. It can be challenging to think about what art our society needs when you're trying to figure out how to care for sick family members, pay for food, homeschool children, and make rent. Here are some of our favorite resource lists for financial, medical, and mental health assistance for artists, as well as mutual aid resources and sources for helpful COVID-19 information.

Collections of resources for artists (financial, health, legal, etc):

[COVID19 Freelance Artist Resources](#) is an aggregated list of free resources, opportunities, and financial relief options available to freelance artists of all disciplines

[Coronavirus 2020 Artist Relief Funds](#) is a spreadsheet of many of the artist relief funds mentioned in these other aggregated lists, but which includes data

on whether the fund is still active, size of the grant, eligibility requirements, application difficulty, etc.

[Emergency Funds for Freelancers & Creatives](#) is a list of relief funds that distribute emergency grants to artists, creative professionals and freelancers facing financial hardships. Note that some of the listed funds are limited to Californians, but many are national.

[COVID-19 Resources for the Artist Organization Field](#) is an open, crowd-sourced list for artists and arts organizations. Extremely extensive, this collection ranges from relief funds to emergency response guidance to health signage to online lesson plans to crisis communications advice.

[COVID-19 Resources for Artists & Arts Organizations](#), compiled by the NEA, is a collection of COVID-19 news and resources put out by various arts organizations and associations.

[List of Arts Resources During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#), compiled by Creative Capital, is tracking relief funds (including a helpful list of local and state grants) as well as arts events that have moved online. This list also features free online workshops on topics like “Livestreaming for Artists” and “Centering Wellness and Self-Care for Creatives.”

⁴⁶ brown. *On Rushing Toward Apocalypse*, 2020.



ARTIST RELIEF FUNDS FOR POC ARTISTS

These are funds that have a specific racial equity lens and prioritize artist of color.

National Funds:

Arts and Culture Leaders of Color Emergency Fund from the Arts Administrators of Color Network, offering \$200 for Black, Indigenous, POC artists or arts administrators whose income has been directly impacted by COVID-19.

Queer Writers of Color Relief Fund is offering \$100 - \$500 grants for queer writers of color - grants are for individuals only, not organizations.

Artist Relief Fund: from a coalition of national arts grantmakers, offering \$5,000 grants to artists facing dire financial emergencies due to COVID-19. This fund does not have a specific racial justice lens, but we're including it here because it's one of the largest emergency grants available for artists facing dire financial distress and we want to make sure you know about it.

Regional Funds:

Dallas Artist Relief Fund from Creating Our Future, offering \$200 grants for low-income, Black, Indigenous, people of color, queer, trans/GNC/NB and disabled artist freelancers who live in Dallas, Texas.

Creative Response Fund from Antenna, Ashé Cultural Arts Center, Junebug Productions, and the Weavers Fellowship, offering \$2,000 grants with an emphasis on Black, Indigenous, people of color, women, LGBTQ+, and immigrant artists who live in the Greater New Orleans region, Louisiana.

Durham Artist Relief Fund from North Star Church of the Arts, offering grants with priority given to Black, Indigenous, people of color, trans, nonbinary, and disabled artists who live in Durham, North Carolina.

Martha Kate Thomas Fund for Artists from the Boulder County Arts Alliance, offering up to \$3,000 grants with a priority on people of color, Indigenous, youth, and disabled artists who live in Boulder County, Colorado.

BridgeSong Fund from the Institute for Musical Arts, offering \$500 grants to Black, Indigenous, people of color, women, nonbinary, and genderqueer musicians, music business professionals, and artists who work with musicians who live in Western Massachusetts.

Artists Now from Zoo Labs and other Bay Area cultural partners, offering \$500 to artists who have been financially impacted by COVID-19, focusing on people of color, women, and people who identify as LGBTQIA+ living in the Bay Area.



COVID-19 Information, Mutual Aid, & Additional Resources

[Healthcare Access for Undocumented Folks in the Time of COVID19](#) gives information about seeking medical help while undocumented, and provides a state-by-state list of free and low-cost clinics where undocumented people are welcome.

[COVID-19 Mutual Aid & Advocacy Resources](#) includes links to existing mutual aid projects by location and a Mutual Aid Starter Pack to help you to start your own mutual aid project.

[Circles of Survival](#) is a framework created by Gan Golan for keeping ourselves, our families, our communities, and our democracy healthy during large-scale crises.

[COVID-19 Resources for Students](#) includes resources around a variety of topics for students from housing to food coverage to student organizing.

[Resource List | Responding Together to COVID-19](#) is a collection of resources that includes herbal remedies; emotional, mental, and spiritual health resources; at-home exercises; and arts/culture-based educational resources for kids at home. Note that the resources for housing, food and utilities are focused on southern California.

[A Daily Report on how COVID-19 is Impacting the Art World](#) is exactly what it claims - short, daily updates reporting on the pandemic's effect on the art world.



Share With Us!

We'd love to know about your artistic responses, projects, or campaigns! Reach us on social media.

Please message us directly or tag us:



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[The Center for Cultural Power](https://www.facebook.com/TheCenterforCulturalPower)

Use the hashtag **#CultureIsPower** on related social media posts

Feel free to reach out to The Center for Cultural Power's Social Media Manager, Chucha Marquez, at chucha@culturalpower.org.

Art by **Ernesto Yerena**