



ANNUAL REPORT
2017



WE RISE



photo by Sally Phnouk



photo by Stefanie Felix

FAMILY,

I arrived in Seattle on January 20, 2017, the same day a new administration entered the White House. When I arrived, Arts Corps' theme for the year was What's Next? The answer was building a more equitable education system, providing arts access to young people, regardless of zip code, and standing up for the greater good.

However, the new administration had a different opinion about what should be Next.

- A travel ban impacting people from six Muslim countries
- Pulling out of the Paris Climate Accord
- Reinstituting the Dakota Access Pipeline Drilling
- Banning trans people from serving in the Army
- Encouraging police officers to use brutal force
- Encouraging white supremacy in Charlottesville
- Threatening North Korea with nuclear weaponry
- Cutting funding to NEA, NEH, DOE
- Ending DACA

Damn.

It is tough to keep standing up for the common good, when so many policies and actions are knocking us down.

So what does Arts Corps do now?

Well...we RISE. ▶

**WE HAVE BEEN KNOCKED DOWN, BUT NOW WE MUST RISE!
WE HAVE TROD ASUNDER, BUT NOW WE MUST RISE!
WE HAVE BEEN FLATTENED, BUT NOW WE WILL RISE!**

BUT....HOW ARE WE GONNA DO THAT?

Arts Corps classes are culturally responsive, which, as defined by the NEA, means that Arts Corps' classes use the "cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of diverse students to make curricula more relevant and accessible." By finding engaging and informational ways to teach to, and through, the strengths of the diverse students we serve, inside a stringent education system, we will RISE.

Oftentimes, when looking at the impact of policies or frameworks on education, youth are left out of the conversation. Arts Corps seeks to remedy that by inviting youth to work on our board, co-present at conferences, and work with the staff and teaching artists. Through the youth, we will RISE.

We will also rise through our new pilot program, the Creative Schools Learning Arts and Belonging (CS LAB). This preventative framework features engaging curriculum, professional development in supporting students with a variety of needs and abilities, and school-wide events designed to acknowledge student accomplishments. In this way, CS LAB provides an alternative to standard disciplinary practices by investing in students' and families' engagement and belonging in their school community. By engaging the community, we will RISE.

We exited the dark ages through art and science. Through the sounds and sights of the Renaissance, we have Shakespeare and the Mona Lisa, Montesquieu and Voltaire, the printing press and vodka.

During the Great Depression, there was the Harlem Renaissance, which was a cultural movement in the black community that gave the world jazz, Langston Hughes, and Lorraine Hansberry. It provided both pride and a source of income for black people in a time when the rest of the country was trying to recover after World War One.

We need Art. Art is for everyone. Art is for you.
Art is for me. Art is for us. Together, through art,
We Will RISE. ■

**Stay Gold,
James Miles
Executive Director**



photo by Sally Phnoulk



photo by Amy Piñon



photo by Stefanie Felix

WE BUILD

WHEN SABRINA CHACON-BARAJAS WALKED INTO THE ARTS CORPS OFFICE TWO AND A HALF YEARS AGO AND HEARD THE TERM, “TEACHING ARTIST”, SOMETHING CLICKED INSIDE HER. After friends, family, and faith, “social justice, education, and art” are Sabrina’s priorities. Having experienced oppression all around her growing up, she relates to her students in the Highline Creative Schools Initiative. “I am very transparent about my own experience being Latinx in the US. I tell them my mom is from Mexico and my dad is from El Salvador. They are immigrants. My first language is Spanish.” As a young person, Sabrina silenced herself to avoid the stereotype of “the fiery Latina.” Making art helped her amplify her own voice. “We don’t give youth a voice. That voice is there already.”

In these three years, Sabrina has found her place as a confident, accomplished teaching artist. She teaches a weekly class at the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI), which houses families that are transitioning out of homelessness. She says that her students at LIHI have experienced various traumas. They have had to grow up fast and assume many family responsibilities. It is important to her that in her art class at LIHI,

they “just get to be kids.” Her students love to do new hands on projects each week. “I try to make the projects as fun and messy as possible.” This means sometimes filling spray bottles with paint because, “healing is a messy process.”

Sabrina knows that her work is about building relationships over time. She understands that she is not “entitled to their trust” and that understanding herself in relationship to her students, is the doorway to this trust. Sometimes she notices that her students at LIHI are resistant to art making. They start out self-conscious saying, “I am not gonna do it.” She remembers a boy who started out stoic and serious, but by the end of the year was boisterous and playful. Although his behavior made classroom management more difficult, she knew that this change meant that he was engaged and comfortable. “There was more confidence in the art making.”

From that first day when she entered the Arts Corps space, Sabrina noticed the warmth and respect extended among the staff there. She knows her work is valued. Sabrina appreciates the community of teaching artists and the opportunities to attend professional development like Teaching Artist Training Lab, the yearlong training she began in fall of 2017.



photo by Stefanie Felix

Sabrina knows that youth are pulled in many directions and often silenced by institutionalized racism and ageism. “I want to be able to hear and honor their stories and not censor them in any way because of my own discomfort or lack of understanding.” In her class, artmaking is a pathway to self-expression. “I am not here to tell the students how they can and cannot behave because that’s oppression to me. I am more interested in asking, how are we facing oppression and how can I support you with that?” ■

2016-2017

arts CORPS RESULTS

4 OUT OF 5

participants in teen leadership programs strongly agree the program developed their openness, encouraging them to try new things and work with different people.



“I have a better idea on how and when to take action, stand up for injustice and lead. I will take these skills to make the world around me a better place for everyone.” -Spokes Participant



100%

of youth who participated in our 2016-2017 Spokes Leadership Board agreed that because of Spokes, they believe that they can develop into a strong leader.

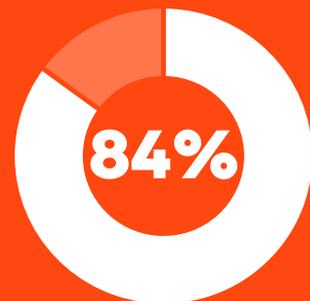
92%-100%



of students in surveyed programs indicated the program supported their artistic skill-building.

“I got to be in a great environment with great teachers/mentors and I learn something new every time I come.” -OST Student

OUT-OF-SCHOOL ARTS PROGRAMS



84% of OST Partners strongly agree that Arts Corps program participants get to know each other and develop a strong sense of belonging.

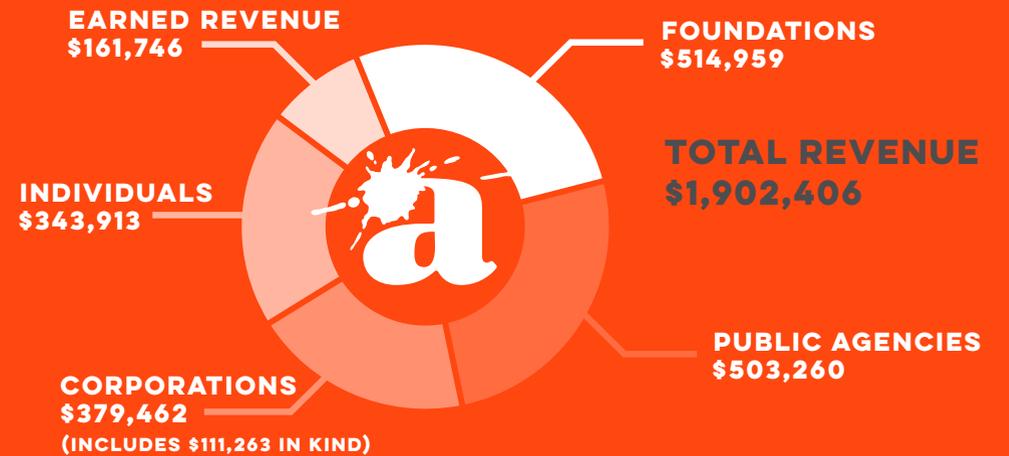
IN 2016-17, ARTS CORPS DELIVERED OVER **40,500** CONTACT HOURS TO **2,467** UNIQUE STUDENTS.

CLASSROOM TEACHERS REPORT THEY ARE VERY INSPIRED TO CHANGE THEIR PRACTICES AS A RESULT OF TRAINING OFFERED BY ARTS CORPS.



80%

of the students in Arts Corps' programs are youth of color.



NET INCOME \$193,896

TOTAL EXPENDITURES \$1,708,510



WE RESIST

ON THE FIRST DAY OF A CLASS, EDUARDO MENDONÇA LAYS OUT A LOVELY SET OF EXPENSIVE BRAZILIAN DRUMS ALONGSIDE A SET OF UPSIDE DOWN PLASTIC BUCKETS AND MALLETS MADE WITH TENNIS BALLS. HE ALLOWS THE STUDENTS TO PLAY WHATEVER CALLS TO THEM. "DIFFERENCE MAKES BEAUTY," HE SAYS. The students can create a rhythm from whatever combination they choose. In this way, he begins to create an inclusive community where many voices can be heard.

When he was 14, living in Salvador, Bahia - Brazil, Eduardo began giving guitar lessons so he could pay for "transportation, clothes and candies." Eduardo put himself through college giving lessons and playing music. He became a teaching artist at the age of 22, as a K-12 music educator in the city where he was born. Eduardo plays many instruments, but loves to play the *cuíca*, a Brazilian friction drum that makes a high-pitched sound like an opossum, because when people hear it, they immediately begin to smile.

Salvador is home to the largest African population outside Africa, so Eduardo rejected the Eurocentric music curriculum that he was supposed to teach.

He wanted students to see themselves in the music they were learning. Eduardo was steadfast in advocating for his own curriculum, which embraced the rich history of African and Afro-Brazilian music. He went on to become the first African South American principal of Escola Parque, the largest public school in South America. To this day, when he is home in Brazil, former students thank him for his fierce compassion and advocacy over his years as principal.

A seventeen-year veteran of Arts Corps, Eduardo has played a significant role in the development of Arts Corps' mission to notice and cultivate the links between arts education and social change. He loves that arts education creates a sense of belonging for youth of color and immigrant youth, who are systematically undervalued by our society; that it provides youth with the skills they need to become change agents, to dismantle the machine that silences them. Knowing that it is scientifically proven that the arts activate our brains, Eduardo sees cuts to arts education funding as a divestment from our humanity.

Recently, Eduardo noticed a woman in a restaurant staring at him. She eventually approached him and introduced herself as a former student from Cascade View Elementary School. She reflected on that class 15 years prior, "Taking your class changed my life. I am a different person because of your class." Eduardo believes that we need to share space and voice with young people, to blend experiences and knowledge and be open to new concepts. "I think Arts Corps is rising. It is rising because we are not afraid of the system and we value our young people." That value has been a guiding principle of Eduardo's life. ■



photo © Susie Fitzhugh



photo by Stefanie Felix

WE PERSIST



photo by Amy Piñon

WHEN SHARMAINE TILLMON WAS IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, SHE SANG “UNFAITHFUL” BY RIHANNA FOR A TALENT SHOW AND PEOPLE THOUGHT SHE WAS PHENOMENAL.

Sharmaine has always been serious about music, but says that her first year in The Residency program, in summer 2016, was like a wakeup call. “I woke up and started taking my music more seriously.” The Residency is a collaboration between Arts Corps, MoPOP, and Macklemore & Ryan Lewis, where over 40 emerging youth hip-hop artists collaborate to produce original songs, perform, and learn about the business side of music. During that summer, Sharmaine developed what she calls her “creative mindset.” The Residency helped her to grow as a vocalist and songwriter, but she was most inspired by the relationships she formed with the community of artists in the program.

This summer, when Sharmaine participated in her second year of The Residency, it “felt like not even just a community, but a family.” That family led to the song Revolution. “It was a group process”, born out of the desire to “speak out on issues we face as a country, such as racism and homophobia.” Outside of The Residency, Sharmaine has devoted herself to her music and released “Vibrant”, an upbeat, summery song that gives the listener the feeling that they are cruising around Alki Beach on a hot day. She also recently released “Burning Bridges.”, which is darker and more emotional. Before The Residency,

Sharmaine had always imagined being on a big stage, but didn’t know about the business side of making music. This year, with help from her community and through trial and error, she planned the social media campaign for each single.

Because of her experience with The Residency, Sharmaine is rising to challenges she hadn’t previously considered, such as curating a stage for Seattle’s Upstream music festival. “I will continue to grow,” she says. Her mother, who was born in The Philippines, notes a new confidence in Sharmaine. “Since being in The Residency, I have noticed that Sharmaine has matured. She has a more positive attitude when dealing with others and encourages them. Musically, she has grown a lot. I have noticed that she is more confident when singing.”

As she grows into her role as an artist, Sharmaine is thinking about the larger issues in the music industry and how she can have an impact. She feels that youth are underrepresented in the music scene here in Seattle. “How do you expect us to take advantage of our youth, when nothing is for the youth until you are 21?” She knows that discrimination is at play in the music industry. “I want to be an advocate for African American Women in the industry and we are in this together.” Sharmaine loves how music communicates emotions and is at work on new songs that are “very real and raw.” “I’ve come to the point in my life where it’s music or nothing at all. This is what I love to do. It’s gonna be hard, but it will be worth it.” ■



photo by Stefanie Felix

ARTS CORPS

is a nationally recognized youth arts education organization that works to address the race and income-based opportunity gap in access to arts education. Through participation in our arts integration, out-of-school arts and teen leadership programs, youth experience the transformative power of creativity and gain a deepened belief in their own capacity to learn, take risks, persist and achieve.

Arts Corps battles racial and social injustice by providing a platform for youth expression and creative collaboration.

photo by Amy Piñon

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Learn more and support arts education at artscorps.org

WE RISE



photo by Amy Piñon