



The Association of American Cultures www.taac.com Facebook/AmericanCultures

From August 12 to 14, 2010, The Association of American Cultures (TAAC) brought the vital discussion of cultural democracy to Chicago with Open Dialogue 2010. The theme for this twelfth biennial symposium was **Building the 21st Century Agenda for Cultural Democracy**. Over three days, participants from around the nation engaged in action-oriented sessions, connected around food, music and common purpose and planned the Cultural Democracy Agenda in 21st Century America. Open Dialogue featured an inspiring keynote by Tony award nominated artistic director of True Colors Theatre, Kenny Leon. Additional remarks were made by Patrice Walker Powell of the National Endowment for the Arts. Following are highlights of the workshops and discussions.

Equal Participation in Policymaking

- Build strong alliances that enable our voices to be heard by government
- Create strategies/opportunities that promote awareness of cultural organizations and that reinforce the position that cultural organizations represent the mainstream
- Create opportunities that impart knowledge and understanding of certain minorities that are not always invited to be part of the conversation (i.e. Native Americans)
- Learn about other cultures – helps provide better understanding of your own culture
- Data collection that is hard to measure: equity of access, equity of participation, quality of the arts, accessibility of funding, differences between communities
- Philadelphia Study: a) Conduct and analyze research on emerging patterns of cultural participation (i.e. if you use different definitions, Latino and Black audiences are showing more participation)

Equity in Funding

- In the economic downturn, decreases in foundation and corporate support to people and communities of color
- There is a dearth of professionals and board members of color among foundations and corporate funders
- Alignment of corporate needs is stressed in grant evaluation as well as how supporting grantees will strengthen corporate positioning/branding strategies within the market
- Measurements, outcomes, and results are being emphasized to ensure the efficacy of corporate investment in grantees
- To increase fundraising: Ask people about the experiences with your organization to activate their memories and increase the potential of them making a contribution
- Access to residencies: there is little diversity in artist residency programs due to lack of access to information
- Economic realities—participating in a residency program for two or three weeks is a challenge for many artists

Elevation of Diverse Leadership

- Develop your own success equation with indicators to track progress and for use in decision making
- Teach young leaders about partnerships, collaborations and advocacy that lead to sustainability
- Use established leaders to help build the next generation of leaders
- Provide opportunities for growth through professional development at all levels of leadership
- Develop succession plans to support long-term institutional building
- Exchange and share knowledge across generations
- Do-it-Yourself model is empowering and provides platform for alternative viewpoints
- Democratic organizations use all voices in decision making – let the group own the project