



## Press Release

**For Immediate Release**  
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### **First-of-their-kind Grants Awarded to Artists Catalyzing Systemic Change within the Arts & Culture Sector**

#### **Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) Announces Inaugural CALI Catalyst Award Recipients And Issues Program Updates for Upcoming Grantmaking Rounds**

**Los Angeles** – Today, four artists were named as the initial recipients of the CALI Catalyst grant and will each receive unrestricted grants of \$5,000. These individuals took bold actions to shift the arts and culture sector in ways that give underrepresented communities—Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities—more power and influence. The grants were supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI).

“The inaugural roster of CALI Catalyst grantees demonstrates the profound impacts that can result when individuals hold a mirror up to the arts and culture sector itself, forcing it to be accountable to the public trust,” shared CCI President and CEO Angie Kim. “We are honored to support the catalyzing efforts of these California changemakers, who are shaping the future of the field that we want to see.”

The grants are part of the program’s first of three open application rounds in 2021. The initial round attracted 114 applicants from throughout the state of California. Of these, the four grantees chosen to receive awards are **Taylor Brandon, Rhiannon Evans MacFadyen, Joel Garcia, and Ann James.**

**“Any situation can be improved with truthful reflection and commitment to change.”**  
**-Ann James, 2021 CALI Catalyst grantee**

Detailed descriptions of each of the recipients are listed below.

**Taylor Brandon** (Alameda County) is an artist and writer from Oakland, CA whose practice is grounded in the study of Black geographies, Black American cultural lineages, her family, and her experience as a Black queer woman. On May 30, 2020, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) used the work of artist Glen Ligon to address the murder of George Floyd on Instagram. Brandon posted a lengthy response in the post’s comments section that culminated with, “museums kill Black people too.” Her comment was deleted, which prompted a series of actions initiated by Brandon—including a national communications

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campaign that saw coverage by Vanity Fair and The New York Times—and her allies to hold arts institutions accountable for censorship and anti-Blackness. As a result, Brandon brought greater attention to the mistreatment of Black employees within cultural institutions and mobilized SFMOMA staff to keep the pressure on leadership and advocate for themselves. [taylorlbrandon.com](http://taylorlbrandon.com)

**Rhiannon Evans MacFadyen** (San Francisco County) is a curator, consultant, facilitator, and project-based artist in San Francisco. With 20 years of experience in the folkloric and visual arts, Rhiannon is deeply influenced by their own—and their communities’—intersectional identities and by their pursuit of “productive discomfort.” Their actions in 2020–2021 re-centered the voices, experiences, needs, and protocols of marginalized communities by voicing dissent and pushing for equity in civic and nonprofit spaces, specifically by co-organizing and co-facilitating public forums for accountability and speaking openly to the press about the misappropriation of resources from BIPOC organizations and artists by large, white-led nonprofits and civic bodies. This work led Rhiannon to appear in spring 2021 in Bay Area news outlets, KQED and SF Chronicle, on matters of funding and labor. The Chronicle pieces centered their image and strong language about how inequitable funding harms communities, and that the forces for healing, safety, and culture must remain entirely in the hands of BIPOC communities and organizations. [pushingart.wordpress.com](http://pushingart.wordpress.com)

**Joel Garcia** (Los Angeles County) is an Indigenous artist (Huichol) and cultural organizer who uses Indigenous-based frameworks to center those most impacted, and arts-based strategies to raise awareness of issues facing underserved communities, youth, and other targeted populations. Garcia played a critical role in the removal of Los Angeles’ Columbus statue in 2018 and later, in the removal of its Father Serra statue (2020). Both removals were strategic actions to raise the visibility of Los Angeles’ First Peoples, increase access and funding for Indigenous-led creative efforts and artists, change policies within the arts, and, primarily, to decolonize publicly owned art collections such as those with the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and the Los Angeles County Department of Arts & Culture. Informed by Garcia’s actions, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation developed a dedicated grant program for the removal of monuments, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Occidental College have focused programming on the issue, and the Los Angeles Mayor’s Office of Civic Memory Working Group released a report with 18 key recommendations connected to undoing the whitewashing of Indigenous histories. [rageoneart.com](http://rageoneart.com)

**Ann James** (Los Angeles County) has an extensive career in international stage direction and theatre education spanning over three decades. In March 2020, she wrote an article for HowlRound—a free and open platform for theatremakers worldwide that amplifies progressive, disruptive ideas about the art form—that shook the still-nascent intimacy industry to its core. She posed that leadership in the intimacy direction field did not fairly represent the global majority and set out to make change happen. Also in 2020, Ann founded Intimacy Coordinators of Color (ICOC) to provide her skills as an Intimacy Professional to projects that center the stories of Black, Indigenous and People of Color actors in the theatre industry. Recently, the ICOC accredited nine cohort members to work as experienced intimacy professionals. In so doing, Ann is actively influencing the direction of this emerging priority away from the field’s homogeneity. [intimacydirectorsofcolor.com](http://intimacydirectorsofcolor.com)

## **GRANTMAKING EVOLUTION**

CCI was heartened to receive 114 applications for this initial round of grantmaking - far beyond initial expectations. With the benefit of this first round and the input of applicants' feedback, the organization is updating its review process and grant criteria to more clearly target intended

beneficiaries.

Effective September 16, 2021, CALI Catalyst will implement the following three changes:

- **Add additional criteria to narrow the list of competitive applications.** CCI will be considering the scale of impact to recognize efforts that shift entire sectors, such as the entirety of the museum or theatre sectors, to move away from the status quo. The program will also be assessing the tangible and measurable ways that applicants helped underrepresented communities gain more power (e.g., through governance authority, through causal “changing of the guards,” or shifting industry or regulatory policies and practices). In addition, CCI will consider how applicants played a causal role in the catalyzing change that was realized.
- **Expand the reference-checking process** to also include calling on individuals in the field of a competitive applicant’s work so that the people directly meant to benefit will influence the adjudication process.
- **The program will be application-based only and will no longer accept nominations by someone other than the individual or team under consideration.** CCI originally wanted to cast as wide a net as possible, but the applications written in the first-person were stronger. Admittedly, this tactic didn’t quite work, but we think it’s important to adjust immediately so as to save potential nominators their time and, instead, hope that once-potential nominators will encourage and work with future applicants.

Updated guidelines will be made available on the CCI website.

Program Director Laura Poppiti continued, “CCI is inherently a learning organization. We are thankful to grantseekers for their feedback to this pilot application round. We listened and have updated the program’s guidelines that reflect what we heard.”

For more information about CALI Catalyst, please visit [cciarts.org](https://cciarts.org).

#### **About Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI)**

Center for Cultural Innovation was founded in 2001 as a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Its mission is to promote knowledge-sharing, networking, and financial independence for individual artists and creative entrepreneurs by providing business training, grants, and incubating innovative projects that create new program knowledge, tools, and practices for artists in the field. For more information, please visit [cciarts.org](https://cciarts.org).

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