

DARRELL GRANT SPEAKS: BEING CHANGE THE ARTIST AS CITIZEN



Having uncovered a treasure trove of examples of artists around the world who are creating dialogue, building community, pursuing activism, and transforming society, Grant highlights the innovative, community-centered work of artists who share the willingness to frame the act of artistic creation as a gift.

In the midst of society's challenges, artists can play a critical role in shepherding communities out of conflict and division into dialogue and renewal. Sharing insights from his Portland State University initiative, "The Artist as Citizen," Darrell Grant, Director of the Leroy Vinnegar Jazz Institute, leads a discussion about the responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities of today's artists to advocate, engage, and even provoke communities toward positive change.

Grant and his fellow educator Suzanne Savaria began the Artist as Citizen project with a series of provocative questions:

- What if, across the disciplines, we approached the understanding of art as a change agent at the same foundational level we treat the acquisition of artistic skills?
- What if, at the early stage in student development, we encouraged them to reflect on their sense of purpose as artists and their own potential to affect change?
- Might they begin to consider, not just the how of making art, but the why, and in the process, expanding their sense of agency and their vision of the role of art can play in changing the world?

More than the information, the true reward of the Artist as Citizen Initiative has been the transformational nature of this way we look at art. Each of us—myself included—experienced moments of personal epiphany through this process of examination and reflection. Each of us was pushed to re-imagine our roles and responsibilities as artists/citizens. In the process, we gained insight into what inspires us, what matters to us, where we feel we belong, where we connect to others, where we find hope, the issues and communities that we care about, our identities, and our dreams.

— Darrell Grant

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