

The
Laundromat
Project

POC-CENTERED PRINCIPLES

ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT



FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

OUR POC-CENTERED PRINCIPLES

Dear Community,

Before calls to create diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in cultural institutions became ubiquitous following the racial uprisings of 2020, The Laundromat Project (The LP) lived as an organization committed to centering the voices, cultures, imaginations, knowledge, and leadership of people of color (POC).

When we released our current strategic vision in 2019, we leaned into boldly outlining the world we wanted to see: one where, alongside our communities of practice and action, we are equipped with the knowledge and tools to push against complex systemic injustices so that all people—across race, ethnicity, class, age, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, disability status, and im/migration status—are free to be their whole selves.

We committed ourselves to rigorous and transparent criteria, learning strategies, regular self-reflection, and feedback loops for real-time adjustments



to help grow our POC-centered practice. These became our **POC-Centered Principles**.

We also committed to sharing regular updates detailing our progress across all ten principles—which include **holding ourselves accountable**—to manifest collective strength and understanding in our field. The events of the past two years caused a delay in producing this report as we shifted our efforts to providing direct support to The LP artist community and our Bed-Stuy neighbors. As we turn our attention to the recovery of our communities in a world that is simultaneously emerging from and continuing to experience the pandemic, it is critical to review and assess what we have done in pursuit of our POC-centered principles. These principles must evolve with our learnings, and we will continue to make adjustments to our policies & practices as necessary.

In the following report, we have included an audit of the many ways we have held fast to our set of POC-centered principles over the past three years. And with it, we ask our community: How do you think we're doing? It's an ongoing effort, and we truly appreciate your feedback. If you believe we're headed in the right direction, let us know. And if there are changes to be made or other ways we should show up, **hold us accountable**. Our organizational efforts, as stated in our values, are propelled by love. We accept all feedback and guidance the same way, as a love offering. With your support, we will build the world we want to see, created in our collective vision of a joyful and equitable future.

George Suttles
Board Chair

Kemi Ilesanmi
Executive Director

POC-CENTERED PRINCIPLES

WELCOME COMPLEXITY

We commit to diversity that is more than skin deep by continually asking ourselves and our communities how we can be a more welcoming and supportive organization across race and ethnicity as well as across class, age, gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, disability status, and migration status.

SELECTED ACTIONS: Organized staff trainings led by Shannon Fennigan on the use of alt text • Released community call to actions for Black Lives Matter, anti-AAPI hate, Palestinian liberation, and Indigenous reclamation of land.



CULTIVATE REPRESENTATIONAL POWER

We commit to maintaining a board and staff that is at least majority people of color, particularly leadership positions. We will continue to serve artists of color predominantly and communities of color exclusively.

SELECTED ACTIONS: Current LP staff & board are 90% of people of color • Majority POC leadership team • Last three years 100% of Create Change Artists-in-Residence and Fellows are people of color • Opened hub in Bed-Stuy, Central Brooklyn—home to the greatest concentration of Black homeowners and small business owners in the United States.



POC-CENTERED PRINCIPLES

MATCH ORG POLICIES WITH ORG VALUES

We commit to developing and enhancing our internal organizational policies, practices, and systems—e.g. advocacy, gift acceptance, and personnel policies—to be fully values-aligned.

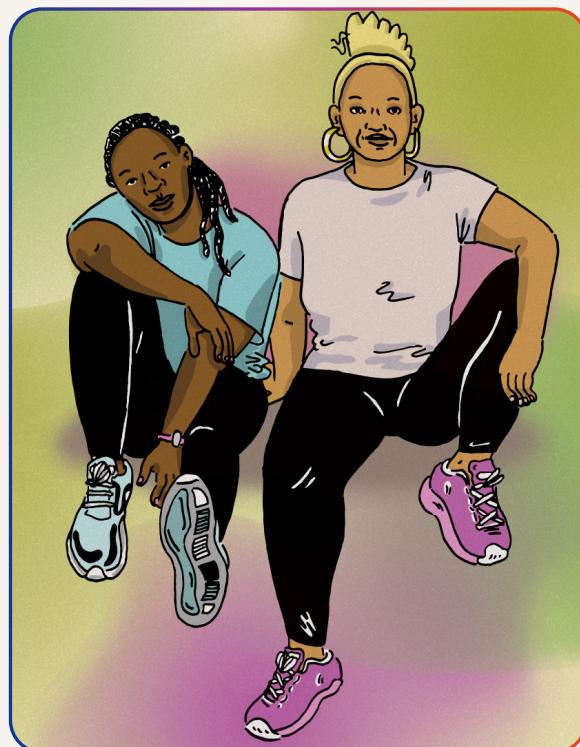
SELECTED ACTIONS: Introduced The LP Culture Guide—a gender-neutral, values-centric employee handbook • Established sabbatical leave policy • Adopted clear Advocacy and Gift Acceptance Policies • Renovated LP storefront to be fully ADA accessible on the main floor.



NURTURE LEADERSHIP

We commit to investing in the leadership and professional development of LP community members, including artists, neighbors, staff, and board. We will provide training to LP staff on anti-racist, gender, and disability equity practices. This commitment includes making space for reflection and self care in action and policies.

SELECTED ACTIONS: Provided direct professional coaching to all full-time staff members • Established the Professional Development & Wellness Fund to support staff's professional growth and self care • Provided bi-annual Community Care sessions for all staff • Provided staff trainings on de-escalation, conflict negotiation, conflict resolution, collective recovery, and trauma informed practices • Conducted an open call for board membership resulting in acquiring four new board members • Designed the Create Change Institute to nurture arts administration leadership.



AT HOME IN BED-STUY

What does it look like when, as a core practice, an organization prioritizes the broad spectrum of histories, legacies, experiences, knowledge, and networks that community members bring to the table? What type of space can be created to house these perspectives and leverage them to drive change in a neighborhood? We at The LP challenged ourselves to reflect upon these questions as we developed our 2018 Strategic Vision plan, leading us to decide that “selecting an anchor home” would be a primary organizational goal.

A dream since our very beginnings as an organization, we wanted to build a home that was informed by the legacies and resilience of our elders and ancestors while also considering the present needs, challenges, and opportunities of our POC-communities. We took time to build out a process for selecting a single anchor neighborhood for The LP’s home through this lens. With the collective voices of our board, alumni artists, local community partners, and other diverse stakeholders—over 100 individuals in total—we developed a cohesive plan to identify a location.

In early 2020, through the haze of uncertainty brought on by the pandemic, we reflected on what it would mean to be a grounding and catalyzing force



1476 Fulton St storefront window.

for community and neighborhood recovery. In that spirit, we marked our 15th anniversary by signing a 10-year lease on a new home in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn! The new space, located at 1476 Fulton Street (aka Harriet Tubman Way), serves as a community arts hub while also housing our administrative operations. It grants us the opportunity to deepen our roots in our founding neighborhood and amplify Bed-Stuy’s rich arts and culture ecosystem.

POC-CENTERED PRINCIPLES

ADVANCE ECONOMIC DIGNITY & ACCESS

We commit to being thoughtful when setting program fees as well as compensation for staff, interns, artists, faculty, partners, etc. We are committed to prioritizing POC-led and community-based vendors for needed services. When possible, we will use financial institutions that value and invest in POC communities.

SELECTED ACTIONS: Commissioned a compensation equity analysis and reset for all staff roles • Increased honoraria and production fees to Artists-in-Residence by 25% • Introduced honoraria for all Fellows • Moved the organization's funds to two values-aligned financial institutions: Amalgamated Bank and Brooklyn Coop Credit Union.



KNOW THAT LANGUAGE MATTERS

We commit to using accessible, multimodal, and multilingual language that upholds the dignity, complexity, and full humanity of LP community members and communities—verbal and written, spoken and unspoken, virtual and otherwise.

SELECTED ACTIONS: Redeveloped website with accessibility as a top priority • Deepend and expanded strategic storytelling through social media, blogs, videos, and podcasts • Regularly published bilingual program material • Adopted a diversified toolkit of inclusive communications practices including image descriptions, CART, and ASL.



POC-CENTERED PRINCIPLES

HONOR PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

We commit to grounding our work in concrete power analyses as well as the often intersecting histories, present day realities, and future dreams of POC communities. We strive to respect and record POC voices, creativity, and knowledge now and for the future.

SELECTED ACTIONS: Opened all public programs with land acknowledgment • Highlighted multigenerational voices through the cultivation of diverse community archives.



SHAPE CONVERSATION

We commit to using our organizational voice to ignite, shift, influence, and amplify important conversations in our field for productive learning and engagement.

SELECTED ACTIONS: Co-authored multiple writings advocating for issues of importance to our LP communities • Publicly shared LP-developed resources (POC-centered principles, Strategic Vision, Resource Library, Culture Guide) • Designed and presented powerful public programs around radical mapping, abolition practices, community art making, and more.



SPOTLIGHT

RADICAL IMAGINATION FELLOW

How does an organization that centers POC voices and experiences, and which values generative change, expand its tool kit to bring about even greater change?

In 2021, The LP hosted storyteller, artist, and scholar Piper Anderson as our inaugural Radical Imagination Fellow. The fellowship role was designed to engage the organization's staff, board, and artist community around new ideas and perspectives. Through trainings, workshops, and her critical public program "Abolitionist Storywork," Anderson deepened our organizational and community-wide understanding around timely issues of abolition, healing justice, public memory, and the Black radical imagination.

DAY 2 | KITCHEN TABLE CONVERSATION

Remembering Ourselves Free

Discussing the collective healing power of gatherings grounded in story

speakers

**AMITA SWADHIN
JONEL BEAUVAIS
PIPER ANDERSON
EMILCE QUIROZ**

LAUNDROMATPROJECT.ORG



**SEPT 24
4:30pm ET**

"I HOPE THAT [THE RADICAL IMAGINATION FELLOWSHIP] INSPIRES DIALOGUE ABOUT THE ROLE OF MEMORY WORK IN DEVISING ABOLITIONIST STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY HEALING AND TRANSFORMATION."

PIPER ANDERSON, CREATE FORWARD

POC-CENTERED PRINCIPLES

BUILD A NET THAT WORKS

We commit to fostering stronger relationships with values-aligned and POC-centered organizations, in order to partner as well as exchange knowledge and resources that strengthen our collective power.

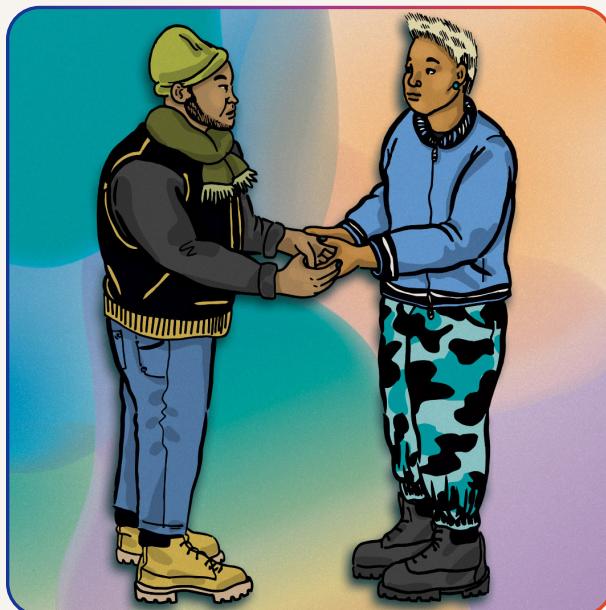
SELECTED ACTIONS: Engaged in two-year listening tour to learn more from Bed-Stuy neighbors about their dreams and challenges • Awarded five values-aligned grassroots POC arts entities with no-strings-attached awards of \$10,000 each • Partnered with Museum Hue & Hester Street to create HueArts NYC, the only citywide effort to bring greater cultural equity, visibility, and support to all POC cultural institutions and initiatives across NYC's five boroughs.



HOLD OURSELVES ACCOUNTABLE

We commit to rigorous and transparent criteria, learning, self-reflection, feedback loops, and real time adjustments—e.g. programs, partners, resources—that help us grow our POC-centered practice. We will produce annual reports that detail our progress across these principles in order to manifest collective strength and understanding in our field.

SELECTED ACTIONS: Engaged in regular check-ins with staff, board, and artists regarding LP values and operations • Committed to ongoing additions and adjustments to programs, policies, and operations as outlined in the principles above.



PAY IT FORWARD

In June 2021, The LP received a generous unrestricted gift from philanthropists MacKenzie Scott and Dan Jewett. We were honored by the unexpected affirmation of our work and immediately recognized the need to share these critical resources with some of our dearest community partners. To thrive, our ecosystem must fortify itself so that it can be self-sustaining one day.

The gift gave us the opportunity to acknowledge the work of some of our most admired friends by awarding \$10K to five of our organizational peers including Kelly Street Garden, W.O.W. Project, Literary Freedom Project, BlackSpace, and STooPS. We also granted \$500 each to all LP artists, alumni, key partners, and current and former staff members—nearly 300 members of our LP family. Each entity, artist, collaborator, and colleague works tirelessly—too often with limited resources—to create change in their own communities. To strengthen our collective power, we paid our gift forward in the spirit of abundance.

"AS A NEWER NONPROFIT, WE'RE ALSO GRATEFUL FOR THE EXAMPLE THE LP CONTINUES TO SET FOR RADICAL ABUNDANCE IN PUBLIC."

EMMA OSORE, CO-DIRECTOR, BLACKSPACE



Photo by Marion Aguas, courtesy W.O.W. Project.

WHAT WE DO

OUR PROGRAMS

CREATE CHANGE RESIDENCY is a year-long program that supports the development of participatory and community-attuned creative projects by artists of color working within their communities. Projects take place anywhere in the five boroughs either in person or virtually, across various community sites from laundromats and urban gardens to playgrounds and community centers.

CREATE CHANGE FELLOWSHIP is for artists and cultural producers who are interested in developing and deepening a collaborative, community-based, and socially-engaged creative practice. The Fellowship is philosophically grounded in peer-learning around art making, power analysis, and community building.

CREATE CHANGE INSTITUTE is a virtual, 2-day intensive version of The Laundromat Project's 6-month Create Change Fellowship Program. This workshop trains participants in meaningful collaboration with communities on shared creative projects while addressing social issues and using a racial justice lens.



Top: GLAD Event at Kelly Street Garden, 2019.

Bottom: DreamSeed Oracle Tarot Deck photo shoot, 2021.
Photo by Maliika Nia-Imani.

WHAT WE DO

OUR PROGRAMS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT builds, catalyzes, and deepens relationships between The LP and its neighborhood via relevant programming, initiatives, and partnerships.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS establish, develop, and deepen neighborhood based connections and coalitions. Current partners include Bridge Street Development Corporation, Her-King Alantic Block Association, Friends of St. Andrews Playground, and several peer arts organizations.

COMMUNITY ACTIVATIONS consist of diverse community-responsive programs that activate The LP's storefront and/or sites around the neighborhood in partnership with friends and peers.



Top: Kelly Street Block Party, 2019. Photo by Abigail Montes.

Bottom: Bed-Stuy Field Day, 2017. Photo by Neha Gautam.

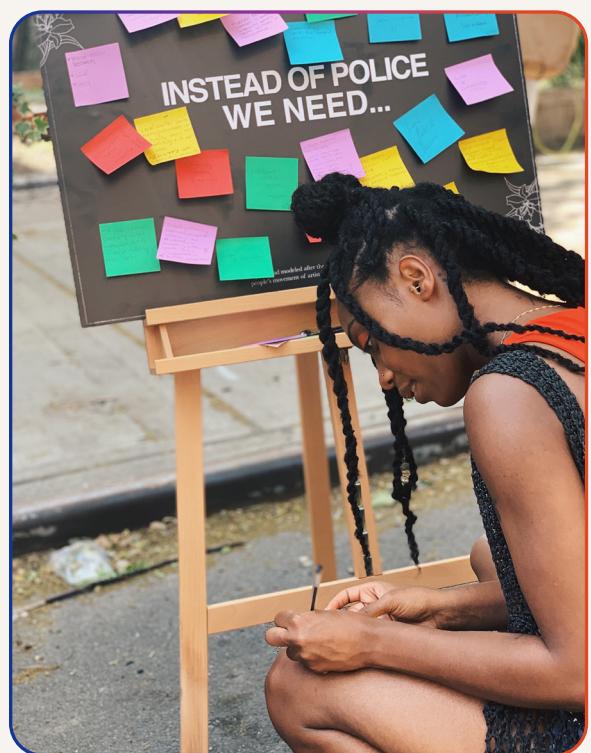
WHAT WE DO

OUR PROGRAMS

CREATIVE ACTION FUND is a micro-grant initiative to seed the ideas and civic actions of our Create Change alumni network. This fund is a critical part of our vision to make sustained investments in our growing artist network through supporting their artmaking, leadership, and professional growth.

CREATE & CONNECT FUND provides \$1,000 grants to support the creative ideas and civic actions of artists, cultural practitioners, community builders, organizers, and makers in Bed-Stuy. Funded projects include those that are rooted in community, foster connections, and ignite conversations and/or collaborations.

FULTON ST WINDOW COMMISSION is a yearly project where The Laundromat Project commissions a 2-D image or illustration from a local artist. The vinyl artwork lives on the public-facing window of The LP's office at 1476 Fulton Street in Brooklyn, creating an outdoor art installation that engages neighbors and passersby.



Top: The LP Fulton St Window Commission by Destiny Belgrave. Photo by Alejandro Jaramillo.

Bottom: Design for the Commons. Photo by Aaron Ni'jai.

WHO WE ARE

STAFF

Moncho Alvarado, Operations Coordinator
Tiara Austin, Artist Engagement Coordinator
Amelia Brod, Development Manager
Emma Colón, Media & Storytelling Manager
Andrea Gil, Programs Coordinator
Catherine Mbali Green-Johnson,
Director of Programs
Brittany Grier, Community Arts
Engagement Fellow
Kemi Ilesanmi, Executive Director
Ladi'Sasha Jones, Artist Engagement Manager
Johnnay Leenay, Development Coordinator
Chloe Lin, Media & Storytelling Coordinator
Ayesha Williams, Deputy Director
Shana Wolfe, Director of Finance & Operations
Cievel Xicohtencatl, Community
Engagement Manager

BOARD

Ashima Aggarwal
Naomi Beckwith
Alison Cuzzolino
Susan Delvalle
Patton Hindle
Rasu Jilani
Jessica Lee
Panthea Lee
Salvador Muñoz
Kevin Rabsatt
George Suttles
Diya Vij

FOUNDER

Risë Wilson

The LP's POC-centered principles were developed as a result of collective LP staff and board discussions as well as insights from the larger LP community. They are also informed and inspired by the Abbe Museum, Alternate Roots, Betty's Daughter Arts Collaborative, Black Space, CultureStrike, Decolonizing Wealth, People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, RaceForward, and Theatre of the Oppressed NY.

A special thanks to the following individuals for their support developing and advancing The LP's POC principles: Gabrielle Bendiner-Viani, Hatuey Ramos-Fermín, Destinee Forbes, Alicia Grullon, Kemi Ilesanmi, Meissa Liu, Julia Mata, Emily Mock, Yvette Ramirez, and Ayesha Williams.

All report illustrations by Julia Mata (@naomitotoques).