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Media Contacts
Voleine Amilcar: 415.321.8687

Zoo Labs, YBCA, Black Joy Parade and Always Win Together Announce Artists Now Fund



Ten preparators raise the first wall of a massive dirt structure by Caleb Duarte for Bay Area Now 8. Photo by James Im.

Community-driven collaboration to provide financial support to Bay Area artists directly affected by the coronavirus crisis

San Francisco, CA (April 9, 2020) — Zoo Labs, in collaboration with [YBCA](#), [Black Joy Parade](#), and Always Win Together, today announced [Artists Now](#), a relief fund born out of a community driven partnership to financially support Bay Area artists directly affected by the economic challenges caused by COVID-19. The initiative aims to get \$500 relief grants into the hands of artists who identify as women,

people of color, and LGBTQIA+—the most vulnerable to economic downturns. Applications to apply for the grant are now [open](#) to practicing artists from the nine counties that make up the Bay Area.

One out of every three Americans are just \$400 away from falling behind on the basics—rent, food, supplies, and being able to care for their family. Local artists—the heartbeat of our culture—are often the most vulnerable in these moments as they continue to commit their time and talent to our community, without the promise of stability. Artists Now aims to provide some relief to those artists directly affected by the additional and extreme economic challenges presented by the pandemic.

“We have been working with the music community for well over a decade. When we started to see our community lose their gigs we knew we couldn't stand by and watch as our artists were losing their income, especially when they live paycheck to paycheck,” said **Zoo Labs founder Vinitha Watson**. “Zoo Labs has always been about artist sustainability and we knew even before this crisis that the artist community struggled to continue to live in the Bay Area. Now with this unprecedented crisis, we know we have to take unprecedented measures. We have to get our community economically stable because culture creators are our healers. They are our bloodline. They are always the first to invest in community, so we should be investing in them if we want our culture to thrive.”

“Like so many organizations across the world, YBCA has been quickly reorienting its creative, human, and organizational resources in order to help in this urgent moment while we had already been reinventing what an art center in service of its community could look like,” said **Deborah Cullinan, CEO, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts**. “When Zoo Labs invited us to deepen our collaboration, and begin a partnership with Black Joy Parade and Always Win Together, our response was an absolute yes. We are honored to join this effort to provide financial support to those artists in need so that they can continue to create the art, culture and community, and the inspiration we need.”

Artists Now will launch with a \$130,000 seed, and a commitment to continue fundraising towards a million dollar goal beyond the launch of the grant program to assist with the rapidly escalating needs of the Bay Area's artists. Individual donors, groups, and organizations who wish to join this effort can direct charitable gifts to YBCA indicating that the support is for Artists Now. Tax-deductible donations can be made at <https://www.artistsnow.us/donate>; 100 percent of donations will be applied directly to this effort.

“Our artists are always there for us—when we're trying to turn up, when we need to make sense of the madness, to soothe our souls during hard times. They are a constant source of joy!” adds **Elisha Greenwell, founder of Black Joy Parade**. “It's only right that we are there for them however and whenever possible.”

Due to expected demand, Artists Now recognizes it will not be able to fund every applicant. Artists demonstrating the most severe financial needs will be prioritized, with an emphasis on funding widely across disciplines. For more information about Artists Now visit: <https://www.artistsnow.us/>

About the Community Partners

Zoo Labs: Zoo Labs is a non-for-profit accelerator that bridges art, entrepreneurship, and capital. Our

mission is to invest in artists so they can shape culture in order to build equity in their communities. You can listen to the music being made at Zoo Labs [here](#) and stay up to date with our activities by [signing up](#) for our newsletter. Zoo Labs is a fiscally sponsored project under Community Initiatives.

Black Joy Parade: The Black Joy Parade exists to provide the Black community and allies a live experience that celebrates our influence on cultures past, present, and future. We will unite a diverse community by creating a space to express each of our unique contributions to the Black experience. We invite you to be creative, be open, be present, be free. You can go to blackjoyparade.org to learn more.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA): Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) is one of the nation's most innovative contemporary arts centers. Founded in 1993, our mission is to generate culture that moves people. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, we are committed to creating an inclusive culture that awakens personal and societal transformation. We present a wide variety of programming year-round, including performing arts, visual arts, and civic engagement. For more information, visit ybca.org.

Always Win Together: Based in Oakland, CA, AWT is an impact vehicle that bridges the pillars of capital, creative, and community to maximize impact. AWT advises, serves, and builds value across strategy, design, data, and development, and spans the spectrum of ideation, from strategy to execution.