



North Portland Aquatic Center and Regional Arts & Culture Council Artist Panel Biographies

February 2024



Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC) “Dream Team” Bios

RACC has assembled an incredible group of artists to lead the crafting of the NPAC Art Plan. The “Dream Team” will be meeting with the NPAC Project Advisory Committee and with the 5 NPAC Focus Groups to discuss their priorities for the way the public are looks and feels at the future NPAC facility.

The following are biographies, submitted by each of the 8 members of the RACC “Dream Team”.

Lillyanne Pham (aka LP) is currently working with youth at Dr. MLK Jr School, Parkrose High School, and p:ear who are from the area and who have been displaced into and from the area. LP is also currently interviewing Vietnamese community members on their histories in Portland including North and Northeast in the 80s/90s. LP was raised by Vietnamese boat people and is in community with them in Portland where water is part and parcel of their shared traumas and ancestry. LP’s experience working with youth, whom we hope will inhabit the space. Black and Brown youth deserve and need a safe space to be their whole selves and to be in community. Even if they can’t swim, we want to think about how the artwork there will welcome them into the center and invite them to hold space.

Paola de la Cruz has gained experience leading and collaborating as/with project managers, agencies, consultants and community members. Through this work she fosters connections with QTBIPOC, youth and houseless communities. This work is guided through a lens of supporting and amplifying marginalized voices. Paola’s background in community organizing has molded her understanding of the power of collective action and advocacy.

ridhi d’cruz currently resides in North Portland and has been engaging in a practice of place justice in the area for several years. This includes acknowledging that it is stolen Indigenous land that was abused and polluted through settler colonialism, and then redlined to oppress

Black communities and then more recently gentrified to make way for even more capitalism and colonialism. As a first generation South Asian immigrant and settler in this place of so many interwoven stories of grief and glory, ridhi hopes to leverage their own positionalities to support the work of channeling love and liberation through this project and connecting this work with other pools of cultural vibrancy including, for example, the continued gatherings of Indigenous peoples in the area including at Delta Park powwow, and the memory activism to honor the people of Vanport just north from the site. As a gender non-binary person who can't swim well in part due to water-based gender violence, ridhi also hopes to create pathways for queer folks to experience safety and healing through water.

Intisar Abioto (b. Memphis, TN. 1986) is an artist working across photography, dance, and writing. Moving from the visionary and embodied root of Blackgirl Southern cross-temporal cross-modal storytelling ways, her works refer to the living breath and breadth of people of African descent against the expanse of their storied, imaginative, and geographic landscapes. Working in long-form projects encompassing the visual, folkloric, documentary, and performing arts, she has produced *The People Could Fly Project*, *The Black Portlanders*, and *The Black*. She is the guest curator of *Black Artists of Oregon*, exploring the history of Black artists in Oregon, currently open at the Portland Art Museum. With the five women artists in her family, she is the co-founder of Studio Abioto, a multivalent creative arts studio.

Yawa (AKA Amenta) Abioto (b. 1991) is a songwriter and producer from Memphis, TN and currently based in Portland, OR. In her one-woman performance, she builds vocal and instrumental loops from synth, drum machine, and kalimba creating atmospheric textures. Amenta surprises and tantalizes audiences with mind bending ideas while skipping vocally from soul-shaking gospel to smooth jazz. Her music is boldly mystical and soul-fired, and her raw live performances invoke elements of both theatrical and magical surprise.

Midnite Seed Abioto is a muse, a consummate lover, an oracle, a mystic, and a mother of five goddesses. Her tools are culinary arts, wordsmithing, spirit law, and storyteller. For over thirty years, she practiced human rights law throughout the byways and highways of Mississippi. She is a culinary evolutionary storyteller "Green Lady" and she has brought her southern roots to vegan and vegan sun foods from the south to the northwest. Combining writing, theatre, law, and spirit; she has been led in the spirit to create "Holy Mojo", a spiritual interactive theatre, "Legal Oracle", a publishing company engaged in the interpretation of world issues from a cultural metaphysical perspective as it impacts people of color, "O'zeal Inspirational Spa", a spirit healing modality, "Midnight Seed" a mystical apothecary and "Green Lady" a living light food vegan cafe. She is a queen mother of five women who have brought their extraordinary qualities to the earth and for this, she is most grateful. She is a consummate lover of life evolving and bursting boundaries of preconceived dogma and for that, she is most blessed.

Kalimah Abioto is a filmmaker, writer, media, and performing artist working between Portland, OR and New Orleans, LA. Her work has been shown from Virginia to Mali, West Africa. Kalimah is the recipient of multiple grants, artist residencies and awards through Open Signal Media, The Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC), Community Lift, The Kresge Foundation and The Southern Documentary Fund among others. Her works have been commissioned by STAX Museum, Africa House, DiVersa Media and more. Kalimah continues to expand and grow as a human being, a Black Woman and Artist. There is no telling where her imagination will take her next...

Ni Abioto is a multi-disciplinary artist and ideator whose main focus is the evolution and ascendance of the world at large. Her immediate mediums are word magic, herbal health artistry, tantric energy manipulation, sensory experiences, and the creative imagining of new worlds through thought and love in the name of unified earth ecologies.