The Laundromat Project

Annual Report 2013
“I think the responses to the workshops are awesome, because it allows the young kids in the neighborhood to have something else to do. They get to be creative, they get to show their artistic side. Some of them don’t even know they have an artistic side.”
– A Harlem neighbor
LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Laundromat Project had a nourishing, challenging, and invigorating year of firsts.

I served my first full year as executive director. Since joining our long-time program director in fall 2012, we have grown to a total of four full-time staffers, thus expanding our capacity tremendously as we served over 6,000 New Yorkers during the year.

In the spring, we completed a rigorous strategic planning process during which we refreshed our mission and theory of change while also articulating the seven values and committing ourselves more fully to the cultural organizing principles that compel our work every day.

In 2013, we also committed ourselves to working deeply in three culturally rich neighborhoods across three boroughs: Bedford-Stuyvesant, Harlem, Hunts Point. While we continue to have a citywide presence, our three anchors allow us to get to know and support our neighbors over the long term as we make the strong, resilient communities we want to live in together.

We grew programmatically in numerous ways. Our Create Change program served a total of 18 artists: 3 as residents and 15 as fellows. Together, they helped plan our very first Field Day, a new annual festival of neighborhoods celebrating the people, creativity, businesses, and organizations that already exist in our three anchor communities. One participant captured it best with a chalk sign that read, “On Field Day, I allowed art space.” That’s what it’s all about.

Ever striving for new ways to engage and connect, The LP’s Works in Progress program also piloted our first in-school initiative—Power of Perception—in partnership with the Rada Film Group and Brooklyn Community Art & Media High School. Over two iterations, 25 students made short films that upended conventions as they portrayed life as black and brown skateboarders, mentors, and LGBT youth, among other truths.

We also tried new ways to draw our amazingly generous, creative, and dedicated friends and supporters ever closer. We raised a record amount from individual supporters around the country and the world, including our inaugural People-Powered $10K Challenge in which we met our 10 day goal and even exceeded it by half.

To help artists and communities ignite, amplify, and revel in their own creative capacity and ability to make the world they want to see, The LP relies on an active and encouraging community of individuals and partners. We are humbled and grateful for everyone who made our eighth year our best one yet. We continue to build, grow, and strive for more art, more creativity, more love. On behalf of The LP board and staff, thank you for your support!

Warmly,

Kemi Ilesanmi
MISSION, VISION, THEORY OF CHANGE, & VALUES

As part of our new strategic plan, we refreshed our mission statement and articulated the values that guide our work.

Our Mission
We amplify the creativity that already exists within communities by using arts and culture to build community networks, solve problems, and enhance our sense of ownership in the places where we live, work, and grow.

Our Vision
We envision a world in which artists are understood as valuable assets in every community and everyday people know the power of their own creative capacity to transform their lives, their relationships, and their surroundings.

What We Do
We bring socially relevant and socially engaged arts programming to laundromats and other everyday community spaces in order to reach as many of our neighbors as possible. We are particularly committed to long-term and sustained investment in communities of color as well as those living on modest incomes.

Why We Do It
We believe art, culture, and engaged imaginations can change the way people see their world, open them up to new ideas, and connect them with their neighbors. When artists have the opportunity to build and contribute their unique skills and perspectives to the needs of their neighborhoods, they can be invaluable assets in furthering community wellbeing. When the skills and strategies for igniting creativity are made broadly available to everyday people and purposefully applied as tools for visioning a new and better world, these can be powerful forces for positive, transformative change. We know we have been successful when, over time, our neighbors—artists and everyday people, newcomers and oldtimers, individually and collectively—become more involved in the civic and cultural affairs of their communities, feel more deeply connected to the places and people where they live and work, and bring a sense of creativity to community concerns.

Our Values
As we strive to achieve our mission and embody our vision, the following values infuse all of our work. We are:

- Creative Catalysts
- Community-Centered
- Neighborly
- People Powered
- Active Listeners and Learners
- Collaborative and Cross-Pollinating by Design
- Propelled by Love
WORKS IN PROGRESS

Laundromat-based workshop series. In 2013, we expanded our free arts education offerings to Bed-Stuy & Hunts Point, offering 35 workshops across 3 neighborhoods from June to August.

Power of Perception. We developed and piloted a curriculum that empowers high-school students to craft their own narratives about power, perception, and bias as they relate to black male experience, based on award-winning documentary American Promise.
- Engaged 25 students at Brooklyn Community Arts and Media High School.
- Co-hosted screening / Q & A about curriculum with American Promise directors at IFC Center.

Community Collaborations. We hosted arts workshops at venues throughout NYC, including:
- New Museum’s IDEAS CITY Streetfest.
- The Hunts Point Fish Parade with The POINT CDC.
- The Studio Museum in Harlem’s “Hands On” Workshop Series.
- Hunts Point Alliance for Children (HPAC) Back-to-School Fair.
- 9th Annual Bed-Stuy Alive Festival.
- Northern Manhattan Perinatal Partnership’s Club MOM group.

Number of people engaged through Works in Progress: over 4,500.
CREATE CHANGE

Create Change Fellowship
We supported 15 artists from a broad range of disciplines and backgrounds (our largest cohort ever!). Fellows developed community-based arts programs for inaugural Field Day (see following page).

Nancy Agabian, Raul Ayala, Bridget Bartolini, Claro de los Reyes, Divad Durant, Noelle Ghoussaini, Audrey Hailes, Sukjong Hong, Ladi’Sasha Jones, Joyce LeeAnn Joseph, Christopher Lopez, Sydnie Mosley, Kameelah Rasheed, Lisa Sikorski, and Didier Silvain

Create Change Residency
We decided to ground the residency in our three anchor neighborhoods, and thus were able to offer more support, including a dedicated Artist Assistant Intern, to each Artist-in-Residence.

- **Aisha Cousins**: *Mapping Soulville* (Bedford-Stuyvesant)
  Aisha Cousins invited neighbors to imagine a map of Malcolm X Blvd full of intersecting streets that create a walkable timeline of Malcolm’s life.

- **Art Jones**: *Portrait of the Community as a Block* (Hunts Point)
  Together with Hunts Point residents, Art Jones recorded stories about experiences buying and selling in the neighborhood, culminating with a multimedia exhibition of community portraits.

- **Shani Peters**: *The People’s Laundromat Theater* (Harlem)
  Shani Peters screened independent films by over 30 contributing artists at her local laundromat. She invited her neighbors to offer feedback, participate in workshops, and attend a VIP red-carpet finale.

4th Annual Public Art Potluck
In 2014, we held our largest ever Public Art Potluck, our annual dinner that celebrates our Create Change artists, with over 81 guests attending.

Number of people engaged through Create Change: over 1,500.
In 2013, we presented our inaugural Field Day, a festival of neighborhoods showcasing the full range of our programs—as well as collaborations with local artists and organizations—in our three anchor neighborhoods: Harlem, Bed-Stuy, and Hunts Point.

Our Create Change Fellows took the lead in organizing the day’s programs, which were supported by local businesses, community sponsors, and volunteers from across the city:

**The Harlem Story Walk**: a traveling storytelling walk transforming Lenox Avenue (116th -130th St.) with Harlem stories, music, poetry, dance, film, art-making, and more. 
*Produced in collaboration with Art in Flux Harlem.*

**Renter’s Archive**: a series of artist-led, interactive workshops empowering participants to create narratives of their own experiences as renters. 
*Produced in collaboration with Adeola Enigbokan (Archiving the City).*

**A Cultural Feast**: a food-focused event featuring games, cooking demos, recipe-sharing, photobooth, free giveaways, and more. 
*Produced by in collaboration with The BLK Projek.*

Number of participants engaged on Field Day: **over 500**.
FUNDRAISING EVENTS & INITIATIVES

In 2013, we took a fresh approach to our fundraising strategy that focused on community-building, friend-raising, and a more inclusive approach to fundraising from individuals.

Cultivation Events & Fundraisers

Supported by our Board members and alumni artists, we threw parties in the summer and fall to raise new support from new and old friends. Both were wonderful evenings of conversation, connection, and cultivation, yielding new members of our Catalyst Circle and raising general operating funds.

Our June Fundraiser was held at the home of Board member Chris Montgomery. The program included featured artist Sonia Louise Davis (Create Change 2011), and Board Chair Risë Wilson.

Our October Fundraiser was held at Third Streaming Gallery in SoHo. The program included featured artist LaTasha N. Diggs (Create Change 2011), and Board Members Chris Montgomery and Erika Faust.

People-Powered $10K Challenge

We launched the People-Powered $10K Challenge to leverage support from the broadest range of our constituency, and recognizing that traditional fundraising methods often overlook potential supporters with modest incomes. Together with our committed supporters or People Movers, we set a goal of raising $10,000 by each asking 10 friends to each donate $10 or more over 10 days. With the assistance of a small matching grant, we met our goal and exceeded it by half!

- 40 People Movers participated, including Board, staff, alumni, volunteers, friends, and more!
- 345 donors from 4 countries and 24 states contributed, raising over $15,000 in total
- Participation felt rewarding, and exceeding our goal became a collective achievement.

“Thanks for allowing me the awesome opportunity to give back to The LP and to help sustain the non-profit's programs!” —A Create Change Alumna & People Mover
TESTIMONIALS

“Amazing project. Thank you all for spreading creativity!”
-A neighbor

"Participating in the program has sparked many interesting conversations with people outside of the program about the impact art can have in a community and how an artists can go about making work that brings change or inspiration outside of the traditional gallery setting."
-Create Change Fellow

"A neighbor's 3 year old saw us setting up and she was so excited to come that she ran out of the house with her mother in her (mismatched) fuzzy house slippers—one green frog and the other a princess."
-Works in Progress Teaching Artist

“I believe in programs that impact communities from the roots up.”
-Contributing Artist

“People really sat down and engaged with each other.”
-Works in Progress Teaching Artist

“The program addresses many needs by creating a framework for artists to create relationships within their own neighborhoods.”
-Create Change Resident

“The LP have helped me see the world through the eyes of artists and change makers.”
-Supporter and Former Board Member

“I am an artist that is interested in working in the community and also in reaching out to people that wouldn't normally be interested in art, so the Laundromat Project seems like a perfect fit.”
-Contributing Artist

“I love working in front of the laundromat and have had great experiences there. The adults and youth that come to take the drop-in workshops are so eager to create.”
-Works in Progress Teaching Artist

“We're really interested in being part of the community—enhancing the relationship between the community and the laundromat. We want people to feel comfortable and welcome.”
-Laundromat Owner

“The residency has re-defined how I think about what it means to make art in my own neighborhood.”
-Create Change Resident
PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

- 18 Amazing Ways to Give Back with $5 or More, by Arianna Davis, *O, the Oprah Magazine*, December 2013


- Street Signs Become a Map to the Soul, by C. Zawadi Morris, *Bed-Stuy Patch*, August 9, 2013


WHO WE ARE

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Alice Mizrachi
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The Laundry Room
Lucky Laundromat
Marmy Laundromat

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Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Garden
The BLK Projek
Boulevard Bistro
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Brooklyn Community Arts and Media High School
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Harlem Shake
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Pa-Paya Seed Frozen Yogurt Cafe
Pioneer Supermarket
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Restaurant Opportunity Center New York
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