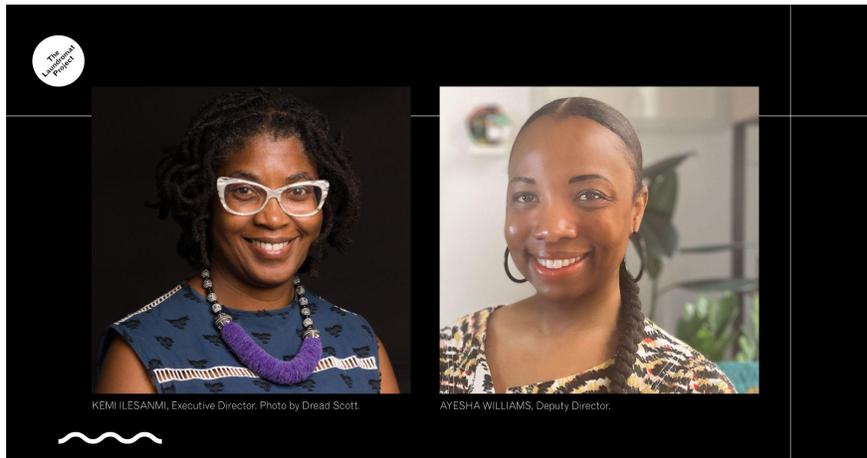




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**The Laundromat Project Announces  
Leadership Succession**

*Kemi Ilesanmi Steps Down After 10 Years as Executive Director, Board of Directors Promotes  
Ayesha Williams to Succeed Ilesanmi*

New York, NY – The Laundromat Project’s (The LP) Board of Directors today announced that celebrated arts leader Kemi Ilesanmi will step down as Executive Director. Ilesanmi will be succeeded by Ayesha Williams, arts administrator, advocate for people of color in the arts, and current Deputy Director at The LP. The Board unanimously selected Williams for the Executive Director role following a rigorous interview and selection process. Williams will succeed Ilesanmi who will step down in December 2022 following 17 years of service to The LP. Williams, whose arts and culture career spans more than 16 years, first joined The LP in 2016 as Director of Strategic Partnerships, and has served as Deputy Director since 2018. Williams will begin her tenure as Executive Director in early 2023.



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**MAKE ART.**  
**BUILD**  
**COMMUNITY.**  
**CREATE**  
**CHANGE.**

“We want to thank Kemi for her dedicated service and commitment to The LP. She has served as an exceptional model of what it means to authentically lead an organization with integrity, passion, and love through times of abundance and adversity. She has left an indelible mark on The LP—growing our mission, presence, and impact over the years in remarkable ways. The LP and the arts and culture field are undoubtedly better because of her leadership,” **said George Suttles, The LP board chair.** “We are also thrilled to welcome Ayesha and are energized by her proven ability and bold vision to lead The LP at this time. As with all we do at The LP, we led this process with intention, transparency, care, and, most importantly, love. Research shows that leadership cultivated from within leads to the most successful transitions. We hope our process can serve as a model for others in our sector to follow and we are excited for all that is to come.”

During her tenure, Ilesanmi exponentially expanded The Laundromat Project’s ability to offer artists of color the support, community, and resources needed to strengthen their practices while also positively impacting their communities. Ilesanmi joined The LP’s Board of Directors in 2006. In 2012, Ilesanmi was appointed Executive Director. Under her leadership, The LP brought to scale its national model for organizations that are both led by and centered on serving people of color with a community-oriented arts pedagogy at its core.

“I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished during my time at The LP. As the organization's first full-time, paid executive director, I have experienced so much joy watching our community grow. I am grateful to founder Risë Wilson for the opportunity to build on her legacy, and feel fortunate to depart with the organization on such solid footing,” **said Kemi Ilesanmi, Executive Director of The LP.** “I have also taken much care in nurturing Ayesha’s innately powerful leadership capabilities. She has been my right hand and a trusted collaborator in all of The LP’s most significant accomplishments over the past six years. I could not ask for a better successor to move the organization forward.”

Ilesanmi, with Williams as second-in-command in her role as Deputy Director, grew The Laundromat Project’s budget by tenfold and tripled its staff, leaving the organization with a solid financial and structural foundation from which to continue its forward momentum as a leading non-profit arts organization. Since 2005, The LP has served more than 200 artists through its artist development and placed-based community programs, and has engaged close to 50,000 people in community-based arts initiatives across New York City. In addition, Ilesanmi moved The Laundromat Project into its new long-term home in the Bedford-Stuyvesant community in 2021.

“I am profoundly grateful to Kemi for her support, guidance, mentorship, and partnership. She has nurtured me as a leader through my years and infused an ever-constant stream of inspiration. She is the paradigm of what leadership should look like and embodies why diversity in leadership is vital to shaping the arts and culture field for equity.” **said Ayesha Williams, Deputy Director of The LP.** “I look forward to moving The LP forward in Risë and Kemi’s light.

Together, with our leadership team, including Catherine Mbali Green-Johson, director of programs, and Shana Wolfe, director of finance & operations, we will continue to invest in the work and lives of community-engaged arts and cultural practitioners citywide, as well as our Bed-Stuy neighbors who are working to fortify the social bonds and visions of their communities.”

Williams began her career in arts administration as Director of Kent Gallery, New York, then went on to serve as Manager of Visual Arts at Lincoln Center. She has organized numerous gallery exhibitions, commissioned works by renowned artists, managed site-specific visual art commissions, and co-created public programming series. She has also managed ambitious, international site-specific visual art commissions in locations such as the Venice Biennale, Italy; Wanås Foundation, Sweden; and Saatchi Gallery, London. Over her career and across her various ventures, Williams has worked with a range of artists, including Lorna Simpson, John Baldessari, Heide Fashancht, Charles Gaines, John Gerrard, Robin Rhode, Barbara Kruger, Adam Pendleton, Emily Prince, and Rashid Johnson.

“As an artist alum, Bed-Stuy resident, and cultural practitioner, I have witnessed the ways that Kemi and Ayesha have impacted so many artists of color in the neighborhood—including myself—over the years. In a field where support and resources for artists, and specifically artists of color, who dedicate their practice to community is limited, Kemi and Ayesha should be acknowledged and celebrated for their sincere approach to conscious leadership,” **said Salome Asega, Bed-Stuy resident, director of NEW INC., and The LP Create Change Artist-in-Residence (2016).**

The roots of The Laundromat Project reach back to 1999, when Risë Wilson, a pioneer in what is now called social practice, blueprinted The LP’s mission and vision. At a time before social media or camera phones were invented, Wilson sought to make art more accessible to communities of color while also allowing BIPOC artists to have more visible, active roles in their neighborhoods. This dual ambition-- motivated by Wilson’s belief in creativity as a powerful means of self-determination— gave birth to The LP’s initial programming in laundromats and the organization’s innovative approach to developing artists as local change agents. The leadership of Black women in this process was always a given. This was expressed in The LP’s founding leadership, including Wilson as founder as well as the earliest iterations of the board and The LP’s inaugural Program Director, Petrushka Bazin Larsen. After Wilson, in close partnership with Larsen established The LP’s founding organizational and programming models, Kemi Ilesanmi picked up the mantel as Executive Director in 2012—already recognized as a seasoned arts leader with an expansive relationship to The LP as a board member, active mentor to LP alumni, and stalwart champion from day one.

"The LP embodies what is possible when Black women are at the helm, and when organizations have a deeply embedded culture of care. Kemi’s extraordinary leadership has not only benefited The LP but the arts sector as a whole. Ayesha is poised to extend this legacy of service. She brings considerable experience in and outside of the organization with a bone-deep commitment

to POC communities. The future of The LP is in great hands and I look forward to continuing to support our growth," **said Risë Wilson, founder of The LP.**

In 2022, The LP welcomed its 16th cohort of the celebrated Create Change artist development program. This season, 10 Fellows designed community-engaged public art activations using The LP's storefront space in Bed-Stuy as the site for convening for the first time, and three Artists-in-Residence are advancing projects that embrace archival practices and community memory in Bed-Stuy, Manhattan's Chinatown, and East New York. In addition, The LP continues to offer opportunities for Bed-Stuy neighbors to (re)connect in their neighborhood and build cohesion through community partnerships, creative place-based programming at block parties, fairs, and sidewalk workshops. The organization also continues its support of self-determined artists and neighbors through micro-grant and commissioning programs, including the Creative Action Fund, Create & Connect Fund, and Fulton St Window Commission.

"As an early and continuing funder of The LP, it has been an honor to observe, learn from, and support the organization and watch it grow. From Risë to Kemi and now Ayesha, we are inspired by how The LP consistently builds bold visions and practices, reaffirms its values through action, and shows up with love and care for its communities. These bright leaders and incredible board affirm the organization's integrity at every step, and this transition is a testament to that," **said Michelle Coffey, co-founder and executive director, Lambent Foundation.** "We look forward to continuing to celebrate The accomplishments of The LP in its newest iteration and beyond."

For more information about The Laundromat Project visit [laundromatproject.org](http://laundromatproject.org).

#### **ABOUT THE LAUNDROMAT PROJECT:**

The Laundromat Project is a Black-rooted and POC-led community-based arts organization dedicated to the advancement of artists and residents of New York City as change agents within their own communities. We envision a world in which artists and neighbors in communities of color work together to harness the power of creativity that has the ability to inspire and initiate meaningful change and that generates long-lasting impact. We make sustained investments in growing a community of multiracial, multigenerational, and multidisciplinary artists and neighbors committed to societal change by supporting their artmaking, community building, and leadership development. Since 2005, The Laundromat Project has directly invested over \$1M in over 200 multiracial, multigenerational, and multidisciplinary artists; nearly 90 innovative public art projects; and a creative community hub in Bed-Stuy, while engaging close to 50,000 New Yorkers across the city and beyond. The idea of a laundromat as a primary place for engagement has expanded over time. It now serves as a metaphor for a variety of community settings in which artists and neighbors transform their lives and surroundings. Our programming has evolved to take place in community gardens, public plazas, libraries, sidewalks, local cultural organizations, and other places where people gather.