



Jawole Willa Jo Zollar
Artistic Director

Jana La Sorte
Executive Director

Board of Directors

Regina Bain

Cristal Baron, Treasurer

Tammy Bormann, Chair

Erik L. Hall

Tonya Murray

Jennifer Smith, Secretary

Sylvia Vogelman

Lorrie A. Warner

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**Summary of Testimony at City Council Hearing--NOCD
Maria Bauman, Director of Education and Community Engagement,
Urban Bush Women**

5/11/12

All art is culturally specific, from ballet (Italian Renaissance courts) to opera (17th century Europe), to stepping exhibitions (South African miners and then African American fraternities) and abstract expressionist painting (American post-World War II movement). Placing cultures, racial, and ethnic groups on a hierarchy is not the intention nor role of any policy-maker or practitioner. The Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts Working Group of New York names equity as a value. We posit that New York residents who are diverse regarding geography, ethnicity, and their approach to citizenship must have equitable access to outlets of recognition and branding, funding, and space allocation in order to thrive and drive the economic and cultural vitality of our neighborhoods--two aspects of our larger New York City culture that we are known for around the world.

We encourage

- an expanded definition of economic activity, including the “small business” role that arts groups play to sustain the local economy (Urban Bush Women recently hosted a team of forty people from the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy in South Africa, and is soon to host a similar group of dancers from Fort Bend, Texas. Our dual identity as an internationally recognized performance group and a Brooklyn-based art for social change advocate positions us to drive tourism to our neighboring cultural organizations such as the Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Art and Tribal Truths artisan shop and to local restaurants and gems like Cake Man Raven. We are a group of artists, and also a business contributing to our local economy)
- Encourage agencies, such as the Department of Cultural Affairs, Public Health, Transportation, Small Business Services, and City Planning, to come together to think about areas of the City holistically, including the arts. (Again, using Urban Bush Women on South Oxford Street in Fort Greene as an example: in June we will participate in culturally relevant place-making in our neighborhood with the Juneteenth Celebration by and for community-members, support individual artist-citizens making participatory work in public spaces across all five boroughs through our partnership with the Laundromat Project, share our experiences and approach

www.urbanbushwomen.com



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- at the LINC Creative Communities Conference in Missouri, and follow up on our partnership with the Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham on using arts and dialogue as unifying and equalizing underpinnings for addressing a history of racism. Our work is not silo-ed and nor is the work of any individual artist-citizen or small business. Therefore, our city agencies must work together instead of parsing city life.
- Increase affordability and sustainability of housing and community facilities for arts, cultural production and presentation by: 1) sustaining rent regulation and implementing rent reform laws to stabilize communities 2) provide space to nurture artists and creative work 3) supporting rent-to-own partnerships and live-work spaces to reduce costs for artists, notably immigrant groups that are vulnerable to displacement

The NOCD Working Group and Urban Bush Women thank you for the hard work and collaborative action that you have already contributed to the sustainability of neighborhood-based cultural activity in addition to that of large institutions. We appreciate your time today and your continued attention to the vitality of neighborhoods via a holistic and equitable approach to space, funding, and mechanisms of visibility.

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