“When planting seeds, it’s not always going to be on fertile ground. You can turn the soil, add things to make it stronger, and then you have to have faith in it,” says RAW’s Senior Expressive Art Therapist Jason Cruz when asked to reflect on his time at RAW.

As we look back on a very challenging 2020, this spring brings light, hope, and an opportunity for growth. We are planting seeds and moving the world forward just as Jason has in his 25 years of serving the community of Lynn. Jason was in his early 20’s when he first came to RAW. At the time, RAW was a one-room art studio in Lynn’s Central Square. That studio was in the building that we eventually purchased in 2004, then expanded in 2015. Jason has been instrumental in the development of our entire organization, spearheading programs like our Good 2 Go public art team, in addition to running several groups for middle and high school youth each year. Jason has built his career on planting seeds and creating paths to empathy, acceptance, and opportunity for the young people of Lynn. These seeds helped to grow an organization that now serves over 300 youth a year.

Above all else, Jason is a listener. Jason left Puerto Rico when he was five years old. Once in the U.S., it took him time to feel confident in his ability to communicate, and because of this he learned to observe and listen deeply. “I LISTEN WITH EVERY MOLECULE THAT HAS BEEN LENT TO ME,” HE SAID, AND THIS IS WHAT MAKES JASON AN EXCEPTIONAL ART THERAPIST.

He wholeheartedly believes (as RAW does) that kids already have the tools to succeed in life, but that sometimes they just need help to realize it. In a world that often creates barriers for our kids, Jason focuses on truly SEEING and HEARING them to validate their individual strengths.

As humans, we all have seeds that we want to foster. These take the form of our passions, our hopes, things we want to learn, and goals we want to accomplish. In order for these to grow, we need access to our own light. When asked what he hopes RAW’s kids will leave with, Jason spoke of this light. “If there’s something I want, it’s for them to be able to harness that flame, to hold on to that little light that sparkles inside them that people try to snuff out. There’s just something about our kids in this community in particular that are born into so many things against them…I don’t know if there’s one thing, except to help their little lights keep shining…each kid’s different, but each kid has a light…”

Whether through virtual or in-person programming, RAW has remained committed to nurturing the growth of our kids. As we safely welcome small groups of kids back into our studios this spring, we continue to move forward with confidence in the culture that Jason and the staff at RAW have cultivated for decades. We remain dedicated to holding space for youth so that they know their lights can shine, their stories matter, and their voices have power.
ALUMNI RETURN TO RAW AND PAY IT FORWARD

This year we have more alumni working at RAW and sitting on our Board than ever before! Hear how RAW impacted their lives and what inspired them to come back.

YESENIA DE LEON
RAW Board of Directors
Graduated 2009

“RAW provided me with stability and a place to grow both my creativity and technical skills. It gave me a really good foundation to step into college and the workforce confidently. I wanted to give back to RAW to help other kids and teens in Lynn have the same opportunities that I was granted.”

ALISON MILLER
RAW Art Therapist
Graduated 2004

“They say when you grow up you should aim to be the adult that you needed as a kid. RAW was there for me when I needed extra support and validation. I came back to RAW as an Art Therapist to give back what was given to me, what helped me plant both feet on the ground, and then take steps forward toward what I truly wanted out of life. I want to help carry on the RAW tradition of creatively amplifying youth voices and to be there to listen deeply. I came back to be there for youth on their good days and their really really hard days. I came back to the place that helped me plant both feet to help give the free spirits and young artists of Lynn a place to belong.”

CINDY SOUS
RAW Board of Directors
Graduated 2008

“As a kid, RAW was a place for me to connect with my peers and delve into my creative abilities and express myself in different forms of art. It was also a place of guidance for life after high school, especially in regards to navigating the complexities of applying to college and knowing what to do and what resources I had. What brings me back to RAW is the youth of our community. Seeing what the kids put together to express themselves and amplifying their voices is what brings me back. I am constantly inspired by our youth and want to continue to empower them — they are the pillars of our city and will grow to shape the community of Lynn. I want to do what I can to help support them in navigating through their journey and seeing our youth thrive.”

EDWIN CABRERA
R2R Film School Instructor & Production Coordinator
Graduated 2009

“Before RAW, I always thought that filmmaking was an impossible pipe dream...RAW showed me that this was something that I could actually do and how to do it. My instructor introduced me to this thing that opened up so many opportunities for me and I fully recognize that. I want to be able to be that for somebody else. That’s why I came back to RAW...I was given this opportunity because somebody cared enough to show me, I want to be that person for somebody else.”
THANK YOU TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS

We’re so fortunate for the support of these amazing businesses that continue to show up for RAW’s kids:

- Amazon Smile Foundation
- Apple, Inc.
- Google Inc.
- Liberty Mutual
- McCall & Almy, Inc.
- Piper Sandler & Co.

A special thanks to these businesses that support RAW through their employee matching gift program:

- Golden Artist Colors
- McCall & Almy, Inc.
- Cell Signaling Technology
- Eastern Bank
- Jones Construction
- Groom Construction
- Community Credit Union
- Shore Country Day School
- Hemenway & Barnes LLP
- IIDA
- New England Documentary Film Festival
- Piper | Sandler
- ReachArts
- New England BioLabs
- LEE Properties - The Mayflower, LLC

A NOTE FROM KIT

This past year has been one of growth for RAW, even in the midst of a global pandemic. We’ve had to evolve ways to deliver our services, ensuring our kids are seen and heard even when they couldn’t be at RAW. We welcomed new Program Director Alejandra, who is helping us look forward to execute on our strategic plan. Our base of supporters grew, and we were humbled by the many new friends who joined RAW’s community through our #GiveAGroup campaign.

While we celebrate the many positives we’ve experienced, we also know growth isn’t always easy, or comfortable. We’re leaning into our discomfort as we grow and adapt and learn (and unlearn), so that we can be the best organization for our young folks who count on us, and look to us for guidance. We are so PROUD to see our kids grow into passionate AND compassionate young adults, like the alumni on this page. And we’re so grateful for YOU and your support of these incredible young people at RAW, who continue to encourage us to learn and grow too.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Bruce Herring, Chair
Jason Baletsa
Cinda Danh*
Yesenia de Leon*
Moe Kelley
Michael Murray
Evonne Peters
Mario Ricciardielli
Patrick Richardson
Meegan Simpson-Best
Cindy Sous*
Scott Sullivan
Mary Flannery, Founder
Kit Jenkins, Executive Director

STAFF
Kit Jenkins, Executive Director
Sam Adams
Alex Ashley
Edwin Cabrera*
Jason Cruz
Guelmi Espinal*
Kaitlyn Farmer*
Arturo Gonzalez Barrios
Paul Hurteau
Hebert Labbate
Fernanda Lopez
Alison Miller*
Erin Oliver
Bruce Orr

Valerie Rafferty
Laura Smith
Rachel St. Pierre
Maghan Stone

* We are thrilled to have alumni on our staff and Board!

BECOME A MENTOR
For information about volunteering as a Project Launch Mentor, please contact
Project Launch Manager, Hebert Labbate, hebert@rawartworks.org.

SUPPORT RAW 12 MONTHS A YEAR
Visit our website and learn more about becoming a monthly donor. Funds support
free programming for all of RAW’s youth.

SPONSOR A KID
In lieu of our annual BASH: Party with a Purpose...we invite you to Sponsor A Kid!
For more information contact Director of Development, Alex Ashley,
alexashley@rawartworks.org.

facebook.com/rawartworks @rawartworkslynn @rawartworks