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The AjA Project Awarded California Arts Council Impact Project and JUMP StArts Grants
State funds support collective liberation through participatory storytelling.

[San Diego, CA] The California Arts Council has announced grant awards totaling $64,000 to The AjA project as part of its Compass and ACTION! programs in its first round of funding for 2022.

Through the Compass program, AjA will work with young folks impacted by the juvenile justice system using art to build self-awareness, make meaningful social connections, and develop wellness practices while crafting their personal narratives. Many of our students are feeling the impact of social isolation, and are looking for relief from anxiety, depression, loneliness, and other risk factors that impact their health and stability. Youth participants in Compass will connect to local Artists who utilize wellness as a part of their personal practice and Guest Speakers who will provide real-life examples of how our community can practice self-expression as a vehicle for healing. In addition to in-class learning, Compass will produce online resources that are FREE and available to the public.

AjA’s ACTION! program critically examines issues specific to the San Diego/Tijuana region from militarization to surveillance, immigration, housing rights, gender violence, and indigenous sovereignty. Participants will be introduced to fiction and non-fiction video works that address pertinent issues and receive hands-on training in all areas of video production. Through caring mentorships, intergenerational skill-sharing, youth-led discussion, and compassionate critique, young people will build a body of documentary work centered around empowerment, reflection, identity, and resilience.

The AjA Project was featured as part of a larger announcement from the California Arts Council, with grant awards for its Cycle A programming totaling more than $31 million across more than 1,100 grants supporting nonprofit organizations and units of government throughout the state. The dollar amount already marks the largest annual investment in the California Arts Council’s 46-year history.

“We are elated today to be able to say that, with this first round of funds, we are placing a historic amount of money into the very worthy hands of California’s arts and cultural workforce—and with more yet to come,”
said California Arts Council Chair Lilia Gonzáles-Chávez. “We have long since understood the value of our artists in this state, and we are incredibly grateful to our Governor and our Legislature for their support and sharing in a like-minded vision for a California where all people flourish with access to and participation in the arts.”

Organizations were awarded grants across seven different program areas within Cycle A, focused on the CAC’s efforts to address geographic equity, enable autonomy and sustainability for smaller organizations, and grow the strength of local arts agencies and their partnerships.

To view a complete listing of all California Arts Council grantees by county, visit this link. For a complete listing of grantees by organization, go to this link.

The AjA Project is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization headquartered in San Diego, California utilizing participatory art to transform youth and communities. Since its founding over twenty years ago, AjA has provided long-term, community-based programming for over 2000 individuals, and has shared visual narratives with over 1 million viewers through large-scale public exhibits.

The California Arts Council is a state agency with a mission of strengthening arts, culture, and creative expression as the tools to cultivate a better California for all. It supports local arts infrastructure and programming statewide through grants, initiatives, and services. The California Arts Council envisions a California where all people flourish with universal access to and participation in the arts.

Members of the California Arts Council include: Lilia Gonzáles-Chávez, Chair; Consuelo Montoya, Vice Chair; Gerald Clarke, Vicki Estrada, Jodie Evans, Ellen Gavin, Alex Israel, Phil Mercado, and Roxanne Messina Captor. Learn more at www.arts.ca.gov.

The California Arts Council is committed to increasing the accessibility of its online content. For language and accessibility assistance, visit https://arts.ca.gov/about/about-us/language-communications-assistance.