



PACE CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



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1600 St. Catherine Street
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Dates

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Documentary Video

<https://bitly.cx/3W5i>

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Photo by Supply Lab Media

Jaylin Stewart, *This is Home*

Overview

In West Louisville's California neighborhood, artist Jaylin Stewart (she/her) worked collaboratively with Louisville Visual Art and dozens of community members to create a vibrant new mural on the outside of the local anchor California Community Center. Stewart, a California neighborhood native, hired local artists as apprentices and conducted several community workshops to determine the content of the mural, which specific community members would be represented, and even create some of the artwork through collaboration. The piece, located intentionally in a neighborhood where there have been fewer investments than other neighborhoods in public art, promotes representation and healing through the depiction of Black and Brown community members, their stories, and participation in the process.

Selecting the Artist

For Louisville Visual Art (LVA)'s first Catalyst project, the staff and consultant team of Kristian Anderson, Desmone Stepp, and Jared Diaz identified their goals as: to highlight and support the growth of Black and Brown art and artists in Louisville, and to develop community relationships. The team wanted an artist to create a socially engaged mural, and participate in trips to Philadelphia and workshops with the Mural Arts Institute's (MAI) Public Art and Civic Engagement



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Initiative (PACE). The artist would receive a \$15,000 stipend, plus additional funds for production. The team then created and released an open call inviting artists to apply. Eight applications were received. Jaylin Stewart was selected by a three-member steering committee made up of respected Black community members: Dr. Renee Campbelle, Dr. Jabani Bennett, and Mr. Lamont Collins. They were looking for an artist who had experience and could do public work, but was early in their career and would benefit from professional development.



Stewart, who began working as an artist in 2013, is an award-winning artist, activist, educator, muralist, and community role model. A self-taught artist from West Louisville, she has worked in painting, mixed media, 3D, installation, and performance, and is known especially for her portraits memorializing lives lost to gun violence. Her work can be seen outside of Black Market KY, the Floyd County Library, the Family & Children's Place Service Center, and on her instagram page. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, she created sidewalk chalk murals memorializing the work of healthcare providers, and a mural at the KMAC museum called "One-19." She received the emerging artist award from LVA in 2021. As a self-described self-taught

artist at the beginning of her career, she felt very honored to be selected, and shared that, "It's heartwarming to know that all of my hard work is not going unnoticed...The lack of opportunities for minorities in the arts has discouraged a lot of creatives, so I hope to inspire artists to follow their dreams and go after every opportunity that they can. Always know that no one can stop what is meant for you! I am super excited and eager to learn with other artists and professionals to create a mural that our community deserves."

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Jaylin Stewart

Devising the Mural

After receiving the commission, Stewart and the LVA team began by selecting a location. Stewart felt it was important to pick a place where there weren't already a lot of murals—in Louisville, many of the commissions have been on the more affluent and whiter south and east sides of town. Stewart also wanted to find a location that was accessible to the whole city, to try to help “break the east and west Louisville divide” across ninth street. They selected the California Community Center (CCC), a nonprofit organization in West Louisville close to ninth street that Stewart had frequented growing up for arts education and community programming.

Next, Stewart and the team began engaging the community to help decide what to depict in the mural. The first community workshop was on November 16, 2021 at the CCC. Workshops continued into January. Many of the participants were children. Together, the team selected seven people representing the past, present and future of the neighborhood, including six-year-old CoCo France; Mr. Ron King, a prominent community member who had played for the Kentucky Colonels; and Trayvon Neely, a California neighborhood community member who died as a result of gun violence. Stewart also determined how to have community members select colors and paint actively in the mural through paw prints, since pets are a beloved part of the community too.

Stewart was influenced by her time in the PACE program—participating in the first two-week incubator online (due to the Covid-19 pandemic); traveling to

Community Paint Day participants embrace at California Community Center



Photo by Supply Lab Media

Philadelphia to meet with Mural Arts Institute (MAI) staff, see Mural Arts' large-scale murals across the city and engage in workshops led by Mural Arts Institute staff. MAI staff would later travel to Louisville for a weekend to support the mural making process.

Making Art

The process of creating the mural focused on engaging the community and providing an opportunity for other artists to get trained. Stewart hired four artist assistants to help her make the piece: Donyalle, Kelsi, Kevon and Natasha. LVA organized two workshops for community members to select content, and artist assistants participated in the weekend of workshops by the MAI staff. Together, the team then painted the 60' x 25' foot mural utilizing the Mural Arts method of mural cloth installation, half in Stewart's studio and half on site at the mural wall over the course of two weeks. Over the course of those two weeks, community members gathered to watch the artists paint to learn more about the process. Then, another workshop invited community members to paint paw prints that were then installed directly into the mural. There was also a Kente Cloth design workshop and a community paint day.

The process and final piece struck a balance between allowing Stewart, as the artist, to have her creative freedom and explore the art and vision she wanted, while also providing the opportunity for community stakeholders to make decisions about what is installed in their neighborhood. The team accomplished this through role definition: first inviting participants to generate ideas, then having Stewart design the visuals of what the mural will ultimately look like.

A child shows off a paint-covered hand during a Community Paint Day at California Community Center



Photo by Supply Lab Media

Reflecting on the Project's Goals and Impacts

The team had two main goals when preparing work for the Catalyst 1 project:

1. Supporting Black and Brown artists in the community with professional development and training; and
2. Strengthening and making new connections between artists, residents.

After selecting Stewart as the artist, together they revised and reaffirmed these goals, adding to the second goal that they specifically wanted to focus on Louisville's California Community Center, a center located in the neighborhood that brings joy, education, and a sense of family to the community.

In order to accomplish the first goal of supporting Black and Brown artists in their professional development, the team took a layered approach of supporting Stewart, her artist apprentices, and burgeoning artists in the community. The team participated in many meetings and trainings online and in -person with Mural Arts Philadelphia and the Mural Arts Institute. Stewart hired three artist apprentices, including them in the training as well, in order to support their professional development. Stewart reflected on the impact of these training sessions, saying, "They encouraged me to go bigger and better. I feel more confident in my skills now, and know that I can use my artwork to bridge between organizations and communities. I want to support other artists too."

To accomplish the second goal of strengthening community connections, Stewart considered community impact at every step of the process - making the project much more complex, given the need to listen, respond, manage relationships - in addition to conceptualizing and implementing the artwork itself. Stewart chose a

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Jaylin Stewart

wall that she knew was important to the community, and then included community members in every decision making she had to make throughout her process - from what to depict, to what colors to use, to even painting the mural itself. “The whole process was a challenge, but one that I was looking for. It changed my perspective—I know I need a team if I want to make the impact. Creating and managing a team made it more fun. I am ready to do bigger, and better.”

Reflecting on Learnings

The PACE initiative is all about learning at every stage—projects are intentionally new for the organizations commissioning the work, and the public. Community-engaged art-making is often new to the artists and others on the project, or if it isn't, the grant reflects an opportunity to evolve in other ways.

In reflecting on the work, the team identified many ways that it helped move the needle on many of the broader intended impacts of the PACE catalyst projects (shown below), as well as those identified by the initial LVA team. Impacts noted include that it supported and broke down barriers for artists of color, redistributed resources, helped reflect the community's cultures in public space, and more.

Note: The indications of impact were shared with PACE project staff and learning consultants. While longer-term impacts need to be tracked over time, many of the indications of impact relate directly to the goals PACE had set out for itself in terms of how it can impact change in people, place, and practice with the ultimate goal of creating more just and equitable cities through cultural and creative practice.

Overall PACE Goals

Change in People

1. Build collective power of BIPOC communities
2. Generate & equitably redistribute communally held resources

Change in Places

3. Reflect community cultural identities
4. Strengthen community-based cultural organizing

Change in Practice

5. Support and break down barriers for artists of color
6. Increase accountability of organizations to BIPOC residents

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Jaylin Stewart

Project leaders at LVA also shared reflections in the sessions with PACE partners that they then directly incorporated into the Catalyst 2 project. Some learnings include the below in various categories.

Community Engagement:

- Different demographics require different tools of engagement and feedback,
- A focus on healing is better than a focus on trauma,
- Not all workshops need to be focused on design; they can be for relationship building and having fun,
- Trust building takes time; participants warm up with more interactions. Take one step at a time.
- Professional and interpersonal communications skills are key,
- Make room for all perspectives, and
- Work to balance participant input with artist vision.

LVA's Catalyst Goals



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Project Management:

- Incorporate the artist assistants as much as possible - share the load,
- Be mindful of and plan for needs related to facilities, utilities, and maintenance, including lifts, supplies, electricity, and more, and
- Plan for documentation (hiring photographers, etc.) early on.

Professional Development:

- Have confidence in our ability to accomplish a goal,
- Make efforts to intentionally build and rely on trust in ourselves and the team, and
- Have humility, there is always room to learn/grow.

Challenges included:

- Expectations of us from commissioning entities - understanding what was required from us,
- A sense of limbo in the beginning - the team was not sure where to start,
- Taking what was learned during trips to visit Mural Arts in Philadelphia and putting it into reality,
- Measurement of community engagement- what the strategy for doing this should be and how to implement it,
- Setback on our schedule due to the CCC's renovations,
- How to divide labor, communicate needs to each other, and work effectively as a team, and
- staffing artists assistants - losing artists, gaining artists, figuring out schedules, and overall team management.

PACE Catalyst artist Jaylin Stewart with artist assistants and former LVA Outreach Coordinator/Director



Photo by Supply Lab Media

About the Artist

At the age of 25, Jaylin Stewart is the founder of a non-profit, an educator, a community role model recognized with awards and accolades, and a prolific artist. Her work ranges from painting, murals, mixed media, chalk, to installation and performance, through which she examines the effects of gun violence, drugs, wealth disparity, and capitalist greed. In 2020, she garnered attention for her sidewalk chalk murals of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, and recently completed a chalk mural at KMAC Museum. Stewart's most recent Installation featured a projection on Louisville Metro Hall featuring a painting entitled "Say Her Name, See Her Face (Justice for Breonna Taylor)". In August of 2019, her installation GOD REST AMERICA converted the white-walled garage space at Sheherazade into a growing memorial, modeled after the kind of street-side memorials often created by community members at sites of violence. Stewart provides free art education to thousands of disadvantaged youth through her nonprofit Adah School of Art.



About the Public Art and Civic Engagement (PACE) Capacity Building Initiative

The PACE Initiative aimed to develop sustainable infrastructure to support the growth of socially-engaged public art in communities around the United States through a cohort learning environment which included mentoring, shared learning experiences and resources, and funding for capacity and two Artist Catalyst Projects. After a competitive selection process, the three host institutions selected to participate in the cohort were the [APANO Communities United Fund](#) in

Portland, Oregon; [Louisville Visual Art in Kentucky](#); and the [South Side Community Art Center](#) in Chicago, Illinois. During the 30-month initiative, each organization worked with artists and community to create two works of public art in a civically engaged manner, including sending the artists for an immersion incubator program to Philadelphia. Additional goals of the PACE initiative were to strengthen a national network of socially engaged public art practitioners, and produce and disseminate research, case studies and useful advice to a national audience. The Mural Arts Institute hired [Congruence Cultural Strategies](#) to lead the research and evaluation work for the PACE Initiative.

About the Mural Arts Institute

The Mural Arts Institute (MAI) was established in 2017 as an initiative of Mural Arts Philadelphia, the nation's largest public art program dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. As part of Mural Arts Philadelphia, the Mural Arts Institute is dedicated to sharing knowledge, ideas, and experiences that have shaped our approach to community-centered artmaking. At its core, MAI seeks to build connections, sustain relationships, and share skills about the practices that have been instrumental in creating works of public art with Philadelphians. We work with artists, arts administrators, and community leaders across the world to align knowledge, amplify voices, empower change, and distribute resources that move us all toward a more inclusive and equitable future of socially engaged public art. www.muralarts.org/institute

About Louisville Visual Art

Founded in 1909, Louisville Visual Art nurtures Louisville artists throughout their creative lifecycles with art education, professional artist development, and art in public spaces. As a creative hub now established in the Portland neighborhood, LVA is dedicated to encouraging artists through programming such as Children's Fine Art Classes, MAP, Artebella, Open Studio Louisville, outreach programs and weekly calls for artists. They enrich artists' lives through exceptional art education, vital artist support, and uplifting community outreach. Each year, LVA's programs activate more than 140 sites in 5 counties, serving thousands of students, artists, and members of at-risk communities. Open Studio Weekend, art[squared], and the Louisville Visual Art Honors are among LVA's essential annual events that help make Louisville the kind of city we're all proud to call home. Join us as we light the way to thriving visual arts by visiting www.louisvillevisualart.org