

**LEEWAY FOUNDATION AWARDED 13 ARTISTS WITH THE TRANSFORMATION AWARD, MOVING \$180,000 TO WOMEN, TRANS\*, AND GENDER NONCONFORMING ARTISTS AND CULTURAL PRODUCERS AT THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND SOCIAL CHANGE.**

January 23, 2023

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

**Bee Knight**  
[bknight@leeway.org](mailto:bknight@leeway.org)  
**(215) 728 - 9273**  
**Leeway.org**

In December 2022, Leeway Foundation awarded 13 artists with the Transformation Award, moving \$180,000 to women, trans\*, and gender nonconforming artists and cultural producers at the intersection of art and social change.

The 2022 cohort of awardees consists of a vast array of artists and cultural producers implementing a variety of mediums and social change intents – musicians seeking justice for incarcerated folks, photographers documenting queer fat and disabled bodies with grace and humanity, media artists investigating immigrant and racial justice, visual artists and poets preserving and reimagining their cultural legacies across Black and/or Muslim American experiences, performers centering communal joy, and more. This year's cohort challenges our perception of storytelling and asks, "How do we utilize art in imaginative and expansive ways to create a vision and action for our collective future?"

These 13 awardees have continued to work through the continued impact of the pandemic, safely adapting their practice(s) and community engagement.

**The 2022 Leeway Transformation Award (LTA) recipients are (in alphabetical order):**

**Amelia Carter** of Mantua, Multidisciplinary  
**BL Shirelle and Simply Naomi** of Lawncrest and Northeast Philadelphia, Music  
**Charlyn/Magdaline Griffith/Oro** of Kingsessing, Multidisciplinary  
**Curtis Walker** of Fairmount, Visual Arts/Performance  
**DARIA** of Bucks County, Music  
**Gabi Sanchez** of Overbrook, Multidisciplinary  
**Gabriela Watson-Burkett** of Cheltenham, Media Arts  
**Ife Nii Owoo** of Germantown, Visual Arts  
**John Jarboe** of West Philadelphia, Performance/Music  
**Sham-e-Ali Nayeem** of Rutledge, Literary Arts/Music  
**Sophie Dipti Sarkar** of Belmont, Visual Arts/Literary Arts  
**Vernon Jordan, III** of Cedar Park/Kingsessing, Multidisciplinary

A national panel of artists and cultural producers convened to review applications and work samples in this two-stage process. The 2022 panel included Los Angeles based poet, organizer, and educator **Cynthia Dewi Oka** (ACG '16, LTA '17), Black 7<sup>th</sup> Generation North Carolinian feminist, mother, healer, and multimedia maker **Omisade Burney-Scott**, and Zimbabwean-American, Baltimore-based artist, ritualist, and cultural organizer **Rebecca Mwase**. The second stage panel welcomed San Antonio-based multidisciplinary

artist and arts administrator **Mari Hernandez** and Sri Lankan born, Brooklyn-based DJ, cultural organizer, and activist **Thanushka Yakupitiyage a.k.a. “DJ Ushka”**, and was facilitated by **Jess Solomon**, Baltimore-based facilitator, organizational development practitioner, and cultural worker.

Applications are made available on the Leeway website and may also be obtained by calling 1(215) 728–9273 or emailing [info@leeway.org](mailto:info@leeway.org). Potential applicants are encouraged to attend one of the many support sessions offered throughout the year or schedule an appointment with a staff member for one-on-one support.

Press inquiries and photo requests should be directed to Bee Knight (215)728–9273 or [bknight@leeway.org](mailto:bknight@leeway.org)

### **ABOUT LEEWAY**

The Leeway Foundation supports women, trans\* and gender nonconforming artists and cultural producers working in communities at the intersection of art, culture, and social change. Through our grantmaking and other programs, we promote artistic expression that amplifies the voices of those on the margins, promotes sustainable and healthy communities, and works in the service of movements for economic and social justice. For more information about Leeway, its grant programs, grantees, and events, visit [leeway.org](http://leeway.org).

*\*Leeway is a trans-affirming organization committed to gender self-determination, and we use the term “trans” in its most inclusive sense, as an umbrella term encompassing transsexual, transgender, genderqueer, Two-Spirit people, and anyone whose gender identity or gender expression is nonconforming and/or different from their gender assigned at birth.*

....

###