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Media Contact:
Denise Beek
dbeek@leeway.org
215.545.4078 x14
leeway.org
[@leewayfound](https://twitter.com/leewayfound)

Leeway Foundation Awards Ten Philadelphia Artists with \$15,000 Transformation Award

The 2017 awards were presented to a diverse group of artists and cultural producers who have worked for five years or more to further social change in Greater Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA – Today, Leeway Foundation announced \$150,000 in grants to 10 women and trans* artists and cultural producers in Greater Philadelphia, acknowledging their commitment to art and social justice that impacts a larger audience or community. This year's recipients work in an array of disciplines, including visual arts, literary arts, and performance.

The 2017 Leeway Transformation Award (LTA) recipients are (in alphabetical order):

Ana Guissel Palma of West Kensington, *Crafts & Textiles and Visual Arts*
Catherine Pancake of West Philadelphia, *Media Arts and Visual Arts*
Cynthia Dewi Oka of Collingswood (Southern New Jersey), *Literary Arts*
Dinita "Princess Di" Clark of Mantua, *Performance*
Erika Guadalupe Núñez of South Philadelphia, *Visual Arts*
Eva Wö of West Philadelphia, *Visual Arts and Media Arts*
Kai Davis of West Philadelphia, *Literary Arts and Performance*
Nehad Khader of West Philadelphia, *Media Arts and Literary Arts*
Sheena Sood of West Philadelphia, *Folk Arts and Literary Arts*
Tawanda Jones of Parkside (Southern New Jersey), *Performance*

A national panel of artists and cultural producers convened to review applications and work samples in this two-stage process. The 2017 panel consisted of Brooklyn-based interdisciplinary artist **Kameelah Janan Rasheed**; Philadelphia-based movement performance artist **Lela Aisha Jones**; Brazilian-American filmmaker **Luisa Dantas**; Chicago-based queer Latinx artist and organizer **Monica Trinidad**; and Oakland-based writer, public health consultant and cultural competency trainer **Willy Wilkinson**. Queer black feminist poet **Alexis Pauline Gumbs** facilitated the panel's second stage.

The next Leeway Transformation Award deadline is May 15, 2018. In addition to the Transformation Award, Leeway offers the Art and Change Grant two times per year. These project-based grants of up to \$2,500 are awarded to women and trans* artists in Greater Philadelphia. The 2018 Art and Change Grant deadlines are March 1 and August 1. Both applications are available on the Leeway website, and may also be obtained by calling 215.545.4078 or emailing info@leeway.org. Interested applicants are encouraged to attend one of the many support sessions offered throughout the year, or schedule an appointment with a foundation staff member for one-on-one support.

Press inquiries and photo requests should be directed to Denise Beek at 215.545.4078, ext. 14 or dbeek@leeway.org.

ABOUT LEEWAY: Leeway Foundation supports women and transgender 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.

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**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.*

2017 Leeway Transformation Awardees

Ana Guissel Palma

Neighborhood: West Kensington

Discipline: Crafts & Textiles and Visual Arts

Social Change Intent: Cultural preservation; Displacement, migration, and immigration

Born in Mexico, Ana Guissel Palma is an artist based in Philadelphia since 1999, originally trained as a muralist since 2002. Ana started art and crafts initiatives aiming to preserve the cultural identities of immigrant groups of Meso American (region and cultural area of parts of Mexico and Central America) descendants, while assimilating the new culture embraced in the Philadelphia area. The art made with the immigrant community has brought them to venues such as the Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia Museum of Art, UPenn Museum, and The Kimmel Center, among others.

Catherine Pancake

Neighborhood: West Philadelphia

Discipline: Media Arts and Visual Arts

Social Change Intent: Cultural preservation; Environmental justice; Transgender justice/gender self-determination

Catherine Pancake is an award-winning visual and sound artist whose film, installation, and fine art works address social critique and change as well as formal ingenuity and experimentation. Catherine's work has been exhibited in major museums (Museum of Modern Art - MoMA) and critiqued in international art publications like *Artforum*. Nonetheless, Catherine views their practice as deeply rooted in the local & personal, exploring their immediate community in Pennsylvania, their identity as a queer/trans person/parent, and on-going explorations of ecological/environmental/family trauma and healing. Catherine also engages in a rigorous practice of curating and supporting fellow artists through a fine arts gallery in their home. Catherine is also an educator teaching at Temple University with research interests in the relationship of queerness and sound, as well as pedagogical approaches to overcoming inequity in high school technical training for students in freshman film and media arts classes.

Cynthia Dewi Oka

Neighborhood: Collingswood

Discipline: Literary Arts

Social Change Intent: Displacement, migration, and immigration; Ending war: militarization, criminalization, and mass incarceration; Feminism

A poet and immigrant from Indonesia, Cynthia Dewi Oka interrogates the way power operates in intimate and public life at the intersections of race, gender, class and nation, with specific attention to constructions of body, memory, and violence. She is the author of two books of poems: *Salvage: Poems* (Northwestern University Press, 2017) and *Nomad of Salt and Hard Water* (Thread Makes Blanket, 2016). Her poetics is informed by her work as an organizer with immigrants and communities of color, and her organizing extends from the empathetic and transformative capacities of poetry, where through language, disappeared and disparate worlds can co-exist. Recently, she created *Sanctuary: A Migrant Poetry Workshop* for immigrant poets in Philadelphia with the support of a 2016 Leeway Foundation Art and Change Grant. She is the proud mom of a young musician, a Community Organizer with the New Sanctuary Movement of Philadelphia, and has served as a Poetry Mentor for *The Blueshift Journal's* Speakeasy Project, an online workshop series for emerging poets from marginalized communities. A three-time Pushcart Prize Nominee, she has received the Fifth Wednesday Journal Editor's Prize in Poetry, and scholarships from Voices of Our Nations and the Vermont Studio Center.

Dinita “Princess Di” Clark**Neighborhood: Mantua****Discipline: Performance****Social Change Intent: Cultural preservation; Feminism**

Di’nita “Princess Di” Clark has dedicated over 15 years to hip-hop/street dance culture as a professional dancer/performer, educator, mentor, choreographer, competitor, community leader and cultural ambassador of street dance. For the past seven years, she has been dedicated to cultivating the next generation of dance artists, specifically women in hip-hop dance in Philadelphia and beyond. She is known for helping shape the dance community she works in, both at the collegiate and community level. She co-founded Just Sole! Street Dance Theater Company with her husband Kyle “Just Sole” Clark in 2010. The mission of the company is to use hip hop/street dance of many forms theatrically to inspire, empower, innovate, and motivate others to embrace their story and individuality while teaching the culture and history of hip-hop dance. In addition, she also co-founded an educational program called Funky Sole Fundamentals with her husband in 2011. A workshop series dedicated to the preservation of authentic hip-hop, House and Funk styles dance. She currently teaches as an Adjunct Professor of Dance at The University of the Arts, Drexel University, and has also taught at Temple University and Bryn Mawr College. Dinita’s dedication to the positive dissemination of hip-hop dance and culture has made her a cornerstone for women in the Philadelphia dance community.

Erika Guadalupe Núñez**Neighborhood: South Philadelphia****Discipline: Visual Arts****Social Change Intent: Cultural preservation; Displacement, migration, and immigration; LGBTQI social movements**

Erika Guadalupe Núñez is a queer immigrant, artist, and community organizer for immigrant rights in Philadelphia. After emigrating from Mexico at a young age, Erika remained undocumented until she received her green card in 2013. As an artist, Erika’s goals are to preserve and lift up the histories of her people while also expanding to include new narratives that speak to who we are as a community. Erika’s visual art pays homage to her culture and upbringing while simultaneously serving as a tool for social change.

Eva Wö**Neighborhood: West Philadelphia****Discipline: Visual Arts and Media Arts****Social Change Intent: Feminism; LGBTQI social movements; Transgender justice/gender self-determination**

Eva Wö is a queer mixed race photographer, videographer and curator born in New Mexico and based in Philadelphia since 2010. Her current projects include an ongoing queer/trans/nonbinary photo series *AFTERWARDS*, and organizing the annual Hot Bits XXX Film Festival, Philadelphia’s only queer porn festival. She also provides accessible and trade-based or sliding scale photography and videography services to local queer event organizers, activists, performers, artists, and sex workers through a reciprocal approach that aims to empower and uplift collaborators through a uniquely sensitive and responsive process. Her work centers and creates visibility for queer, trans, and nonbinary folks, particularly those who do not see representations of themselves in media, and those who have been made to feel invisible and marginalized. Through artistic facilitation and space creation she develops transformative visuals that answer to the vital need for images of queer liberation.

Kai Davis**Neighborhood: West Philadelphia****Discipline: Literary Arts and Performance****Social Change Intent: Feminism; LGBTQI social movements; Racial justice**

As a black queer woman, much of Kai Davis' work is tied up in her identity. In 2011 Kai began performing poetry and teaching writing workshops, which explored themes of race, gender, and sexuality. For the past four years she has expanded to utilize a combination of poetry, music, visual art, and dance to explore these themes in theatrical productions. Kai performs, co-writes, produces, casts, and directs these showcases, in which marginalized artists come together to communicate through collaboration. Most recently, Kai directed a show in which she and six other artists used photography projections, poetry, dance, and interviews to discuss the body as a map.

Nehad Khader**Neighborhood: West Philadelphia****Discipline: Media Arts and Literary Arts****Social Change Intent: Ending war: militarization, criminalization, and mass incarceration**

To capture the scope of her work, Nehad Khader considers herself to be a cultural historian. She is a filmmaker/curator, a writer, and an editor whose work in film informs her work as a historian and vice versa. Trained in media and literature by Black and Palestinian creators, Nehad believes in art that carries aesthetic excellence as well as social-political significance. She is a programmer at Philadelphia's BlackStar Film Festival and DC's Palestinian Film & Arts Festival, and serves as the managing editor of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*. She is also currently producing a film about Islamophobia with director David Felix Sutcliffe (*(T)Error, Adama*), and writing an absurdist web series titled *Out West* about a changing Philadelphia. Deeply committed to justice in the city of Philadelphia, Palestinian liberation, and stories by creators of color, Nehad's filmmaking and writing combats oppression by challenging simplistic and damaging mainstream narratives.

Sheena Sood**Neighborhood: West Philadelphia****Discipline: Folk Arts and Literary Arts****Social Change Intent: Cultural preservation; Displacement, migration, and immigration; Racial justice**

Sheena Sood is a femme yogini, holistic healer, writer, educator, and activist scholar of South Asian descent, living in West Philadelphia. As an artist, Sheena uses yoga, yogic philosophy, sound healing and Ayurvedic therapy to preserve and share healing practices in accessible ways, namely with marginalized communities. She offers these holistic practices through a critical healing justice framework by grounding them in principles of decolonization, anti-oppression and intersectional social justice. Central to Sheena's practice is the recognition that oppression, as a form of trauma, inflicts harm on marginalized communities; core to her solution is radical healing—a process that builds people's capacity to work for justice by strengthening their sense of resilience and well-being. As a sociologist, engaged activist and healer who believes in transformative change, Sheena curates yoga and healing offerings that preserve and connect our local movements in Philadelphia to a praxis of collective care.

Tawanda Jones**Neighborhood: Parkside****Discipline: Performance****Social Change Intent: Economic justice; Feminism; Racial justice**

Tawanda Jones was 15 years old when she founded the Camden Sophisticated Sisters Drill Team 31 years ago, not imagining that it would become a lifelong calling. Over three decades, the group has practiced wherever they could and mentored over 4,000 Camden youth, essentially becoming a life-saving nonprofit organization disguised as a drill team. In one of the poorest cities in America, Tawanda strives to give its children, their families, and communities purpose and self-esteem, and to motivate and empower them to fulfill their potential.

2017 Leeway Transformation Award Panelists (Stage Two)

Alexis Pauline Gumbs (Facilitator) defines herself as a queer black troublemaker, a black feminist love evangelist and a prayer poet priestess. With a PhD in English, African and African-American Studies, and Women and Gender Studies from Duke University, she was the first scholar to research the Audre Lorde Papers at Spelman College, the June Jordan Papers at Harvard University, and the Lucille Clifton Papers at Emory University during her dissertation research. As an educator, Alexis walks in the legacy of black lady schoolteachers in post-slavery communities who offered sacred educational space to the intergenerational newly free in exchange for the random necessities of life. She brings that approach to her work as the provost of the Eternal Summer of the Black Feminist Mind, a transmedia-enabled community school (aka tiny black feminist university) and lending library based in Durham, North Carolina. Alexis is the author of the forthcoming *M Archive: After the End of the World, Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity*, an experimental and poetic work of literary criticism based on the work of Hortense Spillers and the literary archive of freedom seeking black women, and the edited volume *Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Frontlines* (co-edited with Mai'a Williams and China Martens), and has been published widely on Black Feminist literary practice and Caribbean Women's Literature. Alexis is also a visual mixed-media artist. Her current series of Black Feminist Breathing Collages is touring the United States.

Kameelah Janan Rasheed is a Brooklyn-based interdisciplinary artist, former high school public school teacher, and writer working in installation, photography, printmaking, publications, and performance. In addition to her full-time work as a social studies curriculum developer for New York public schools, she is on the faculty in the MFA Fine Arts program at the School of Visual Arts and on the Board of Directors for Sadie Nash. She has exhibited her work at Jack Shainman Gallery, Studio Museum in Harlem, Bronx Museum, Queens Museum, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 2017 Venice Biennial, among others. Selected as a finalist for the Future Generation Art Prize, she is the recipient of several other awards and honors including Denniston Hill A-I-R (2017), Alumni Award for Art in Community-The Laundromat Project (2017), Harpo Foundation Grant (2016), Magnum Foundation Grant (2016), and Creative Exchange Lab at the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art (2016). She has spoken and facilitated discursive programming at a number of institutions including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the MoMA. A 2006 Amy Biehl US Fulbright Scholar to South Africa, she earned her BA in public policy at Pomona College and her EdM at Stanford University in Secondary Education.

Lela Aisha Jones is a native of Tallahassee, FL who resides in Philadelphia, PA. She is a movement performance artist that intertwines personal history, diasporic movement, and social commentary. The foundation of her work is the individual and collective lived experiences of blackness as archived in and excavated from the body through dance. As the founder of FlyGround, she directs her own artistic projects, the Dancing for Justice Philadelphia Initiative, and The Requisite Movers Program and Performances (co-founded in 2010 by Deneane Richburg). Lela is a 2013 Dance USA Philadelphia Rocky Awardee, a 2015 Leeway Foundation Transformation Awardee, and a member of the inaugural 2015 Innovative Cultural Advocacy Fellows by the Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute in New York City. In 2016, Lela was awarded a Pew Fellowship in the Arts and was also recently awarded a 2017/2018 Diversity Dissertation Fellowship at Bryn Mawr College. She earned her Masters of Fine Arts in Dance at Florida State University and is a current doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University.

Brasilian-American filmmaker **Luisa Dantas** works at the intersection of storytelling, social justice and cities. She produced and directed the multi-platform documentary *Land of Opportunity*, which chronicles the reconstruction of New Orleans through the eyes of those on the frontlines and asks the question: what kinds of cities do we want to (re)build in the 21st century? The project includes a feature film and groundbreaking interactive web platform produced in conjunction with partners in six cities. Luisa co-produced the documentary *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*. Her first fiction film, *Bolo*, was produced in Brasil. She has written for the animated series *Go, Diego, Go!* for Nickelodeon Television. Luisa is currently working as a narrative and communications consultant with nonprofit clients and grassroots advocacy groups. Her work has received funding from Chicken and Egg Productions, Rockefeller Foundation and Ford Foundation. She is also a member-owner of New Day Films. She has taught film production and screenwriting at Tulane University, and received an MFA in Film from Columbia University. Luisa was recently selected as a Rockwood/Just Films Leadership Fellow for 2017-18.

Monica Trinidad is a queer Latinx artist and organizer born and raised on the southeast side of Chicago. Co-founder of Brown & Proud Press and For the People Artists Collective, Monica actively pushes for spaces where both artists & organizers recognize the necessity of cultural organizing, and creates work to uplift and document struggles in Black & Brown communities in Chicago. Since January of 2016, For the People Artists Collective (FTP) has created two radical coloring books entitled *Color Me Rising* and *Color Me Resisting*; created artwork for and participated in four large-scale campaigns challenging police violence in Chicago; and has commissioned artwork and led creative workshops for over 20 different Chicago-based social justice organizations and collectives. Monica has had work shown at DuSable Museum, National Museum of Mexican Art, East Meets World Gallery, and more. Monica currently co-hosts the *Lit Review*, a podcast where organizers interview other organizers about books relevant in this current political moment.

Willy Wilkinson, MPH is a writer, public health consultant, cultural competency trainer, public speaker and spoken word performer. He is the author of the Lambda Literary Award-winning book *Born on the Edge of Race and Gender: A Voice for Cultural Competency*, which illuminates trans experience from a Chinese American and mixed heritage perspective, and transforms the memoir genre into a cultural competency tool. Willy has provided LGBTQ and trans-specific training and technical assistance for hundreds of community health organizations, educational institutions, and businesses. He is the recipient of a National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association award, and the Transgender Law Center Vanguard Award, and is recognized on the Trans 100. He lives in Oakland, California with his three vibrant, young children.