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

*The 2018 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 \$135,000 in grants to nine 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 folk arts, media arts, and performance.

### The 2018 Leeway Transformation Award (LTA) recipients are (in alphabetical order):

**Angela-Sadio** of Germantown, *Folk Arts and Performance*  
**Bonita Elaine Taylor** of Chester, *Crafts and Textiles*  
**Gloria Kingcade** of North Central Philadelphia, *Folk Arts and Performance*  
**Iris Devins** of West Philadelphia, *Media Arts*  
**Jeannine "JBK" Kayembe** of North Philadelphia, *Multidisciplinary*  
**Meg Onli** of West Philadelphia, *Visual Arts*  
**Milena Velis** of West Philadelphia, *Media Arts*  
**Muthi Reed** of LaMott, *Media Arts and Performance*  
**Nuala Cabral** of West Philadelphia, *Media Arts*

A national panel of artists and cultural producers convened to review applications and work samples in this two-stage process. The 2018 panel consisted of Philadelphia-based writer and cultural facilitator **Debora Kodish**, Filipinx-American trans queer poet and educator **Kay Ulanday Barrett**, and New Orleans-based cultural strategist and consultant **Sage Crump**. Trans community organizer, activist trainer, and poet **Nico Amador** facilitated the panel's second stage, joined by San Antonio-based visual artist **Isabel Ann Castro** and South Carolina-based filmmaker and photographer **Roni Nicole Henderson**.

The next Leeway Transformation Award deadline is May 15, 2019. 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 2019 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](mailto: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 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](mailto: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, 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.*

## 2018 Leeway Transformation Awardees

### **Angela-Sadio**

**Neighborhood: Germantown**

**Discipline: Folk Arts and Performance**

**Social Change Intent: Cultural preservation; Racial justice**

Angela-Sadio is a community artist working with social justice and the performing arts to reclaim lost African heritage and empower youth through the arts, creating space for expression and elevated consciousness. As the founder of Camara Arts, “keepers of tradition,” an arts organization that centers African pride and legacy through historical teachings and empowering youth, women, and elders by utilizing African dance and drumming, Angela-Sadio has fostered partnerships with the Bright Lights, FACTS Folk Arts Charter School, the Church of the Advocate, and DanceAfrica Philadelphia. Her goal is to “elevate African Arts to a higher level of legitimacy and respect”.

### **Bonita Elaine Taylor**

**Neighborhood: Chester**

**Discipline: Media Arts and Visual Arts**

**Social Change Intent: Cultural preservation; Economic justice**

Bonita Taylor is a business owner and community leader who nurtures entrepreneurship through teaching sustainability skills (i.e. sewing, cooking, jewelry making, gardening, and farming) to children and youth in her community. She holds a B.S. in General Dietetics from Cheyney State University and an M.S. in Health & Nutrition Education from St. Joseph’s University. Bonita is the recipient of a 2017 Leeway Foundation Art and Change Grant, where she led workshops for predominantly black children from the Sun Village section of Chester, Pennsylvania, and taught them to use their imagination and self-expression to create jewelry that reflects their culture. Her goal is to preserve the art of sewing by teaching it to as many people in her community as possible, and for them to use these skills to find creative ways to sustain themselves.

### **Gloria Kingcade**

**Neighborhood: North Central Philadelphia**

**Discipline: Folk Arts and Performance**

**Social Change Intent: Cultural preservation**

Gloria Kingcade is a nationally renowned line dance instructor who has presented and promoted soul line dancing to thousands in classrooms, workshops, conferences and festivals since October 1998. In January 2001, Gloria founded D.A.S.H.E.R.S. Entertainment Network (Dancing and Singing Help Everyone Relieve Stress), a business she created after leaving a nine-year job as a welfare-to-work counselor. She is an award-winning master instructor who has received an Outstanding Community Service Award from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. in February 2006, the 2009 Master Teacher Trophy from Union Crew Star, and a Five-County Arts Grant in 2007. Gloria has mentored over 40 students who instruct, choreograph and/or perform. She remains dedicated to preserving the “Philly Style” of line dancing although she is sought after by many out-of-town soul line dance groups as a guest instructor.

### **Iris Devins**

**Neighborhood: West Philadelphia**

**Discipline: Media Arts**

**Social Change Intent: Feminism; Transgender justice/gender self-determination**

Iris Devins is a writer, director, and producer. She recently developed a series of narrative films with an emphasis on trans stories. Her short, *After the Date*, premiered at Frameline in 2017. The film portrays a romance between a trans woman and a cisgender, straight man. The relationship flourishes, and they both face oppression from the outside world.

**Jeannine “JBK” Kayembe****Neighborhood: North Philadelphia****Discipline: Multidisciplinary****Social Change Intent: Environmental justice**

Jeannine “JBK” Kayembe is a painter, writer, musical performer and co-founder of LifeDoGrow Urban Farm in North Philadelphia. Most of her writing is rooted in her experience as a world traveler, land steward, and being a queer woman of color (QWOC). Jeannine chooses to paint portraits of people whom the world tries to erase in order to immortalize them, from Henrietta Lacks to her best friend Gizzle, a QWOC rapper. Jeannine describes co-founding LifeDoGrow Urban Farm as the foundation to her creative place-making practice. Through her leadership at LifeDoGrow, Jeannine aims to change the narrative of what environmental justice can mean by changing the environment of her neighborhood into a safer space using healthy food and public art.

**Meg Onli****Neighborhood: West Philadelphia****Discipline: Visual Arts****Social Change Intent: Cultural preservation; Feminism; Racial justice**

Meg Onli is the Assistant Curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania. Her recent exhibition *Speech/Acts* explored experimental black poetry and how the social and cultural constructs of language have shaped black American experiences. Prior to joining Institute of Contemporary Art, she was the Program Coordinator at the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. While at the Graham Foundation, she worked on the exhibitions *Architecture of Independence: African Modernism* and *Barbara Kasten: Stages*. In 2010, she created the website Black Visual Archive for which she was awarded a 2012 Creative Capital/Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant. Onli is currently working on the exhibition series *Colored People Time* which continues her interest in how black American artists utilize language to question structures of power.

**Milena Velis****Neighborhood: West Philadelphia****Discipline: Media Arts****Social Change Intent: Displacement, migration, and immigration; Economic justice; Racial justice**

Milena Velis is a movement storyteller, filmmaker, organizer and educator. Milena spent eight years at Media Mobilizing Project, training and supporting movement media makers and producing media, telling the untold stories of everyday people fighting for a better world. Previously, Milena worked as a local news reporter for *Al Día*, a Spanish-language weekly newspaper covering Philadelphia’s Latino community. She has also built community radio stations with the Prometheus Radio Project, taught journalism at Temple University, and interpreted between Spanish and English in courtroom, community, and healthcare settings.

**Muthi Reed****Neighborhood: LaMott****Discipline: Media Arts and Performance****Social Change Intent: Displacement, migration, and immigration; Indigenous sovereignty/rights**

serena muthi reed works with digital media and design. Reed is an ethnographic artist. Their frequent life patterns of geographic & social migration are the premiere creative avenues for growing and shaping their work. *Krewe Coumbite* is Reed’s DJ/Veejay archive. Their live mixed sets use visual and sonic information as pathways for past/present/future community and kinfolk connectivity. Reed’s work is shaped in relationship -- relationship with people, environment, space, objects, movement, energy.

**Nuala Cabral**

**Neighborhood: West Philadelphia**

**Discipline: Media Arts**

**Social Change Intent: Displacement, migration, and immigration; Feminism; Racial justice**

Nuala Cabral is an award-winning filmmaker, cultural producer, and teaching artist who is deeply committed to the power of storytelling and media to build bridges of understanding and advance social justice. She has taught media production, media advocacy, and media literacy in high schools, colleges and community spaces for the past decade. Nuala developed the youth program at BlackStar Film Festival and currently oversees youth media programs for high school students, including the award-winning journalism program, POPPYN (Presenting Our Perspective: Philly Youth News). Nuala is co-founder of FAAN (Fostering Activism and Alternatives Now), a media literacy and activist project formed by queer women of color. She is also a founding member and alumna of BYP100, a national black youth activist organization fighting for black liberation.

## 2018 Leeway Transformation Award Panelists (Stage Two)

### **Nico Amador (he)**

FACILITATOR

Born and raised in San Diego, California, Nico has worked extensively as a community organizer and activist trainer. Between 2007-2015, he lived in Philadelphia, where he was director of Training for Change, an organization dedicated to developing the skills and leadership of those doing grassroots work, and taking direct action to advance social, economic and environmental justice. Over the last ten years, he has led over 300 workshops, trained over 7,000 organizers and supported groups such as the Trans Justice Funding Project, the Audre Lorde Project, Grassroots Global Justice, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Service Employees International Union, ACT UP Philadelphia, and many others. His poems have appeared in *Poets Reading the News*, *Poet Lore*, *Bedfellows*, *Plenitude*, *Nimrod International Journal*, *APIARY Magazine*, *MiPOesias*, *Big Bell*, *HOLD* and elsewhere. His chapbook, *Flower Wars*, was selected as the winner of the Gloria Anzaldúa Poetry Prize and was published by Newfound Press in 2017. He is an alumni of The Home School and the Lambda Literary Foundation's Writers Retreat, serves as poetry editor at Thread Makes Blanket Press and helped to co-found the Rogue Writing Workshop of Philadelphia, which provides workshop instruction with accomplished poets to those writing and learning outside of academic institutions. His home base is currently a small town in Vermont, where he lives with his boyfriend and three cats.

### **Debora Kodish (she)**

Debora Kodish describes herself as a writer, facilitator, and cultural midwife. She works collaboratively and in multiple media to reclaim and cultivate radical grassroots folklore history, theory and practice. She is currently working on a book about critical folk arts pedagogy: how we teach one another what we need to know and be able to be decent people and to imagine and build freedom. As founder and first director of the Philadelphia Folklore Project (1987-2014), she intended "to grow a community-accountable public interest folklore nonprofit: a place to develop folklore practice in the peoples' interest, for the common good." Over 27 years at PFP, she says, "I was privileged to get a first-rate folklore education from local people committed to folk arts and social change and to creating healthy communities, vital education, and strong movements for justice." Debora formally studied folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland (M.A.) and the University of Texas (Ph.D). More information and links to publications can be found here: [deborakodish.wix.com/wordofmouths](http://deborakodish.wix.com/wordofmouths).

### **Isabel Ann Castro (she)**

Isabel Ann Castro is a visual artist from San Antonio, Texas. She received a BFA in Communication Design from Texas State University. Isabel is a co-founder and art director for *St. Sucia*, a DIY, international Latina/x feminist magazine. *St. Sucia* focuses on collecting, curating and publishing contemporary Latina/x writing and art. Her work *Too Mexican* was featured at the MACLA/Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana's 6th Chicana/o Biennial in San Jose, California. She is a 2018 National Association of Latino Arts & Cultures Leadership Institute Fellow. In her free time, Isabel is an organizer for San Anto Zine Fest, a member of the Creative Women's Alliance, and spins records with Chulita Vinyl Club San Antonio.

### **Kay Ulanday Barrett (he)**

A Campus Pride Hot List artist, Trans Justice Funding Project Panelist, and Trans 100 Honoree, Kay Ulanday Barrett aka @brownroundboi, is a poet, performer, and educator, navigating life as a disabled pin@y-american transgender queer in the U.S. with struggle, resistance, and laughter. He has been a poetry fellow at The Home School, Drunken Boat, and The Lambda Literary Review. He has also been featured on colleges & stages globally: Princeton University, UC Berkeley, Musee Pour Rire in Montreal, Queens Museum, and The Chicago Historical Society. Kay's bold work

continues to excite and challenge audiences. He has facilitated workshops, presented keynotes, and contributed to panels with various social justice communities. Honors include: 18 Million Rising Filipino American History Month Hero 2013, Chicago's LGBTQ 30 Under 30 Awards, Finalist for The Gwendolyn Brooks Open-Mic Award, Windy City Times Pride Literary Poetry Prize. His contributions are found in *RaceForward*, *Entropy*, *APOGEE*, Asian American Writers' Workshop's *The Margins*, *Poor Magazine*, *Fusion.net*, *Trans Bodies/Trans Selves*, *Windy City Queer: Dispatches from the Third Coast*, *Make/Shift*, *Third Woman Press*, Asian Americans For Progress, *The Advocate*, and *Bitch Magazine*. Recent publications include contributions in the anthologies, *Subject To Change* (Sibling Rivalry Press), *Outside the XY: Queer Black & Brown Masculinity* (Magnus Books), and *Writing the Walls Down: A Convergence of LGBTQ Voices* (Trans-genre Press). *When The Chant Comes* (Topside Press) is his first collection of poetry. Check out his work at [kaybarrett.net](http://kaybarrett.net).

### **Roni Nicole Henderson (she)**

Roni Nicole Henderson is a Columbia, South Carolina-based filmmaker and photographer. She earned her MFA in Film and Television at Savannah College of Art and Design and was the recipient of the A. Gregory Peeler Fellowship for Graduate Study. Her work has been exhibited in galleries, museums, and film festivals across the country and internationally including Spelman Museum of Fine Art, Leonard Pearlstein Gallery at Drexel University, the Museum of Contemporary Art Georgia, The National Black Arts Festival, Indie Grits, BlackStar Film Festival, Pan African Film Festival, Africa in the Picture Film Festival, and many more. She has published work in the 2018 release, *MFON: Women Photographers of the African Diaspora* and in 2017, she self-published a memoir entitled *Of Grace and Moons: The Making of Grace*. Roni is currently an Indie Grits Lab Filmmaker-in-Residence and her recent work, *bridge/refrain*, was commissioned by the Columbia Museum of Art.

### **Sage Crump (she)**

Sage is a culture strategist who seeks to expand and deepen the work of artists, cultural workers, and arts organizations in social justice organizing. Based in New Orleans but working nationally, she believes in leveraging art, creative practice, and the cultural sector to transform systemic oppressions. Her work with artists such as Detroit-based Complex Movements highlights the way intentional shifts in practice create new strategies that intersect artistic practice and movement building. Sage is currently a Program Specialist for Leveraging a Network for Equity at NPN/VAN and a board member for the Center for Media Justice, and Art2Action, and a member of Alternate ROOTS. Sage's work incorporates complex sciences, emergent strategy and creative practice to imagine and transform in which we live.