

Tacoma Artists Initiative Program 2021 - 2022 funding recipients

[Curtis Ashby](#)



Curtis Ashby is a painter and graphic designer specializing in painting murals, creating hand drawn illustrations, logo design, brand identity and social media marketing. His bold, colorful imagery has been featured on everything from apparel, community murals, magazines, and even on television. From 2016-2018 he created two murals for the City of Tacoma, including a 200 ft. long mural on South Tacoma Way for the Water Flume Line Trail Project. In 2019, he created a large-scale mural for the Tahoma Audubon Society, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Community Award for his work. During the spring of 2020, he was selected by Spaceworks to be a part of their Rapid Response Mural Project. He painting the boarded up windows of three different buildings in Tacoma.

For his TAIP project, Curtis is designing and painting an outdoor mural at, and in partnership with, Tacoma Housing Authority's James Center North property. The mural will be designed to inspire the community that lives and works in the area and will feature birds native to the area on an illustrative background with a geometric pattern and plants representing the cohabitation of nature and city life. He will also create an educational coloring page of the same artwork with the names of the birds and plants. During the execution of the mural, Curtis is working with Tacoma Housing Authority and Tahoma Audubon Society to host two free events for the community where he will briefly speak about his process, the content of the mural, and share information about local places where nature can be observed and appreciated.

[Marit Berg](#)



Marit Berg was born and raised in San Diego, California. She attained her BA in Painting and Printmaking from San Diego State University and an MFA at Washington State University. She settled in Western Washington, where she is a tenured Art Professor at Tacoma Community College. Her main media is painting and printmaking. Marit is interested in subjects that represent the natural world, specifically, animals in their natural habitats and the delicate balance of environmental biomes. She exhibits her work annually at CORE Gallery, Seattle; and is represented by Davidson Galleries, Seattle; Brumfield Gallery, Astoria; and Karin Clarke Gallery, Eugene.

Marit has a fascination with patterns in nature. These may appear in amazing regularity or in an abstract density. What holds true for both is that the way we see patterns allows us to grasp the complexity of the whole. Bird murmurations are an example of abstract pattern densities. Hundreds of thousands of birds will fly in unison, usually at dusk, resulting in moving

abstract patterns of varying densities creating value transitions from dark to light. These patterns inspire her installations on the walls of the gallery using thousands of screenprinted birds. Marit hopes to create an environment, which will encapsulate the viewer and create the similar awe one finds in nature.

[Katie Dean](#)



Katie Dean is an artist and printmaker in Tacoma, who loves vibrant color combinations and natural themes for the foundation of her work. She hand carves and prints linoleum blocks from original drawings to create her images. Katie has had an ongoing interest in storytelling and illustration and will be creating a children's book in collaboration with her friend Katherine Nugent, who is a writer and poet. Katherine recently shared writings that inspired Katie to create images encouraging young readers to imagine different boats as symbols for living a full and peaceful life.

“There's the kayak of energy which symbolizes physical health and wellness and the row boat of unity which symbolizes working together, which are a few examples of concepts we are currently working on.”

Once the project is completed, Katie and Katherine will organize public readings with local libraries and schools as a way to share their story.

[Priscilla Dobler](#)



Priscilla Dobler Dzul is an interdisciplinary storyteller, who creates multimedia installations focused on reframing the context of America's prideful nationalism while critiquing identity and examining the structures of power in our domestic lives. Her work has been exhibited domestically and internationally. Most recently she has shown at Project for Empty Space, Newark, NJ; A.I.R Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; Consulate of Mexico, Seattle, WA; The Northwest African American Museum, Seattle, WA; NARS Foundation, Brooklyn, NY; 125 Maiden Lane, NYC, NY; Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle, WA; King Street Station, Seattle, WA; The Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, Santa Ana, CA and Decentered Gallery, Puebla, Mexico.

Priscilla's project, Generational Root Healing, One Seed a Step II, is a public art installation about acknowledging land rights, displacement of indigenous, black and brown people and native plants through the introduction of invasive species and colonization. Priscilla is interested in redesigning the function of roundabouts throughout our city as positive solutions for sustainable permaculture methods. Through community involvement this project will also address food sovereignty, water accessibility and the need for educational free art classes for all ages to understand the complex ecosystems of our region. Free art classes will include educational hands-on seed bombing and air-dry clay Alebrijes (Mexican folk art mythical creatures) workshops with all materials included starting in late June to

August. In addition, three sister crops of beans, squash and corn will be planted at the sign entrance of Oakland Madrona Park starting with corn in June ending with a community harvest at the end of August.

[Lance Griffith](#)



Lance Griffith is a proud member of the Choctaw Nation. His work is based on Native Pride. Lance works in large-scale oil and acrylic paintings on canvas. His goal is to celebrate Native heritage, through portraits of the Great Chiefs, with vibrant backgrounds and traditional designs.

[Maria Jost](#)



Maria Jost is a Tacoma-based artist whose work is primarily influenced and inspired by the biological sciences. Her small illustrations are made using watercolor, ink and collage elements created from original artwork. Larger projects include From Sea to Shore, a mural in the touch tank of Point Defiance Aquarium, and interactive temporary public art installations in Tacoma and Seattle. Topics of illustrative work and past projects have included human uses and interactions with local flora and fauna, the cycling of energy and matter within an ecosystem, natural selection, the plight of marine organisms, and most currently, neurodiversity and brain health.

Maria's TAIP project seeks to positively influence mental health in Tacoma residents through the creation and distribution of an illustrated brain care tool. A set of cards containing original artwork and brain care exercises will be created and distributed to participants, with directed focus on communities and groups most impacted by mental health challenges. The exercises will be informed by polyvagal theory, the pathology of embodied trauma, and clinical approaches used to foster feelings of safety and prosocial behavior, all science-based approaches shown to positively affect the practitioner's mental and physical state. The artistic imagery will be inspired by neurophysiological structures involved in emotional regulation, physical sensations elicited by the somatic exercises on the cards, and natural patterns found in local organisms and biological communities.

[Kareem Kandi](#)



A native of the Pacific Northwest, saxophonist Kareem Kandi is a performer, composer, and educator. Kareem is a versatile saxophonist and composer with strong roots in the traditions of Jazz, Blues, Classical and Funk, and has been performing throughout the U.S. and abroad for years. While staying true to musical styles of the past, he also keeps an eye towards the future by composing original music as well as new arrangements of timeless songs from the great American songbook. Since 1996, Kareem has been performing both as a bandleader and as a sideman to enthusiastic audiences around the world at concert halls, festivals, and clubs. As an educator

Kareem maintains a busy schedule teaching at The Tacoma School of the Arts as an artist in residence. He also maintains a full studio of forty private students, conducts weekly jazz classes at Ted Brown Music, coaches ensembles for Seattle JazzED, and regularly conducts masterclasses and workshops at schools around the Pacific Northwest. Along with his teaching duties he is also the director of The Kareem Kandi World Orchestra, The Tacoma Jazz Association, and has served on the Tacoma Arts Commission.

For his TAIP project, Kareem will compose a suite of new original music comprised of 8 different songs, each about a specific well known location, district, or landmark in Tacoma. Each composition will feature different elements of style, form, harmony, and rhythm from cultures throughout the world. Kareem will select styles – including Swing, Blues, Funk, and Hip Hop - as they relate to his memories and associations with each location while growing up in Tacoma. Kareem will perform a free live concert of this music.

[Ri'an Kelly](#)



Ri'an Kelly is a fine artist with over 20 years of experience; she specializes in drawing and painting. She believes “Airplane” is a cinematic masterpiece, her favorite direction is left, and she has a hard time not dancing to disco. She holds it together with the support of her amazing (and funny) husband and beautiful daughter.

Ri'an will be creating a project that brings attention to abused, missing, and murdered women from many cultures and lifestyles. Many conditions exist that hinder everything from public knowledge to investigative services. The pandemic has also intensified some of these situations. Ri'an will create and exhibit 7 fine art charcoal portraits and compilations telling some of the stories of these women. Her work will also be made in to large-scale outdoor banners to be hung around Tacoma.

Gene Kemper

[David Long](#)



David Long is a mural artist and sign painter who has multiple goals with his work: He sometimes aims to inspire wonder, and other times to present information that raises awareness and provokes action. Graduating from UPS in 2011, David Long joined the Tacoma Murals Project and began working with Fab-5 that same year. In those experiences, he worked with community members and found art and art education to be a gateway to community growth and empowerment. In 2015, David was commissioned to paint a mural on 11th and Market and he connected with La Resistencia, an undocumented-led group organizing to support people detained at the Northwest Detention Center, down the street from the mural site. He has painted two more murals for the activist group since then. His goal with this work is to present information to raise awareness and to provoke action.

With the help of TAIP funding, David will continue his series of murals for La Resistencia. The last two murals, "Hunger Strike Letter From Women Detained In Pod D1" (2017) and "Quotes From People Detained, Leaders of La Resistencia" (2019) feature words from people detained. This next mural will similarly feature quotes. To create the design, David will connect with leaders who were released from the detention center, who are now helping organize from outside. He will ask them what they want to say/what they want the public to see and he will paint their words. The objective is to amplify voices of people who have been detained here, the people who most closely know this issue.

[Miriam McBride](#)



Miriam McBride is a Fijian born, Tacoma based lifestyle photographer. They are self-taught and the founder of Truth Movement Innertainment, a locally based photography and storytelling company. Their art is both emotionally packed and captivating. They are passionate about capturing images that depict the connection between people and the places they occupy. Their work operates as both art and the documentation of modern history.

Their project "The Spaces In Between: Survival, Pleasure, & Legacy" is a photography series collection of narratives of the Black spaces that have existed, thrived, and provided safety for the Black community in Hilltop. Hilltop has been undergoing many attempts of gentrification, which attempts to erase the Black history, culture, and narratives of this community. This project will uplift these spaces that exist now and those that are carried on through the memory and hearts of those connected to Hilltop so that we can never forget where we've been in order to inform where we are going.

[Adrian Milanio](#)



Adrian Milanio is an R&B artist out of Tacoma. With the majority of touring and live performances on pause during the COVID-19 pandemic, he decided it was time to get creative and to put together a virtual concert for the Tacoma community. His fan base continues to grow with upwards of 10 million streams on Spotify and TikTok through music that connects with his young adult peers and mentorship through R&B legend Ne-Yo.

[Mark Monlux](#)

Mark Monlux is a freelance illustrator and cartoonist. The bulk of his work has been in the adverting and publishing world, his work in recent years has turned to various aspects of Graphic Facilitation; Ideation Illustration, Cartoon Reporter, Sketchnotes, and Whiteboard Animation. He co-founded The C.L.A.W. and is a member of the Graphic Artist Guild, the National Cartoonists Society, and Cartoonists Northwest. He lives in Fern Hill with his loving wife.



As children we were taught to find objects in surroundings. Sometimes these would be out of context, such as in drawings where objects were hidden within a scene like a spatula hidden in the bark of tree, or an iron in a field of flowers. Jigsaw puzzles were another way we learned to organize our thoughts. Our reward would be a view of a larger picture with a sense of accomplishment. In 2019, Mark lost three family members and became familiar with hospice facilities. There was a constant between all the facilities he visited: jigsaw puzzles. On tables by bedsides and in the communal waiting rooms he saw jigsaw puzzles being constructed. They brought forward a familiar welcoming feeling of those bygone times of play and learning. It was a perfect low-key activity that brought enjoyment, of pieces coming together to form a big picture, a gratifying feeling of coming full circle. Those hospice moments inspired an idea. Mark will be creating a puzzle picture of a busy scene filled with people, animals, plants, and buildings, all bustling with activity. Within it there will be hidden objects. This image will in turn be turned into a jigsaw puzzle. Mark will hide some of these puzzles around Tacoma to be discovered by provided clues or chance. He will also be donating a few to local hospices and retirement centers.

Gloria Joy
Kazuko
Muhammad



Gloria Joy Kazuko Muhammad (Joy) is a writer and literary arts teaching artist based in Tacoma, WA (Puyallup Tribe Territory). As a writer, Joy is inspired by spirituality, everyday life, nature, music, and cinematography. She is a graduate of Washington State Teaching Artist Training Lab and facilitates writing workshops rooted in healing and personal development.

Writing workshop bookings: gloriajoymuhammad@gmail.com
 current projects: <https://linktr.ee/whoisgloriajoy>
 stay in touch on IG: @whoisgloriajoy

[Tamiko Nimura](#)



Tamiko Nimura is an Asian American writer and public historian living in Tacoma. She has degrees in English from UC Berkeley (BA) and the University of Washington, Seattle (MA, PhD). Her poems, profiles, essays and interviews have appeared in KNKX, Narratively, The Rumpus, Discover Nikkei, International Examiner, Full Grown People, Heron Tree, HYPHEN, Kartika Review, and Blue Cactus Press. She is a 2016 Artists Up grant recipient and a 2019 GAP Award recipient. She is the author of *Rosa Franklin: A Life in Health Care, Public Service, and Social Justice* (2019) and the co-author of a graphic novel, *We Hereby Refuse: Japanese American Resistance to Wartime Incarceration* (May 2021).

Tamiko's project, *PILGRIMAGE: HOW IT FEELS TO INHERIT CAMP*, is an intergenerational family memoir with 3 large section: “Departure,” “Arrival,” and “Return.” Against the backdrop of a biennial Japanese American pilgrimage to Tule Lake (a former American concentration camp),

Tamiko learns how to grieve the collective losses of her community, the loss of her teaching career, and the early loss of her Japanese American father. The book is an exploration of the personal, historical, and psychological afterlife of Japanese American wartime incarceration.

[Chandler O'Leary](#)



Chandler O'Leary is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, and the proprietor of Anagram Press, a studio specializing in lettering, illustration, artist books, and narrative nonfiction writing. Her work is housed in over 50 public permanent collections, including the Library of Congress, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Yale University, Smith College, Walker Art Center, Stanford University, Washington State Library, University of Utah, Harvard College, the Newberry Library and the University of Washington. Chandler is also the author of the illustrated travel blog Drawn the Road Again, and one half of the collaborative team behind the Dead Feminists letterpress broadside series and book (published in 2016 by Sasquatch Books). Her second book, *The Best Coast: A Road Trip Atlas*, was published by Sasquatch Books in 2019, followed by a companion book of postcards in 2020. Her next illustrated travel book, *On Island Time*, will be published by Sasquatch Books in spring 2023.

For her TAIP project Chandler will be creating an illustrated sketchbook monograph exploring marginalized Tacoma neighborhoods that are undergoing gentrification and rapid change. Her sketchbook will focus on the Lincoln, Hilltop, South Tacoma, and Eastside neighborhoods, and contain 40-60 full-color drawings documenting each neighborhood's details and minutiae—and the change they are undergoing—in real time. Chandler will share the finished sketchbook in a free virtual artist talk in 2022, and also discuss her process of developing and maintaining a sketchbook practice in general. Chandler's hope is that, in addition to documenting Tacoma's living history and changing cityscape, she can help inspire others to document their own communities through drawing.

[Gerardo Peña](#)



Gerardo Peña, better known as Periko the Artist, was born in Queretaro, Mexico, but his family moved when he was a young child to the state of Washington. Periko was raised up and down King County and eventually settled in Tacoma. With a background in business management, and with the current political climate, as a DACA recipient, he felt that the time was now or never to focus his energy as an artist. Typically a surrealist painter, Periko, has been expanding into the public art and multimedia world. His art is an introspection of his journey into self-identity and an emotional response of the world around him.

Periko's TAIP-funded project is to paint a mural near the entrance of the bottom floor of the First United Methodist Church. This entrance is used for the food bank, "My Sisters Pantry", and possibly other programs in the

future that will help feed those in need in our community. Currently, the space, looks very gray. Periko's goal is to transform the space and make it look more inviting and at the same time make an image that represents unity, diversity, and solidarity while using images that represent people dealing with food insecurity.

[Kellie Richardson](#)



Kellie Richardson is a writer, artist and educator born and raised in Tacoma. Her work explores the intersection of race, class, and gender with specific emphasis on themes of love, loss and longing. As the 2017-2019 Tacoma Poet Laureate, Kellie worked to ensure literary arts are both accessible to and representative of the diversity of the community. Kellie has published two collections of poetry, [What Us Is](#) and [The Art of Naming My Pain](#), both published by Blue Cactus Press. Kellie's work explores the healing power of disruption, reclamation, and joy as well as the criticality of rage, grief, and chaos. She believes her work has one purpose: to be used as a tool for liberation and healing. Sometimes through provocation or confession, other times through belly laughs or tears, Kellie works to center the beauty and power of everyday folk, and put some funk into the dread we call survival.

Kellie's project, *Realized*, will be a collection of mixed media collage and graphic poetry exploring Blackness devoid of the impacts of slavery, colonization, and generational trauma. The collection will center three primary questions:

1. What gifts, wonder, and legacy were irrevocably changed by America's slave trade (economic, social, political, arts and culture)?
 2. What connotations and possibilities would be associated with the term "Black" had it not been for a patriarchal, White supremacist agenda?
 3. What is Blackness uninterrupted?
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[Mauricio Robalino](#)



Mauricio Robalino was born in Quito, Ecuador and spent part of his childhood with his grandfather at his solar observatory and botanical garden that he built on the Equator. Mauricio enjoyed his passion for knowledge and storytelling. When he was ten years old he moved to England by ship. The journey took almost a month and on that voyage he fell in love with drawing and painting. Upon graduating from high school, he moved to California to attend business school. Fortunately for him, he took a painting class and botany courses. In 1988 Mauricio created his first mosaic for a swimming pool in Los Angeles. That year he also moved to Washington State. Mauricio lives in Tacoma with his family where they grow many of their own fruits and vegetables. Mauricio strives to practice drawing, yoga, and walking daily.

For his TAIP project, Mauricio will create a suite of video documentaries that follow his creative process. The videos will demonstrate how he creates drawings, paintings, collages, and sculptures in a variety of mediums and

how they all tie together to help to form an amazing experience. The videos and accompanying artwork will be shared via Facebook, [his website](#), and at in-person events at public venues in Tacoma. It is Mauricio's hope that these demonstrations will help others to find inspiration and overcome blocks to their personal expression and creativity.

[Suzanne Skaar](#)



Suzanne Skaar is a multi-disciplinary artist, activist, and mother. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from The Evergreen State College and Master of Arts in International Studies from the University of Washington. Her writing has appeared in The London Reader (UK) and Creative Colloquy's Print Anthology Vol. 6 (Tacoma, WA), and she has presented independent research on topics ranging from the history of immigration in Tacoma (Lynn DiNino's Artist Tripod Series) to secret societies (Portland, OR's Drunken Discourse). She was a panelist for GeekGirlCon's Creative and Chronic Panel on maintaining creative practices for individuals with chronic illnesses and disabilities in 2018 and 2019 and moderated a panel on making nerd culture more accessible for the 2019 Jet City Comic Show. Previously, she worked in education (in Washington State and abroad), the non-profit sector, and vocational rehabilitation services. Over the years she has served on numerous boards, including the City of Tacoma's Human Rights Commission, Radio Tacoma's Board of Directors, and as Vice Chair for Tacoma's South End Neighborhood Council.

Suzanne is excited to be a part of the newest TAIP cohort. Her project is a 2D pixel art game, which relies on humor and empathy to explore accessibility, power, knowledge, and gatekeeping. Players assume the role of a dinosaur roaming city environments loosely based on real places, including many in Tacoma. Suzanne will host a free virtual artist talk in October 2021 to share game progress, the technical aspects of the project itself, and resources. The presentation will touch on what accessibility means in art, community, and our daily lives. Suzanne will also share details for Tacoma residents interested in recording their best roars for non-player characters in the game at that time.

[Cydney Stephens](#)



Cydney Stephens is a photographer and videographer born and raised in Tacoma. As a child, Cydney would use her creative talents to write music and plays, design graphics, take photos, and sing for her school's choir. Cydney is a recent graduate of the Cathy Hughes School of Communication located on the campus of Howard University. Cydney received her Bachelors of Arts in Television Production and Film Media, while minoring in Spanish. While reflecting on her childhood in Tacoma, Cydney felt as though there were not many opportunities for children, specifically black, brown, and self-identified young women, to develop interests in multimedia production. For this reason, Cydney wishes to create an organization, under the helm of her production house that teaches young people how to create, develop, and edit

a production from start to finish.

Cydney's project, *The Rundown*, is a lifestyle talk show dedicated to highlighting up and coming culture-shifters located in the Pacific Northwest. The show's mission is to shine a light on members in the community with hopes to inspire future creatives, entrepreneurs, athletes, etc. to follow their dreams. Each episode will follow one culture-shifter for the day to see what they do, to discover which neighborhood(s) they serve, and to learn more about why they do what they do. Episodes will air weekly on *The Rundown* Official YouTube page.

Jacob Sunday



Jacob Sunday is a filmmaker and graduate of The Evergreen State College who lives in Tacoma. He has worked professionally in film and photography for over 15 years. His resume includes everything from still photography to feature films. Jacob's current film project has been compared to Jan Švankmajer, the Czech animator, and described as beautiful and unnerving.

Jacob's project is a film exploring in the mythology of Baba Yaga, the witch from Slavic folklore. The film seeks to find meaning in her origin and the disturbing nature of witches and cannibalism. The film is drenched in symbolism and influences from both the Slavic roots as well as a blend of current and modern day pressures on women in our society. It explores the conflicts of the ideal mother/wife in juxtaposition with the brutal demands of a capitalist society merging to explain how one who once was in equilibrium with their environment could be forced to sacrifice her own child in the attempts to achieve the goals of a superficial and greedy world. The film was shot using a style called pixilation where the live actors take on the articulation of puppets. This in combination with stop motion and real puppets creates an unsettling and magical experience for the audience and is perfectly suited for a tale telling the origin of a witch.

[Chuck Taylor](#)



Charles (Chuck) Taylor is a visual artist based in Tacoma, specifically of the Eastside and Hilltop. He received his Bachelor of Communication Design from Evergreen State College and AAS Commercial photography from Seattle Central community college. He creates visual narratives inspired by the experience of growing up caught between a collapsing conservative logging town and the rural escapism of redlining communities. By layering distressed drawings, paint, and original photography, the construction and handcrafted quality of his work is still visible in the final image.

"I try to create artworks that invite everyone to re-discover the curiosity we all had as children: to encourage us to see life as full of possibilities and to value our experience in the present."

The spectacle of Chuck's palette, which can be audacious or delicate, also

draws on disparate rhythms. It embraces songs, echoes and repetitions; from the gentlest breeze to the most profound ecstasy.