

## **DiverseWorks Announces 2019 Project Freeway Fellows: Willow Curry and Matt Manalo**



**(Houston, TX, July 17, 2019)** - DiverseWorks is pleased to announce the 2019 Project Freeway Fellows: Willow Curry and Matt Manalo.

The Project Freeway Fellowship Program provides support for Houston-area artists and creative individuals to create socially-engaged or community-based artistic practices within their own neighborhoods. The Project Freeway Fellowship was developed in response to the rapid growth and diversification of the city of Houston and DiverseWorks' desire to support innovative artists' projects that engage all Houstonians, especially in neighborhoods outside of the city center.

From a very strong and diverse applicant pool, the two artists chosen for the 2019 Fellowship are **Willow Curry (Kashmere Gardens)** and **Matt Manalo (Alief)**. Throughout this seven-month Fellowship program, DiverseWorks will advise and facilitate meetings for the Fellows with other artists, activists, and arts professionals to help in the development of their proposed community projects. Each Fellow receives an honorarium of \$5,000 plus production and marketing support.

Willow Curry is a writer from Kashmere Gardens, a historically African American neighborhood bordered to the north by Highway 610 and Hunting Bayou, to the west by Highway 69/59 and by the Union Pacific railroad tracks to the east and south. Kashmere Gardens is one of the few remaining inner loop neighborhoods that has not yet experienced the pressures of gentrification, and Curry proposes to create a community memoir using a variety of tactics - including writing workshops,

capturing oral histories, and live readings. She is excited to have the support of DiverseWorks and the Project Freeway Fellowship to undertake a new community-driven project in her lifelong neighborhood of Kashmere Gardens.

Matt Manalo is a visual artist from Alief, the outer loop neighborhood in southwest Houston that is one of Houston's most ethnically and culturally diverse. Manalo, himself a first-generation immigrant from the Philippines, proposes to create an "Alief Art House," which could take the form of a shed on publicly accessible property where a variety of participatory arts activities can take place.

### **FELLOW BIOS**

**Willow Naomi Curry** is a journalist, essayist, and multimedia artist born and raised in Houston, Texas. She contributes reporting to the Ontario-based digital magazine *kaur.space* and the London-based *Restless Magazine*, and her essays have appeared in the literary journal *Fourth Genre* and the anthologies *From All Corners* and *Mosaics: A Collection of Independent Women*. Willow's interest in communicating ideas across artistic disciplines and her desire to understand and build socially just systems within communities led her to the field of socially engaged, community-based arts, and in 2018 she was awarded a City of Houston Support for Artists and Creative Individuals Grant for a cross-disciplinary project focused on Houston's Freedmen's Town, on which she is currently at work.

**Matt Manalo** was born and raised in Manila, Philippines and immigrated to the United States in 2004. He received his Bachelors of Fine Arts in Painting with a minor in Art History from the University of Houston. His work was most recently seen in the exhibition, *There Is Enough for Everyone*, curated by Michael Stevenson and Josh Anderson, and he was included in the 2018 and 2017 *The Big Show* exhibitions at Lawndale Art Center. In 2017 he had a solo show at Kirk Hopper Fine Art Gallery (Dallas) and he has been included in group exhibitions at venues such as The Center for Reconciliation (Providence, RI), Box 13 (Houston), Mexic-Arte Museum (Austin), and Human Resources LA (Los Angeles), among others. A frequent topic of Manalo's work is how the colonization of the Philippines by Spain, Japan and the United States resulted in erasure, colorism, and a colonial mentality.

### **SUPPORT**

The Project Freeway Fellowship is supported in part by EmcArts, the Houston Endowment, the John Steven Kellett Foundation, and the City of Houston through the Houston Arts Alliance.

DiverseWorks is also supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, Texas Commission on the Arts, The Brown Foundation, Inc., the Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts, the George and Mary Josephine Hamman Foundation, the Heimbinder Family Foundation, the Hollyfield Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the Wortham Foundation.



### **ABOUT DIVERSEWORKS**

DiverseWorks commissions, produces, and presents new and daring art in all its forms through innovative collaborations that honor each artist's vision without constraint.

Founded by artists in 1982, DiverseWorks is nationally known for its groundbreaking programming; as a resource for the innovative and meaningful engagement of communities; and as a force that has shaped contemporary thought and practice in Houston and the nation. DiverseWorks has a long history of supporting the creation of new work, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and as a bridge between diverse sectors of the art community.

DiverseWorks is committed to equitable compensation for artists and is W.A.G.E. (Working Artists in the Greater Economy) Certified. More information at <http://www.wageforwork.com/>.

**DiverseWorks**

at Midtown Arts and Theater Center Houston  
3400 Main Street, Suite 292  
Houston, TX 77002  
(713) 223-8346

Facebook: [www.facebook.org/diverseworks](http://www.facebook.org/diverseworks)

Twitter: @DiverseWorks

Instagram: @DiverseWorks

Web: [www.DiverseWorks.org](http://www.DiverseWorks.org)

###