

**El Museo del Barrio and NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs  
Announce Selected Artists and Organizations for *Talk of the Town: Artist-in-Residence  
with Indigenous and Endangered Language Communities***



Artists selected for *Talk of the Town: Artist-in-Residence with Indigenous and Endangered Language Communities* (L-R):  
Raul Ayala, Radhiyah Ayobami and Cinthya Briones.

**NEW YORK, July 11, 2024** – El Museo del Barrio and the NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) are pleased to announce the artists and organizations selected for ***Talk of the Town: Artist-in-Residence with Indigenous and Endangered Language Communities***.

Following an open application process, three New York-based artists who identify with the immigrant experience were selected to participate in one-month-long residencies at three Community Based Organizations (CBOs), located in Manhattan, Queens and The Bronx, that each support local immigrant communities:

- **Raul Ayala**, a visual artist and educator specializing in community muralism and public art, will collaborate with [The World's Borough Bookshop](#) in Jackson Heights, Queens. With community participation, Ayala will design, fabricate, and ceremonially activate a series of processional banners dedicated to serving this community.
- **Radhiyah Ayobami**, a writer and teacher, will collaborate with the [African Services Committee](#) in Harlem. With community participation, Ayobami will create a guidebook that highlights elements of immigrant survival, including places of worship, restaurants, community organizations and alliances.
- **Cinthya Santos Briones**, a visual artist, educator and cultural organizer with Nahua roots, will collaborate with the [Red de Pueblos Transnacionales](#) in the South Bronx. With community participation, Santos Briones will document their traditional and herbal medicine knowledge and create art through audio, text and other forms in collaboration with plants.

Each selected artist applied with a proposal for a participatory art project that responds to the needs of immigrant community members involved with each respective CBO. Their projects will engage community members, responding to their spoken languages, lived experiences, and influence on New York City. The residencies are meant to enhance the capacity of each CBO to inspire, serve and empower their audiences by connecting them to unique cultural experiences, as well as ensure that community participants are informed of city resources available to them through language access.

*Talk of the Town* is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation.



## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

### Raul Ayala

Raul Ayala stands at the intersection of art and education, with a clear commitment to mural production and public art. Utilizing a diverse range of mediums, from large format paintings to mural fabrications and activations of public spaces, Ayala consistently seeks collaborative and co-creative processes. Currently, Ayala is a drawing lecturer at the Arts, Culture and Media Department of Rutgers University, Newark. His approach to education mirrors his artistic philosophy, fostering spaces for creativity, dialogue and the amplification of voices often unheard. With a continued dedication to his craft that goes beyond borders, Ayala continues to shape the narrative of public art, leaving an indelible mark on communities of the Americas. Having exhibited in Spain, Mexico, Ecuador and the USA, Ayala's artistic journey is mainly produced between New York and Ecuador. He has been honored with several awards in both of these homes for his ongoing public art and mural work.

### Radhiyah Ayobami

Radhiyah Ayobami is Brooklyn-born with Southern roots. Her journey to writing began at the kitchen table listening to her grandmother's stories. She holds a BA in Africana Studies from Brooklyn College, and an MFA in Prose from Mills College. She has received awards from the New York Foundation of the Arts, the Sustainable Arts Foundation and International Literary Seminars Kenya. She has also received residencies from Under the Volcano Mexico, Atlantic Center for the Arts and Breadloaf Environmental Writers Conference. She has been published in several anthologies and journals, including *AGNI*, *Asterix*, *Kweli*, *African Voices*, and *Hispanic Theological Initiative*. Some of her most enjoyable work has been facilitating workshops with pregnant teens, inmates, and elders. Her free time is spent listening to plants, unrolling her yoga mat in random locations, going to her son's basketball games and turning everything into stories.

### Cintha Santos Briones

Cintha Santos Briones is a visual artist, anthropologist, ethnohistorian, educator and cultural organizer with Indigenous Nahua roots based in New York. Her work focuses on a multidisciplinary social practice that uses a variety of non-linear storytelling mediums: photography, historical archives, writing, ethnography, drawings, collage, textiles, sculpture and popular education. Briones holds an MFA in creative writing and photography from Ithaca-Cornell University and a certificate in Documentary Practice and Visual Journalism from ICP. She has received multiple awards and fellowships from Magnum Foundation, En Foco, National Geographic Research, We Woman, Wave Hill House Winter Residency, Mellon Fellow at Hemispheric Institute in NYU and BricLab Contemporary Art. Her work has been published in *The New York Times*, *Vogue*, *New Yorker* and *The Nation Magazine* and exhibited at Sky Blue Gallery, Latinx Project, International Center of Photography, Museum of the City of New York, among others. She is co-author of the book "The Indigenous Worldview and its Representations in Textiles of the Nahua community of Santa Ana Tzacuala, Hidalgo."

## ABOUT THE COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS

### **African Services Committee**

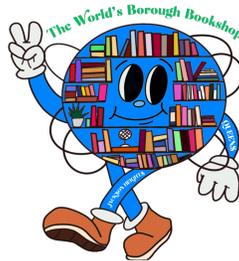
In 1981, Asfaha Hadera—an Ethiopian refugee—founded African Services in his basement apartment in the Bronx providing much-needed services to recent refugees. Today, African Services is a multi-service human rights agency dedicated to assisting immigrants, refugees and asylees from across the African Diaspora. With our staff representing the community we serve, African Services provides health, housing, legal, social welfare, education, nutrition, and advocacy services to more than 8000 people a year in New York City, addressing the needs of newcomers affected by war, persecution, poverty, and other global health inequities.

### **Red de Pueblos Transnacionales**

Transnational Villages Network/Red de Pueblos Transnacionales (RPT) is a grassroots network of Indigenous and rural immigrant groups living in New York City working to advance cultural, social and economic inclusion, recognition and rights. We envision cities where all communities are welcome, included and represented at all levels and with access to all rights, regardless of class, gender, ethnicity or immigration status. RPT results from 17 years of work, starting in communities of origin in Mexico and reaching the United States in 2017. RPT's organizing model is inspired by the organizing traditions from Indigenous communities, including electing coordinating committees that voluntarily work for a period of time representing the interest of the community. Each group has its own governing guidelines, and once a year all groups elect the RPT's Community Organizing Board.

### **World's Borough Bookshop**

World's Borough Bookshop's mission is to create a safe and inclusive space for everyone to discover, read and celebrate diverse literature. By offering a vast selection of BIPOC books, they aim to uplift the voices and stories of underrepresented communities, providing a space for them to connect and empower one another. Their shelves are dedicated to amplifying diversity and inclusivity of BIPOC writers, they opened their flagship in the heart of Jackson Heights, Queens, New York. Queens is one of the most diverse places in the world, with over 130 languages spoken in just one borough. However, despite its diversity, there are very few bookstores around, leaving many areas as book deserts. As a result, many young children, families, and adults lack access to books that represent their experiences, cultures and identities. The lack of owning books in their home leads to issues including economic, social and educational issues amongst others.



### **ABOUT EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO**

El Museo del Barrio is the nation's leading Latinx and Latin American cultural institution. The Museum welcomes visitors of all backgrounds to discover the artistic landscape of these communities through its extensive Permanent Collection, varied exhibitions and publications, bilingual public programs, educational activities, festivals, and special events. For more information, please visit [www.elmuseo.org](http://www.elmuseo.org).

### **ABOUT NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS**

MOIA promotes the well-being of immigrant communities by serving as a bridge between the city's government and its immigrant communities and enhancing, assisting, and advising city offices and agencies in their efforts to serve immigrant populations. MOIA's charter-mandated responsibilities include advising and assisting the mayor, council, and other agencies on programs and policies related to and designed for immigrant New Yorkers; tracking state and federal policy and law that will impact immigrant New Yorkers; increasing access to city programs, benefits, and services by conducting outreach; and helping advise on the legal service needs of immigrants. For more information, please visit [www.nyc.gov/immigrants](http://www.nyc.gov/immigrants).

### **ABOUT OUR TOWN**

Our Town is the National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, the program supports activities that integrate arts, culture, and design into local efforts that strengthen communities over the long term. Our Town projects engage a wide range of local stakeholders in efforts to advance local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes in communities. Competitive projects are responsive to unique local conditions, authentically engage communities, center equity, advance artful lives, and lay the groundwork for long-term systems change. For more information, please visit [www.arts.gov/grants/our-town](http://www.arts.gov/grants/our-town).

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