Healing:

Helping Others, Creating Change & Breaking Cycles



by The Creative Youth Development BIPOC Alumni Council (2021)

(Based on a quote from Alumni Council member Hannah Parker, "Helping others is healing, creating change and breaking cycles is healing.")

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The content of this zine was written and produced by the nine members of the first pilot phase of the Creative Youth Development (CYD) BIPOC Alumni Council. Though I was given the special responsibility of formatting their ideas and writing during the second pilot year, I want to acknowledge the zine's first draft that I received, which was already brimming with originality, passion, and character. The nine council members clearly had become a community and an advocate for youth voice. They spoke for each other, for community, for mental health, and listened to their younger peers. This zine is a document and a testament of their work and their research, we are so grateful to share it in a format which strives to be just as vibrant.

I would especially like to thank and credit CYD BIPOC Alumni Council member, Mattingly Wood, for the beautiful alumni profile spreads. Without their designs, we would simply not feel the personality and energy of the alumni who were devoted to the first phase.

A big thanks, as well, to **Arielle Brown** Mina Kim **Rajaiah Jones Timothea Pham** Carmen Plazas **Denise Montgomery** Käthe Swaback

Foreword

- Amy Chu CYD Program Officer Mass Cultural Council



Goal: To partner with youth in creating safe and brave spaces for alums to develop goals, share stories, creativity, and strategies for greater impact in CYD programs, philanthropy, and communities.

Why is a CYD BIPOC Alumni Council needed?

- 1. To connect alumni to career and support resources
- 2. To create community
- 3. To be a voice for change
- 4. To truly value youth voices and diversity
- the CYD programs.

It's important that the support network of an Alumni Council is established because for a lot of CYD organizations unless the youth are personally in contact with their orgs or have close friends who were alums, once they leave, they are thrown into a world they might not have the tools to navigate through yet.

Having an Alumni Council allows us to all navigate together and to share our knowledge, our experiences, and our resources with youth in CYD organizations.

5. To be a bridge between alums of CYD organizations and the youth in these programs -while they are there and once they leave. Through alums young people are able to learn about opportunities and what life looks like beyond

Meet the 2021

Creative Youth Development BIPOC Alumni Council



My name is Rajaiah Jones and I serve as the Chairperson for the CYD BIPOC Alumni Council. Seeing that this Council was a pilot program, I can say that I took part in a lot of groundwork concerning its operations. This was the first time I have been an overseer of this many people. Doing so challenged me but also allowed me to make dope connections with them. Each of us came in with skills and strengths we could offer. Although there wasn't enough time to tackle all of our interests, I'm proud of what we were able to accomplish with the time we had.

More about myself...

Culture and community have played major roles throughout my life. From attending annual events in my community to being a student at the Boys and Girls Club, Kids in Community at St. Stephens Church, Raw Art Works, and Upward Bound, to interning and working at my local television station, I have witnessed the positive effects of participating in culture and community. I like to call myself a "community kid", as coined by a staff member at Upward Bound who is also from Lynn, MA. I take pride in being from my small community because when we support each other we see how much we can accomplish. As an alumna of many organizations, my first introduction to Creative Youth Development was at RAW. I was introduced to the program through a close family friend who was an amazing artist. At the time, my favorite way to express myself was through my drawings. Yet when I got to RAW, I was exposed to so many different forms of art. Being there opened my mind up to so many possibilities. Two years later I joined their Real to Reel Film School program who had opened their doors to middle school-aged youth just one year

prior.

Film school was a completely different adventure for me. It changed my perception of art. I was a student at Real to Reel from 2011 to 2016 and not only did I learn about various elements of filmmaking and principles, I learned a lot about myself. One of the great things about being a student of a CYD organization is the connection you build with your peers and instructors. It was those connections that helped me learn more and more about myself throughout the years. I am extremely grateful for my instructors who invested in me because I know not every student has that experience. At the beginning of my junior year of high school, I almost quit film school because I felt a lack of support and validation. It was then that a bond was built with my instructors that lasts until this day because they continue to validate and support me. You can read more about the story behind this in my portion of the Racial Equity and Social Justice section.



I am Mattingly Wood and a nineteen-year old Indigenous person/woman. I am a film-maker and artist but I work

Indigenous person/woman. I am a film-maker and artist but I work mostly in film-making as it's my main passion and job. I am a full-time student and an upcoming sophomore at Massachusetts College of Art and Design. I would also label myself as an activist and I fight hard for the recognition of Native American and the oppression they face in the modern-day United States of America, mostly through mine and my family's experiences.

I am an alumni of the Youth Media Program at Cambridge Community Television or CCTV. I was at CCTV from 2016 to 2020. I finished my last summer of the program in the summer of 2020 before I started my freshman year of college.

My main art medium is film-making and I learned how to make videos through Cambridge Community Television so I have been making videos since 2016. Even though my time at CCTV has ended, I have continued to make videos and I am currently studying Film/Video at Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Film-making has allowed me to express my opinions and identity creatively and I am able to control every part of production. Even though I mostly do film-making, attending Massachusetts College of Art has pushed me to work in different mediums, specifically drawing during my freshman year, also known as the foundation year.



My name is Bendu David and I am a Black creative.

My art mediums range from poetry and writing, to dancing and playing instruments. I love being able to paint a world of my own when I tap into my mediums and find solace in how I am able to tell stories. Though all my mediums are special to me in their own ways, I self-identify as a writer and a dancer. I've been practicing all my art forms since I was very young, being introduced to music through my family and starting the violin and choir at my church at age 4. However, it wasn't until high school that I became more passionate about writing and dance, recognizing my passion for writing significantly through WriteBoston's Teens In Print and dance through Hyde Square Task Force. Through writing, I am able to tell so many different stories, both my own and the stories of others. At HSTF I danced on their Ritmó en Accion dance team where I was introduced to various dance forms I had never practiced before, two notable ones I fell in love with Afro-Cuban dance and modern dance. My time at HSTF opened up a greater appreciation for the art of dance for me which I now continue to carry with me. Through dance, I am able to express emotions in ways I could never do justice through words. My favorite thing about my mediums is how they make me whole and can be used to place a spotlight on other passions I hold close to my heart. I believe in advocating for better discussions surrounding mental health, healthy relationships (both externally and internally), and Black Queer & POC representation- all of which are topics I've written about journalistically, academically, or creatively. I am currently a student at the University of Massachusetts Boston and plan on using my resources to continue going about learning and advocating further for the things I believe in.

Nonling alongride my peers with the BIPOC Alumni Council. has solidified in my mind the value of having a Ham. Having a group of people to back you up and who want to understand your risions is vital to any movement. This kinship became especially valuable to me during times Where I felt like I wasn't being heard. We created special bonds within the council and only ever supported ? showed eachother love. Moving forward my vition for creative youth development programs as a whole is for the youth voice to be central to these organizations. I want students to more than sojustile alumni or the be more than solution and or the face of these orgs. I want them to come back and be put in positions of power within the orgs and to be given a larger role while they are still attending. After all, they are the reason these organizations thrive.



My name is Helina Almonte a RAW alumni. My favonik thing about a RAW is the fact the most initiates like gan illustrates the most intimate and illustrates the most intimate and illustrates the most intimate and illustrates the tell in the like for personal feelings, making what can only be felt tangible.

The youth is the future. Literally. Youth voices should be centered and uplifted in to many more conversations but especially in art. In my time wonling within creative youth development spaces live realized this. The students who spaces live realized this. The students who of it all. So why are they not being tooked of it all. So why are they not being tooked of power at said organizations? The years of our adolescence are incredibly special and impactful times. We hold so much poner and have yet to realize it. I thuly believe there is no period of time in our lives more tender and meaningful than that of our youth. There is so much to be expenienced so much change to undergo, so many emotions and so little understanding in the world. It is our duty and a priviley for the rest of us to offer a hand of guidents in helping the youth have a lot to say, and its time Ne start listening.

My name is Helina Almonte, a RAW alumni. му

favorite thing about art is the fact that it imitates life. It illustrates the most intimate and personal feelings, making what can only be felt, tangible.

Working alongside my peers with the BIPOC Alumni Council has solidified, in my mind, the value of having a team. Having a group of people to back you up and who want to understand your visions is vital to any movement. This kinship became especially valuable to me during times where I felt I wasn't being heard. We created special bonds within the council and only ever supported and showed each other love. Moving forward, my vision for Creative Youth Development programs as a whole is for the youth voice to be central to these organizations. I want students to be more than *just* alumni or the face of these orgs. I want them to come back and be put in positions of power within the orgs and to be given a larger role while they are still attending. Afterall, they are the reason these organizations thrive.



Hey all, I'm Jeremy Suh, a member of the CYD BIPOC Alumni Council of the Mass Cultural Council. I am also an alumni of the ICA Fast Forward Film Program.

A little bit about me. My favorite art medium is . . . film, if you could not guess. I have been doing it for the last few years. To be honest, this passion sparked kind of randomly. Let me explain. I had just become a teenager. Obviously, I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. Not too many things excited me, so I was worried I would spend my life stuck in an office working for someone, doing something that didn't interest me. But, on one fateful dinner (ooh suspenseful), I brought this predicament up to my parents. They sat there silently for a moment, thinking over what I said. My father, the natural problem solver, spoke up. "Well, what are some things you

like?"

I had asked myself the same thing multiple times in the past, and the list I came up with was almost always depressingly blank. "Well," I started. "The only hobby I can think of that I definitely enjoy is watching movies."

Then came the moment of truth. "Why don't you try making them then?" This sent my mind spinning. Maybe my father was right about something... However, I did not take any action on this passion of mine until I joined the Fast Forward Film Program a few years later. Since then, it has only been fun and games. I am super grateful for that program. I had no issues - I felt I got the education and support I needed (if only everything were like this). I pray this hobby of mine will lead me somewhere special someday, hopefully to a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow, but only time will tell.

Thankfully, my connection with the ICA led me directly into this position I occupy right now. I do want to take this moment and acknowledge my thanks for this opportunity. It definitely was not perfect, but I think we made do with what we had. As a team, we communicated and planned events virtually - not an easy task. We spoke to leaders of various art programs around the country and consulted them when they brought up their problems. I am proud of the work we did. There should be more equality in the workforce. There is also a gap between generations that needs to be bridged. This program gave me a chance to skim the surface of these issues and push for these necessary changes. I will undoubtedly take the lessons and principles learned in this pilot with me into future work opportunities.

For more information about what we did and who we are, read other parts of the magazine!



I am Sumeya Ali, a visual artist and alumni from Artists For Humanity.

I am a painter, I use a range of mediums such as acrylic paints, and oil paints. I have been painting since 2014 but have been a lifelong artist. I have always been a creative person even as a child. When I began working at AFH I was able to develop the technical skills of painting that allowed me to express myself creatively. Our council was a wonderful opportunity for me to connect with other artists who are also interested in protecting the livelihood and autonomy of young artists. I enjoyed learning about my fellow council members' approach to art and resistance. Seeing a group of visionaries share how they believe our world can be improved is inspiring.











My name is Hannah Parker, better known as Parker, and storytelling is one of my many passions. I have always had a deep desire to share my voice whether it be through writing and performing spoken word poetry, musical theatre, singing and songwriting or public speaking. I believe communication is imperative in the society we live in because it expresses the complex but simple human experiences we undergo daily. It creates color and adds beauty to our lives, well at least I know it has for me!

Growing up I have attended amazing organizations like Raw Art Works and MassLEAP which have allowed me to see myself as an artist as well as provide me with the platform to share my truths with a larger audience. Whether it be 500 people at the Strand Theatre in Dorchester for Louder Than A Bomb or a group of elementary school-aged girls I helped mentor at RAW; I learned that my words had an impact in the world which gave me the confidence to continue this passion!

Now, I quite literally cannot live my life without expression, it starts to feel like I am trapped, and I become depressed because as an artist our labor is our creations and many people do not realize the responsibility that creating is!

I try to take the pressure off of myself by realizing that living my life allows me to mimic life in my art, and just like many artists, I have to create the balance between living and creating which I am hoping will get easier with time.



My name is Mithsuca Berry and I am an artist, healer, and educator based in Boston MA.

I'm an alumni of both Zumix and The Institute of Contemporary Arts. My mediums range depending on what message I'm trying to convey. I love exploring my voice through painting, digital artwork, writing etc. as I feel like each medium allows my story to have a life of its own. I have been a creative since I was really young, and it took navigating CYD programs to fully appreciate my own potential. I have been freelancing since I was 16, and a lot of transformation has taken place since then. The programs I engaged with expanded my imagination for what was possible. This was a beautiful foundation to then build my career and confidence off of. Spirituality made its way into my work when I realized just how much a life of creating HEALED a lot of my trauma. Making me stronger, wiser, and more flexible in how I put my whole body into my practice. I now not only create work but I am an activist and healer for my community. Particularly communities of color are who I serve because our need for emotional release is systematically rooted, and the white supremacy that plagues the art world keeps us from the resources we deserve. My practice is revolutionary for this very reason.



My name is Mariam Ahmed Aare. I was a member of the Institute of Contemporary Art's Fast Forward program in high school. Though I didn't ultimately pursue filmmaking, it got me into film critique and theory. I am also a writer, musician, and DJ. I am a DJ over at Boston College's radio station WZBC 90.3 as well as a music director. I love everything about curating the perfect mix and I especially love my listeners who call. The pandemic has been such an alienating event that it's nice to hear that someone out there is listening. I've always loved music but the past few years have inspired me to learn to make music myself. I am interested in making my guitar not sound like a guitar and am recently getting into producing electronic music like my favorite musician Björk. Music is something so intrinsic to our humanity and I want nothing more than to try to understand and share its power.

Our Accomplishments



A poster for the Art of Healing Workshop led by the CYD BIPOC Alumni Council for fellow alumni

Proposed Activity

Proposed Spending: \$17,820 **Proposed Convenings/Meetings:** 10 CYD community meetings and five Alumni Council meetings

Actual Activity

Actual Spending: \$17,051 **Actual Convenings/Meetings:**

- Helped facilitate 10 CYD community meetings
- Ran 19 Alumni Council meetings
- Participated in two trauma trainings
- Mass Cultural Council
- · Designed, presented, and facilitated five of their own workshops:
 - 1. Youth, Power, and Art with EdVestors: Designed, led, and City of Boston, and Boston Public Schools
 - CYD.
 - 3. Art of Healing: Designed for Alumni of CYD
 - Communities team

Participated in various national CYD funders calls and internal

delivered a Virtual Forum co-led with Alums from EdVestors, 2. Active Listening: CYD call presented to over 40 practitioners in

4. Art and Mental Health: Co-presented with Mass Cultural's

5. Youth Focus Groups: Met with national CYD researchers, Denise Montgomery and Arielle Brown. Designed focus group questions and ran three focus groups with young people from Artists For Humanity, Hyde Square Task Force, and Raw Art Works.

Summary of **Our Learnings**

The CYD BIPOC Alumni Council met each week to discuss ways youth and alumni can be better supported within the CYD community. We also attended ongoing CYD Community Meetings biweekly and various national CYD and Arts Funders meetings as well. Something we noticed and found in these conversations was that there was not enough youth representation.

Because a main goal within the Alumni Council is to ensure that youth voices are encouraged, included, and implemented in program planning, we invited CYD organizations to participate in a focus group session where we aimed to bridge a connection between CYD program youth and alumni.

It was a busy end of the school year, but we were able to meet with CYD researchers Denise Montgomery and Arielle Brown via Zoom, revise our questions and meet with three CYD organizations: Raw Art Works, Artist for Humanity, and Hyde Square Task Force. We desire to continue to collaborate with CYD educators and organizers to fulfill the wants and needs of the youth and to better inform our recommendations as alumni in the CYD BIPOC Alumni Council.

The following is some of what we heard during these focus groups.

Organizations thrive when they offer support:

- home.
- the mentors from the painting studio.
- The youth reported that the mentors are accessible and assistance.
- honest, kind, and respectful the staff are.
- with for advice or just to talk.

Students can talk about what they don't talk about in school/

The current youth feel supported by their mentors, specifically

approachable, especially if the youth have questions or need

 One student shared that though they would rather approach the younger staff, they felt comfortable with most of the staff. Students said had influence in their team and appreciated how

 One student stated that their favorite quality of their group leader(s) was, "how kind and respectful they are and how they listen to everything we have to say." We learned that the youth have someone they can reach out to and make appointments

Concerns and Challenges:

- Some youth said they feel creatively restricted. For example when a youth artist wants to paint a certain image they might be told to change it so it is more palatable. That is limiting to the artists.
- Youth artists are also concerned about the rate of commissions they receive from sold art works, however, they are satisfied with the hourly wage.
- There is little to no say in the way the group is designed. Projects are presented and the student assistants just run with the plan.
- Students feel as though they should have more responsibility and be adequately compensated for all the work they do within the organization. They are working on newsletters, doing fundraisers, and serving as the face of the organization - having great impact while not having much authority within the org (this seems performative).

Student Suggestions:

- their skills.
- world. It would be helpful if the administration was more diverse.
- Students are looking for more conversations centering topics like identities don't resonate with group leaders.
- benefit people who struggle in certain areas.
- Students expressed a lot of interest in a youth-led council.
- Having alumni visit and speak to them more frequently can build
- more comfortably.
- In the hiring process, there should be a priority to hiring alumni over alumni network.

 Youth look forward to their CYD program including more workshops for beginners, as they believe this would be helpful for them to improve

• Students stated that since most of the staff are white, they mostly felt sympathy from staff and not really solidarity when speaking on race. Conversations didn't feel as comfortable because the majority of the staff simply couldn't understand the feeling of how race affects their gender identity and intersectionality. (How can orgs really promote racial equity and not speak on intersectionality?) It seems as though some topics aren't discussed, or maybe even avoided because certain

• When asked what they thought about the idea of office hours with alums, one shared it would be helpful and they would be interested in being put in contact with alums. Another student shared it would

encouragement for students to return. Students expressed interest in an "office hours" kind of setting with alumni in order to be connected to people who understand their intersecting identities more closely. • Students feel like if different identities were represented within the staff, more conversations centering identity would be had and be had

outside candidates, as they have firsthand experience in the org. This is also a way to keep former students in the loop and build a stronger



Reflections on Creative Youth Development (CYD) Values

Youth Voice

"Centering youth voice in the field of Creative Youth Development is essential to lifelong learning for both youth artists and their mentors. When an organization does not place youth and their needs, wants and hopes at the forefront of their programming it is unlikely that the organization will be accepted as part of the youth arts community or communities in general. Organizations must understand that youth do not need a guardian or boss to tell them what to do, rather they require a partnership with a mentor who believes in their right to self-determination."

- Sumeya Ali

"The youth are our future. Literally. Youth voices should be centered and uplifted in so many more conversations but especially in art. In my time working within Creative Youth Development spaces, I've realized this. The students who participate in those organizations are the lifeline of it all. So why are they not being looked at when it comes to being put in positions of power at said organizations? The years of our adolescence are incredibly special and impactful times. We hold so much power and have yet to realize it. I truly believe there is no period of time in our lives more tender and meaningful than that of our youth. There is so much to be experienced, so much change to undergo, so many emotions and so little understanding in the world. It is our duty and a privilege for the rest of us to offer a hand of guidance in helping the youth find their voice and who they are. The youth have a lot to say, and it's time we start listening." - Helina Almonte

Racial Equity and Social Justice

"To be a black student, you are expected to assimilate in the same systems created to reject your humanity.

Many of us are or have navigated our youth from a detached perspective. Watching the body from below as it takes up space - in the places we feel the most invisible. This dissociation can often be the foundation to our peer to peer relationships, familial relationships, experiences with learning etc. Race plays a major role in our developmental journeys. This constant misunderstanding makes it difficult to find safety and security in our environments. This is often why we feel like imposters in every room we walk into. As an educator, do you consider this internal conflict in the students you support? Together let's unpack why intentionality is vital to any learning space, especially ones that specifically reach out to black and brown communities.

Let's revisit the introduction to my point: The mere weight of race has stripped many of us of our childhood. Imagination. Curiosity. These are things that are necessary to have a present experience in learning. The politics created about our right to exist is heavy. It becomes the second voice in your head, aside from your true self. This pressure is often what young black students carry when entering spaces. It sits beside them throughout their time in our programs and beyond. The whole point of it, as mimicked systemically, was made to slow us down. Resources have historically been held out of our reach. Education spaces have historically not been the safest places for us. We are progressing forward, but shouldn't plateau at what should be the standard. Intentionality is the ingredient that could transform this practice. Understand that you are not creating these students, you are their bridge to what's already within them. When you support their passion for music, tutor them, or give back to the community with them, remember that you may be responsible for helping to create one of the few spaces where they can be themselves. Remind our students that there is a life for them outside the confines of their circumstances - while holding ourselves accountable to make that reality accessible."

- Mithsuca Berry

"In my personal statement, I discussed that I didn't always feel comfortable forging a relationship with my other instructors in the past. There was a major disconnect between myself and them. I also felt this separation time and time again throughout my experience in the Lynn Public Schools. The disconnect was having white teachers from middle and upper-class backgrounds who have never lived in Lynn or come from a community similar to my own. I just couldn't relate to my teachers and clearly, they couldn't relate to me. The lack of awareness, acknowledgment, support, and dialogue around my life as a young Black woman from the same working-class community that they worked in was disheartening to me. Students need representation from their staff and administration. It would benefit everyone to have representation from the classroom to the board room to government. When there is a lack of representation, certain perspectives are left out. An environment needs to be created where students and staff can have conversations about what's really going on in their lives - especially addressing how racial climate affects so many Black and brown students. Students need support, not just sympathy. I also believe that students and staff of color should not be put in a position to be the spokesperson for their communities. Therefore, it is imperative that CYD organizations put funds toward racial equity and inclusion training. We cannot run away from our history or put only half the effort in to acknowledge its effects. Having countless meetings, seminars and events on racial equity and social justice is half of the work. We need to see real racial equity and inclusion within CYD staff, administration and boards."

- Rajaiah Jones

Collective Action and Advocacy

In a year where we have become alienated from one another both physically and socially, coming together has never been more important. We have learned that we are far better together as a community than alone. It is only when we unite that we can advocate for collective action. That action can be anything from holding space, working to maintain our mental health, and just listening to one another. We will come together eager to work on the well-being and success of our youth and our community. We will be more diverse, accountable, and collaborative

So what are some things we can do to promote collective action and advocacy? One thing we can do is actively listen. This means sharing the same language, and we are not talking about being able to converse in English. We are talking about being on the same wavelength as each other, through empathy and understanding. People should be able to share the same values and goals. People need to pay attention to what others say, want, and need in order to build a strong connection, and eventually band together for a common purpose.

Inclusion and collaboration is the name of the game. Times are changing. There are so many ways to connect. It does not have to be inperson anymore. With the rise of the Internet, people can come together through email, social media, group chats, etc. The Internet, of course, will never be the same as coming together face-to-face and we are so excited to reconvene in-person. The more ways to convene, the better. The opportunities are endless.

There are many gaps and disregarded problems within our community and country, and thus, we need to raise our voices to battle injustice. Use your gifts for the community. The time is ripe. We need to stand up, showcase the work and power of the people, and make an impact. - Mariam Ahmed and Jeremy Suh

Well-being and Mental Health

With the rise of the importance and visibility of mental health over the years, how it shows up in our lives, and the added strain of the pandemic, we have decided to add Trauma and Mental Health to the list of CYD Values.

"I have always had to pay close attention to my mental health because of how intensely I feel things. I try to give my body its basic needs like sunlight, water, nutrition and rest to create a level of balance in my everyday life but during the pandemic it became a bit harder to pay attention to those needs. Laboring became extremely important to me but I soon noticed that no matter how much art I conceived I could never execute to my greatest ability without seeing myself as a whole person and dealing with my everyday traumas and mental health first. I had to take extra time on the things that were good for me and be extra patient with myself. This looked like breathing, meditating, taking intentional naps and a lot of talking to myself. This year was my first time going to a therapist and it felt liberating taking my health into my own hands and sharing some of the weight I carried in my everyday life. It also really helped being part of the BIPOC Alumni Council. We had several conversations about mental health and the ways in which we as people have struggled mentally during the pandemic but tend to ignore it. That honesty and open space restored so much light in me and reminded me I was not alone. Helping others is healing, creating change and breaking cycles is healing and I feel honored to have been around so many brilliant minds."

- Hannah Parker

"Mental health has always been something of great importance to me. Struggling with my own mental health since as young as 13, it's always been a major thing in my life. However, it wasn't until my senior year of high school that I really started to realize how serious mental health was and how a lack of understanding of warning signs can be detrimental to every aspect of a person's life. I learned this firsthand. During my senior year of high school, I took on a lot of commitments on top of all the schoolwork I already had. In addition to this, my sleep schedule wasn't accommodating for everything I was doing. I was getting 3 hours of sleep at most and then going on to work through 10+ hour days. It had been too much for me to handle and my body's reaction was anxiety. I saw my doctor and a therapist following an incident at school and learned that I was in fact suffering from anxiety in the way I was taxing myself. I had missed all the warning signs. Ever since, I've taken mental health very seriously. I see the ways in which people place physical health over mental health but I think it's crucial to talk about how both are important and vital to understanding. If it weren't for my support nets and the downtime I took to focus on myself, I wouldn't have been able to reach the clarity I have today." – Bendu David

"I have been working on my mental health my entire life but I started to focus more on it during quarantine when I had a lot of time to think about myself and the issues I was facing, mostly with myself. I started online therapy and got medicated for my depression and anxiety after some sessions. I am still taking my medication and attending therapy as quarantine starts to wind down. I am even planning on having weekly or bi-weekly sessions with a new therapist. Through therapy, I am improving my mental health and addressing trauma I have faced and had kept silent among myself since last year. I honestly could not imagine myself without therapy and medication, it has allowed me to see the world in a brighter light and looking forward to my future. I feel like a better person so I can treat myself and other people around me better, which is all I can really ask for in a pandemic."

- Mattingly Wood



What worked:

- Spreading awareness about mental health and the importance of active listening
- Speaking with other leaders of various art programs around the country
- Being able to meet as an Alumni council in our own space and get to know all of the Alumni council members
- Shining light on the importance of youth voice
- Being able to meet weekly

Suggestions moving forward with Phase 2 of CYD **BIPOC Alumni Council**

- We believe that the CYD BIPOC Alumni Council (CBAC) needs to have a social media presence. This is very important because it will help to solidify a sound voice for CBAC and establish a pointplace where people can find CBAC. A social media account for alums would allow for members to post about opportunities like scholarships, programs, or resources they might find and also would make it easier to promote events in the future.
- Connection with Mass Cultural Council at large. We suggest that Mass Cultural Council and CBAC meet at least once a month so that the staff knows who CBAC is and what we are working on and might need support in.
- We suggest that CBAC be introduced to the youth at CYD organizations. Whether this is through an online panel where youth can come in with their organizations or an in-person panel with CBAC members going into spaces and giving a presentation, we

think it's important that the youth know that CBAC exists and is present to benefit and support them.

- For work being done by CBAC, I suggest at least a cycling pay least accomplish this goal.
- Less focus on attending Thursday CYD calls and more focus on tending to events CBAC wishes to curate. Create more opportunities for CYD organizations to speak with CBAC on

system as opposed to a stipend at the very end. If it's not possible for the members of CBAC to be paid on a biweekly schedule, being paid monthly, or in two-three installments would be better than the current pay situation. CBAC is doing real work that should be properly compensated for and a system like this would at the very

intentional meetings about ways to support youth and alumni. • Sufficient time for CBAC to define itself and get to know their peers before being required to plan or be part of an event or external call.