

## 754 Congress Street – Counting from Thirteen

In 2020, Indigo Arts Alliance (IAA) launched the collaborative, community-focused installation, **Counting from Thirteen**. This project – activated initially at 754 Congress St. in Portland, ME – speaks directly to the Black embodied experience in the United States and invites reflection and engagement on how we individually and collectively consider lived history in the United States since the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. This installation, created by Daniel Minter (IAA co-founder; <https://danielminter.net>) and Ryan Adams (<http://ryanwritesonthings.com>) and made manifest at 754 Congress St. serves as a call for introspection and for action. In both inviting a centering inward and a reaching outward and toward each other, **Counting from Thirteen** offers a point of grounding for contemplating how a Culture of Health can be invited to flourish in our communities in this time.

For the initiative we propose here, and in support of this **Culture of Health**, we envision the inviting of artists and cultural practitioners to create works to exist in dialogue with a more permanent installation of **Counting from Thirteen**. The geography for grounding this work is envisioned as a centering of earth, sand and stone. The dialog that will emerge grows from the root of knowing that while Freedom as promulgated by the Thirteenth Amendment is the foundation for personal and community Health, a true **Culture of Health** must actively center the physical, emotional and creative growth of Black, Brown and Indigenous artists. To be centered and nourished is how Culture grows.

Support for this initiative would provide funding for the more enduring installation as well as funding for Black, Brown and Indigenous artists in community to create what each may feel called to manifest: spoken word; embodied performance; musical resonance; video projection; temporary garden; structural installation; community conversation; a space of silence. As the incubator for this vision, we ask: how can the space that surrounds a more deeply anchored **Counting from Thirteen** be activated to support this richness?

Work that could be created within this space and in support of this vision might include:

- In Memoriam - Open call for BIPOC artists and performers to create work in honoring of the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on loved ones and community;
- Sage and Thyme - Summer Garden project - funding to create and maintain a garden installation to also include seed sharing and celebration of food as cultural sustenance;
- Community gatherings - installation/construction of comfortable and accessible seating areas within the garden to create gathering spaces for conversation;
- Community workshops conducted in tandem with other arts engagement projects – by Indigo Arts Alliance as well as by other organizations – in Portland during summer months;
- Projection I Installation Art space - simultaneous projections celebrating both history and the collectively re-imagined *now*, employing the Counting from Thirteen installation as the foundation/backdrop for this work

We believe that time spent in creation of personal artistic expression has value and that the visibility gained (if desired) through recompense for publicly shared work is a necessary re-balancing of social biases around whose artistic visions and expressions have historically and culturally been ascribed value. We believe that art is a key resource for healthy communities and that opportunities to engage the wider community in sharing artistic expression should be cultivated and celebrated. Carried together, we are committed to creating what we envision: a **Culture of Health** dynamically growing toward a more inclusive, humane and just world.