

Black Art Speaks

Building Systems, Not Moments

Peter Niehoff • Board member

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We are not here to ask for inclusion.

We are here to lead.

Are you coming!



Who We Are

A Cincinnati-based ecosystem of creativity and impact

- 150+ artists, designers, and entrepreneurs and mid size businesses
- 501(c)(3) with nearly \$1M annual operations 80% growth over 5 years.
- Born from the Black Lives Matter mural
- Building careers, public art, and community wealth

We don't just create art — we build the systems behind it.

The Pattern

What we see today:

- Black stories are funded
- Black culture is elevated
- But **Black artists are not always centered** in decision-making or economics

*It's not about effort or talent —
it's about who leads and who benefits.*



Real Examples

Where the pattern shows up:

- National selection; impacts local talent
- Black Artist left out of creative process
- Representation disconnected from execution

When we're not in the lead, trust and opportunity leave the community.

The Core Issue

The issue isn't representation.

The issue is power —

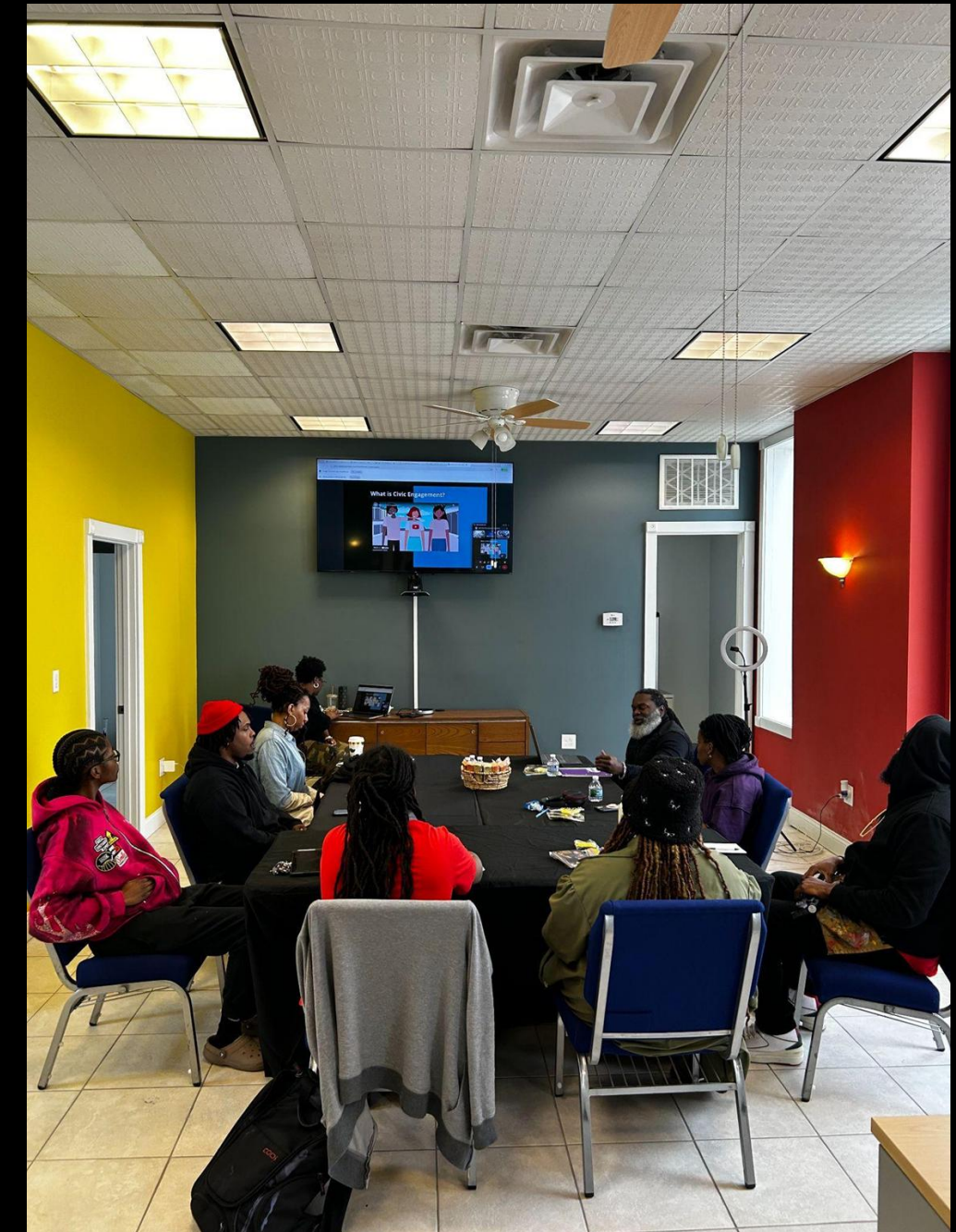
who is trusted to lead, decide, and benefit when Black stories are told and investments are made.

Our Role

Black Art Speaks exists to:

- Train and develop artists as entrepreneurs
- Drive neighborhood revitalization through art
- Build cultural and economic systems that last
- Lead projects with community, not just about community

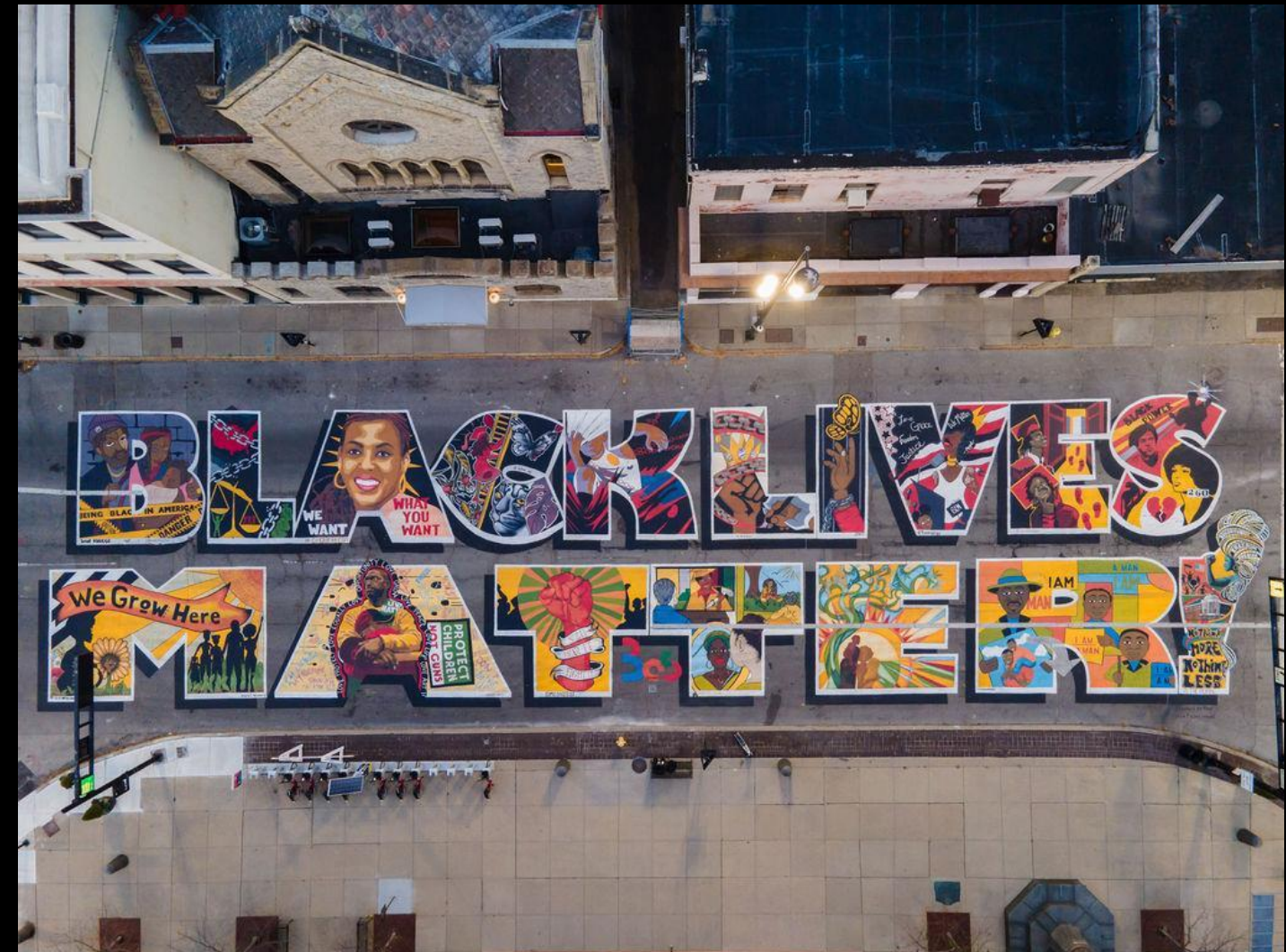
We are the decision-makers closest to the culture.



Our Track Record

- Nearly \$1 million in annual operations
- 30% growth year-over-year
- Partnerships with schools, corporations, and neighborhoods
- Proven artist workforce and youth engagement outcomes

Trust + Results = Readiness to Lead



2025 National Mural
Award Winner

What We're Asking For

- **Lead Locally**
Public funds for Black culture should be led by **Black-led, local organizations.**
- **Share Power, Not Just Process**
We should **co-design and co-decide** funding priorities and partnerships.
- **Build Infrastructure, Not Moments**
Invest in training, entrepreneurship, and systems that deliver long-term impact.



What it Looks Like

- Local preference in City RFPs
- Co-design committees for project selection
- Multi-year ecosystem investment
(*approx. \$400–500K over 3 years*)

The City sets the goals — we build the system that achieves them.

The Vision

When Black artists lead:

- Culture drives economic activity
- Youth see real career paths
- Neighborhoods gain wealth and pride
- The City achieves true equity and inclusion

Cincinnati wins — because its artists do.



Closing

“The art is powerful.
But the system behind the art —
that’s what changes lives.”

*Cincinnati can fund moments... or
build infrastructure that lasts.
Black Art Speaks is ready to
lead.*

