

# SPILL THE TEA

## ON FUNDING



A funding zine made by Jennifer Multani  
and Diane Huang in partnership with

Wove  
Intersections

Dear Reader,

What you hold in your hands is a project that we created with the wonderful artistic co-directors, Jen and David, at Love Intersections. Inside you'll find important musings about the funding system by scholars, drawings of food that you can colour in, and insights from Love Intersections totalling everything from what funders should stop doing to how to maintain important relationships to community and each other.

We created this zine to highlight the work that artists, particularly BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) artists, do that often goes unrecognized or are considered of less importance. Love Intersections' artistic practice is built within community, rather than individually, which funders (the gatekeepers and money bags) don't always view as "art."

After this zine is read, by artists or funders, we ask that you reflect on what type of systems create this disconnect between funders and artists. How do Canadian policies of multiculturalism, specifically drafted to facilitate the removal and colonizing of lands stewarded by Indigenous peoples, affect how BIPOC artists navigate and access funding?

Happy reading,  
Jennifer Multani & Diane Huang  
ACAM 320J Winter 2023



3

Love Intersections is a really cool queer BIPOC organization that creates multimedia artworks (think films, artwork, installation, performance etc) that fights racism from the lens of love and intersectionality. Founded by Jen and David, Love Intersections tackles hard questions, sometimes within Asian communities, on many topics such as activism, anti-racism and queer joy.

The first time we met, we had so much conversation that extended into our second meeting. Jen and David introduced their work and their artistic practice, and we shared some of our ideas with them. To get to know LI better, Jen and David invited us to see their window installation for the DTES Heart of the City Festival. So, we met at the [Lim Sai Hor Kow Mock Benevolent Association Building](#) at 531 Carall Street in Chinatown, which is also LI's artistic home. We also helped install the window art, and Jennifer filmed some of the scenes from the installation for Love Intersections' Instagram!

We definitely wanted to offer our support and capacity to help. We learned about the importance of making equal partnerships in ACAM 320J from the readings from [Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services](#), specifically Chapter 3.



Hopefully, funding bodies start to see the relationships and friendships as valuable to fund too.

In addition, after hearing about how Love Intersections collaborated with the Lim Association to create the film and exhibit “House of 9 Dragons” after they moved into the building, we knew we wanted to also create a lasting relationship with impact.

At the second meeting, we discussed the disparities of funding for BIPOC arts and cultural organizations versus Eurocentric arts forms such as ballet (an example David often likes to use). While the format of our project changed from short social media videos to this zine and a research report, the goals remain the same. Everything LI does is fundamentally rooted in community and the relationships built from the collaborations for films, exhibits, and other projects were hard for funders to “see.” Knowing that LI’s work is very relational, we wanted to highlight these practices in creating community.

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Definitions;

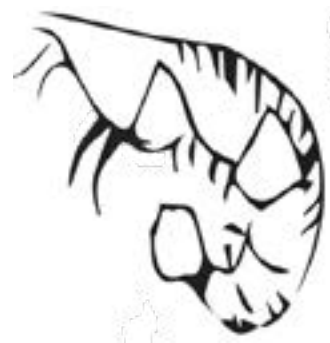
Intersectionality is a concept created by Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw to describe the overlapping experiences of oppression. See her [Ted Talk](#) for more info.



Our project has two parts: a report for ACAM students and students interested in doing community engaged research and this zine. The report was created since there would be more space to put the background academic information that Jennifer has painstakingly reviewed, and we all know how much institutions and academics love their reports. We have a lot of statistics and research that helps the reader know that this isn’t just feelings that have been floating around--there are REAL impacts to funders’ understandings of what counts as “art.”

The zine helps us communicate the really long stuff into a shorter format that can be read and shared by everyone.

You’ll see drawings of familiar foods to us which represents the importance of food to culture. Many Love Intersections’ projects have revolved around food and sharing food and we wanted to bring that aspect into our zine. You can also colour in the zine and make it your own. Create your own mini art piece or share it with friends. There’s no limit to what you can do!



Jennifer read many articles related to funding and multiculturalism policy. Some were reports by the government or funding agencies. Others were very long and written to get a degree. For the most part, our research question looks at reasons for funding disparities for BIPOC arts and cultural organizations, which the articles suggested it was due to multiculturalism policy. After doing some research, we realized it wasn't as simple as multiculturalism policy makes funding harder to get, it was a matter of what assumptions were still being made.

Multiculturalism comes from the Canadian Multiculturalism Act from 1988 by Pierre Trudeau's (PM Justin Trudeau's dad!) government to ensure immigrants' (hint: everyone but white people) cultures would stay "intact" (Lee, 2013, p.ii). Okay, this isn't exactly what happened, but the effect was pretty much this. [Emerald Lee's thesis](#) helps us understand that this policy came about in response to perceived (because we don't actually think these were threats) threats to national identity. This assumed that Canada's baseline culture is that of white Canadians and in two languages: English and French.



For many of us, we English and/or French aren't the only languages we speak. In the funding world, only two languages are important and speakers of these two languages navigate funding much easier. In addition, [Belle Cheung](#), whose thesis is on multiculturalism and theatre funding, notes that theatre programs geared at non-English or non-French speakers are not able to access the same level of financial support (2018).

[Canadian Live Music Association](#) produced a report looking at barriers for BIPOC live music workers. They found that access to funding was one of the main barriers for BIPOC live music workers. 45% of Indigenous, 53% of Black, and 49% of POC respondents said that funding was a challenge. They also found that among barriers in accessing funding, language "barriers", lack of awareness of available funding programs, and insufficient reflection of cultural diversity within public funding frameworks and policies were noted quite often.

So, we can see here that for BIPOC live music workers funding is a challenge. While this is in another industry, the statistics show us that BIPOC worker-artists have greater barriers to accessing funding which is a greater need than for white artists according to the Canadian Live Music Association report.



We asked a bunch of questions related to three themes; funding, community, and about Love Intersections. Under the funding category, we wanted to know things about whether funders give feedback, or if LI had to say things a little differently to funders. One of the things that always come up is ballet.

David found the amount of funding that the Royal Canadian Ballet gets is totalled to around 44-45 million dollars! A good question to think about is: why does ballet get that much money? What makes ballet so valuable to Canadian society? David also tells us that BIPOC artists and organizations are not funded equally compared to white artists:

*"In terms of the pie of arts funding, you know, there needs to be a better redistribution. Whereas you know, the majority 90, I would argue, that 99% of the artists, and I would say 99.99 99% of the BIPOC artists are receiving, I imagine a tiny sliver of that funding"*

A lot of our conversations go back into this idea of multiculturalism and what assumptions funders are making about the types of art that BIPOC artists make.



LI's work is very based on collaboration with community members and other artists. Jen describes the art that they do as *"finding belonging and community is often rooted in this type of in a sense of like solidarity with within marginalized communities."*

Beyond what they produce (such as a film), they also ensure they are creating lasting relationships and friendships, which doesn't always get seen. Community engaged art is also the type of art that many BIPOC artists and organizations tend to do.

This type of art, one that is very based around relationships, is hard to translate for funders as funders often look for "artistic merit." But on whose "artistic merit"? What kind of assumptions are happening behind the scenes?

*"The Indigenous artists who have long had this conversation about [the] types of art and cultures or cultural productions that are, you know, the term intangible art. But how do you, you know, grade, the artistic merit of these types of cultural practices that are really important for communities? You know, it's like it's a big it's a big I think it's like 40% of your-your application is artistic merit,"* says David.



Additionally, when asked about what should change in the funding system, Jen talked about feedback and reporting:

*“Well on a tangible level, no reporting, if anything. Verbal, ask us just hear from us. You know, actually talk to us. Talk to the artist. Give feedback.”*

Other themes, we found through our analysis of the interview transcript, were around LI’s ethical practices and thier relationships to the community they are physically located. It is clear that everything they do is grounded in community. The process of creating and strengthening relationships a key aspect of Jen and David’s art making.

After interviewing them, we can see that their thoughts reflect what scholars and artists have said about the assumptions of what counts as arts and culture for funders. Under multiculturalism policy, Euro-Canadian culture is considered a non-culture. Non-Euro-Canadian cultures are viewed as “adding culture,” which makes Euro-Canadian culture the “base” or the unspoken foundation of Canada. Not only does this erase Indigneous and BIPOC people, this assumption creates funding deficits for BIPOC arts and cultural organizations.



Going back to the first question asked, we learn from talking to Jen and David that getting funding as BIPOC artists is not easy. There are many things they must do to prove that they are “worthy” of, as David puts it, “a tiny sliver of that pie.” While BIPOC artists and organizations have to fight for limited funding, Eurocentric art forms such as ballet do not have to “translate” their art for funders to understand. Ballet doesn’t need to be explained to funders. But, relational art practices do need to be translated due to the funding system’s assumptions of what counts as art and what has merit.

In conclusion, funders do not recognize LI’s art practice that is relational and community based as art due to beliefs stemming from Canada’s federal policy of multiculturalism. We ask: what needs to be done to address these underlying beliefs of arts and culture? How do funders bridge the gap with artists? What needs to be done for change?

#### Acknowledgements:

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