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Press Release

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NEH Announces \$200,000 Grant for the Mechanics' Institute with Funding from the American Rescue Plan

Grant award supports hybrid programming highlighting marginalized communities

(SAN FRANCISCO, CA) – The Mechanics' Institute is honored to have been awarded a \$200,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to fund programming in the “Civil Rights, Artistic Diversity, Historical Reckoning: Exploring the Film, Literature, and Lives of Marginalized Communities” series of events. The grant will support increased capacity and diversity of programming, as well as funding to develop sustainable hybrid options to expand access to events for all community members.

The Mechanics' Institute (Institute) hosts authors, speakers, and experts with the ability to create dialogue through cultural exchange and discussion about literature, film, and historical artifacts and events. This new grant will enable the Institute to create more opportunities to engage in critical thinking, sharing of ideas, and learning by engaging a diversity of presenters on topics related to marginalized artists, writers, and thinkers. Covering a one-year period, the grant supports staffing and resources to develop new programs and acquire the expertise and equipment needed to support hybrid or blended programming, which enables audiences to join live events either onsite or virtually, and thus increase access to the programs.

NEH Acting Chairman Adam Wolfson states, “These new grants will provide a lifeline to the country’s colleges and universities, museums, libraries, archives, historical sites and societies, save thousands of jobs in the humanities placed at risk by the pandemic, and help bring economic recovery to cultural and educational institutions and those they serve.”

The Institute recently hosted programs related to Indigenous lands, universal suffrage, Juneteenth, the work and legacy of James Baldwin, and the history of San Francisco’s Chinatown. Authors from diverse backgrounds have presented their work to audiences, including Roberto Lovato’s *Unforgetting: A Memoir of Family, Migration, Gangs and Revolution*; *White Space* author Jennifer De Leon, Wendy Liu with her book, *Abolish Silicon Valley*, and Frederik Green with Fiammetta Hsu Yin Peh in discussion of Xu Xu’s *Bird Talk and Other Stories*. From CinemaLit Salons to member reading groups, the voices of diverse creators have been centered in many programs at Mechanics' Institute.

Kimberly Scrafano, Chief Executive Officer of the Mechanics' Institute, says, "This grant recognizes the continuing efforts of the Institute to celebrate the voices of the great thinkers, writers, and artists who are often overlooked, and will help ensure that we are able to welcome

new folks – both those in the Bay Area and beyond – into our community. This support will enable us to continue to build the partnerships and programs that speak to the diversity of our members and communities.”

Mechanics Institute. The Mechanics' Institute was founded in 1854 to serve the educational and literary needs of the Bay Area. Located in downtown San Francisco, the Institute offers a vibrant full-service library, a world-renowned chess club, and a host of cultural programs. Each year, Mechanics' Institute produces more than 500 programs and events, including 70 author and literary programs, 285 classes and workshops, and 35 film screenings and salons, as well as a number of cultural celebrations, chess tournaments, and special events. Partnering with local institutions such as Museum of the African Diaspora (MOAD), the Goethe-Institut, Gray Area, City Lights Books, the California Historical Society, the Proust Society of America, ZZZZYVA, and LitQuake, we introduce members to new areas of study and enrichment, while creating opportunities for cultural exchange and dialogue around today's most pressing issues.

Member Bobby Coleman says, “Beyond the membership benefits, I believe in the Mechanics' Institute's mission as an accessible community resource. It's a unique sanctuary for people with healthy curiosities and a desire to learn and grow.” With the support received from the NEH, Mechanics' Institute will be able to extend its reach and make our programs even more accessible to curious individuals both near and far.

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<https://www.neh.gov/news/neh-awards-878-million-arp-relief-funding>

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