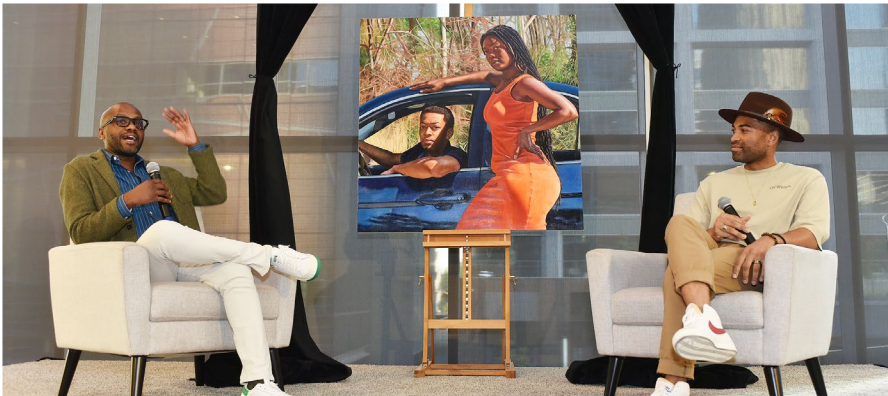




Harvey B. Gantt Center  
for African-American Arts+Culture

# IMPACT REPORT

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY + ARTS + CULTURE



#### OUR MISSION

Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture presents, preserves, and celebrates excellence in the art, history, and culture of African-Americans and people of African descent.

We ignite engagement and conversations that inspire, empower, and enlighten all.

## A NOTE FROM THE CEO

Over the past several years, society has witnessed both great triumphs and tremendous challenges, including a global pandemic and a fight for social justice. Through it all, the Gantt has remained steadfast to our mission.

In 2018, we renewed a long-term commitment to social justice and introduced our Initiative for Equity + Innovation (IEI). With IEI as the foundation, we embrace the full power of the arts to provide opportunities for experiential learning that accelerate progress towards an equitable society, and significantly strengthen and enhance our community.

For five decades, the Gantt has continuously reaffirmed our commitment to the community with engaging programming, stellar exhibitions, and important educational initiatives.

In 2023, over 700,000 guests visited the Gantt since opening the Levine Center for the Arts building in 2009.

With the support of our donors and sponsors, the Gantt has served our community virtually with dynamic programs like the *Unmasked* community conversations, our *Open Air* virtual artist talk monthly series, hybrid programs, as well as in-person programs and exhibitions.



Photo courtesy of Danielle Hicks.

We continue to reach outside the walls of the Gantt through programs like the *Gantt Teacher Institute* (GTI) for K-12 educators and *EnVision Me* photography and filmmaking instruction for students.

With a new focus on digital transformation, including MODA (Mecca of Digital Arts), our digital arts and creative content studio, we are excited about the future.

Our impact is exhibited by igniting engagement, inspiring community conversation, and sparking innovation within and outside of our Uptown location.

If you haven't visited the Gantt recently, we invite you to come and experience, first hand, what we have to offer.

We look forward to welcoming you!

**BONITA BUFORD,**  
GANTT CENTER PRESIDENT + CEO

SOCIAL JUSTICE + EQUITY

# OUR WORK MATTERS

Since our founding in 1974, social justice has been at the heart of all we do.

**CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE**

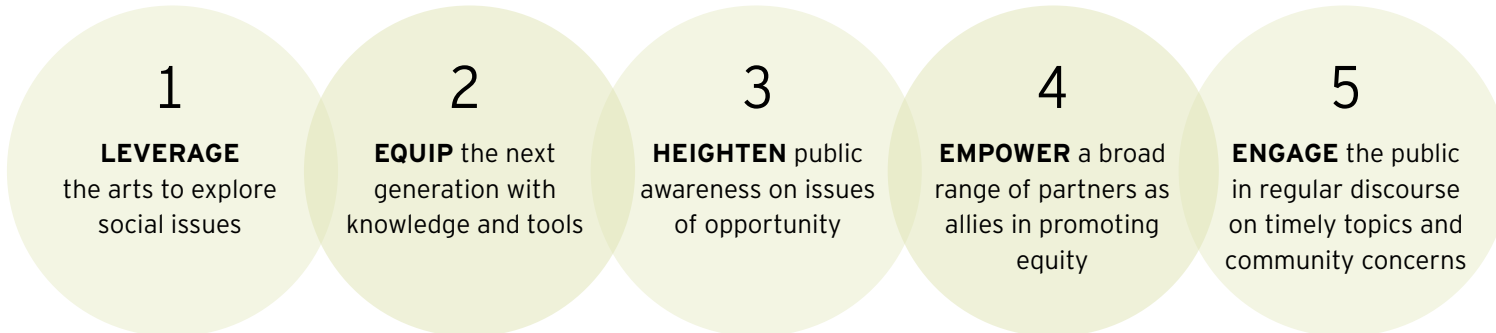
The Initiative for Equity + Innovation (IEI) is a direct response to the police shooting of Keith Lamont Scott in 2016 and the subsequent protests that shut down the city. The findings in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force’s 2015-16 study on intergenerational poverty and the city’s bottom ranking for economic mobility, including Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools’ (CMS) “Breaking the Link” study on poverty and educational outcomes, were also an impetus. As a result of these challenges, the Gantt Center launched IEI as an incubator to address social justice and equity.

Using IEI as a strategy, we leverage our art exhibitions, programs, and relationships with the community and business leaders to help close the cultural divide and develop sustainable ways to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity.

The five pillars of IEI are woven throughout our work:



The Initiative for Equity + Innovation is the Gantt’s incubator to address social justice and equity.



STORIES FROM THE GANTT

**TWO TEACHERS ... ONE GOAL**

What started as a connection between two educators viewing *Question Bridge: Black Males* at the inaugural *Gantt Teacher Institute* in 2019, blossomed into a multi-year partnership between Ellen Loflin, The Cannon School, and Lynn Roach, West Charlotte High School, and their students. For almost four years, Loflin, a Media Arts teacher, and Roach, Civics and American History teacher, in partnership with the Gantt, designed a program with their students' emotional, intellectual, and social growth as their primary goal.

Loflin, Roach, and their students met in person, at the Gantt, at both schools, and virtually, to complete assignments and explore social justice issues borne out of the *Question Bridge: Black Males* exhibition. The academic assignments subsequently evolved into issues that reflected students' lives, experiences, and shared readings of contemporary works, such as Ibram X. Kendi's *Stamped*. This project encouraged students to open their minds to the perspectives of others, even if they disagree. The partnership between The Cannon School and West Charlotte High School, with both diverse geographies and cultures, was fruitful and productive - even surviving a pandemic!

RIGHT: Lynn Roach and Ellen Loflin, *Gantt Teacher Institute*, Fall 2019.

BELOW: *Question Bridge* Program Group, May 16, 2023. © Ben Premeaux, smART Lab.

“ Before judging other’s character, seek for understanding. ”

- QUESTION BRIDGE STUDENT, THE CANNON SCHOOL

“ *Question Bridge* has helped open my eyes to people’s different views of life. If I could go back in time and tell my younger self anything, I would tell myself to take pride in where I come from. ”

- QUESTION BRIDGE STUDENT, WEST CHARLOTTE HIGH SCHOOL





“I wanted to create more positive pathways and ways to represent ourselves and our culture ... the diaspora. I want people to look at the mural and be happy to be within Black culture.”

- **GEORGIE NAKIMA**    BACKGROUND ARTWORK CREDIT: *Earth Keeper*, 2022, Georgie Nakima.

## SUSTAINING CREATIVITY + INNOVATION

# WE GROW ARTISTS

The Gantt is proud to feature the work of celebrated local, regional, national, and international artists. The Gantt's focus is on artists - their creativity, expression, unique experience, and impact. Visual art, in its diverse array of formats, has a home at the Gantt.

### FINE ART AT THE GANTT

Since its founding in 1974, the Gantt has built an impressive collection from works both gifted and acquired by the institution. The John and Vivian Hewitt Collection of African-American Art was created by two avid collectors over a fifty-year period and is the cornerstone of the Gantt's collection. The collection, purchased by Bank of America and pledged to the Gantt in 1998, includes fifty-eight two dimensional works of art created by twenty 19th and 20th century masters including Charlotte native Romare Bearden, Hale Woodruff, Jonathan Green, Ann Tanksley, Jacob Lawrence, Elizabeth Catlett, and Henry Ossawa Tanner.

With this foundation laid by John and Vivian Hewitt and the evolution of contemporary Black artists in media and scale, the focus for the Gantt's collection remains the same - to support future masters and creative leaders of African American art and art history.

### SUPPORTING CAROLINA ARTISTS

We celebrate art and artists! Our events like *Art After Dark*, a creative showcase, exemplify the celebration of Black excellence in a festive atmosphere.



ARTWORK CREDIT: *Past, Present & Future*, 2023, Abel Jackson.

The Gantt launched its first biennial in 2021. *Visual Vanguard: An Exhibition of Contemporary Black Carolina Artists* assembled 25 artists from the Carolinas who create in a variety of vibrant and versatile media. The exhibition was curated by renowned North Carolina artists David Wilson and Stephen Hayes, Jr. The second biennial, launched in 2023, entitled *my Presence is Present*, was an exhibition that navigated through surreal African American experiences as told by 20 artists.

The Gantt is bringing landscape and street art inside the building with rising art star Georgie Nakima's mural entitled *Earth Keeper* and *Past, Present, Future* by renowned muralist Abel Jackson. These are the first of several murals that will be painted on the interior walls of the Gantt.

As a result of our growing national prominence, the Gantt was selected among 18 national organizations of color to receive a \$3 million grant from the Wallace Foundation. This funding will support professional development and artist residencies for social justice creatives in the Carolinas.

## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION + TECHNOLOGY

# THE FUTURE IS NOW

Through the support of our donors and sponsors, the Gantt has served our community with engaging virtual content like *Open Air* virtual artist talk monthly series; art, dance, and writing workshops; hybrid programs; and community conversations. We have met the challenge to provide rich and informative virtual programs for local, national, and international audiences who are unable to visit the Gantt on-site.

### MECCA OF DIGITAL ARTS - MODA

We see the virtual world as the gateway to the future and replaced our traditional classroom with a newly constructed digital arts studio, MODA (Mecca of Digital Arts), which opened in March 2023. MODA is a community asset that furthers digital arts exploration. It has broadened our programming capabilities, and supported other Gantt initiatives.

BELOW: Students and artists in MODA studio.





## PODCASTING WITH NNENNA FREELON

Six-time Grammy® nominee, Nnenna Freelon, accompanied by keyboardist, Andrew Berinson, inspired an at-capacity audience during *Great Grief Live!* Freelon shared mellifluous jazz music woven through her stories of healing followed by an audience talkback about grief and mental health. The live recording of *Great Grief* airs as a podcast episode in her series.



Nnenna Freelon, *Great Grief Live!*, April 26, 2023.



Nigel Malone (center) and students in *Colorful Noise Afterschool Music Masterclass*.

### STORIES FROM THE GANTT

## STUDENTS CREATE COLORFUL NOISES AT MODA

Students from Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and Wilson STEM Academy thrived in the *Colorful Noise Afterschool Music Masterclass*, an introductory audio engineering and music production 3-month class series which took place at MODA.

This series was led by multi-talented artist, Nigel Malone (@nxgxl), founder of *Colorful Noise* music production company. Students also learned from special guest instructors Myles Harris (@mgfmyles), multi-platinum producer, and DJ Pauly Guwop (@djpaulyguwop).

The class concluded with a student showcase where families, friends and the community at-large enjoyed the “demo tape” student presentations, their final project containing original works created during the class series. *Colorful Noise Afterschool Music Masterclass* was a wonderful example of the power of education and community, while celebrating arts and culture.

## EVOLVING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Digital transformation is a thread that runs through all of our work at the Gantt. Our growing Technology and Innovation team produces exhibition videos for the Gantt’s website and YouTube channel, archival video content, and virtual and hybrid programming for enrichment, entertainment, and instruction.



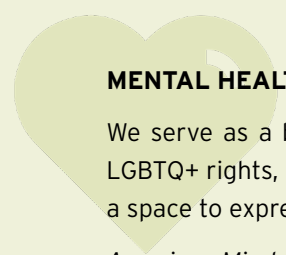
## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + EMPOWERMENT

# A BRAVE SPACE

The Gantt offers brilliant and diverse monthly public programs which reflect the full spectrum of arts and culture for all ages, which include:

-   
*Family First*  
 programs
-   
 Artist  
 workshops
-   
 Author  
 appearances
-   
 Book-signings  
 and talk-backs
-   
 Live music
-   
 Artist and  
 curator talks
-   
 ... and more

The Gantt continues to be the community's first choice for important cultural celebrations like Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Black History Month, Juneteenth, and Kwanzaa. Visitors continue to find rich, diverse programming and events year-round at the Gantt.



### MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN THE FOREFRONT

We serve as a brave space for necessary community conversations. Talks focused on mental health, Black LGBTQ+ rights, and societal inequities are discussed with sensitivity and candor. Audiences appreciate having a space to express themselves freely.

*American Mind: Discussing Black Mental Health* featured a panel of experts who engaged in a talkback with the audience and shared helpful resources on protecting one's mental health. Lively discussions left the audience fulfilled, but often asking "When will the Gantt do this again?"

Community engagement with the Gantt's public programs.

## VALUED EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES + PARTNERSHIPS

# PROVIDING MUCH-NEEDED RESOURCES

Serving, empowering, and engaging communities outside the walls of the building is an important part of the Gantt's mission and the Initiative for Equity + Innovation (IEI).

### EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE: GANTT TEACHER INSTITUTE

The *Gantt Teacher Institute* (GTI) launched in 2019. Originally an on-site program, GTI evolved into a hybrid (virtual and on-site) arts and professional development institute for Charlotte-Mecklenburg area teachers. It is steeped in experiential learning and designed to help educators foster equitable classrooms through the power of the arts. In partnership with Digital Promise®, participating educators can earn micro-credentials upon certifying their proficiency with cultural-competency tools.

### EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE: ENVISION ME

Through generous support of donors, like D. Oscar and Heide Groomes, we have continued the *EnVision Me* program, which seeks to cultivate student creativity by designing culturally rich, project-oriented experiences that support learning through visual teaching strategies. During its pilot year of 2021, in partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, *EnVision Me* provided photography and writing instruction at Marie G. Davis Middle School. In the 2022-23 school year, the program was presented at Julius Chambers High School with a focus on filmmaking. A week-long *EnVision Me* summer camp was also established, where students created individual short films shooting Uptown Charlotte. In the 2023-24 school year, Hopewell High School students focused on filmmaking.



Gantt Teacher Institute, 2019.



EnVision Me Students, 2023. © Ben Premeaux, smART Lab.

**STORIES FROM THE GANTT**

**ENVISION ME - CLASS OF 2023**

EnVision Me introduces high school students to photography, filmmaking, and provides real-life experience with the guidance of seasoned professionals in the field.

“We wanted to get the students to think as artists, think differently, make connections, create meaning, make creative decisions, tell stories using symbolism, understand there can be multiple solutions to a problem, and decipher the millions of images coming at them 24 hours a day,” stated Ben Premeaux, EnVision Me instructor.

Kalea Andrews, better known as “Lavish”, has a bright personality and bright future. Her friends see her value and creativity, even at times when she may not see it herself. As a member of the Class of 2023 at Julius Chambers High School, she experienced the best of times and some more challenging times, especially during the pandemic. Andrews, like her classmates, had a story to tell, stories that people don’t often hear -- she was excited to enroll in EnVision Me. At the end of her 12-week journey studying documentary filmmaking, Andrews was more confident about her goal to start her own business including clothing, music, and art; a bold vision she may not have had have prior to EnVision Me.

**OF THE STUDENTS ENROLLED IN ENVISION ME:**

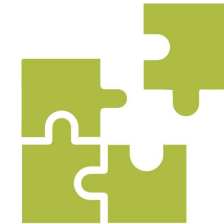
**85%** COMPLETED THE ENTIRE PROGRAM and created their own documentary



**100%** have GROWN IN THEIR FILMMAKING and editing skills

**82%**

STUDENTS GREW IN PROBLEM-SOLVING AND TIME MANAGEMENT through the creation of film



**88%** would REFER A FRIEND to EnVision Me

“

[EnVision Me] has definitely shown me how to trust myself and trust the process, because starting off, I really didn’t know what to do. ”

– KALEA, ENVISION ME STUDENT

## INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT

# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

We are thankful to federal, state, and corporate donors that support the growth and great work that the Gantt offers. We are also grateful for donors including Heide and D. Oscar Groomes, Bertram Scott, J. Porter and Victoria Durham, Jr., Pat Rodgers, and individual donors at all levels, who are our lifeblood and make it possible for the Gantt to present rich programming and exhibitions to the community.

**TOP LEFT:** Harvey B. Gantt with wife Cindy Gantt. **TOP RIGHT:** (Left to Right) Janet Hanson, David Taylor, and Heide and D. Oscar Groomes. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Guests tour MODA Studio. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Dr. Bertha Maxwell-Roddey and Dr. Mary Harper, Founding Mothers.



## ABOUT THE CENTER

Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture is a multidisciplinary arts institution located in the heart of Charlotte, North Carolina. Founded in 1974, the Gantt's mission is to present, preserve, and celebrate excellence in the art, history, and culture of African-Americans and those of African descent through visual and literary arts, dance, music, film, educational programs, theater productions, and community outreach. The Gantt features fine art and history exhibitions from around the world. It is home to the nationally celebrated John and Vivian Hewitt Collection of African-American Art, which was generously donated by Bank of America, and is accessible online.

Named for Charlotte civic leader and former mayor Harvey Bernard Gantt, the Gantt is housed in an iconic, award-winning structure designed by architect Philip Freelon, co-designer of the Smithsonian National Museum for African American History and Culture (NMAAHC).

For more information, visit [GanttCenter.org](http://GanttCenter.org)

SCAN TO VISIT  
[GANTTCENTER.ORG](http://GANTTCENTER.ORG)



Join us on socials! @HBGanttCenter



Harvey B. Gantt Center  
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