

## W■A■G■E■

*What W.A.G.E. Is Working On*, posted on [wageforwork.com](http://wageforwork.com) on January 19, 2017.

Minimum payment standards for artists' labor have never been established by government at the city, state or federal level—that task has been left to us.

In the absence of state regulation, W.A.G.E. introduces mechanisms for self-regulation into the art field that provide both artists and institutions with the means to collectively bring about a more equitable distribution of its economy.

In 2014, W.A.G.E. Certification provided the first set of guidelines and standards for artist compensation in the U.S. In 2017 'WAGENCY' will add mechanisms for their enforcement that enlist artists in sharing responsibility with institutions for the process of shifting the entire field toward something sustainable.

WAGENCY is how we propose to organize an atomized workforce in an unregulated field. It will be a broad-based coalition and artist certification program that provides working artists with the necessary agency to negotiate compensation or withhold content and services from the nonprofit institutions that contract our work.

Artists are contracted workers. We are no different to the millions who supply content and produce value in the gig economy. When we enter into temporary transactional relationships with nonprofit organizations we are content providers—but that doesn't diminish the content of our work. It has nothing to do with what we make because payment is not for the content itself, it is for its provision.

Under WAGENCY, anyone can be an Artist. When a performer, poet, filmmaker, choreographer, dancer, painter, sculptor, illustrator, writer, historian, critic, curator, musician or anyone else provides content for the program of an arts organization they are an Artist.

When 'Artist' becomes content provider and contracted worker, Artist becomes just like everyone else and should expect to be paid just like everyone else. This is a process of emptying out the constructed figure of the Artist as an economic subject and it is a necessary form of decolonization.

The Artist as an economic subject has been designed for self-exploitation and in the context of an (art) world built on white supremacy this subject has been designed to perpetuate systems of oppression. In providing unpaid labor we not only exploit ourselves, we exploit each other. When we participate in a race to the bottom we deny the participation of those who can't afford to work for free.

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WAGENCY will be a tool for self-organization grounded in collective mobilization for all those who need to earn money in order to survive, and who refuse to support a multi-billion dollar industry through their exploitation by it.

WAGENCY will be a matrix of individual boycotts and the articulation of Artists as a labor force. It is an effort to reconcile principles of self-regulation, self-organization, and self-determination with the urgency of both artists and institutions to engage in processes of decolonization, decentralization, and of decentering whiteness.