

Starting with explorations of notable creative practices in collaboration, we partnered with the Hemispheric Institute at NYU, the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies at Harvard University, the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and the Departments of African and African American Studies, English, and East Asian Studies at Harvard University. These explorations yielded a project focused on the cultural complexities of immigration: "New American Studies," which the Rockefeller Foundation funded through a four-year conference-series grant. The successful conferences and subsequent programs focused on the concept we coined as "Cultural Agents," which we adopted as a title for the Initiative at the Bellagio Conference in 2000. Thanks to support from the Ford Foundation, the SSRC convened a conference which resulted in the book *Cultural Agency in the Americas* (Duke University Press, 2006).



“Travesía” Las Tejedoras de Mampuján. (Museo Nacional, Bogotá, 2015)

The Cultural Agents Initiative at Harvard and the NGO seek to increase the impact of creative and scholarly practices by identifying artists, educators, and community leaders who have developed socially productive artistic practices. We reflect on the role of art in building civil society and disseminate good practices through workshops and public forums. Our distinguished guests have included Werewere Liking, Mariam Said, Antanas Mockus, former mayor of Bogotá, and Augusto Boal, whose interactive theater workshops at Harvard produced sequels: our AIDS prevention programs, an anti-discrimination theater program in collaboration with the Equal Opportunities Commission, Symbolic Reparations, Fútbol Viral, among others. Cultural Agents regular activities range from graduate student workshops to conferences on good practices. They include artist workshops in the community, internships, and active learning, both inside and outside the university. Since its inception, Cultural Agents has invited participation from broad constituencies based on collaborators' existing efforts. For example, the conference "Visible Rights: Photography for and by Youth" grew out of visits by

practitioners engaged in collaborative photography projects, "¡Culturas en el aire!" a conference on indigenous language radio gathered programmers who employ contemporary media to sustain local ways of knowing. More recently, we have organized conferences on Symbolic Reparations, Empathy/Compassion, and Cases for Culture. Among our distinguished participants are Salvador del Solar, Renato Cisneros, Pedro Reyes, Carla Fernandez, James Young, Benvenuto Chavajai, José Guillermo Nugent, Marco Abarca, Lurgio Gavilán, Consuelo Saízar, Raúl Zurita, and Alice Flaherty. Our programs are an open invitation to propose scholarly and artistic projects that explore creativity as a resource for non-violent social change; they rest on the belief that imagination is vital to the health of democracies and to the development of ethical, resourceful citizens. We welcome your proposals.