

Journal

Vol. 2/10 Nov. 79

News of The Cultural
Council Foundation
CETA Artists Project

Congressman Weiss Introduces \$60 Million Federal Bill for Employment of Artists

By GROVER AMEN

New legislation to provide a permanent federally supported program for employment of artists has been introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives by Congressman Theodore Weiss (D-N.Y.C.)

Called the *Federal Artists Program*, it would be administered by the National Endowment for the Arts. It provides for an initial outlay of \$60 million for three years. It will create about 6,000 jobs with a provision permitting at least two more years of additional funding and employment, pending Congressional review of program performance.

Rochelle Slovin, CCF Artists Project director, said of the bill: "It has been a great honor for us to

have contributed to the forming of this legislation. It shows what a successful artists' program can do in communicating with the people at a grass roots level. We feel that this bill grew out of the efforts and accomplishments of the CCF and other artists' projects across the country. We are grateful to Congressman Weiss for having the concern and initiative to introduce this bill to the House."

Rep. Weiss, in presenting his bill on the floor of the House, discussed the high unemployment rate among artists. "The NEA programs and, more recently, CETA have alleviated the problem to some degree," he said. "But requests to NEA for assistance far exceed its funding limitations, while CETA is primarily designed to serve other groups of unemployed people. With only a small percentage of NEA grants going to individual artists, and with an already diminished CETA involvement in

the arts, neither program can address the current situation adequately."

Many of Rep. Weiss's comments drew upon the goals and experience of the CETA artists' projects: "Audiences for cultural events have never been larger or more enthusiastic than they are today... It has become quite apparent that the arts need not be confined to a theatre or an institution for the public to respond... murals on neighborhood walls, sculptures in parks and plazas, free street performances for downtown office workers, painting classes in senior centers, concerts on village squares, poetry readings in hospitals, mime troupes in day care centers... the arts have come to the people, and the people have welcomed their integration into daily life (the essence of the CCF Artists Project—Ed. Note)... *The Federal Artists Program* will integrate arts and the artists with every aspect of community life in every part of the country. Painters, for example, could be hired to design murals for subway stations and bus terminals. A potter could conduct workshops at county fairs... Musicians could perform in shopping centers... A sculptor could create his or her works for village squares."

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Stanford Golob

At dedication ceremonies of four murals by CCF/CETA artists at the World Trade Center (above from l to r) Ernest Green, assistant secretary of the U.S. Dept. of Labor, Rochelle Slovin, CCF Artists Project director, and Mrs. Joan Mondale, unveil plaque commemorating Cynthia Mailman's mural in the WTC rotunda. At upper right are (from l to r) Ernest Green, Cynthia Mailman, Mrs. Mondale, and the three other muralists Germaine Keller, James Biederman, and Hunt Slonem. In lower right photo, Mrs. Donald Straus, CCF president, presents Mrs. Mondale with a portfolio hand-made by Susan Share of photographs documenting the CCF Artists Project.



Stanford Golob



Ann Marie Rousseau



Six ceramic tile panels by Lucy Mahler (left) and Nitza Tufino, have been installed in the courtyard of the Third Street Music School Settlement at 235 E. 11 St.

Stanford Golob

Grant for Performing Artists Announced By Mrs. Mondale

Mrs. Joan Mondale has announced a \$646,660 grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to enable the Labor Institute for Human Enrichment to implement an employment and training program for professional performing artists and supporting craft personnel.

Mrs. Mondale said that the program represents a major effort on the part of unions, government, and employers to face the chronic and complex problem of unemployment and under-employment in the arts, entertainment, and media industry through the creation of new jobs in the private sector, the development of training standards and career counseling.

In announcing the program, Mrs. Mondale affirmed her conviction that "Our pride in the vitality and originality of our performing arts should be matched by care and attention to the situation of the artists and of those who back them up behind the scene." □

Congressman Weiss...

Rep. Weiss pointed out, in the bill's favor, that the arts are good for business. He cited a survey by the Chicago Council on Fine Arts which found that every public dollar spent on the arts generated between three and four dollars for business directly and indirectly.

To mention some specific points about the program: salaries for artists would be \$10,000 a year with a limit of three years for each participating artist. (The program itself may become permanent, but not for the individual artist.)

The program would channel funds from NEA to local sponsoring organizations selected by regional, state, or local arts agencies. The sponsors would be required to pay one fourth of the artists' salary for the first year, a half for the second and three fourths for the third year. The idea is that the artist would be fully funded by the sponsor in the fourth year so that, hopefully, the three-year limit would not be an end but a beginning.

The only eligibility requirement is that the artist must have earned at least 20 percent of his income through art work in at least two of the four years

Litmus Test For Strangers

If only I could run a litmus test on strangers,
take the measure of their give and take right in the first encounter. But no,
in the overarching presence I am making of myself
trying to be somebody there for them,
I get confused
amid projections, dimensions of myself overflowing: my kindness, soft touch,
curiosity,
still an idiotic fearlessness, and
worst of all,
the most deceptive history of and faith in love,
a breed or depth of love which
I hardly realize few dream of.

My streaming self pulls me past the person I am trying to know. I try to swim against the current taking me away, and let my gifts, my wants, the dreams they make, screen themselves on this foreign body,

as I'm also standing back in some neutrality
watching, as if after saying "show me what you are,"
which sometimes may make a person feel like a specimen.

This time the upstream struggle yielded a figure
in the waves before me, I was suddenly quite frightened, finding someone who cannot be known
any better than a rolling stone.
Somehow the root systems, the veins, the nerves
of feeling all balled up, so
when I'm holding out a branch of mine for him to match
he just keeps rolling.
Terrifying.
Not only that a life, millions of lives roll like that,
but also that your mind doesn't always, can't
know a stone when it sees one.

—Janet Bloom

prior to his application. Income would play no role—only talent and experience. Nor would community work experience be a factor. Work as a CETA artist would qualify, and there would be no prejudice either for or against CETA artists. Again, only the quality of the work would count.

The next step will be a series of subcommittee hearings throughout the nation, including New York City, to get responses and input for further detailing of the program.

The project would employ visual, performing, and literary artists. It is not intended to replace existing CETA artists' projects nor would it be in competition for the same funds. For further information about this new legislation, contact Arlene Shuler in Rep. Weiss's office in Washington D.C.

The Harlem Book: Going Home Again

By GERSAMI KAREN FREDERICK

When I was hired to participate in the CCF Artists Project, I had no idea that my world-view, energies, and creative visions would be called upon to journey full cycle back to Harlem. As a believer in fate and irony, I silently smiled to myself when, at the Artists Project orientation, several persons informed me of a plan to document the neighborhood life of Harlem at the Studio Museum in Harlem. There was no question in my mind that I would have to be involved. After discussions with Dawoud Bey, who is coordinating the project, it was agreed that we would work together on a guidebook — *THE HARLEM BOOK: A Historical and Contemporary Guide*.

After many visits to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (itself one of Harlem's landmarks), I realized that what we had at hand was a monumental effort to record the highlights of one of the most culturally and historically fertile black communities in the United States — one that consistently conjures up vivid, superlative images.

To be sure, my image of Harlem had gone through many changes in conjunction with my own personal development.

As a child growing up on West 137th Street and Lenox Avenue, it was a subtle process learning

Journal/Vol. 2/10/CCF/CETA News

ISSN: 0194-0732

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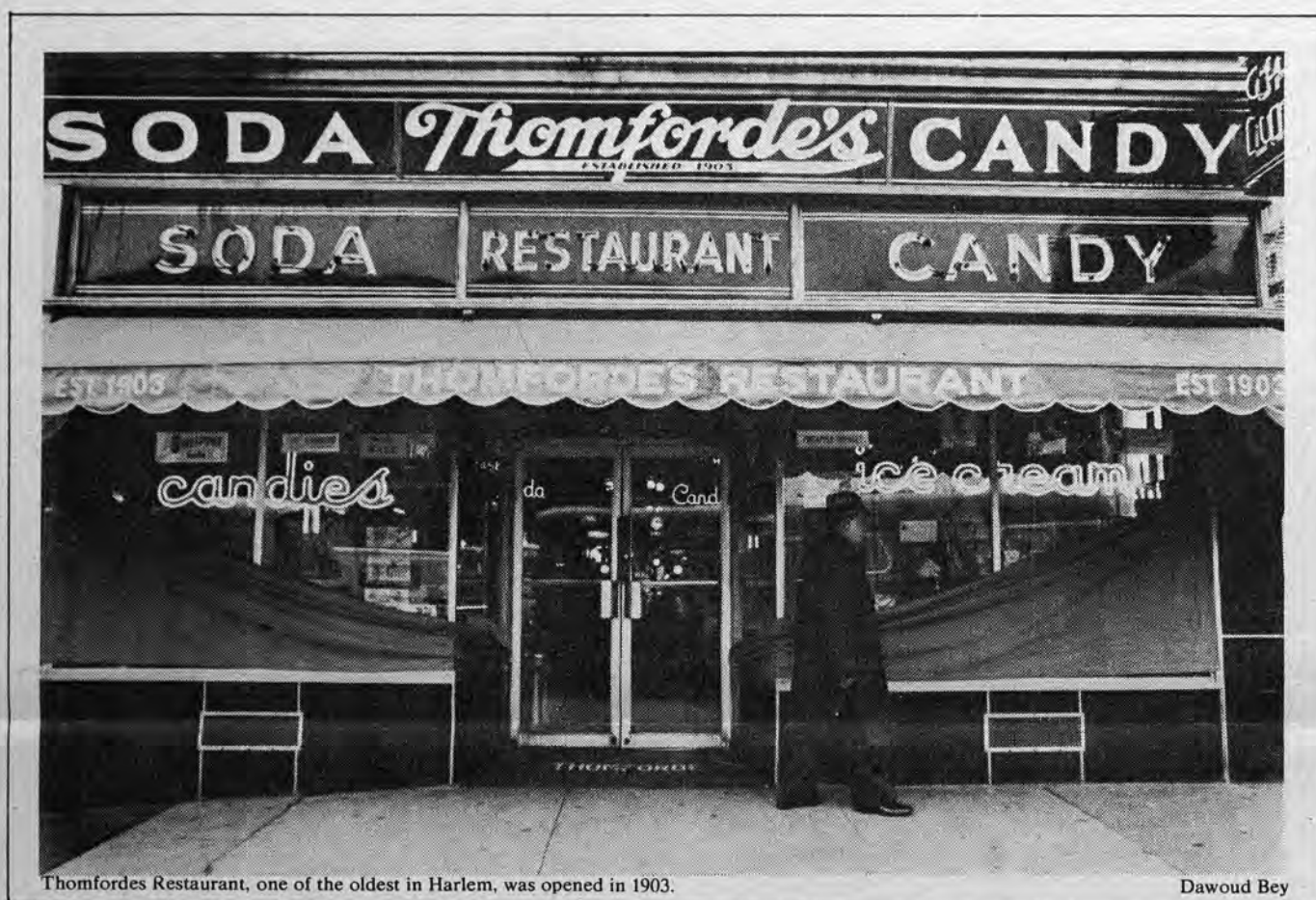
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Published by The Cultural Council Foundation Artists Project: Mrs. Donald B. Straus, CCF President, Sara P. Garretson, CCF Executive Director; and Rochelle Slovin, CCF Artists Project Director.

The Cultural Council Foundation Artists Project places artists in community based residencies throughout the five boroughs of New York City and provides artistic services and products through six specialized teams: Public Art, Exhibitions, Literary Works, Graphic Design, Documentation-Neighborhood Life, & the Performance Ensemble at Lincoln Center. The Association of Hispanic Arts, Black Theatre Alliance, & The Foundation for Independent Video & Film, all CCF subcontractors, provide additional services & performances throughout New York City.

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Thomfordes Restaurant, one of the oldest in Harlem, was opened in 1903.

Dawoud Bey

that I was black and living in what some considered a devastated ghetto. Being a child of the sixties exposed me to all the catch phrases and analyses of that growing civil rights period. I watched the summer riots of 1964 with a bird's eye view from our second-floor apartment window. During this period my world-view and self-image encompassed quite a narrow parameter: Catholic school one block away, home, and occasional visits to the Countee Cullen Library on West 136th Street. Most everywhere I turned, Harlem was painted in bold letters, and the media described it as being punctuated with garbage and despair.

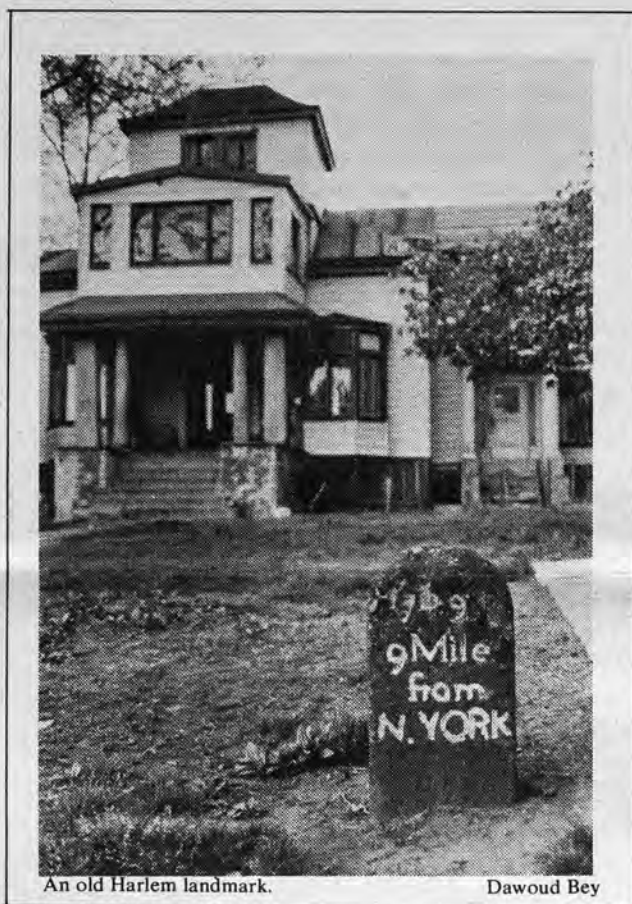
As I ventured to high school in an Irish-Italian section of the Bronx, the next stage of how I viewed my neighborhood took seed. As one of the few non-white students at Preston High School and as a non-resident of the Bronx, I was continuously asked where I lived and on many occasions merely answered, "Manhattan." When pressed further, my response became a shy utterance, "I live in Harlem." I can still feel the negativity that I conveyed about my neighborhood. I had internalized Harlem's myth. Only when outsiders pointed out the richness of the area did I wonder whether Harlem was more than "piss-stained stairs" and dope addicts.

Then something also happened to me in the late sixties. I found many reasons to be black and proud: The Black Panthers on 125th Street selling their newspapers; the Nation of Islam preaching love of black self and self-determination; street festivals and rallies and poetry readings along Harlem's main boulevards. The Afro was in; whites were out. Now when I was asked where I lived, the response became arrogant, self-assured. Living in Harlem became an added measure of protection.

In the years following, my perspective of self and community was toned so that Harlem became a place of beauty and struggle. I came to see a more real Harlem with its notable residents, its numerous places of interest and significance, its poverty and wealth, and its ever present spirit of endurance.

Harlem did not start out being a black center city. Until mass transportation assured its accessibility from lower Manhattan, Harlem was marshland inhabited by squatters and then an idyllic retreat for the monied gentry in the 1800's. With the construction of the elevated trains to Harlem, wholesale building of apartment houses flourished. Model architecture abounded to the point where

mass real estate speculation was taking place. So quickly was construction being undertaken that, before the elevated train system could be completed through Harlem, empty apartment buildings were standing with no one willing to occupy without mass transportation — no one except



An old Harlem landmark.

Dawoud Bey

blacks who were living in cramped living quarters in other parts of the city. Real estate speculators, with the help of a black man by the name of Philip Payton, were able to obtain willing tenants. Exorbitant rents were gotten from blacks who were more than willing to pay dearly for better housing. Newspaper articles from that period (1900-1910) documented the movement of blacks to Harlem and also chronicled the opposition by whites to this "invasion."

The 1920's (in what was once called "Little Africa") has been called the era of the Harlem Renaissance. During this period, which interlocked with the Roaring Twenties, blacks and Harlem were the target of pleasure-seeking whites in search of the noble savage. White academicians swarmed

to Harlem in search of statistics, prototypes, and guinea pigs for scholarly research. Whites from the arts and entertainment field travelled to Harlem in avid anticipation of a "Rhapsody in Blue." Black artists, too, looked to Harlem for inspiration and material for creating a black aesthetic. Artists and writers such as Langston Hughes, Aaron Douglas, Claude McKay, and James Van Der Zee helped create the atmosphere of the Harlem Renaissance where major works were produced that are still considered durably important efforts.

With the era of the depression, whites' fascination for Harlem diminished. No longer was there money for recreational jaunts or fervent and frivolous philanthropy flowing uptown. Indeed, most residents in Harlem were oblivious to the fact that there even was a Harlem Renaissance going on in their midst. So with the depression, they kept on working, struggling, laughing and crying, and kept on having rent parties to make next month's payments. With or without the Harlem Renaissance, life continued for its residents. Langston Hughes continued to write at 20 East 127th Street. A. Philip Randolph organized a march on Washington. Father Divine spread his words of "Peace." W.E.B. DuBois spoke out against racism. And in the thirties, forties, and fifties, life went on...

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture houses one of the most extensive collections on nearly every aspect of black life. The row of brownstones, known as Strivers Row, are designated landmarks. Just recently, the Dunbar apartments, named after the well-known black writer, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and built by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. in 1926, was given landmark status and will be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Dunbar Apartments constituted the largest cooperative housing of the time, and were the first such housing built especially for blacks. Innumerable black artists, entertainers and public personalities have either lived in Harlem or adopted Harlem as an inspiration.

On April 26, 1979, Vice-President Walter Mondale came to Harlem for a briefing by the Harlem Urban Development Corporation on its plans to build a multi-million dollar international trade center on 125th Street. Earlier that month a meeting took place in the Harlem State Office Building to discuss the buying of brownstones in Harlem.

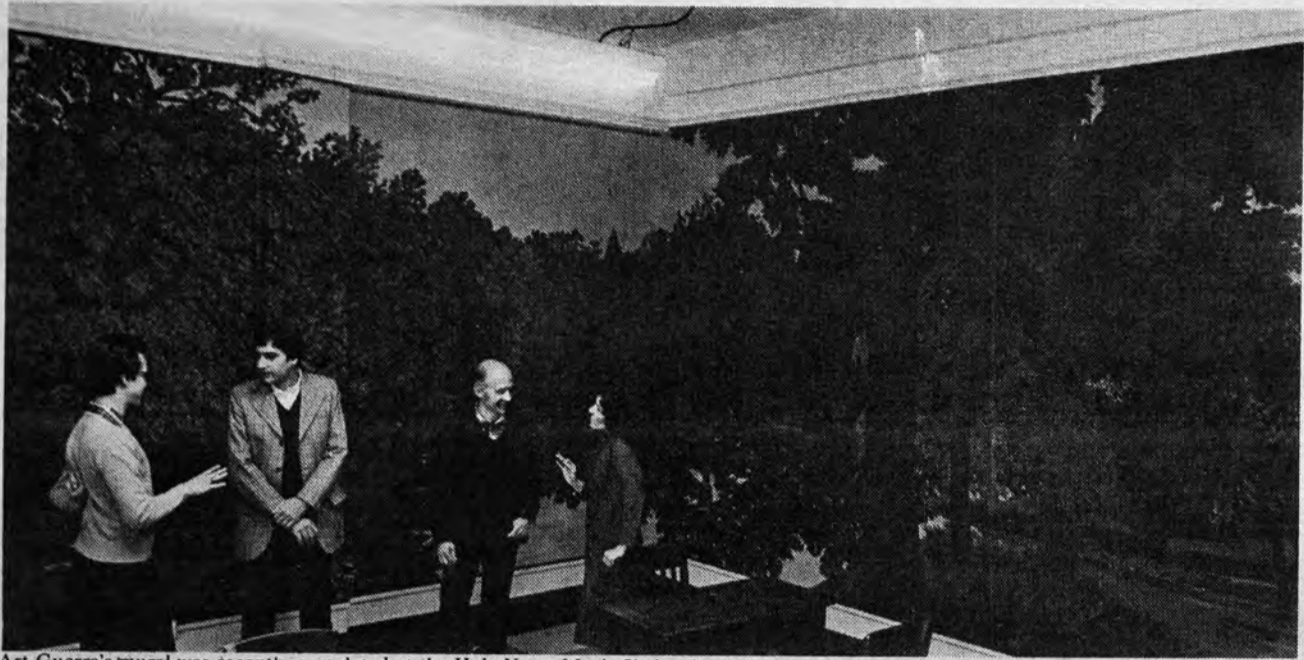
Many visitors to New York City express an interest in Harlem. Just as many visitors voice their desire to see this black metropolis. Yet, although mention of Harlem has been made in general guides to New York City, no guide book has ever been created that concentrates solely on this neighborhood.

This opportunity to document these and other facts of the Harlem story has been enlightening and inspirational. My research and self-guided tours have taken me through many of Harlem's high times and lows. I have had to look at Harlem with a fresh eye — neither rose-colored nor morbid, but refreshingly honest. □

Je Ne Regrette, Verlaine

Taxis with their hostages
trundle down the silknet avenues
god! how it storms in my heart
as it rains on this goddamn town
again

— Charles Doria



Art Guerra's mural was recently completed at the Holy Name Men's Shelter in the Bowery. From l to r are James Flanagan, administrator of recreation, Joe Giordano, coordinator of the CCF Public Art Team, Art Guerra, and Rochelle Slovin, Artists Project director.

Stanford Golob

Short Takes...

Ida Talalla... I work with textiles and have a special interest in resist dye techniques, especially batik and tie and dye. I am exploring and exploiting the materials in ways that I think fully utilize the medium's potential. There is a variety of ways to use wax, of manipulating the dyes, and CETA has given me the time to explore the medium.

As a coordinator of CCF and community exhibitions, I am gaining valuable administrative experience. I've helped coordinate the exhibitions at City Hall and Snug Harbor, and I was currently involved with an exhibit at Asia House called "Splendid Symbols: Textiles and Traditions in Indonesia." It has been my job to explain textile techniques to the public by conducting workshops and tours and by giving lectures.

I become furious when I hear people say that trials and tribulations contribute to an artist's development. I believe that the creative process must be ongoing or else growth is stunted. Only through constant practice can the artist achieve anything worthwhile. That's why I think the CETA

program is terrific for me. The steady income and employment allows me to plan and carry out my goals at both the administrative and creative levels, and the support I've received from the staffs at Asia House and CCF is very encouraging.

Zoe Best... I'm most comfortable working in a multi-cultural, multi-racial environment, and that's what the CETA Artists Project provides. The program has given me the opportunity to meet other artists and acquire new skills. My writing assignment on the Steve Cannon Show (a black soap opera called "Personal Problems") enabled me to learn about the artistic video technique of producing a soap opera. I read my poems to seven construction workers of high school age — five women and two men — at the Clinton Hill Restoration Center and to elementary school children in a Brooklyn library.

I have the time to write during the day, something I couldn't do in the past because I have four children and many responsibilities. But now my job title is "literary artist," and writing has become one of my first priorities.

The imagery and symbolism of my poetry is northwestern, since I was born in Oregon. There's a slow pace and spaciness about it that seems to

capture the physical distances of west coast landscapes. So it's a challenge for me to make my work interesting to New Yorkers.

I do wish that the artists reached more people-oriented organizations. At the rally to save our jobs at City Hall we came into contact with hospital workers and other city employees, and it would be productive if our art reached them. It might be worthwhile to have an artist exchange with the Frederick Douglass Creative Arts Center.

The CETA Artists Project is a very young and nascent program, and I feel that in time it will reach more people. Right now I'm proud to be a part of it and happy to be working for the Cultural Council Foundation.

Jeff Wright... This is a productive time for me, a collaborative time. I've been meeting new people and artists, which gives me a new perspective on things. Through the CETA program, I've met visual artist Charles Stanley, who included my poems in his inter-media anthology *Colleagues*. And I've worked on a play with Chris Kraus, another CETA writer, that will be performed on the Staten Island ferry.

I feel very lucky to have worked with some energetic senior citizens at the Countee Cullen library in Harlem. Together we wrote poetry, prose, and a chronological autobiography. The group process is very exciting: When the seniors talk about subjects I've suggested — trains, Broadway, the World's Fair — I take everything down, and the results are very nice poems. My sponsor, Teachers and Writers, has been totally supportive and plans to publish a book of the writing that comes out of the workshops. I've also been able to study Black literature in an adjoining research center that is chock full of great artifacts and manuscripts.

Another assignment is editorial work on an issue of the king of the little magazines, *The Unmuzzled Ox*, which is a synthesis of art, poetry, and politics.

I was really happy about the WORDS TO GO readings because I travelled to different neighborhoods, enlarging poetry audiences, and learning what different audiences appreciate.

The great thing about CETA is that it's giving me a chance to work in my field in the arts through existing agencies that may provide me with future employment or references.

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Cultural Council Foundation
175 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10010
Vol 2/10/Nov. 79

NON-PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
NEW YORK, N. Y.
PERMIT NO. 7228