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## Waymakers Collective Names First-Ever Exec Dir.

KNOXVILLE (TN), (NOVEMBER 10, 2023) – Waymakers Collective – the radical grantmakers and disruptive philanthropists in the heart of Appalachia that has so far granted more than \$1 million to underfunded artists and organizations – has just named its first ever Executive Director, Joe Tolbert Jr. (he/him, they/them).

Joe's responsibilities as the first Executive Director of the Waymakers Collective will include the relational oversight of the current Assembly (voting membership); governing AppalCore (elected members that oversee the fund), and working with leaders from across the region whose work aligns with that of the Waymakers Collective.

"I was at the original meeting of what would become The Waymakers Collective. I am happy that this region that I love and call home trusts me enough to keep stewarding this work, and I hope to amplify the diversity, creativity, and innovation happening in Central Appalachia," said Joe. "I also look forward to growing relationships, networks, and strategies to weave the work of the Assembly into existing and emerging philanthropic and resource distribution networks."



Joe most recently served as Waymakers' Program Director, in which, among other things, he oversaw the Collective's 2023's Radical Rest Grants program. Under Joe's leadership, 105 Radical Rest Grants were made, totaling \$182,000. With a priority on racial equity and acknowledging historical underrepresentation in grantmaking in the region, 40% of grants made went to BIPOC artists and/ or BIPOC-led arts organizations.

In addition to his new role as Waymaker's first-ever Executive Director, Joe is a minister, scholar, writer and cultural organizer whose work is at the intersections of art, culture, spirituality, and collective liberation. He received his B.S. in Communications from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and completed his M.Div. with a concentration in Social Ethics from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Joe's work in Central Appalachia includes founding The Stay Project and other non-profit organizations. As a writer and critic, his work has appeared in Alternate ROOTS, Arts.Black, Quiet Lunch, Cross Currents Journal, various

exhibition catalogs, and has an essay in the book [Applied Theater with Youth: Art, Education, Activism](#) (2021, Routledge Press).

**About Waymakers Collective (<https://www.waymakerscollective.org>):**

The Waymakers Collective are radical grantmakers dedicated to supporting community arts and organizations in the heart of Appalachia that are historically underfunded: those led by BIPOC (Black, indigenous, and people of color), youth, LGBTQIA+, and non-English speakers/immigrants. Founded in 2022, Waymakers seeks to disrupt the traditional model of philanthropy through the direct distribution of monetary gifts towards "Appalachian Futurism," an inclusive path rooted in equitable justice, creative cooperation, and sustainable stewardship. This approach to giving challenges traditional power dynamics between foundations and grantees, and answers the urgent call to remove barriers for creatives and their communities to receive the resources they need and deserve. As of Nov 2023, Waymakers has been able to redistribute more than \$1 million— mostly to individual artists and organizations that had never received funding before.

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