

Immigrant Artist Project Newsletter

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IAP Newsletter: Issue 5, March 5, 2010

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Issa Nyaphaga, Cameroonian cartoon journalist and freeDimensional artist.
Photo: Angèle E. Essamba

Featured Organization

freeDimensional

"No matter where you are in the world," explains freeDimensional's Executive Director and Founder Todd Lester, "there are always people using creativity to challenge injustice." Recognizing this, freeDimensional (fD) supports cultural workers in distress, including many artists - writers, actors, musicians, photographers - from around the world who face censorship or direct threats to their livelihood as a result of their creative work. fD matches these artists with placements in art spaces that can offer an escape from danger, a temporary reprieve from the stresses of their

daily lives, much-needed time for recovery and reflection, or an opportunity to produce uncensored work and reach new audiences - "at the very basic level ... a space to sleep."

How does it work?

freeDimensional is a network of 375 art spaces and 50 human rights and free expression organizations in over 70 countries. Often, a particular artist's case comes to fD's attention through one of their human rights partners. fD then works with art spaces to find a safe haven for that artist in the form of an artist residency, as well as connecting the artist with travel funds, pro bono legal representation and other services. fD's founder saw a lack of resources on one side (a safe space to create for cultural workers in distress) and a surplus of resources on the other (available space at artist residencies) and sought to balance these two realities.

What are some examples of recent cases?

Un Uzbek photographer who was charged with criminal defamation for the content of her work. A Pakistani actor who was kidnapped by the Taliban and is now seeking refuge in Malaysia with his family. A visual artist and cartoonist from Cameroon (see image above). A Burmese installation artist exhibiting in Brooklyn who is currently filing for political asylum (see details below). An Indonesian conflict journalist living in Queens and currently participating in the NYFA Mentoring Program for Immigrant Artists. Since its founding in 2005, fD has taken on 60 such cases.

Where is fD based?

Right here in New York City. fD makes its home, quite fittingly, in a multidisciplinary, multi-use art space: Flux Factory in Long Island City, Queens.

Why New York?

According to Todd Lester, "when people are in trouble they come to New York." New York is tapped into international currents of arts, migration and human rights activism. Given that, fD seeks to be a truly international organization, with regional hubs in Brazil, India, Germany and Egypt and partner organizations all over the world.

How can you get involved?

- > **Artists in Distress:** Access the [Creative Safe Haven and Distress Services](#) section of fD's website, where you can be nominated (or nominate yourself) to have your case taken on by fD.
- > **Emerging Art Spaces:** Art spaces interested in building their capacity to receive artists in distress as part of the fD network are eligible to join the [Emerging Art Space Support Initiative](#).
- > **Anybody, Anywhere:** Join the [fD online network](#) to contribute to discussions, learn about upcoming events and stay informed about current cases.
- > **On the ground in New York:** Visit fD at [Flux Factory](#), or check their [website](#) for upcoming events and initiatives.

Visit fD's website: www.freedimensional.org