

COMMUNITAS AMERICA

*Building inclusive and equitable
economic ecosystems with diverse
community-and social impact-driven
entrepreneurs in hyperlocal
communities.*



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Heyground Harlem, run by Communitas America

ROOTED IN OUR COMMUNITY, AND BEYOND

Communitas America began five years ago in the fall of 2018. Despite challenges posed by the pandemic and instances of social and political unrest, we have remained true to our commitment to foster hyperlocal and inclusive entrepreneurship, primarily in the Bronx and Harlem of New York City. Continuous innovation and adaptation have been key for us, which we could not succeed in without our supporters and partners. Their collaboration reaffirms that we are on the right track in enhancing the significance and influence of community-driven entrepreneurs.

First and foremost, our primary supporters are **Communitas Ventures** alumni and our family of nearly 200 program participants from Cohorts 1 to 11. The Chung Family, Justworks.org, the Siegel Family Endowment, and the New York State Empire Development Corporation, which certified us as an NYS Business Incubator, have all provided unwavering encouragement to continue our Communitas Ventures Accelerator, and soon launch upcoming new initiatives centered on our bold ideas and investment in community-driven entrepreneurs who take risks to better serve our communities.

Since **Heyground Harlem** opened in March 2023, our community of entrepreneurs has brought the space to life with over 100 programs, events, and community gatherings. The dynamic activity has positioned Heyground Harlem as a place where culture and economy meet. Collaborating closely with our neighbors and partner organizations, such as Columbia Business School, CUNY, Blue Ridge Labs, and EGF Accelerator, who are great thinking partners, helps us navigate resources to tackle systemic challenges embedded in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Collectively, we have forged a unique and **community-driven entrepreneurship program** that's needed, but remains untapped.

Personally, I prefer avoiding the word "help," as its direction and meaning need to be reconsidered. I don't view our role in the program as providing help, but rather as receiving support from our alumni entrepreneurs, who, in turn, provide support to one another. **Our alumni entrepreneurs, many with lived experiences, are our most astute partners.** They are courageous risk-takers who invest their time and energy into the communities they come from or serve. We will continue to learn from them, facilitate the peer learning within the community of entrepreneurs, and keep improving our programs to better serve them.

Lastly, I would like to extend our gratitude to our founder, Kyungsun, as well as our esteemed board of directors: Dorothy, Malcom, Yolanda, and William. Their support has allowed our creative minds to flourish, and has inspired us to consistently push the boundaries of innovation within our program.

While we are deeply rooted in our communities, we also aim to push ourselves further, venturing beyond our current boundaries in the coming five years.

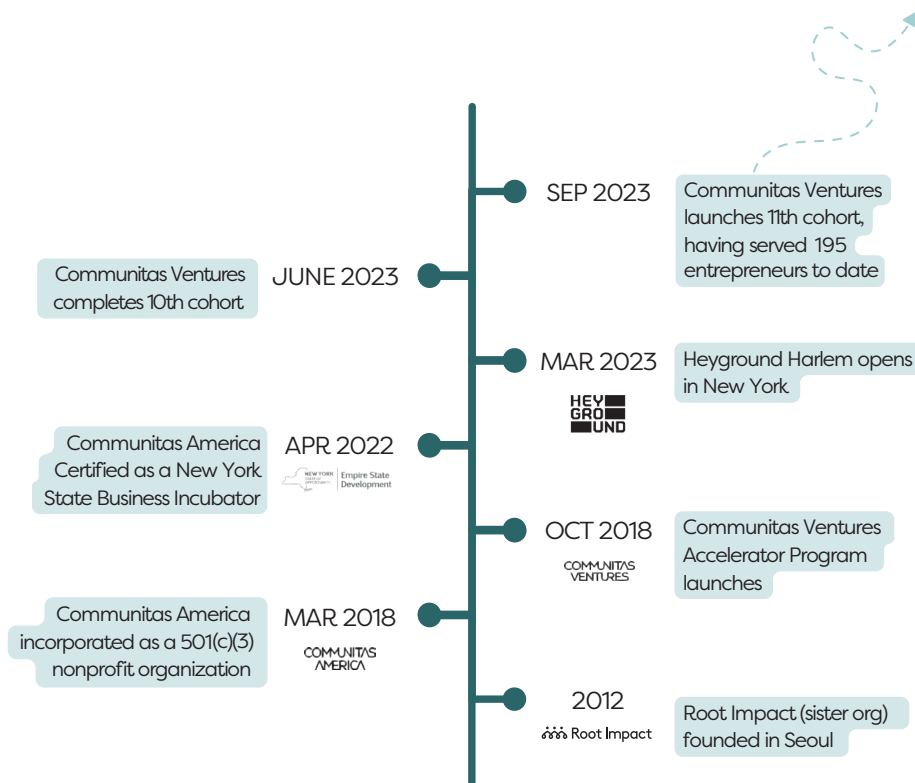
Sunmoon Jang

SUNMOON JANG
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ABOUT COMMUNITAS AMERICA

Communitas America launched in 2018, drawing inspiration from our sister organization Root Impact's meaningful growth in Seoul, South Korea. Communitas America is a nonprofit organization that empowers social entrepreneurs to promote economic mobility, build family wealth, and reshape local communities.

We serve diverse women and BIPOC entrepreneurs who face persistent and significant barriers due to structural racism. Our work fuels a wider impact-driven ecosystem providing inclusivity, access, opportunities, and entrepreneurial tools in historically under-resourced communities like the Bronx and Harlem in New York City.

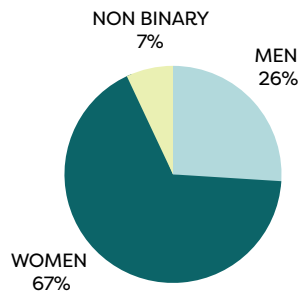


OUR IMPACT DATA

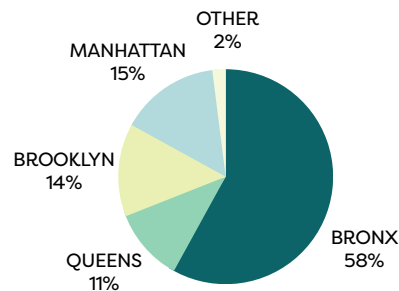
We are building an inclusive ecosystem, primarily made up of BIPOC and women changemakers, who are helping create equitable local economies in historically under-resourced communities in the U.S.

Including Cohort 10, we have served over 175 entrepreneurs to date.

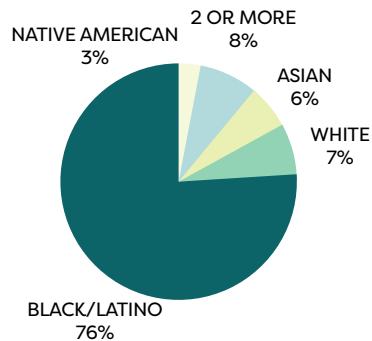
GENDER



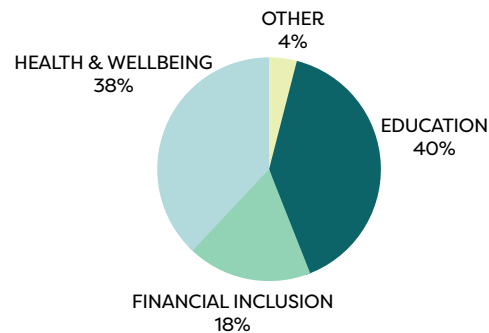
NYC BOROUGH



RACE/ETHNICITY



THEME



Impact Data
2018 - June 2023
(Cohorts 1-10)

CampusLush is an EdTech venture that creates access to opportunities, events, resources, and communities, primarily for Black students. Mac is currently negotiating a potential contract with the National Association of **Historically Black Colleges and Universities** (HBCUs)

“THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT I HAVE TRULY EXPERIENCED COMMUNITY IN THIS MANNER. FROM THE GUIDANCE TO THE FRIENDSHIPS, IT HAS BEEN NOTHING SHORT OF AMAZING.”

- **Mac Exumé**, founder of CampusLush and Cohort 10 Ventures Award winner

Cohort 5 alum Hetal Jani (founder of SpeakHire) running a hybrid professional development workshop for immigrant youth in the **Forum at Heyground Harlem**. SpeakHire collaborated with six Communitas Ventures program alumni from cohorts 8-10 for this event.



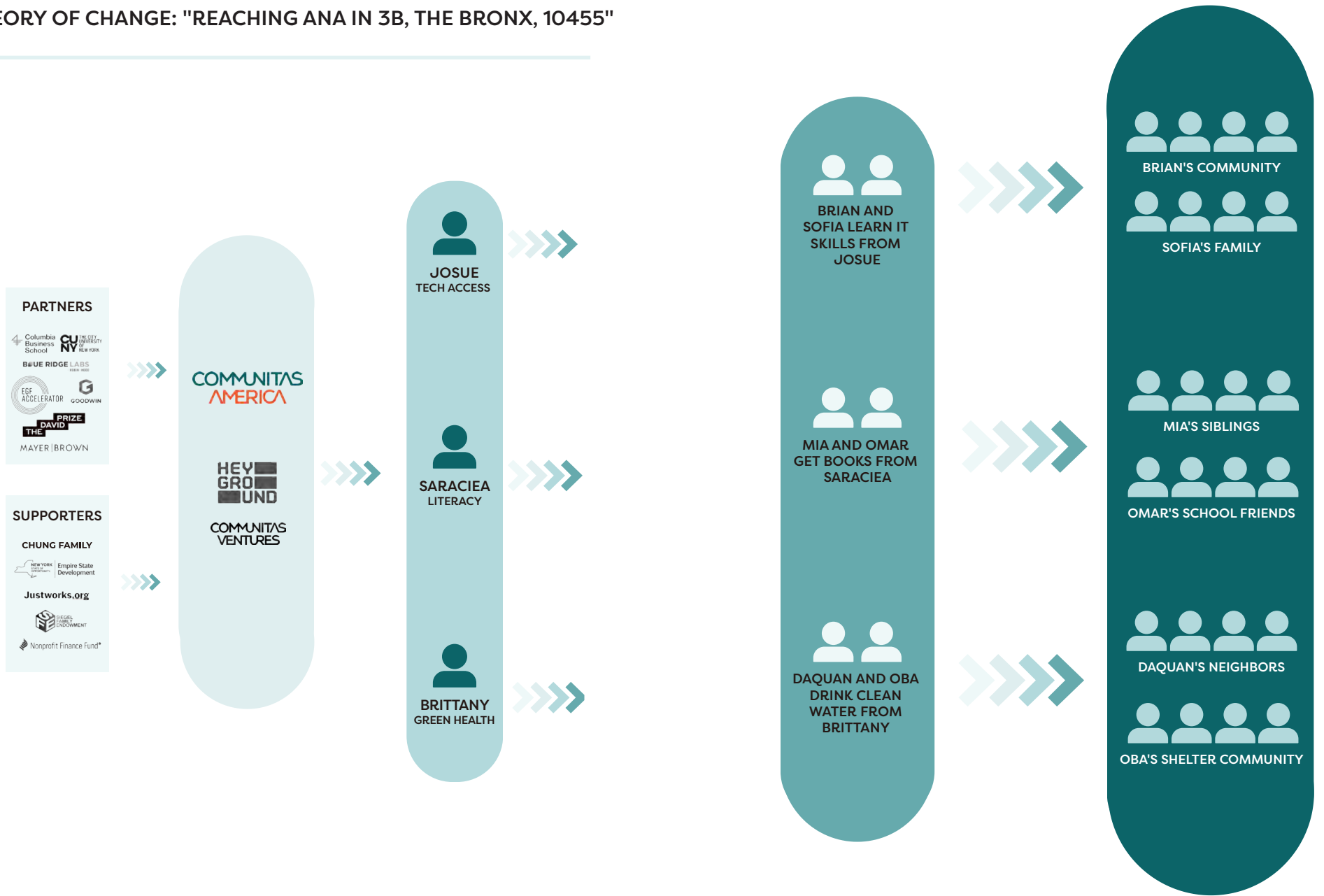
The Communitas America team brainstorming and **co-creating** with Communitas Ventures alumni and ecosystem partners at a Heyground Harlem Town Hall in August 2023. Members come together at Town Halls to set goals, plan skill-sharing workshops, and weigh in on Heyground Harlem's community and evolution.

“THE COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT IS UNMATCHED”

- **Josue De Paz**, founder of First Tech Fund, Cohort 6 participant, and Communitas America grant awardee

First Tech Fund breaks down barriers for students by providing them with technology, mentorship, and career advancement curricula. Josue was recently selected as a 2022-2023 **Obama Foundation Scholar**.

THEORY OF CHANGE: "REACHING ANA IN 3B, THE BRONX, 10455"



COMMUNITY DRIVEN
ENTREPRENEUR ECOSYSTEM

WOMEN/BIPOC ENTREPRENEURS IN
OUR INCUBATOR PROGRAMS

RECIPIENTS

BENEFICIARIES:
RECIPIENT'S COMMUNITIES

COMMUNITAS VENTURES

Communitas Ventures is currently running its eleventh cohort. We have served **195 entrepreneurs** since launching the program in 2018, awarding over **\$300K** in seed funding across 30+ ventures.

At Communitas America, we believe that those with lived experience and proximity to a problem are best equipped to solve it. Our professional development accelerator serves entrepreneurs solving for equity, inclusion, and diverse representation in their communities. The program is sector agnostic, to facilitate real-world intersectional collaboration among entrepreneurs supporting underserved communities.

Communitas Ventures runs twice a year. The 10-week cohort-style program combines structured business development coaching, guest speakers, workshops on impact models, business models, and pitching, peer mentoring, networking events, legal, financial, and marketing consultations, wellness programming, skill-sharing workshops, a pitch competition, resource navigation support, and - most importantly - a thriving community of likeminded changemakers who address inequities in our communities.

Legacy Dinner in the **Quad at Heyground Harlem**, which comprises the central wellness component of our Communitas Ventures programming.



Our Communitas Ventures program culminates in Pitch Night, where entrepreneurs showcase their ventures through pitches, vendor stands, and panels discussions.

For Cohort 10, we partnered with Columbia Business School's Tamer Center for Social Enterprise. They co-hosted pitch night, and awarded the first inaugural **Tamer Center Award** for social impact, in addition to **five Communitas America grants**, totaling \$33,000 in support for our entrepreneurs.



Cohort 10 sharing insights about the legacies they have cultivated and want to pass on.

Second Wind is a co-op empowering indigenous Ecuadorian artisans. Founder Diego Torres shares a prototype from the artisans' Edith brand, an heirloom childrenswear line using traditional embroidery techniques.

The World's Borough Bookshop is a BIPOC-centered bookstore. Founder Adrian Cepeda leveraged Communitas America and other seed funding to open his physical space in Queens in August 2023.

Liberty Learning Group is a Bronx-based childcare and learning center for parents with non-traditional work schedules. Founder Jessica Duran is currently conducting customer discovery research.

HEYGROUND HARLEM

WHERE CULTURE AND ECONOMY MEET

Our incubator space launched in March 2023 in Harlem, New York.

Leveraging hybrid meeting rooms, event spaces, screening capabilities, communal working spaces, and a community gathering hub, Communitas America hosts regular networking events and pipeline development workshops with ecosystem partners, anchored by our signature **Heyground Sundowners** happy hours, morning **Coffee + Impact** workshops, co-creating **Town Halls**, legal workshops, and more.



After completing the Communitas Ventures program, entrepreneurs are eligible for subsidized access to Heyground Harlem, where we continue to incubate their ventures and support their community impact.

Since March 2023, our members have held **over 100 events**, including professional development programs, brainstorming sessions, internship programs, book fairs, poetry slams, pilot launches, press interviews, wellness programs, and skill-sharing workshops. These alumni member-activated programs have invited over 500 local community residents and partners.



EDUCATION & LITERATURE HIGHLIGHTS

BLACK MENTOR NETWORK, NGOBITAK WILLIAMSON, COHORT 10

An education collective of Black professionals that provide mentorship and career guidance to Black students interested in a wide array of career fields.

BRONX BOUND BOOKS, LATANYA DEVAUGHN, COHORT 3

The bookstore that comes to you: a literacy venture that provides access to books in book deserts like the Bronx with mobile libraries on wheels.

THE BRONX IS READING, SARACIEA FENNEL, COHORT 8

Celebrating literacy (especially for children and teens) through initiatives including the Bronx Book Festival and The Bronx is Reading Literacy Program.

CAMPUSLUSH, MAC EXUMÉ, COHORT 10

Making the college experience equitable for schools, students, and alumni.

CULTIVATORS, KASHON DEBOSE, COHORT 4

School and community enrichment horticultural programs that encourage people to learn about plants and connect with nature.

INCLUSIVE ARTS MEDIA, LUZ MARIA MACK, COHORT 10

Empowering children to be the heroes of their own stories.

INTERNATIONAL SALSA MUSEUM, WILLY RODRIGUEZ, COHORT 9

Preserve the past, teach the present and influence the future: a museum dedicated to Salsa and its impact on NYC culture.

Leveraging his experiences as a musical student and eventually director working with Salsa legends Celia Cruz and Tito Puente Jr., founder Willy Rodriguez leveraged Communitas Ventures Award funding to launch music and educational programs for youths in the Bronx as he works towards launching a brick and mortar museum housing artifacts from the Tito Puente estate. The International Salsa Museum has garnered significant media coverage on the New York Post, NPR, and Univision, including interviews held at Heyground Harlem.



LOC'D AND LIT, TRICIAH CLAXTON AND ALANNA RAMIREZ, COHORT 9

Promoting BIPOC authors and celebrating the joy that books bring.

NEVER STOP GROWING COACHING & CONSULTING, DENISE RELF, COHORT 9

A matchmaker for schools seeking highly skilled professionals to support their improvement projects.

OAAARS, SIMONE GAMBLE, COHORT 9

Social justice and DEI centered training and education for safer and inclusive work environments.

SHARED TALENT, LASHAWNNA HARRIS, COHORT 2/5

A matchmaker for schools seeking highly skilled professionals to support their improvement projects.

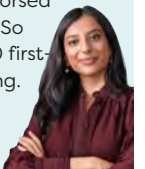
SPEAKHIRE, HETAL JANI, COHORT 5

A virtual mentorship solution for youth, targeting immigrant youth, that combines college and career readiness with social emotional support.

START LIGHTHOUSE, RINA MADHANI, COHORT 6

Advancing childhood literacy through a social justice lens.

Start Lighthouse has seen tremendous success since launching in 2021, including support from funders including Macmillan, Penguin, and Sephora for educational literacy programs with NYC Schools. In 2022, founder Rina Madhani was endorsed by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and honored by **L'Oréal Women of Worth**. So far, the organization has distributed almost 24,000 books, established 5,700 first-time home libraries, and implemented over 750 hours of literacy programming.



STAPLEDON ARTS, CHARLECIA JOY COLE, COHORT 9

Inspiring emerging artists with skin-tone inclusive "Melanin" paints and programs for representation, art education, and professional development.

After winning a Communitas Ventures grant in 2022, art educator turned entrepreneur Charlecia Joy Cole went on to win **the New York Urban League Small Business Solutions Center Pitch Black Competition and NY NOW grant in August 2023.** grant in 2023.

She works out of Heyground Harlem most days of the week.



THE WORLD'S BOROUGH BOOKSHOP, ADRIAN CEPEDA, COHORT 10

A Latino-owned, Jackson Heights-based bookstore dedicated to promoting diversity, representation, and inclusivity through the power of literature.

HEALTH & WELLBEING HIGHLIGHTS

DOTZZ, NATASHA JOHNSON, COHORT 8

Combating domestic violence by connecting the Dotzz to your safety with a creative and effective safety tool.

DANZARTES, YASMAR CRUZ, COHORT 6

An arts organization dedicated to promoting Puerto Rican and Afro-Caribbean dance and folklore.

In April 2023, founder Yasmar Cruz performed at the opening reception of the Daniel Lind Ramos exhibit at New York's iconic **MoMA PS1** museum. Yasmar is also a published poet, and she has penned a number of articles on yoga. She joined Cohort 10 as an alumni guest at Legacy Dinner at Heyground Harlem.



EQUITY DESIGN, MAURELHENA WALLES, COHORT 3/5

Leveraging physical activity programming to close the gap between health and wealth in communities that have the highest health disparities.

FLORA'S TEA, ARNALDO LOPEZ JR., COHORT 9

Promoting education, literacy, and literature for seniors in underserved communities of color with high-quality fresh tea and community outreach.

GRASSROOTS GROCERY, DAN ZAUDERER, COHORT 7

Advancing food justice by cultivating a community of neighbors helping neighbors.

Grassroots Grocery has gained significant community traction, having launched over 32 community-led hyper-local food distribution sites, recruited almost 3,000 volunteers, and raised over \$900K in funds. In June 2023, founder Dan Zauderer was named a **40 under 40 rising star** by the **Hunter College NYC Food Policy Center**. Grassroots Grocery has been featured in **CNN**, **CBS New York**, and the **Kelly Clarkson Show**. The Grassroots Grocery team have been leveraging the space at Heyground Harlem for weekly planning meetings as they expand their growing team.



THE HOOD HIKERS, JASMINE GUADALOUPE, COHORT 7

Curating carefree, healing, and fun nature experiences for BIPOC city-dwellers while diversifying outdoor activities and outdoor leadership.

LBX SPORTS, DAQUAN HAWKINS, COHORT 8

Sports and recreation programs for youths to enhance self-esteem, cultivate leaders, and break down social/cultural barriers to opportunity.

NANA'S VEGAN, NIYA JARVIS, COHORT 3

Vegan soul food kitchen offering meal delivery, catering, and curated educational/culinary experiences for underserved communities, with a mission to nourish, educate, and transform communities.

ÖZEMI BEAUTY, RUBEN TORRES, COHORT 10

Drawing from Afro-Latino heritage to create a safe space for stillness, wellness and gratitude with Harlem made, ethically sourced beauty products.

POETIC BLACK GURL, ANDREA AUGUSTUS, COHORT 9

Empowerment through art to heal, grow confidence, and connect with others.

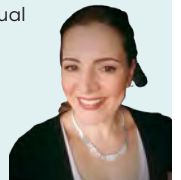
TRAC ACTIVITIES, LUCAS ADDO, COHORT 8

Inclusive art, movement, culinary expression programs and communities that fostering creativity and self-expression for people of all abilities, including those with special needs.

SILVER SHOES DANCE CLUB, DANIELA DEL GIORNO, COHORT 4

Ballroom and Latin Dance programs for active senior citizens in underserved communities to encourage longevity, community, partnership, and good health.

Centering around the Bronx, Cohort 4 winner Daniela Del Giorno's venture, Silver Shoes Dance Club, holds regular public events in addition to its virtual and in-person classes. The organization is a frequent recipient of grants from the **Bronx and NYC Councils of the Arts**, the **NYC Department for the Aging**, and the **NYC Department of Cultural Affairs**.



THEORY 9, SHAKIR SEAGERS, COHORT 10

A community organization bringing knowledge to underserved youth through sports, life coaching, STEM, marketing, career prep, and more.

TECH & SUSTAINABILITY HIGHLIGHTS

HERA HEALTH SOLUTIONS, IDICULA MATTHEW, COHORT 6

Nanotechnology-enabled biodegradable drug implants that enable companies to rapidly increase the efficacy of existing therapeutics.

In 2023, Hera Health Solutions was awarded a prestigious SBIR **National Science Foundation (NSF) grant** for research and development.



HYDRONOMY, BRITTANY KENDRICK, COHORT 5

Creating equitable solutions to global water crisis, including a patent-pending solar powered atmospheric water generator system that captures moisture in the air and converts it into clean water.

Founder and Cohort 5 winner Brittany Kendrick was accepted to **NYCEDC Venture Access's Founder Fellowship at Newlab**. She is also partnering with **BlocPower** to run green professional development programs for underserved job-seekers at Heyground Harlem throughout 2023.



KERATIN NAILS, JIYE SON, PHD, COHORT 9

Supporting environmental research and solutions for women in STEM, and revolutionizing the nail industry with keratin-based nail polish that is nontoxic for wearers and nail technicians alike.

RSSPCTS, SAIRA PATEL, COHORT 8

Reducing inequality and driving social change in aquatics, while increasing BIPOC participation in the sport with coily-hair-protecting swim caps.

VADER NANOTECHNOLOGIES, TREVON GORDON, COHORT 4

Improving the ability to recycle plastic and degrade forever chemicals by creating new organisms and enzymes that breakdown these pollutants.

Vader Nanotechnologies has received **IndieBio/SOSV** funding and was selected as a semi-finalist for the **2023 Black Ambition Prize**, competing for up to \$1M in funding.



FINANCIAL INCLUSION HIGHLIGHTS

BLACK TO BUSINESS, MONIQUE MARSHALL, COHORT 9

Fostering financial growth through digital tools including a podcast, business toolkit, masterclass, and start-up course for Black entrepreneurs.

FIRST TECH FUND, JOSUE DE PAZ, COHORT 6

Closing the digital divide by supporting students from underserved backgrounds with technology, practical skills, and opportunities to succeed.

GOOD VIBES, IBRAHIMA BADJI, COHORT 10

Providing education and business consulting to disadvantaged communities. 90% of students go to college debt free.

MAKING MONEY MOVERS, HAIZEL MCINTYRE, COHORT 9

Expanding financial literacy with financial education starting at an early age.

REVIVAL FUNDS, DARYL HOLMAN JR., COHORT 1

Bankers are incentivized to keep people in debt. Revival helps people buy out their debt and build wealth.

For 2023, founder Daryl Holman Jr. secured \$100K+ in funding as a **Blue Ridge Labs Catalyst Fellow @ Robin Hood Foundation**. Daryl has served as an **alumni mentor** for Communitas Ventures Cohorts 10 and 11.



UNLOCK NYC, JESSICA VALENCIA, COHORT 10

Designing user-friendly digital tools that New Yorkers with rental vouchers can protect their right to a home.

Unlock NYC has participated in several NYC accelerators including **Blue Ridge Labs @ Robin Hood Foundation**. Founder Jessica Valencia joined Communitas Ventures seeking **community**. She collaborated with Cohort 10 alums Tasha Dougé (Thou Art Pay Us) and Jessica Duran (Liberty Learning Group) to host fundraising events at Heyground Harlem.





Join us for a Networking Happy Hour with Blue Ridge Labs

We have several networking events lined in the coming months with local entrepreneur partners who are similarly focused on supporting inclusive and impactful entrepreneurship.

This month, we're teaming up with **Blue Ridge Labs** to host a networking happy hour at **Heyground** located on Thursday, August 22nd at 5PM. Meet with changemakers from the Blue Ridge Labs community and the Blue Ridge Labs *Collaborative*. Meet & learn from our community members and hear from our incubation educator, Jason. Join us for drinks, communitas, and resources! [RSVP Here](#)





THU AUG 24, 2023
5:00 - 7:00 PM

WELCOME TO EVERYONE!





Heyground Harlem Town Hall: A Truly Co-Creating Changemaker Community Gathering

At Communitas America, we firmly believe in co-creating with our community based on entrepreneurial needs and lived experiences. Our Town Halls enable Heyground partners to share ideas about the space and the region.

We were thrilled to welcome all-around changemakers on through to this town hall! Town Hall last night was participants who enjoyed a healthy hour of free professional headshots while sipping grapes and sipping on us Heyground!



Heyground Harlem opened its doors in March 2022, so entrepreneurs have hosted over 100 events, workshops, and programs. In the meantime, we've been giving many business incubation resources to members, including real work, networking, fundraising events, and more. At the Town Hall, members collectively brainstormed ideas for the space, youth-led sharing workshops, city funded as well as we had in the past couple of years.

Communitas America Resources and Events

COFFEE + IMPACT

COFFEE + IMPACT is a monthly event for entrepreneurs to connect, network, and share resources. The event is held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 10:00 AM. The event is free and open to all entrepreneurs. The event is held at the Heyground Harlem Town Hall. The event is held at the Heyground Harlem Town Hall. The event is held at the Heyground Harlem Town Hall.

We're launching "Coffee + Impact" get together at Heyground Harlem. Our Executive Director Summer Jiang will host these morning get-togethers in collaboration with local partners. Join us to discuss the impact ecosystem and its resources.

Our first Coffee + Impact morning gathering will be on **Monday August 7, 2023 at 9:30 AM** in the event space at Harlem Market Avenue. [RSVP Here](#)

COMMUNITAS VENTURES

COHORT 12
JULY - SEP 2023

APPLY TO JOIN

Apply to join our next accelerator cohort and access a suite of resources including legal and financial consultations, mentors, incubator space access, networking events, business programming, a thriving entrepreneurial community, workshops on impact models, business plans, and opportunities to pitch to investors.

The application deadline is August 7, 2023.

We understand that entrepreneurs' needs don't always fit into traditional, one-size-fits-all entrepreneurship support model, to cater to the needs of our community, we've created a new program. Apply to join our next accelerator cohort and access a suite of resources including legal and financial consultations, mentors, incubator space access, networking events, business programming, a thriving entrepreneurial community, workshops on impact models, business plans, and opportunities to pitch to investors.

Apply for microgrants as needed for resources.

Art Education: A Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship

"Artists are remarkable, innovative translators of the world around us. They move resources from one place to another, they are able to engage with complex global topics with different languages, sensory skills, and experiences. Through their talent, they challenge and celebrate all of us. They are the most powerful force for change and more: they are the foundation of great social entrepreneurship."



Read about founder of [Shoreline Arts](#) and Co-lead of [Art Education: A Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship](#) through an interview from Int'l education in our latest podcast [Shoreline Arts](#) (JUN)

Congratulations to Our Latest Microgrant Winners

Devinet Nell, Co-lead and co-founder of [Shoreline Arts](#), [Communitas America](#), [Creative Commons](#), and [Communitas](#) is recognized to support three fellows participating in 2023's program for innovation leading to positive social impact.

Microgrant Winner: Cohort 8 and founder of [Shoreline Arts](#) is recognized for professional development and connections.

Volume Deeds: Cohort 8 and co-founder of [Shoreline Arts](#) is recognized for volunteerism.




[illegible]

August Event Highlights @ Heyground Harlem

Monday August 10, 10:00-11:00 PM
BOAT to support the Children's Book Fair to help L.A. kids, where they can browse to discover new children's books and supplies. Free entry to all ages.

Tuesday August 6, 10:00-11:00 PM
BOAT to join Hops of Drugs and Beats & Cream to meet live a talented, young and breakthrough talents in music, among fun giveaways, giveaways, and connect with community.

Friday August 20, 8:00 PM
BOAT to get up with the award-winning **Moribanda Band** "Project's Wife, Soul Train" (2019) in a special, BOAT to the show (show and drinks included, give a table to the BOAT).

[FOLLOW US ON TWITTER](#) [FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM](#) in our next newsletter. [LEARN MORE](#) about Heyground Harlem News & Events.

Ecosystem Resources

We are growing our community partner network and we expand our footprint in New York City. Watch this space for announcements and funding opportunities.

Join the NY Office League and TD Bank as a Sponsor of 2018 New York State Bar Association for Anti-Discrimination - in honor of National Black History Month.

Black-owned business owners, apply for the **Financial Digital Grant**, including 10K funding, business consultations, and more. **Deadline to apply is August 20, 2018**

Entrepreneurs with \$250K+ revenue, have **AMPAC** contracts announced with pre-set profit advance in a cohort e-pay program.

Check out our **Incubator** info by Nick Jan [\(link to incubator program\)](#) **Deliverables** [View our 2018 Plan](#)


Want to meet impact tech insights about social enterprise? [Join us for the 9th, 4th Annual](#) **Entrepreneurial Impact** and **Innovations for the social impact** event.


Sign up for the **Aspen Institute** [series](#) for the social impact publications, events, and more.


August 2023 Newsletter


Communitas America's monthly newsletters and social media serve as curated hubs highlighting upcoming resources for changemakers.



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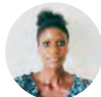
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Heyground Community Manager



Edward Greenwood
Partnerships Manager



Hailey Kim
Operations Manager



Sacha Wynne
Marketing Advisor



David Michael DiGregorio
Research Advisor

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