



DEVELOPING BOLD + INSPIRED
NEXT STEPS
FOR SOCIAL IMPACT THRU THE ARTS

Case Study
for Nonprofits
by dr candi dugas
candi dugas collective
2025-26

Cover Images + Credits of Artist-Activists:

Josephine Baker (*womenshistorynetwork.org*)

Marlon Brando (*life.com*)

James Baldwin (*jacobin.com*)

Lillian Smith (*georgiaencyclopedia.org*)

Harry Belafonte (*syncopatedtimes.com*)

Tony Bennett (*bbc.com*)

Ossie Davis + Ruby Dee (*wnyc.org*)

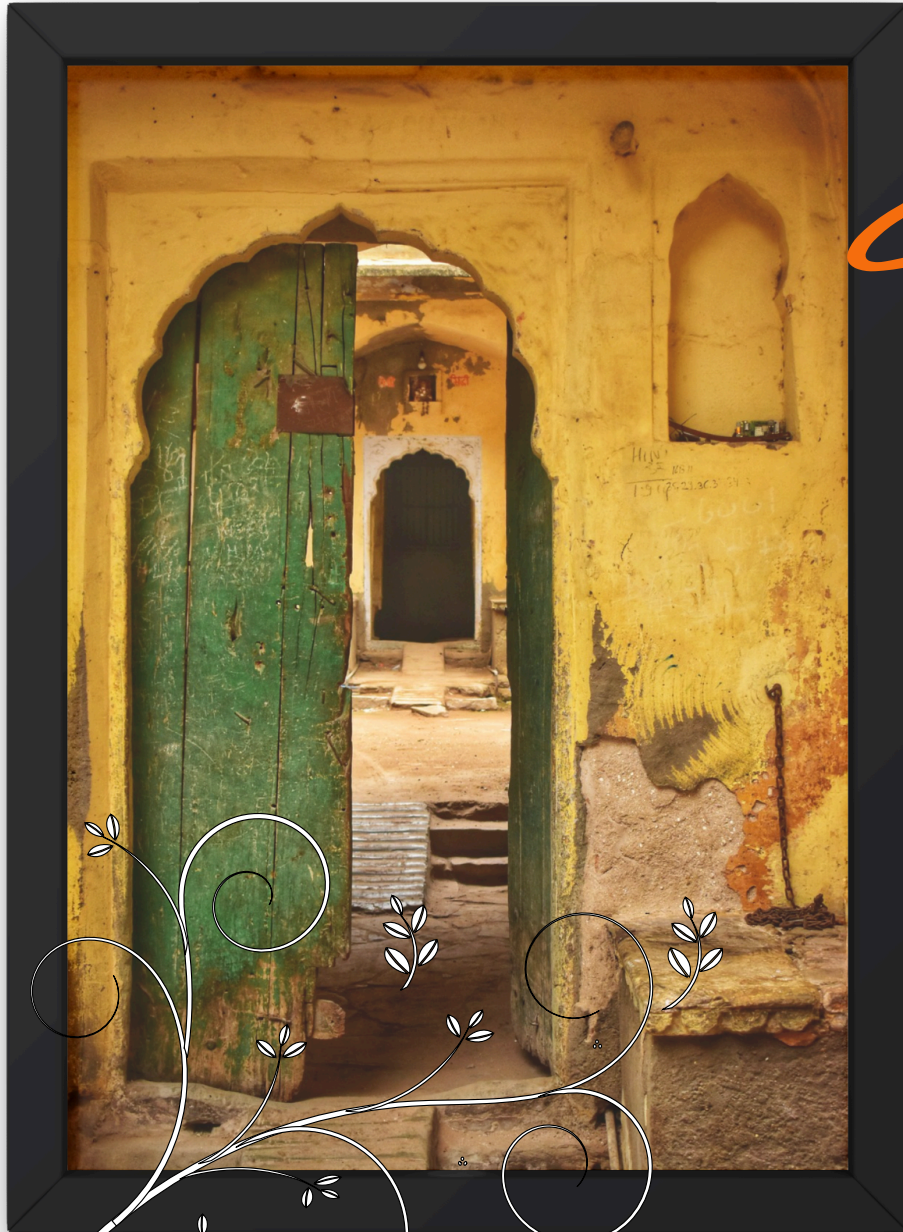
Carl + Anne Braden (*aclu-ky.org*)

Kendrick Lamar (*polygonnews.org*)

Bruce Springsteen (*slate.com*)

Nina Simone (*tribunemag.co.uk*)

Joan Baez (*pages.stolaf.edu*)



Developing **FUTURE** for **COMMITTED NONPROFITS**

Dear Leader(s):

Thank you for seeking the unprecedented to help cure the ills of our world. Thank you for understanding that times like these require bold + inspired strategic next steps to walk into a more equitable future for all.

I am so thrilled to share with you a phenomenal case study of my work that has held these qualities of being unprecedented, committed, bold, and inspired: **Broadway Brunch™**, living at the intersection of artistic excellence + effective activism. Enjoy the following pages!



BROADWAY BRUNCH



A delicious meal, relevant stories + community conversation

A Social Impact Case Study | Atlanta, GA

Conceived + Designed by dr candi dugas

Table of Contents

Greeting - **p3**

The Problem - **p6**

The Insight - **p8**

The Design - **p10**

The Impact - **p13**

The Community's Response - **p15**

The Model - **p17**

About **candi dugas** - **p18**

Gratitude + Let's Talk **FUTURE** - **p19**



The Problem

When the Pews Empty-out, Where Has the Community Gone?

For decades, predominately white mainline Protestant congregations across the United States situated in racially changing neighborhoods have faced a crisis: declining attendance, aging membership, shrinking resources, and a stubborn disconnect from the communities they're faith called them to shift to serve.

One Atlanta congregation, Grace United Methodist Church (*Grace UMC*), knew this reality intimately. A handful of faithful older members held on, mostly to the memory of the megachurch they'd been in their youth/young adult years. The massive, mostly empty building – maintained through bequests + nonprofit tenants – had recently been renovated after a denominational office purchase bought them much-needed time. But the *life* of ministry, vitality, the kind that fills rooms + transforms lives – that remained out of reach, by choice.

The question wasn't on the surface, "How do we get people back?"

It was actually deeper: **"Where are people on Sunday mornings when they aren't in church?"**

The answer was both simple + revelatory ...

"They're at **brunch.**"



**meeting
community
where they are**

The Insight

Meet People Where They Are

Since the community had migrated to Sunday brunch — and since storytelling (e.g. *theatre*) is the most powerful, effective tool for building empathy, sparking conversation, and moving people toward action — then the solution for Grace UMC actually did not require a reach. It was already present at the intersection of those two truths.

Broadway Brunch™ (BB) was born at that intersection: a monthly gathering replacing that day's traditional Sunday service. BB combined a delicious meal from nearby neighborhood chefs/caterers with 30 minutes of live theatre (*a one-act or excerpt from a full-length production*) — followed by a 30-minute community conversation. The conversations included the audience, cast, creative team, and subject matter experts connected to the theme/topic of the script.

rev dr candi dugas — playwright, dramaturg, cultural architect/organizer, and worship leader — conceived + designed Broadway Brunch not to be yet another program in search of attendees. BB was about finally building a room worthy of a changing community.



committed to justice

©: Cast, Creative Team + Wise Voices for Community Conversation following *The Modern Prometheus* (gentrification)

The Design

Architecture of an Experience

Broadway Brunch™ was designed with the precision of a theatrical production + the hospitality of a Sunday dinner table. Every element was intentional.

The Format

- 30 minutes of live theatre: a one-act or excerpt from a full-length play or musical
- Scripts sourced from Atlanta-based playwrights (*including two written by dr candi*) + published works
- Professional directors, actors, and musicians drawn from Atlanta's theatre + music communities
- A brief intermission, then 30 minutes of structured community conversation
- Panels included all artists plus subject matter experts on the script's theme/topic
- Every panel included a licensed therapist — to help process in the moment + as a resource for follow-up

The Curation

Each Broadway Brunch was curated according to both liturgical + cultural calendars — honoring the rhythms of community life while centering stories that mattered in the moment. Productions + themes included:

- ***The Glass Menagerie*** (Tennessee Williams, a classic premiere to appeal to Grace UMC legacy members)
- ***The Color Purple*** (Marsha Norman/Brenda Russell/Allee Willis/Stephen Bray, celebrating recent local success of this production)
- ***Fences*** (August Wilson, centering Rose Maxson, for Women's History Month)
- ***'Night Mother*** (Marsha Norman, exploring end-of-life wishes of an adult child, for Mother's Day)
- ***Grease*** (Jim Jacobs + Warren Casey, for Back-to-School)

Continued The Design

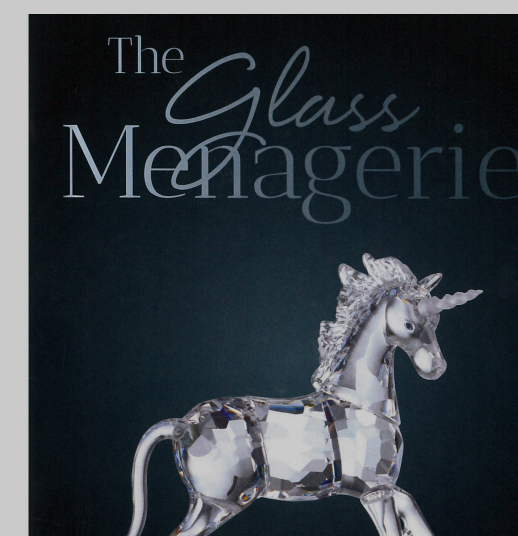
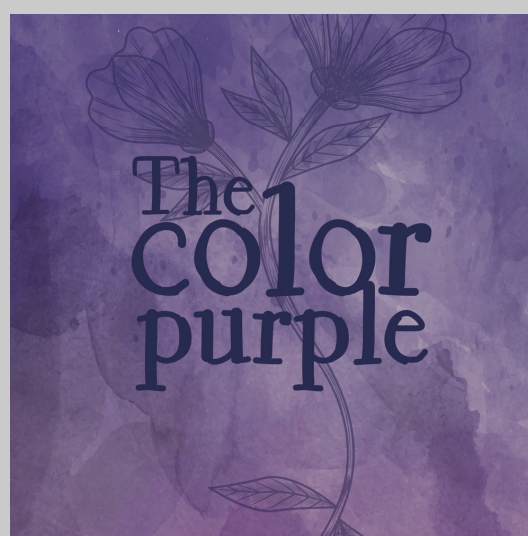
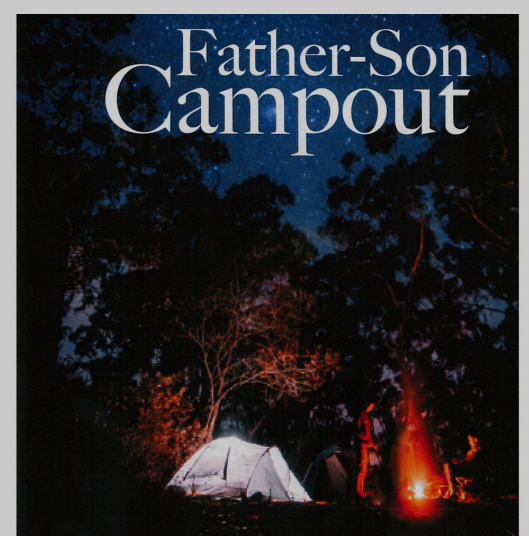
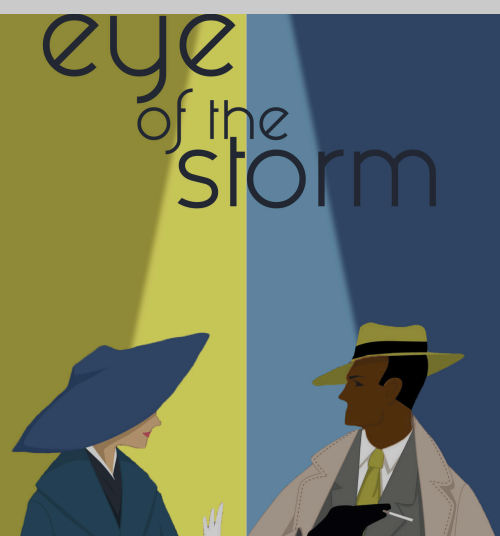
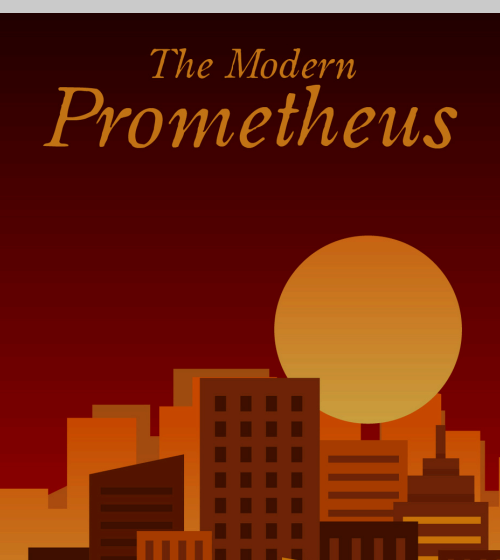
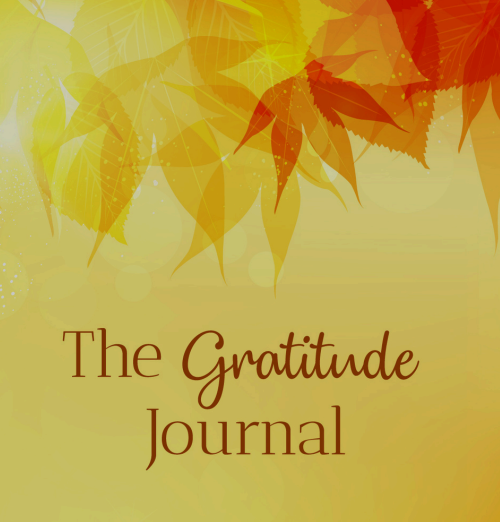
Architecture of an Experience

The Curation, *ctd.*

- ***Tigers Be Still*** (Kim Rosenstock, exploring finding one's own purpose by helping others)
- ***a cappella*** (Vynnie Meli, ATL playwright, a musical in development celebrating men pursuing their dreams, for Father's Day)
- ***Father-Son Campout*** (Hank Kimmel, ATL playwright, exploring Alzheimer's + caring for aging parents)
- ***The Modern Prometheus*** (Lee Osorio, ATL playwright, exploring gentrification, during the month of July 4th)
- ***Gratitude Journal*** (Rebekah Suellau, exploring the power of gratitude + journaling to overcome personal quandaries, for the Thanksgiving season)
- ***"eye of the storm"*** (candi dugas, ATL playwright, exploring regular/everyday people in the days leading up to the Montgomery Bus Boycott for Black History Month)
- ***"That Day"*** (candi dugas, ATL playwright, exploring grief and women's friendships)

The Community

Everyone said, "Yes!" immediately – every artist, chef, caterer, and community partner approached to participate was incredibly enthusiastic about participating. Minimum sets + props were donated as a loan by a neighboring vintage shop, including delivery + pickup. The denominational office provided table linens, room setup, and occasionally food + promotional support. And word-of-mouth support, invitations, and registrations spread very quickly.



The Impact

Nine Months. One Neighborhood. Extraordinary Results.

Broadway Brunch™ started as a soft launch – and became something a-mazing that no one fully anticipated.

By the numbers, in just 9 months *(9 of 12 months):*

- **300** unique new attendees *(many returning month after month)*
- **89** new community leaders, artists, and guest speakers engaged
- **50%+** consistent increase in attendance with each new program
- **\$5K** unsolicited district grant secured in recognition of the program's innovation + impact
- **12** Broadway Brunch experiences produced multiple cross-sector connections: education, grassroots organizing, business, arts, faith, and mental health

Receiving an unsolicited grant signaled to the team not just success, but **credibility**. Funders noticed before they were even asked.



**speaking out
about what
matters most**

©: Audience during Community Conversation for *The Modern Prometheus* (gentrification)

The Community's Response

They Didn't Wait to Be Invited Back

Audience members didn't wait for formal feedback forms. They stopped dr candi in hallways during the week between Sundays. They showed up the day *before* promos dropped asking what was next. They made two specific requests that said everything about the depth of their investment:

Could playwrights devise a one-act from our own life stories?

Could we act alongside the professional artists?

When dr candi brought both requests back to the professional artists, the response was immediate + generous:

Yes. We'd love that.

Testimonials

"I've never done anything like this before. I am thankful to candi for asking me to be her stage manager, and being with these amazing actors is an experience I will never forget. It was all so special." ~ Mrs. Karen Scott Burson, Community Member

"I appreciate the positive support system [at Broadway Brunch™]. It was nice to come together with people of different backgrounds to discuss a common theme. Friendly tone, nice people! And it was proactive - if we did not need further engagement, we were given gentle direction." ~ Anonymous Community Member

Continued The Community's Response

They Didn't Wait to Be Invited Back

Testimonials, *ctd.*

"I support events that engage the community through the arts." ~ Anonymous Community Member

"ms. candi - I just had to come back in, and thank you so much for all of this. I will be back!" ~ Brandon Michael Mayes, Actor

"I only hear wonderful things about the programs you've been producing. Everyone involved always seems SO HAPPY from start to finish." ~ Erin Considine, Playwright

"Everywhere I go, from ATL to NYC, I talk you up - from other playwrights to producers - about the very special work you're doing with Broadway Brunch™." ~ Rebekah Suellau, MFA, Director, Dramaturg, Playwright

"You may want to reserve your seat TODAY. So far, seats for every Broadway Brunch tend to go quickly. If you want to be there, get yours today." ~ Hank Kimmel, Playwright

"Collaborating with candi on anything is always a pleasure, especially Broadway Brunch. I have witnessed first-hand her exceptional storytelling ability, and unique artistic vision. She consistently demonstrates a keen understanding of dramatic structure, character development, and thematic depth, which is evident in her body of work, including with communities."

~ David Koté, MFA, Director

The Model

What Broadway Brunch™ Demonstrates

Broadway Brunch is proof of a principle that dr candi has carried across decades of nonprofit leadership, cultural organizing, and artistic practice:

**When you meet people where they are —
with *relevance, beauty, story, food, and honesty*
— they don't just show up. They come back ... and bring others.
They invest (*\$ + emotions*).
They ask for more.**

The Broadway Brunch model is replicable, adaptable, and scalable. It has been successfully applied in a faith context, but its architecture — live performance + structured community conversation + expert resources + radical hospitality — translates across sectors.

It is, at its core, a **field-building tool**: a safer container for + a way of braiding together within + beyond communities that don't yet know they need each other. It holds + builds around stories + truths we have always known to be so.

About

CANDI DUGAS

dr candi dugas is a New York Times award-winning playwright, dramaturg, indie producer, cultural architect/organizer, and nonprofit leader with 20+ years of experience at the intersection of social justice, arts, and community building. Her work builds bridges across sectors — faith, education, grassroots organizing, business, and the arts — through the power of story, strategic design, and genuine relationship.

Learn more about **dr candi** + her art x activism:

Website

CVs

- [Artistry Forward](#)
- [Leadership Forward](#)

Folios

- [Storytelling](#)
- [Marcom](#)

Artist Statement




Let's make
Art.
+ Change the World -
for good this time ...

Thank you, again, so much for this opportunity be
in collaboration with you at the intersection of a-mazing art +
social impact!

You may reach me for further discussion about all the possibilities:
candicandidugas.com
770.833.8734 (mobile)

Broadway Brunch™ was produced in Atlanta, GA. For
inquiries about the Broadway Brunch model, contact dr
candi via the contact info on this page.

 [Flocentric art store on Etsy, unsplash.com](https://www.etsy.com/shop/flocentric)

