

Illinois Artists Against Fascism

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Governor Pritzker,

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Thank you for your bold and powerful State of the State Budget Address last year. Your comparison of the Trump Administration to the Nazi era was both timely and courageous. It was refreshing to hear a leader speak the truth so clearly and forcefully, something far too few Democrats, from state legislatures to Congress, have been willing to do. And yet, here we are one year later.

Today, liberals almost universally agree that Democrats are not working hard enough to stop what is widely understood as an ongoing coup d'état. The party's messaging has been weak and ineffective. If this trajectory continues, the Democratic Party will fail, and with it, our nation may fall. To prevent this outcome, Democrats must adopt an emergency, all-hands-on-deck approach.

To counter the constant barrage of right-wing media propaganda, funded and amplified by Facebook, X, TikTok, and Russian bot networks, Democrats must develop a robust cultural response. This means a continuous and aggressive flow of information, art, music, film, literature, and public debate that directly opposes fascism and reclaims control of the narrative.

For this reason, we are requesting that you initiate a privately funded artist work program, modeled after the Works Progress Administration (WPA) created by FDR as part of the New Deal. Such a program would empower artists to respond quickly and effectively to the present fascist threat.

This program would provide grants to support artists whose work meets the following criteria:

- 1) Oppose fascism.
- 2) Reconnect with our in-state red neighbors. This is not a partisan issue.
- 3) Promote Illinois as one strong, unified community.

Who are we?

Matt Schultz is a multidisciplinary artist from Illinois who has lived in all four corners of the state. As a resident of Chicago, he co-founded the band Pigface, which played a significant role in the development of the Industrial Music movement in the 1990s. He appears on over 36 albums and composed several feature film soundtracks. He earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in Sculpture from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale on a full-ride scholarship. Schultz has taught Art and Design for twelve years at multiple colleges and universities across the state. He is the author and illustrator of the book *Freddy Fox and Friends Fight Fascism* and several other publications. His body of work covers everything from political satire to comedy troupes to the healing arts.

Jerry Lee Ingram Jr. is an international multidisciplinary artist who has lived between Europe and Illinois for several decades and now resides in his hometown of Jacksonville. He has promoted and exhibited Illinois artists from across the state through his Jacksonville gallery. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in photography through Illinois State University and MacMurray College, with honors. As an instructor, he taught fashion photography to international students at the Florence University of the Arts. His work for numerous well-known European fashion houses has reached a broad international audience. His artwork has been exhibited in galleries throughout the United States and in several national galleries in Italy. He has received achievement awards in arts and culture, advertising photography, and was nominated among the world's most prominent photographers.

Together with other Illinois artists, we seek to operate this collective under your personal financial support. Our objective is to provide grants that enable artists to produce urgent, persuasive, and culturally resonant work aligned with the three objectives outlined above.

We must act now, before it is too late. This artist collective can strengthen the Democratic message in ways traditional politics cannot. Art has always shaped public consciousness, and in this moment, it will be no exception.

We eagerly await your response.

Matt Schultz, Jerry Lee Ingram