Extraordinary Ordinary People: A Music-Fueled Journey through Folk and Traditional Arts in America, by Alan Govenar

(2017. 84 minutes. DVD format, color, includes extras: five short films and portrait portfolio. Documentary Arts, Dallas, TX.)

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The National Heritage Fellowships have been awarded to folk and traditional artists by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) every year since 1982, to “recognize the recipients' artistic excellence and support their continuing contributions to our nation's traditional arts heritage” (NEA National Heritage Fellowships, 2019). Extraordinary Ordinary People is a celebration of the artists honored by the Fellowships. Much of it was filmed at the 2015 National Heritage Fellowships concert (the annual awards ceremony) in Washington, DC, but it also includes footage of artists going back to the first year of the award. The film is directed by Alan Govenar and co-written by Govenar and Jason Johnson-Spinos, who also edited it.

Beginning with several definitions of “tradition,” the film surveys dozens of traditional artists, generally grouped by genre or style (bluegrass, blues, conjunto music, baskets, quilts, etc.), interspersed with longer interviews with artists such as oud master Rahim AlHaj, circus aerialist Dolly Jacobs, and especially North Carolina balladeer and banjo player Sheila Kay Adams, who also narrates the film (along with Elva Perez). The longer interviews nicely convey the importance of narrative to the artists in presenting themselves and their art, as well as many details about their art forms.

The film also explores the history and goals of the Fellowships through interviews with the late Bess Lomax Hawes (former NEA Folk and Traditional Arts Director and creator of the Fellowships) and, especially, with Dan Sheehy, winner of the 2015 Bess Lomax Hawes Award for the preservation and awareness of cultural heritage (awarded annually as part of the National Heritage Fellowships). Sheehy, an ethnomusicologist, is former director of NEA Folk and Traditional Arts, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

The film looks briefly at several political and cultural issues surrounding folk and traditional artists: the impact of immigrant and refugee experiences on the maintenance of traditional arts; the impact of language and language loss, especially with Native arts; the lack of recognition and
financial compensation for many traditional artists; the role of art in surviving and healing; the passing of traditions to the next generation; the simultaneously conservative and dynamic nature of most traditional art forms; and the ways that traditional artists must adapt to new technology, new modes of communication, and changing social norms. All these issues are explored through interviews with artists.

The film emphasizes music and dance and, inevitably, explores only a slice of the hundreds of art forms of National Heritage Fellows, but it still manages to survey a great variety of art forms, from mariachi music to Orthodox icon making, to straw weaving, boat building, rockabilly, bobbin lace making, retablo making, Korean and Cambodian traditional dancing, Peking opera, capoeira, Nez Perce and Tolowa singing, and many others. The film is beautiful, multi-sensual, exciting, thought provoking, and often moving. As diverse as the artists are, they have in common an intense passion and commitment to their art forms. Although the film touches just briefly on specific art forms and artists, it compels the viewer to learn more. As I watched, I paused it frequently to look up more information on the artists and their traditions.

The DVD includes five short films, mostly interview excerpts, and a portfolio of portraits of some of the Heritage Fellows. It does not come with any materials directly intended for classroom use. However, the Masters of Traditional Arts website includes photos, audio, and video of over 400 Fellows as well as an education guide by Paddy Bowman, with lesson plans and activities. (Unfortunately, there is no mention of this site anywhere on the DVD package.) Even without the online materials, the film (or excerpts from the film) could definitely be used in the classroom to illustrate the incredible variety and beauty of folk and traditional arts in the U.S. It is easy to imagine activities based on the film— for example, having students choose an art form from the film that interests them and create a research paper, class presentation, or creative project centering on that art form. Such activities would enrich curricula in art, culture, and history, among other subject areas.

The DVD can be ordered through Documentary Arts or First Run Features, and it can be downloaded from iTunes.

**URLs**
- https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage
- www.mastersoftraditonalarts.org
- http://www.docarts.com
- www.firstrunfeatures.com
Folkstreams (https://www.folkstreams.net)

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For nearly two decades, Folkstreams has held a reputation as the go-to resource for viewing and browsing ethnographic films online. The website, founded by Tom Davenport, is now managed as a 501(c)3 organization headed by Davenport and staff and advised by a committee of distinguished folklorists and scholars. The growth of this site is clear; over the last several years, it has experienced a significant design overhaul. Many features remain consistent, but the site is now sleek, easy to navigate, and visually appealing as a searchable resource.

While visiting the main page of Folkstreams, a large banner image that changes with each new visit to the site greets viewers. The main navigation menu at the top features the opportunity to browse films by title, filmmakers, or search bar. Additionally, from the top navigation, viewers can learn more about Folkstreams history, the rights of the films available on Folkstreams, and how to contact and donate to the organization.

Folkstreams is a remarkably searchable website. Browsing film titles by name, the viewer has the option to filter titles by category or region, as well as sort alphabetically or by the date they were added to the database. Search results appear as a grid of thumbnail images with title, date, and film length. When the viewer hovers the mouse over the film images, brief summaries appear without having to navigate to a new page. Upon clicking on a film, the viewer can watch the film, learn more about the production crew and licensing of content, and even browse related films on the lower right side.

When browsing films by filmmaker alphabetically, a particularly savvy feature is the way that each filmmaker’s complete body of work on Folkstreams is listed immediately below their name in the filmmaker index. If a viewer is a fan of a particular film, they will immediately be able to see other content by that filmmaker. If one is looking to browse more casually, the homepage offers the option to view featured films and popular categories of films. If a viewer would like to search by specific term, the search bar is highly responsive; the results for a search go beyond the titles or categories of videos to scan the descriptions of each video for keywords.

Folkstreams maintains a strong commitment to education, with the bottom navigation reflecting the website’s intended audiences, including educators, community members, families, and users looking to learn more about video preservation. For educators, a portal developed by Paddy Bowman features a variety of lessons and worksheets to accompany several films. While this section might appear limited in content with only four film-specific guides, advice is given for adapting these plans to a wider variety of films. The worksheets are highly adaptable. For example, the Film Analysis Framework worksheet helps viewers analyze content from any film through a variety of pre-viewing, viewing, and post-viewing tasks. Viewers are asked to look for specific elements in a film, such as narrator, setting, techniques, vocabulary, and symbols, to name a few.

For community and family audiences, Folkstreams offers a resource page that encourages the use of Folkstreams videos to bring intergenerational groups together and spark dialogue. This page
offers a variety of topics (framed as questions) to kick-start these conversations. The page links to further resources, including *Louisiana Voices* and the *Veterans History Project* at the American Folklife Center.

Lastly, the bottom navigation menu features a tab on video preservation, which, although small and unassuming, links to a robust database of video demonstrations on a variety of topics related to motion picture preservation and restoration. Although this appears like a separate site visually, this page is also created and maintained by *Folkstreams*. Topics range from film repair and cleaning to disaster planning and storage. The videos supplement aids that already exist on the linked National Film Preservation Foundation’s *Guide to Film Preservation*.

In all, *Folkstreams*’ growing site has tremendous educational potential for a variety of contexts. The website is approachable, fun to explore, and rich with resources. Educators should note that *Folkstreams* emphasizes that the films are limited to home use. Film rights remain an omnipresent theme on the site. Rights appears as a category both in the top and bottom navigations, and the page indicates that users who wish to stream in classrooms/institutions must apply to *Folkstreams* or the filmmaker. This holds true for users wishing to use footage in projects as well. Alongside the educational resources, *Folkstreams*’ commitment to showcasing and crediting the hard work of folklorists and scholars remains part of the mission and legacy of this project.

**URLs**

- [www.folkstreams.net](http://www.folkstreams.net)
- Film Analysis worksheet and other education tools: [https://www.folkstreams.net/educators.php](https://www.folkstreams.net/educators.php)
- [www.louisianavoices.org](http://www.louisianavoices.org)
- [www.loc.gov/vets](http://www.loc.gov/vets)
- [www.filmpreservation.org](http://www.filmpreservation.org)
Yo’Mama, Mary Mack, and Boudreau and Thibodeaux: Louisiana Children’s Folklore and Play, by Jeanne Pitre Soileau (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. 2016, xi +193 pp, appendices, notes, index.)

Nic Hartmann currently serves as both the Director of Learning & Civic Engagement at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library and an Adjunct Professor of Leadership Studies at Mount Mercy University.

In Yo’ Mama, Mary Mack, and Boudreau and Thibodeaux: Louisiana Children’s Folklore and Play, author, educator, and folklorist Jeanne Pitre Soileau presents an analysis of over four decades of fieldwork on southern Louisiana children’s games. Soileau’s work as an educator gave her extensive opportunities to collect recordings from children from around the state, and this book highlights the vast variety of verbal and play-based lore that comes from these communities. Looking at children’s folklore as an example of ephemeral art that serves as one of the “most treasured outlets for artistic expression,” Soileau emphasizes how this folklife has served as a constant for African American children over the last several decades, whether in facing the backlash of integration, responding to the issues of busing, or coping with other contemporary issues related to African American life.

Soileau’s collection adds to the rich collection of African American children’s folklife not only by displaying the rich regional collection of Louisiana folklife, but also by emphasizing the role of girls’ play as being equally present, yet not nearly as researched among historical folklorists. Rather than looking at the media, and the rise of electronic devices, as a negative presence set to reduce the role of children’s folklore, Soileau heavily discusses their importance in her chapters, “The African-American Child in the Media” and “To Infinity and Beyond: Children’s Play in the Electronic Age.” Readers get a strong idea of the evolution of children’s play and the methods of Soileau herself, who goes from playgrounds to school anime clubs over the course of 44 years of research. This is just as much a study of her life as a folklorist as it is the people she examines, and the evolution of her work over time is very evident in the text. It’s part ethnography and part autobiography, which work well together.

While the book is well organized into four basic sections—one each for the study of boys’ and girls’ play and the others to examine media and technology, respectively—there is more to the book than those theoretical analyses and examples. Rather than lament technology as a distraction from the cultural creation process, Soileau’s book actually embraces it, which makes it a better model for educators to understand better how to embrace technological innovation and its effects on youth. Some of the richest materials come from her appendices, which feature recent examples of fieldwork in various formats and make the book’s purpose stronger. It is a solid resource for educators, both inside and outside the classroom, that gives an idea of how a fieldwork session can operate and how educators can engage children in the fieldwork process. It is just about analysis but also about how folklorists engage with youth and how they can do so in a way that sparks creativity. Over the years, Soileau has succeeded in doing so, and her collection is both vital to the study of children’s folklore and the study of folklore and education.
In this accessible monograph on the intersection of music education and ethnomusicology, Campbell uses her “half-century’s work as a teaching musician, a card-carrying music educator,” and an ethnomusicologist to explain music education in the U.S. as lagging behind larger societal shifts toward multiculturalism and social justice but as having promise. In doing so, she demonstrates the usefulness of ethnomusicological approaches and materials for multicultural education as well as the utility of contemporary social justice and multicultural education scholarship for ethnomusicologists and folklorists working in schools and teacher education. The book should be required reading in music teacher education programs and in applied folklore courses as it helps explain needed developments in music education today while also revealing the kind of theoretically-informed work that ethnomusicologists and folklorists need to do for our work to be relevant in the broader society.

Campbell is an accomplished and prolific scholar, having authored seven books and many articles, and edited several handbooks, including a recent seven-volume series on World Music Pedagogy for use by teachers and in teacher education (https://www.routledge.com/music/series/WMP). *Music, Education, and Diversity* has eight chapters, two of which are adapted from Campbell’s entries in the *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education* (2012) and *The Oxford Handbook of Social Justice in Education* (2015). Throughout, Campbell uses the trope of herself as “musical artefact,” inserting personal experience narratives that allow her to reflect on her “sense of connections between musical power and cultural equity” and to share her firsthand observations of the diversification of music education programs as well as the challenges that have kept them predominantly monocultural.

The first four chapters give the big picture of “musical engagement as human need” (chapter 1), “the changing nature of school music” (chapter 2), “educational intersections of ethnomusicological ideals” (chapter 3), and “multicultural education and social justice in school music practice” (chapter 4). *Music* is a “pan-human phenomenon” but without a “universal language”: it must be understood in context and is grounded in the home. *Musicking* is not object but action and process, and music educators should focus on “living musical-cultural experience.” All people deserve music in their lives as a right rather than a privilege. The question is whose music will be included in the curriculum as official knowledge.
Campbell answers that question through a literature review of how school music has been conceptualized, from its Anglocentric roots to the present ongoing expansion into global and local musicking, starting with UNESCO’s International Music Council in 1953. She reviews “crossover scholarship” by ethnomusicologists working in music education and music educators using ethnomusicology. Campbell identifies the persistence of a “19th-century conservatory model” in higher education, including teacher education, as thwarting inclusion of global and local musicking. But she also introduces social justice and multicultural education approaches, illustrated by exemplary music education in practice, and concludes that music educators are increasingly paying attention to equity and social action, “leading [their students] toward the socially responsible citizens they will become.”

Campbell’s last four chapters drill into specific pedagogical concepts and techniques, and it is in these that the reader finds the application of core folkloristic and ethnomusicological concepts: “transmission, teaching, and learning” (chapter 5), “world music pedagogy as learning pathway” (chapter 6), “connections with communities and culture bearers” (chapter 7), and “principles of diversity in school music practice” (chapter 8).

For music teacher educators, *Music, Education, and Diversity* provides a blueprint for diversifying the curriculum to catch up to the 21st century. It could be the main text used in undergraduate or graduate introduction to music education courses and should not be relegated to a specialty course on multicultural education.

For ethnomusicologists and folklorists working in education, *Music, Education, and Diversity* provides an excellent lesson in how to use folklore for democratic, multicultural, social justice education while maintaining a focus on key folk processes. As part of the *Multicultural Education Series* edited by James A. Banks, the book illustrates how to operationalize Banks’s five dimensions of multicultural education (content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture) as well as his four levels of curricular reform (contributions, additive, transformation, and social action). Framing folkloristic materials and methods in canonical educational practice allows for teachers and teacher educators to understand the power of global and local materials and processes.
In their cleverly titled volume, repeat collaborators Doug Blandy and Paul E. Bolin offer a brief overview and introduction to material culture studies and outline a case for including material culture studies topics and techniques in art education. While ostensibly for an audience of art educators, the book may serve as a useful quick start guide for anyone looking to orient themselves in the interdisciplinary landscape of material culture studies, whether seeking to enhance their own research or to plan activities for students.

The book is organized into seven accessible chapters plus an introduction and list of selected readings for further exploration. The first chapter offers an overview of material culture and material culture studies, situates those in comparison with—and potential inclusion in—art education, and outlines 12 key ideas such as the interdisciplinarity of material culture studies, the inherently political nature of material culture, and the multi-directional connections between things and stories. The following chapters elaborate on these ideas through slightly expanded discussions of objects and stories; collecting and collections; objects and links between people, places, and times; technology and material culture; multisensory engagement; and specific techniques for teaching and studying material culture.

Theoretical treatment is light, contained to succinct mentions of some key figures and perspectives. The bulk of the text is devoted to descriptions of various categories of material culture, examples of what may be learned through examination of objects, and explication of “how to” methodologies for closer consideration of those things and topics. Miniature case studies drawn from the authors’ experiences are sprinkled throughout, grounding the work in easily grasped concrete examples.

The majority of the techniques presented would be quite effective in undergraduate curriculum, either as standalone activities or as part of a course-wide (or multi-course series) focus on the study of one or more types of material culture and/or research methodologies. These approaches would also work well in museum, archive, or library education settings, whether for single-visit audiences or as part of continuing education offerings. The strategies might well prove fruitful, too, for scholars planning cross-disciplinary collaborations.

Some of the activities, such as the “Who Made That?” exercise or object-linked storytelling, also could be used with students as young as Kindergarten, perhaps with slight adaptation. Indeed, the show and tell/show and share time that is commonly part of elementary school experience already touches in a simple way on some key points of interest to the material culture scholar, and variants of some of the book’s other approaches have been incorporated, at least in part, into instructional
exercises for elementary through high school students. Material culture can be a lens through which to focus on any topic, and the activities suggested by the authors pair nicely with the structure of existing academic standards.

It is worth revisiting the authors’ aim of providing a “motivational catalyst” (p. 5) for art educators to include material culture studies as part of their teaching. Blandy and Bolin do a respectable job of laying out what can be learned through material culture studies, with some notable focus on linkages between people, processes, worldview, and objects. It does not take a huge feat of imagination, however, to think that some scholars might not be persuaded to stretch what have been the conventional boundaries of their purview to take on these expanded considerations. The authors’ argument that may be hardest to dismiss is that, unlike approaches that privilege the visual, material culture studies lend themselves to including and accommodating individuals with visual or other sensory impairments, since material culture engages all the senses. This inclusiveness is noteworthy.

The authors reiterate material culture studies’ interdisciplinary nature at several points. Their streamlined format does not allow extended discussion of the differences between disciplinary orientations or techniques, however, so readers interested in such details will need to do additional research. Even included models are not always linked to their disciplinary background. The “Selected Books” are a thoughtful gesture toward this, although I wonder whether an author-alphabetized list is the most helpful presentation. Perhaps organization by topic or discipline might be more useful to newcomers to this subject, or to those looking to make connections outside their own disciplines. An online resource searchable by multiple fields would be a welcome companion tool to Learning Things. All told, though, this volume provides a good jumping off point, offering a wide enough range of readings, curriculum ideas, and additional resources to solidly launch early forays into studying material culture.
The 2020 Journal of Folklore and Education (JFE) titled "Teaching for Equity: The Role of Folklore in a Time of Crisis and Opportunity" is now accepting submissions. This issue speaks directly to the national crisis of equity, representation, and access in our zip codes and our cultural and educational institutions. Folklore includes the traditions, arts, and stories that make cultural communities unique and strengthen social bonds within our communities. The tools of folklore—such as observation, identifying important traditions and rituals, and deep listening to diverse narratives through interviews and ethnographic fieldwork—create opportunities for addressing significant social justice questions because the study of folklore and folklife centers students’ linguistic, cultural, social, and racial pluralities. The terms “inclusion,” “diversity,” “equity,” and “access” are often used to critique privilege and hierarchy to address long-term effects of infrastructural and lived inequity. Yet as buzzwords these terms sometimes mask inaction and perpetuation of the status quo. This special issue of JFE asks how folklore and paying close attention to culture in our learning spaces can equip educators with tools and resources to engage more fully diverse students and audiences.

We seek submissions that present case studies, lessons, and research on the significance of arts that are based in community cultural life that may be useful for:

- Educators in diverse settings or contexts;
- Curators and program managers at museums, community centers, and cultural institutions addressing issues of representation and access in content creation and program development;
- Administrators addressing the complexities of equity and access in teacher preparation and professional development, as well as in curriculum development and sustaining community relationships; and
- Students and community members who want to see their cultural knowledge valued in educational practices and policy.
Essential questions that contributors may use to inspire their writing, interviews, and media submissions include the following:

~ Culturally responsive teaching asks educators to recognize students’ cultural displays of learning and meaning making (Gloria Ladson-Billings 2007). Culturally sustaining teaching sees culture more deeply as an asset that should be explicitly supported (Django Paris 2012). How might folklore in education, with an attention to local knowledge and arts, enhance pedagogy in diverse learning spaces?

~ What are best practices in Indigenous/indigenous methodologies to bring traditional ways of knowing, creating, and learning into a classroom, museum, or community?

~ How can the tools of folklore such as observation, identifying important traditions and rituals, and collecting personal experience narratives through interviews create opportunities for addressing significant social justice questions? Describe and unpack classroom activities, exhibition design protocols, resources and curriculum development, public program formats, and other engagement methods that use these tools for social justice.

~ What does a culturally safe space look like for diverse and equitable classrooms or cultural institutions and organizations?

~ How can educators from multiple disciplinary areas, including science, health care, social studies, composition, or literacy, use culture in their teaching to create inclusive, differentiated learning environments?

~ How does a folkloristic, ethnographic approach in a classroom or other educational setting connect learners with cultural knowledge systems different from their own and deepen understanding of their own community—from early childhood, to K-12, to adult learners?

~ How can higher-education teacher-preparation programs incorporate cultural ways of knowing, creating, or learning as a key part of their pedagogy?

~ How can the field of Folklore help address “tough conversations” or controversy in contemporary discourse surrounding the education achievement gap or structural racism in schools and the communities where they are situated? How might this practice help serve learners with diverse perspectives in our classrooms?

~ What lessons and activities can help educators address stereotype threats?

~ Describe models for incorporating mindfulness, restorative justice, and uncovering unconscious bias in school-based classrooms and other educational settings. How might such practices meaningfully connect with folklife and cultural knowledge?

More about Submissions: We seek submissions of articles, model projects, multimedia products, teaching applications, and student work accompanied by critical writing that connects to the larger frameworks of this theme. We particularly welcome submissions inclusive of perspectives and voices from represented communities. Co-authored articles that include teachers, administrators, artists, students, or community members offer opportunities for multiple points of view on an educational program or a curriculum. We publish articles that share best practices, offer specific guides or plans for implementing folklore in education, and articulate theoretical and critical frameworks. We invite educators to share shorter pieces for “Notes from the Field.” Nonconventional formats are also welcomed, such as lesson plans, worksheets, and classroom exercises. Media submissions, including short film and audio clips, will also be considered. When considering a submission, we highly recommend reviewing previous issues of JFE (see www.locallearningnetwork.org/journal-of-folklore-and-education/current-and-past-issues).
encourage you to be in touch with the editors to learn more and see whether your concept might
be a good fit and to discuss submission and media ideas.

Research-based writing that theorizes, evaluates, or assesses programs that use Folklore in
Education tools and practice are also welcomed. These research articles may intersect with the
theme, but all submissions with a research component will be considered. We expect that,
regardless of the format, all projects presented in submissions will have appropriate institutional
permissions for public dissemination before submission to JFE, including approval from
Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and/or data licensing for the acquisition of existing data, as
may be required. See the protocol for publishing a study used by ArtsEdSearch for guidance.

Format: Articles should be 1,500-4,500 words, submitted as a Word document. We use a modified
Chicago style (not APA) and parenthetical citations. Contact the editors for our formatting
requirements and citation style template. All URL links hyperlinked in the document should also
be referenced, in order, at the end of the article in a URL list for offline readers. Images should
have a dpi of at least 300.

Contact editors Paddy Bowman at pbbowman@gmail.com or Lisa Rathje at
lisa@locallearningnetwork.org with ideas for stories, features, lessons, and media productions.
You may also request a citation style template. Initial drafts of submissions are due April 1,
2020.

Please share this announcement with colleagues and educators in your community. This endeavor
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We are grateful to our Advisory Committee for this special issue:
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Local Learning connects folklorists, artists, and educators across the nation and advocates for the full inclusion of folklife and folk arts in education to transform learning, build intercultural understanding, and create stronger communities.

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Please support The Journal of Folklore and Education so that we can continue to provide this free resource.

Teaching for Equity: The Role of Folklore in a Time of Crisis and Opportunity, Volume 7 of the Journal of Folklore and Education, will be published in September 2020. See the Call for Submissions in this issue.

About the Editors

Bonnie S. Sunstein is professor of English and education at the University of Iowa, where she teaches essay writing, ethnographic methods, writing theory, and folklore. She has been Director of the Nonfiction Writing Program, Program Chair in English Education, and Director of Undergraduate Writing in English. A veteran of New England colleges and public schools, she conducts writing and teaching institutes around the world. Her chapters, articles, and poems appear in journals and anthologies. FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research is in its fourth edition. Her newest book explores issues in teaching nonfiction. Bonnie has received awards and grants for excellence in teaching and outreach projects involving teachers, students, and university faculties locally, nationally, and internationally.

Paddy Bowman is Founding Director of Local Learning and creator of numerous folklore and education resources. She co-edited Through the Schoolhouse Door: Folklore, Community, Curriculum (2011) and co-wrote a chapter in Folklife and Museums. She was awarded the Benjamin A. Botkin Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Public Folklore and is a Fellow of the American Folklore Society. Reach her at pbbowman@gmail.com.

Lisa Rathje is Executive Director of Local Learning. She also teaches in the Goucher College Masters in Cultural Sustainability program. She currently serves on the Arts Education Partnership Equity and Higher Education Working Groups. Reach her at lisa@locallearningnetwork.org.