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**DATE:** December 29, 2011

## **NEA Chairman Landesman announces Challenge America Fast-Track grants** ***3<sup>rd</sup> EyE Youth Empowerment, Inc. is one of only 162 grantees nationwide***

*New Bedford, MA* —As National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Rocco Landesman has noted, “Art works everywhere,” which is why the NEA’s Challenge America Fast-Track (CAFT) program supports projects from primarily small and mid-sized arts organizations that extend the reach of the arts to underserved audiences—those whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, ethnicity, economics, or disability. 3<sup>rd</sup> EyE Youth Empowerment, Inc. (3<sup>rd</sup> EyE) was selected to receive one of the 162 grants of \$10,000 awarded to organizations in 46 states, plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Challenge America Fast-Track grant will support 3<sup>rd</sup> EyE’s 13<sup>th</sup> Annual 3<sup>rd</sup> EyE Open that is scheduled to take place on July 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> at Buttonwood Park in New Bedford. The 3<sup>rd</sup> EyE Open is a Hip Hop Cultural Festival that exposes the positive elements of the culture through live performances, breakdancing and popping competitions, 3-on-3 basketball tournaments, live mural painting, children’s activities, skate jams and much more. The Open is a youth-led, family-oriented and peaceful event for the New England area that provides the opportunity for local artists to showcase their talents and builds awareness of the arts to the community at-large.

“Taken together, these Challenge America Fast-Track grants provide an extraordinary sampling of the work that arts organizations do to reach underserved communities,” said Chairman Landesman. “With these grants, we are helping to ensure that art works for all Americans.”

“On behalf of 3<sup>rd</sup> EyE, we are very grateful for the support of NEA’s Challenge America Fast-Track grant and their recognition of the work that we do,” said Jennifer DeBarros, Executive Director of 3<sup>rd</sup> EyE. “The Open is a unique way to engage our youth in a meaningful and positive experience that reflects their interests and ambitions.”

The program is called Fast-Track because of its expedited review timeline. 3<sup>rd</sup> EyE was notified approximately six months after applying. Also, with 375 eligible applications submitted from across the country, there was significant competition for funding for these grants. 3<sup>rd</sup> EyE’s grant award is evidence of the artistic excellence and artistic merit of the 3<sup>rd</sup> EyE Open.

Please see the [complete listing of projects](#) recommended for Challenge America Fast-Track grant support.

**3<sup>rd</sup> EyE** is a youth development organization whose mission is to engage and empower young leaders to positively transform their community through skill-based mentoring, organizing and the arts. 3<sup>rd</sup> EyE has become a community fixture in the City of New Bedford serving youth, their families and the community for over 13 years. For more information please visit our website: [www.3rdeyeunlimited.com](http://www.3rdeyeunlimited.com) or call 508-910-2260.

**The National Endowment for the Arts** was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).