

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Historically, emerging cutting-edge computing paradigms (personal computing, the internet, mobile devices) made their way into the world from the “top down”, starting as expensive and exclusive products for a select few, and then gradually becoming more accessible to a wider population. Of the financially privileged who can *afford* these cutting-edge technologies, even fewer have the specialized skills to gain programmatic *agency* over these technologies, reinforcing an exclusionary model of technology innovation which primarily serves the interests of a sliver of a sliver of society: those already holding the most advantage. Most approaches to expanding access to technology are motivated by charity, directly serving people’s computing needs without the expectation of skill development, capacity building, or addressing deeper structural inequities.

To counter this, Dynamicland’s approach is based on equity, with computing as a form of collective political, economic, and cultural power. We design for a “bottom-up” strategy that starts at the margins, where communities traditionally underserved by existing technology and underrepresented in the process of scientific research are the very *first* to be empowered by communal computing.

Rather than being handed a predefined vision that’s developed external to their culture and context, communities will learn to build computing as an expression of shared prosperity and self-determination. In this way, communal computing will challenge the monoculture of technology of today and foster a pluralistic future.

Experience and past record.

The first Dynamicland community space was founded in downtown Oakland in order to partner with grassroots and community-based organizations that represent the racial, economic, and cultural diversity of Oakland, including Oakland Youth Radio, California College of the Arts, Oakland Unified School District, Hack the Hood, CODEd, and the Kapor Center. We co-designed programs with the goal of empowering Black, Indigenous, and Latina/o/e youths with computing and technology.

Three of these programs are described briefly below.

Partnership with CODEd Academy: bridging the racial technology divide and creating equitable pathways for students of color. In 2017, Dynamicland partnered with CODEd Academy and hosted 20 Oakland students from 5th to 7th grade to learn, create, and craft in a communal computing environment. Students described their experiences as “astonished, awesome, unbelievable, dreamland”. Here is a representative response from participant Kennan Scott, Oakland teacher and CODEd Academy founder: *“CODEd Academy tackles the problem of tech inclusivity by giving black and brown youth the skills, language and vision needed to become the next tech industry leaders. Partnering with Dynamicland gets me juiced because they perfectly integrate Computer Science into MakerEd. Their work is going to push future generations of problem solvers to think creatively for new solutions. My students left the space with a greater appreciation for research and the power of tinkering.”*



Partnership with Black Speculative Arts Movement: Building cultural power and imagining a technology future centered on the Black experience. In 2018, Dynamicland hosted “Minority reports/Future time 2054”, a program by Lonny J Avi Brooks, cofounder of the Black Speculative Arts Movement and resident of the Afrofuturist Podcast. The program consisted of an Afrofuturist Game Jam for 21 undergraduate and graduate students from Cal State East Bay. Outputs from this event were presented at the Black Speculative Arts Movement’s 2018 event “Beyond Wakanda: The future of Afrofuturism”.



Partnership with the Oakland Unified School District: Co-creating a future of learning centered on diversity, equity, and inclusion. In 2018, Dynamicland hosted a three-month program to co-create the future of learning centered on Black, and Latina/o/e, women, and non-binary educators, students, and their families from the Oakland Unified School District. In the communal computing environment at Dynamicland, participants mapped their personal journeys and converged on a shared language and strategy for the future.

