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## **ART 180 Executive Director Marlene Paul to Step Down in May 2025**

**Richmond, VA** – After 26 years of visionary leadership and service to Richmond’s arts and youth communities, Marlene Paul, Executive Director and Cofounder of ART 180, has announced she will step down from her role at the end of May 2025. Paul’s departure marks the culmination of a legacy that has firmly positioned ART 180 as a cornerstone of creative youth empowerment and community-building through art. Since cofounding ART 180 in 1998, Paul has grown the organization from a grassroots project to a force for social change.

One of Paul’s most enduring contributions is the creation of ART 180’s own gallery and community space, Atlas, which has been in operation for nearly 12 years in the heart of Jackson Ward. The gallery serves as a vibrant home for young artists and a hub for art that catalyzes positive community change. More than 682 programs have reached more than 8,800 young people, with the support and collaboration of over 1,000 professional artists. Under her leadership, ART 180 has fostered relationships with local and international artists, creating pathways to creative development for Richmond’s youth. In just the past four years, ART 180 has awarded more than \$54,000 in financial stipends to its young artists, further supporting their creative and professional growth.

Marlene Paul’s departure comes at a time when ART 180 is looking toward an exciting future. The organization is set to expand its reach beyond Richmond, already building international bridges with artists and communities. Spearheaded by Deputy Director Nicole Jones and Program Director Maurice Leoni-Osion, ART 180’s recent collaboration with South African artist Xolani Sivunda, its first international artist-in-residence, is just the beginning. In 2025, ART 180 will replicate its successful youth artist residency program in Cape Town, South Africa, further solidifying its role as a global arts leader.

“I’m ready for a change, and I think ART 180 is ready for new leadership. We’re in a good place and have worked hard to build a strong collective with shared responsibility, so the transition feels healthy for all of us,” said Marlene Paul, Executive Director and Cofounder of ART 180. “I’m proud of what we’ve created and motivated to make space for something new.”

Chris Hairston-White, President of ART 180’s Board of Trustees, added, “As we say farewell to our incredible leader, whose passion and dedication over the past 26 years have transformed our organization into a beacon for social change, we are filled with both gratitude and excitement for what’s to come. Marlene’s influence has created lasting ripple effects far beyond ART 180, and the connections she fostered will continue to grow and flourish for years to come. While honoring her vision, we’re energized by the future and ready to embrace the new opportunities that lie ahead.”

Looking ahead, ART 180’s Board of Trustees will lead the process of selecting new leadership to guide the organization into its next chapter. A celebration of Paul’s legacy and contributions to ART 180 will take place at the annual Block Party in May 2025, coinciding with her official departure.

As ART 180 moves into this new chapter, it holds strong to its core mission to cultivate the tools and strength of spirit to meet every moment, every trauma, and every triumph head on.

For more information on the leadership transition and organizational updates please contact:  
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