

LOVE Building: A Conversation with Toni Mocerì of Allied Media Projects

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The LOVE Building, 4731 Grand River Ave, Detroit, MI 48208. Courtesy of Leslie Cieplechowicz

“We work to nourish, protect, connect, and cultivate the ecosystem of media for liberation of specific groups,” says Toni Mocerì, the Executive Director of Allied Media Projects (AMP). Allied Media Projects began in 1999 as the Midwest Zine, and blossomed into Allied Media Projects and the Allied Media Conference (AMC) in 2002. In 2007, the organization migrated from Ohio to Detroit and has since provided fiscal sponsorship to over 140 projects in the LGBTQ community, which includes financial, operational, and fundraising support. AMP strives to “make the radical practical by providing highly specialized and politically competent administrative and project support to cutting edge Queer, Trans and BIPOC media makers who are working towards liberation,” states Mocerì.

Toni has been a part of Allied Media since 2016, when she was hired as the Director of the Sponsored Projects Program. Her commitment over these six years has led to AMP securing over \$60 million dollars in funding, allowing groups in Detroit and across the country to achieve their visions. Project sponsorship grew from 12 to almost 150 in 2021 under Mocerì, who believes that it is a collective responsibility to create a world where everyone can live and thrive.

Some of the organizations that have been supported by Allied Media include TransTech Social Enterprises, Detroitography, Youth Volume, The Hoodsie, and Flower Press. TransTech Social Enterprises is a staffing service that provides transgender people with professional opportunities in graphic design, social media management, and web development. Detroitography is an initiative that brings together many talented Detroit cartographers and focuses on mapping and archiving their stories. Youth Volume cultivates inspiring musicians, ages 14-18, in an effort to make arts education available to lower income families. The Hoodise is a radicalized Chicago news show that brings people of color together, from comedians to social changers, to give a politicized take on current events. Flower Press is a media house that publishes works by womxn, femme, queer, and trans artists.

Mocerì asserts that Allied Media Projects is committed to celebrating Detroit brilliance within their network, while cultivating an environment where media-based organizing can continue to be resourced and thrive. AMP provides two types of fiscal support: Comprehensive (Model A) with 10% of project funds, and Grant Specific or Grantor-Grantee (Model C) with 7% of project funds. Under AMP's 501(C)3 umbrella, a project can apply for grants, and receive gifts or services ranging from guidance in the realm of human resources, to financial planning such as accounting and book-keeping.

Allied Media has also had many successful collaborations over the years, one being with Project Hajra (PH), a transformative justice initiative working out of their local AM-EMSA (Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South/Central Asian) community in Queens, NYC. PH supports survivors of interpersonal violence through programs such as grief circles and workshops. When Project Hajra's emergency fund was low and it could not pay its staff, AMP helped the group create and execute a campaign to spread awareness.



Portrait of Toni Mocerì. Courtesy of Allied Media

Allied Media has overcome many challenges since being founded twenty years ago. Changes in leadership, going remote during COVID-19, and closing the AMC chapter to focus on redeveloping the LOVE Building as their new headquarters are only a few. But Toni feels that moving to the LOVE Building was worth it as it is now a permanent, centrally located and accessible home to six Detroit-based social justice organizations. Though the missions vary amongst them, all of these groups share AMP's view of cultivating equality, justice, and joy for all Detroiters.

Mocerì believes that "the strongest solutions happen through the processes, where we learn, adapt, iterate, and rethink through the problems we are trying to solve." This guiding belief has helped AMP weather even their toughest years.

While Allied Media is not accepting any new projects at this time, Mocerì encourages anyone interested in working with them to follow AMP on social media and sign-up for their newsletter. You can also check out the AMP website to learn more and stay up to date on when applications for new projects will be opened.

<https://alliedmedia.org/>

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