

***Upstream Democracy: Beauty, Belonging, and Civic Repair* | April 9, 2026**  
**Rutgers University**

**About the Speakers**

**Christina Lessa** is a cultural strategist and civic entrepreneur, founder of Blueprints for Arts and Policy, and CEO of Art Vue Worldwide. As Senior Arts and Culture Advisor to the Riyadh City Royal Commission for the past decade, she pioneered Saudi Arabia's first public art master plan into policy, implementing over 1,000 artworks, and directed arts integration for 85 Riyadh Metro stations.

**Saladin Ambar** is professor of political science and senior scholar at the Eagleton Center on the American Governor at Rutgers University. He is the author of six books, including *Stars and Shadows: The Politics of Interracial Friendship from Jefferson to Obama* (Oxford University Press, 2022), winner of the PROSE Award for Best Book in Government and Politics.

**Lucas Johnson** is an organizer, writer, and public theologian rooted in the Black freedom struggle and the practice of nonviolence. A former leader of *On Being*, he is a member of the Institute for Integrated Transitions' Depolarization Community of Practice and a board member of Waging Nonviolence.

**Andrew Binger** is program officer for community partnerships at the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, where he works at the intersection of arts access, equity, and cross-sector collaboration.

**Matthew Steinfeld** is associate professor of psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine, a clinical psychologist, psychoanalyst, and classically trained musician. His scholarship on the psychodynamics of music-making illuminates how resonance and attunement function as foundational conditions for human connection.

**Christina Bouey** is a Canadian-American violinist, assistant professor of violin at Mason Gross School of the Arts, and concertmaster of the Albany Symphony, hailed by *The New York Times* for playing "beautifully."