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National Volunteer Week: Watts House Project

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In honor of National Volunteer Week, GOOD will be bringing you a daily recommendation about organizations with which you can volunteer in your neighborhood and around the country.

When federal budgets get tight, it's not uncommon for Washington to train its fiscal scalpels on the most defenseless of federal institutions: the National Endowment for the Arts. For some reason, the idea that "a great nation deserves great art" is absolutely lost on politicians. Thankfully, Los Angeles artist Edgar Arceneaux understands exactly the impact that art can have on a community, and has linked the ideas in a tangible way as part of the Watts House Project.

The Watts House Project is an urban revitalization initiative disguised as an art project. The goal is to improve the neighborhood immediately surrounding the historic Watts Towers—a well-known Los Angeles art installation that has achieved National Historic

Landmark status—a neighborhood that has rarely benefited from the cultural currency the Towers drive. Arceneaux hopes to align the needs of Watts's residents with the desires of local artists, and channel that creative energy into real solutions for the community.

Volunteers can expect to help execute an artists vision in service of a local need—this weekend, for example, a series of houses are being renovated in the area immediately surrounding the towers. And they're looking for help.