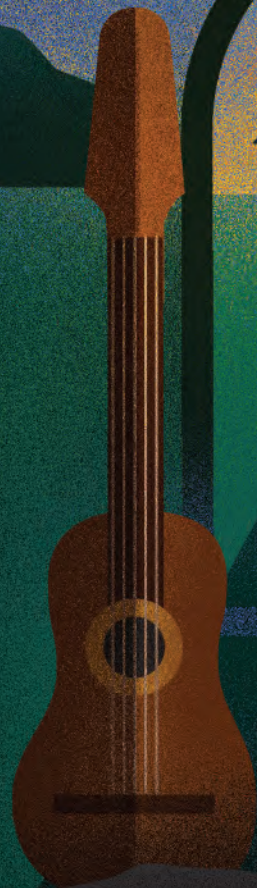


# Traditional Arts as Healing from Trauma



A WORKBOOK FOR  
BUILDING WELLNESS  
IN COMMUNITY



Traditional Arts as Healing From Trauma:  
A workbook for building wellness in community

Copyright 2021 by the Alliance for California Traditional Arts.  
All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-68564-626-4

Alliance for California Traditional Arts  
Central Office in Fresno  
744 P Street, Suite 307  
Fresno, CA 93721  
Actaonline.org

Edited by: Betty Marín  
Advisors: Quetzal Flores, Amy Kitchener, and Jasmin Temblador  
Design support: Jennifer Joy Jameson

Book design and cover art: Diana Molleda  
Copy editing: Kelsey Ford  
Printed in the United States of America.



This program and publication is supported by the California  
Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

# Traditional Arts as Healing from Trauma:

A workbook for building  
wellness in community

**EDITED BY:**  
Betty Marín

**ADVISORS:**  
Quetzal Flores,  
Amy Kitchener, and  
Jasmin Temblador

# Table of Contents

6	Acknowledgements
12	Introduction
18	Shared Agreements

---

## Curriculum Samples

### ALTARES AND TRADITIONAL HEALING

21	Grounding - Finding Mother Earth
----	----------------------------------

### CREATIVE WRITING

35	The House of Energy
----	---------------------

### ALTARES AND TRADITIONAL HEALING

45	Creating your Sanctuary
----	-------------------------

### CREATIVE WRITING

53	Agreements
----	------------

### SONGWRITING

61	Blues Part II
----	---------------

75	50s Rock, R&B, and Soul Part I
----	--------------------------------

### POWER OF COMMUNITY

89	Introduction
----	--------------

93	Traditional Arts as Healing and Restoration
----	---

101	Introduction to Cultural Asset Mapping
-----	--

107	Cultural Asset Mapping, How to Transfer and Sustain Knowledge
-----	---

---

111	Closing Affirmation
113	Glossary of Multiple Definitions
116	Related Reading and Resources
118	Facilitator and Advisor Biographies

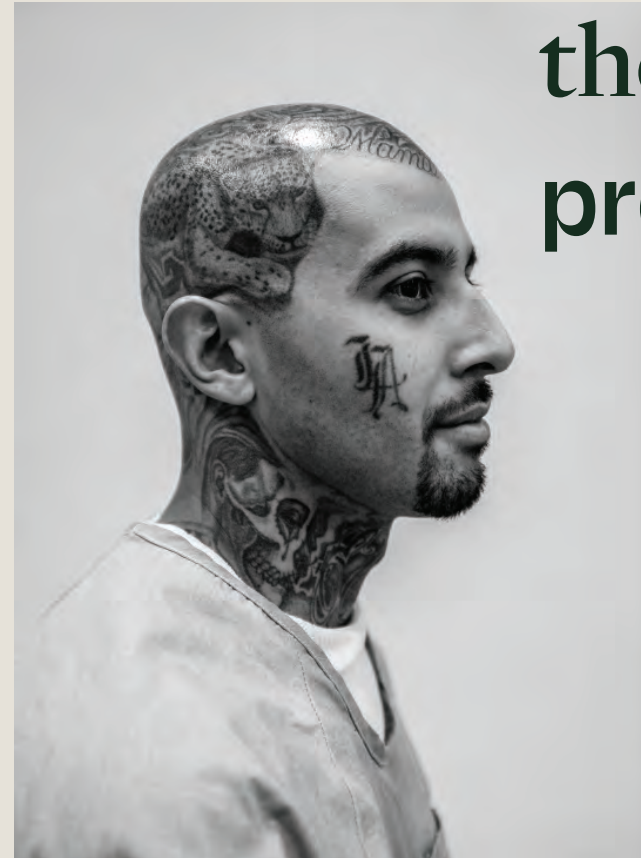


"Navajo Warrior," Shawn Chambers, colored pencil on paper. Created in Drawing class taught by Wenceslao Quiroz and Fabian Debra at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2018.

Healing from trauma means



to address the harms preventing us



following a culturally sustainable process



from fully expressing and being who we are.



# Acknowledgements



We'd like to acknowledge and honor teaching artists Rosanna Esparza Ahrens, César Castro, Ofelia Esparza, Quetzal Flores, Betty Marín, Luis Rodriguez, and Federico Zúñiga Jr., and all the Arts in Corrections artists who have taught in our program over the years, whose dedication and commitment to traditional arts as healing and restoration is paving a path of empathetic responses to harm and trauma.



Storytelling students in class facilitated by Michael McCarty at California City Correctional Facility. Photo: Peter Merts, 2018.

## Introduction

Since 2014, the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA) has been providing traditional arts-based programming inside adult correctional institutions in California through the California Arts Council's Arts in Corrections (AIC) initiative. Now in our seventh year of AIC programming (2020-2021), we are offering sixty-four traditional arts residencies in nineteen institutions, and we have thirty-six artist resident employees who carry out the programming inside the institutions. ACTA's artist residents lead long-term, participatory classes that connect students with their cultural inheritance through art forms like Mexican son jarocho, Afro-Colombian percussion, storytelling, Native American beadwork, Danza Azteca, and many other community-based art forms.

The art forms and artists that ACTA has been bringing inside prisons since 2014 emerge from the communities the incarcerated participants largely come from, working class and poor BIPOC communities. The teaching artists understand that the threat of incarceration isn't far removed from their realities, their families, and their friends. At the same time, ACTA's teaching artists are invested in art forms that have transformed them and recognize the possibilities of transformation for those currently impacted by the system of incarceration.

ACTA's investment in programming for adult correctional institutions is driven by our commitment to social justice, restorative practices, healing from trauma, and an investment in historically neglected communities in the state. A 2018 evaluation of ACTA's Arts in Corrections programming at the California Correctional Institution by researchers from UC Davis found that our program participants experienced several measurable impacts, including improved relationships with others, enhanced mental health and psychological well-being, personal growth, future development, and increased arts-based knowledge.

This book documents curriculum that has grown out of this history of work with an intentional focus on how the traditional arts can create pathways towards healing from trauma.

# Traditional Arts as Healing From Trauma Program

The curriculum developed for the Traditional Arts as Healing From Trauma program interconnects four classes led by traditional artists and cultural workers that together create one curriculum centered on individual and community restoration. The four classes are: **Altars and Traditional Healing, Creative Writing and Ancestral Knowledge, Songwriting and the Power of Community, closing with SaludArte, a Community Healing festival.** Due to COVID-19, the first iteration of this class series happened completely remotely. We weren't able to implement the last component of the class, a festival focusing on celebrating the cultural resources in the prison, therefore the curriculum in the book doesn't reflect this piece.

The curriculum was developed for people who, by and large, physically cannot be with their families and wider community, acknowledging the possible ways that may impact their individual health and well-being. This program intended to plant seeds of restoration grounded in the possibility for students to reintegrate into community on many levels, both physical and spiritual. It goes without mentioning that the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened isolation both inside and outside the prison system. The purpose of the Traditional Arts as Restorative Justice curriculum is to connect participants to each other, to culture bearers, to their families, and to their larger community through the shared practice of the traditional arts and a commitment to transformation and restoration. Curriculum for a sister class series, **Traditional Arts for Restorative Justice**, was also taught concurrently and is featured in a sister publication with that same name.

See following page for full class descriptions for each class.

This program is intended to plant seeds of restoration, grounded in the possibility for students to reintegrate into community on many levels, both physical and spiritual.



Drawing student in class facilitated by Wenceslao Quiroz and Fabian Debora at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2018.



Son jarocho student in class facilitated by Cesar Castro and Quetzal Flores at Corcoran State Prison. Photo: Eric Coleman, 2017.

# Curriculum



## Altars and Traditional Healing

**Artist facilitators:**  
Ofelia Esparza and Rosanna Esparza Ahrens

This module focuses on the practice of entering and arriv-

ing into a collective space as a key component to healing. The process of arriving involves mindful awareness of one's own presence and story as part of a larger community body; the process, led by traditional healers and altaristas Ofelia Esparza (NEA National Heritage Fellow) and her daughter Rosanna Esparza Ahrens, builds a sense of shared responsibility, belonging, and visibility rooted in *convivencia*, or co-existence. The practice of building altars, emerging from Chicanx traditions of remembrance in the United States, creates a thoughtful opportunity for setting intentions, honoring those around us, and remembering our place in a larger community. As experienced traditional healers, Ofelia and Rosanna will lead participants in using visual arts to record and reconcile past physical traumas in a process called "body mapping." Through the arrival/entering process, body-mapping process, and altar-making practice, participants will have the opportunity to commit to shared values, agreements, and healthy relationships within their group.



## Creative Writing and Ancestral Knowledge

**Artist Facilitator:**  
Luis Rodriguez

This module creates opportunities for participants to practice self-reflection and

deep listening with the intention of creating understanding through the act of storytelling. Storytelling traditions offer pathways to change narratives that have restricted our ability to heal from trauma and to re-story the past in order to arrive at a healthier future. Led by Los Angeles Poet Laureate Luis Rodriguez, this module also taps into intergenerational and ancestral legacies of community knowledge and ways of knowing, such as reflections on rites of passage marking the different stages of the life cycle, to help participants develop a sense of far-reaching sense of belonging.



## Songwriting

**Artist Facilitators:** César Castro and Federico Zúñiga Jr.

Through the work of musical composition, this module will focus on reviewing some concepts both musical and social through writing,

rhythm, and other exercises ultimately to build students' songwriting and storytelling skills as tools for healing. Students will consider the history of several musical genres, including many traditional and folk forms, like the blues and son jarocho, and their connection to broader cultural practice, especially through their own reflections, ideas, experiences, wishes, and other wisdom they've acquired throughout their lives. Musical experience isn't required, but a serious and honest personal commitment is.



## Facilitating Community Healing - Salud'Arte

*Samples of curriculum not included due to COVID-19 limitations*

**Artist & Cultural Facilitators:**  
Rosanna Esparza Ahrens,

César Castro, Ofelia Esparza, Quetzal Flores, Betty Marín, Luis Rodriguez, Federico Zuniga

The final module consists of four sessions to collectively design a community festival featuring the traditional arts experiences of the students, their instructors, and the larger community within the institution. The name Salud'Arte combines two Spanish words, "salud" (health) and "arte" (art), but also carries the double meaning of "saludar" (to greet), which embodies the spirit and goals of the culminating event. Working closely with the prison's Community Resource Manager (CRM) to identify the optimal number of participants and location, the festival will include the program artists, participants, and the wider prison community. Students will facilitate the program, introducing and presenting the cultural treasures they have identified through performances, demonstrations, and workshops designed to cultivate appreciation and understanding amongst the various segments of the larger prison community.



## Power of Community

**Cultural Facilitators:**  
Quetzal Flores and Betty Marín

This module explores the foundational element of all traditional art expressions

as rooted in a community and transmitted as a shared expression of beauty, meaning, values, and standards. Using the methods of public folklorists, we will share our processes of cultural asset mapping, or cultural fieldwork, to identify and uncover the hidden gems in any community. These cultural assets include the people, places, groups, events, and practices that hold community significance and function to hold a group together. This module introduces students to concepts, including the traditional arts and cultural organizing and their relationship to restoration. Students take part in a collective cultural asset mapping project to identify the cultural treasures found within their own community inside the institution, which includes others who are incarcerated or work within the institution.

The curriculum as mentioned has grown out of the work our teaching artists have been developing for years in various California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) institutions. In order to create a cohesive Traditional Arts as Healing from Trauma program, we invited another teaching artist in the prisons who has extensive experience in the theory and practice (praxis) embedded in the relationship between restoration and the cultural arts. This artist, Omar G. Ramirez, created a series of training sessions for these instructors about the tenets of Restorative Cultural Arts Praxis and facilitated discussions to support the creation of a cohesive curriculum that spoke to our goals as an organization and our goals as artists and teachers of traditional and cultural arts.

A total of about eighty-five students at California City Correctional Institution and North Kern State Prison received curriculum for all four classes. They were invited to respond to prompts and reflection questions. While it was difficult to receive correspondence during the remote iteration of this work, we have included the words of previous students who have experienced and participated in past related ACTA curriculum. While the first iteration of the class in the Winter-Spring of 2021 was completely remote, we plan on implementing this curriculum again in person in the Fall of 2021.



Songwriting student in class facilitated by Quincy McCrary at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photo: Eric Coleman, 2017.

## Who is this work for?

What follows are excerpts that represent the style and content of each of the classes, anchored by quotes from previous students whose experiences and contributions have informed this curriculum. We hope this collection of curriculum will continue to be used both within and outside of prisons by other students, artists, teachers, and organizations dedicated to building sustainable communities through restoration, healing, and transformation by using the traditional and cultural arts. In particular, we hope this collection can be a workbook for many other students within CDCR institutions seeking restoration for themselves and their communities.



## Shared Agreements

Through Omar G. Ramirez's Restorative Cultural Arts Praxis training, we arrived at the understanding that having shared agreements for this work is imperative to a shared outcome. What follows are the shared agreements created by the traditional artists and cultural workers who facilitated and designed this curriculum. The agreements speak to our goals about the impact we want to have on the students and served to guide us as a cohort of teachers leading distinct parts that form the larger whole of the Traditional Arts as Healing from Trauma program.

### We are committed to:

Students blessing the world because of this work.

Students writing the song of their lives and using music as a process to deal with their lives.

Students expressing themselves, generating sound and generating healing.

Centering the art of people of color in the process by teaching the hidden and invisible histories and contributions of people of color and working class people.

Centering the lived experiences of participants by using storytelling as a tool for self-reflection, through "Testimonio."

The sacredness of human beings, and honoring that through writing and art.

Using the altar as a structure that holds the ofrenda.

Exploring all experiences, both wanted and unwanted, as part of the spiritual journey and healing process.

Teaching options including healthy relationships and distinguishing between reactionary behavior versus responsive behavior.

Seeing where we can change the ending of our lives.

Affirming that you can reinvent yourself, and that restoration and transformation are possible and doable.

Students finding the medicine within and connecting with intention.

An artistic process that addresses, repairs, and transforms.

“It’s actually a piece of freedom. It’s like release therapy. It takes me out of here for the three hours I’m here. It’s sensational.”

Music Student  
Corcoran State Prison



Ofelia Esparza creating paper flowers for the "La Cultura Cura" altar, part of Building Healthy Communities in Boyle Heights.  
Photo: Oscar Vargas/ACTA, 2020.

## LESSON

# Grounding: Finding Mother Earth

Altars and Traditional Healing Class

Facilitators: Ofelia Esparza and Rosanna Esparza Ahrens

### ABOUT THIS LESSON:

This lesson is about re-minding ourselves of our connection to Mother Earth and re-grounding to your cultural roots.

### INTENTION:

I am in community with nature at all times.

### Dear Amazing Being,

Remember playing in the dirt when you were a child. Think back to that time, that moment when you were digging in the dirt with your little hands. Maybe you were making a hole to bury a toy or playing with a roly-poly bug. These moments in the dirt are the first grounding experiences with Mother Earth.

Notice how just thinking about these moments makes you feel.

Warmly,  
Ofelia & Rosanna

# The Arrival Ceremony

## CHECKLIST

- Do you have everything you need?
- Is everyone here that needs to be here?
- Am I ready?

**It doesn't take much to bring yourself to this moment.** All you need is your attention and your breath. You could be anywhere to arrive at your present moment. However, when it comes to ceremony, there is a prescribed intentionality required from the body, mind, and spirit. This practice stops time for a moment — it slows everything down. Recall going to a meeting with your community. There's a point before the meeting where attention is placed on "gathering." A roll call happens: Do you have everything you need? Is everyone here that needs to be here? Am I ready? This is the same with our own spiritual practice. Arrival ceremony requires our attention and our breath to gather ourselves from all the places we've visited in our mind and come back into our bodies — into presence. This Arrival brings you into your full power of noticing that nature is here to support you as you are and where you are at this very moment. Nothing more is required, only your attention, only your presence. Today, instead of a guided arrival ceremony from this text, use this space to create this sacred time and sacred space to arrive at this moment.



"Awakening," silkscreen by Ofelia Esparza, 2000. Courtesy of the artist.

## ARRIVE

# Grounding: Connecting to the Mother

**Let us reflect on our Ancestors.** Through this lens, we understand that our essence is connected to the cosmos. However, our closest and most tangible connection is Mother Earth. Earth includes all the plants, animals, birds, sea life, oceans, waterways, forests, deserts, jungles, mountains, rocks, and crystals — all living things! Mother Earth is constantly and always available, no matter where you are on this planet.

**What does this mean?** It means that we can connect to Mother Earth at any time, anywhere. This is called "grounding," or "earthing." We don't need to be in the middle of a beautiful forest or on a lonely beach to feel completely connected. We have our breath and we have our bodies to notice where we are. We can look to the sky and see the colors change, the sun set, and know in a little while there will be darkness and behind that a brand new day. Just this is enough to bring you to the understanding that we're on planet Earth, swirling in orbit around the Sun, which is also orbiting within a galaxy, the Milky Way. When you contemplate this, you've left your body and expanded your imagination into the Earth and out to the universe.

**How can I ground myself?** Do I need a guru? A priest? A rabbi? Nope! "Grounding," or "earthing," happens naturally when we pay attention to four things:

- Body
- Breath
- Awareness
- Gratitude

This is the foundation of the Arrival Ceremony.

**Why is this important?** When you realize where you are in the Universe, you also realize your Creativity, Imagination, and Energy lives in the space of the Universe. You realize that this noticing is so much bigger than your physical body. Your imagination can take you into other dimensions or anywhere you want to go.

This is called freedom.

When you realize where you are in the Universe, you also realize your Creativity, Imagination, and Energy lives in the space of the Universe.

**BODY:**

If you're able, go outside.  
 If you can't go outside,  
 you can do this by  
 envisioning.

**ACTIVITY 1:**

## Earthing

**Bare feet on the earth is the simplest way to bring balance, or "grounding," to your energetic body.** When you stand on the earth with your bare feet, you're in an energy exchange with Mother Earth. You suddenly feel a coolness and calmness, which is a release of energy that you no longer need. We call this composting. You also receive new energy from Mother Earth, bringing everything back to balance.

Close your eyes and imagine you're going outside. Walk around barefoot. Stand still for a few minutes and notice how your feet feel standing on dirt or grass or on a sandy shoreline. Imagine gathering all your stresses and worries in with a deep inhale. Let them go out through your feet, down to Mother Earth with a big, body-relaxing exhale. Inhale, imagining that you're pulling up new energy like a straw through your feet, up your legs into your whole body. Exhale, imagining golden light glowing and radiating out of your body in all directions. Feel the sun. Feel the wind. Feel the earth.

You are now grounded.

Use this space to record any thoughts or feelings that come up for you.



Aztec Dance instructor Marty Natividad at Substance Abuse Treatment Facility at Corcoran State Prison. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2019.

## ACTIVITY 2:

# Breath and Awareness

**Cause your mind to slow down enough to notice the bigness of the present moment.** Awareness is a state of “knowing” something, like an awareness the sun will come up tomorrow. Mindful breathing causes one to realize that the part of you that’s thinking, isn’t the same as the part of you that’s observing you thinking. That’s a mouthful, but read that sentence again and think about it.

Breathe in through your nostrils and notice the cool air sensation that you feel on the skin just below your nostrils, then exhale and feel the warm breath exiting your nostrils.

Purposely make the breath longer and deeper and slower.

Bring your awareness to the body and locate all the tight or tense areas and bring your breath into those areas with a long inhale — hold for a few seconds — then release.

As you continue to breathe, give yourself five to ten minutes to be still, to listen to your environment, listen to nature.

Notice what you become aware of.

Mindful breathing causes one to realize that the part of you that’s thinking, isn’t the same as the part of you that’s observing you thinking.



Participant in ACTA's Traditional Arts Roundtable Series (TARS) event, "Theories of Change and Transformative Cultural Practice," a part of the 2019 REMAP LA Conference. Photo: Timo Saarelma/ACTA, 2019.

ACTIVITY 3:

# A Moment with Nature - Gratitude

**Think about a moment when you were in the mountains, or the desert, or at the beach, or when you were gazing into the beauty of a flower.** Remember the warm sun on your skin and a slight breeze moving your hair. Remember that feeling of belonging; it was a sense of welcoming.

Once you have that memory in your mind's eye, put yourself back in that place. See yourself walking in that picture. Allow the memory of the sights, smells, and feelings to flow into your awareness.

DEFINITION

## gra·ti·tude

*noun*

The quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

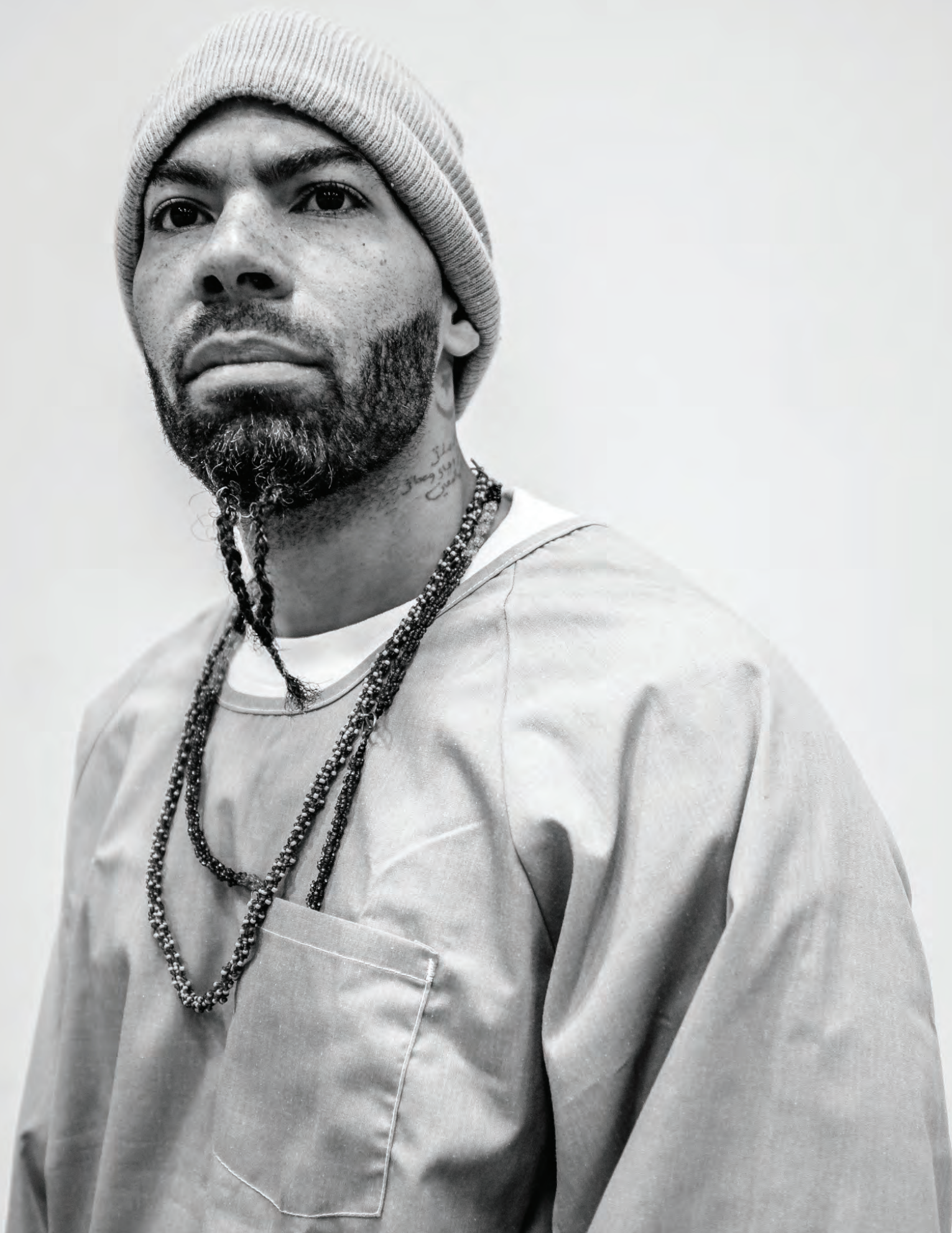
*"she expressed her gratitude to the committee for their support"*

What are you grateful for?

In nature?

In your relationships?





“ I wasn’t a criminal that came to prison, I was a person who committed a crime who came to prison. I became a writer. I became an artist. I became a philanthropist. I became the person my mother originally wanted me to be.”

Theater and Music Student  
Valley State Prison

Songwriting student in class  
facilitated by Quincy McCrary  
at California Correctional Institution in  
Tehachapi. Photo: Eric Coleman, 2017.





Danza Azteca student taught by Marty Natividad at Substance Abuse Treatment Facility at Corcoran State Prison. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2019.

## LESSON

# The House of Energy for Healing

Creative Writing

Facilitator: Luis J. Rodriguez

---

### OBJECTIVE FOR THIS LESSON:

A house is an important metaphor in writing, in art, in story — but also in healing. Generally, a house represents a person. We're all houses of energy. Here I explore the indigenous peoples' way of thinking about house as person and how the natural elements play important roles in this house for growth and development.

### MESSAGE TO STUDENTS:

The prompts are meant to encourage and elicit writing. They're meant to move minds and hearts to writing as healing and toward integral personal authority. However, if a student wants to go into their own writing and process, this is encouraged. Also, if a student is already working on writing projects (poems, stories, novels, scripts, plays, essays, journaling, etc.) this is also fine. The aim is to make a move, any move, to write creatively by thinking and living creatively.



## The House of Energy

**When someone writes about a house as a metaphor, it generally means their internal house that holds their thoughts, feelings, experiences, energies, secrets, pains, and joys. When we “come home,” the home is generally inside our heart. Our soul. Our inner being. Home is not just a structure. Home is what you bring to any site, place, building, as long as it keeps you “comfortable in your own skin,” home within yourself.**

Like a house, we can have many rooms. We put different things in each room. Something welcoming in the living room; food and hearth (the heart of a home) in the kitchen; the comfort and warmth of intimacy and solitude in the bedroom. There are various hallways and passageways, closets, dens, and attics as well. We almost always have a basement, where we keep the secrets, the “hidden” things — perhaps, metaphorically again, the buried bodies.

For the Mexicas (so-called Aztecs), a *teotlcalli* meant a House of Energy. *Teotl* is the word for energy; *calli* means house. Spanish conquerors claimed *teotl* meant “God.” There were no “gods” among indigenous peoples. They recognized and honored the energies in everything, providing them with names, characterization, poems, songs. They were not to be worshiped. They were respectfully evoked so that these energies would bring out their positive aspects, not negative. All energies had capacity for both. The main creator energy had various names, but generally it was *Ometeotl*. This roughly translates into, “The Energy of Two.” What this means is the push and pull of opposites, of feminine and masculine energies. This was considered the Supreme Generating Principle of the Universe. All being — all existence, all creation — came from the proper tension between feminine and masculine.

For our purposes then, the House of Energy is a metaphor for any mountain, tree, or person.

Here are the words of a Mexica song:

Teotcalli, teotcalli, teoltzin, teoltzin;  
teotcalli, teotcalli, teoltzin, teoltzin  
Alt, huehuateotl, ehecatl, tonantzin . . .

(House of energy, revered energy,  
house of energy, revered energy . . .  
water, fire, wind, earth . . .)



## The Four Elements

Any House of Energy has the four elements of nature: water, earth, air, and fire. For this house to not be overwhelmed or consumed by any one energy, they have to be in proper relation to each other, in the right tensions, in harmony. Again, all these elements have positive and negative qualities. While these qualities are not “bad” or “good,” they can result in bad or good things when not understood or allowed to be misaligned.

Every person, therefore, being also a teotlcalli, carry the same elements. And every poem, building, song, statue, and more also carry such energies. All are teotlcallis — Houses of Energy.

Here is a general breakdown of each element in such a house:

- **Earth** represents stability, grounding, welcoming. It holds you. Acknowledges your presence without judgment. But when one has too much earth, they can be stubborn, stuck in various positions or lures. They can be “sticks in the mud.”
- **Water** has fluidity and flow. It represents healing, reconciliation, negotiation. But if there’s too much water, one can be all over the place, unstable, uncontained.
- **Fire** has vision, passions, determination. It has links to ancestors, the first minds, the original instructions and knowledge. But with too much fire, one can burn indiscriminately, inside and out, burn a person or the village.
- **Air** is about change, thinking. It flows into lungs to keep blood and brain oxygenated. It’s in trees, providing an exchange that keeps all life going. But in a person, if you have too much air, you can be flighty, an airhead.

I often like to include a fifth element. Many peoples, including the Chinese and various African tribes, have five elements. One of my teachers was an initiated Dagara tribal elder from the country of Burkina Faso in Western Africa. He talks about the elements somewhat differently. I often bring in what the Dagara call the mineral element, representing story, language, poetry, and richness of thought. In our body, this can be considered the bones. On Earth, it’s the stones. Even geologists, who study rocks, find the Earth’s story there. But, again, if you have too much “mineral,” you can be hard, unmoving, calcified.

The Dagara also have “nature” instead of just “air” as a separate element, which includes the trees and the air blowing through them, representing the transformative capacity in all people and things.



A Dagara medicine wheel depicting Sun, Fire, Nature, Mineral and Water elements.

**These elements live in all nature, but also in our nature.** They have characteristics that we can exhibit. People use astrology this way. The astrology used in the US is based on European models that arose out of the Middle East and Northern Africa. Chinese, South Asian, Pacific Islanders, and original peoples of the Western Hemisphere had their own kinds of astrologies based on the cosmos, natural elements, and energies — how they shape our personalities and destinies.

In our bodies, since we also consist of the elements, our flesh and hair are the “earth”; our blood, sweat, and tears are the “water”; our internal organs are fire (in good health, we are around 98.6°F, very hot); and the air we breathe goes through the lungs (our “trees”) and through blood to our brains. When you add “mineral,” then you include the bones as our stones — holders of our stories (including the specific DNA story in our marrow).

Again, these are metaphors to help us understand and guide. Falling into them, like falling into any metaphor, literalizing them, is done at great peril. Doing so, we may lose their powerful messages and teachings.

**Rituals to connect**

The value of understanding the material elements of our earth, our bodies, and our psyches helps us appreciate that everything is truly connected. This is something that’s not always evident in our modern culture. We’re generally alienated from nature, our own nature, the nature of relationships, and the Divine. In our socio-economy, we’re alienated from the sweat of our brow and the full fruits of our labor. We’re alienated from our creative essence, often thinking that “artists” are a special kind of people when in reality, we’re all a special kind of artist.

Human beings created ritual and ceremony as powerful ways to link the seen with the unseen, the material with the spiritual, the immanent and the transcendent. The intention of ritual is to create “sacred” space, where spirit and the profane meet for healing.

**Why Ritual?**

Most rituals, especially in indigenous societies, are conscious efforts to include the key elements of fire, water, earth, and air. In a sweat lodge ceremony — a sweat lodge is also a House of Energy — all these elements are included: the fire that heats the stones; the water to pour over the red-hot stones; the earth that people rest on, but also the sage, cedar, and sweetgrass used inside and outside the lodge; and the air from the rising steam that

bathes our bodies and our troubled souls. Other rituals include prayer; meditation; exercise; painting, dance, music, or writing as ritual; church liturgy; gratitude rituals; and more. All religions involve ritual.

Indigenous peoples throughout the planet understood all this. They provided ritual from the day humans are born to the day they die. Ritual is to the soul what food is to the body. It helps in healing. Healing connects to community, which also includes the ancestors. The idea is to access ancestor energy to help heal the present and protect the future. It’s multigenerational — at least three generations before you, the present generation, and at least three generations hence. That’s why US indigenous peoples say that whatever they do now takes into account “seven generations.”

“**Liberation is the path of transcendence. Manifestation is the path of immanence. Both lead to the same place: the divine.**”

**ANODEA JUDITH**

Ritual ties into our essence; it also tunes into the collective spirit. Ritual has two hungers: the short hunger, for the immediate issues, concerns, and hurts of a person or family or community. And the long hunger — for a world free of poison in the air, the water, the soil, in our institutions, as well as in our spirits with the poisons of hatred and despair. Ritual is the antidote.

**Prompts**

What is your House of Energy?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

How do the elements play out in this house?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Do you have more fire, earth, water, or air?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What positive and negative aspects that you carry can you identify for each element?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





Rosanna Esparza Ahrens [L] and Ofelia Esparza during Convivio for Building Healthy Communities in Boyle Heights. Photo: Erick Iñiguez/ACTA, 2019.

## LESSON

# Creating Your Sanctuary

Altars and Traditional Healing Class

Facilitators: Ofelia Esparza and Rosanna Esparza Ahrens

### OBJECTIVE:

Establishing a personal sacred space by using your imagination and employing your creativity to construct a sanctuary that's only for you, somewhere you'll go to whenever you are writing/creating for all the class sessions.

### ABOUT THIS LESSON

As we move forward into the coming weeks, we'll be exploring our beginnings from the day your name was first said out loud as your family was preparing to receive you into this world, all the way to the power and self-awareness you experience today. Consider these sessions a spiritual journey. Today you will only need paper, pencil, and your own presence. Your sanctuary will be your space — your space of wisdom and your space of creating anything you want for your life.

Let's get started!



Below is a space for you to document your visioning experience. How do you feel? What did you learn about yourself? Did you notice that the presence of nature is an important element in your sanctuary? How will the sanctuary be useful to you?

Horizontal lines for writing.

# Constructing your Sanctuary

**This section is about visioning , so you may want to read through the entire visioning script before you do it. Or, if you have someone willing to read it to you as you go through the process, that would be great. Ready?**

Close your eyes. Allow yourself to relax. Inhale and exhale deeply several times. Take your time, then return your breath to your normal breathing pace. Turn your attention to your heart center. Think love. As you become connected to your heart center, see a light glistening and glowing there and notice the feeling of love radiating out to the rest of your body. Let it relax you.

Imagine you're walking along the beach alone. Notice what you see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. Take a moment to stop and enjoy. It's a sunny day. As you're walking along, you notice in the distance a small child playing in the sand, perhaps building something. As you get closer, you realize the child is a very young you. As you approach, be aware of your adult body's posture. Open your breath. Relax your body. Become an inviting presence to the child by getting down on the ground to help the child feel safe. This little child is you.

Take a moment to acknowledge that this child will have many painful experiences to deal with and live through in life. As your heart begins to open even more to this little being, look in the child's eyes and gently explain that you've come from the future to be here. The child may welcome you, be a little uncertain, or ask, "Why did you leave me?" Take the time to sincerely apologize. Allow the child time to get used to you and to feel comfortable and safe. Be very gentle and loving. Ask the child to come to you.

**Gently put your arms around the child and say:**

- "I will protect you now."
- "I know what will happen to you and I know you will survive it all."
- "You made all the right choices."
- "I know this because I'm you, all grown up."
- "I'm here because I love you and you will never be alone again."
- "In fact, I am here to learn from you and your child's heart."

**Lovingly, tell the child:**

- "You have so much to teach me about playing and being a child, and I want to teach you how to protect yourself and be safe."
- "Let's make a deal and agree to protect each other and let's build something together."

**Nod your head in agreement.**

## DEFINITION

**sanc·tu·ar·y**

*noun*

a place of refuge or safety.

*"The chapel became a sanctuary for the refugees"*



### STEP 1 The Room

Now, using your imagination and your body, stand up. With your hands, form or build a wall. Then, with your hands, trace out an opening, like a doorway in the wall. Go to the right side and build another wall and invite the child to help you. Move to the left side and build another wall on that side. With your hands, make a ceiling overhead. Now you have three walls, a ceiling, and a doorway opening in the center wall.



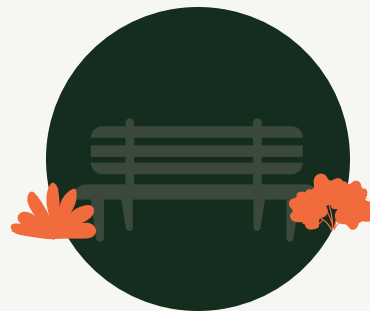
### STEP 3 The Sanctuary

Now turn around, facing away from the door, and notice the openness which has been behind you. Say to the child, “This is your sanctuary and anything you want I will wave my hand and it will be created for you.” . . . “Whatever you want you can have. You can have oceans or mountains, animals, toys, rides, whatever you want! You can have a dog, an elephant, anything except another person that’s still living.” . . . “You can have a spiritual being here, like Jesus or Buddha or Mother Teresa, God, angels, or an ancestor, someone who has already passed on.”



### STEP 2 The Door

Build a door. It must be made of something solid and thick, like wood or metal, but not glass. Make a very small window at eye level that you can look out from. Have the child also make a window in the door that the child can look out from. The window glass is reflective, so you can see out but no one can see in. It’s very secure. Now press the door and see which way it opens. Does it open to the right? Or to the left? Ask the child to watch you as you reach for the door handle on the outside of the door, remove the handle, and install it on the inside, so only you can open the door. Reach out and feel the smoothness on the outside where the door handle used to be. Close the door, create a bolt, and lock it. Notice the safety you feel now that no one can open the door from the outside.



### STEP 4 The Bench

Kindly ask your younger self to make a special bench for you to sit on in a special garden. Tell the child, “I will come visit you when I meditate. I will be sitting on this bench in our beautiful garden.” Also say, “Please remember our special rule of the sanctuary. You can have younger or older versions of us in the sanctuary, but no other person that is living.” . . . “We can have angels and God and spirits here but no human beings because it confuses us.” When the child is happy with the sanctuary, nod your head. Encourage the child to have a favorite pet that will be a friend and helper.



### STEP 5 The Sacred Circle

Ask the child, “With your favorite color, will you please draw a Sacred Circle on the ground, so when I step into the circle, I’ll truly know what I feel and want?” When the child is done, say, “Good job!”

Step into the Sacred Circle and breathe in the color of the circle. Feel the color come up into your body. Let the color spread everywhere within you. Now ask a Yes or No question that you’ve been wanting to ask for a long time. Explore what it feels like to know what you feel and want and listen for any guidance that may come up. Then step out of the circle and thank the child. If you have another question, you can do it again. Give the child a hug and say, “Thank you!”

Turn around and face the door. The Sanctuary and Sacred Circle are behind you now. Approach the door and look through the small window at eye level. See a person that you like passing by and then see a person you don’t like passing by. See the person you like again and explore how it feels to open the door and be face-to-face with the person you like. Remember the special rule of not letting any other person into your sanctuary, even if you like that person very much. Now close the door, bolt it, and look through the very small window. Notice how safe you feel looking at the person you don’t like from behind the locked door.

Explain to the child the value of the sanctuary. Now explore how you feel when you open the door and see someone you really love through the open door. Then close the door and lock it and see how it feels when you’re looking at them through the very small window. Notice the difference in how you feel.

Look down and express your gratitude for the help. One last thing for the child to do is call the pet/helper to go out into the sanctuary to look for any people that snuck in and may be hiding somewhere. Have the pet escort the person/s out of the sanctuary through the doorway. As you’re ready to leave, ask the child to close the door. It’ll lock and only you can come through that door. Tell the child you’ll return to visit again. The child can now go and play in the amazing sanctuary.

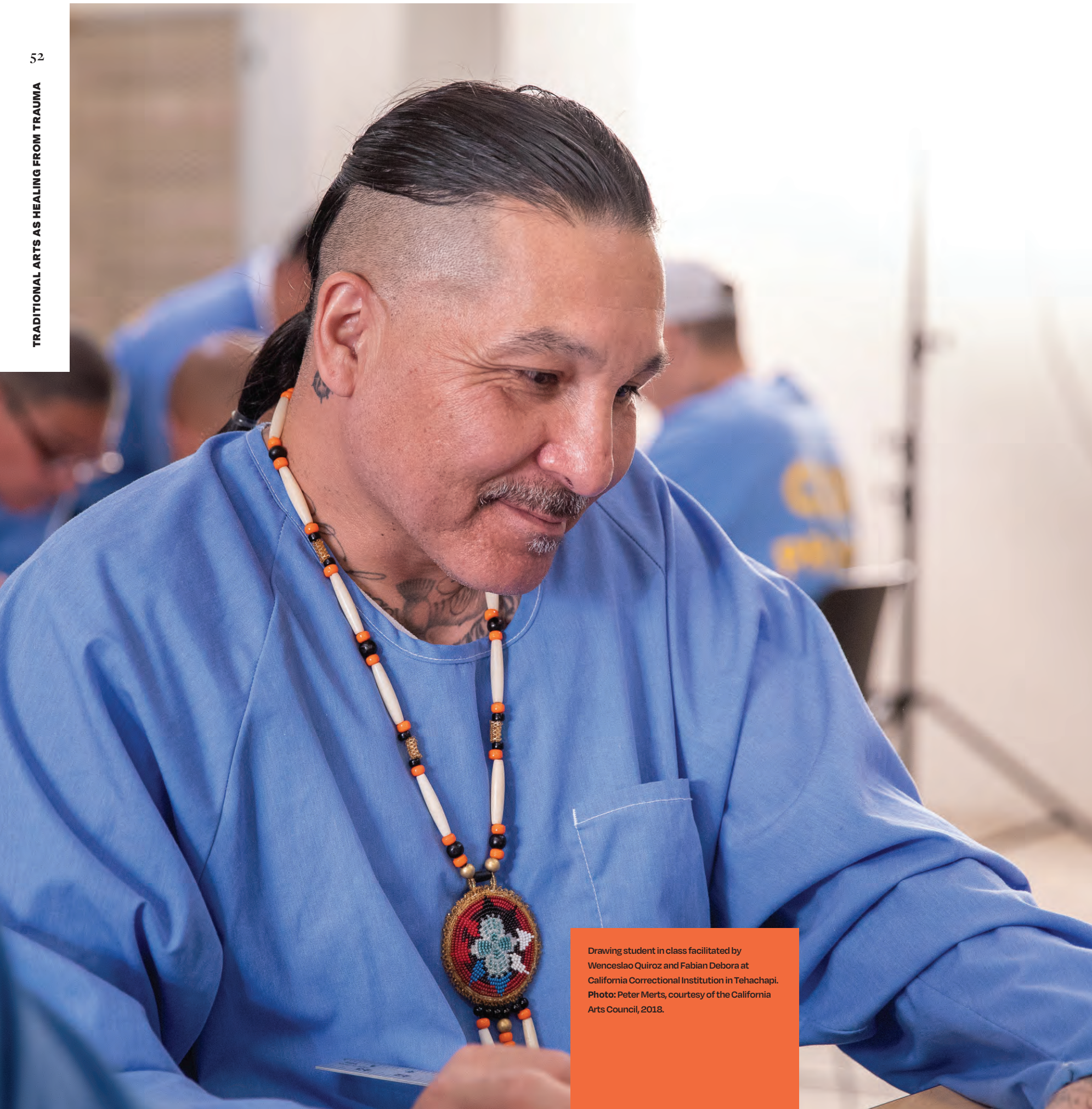


### STEP 6 Accessing the Sanctuary

Now go ahead and unbolt the door and open it, understanding that you have the strength and wisdom to say yes, or no, or to let go. All decisions you make from now on are safe and you’re protected with this new wisdom.

You can now navigate your life from this sanctuary. You’re present there anytime you envision it in your mind. When you need to connect with your younger self, all you need to do is call the child, ask a question, step into the Sacred Circle, and listen for your message.

You have instant access to your sanctuary. Learn how to quiet your mind so you can hear the messages that are coming through you — for you. This takes practice, so use your sanctuary as often as you want and need.



Drawing student in class facilitated by Wenceslao Quiroz and Fabian Debora at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2018.

## LESSON

# Agreements

Creative Writing Class

Facilitator: Luis J. Rodriguez

**OBJECTIVE FOR THIS LESSON:**

Agreements in life are usually relegated to business or personal agreements with others. But there are key agreements that you have to make with yourself, agreements that have to do with a deep innate purpose of being — as well as important, but secondary, agreements. I explore these but also the role of Fate and Destiny. Often confused as the same thing, Fate and Destiny represent powerful forces in human beings that, if understood, can be extremely liberating — and if not, can be quite exasperating.

## The First and Second Agreements of Life

Not all agreements one makes in life — to oneself, to others, or to the universe — are equal in weight. There's a primary agreement, a first agreement, that you should challenge yourself to meet above all others. That agreement is not about external aspects, all of which are important. Finding friends, a love partner, having children, building a flourishing career — all of these are extremely valuable agreements, but none are a primary agreement. A primary agreement has to do with something not part of the material world. It has tentacles to the "other side," the spirit world, the ancestral realm.

*"According to ancient myths, there are two agreements each soul must make upon entering the world. The First Agreement binds the individual to a destiny that becomes the soul's great experiment in life. The Second Agreement involves one in the distinctions and limits of family, culture, time, and place."*

**MICHAEL MEADE**

The first agreement is about a song the soul must sing, a poem that has to be written, a painting that must be rendered, a dance unlike any other, a play, opera, script, or novel that only you can do and feel so driven to realize that nothing can stand in its way. Yes: the music, plays, books, movies, sculptures, and such that one life was meant to live out. The art you're supposed to do and master. This is linked to callings, genius, destiny . . . all those concepts I've already spelled out. The primary and secondary agreements are another way of putting forward something that may not be that evident to most of us, those forged in the societal crucible of forgetting the dream or story you were born with. Who tells us these things? Who prepares us? Who gives us the knowing heart, teachings, and loving hands to steer our way toward our primary agreement? Most of this world is about practical things. Get a job. Make money. Pay bills.

Get married. Have kids. Buy a house. Get promotions. Retire. Die. In our culture, the masculine energies rule. There's nothing inherently wrong in any of this, except the most important question must be asked and answered — are you in your first agreement?

My parents were hard-working Mexican migrants. When the family first moved to the United States, to Watts, California my dad worked in a dog food factory, a paint factory, and sold Bibles, pots, and pans on weekends. He eventually retired as a custodian. My mother, when she wasn't taking care of her four children (I also had four other half-siblings from my dad who didn't live with us), worked in the garment industry — massive buildings with row after row of industrial sewing machines. She also cleaned houses of well-off people. Even though my parents were both better educated than most Mexicans in LA, they were obreros — workers. My mom began work at the age of nine, picking cotton in southern Texas. So hard work was expected of all of us.

As a teenager, when I showed interest in art, music, or writing, my parents weren't happy. "What a waste of time," they'd declare. Partly to stay out of the trouble I was in, and also embracing their tenets, as a young man I worked in a paper mill, a foundry, a chemical refinery, as a truck driver, in various construction jobs, and four years in a steel mill. For years I let go of my "dreams." I didn't mind these jobs. I actually like working hard. I learned many skills — welding, rigging, mechanics, carpentry. Nonetheless, something felt hollow inside. I was missing something I couldn't quite name.

Once, I returned to my parent's house and discovered my mother had thrown away murals I'd painted on plywood and a grocery bag full of my early writings. It was heartbreaking, but I don't really blame my mom. For many people, especially in the working class, among the poor and the struggling in constant survival mode, trying to do creative things seemed extravagant: "A waste of time."

Fortunately for me, I never gave up. In my mid-twenties, after my marriage with my first wife went down the tubes, I quit all my industrial and construction work. I began to earnestly pursue a writer's life. I went to night classes at a community college to learn writing skills. I worked for weekly, daily, and monthly publications. I did news radio. I wrote and edited newspapers and flyers for a major trade union. Eventually, over the years, I created my own projects — poetry books, children's books, fiction, nonfiction. I worked on TV shows as a script consultant. I wrote plays that were staged. I gave up art and music, but writing was always my passion. I learned to paint and make music with words. For close to thirty years, I've been self-employed writing, speaking, and teaching. It took a long, winding road to get here, a lot of ups and downs, sidetracks and roadblocks. But I've met the challenge of my own particular first agreement.

“ There's an African proverb:  
 “when death finds you,  
 may it find you alive.”  
 Alive means living your  
 own damn life, not the  
 life that your parents  
 wanted, or the life some  
 cultural group or political  
 party wanted, but the  
 life that your own soul  
 wants to live.

**MICHAEL MEADE**  
 from an interview in *The Sun*  
 magazine, November 2011

## Fate and Destiny

I've often been asked — what does any of this have to do with someone in prison? And how can one live out a destiny behind bars? I'll explore this by bringing in two other “opposites” that play a major role in our lives: Fate and Destiny. Now I'm aware many dictionaries say these concepts are the same thing. They're not.

The best way to describe Fate is as “the cards you've been dealt.” Fate is about those energies and circumstances not of your making. When and how you were born. Parents, or lack thereof. Any deformities or other limitations. Poverty. Accidents. A wrong turn. Trauma upon trauma. Or it can be about good things that you didn't do or decide on — good parents, a warm household, decent community, a loving partner, opportunities that came your way, and more. Fate isn't just about “bad” things. Fate is about phenomena out of your control.

Destiny is something that's inside of you wanting to be lived out. It's linked to the word “destination” — where your soul is trying to get to. You may not be conscious of this, although it's always best to be. It's not about ending up in prison, or debilitated, or behind the eight ball. That's when Fate clashes with Destiny. But your decisions, often shaped by Fate, can also be propelled by Destiny. Destiny is something you can control. The more you know about these energies, the better equipped you'll be to take them into account.

Destiny may happen without choice, but in general it requires your own will and power to be realized. It's also part of growing up, even if driven by objective developmental changes. You have to — somewhere, somehow — “decide” to mature. Destiny happens by design; fate just happens. Or another way to put this, as a wise man once said: “Fate is destiny unattended.”

## When Fate and Destiny Coincide

When one thinks of fate as things that happen to you without your contribution, and destiny as a soul's calling to be met with your understanding and commitment, then one can see how these don't always work in conjunction with each other. You're going one way with destiny, and fate comes along and throws a wrench in the works. This is likely how we'd describe someone ending up in prison, shot, or disabled. There are too many cases of good, heroic people with clear destinations who get hit by a car, succumb to disease, or fall off a cliff. Then there are those who have no clue what their destinies are, and many who could care less, who continue to live, grow, and get old.

I understand how people say this is all God's plan. Okay, we can agree God knows the fate you're going to confront as well as the destiny you should make happen. Just the same, you're still in charge of your own actions. This is the part I'm interested in. Many have said how a “bullet has no name.” Many deaths and injuries in the streets are due to the “luck” of the bullet. Again, this is about fate.

And yet there are a myriad of decisions that put someone in the particular time and place, when and where something like a striking bullet can occur.

Fate is about  
 those energies and  
 circumstances not  
 of your making.  
 Destiny is something  
 that's inside of you  
 wanting to be lived out.

They don't have to be crystal clear about this. Many of these decisions are even benign. Nonetheless, when fate meets your destiny, it's either a disaster or the most fortuitous of circumstances.

Prison doesn't have to be the end of the process. Destiny is going somewhere, but it doesn't always look like a specific, detailed plan. It can be met, despite trying circumstances, within the walls. The decision one makes to complete their destiny may have to be adjusted. Life is like that. Configuration and reconfiguration.

My oldest son, Ramiro, did close to fifteen years in Illinois prisons. I don't mind bringing this up — I've included my son's story in my memoirs, talks, and other writings. He was a troubled young man: in a Chicago gang, a high school dropout, on drugs, father to three kids from three different women. In his case, however, prison proved to be a stabilizing setting. Not that prison wasn't harsh or dangerous. He endured and overcame what he had to in that environment. But he also began to reflect heavily on his life, and perhaps deeply consider what I and others had been trying to teach him, often to deaf ears. He seemed to "grow up." He decided to quit the prison gang politics. To let go of drugs and "pruno." When available, he programmed, took college courses, and even helped teach language skills to other prisoners. He stayed on the mainline, not in "protective custody." He was targeted at first by some gang members and even correctional officers, but eventually they respected his decisions as long as he stayed true to them. When he was finally released, Ramiro obtained two AA degrees and a number of certificates.

This may not be the case for others in similar straits, but it shows that things can still work out, no matter how dark things are. Light is more appreciated in the dark than under the sun.

Our limitations, if we understand the parameters governing them, can provide the greatest freedoms. It's about appreciating necessity — what needs to be done under the circumstances. Anything depends on time, conditions, and place. When all three come together, "miracles" appear. Similarly, when fate and destiny coincide, all manner of transformative possibilities get "geared up" and enmeshed, and providence and other forces come together to assist in the great tasks. Disappointments in life may be said to be the "missing of appointments" regarding destiny. Live life, make mistakes and learn, and increasingly more of those "appointments" will come your way and be met.

“ If you don't know the kind of person I am and I don't know the kind of person you are, a pattern that others made may prevail in the world and following the wrong god home we may miss our star...”

**WILLIAM STAFFORD**

“ Trouble is another word for fate; what troubles us the most is what we are fated to one day face. What troubles us in youth will return at each crossroad in life because it secretly seeks to provoke a deep awakening to the unique way that we are intended to live.”

**MICHAEL MEADE**

### Prompts

Think and write about your "agreements" in life.

---

---

---

---

What is your first agreement, related to your soul's desires, passions, callings?

---

---

---

---

---

What are your important second agreements? When have they been in contradiction?

---

---

---

---

---

How do you make these agreements work in harmony?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What does it mean to have an aligned combination of agreements?

---



---



---



---



---

Think and write about Fate and Destiny. How has fate played out in your own experiences? In others?

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

How has destiny played out in your experiences? In others?

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

What does it mean when Fate and Destiny coincide? How do you address having fate go one way and destiny another?

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

Write how trouble in your life helped make a life.

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



Songwriting students with facilitator Quincy McCrary at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photo: Eric Coleman, 2017.

LESSON

# Blues – Part 2

Songwriting Class

Facilitators: César Castro and Federico Zuñiga Jr.

**OPENING REFLECTION**

There was a time in my life when I wanted to choose the music I listen to, at least the radio station that played music similar to my liking. One time my dad asked me “what should I give you as a present?” for finishing a year of school, which surprised me, but I knew I had to take advantage of that moment. So, almost without thinking, I said: a Cri-Cri record! Francisco Gabilondo Soler was a composer of children’s music who created all kinds of stories. His instrumentation and arrangements were excellent for the imagination of children and adults, so I wanted to hear more of his stories on vinyl. His songs talked about manners, hygiene, and other topics that I was very interested or curious about. This music inspired me and taught me that it is possible to say things in a way that everyone can easily understand.

**Question for you: When you were a child, what music did you like and what did those songs talk about? How did they inspire you?**

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

# The Delta Blues

Hello everyone and welcome to week two as we break down some history of America's greatest art forms, the blues. Today we'll take a closer look at one of the genre's first iterations, the Delta blues. We'll look at some historical facts about the genre, key and influential composers, and we'll analyze and reflect on a song. Again, even though we aren't requiring you to write a blues song, our hope is that we can learn about this incredibly influential genre and we can take influence, inspiration, and learn the tools or technologies that were developed by this music to inspire your own storytelling, self-expression, and, ultimately, your song writings.

## Origins of the Delta Blues

The Mississippi Delta is the "land where the blues was born." Romantic as it may seem, the term isn't too far from the truth. Today we'll look at what exactly gave birth to the Delta blues and why it's still a cultural cornerstone of American music history. The Mississippi Delta is a fertile plain that runs between the Mississippi and Yazoo Rivers. Highway 61, which ran through the birthplace of Bob Dylan and inspired his sixth album, travels through the heart of the land, from Memphis to Vicksburg.

In its earliest form, the Delta blues became the first black guitar-dominated music to make it onto phonograph records in the late twenties. It often borrowed from vocal lines in "field hollers" that the audience and players heard around them every day. Through the spurning of legend and its inherent embodiment of pain and maltreatment, the Delta blues has become a symbolic snapshot of American culture and music as a vehicle for overcoming oppression.

The earliest form of the blues was often referred to as country blues or Delta blues. This style usually had a solo singer who would also play either the harmonica or bottleneck slide guitar. Bottleneck slide guitar is when a musician presses a hard object across multiple strings on a guitar and slides it down the fingerboard. Sometimes they would use a steel bar, a knife, or a bottleneck, and this would create a smooth, wailing sound. The Delta blues also emphasized rhythm, finger-style guitar, and contemplative lyrics about the hard lives of African American farmers in the South. As blues music grew in popularity, some musicians like Charley Patton, Eddie James "Son" House, Jr., and Robert Johnson became famous and toured around the Delta region.

## The Birth of Delta Blues

WC Handy (1873-1958), known as the "Father of the Blues," recalls waiting at Tutwiler in 1903 when he heard a peculiar tune picked out on the guitar. The player was sliding a knife across the strings to mimic the wailing, sad tones of a human voice as he howled about "*Goin' where the Southern cross the Dog.*"

Handy's skills as a composer allowed him to transpose what he heard into the earliest blues songs, using characteristic chord progressions and A-A-B rhyme patterns. In 1902, a sixteen-year-old girl was touring the same marshland area with her minstrel parents. One evening, she heard a woman singing a sad love song. She was so moved, she learned the song by heart and played it as an encore in her vaudeville act. After marrying Will Rainey two years later, Ma Rainey became known as the "Assassinator of the Blues" and made one hundred recordings between 1923 and 1928 — Dockery Farms "First School of Blues."

By the mid-twenties, the juke-joints and fish-fries in every little town in the Delta were moving to the sound of the blues. The sound became characterized by repeated guitar riffs, heart-rending vocals, and twelve bar circular progressions.

The most important recording artists of the time played finger-picked acoustic guitar and slide guitar, giving the blues a characteristic stripped-back aesthetic defined by its palpable soul and haunting vocals. Just outside Clarksdale at the Will Dockery Plantation, a worker named Henry Sloan earned a reputation as a stylish performer and bluesman. Charley Patton, Willie Brown, and Son House all lived at Dockery on and off and swapped songs, tunes, and licks amongst themselves and other musicians on their travels. Tommy Johnson, Sam Carr, Howlin' Wolf, and most



Charlie Patton with Stella guitar, circa 1929. Photo published by Paramount Records and the F. W. Boerner Company. Photographer uncredited and unknown, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

W.C. Handy statue on Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee.

Ma Rainey. Unknown author, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

famously Robert Johnson, were among the players under the tutelage of this formative "school" of blues. This was one of many unofficial schools spread across the swamplands of the Delta. These two events occurring in such close approximation are said to mark the birth of the blues.

## Why study music history you may ask:

1. It will give you information about the circumstances for which the music was written.
2. It will help to explain why certain things are present or absent in the music you're playing.
3. It will help you to appreciate the evolution and development of humans, in terms of thought, inventions, technology, politics, religion, events, lifestyles, economics, and geography.

Composers generally compose in response to events in their lives, either consciously or subconsciously. When we know about their history and their time, we can better understand ourselves and our place in time and society. For people of color and marginalized people, this is important as it's in the universal art form of music and contemporary music of the United States and Americas that we see ourselves elevated as innovators and revered creators. It's

most often artists of color who turned the dire circumstances of racism, white supremacy, discrimination, and injustice into the impulse to create the mother of American music, the blues. Often, people use the arts to respond, out of a need to "release" the frustration that one feels inside. This is our goal, for you to express, release, and transform what troubles you. This process is the medicine from which healing can begin.

Edward James "Son" House Jr. (March 21, 1902[1] – October 19, 1988) was an American Delta blues singer and guitarist, noted for his highly emotional style of singing and slide guitar playing.

After years of working as a preacher with a hostility toward secular music, Son House turned to blues performance at the age of twenty-five. He quickly developed a unique style by applying the rhythmic drive, vocal power, and emotional intensity of his preaching to the newly learned form. During his short career, which was interrupted by a spell in Parchman Farm penitentiary, he developed his musicianship to the point that Charley Patton, the foremost blues artist of the Mississippi Delta region, invited him to share engagements and to accompany him to a 1930 recording session for Paramount Records.

## Lyric Reflections

Let's take a look at some lyrics and share our reflections.

### DEATH LETTER BLUES

By Son House

I got a letter this mornin, how do you reckon it read?  
It said, "Hurry, hurry, yeah, your love is dead"  
I got a letter this mornin, I say how do you reckon it read?  
You know, it said, "Hurry, hurry, how come the gal you  
love is dead?"

So, I grabbed up my suitcase, and took off down the road  
When I got there she was layin' on a coolin' board  
I grabbed up my suitcase, and I said and I took off down  
the road  
I said, but when I got there she was already layin on a  
coolin' board

Well, I walked up right close, looked down in her face  
Said, the good ol' gal got to lay here 'til the Judgment Day  
I walked up right close, and I said I looked down in her  
face  
I said the good ol' gal, she got to lay here 'til the Judgment  
Day

Looked like there was 10,000 people standin' round the  
buryin' ground  
I didn't know I loved her 'til they laid her down  
Looked like 10,000 were standin' round the buryin'  
ground  
You know I didn't know I loved her 'til they damn laid her  
down

Lord, have mercy on my wicked soul  
I wouldn't mistreat you baby, for my weight in gold  
I said, Lord, have mercy on my wicked soul  
You know I wouldn't mistreat nobody, baby, not for my  
weight in gold

Well, I folded up my arms and I slowly walked away  
I said, "Farewell honey, I'll see you on Judgment Day"  
Ah, yeah, oh, yes, I slowly walked away  
I said, "Farewell, farewell, I'll see you on the Judgment  
Day"

You know I went in my room, I bowed down to pray  
The blues came along and drove my spirit away  
I went in my room, I said I bowed down to pray  
I said the blues came along and drove my spirit away

You know I didn't feel so bad, 'til the good ol' sun went  
down  
I didn't have a soul to throw my arms around  
I didn't feel so bad, 'til the good ol' sun went down  
You know, I didn't have nobody to throw my arms around

I loved you baby, like I love myself  
You don't have me, you won't have nobody else  
I loved you baby, better than I did myself  
I said now if you don't have me, I didn't want you to have  
nobody else

You know, it's hard to love someone that don't love you  
Ain't no satisfaction, don't care what in the world you do  
Yeah, it's hard to love someone that don't love you  
You know it don't look like satisfaction, don't care what in  
the world you do

Got up this mornin', just about the break of day  
A-huggin' the pillow where she used to lay  
Got up this mornin', just about the break of day  
A-huggin' the pillow where my good gal used to lay

Got up this mornin', feelin' round for my shoes  
You know, I must-a had them old walkin' blues  
Got up this mornin', feelin' round for my shoes  
Yeah, you know bout that, I must-a had them old walkin'  
blues

You know, I cried last night and all the night before  
Gotta change my way a livin', so I don't have to cry no  
more  
You know, I cried last night and all the night before  
Gotta change my way a livin', you see, so I don't have to  
cry no more

Ah, hush, thought I heard her call my name  
If it wasn't so loud and so nice and plain  
Ah, yeah  
Mmmmmm

Well, listen, whatever you do  
This is one thing, honey, I tried to get along with you  
Yes, no tellin' what you do  
What came up for you while reading these lyrics?

I done everything I could, just to try and get along with  
you

Well, the minutes seemed like hours, hours they seemed  
like days  
It seemed like my good, old gal outta done stopped her  
low-down ways  
Minutes seemed like hours, hours they seemed like days  
Seems like my good, old gal outta done stopped her  
low-down ways

You know, love's a hard ol' fall, make you do things you  
don't wanna do  
Love sometimes leaves you feeling sad and blue  
You know, love's a hard ol' fall, make you do things you  
don't wanna do  
Love sometimes make you feel sad and blue

What came up for you while reading these lyrics?

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

Was there any part you could relate to or liked?

---



---



---



---



---



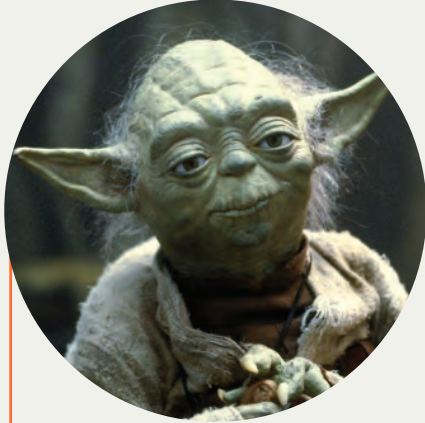




## Healing Trauma with Rhythm

In other lessons, we practiced marching to our own internal beat. If we took the additional challenge, we also practiced syncing up our steps and words to the speed of the second hand on a clock. Now we'll add two sounds per step/clap, or what we call the "Beat."

**Let's warm up:** If we're syncing up to a clock, each tick of the second hand is equal to one whole Beat.

### STEP 1

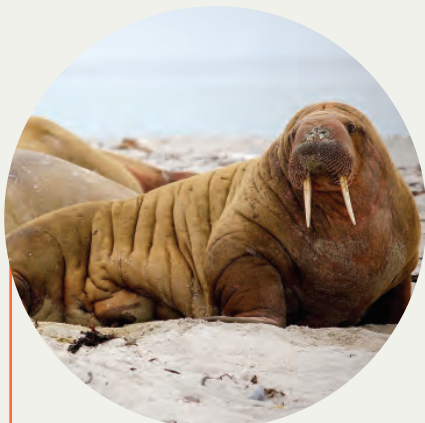
In the word Yoda, there are two syllables: "Yo" and "Da." Begin marching. With each step say, "Yo- Da, Yo- Da." Repeat this. Each syllable gets one whole step, or beat.

	
Yo	Da
	
Yo	Da
	

### STEP 2

In the picture "Big Walrus," the word "Big" has one syllable and "Walrus" has two syllables. The word "Big" takes up the space of one whole beat. The word "Walrus" will also take up one whole beat, but it will make two sounds.

Begin walking or marching in place (if you can't walk, clap). With each step you take, say out loud or in your head: "One, two, three, four, Big, Walrus, Yo Da." Repeat this.

	
Big	Walrus
	
Yo	Da
	


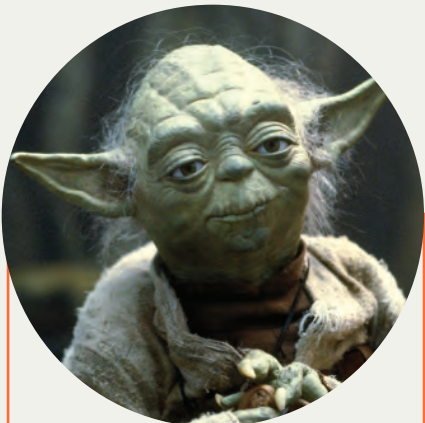




### STEP 3

Begin walking or marching in place (if you can't walk, clap). With each step you take, say out loud or in your head: "Yo, Da, Lazy, Sloth." Repeat this.

	
Lazy	Sloth
	
Yo	Da
	

### STEP 4

Begin walking or marching in place (if you can't walk, clap). With each step you take, say out loud or in your head: "Chupa, Cabras, Chupa, Cabras." Repeat this.

	
Chupa	Cabras
	
Yo	Da
	





### The Chorus

The chorus is defined as either a group of voices singing simultaneously in harmony or the catchy part in a modern song.

I'll begin by talking about the first definition, which might refer to a well-organized choir arranged to sing in different melodies and rhythms. These musical concepts shouldn't be overlooked or minimized. They generate a complex degree of harmony and counterpoint. When speaking about orchestration or instrumentation, these concepts are fundamental to keep in mind.

There's another type of chorus in popular culture that I call "community chorus," which is a group of voices inspired by the participatory impulse without adhering to a specific musical arrangement. This type of singing occurs on birthdays when the birthday person is sung to. Everyone joins in with their voice, regardless of singing ability, to participate with the group celebrating that special person.

Finally, we have the "hook" chorus, the catchy chorus of modern songs. Usually, the hook chorus gives the song its title or becomes a reference for it. I'm sure you know songs like this, the ones you remember more for the hook chorus than for their actual name!

What type of chorus have you taken part in?

---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---



---

“ Art has a way of inspiring people. If we lose inspiration, if we lose hope, we’ve lost everything.”

Gospel Choir Student  
Valley State Prison





A black and white photograph of Cab Calloway performing with his band at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba. Photo: Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Cabella Calloway Langsam.

## LESSON

# Fifties Rock, R&B, and Soul – Part 1

Songwriting Class

Facilitators: César Castro and Federico Zuñiga Jr.

### ABOUT THIS LESSON

There is traditional music all over the world. Social groups have relieved themselves of traumatic feelings and experiences thanks to traditional artistic expressions, which means that the music is performed and taught from generation to generation, making it something that is “easily” accessible.

As we understand the importance of traditional art practices, let’s take a few minutes to reflect and remember to identify some traditional artistic expressions we’ve grown up with: music, dance, poetry, theater, painting, drawing, storytelling, etc. Of course, towns or rural areas aren’t the only places that have traditions; cities do, too. In fact, city-based traditions can become very interesting, due to the close interaction between immigrant groups and others.

The healing process isn’t achieved individually. It’s always necessary to have a group of people around you and the confidence in this group/community to achieve our goal of healing. In Veracruz, we’ve had four military invasions over the last two centuries, two of them by the United States. From this, song lyrics were written that have helped us to heal and, at the same time, to not forget. A lot of immigrants from all over the world live in the city of Los Angeles. If you pay attention to the lyrics of the music from local bands, you’ll undoubtedly find stories that talk about immigration. Therefore, one can say that it’s a tradition (perhaps an unconscious one) that the musical groups in LA have at least one song that talks about the immigration experience, either in the first or third person. All of us can identify with those lyrics.

What would you say is a traditional artistic expression you have seen inside the prison?

## PART 1

# Fifties Rock, R&B, and Soul

Hello everyone. From R&B to rock 'n' roll to the blues: We'll continue to experience the origins and evolution of another significant art form called rock 'n' roll, then will move forward to soul music. Again, even though we aren't requiring you to write a rock 'n' roll song, our hope is that we can learn about these incredibly influential genres and we can take influence, inspiration, and learn the tools or technologies that were developed by this music to inspire your own storytelling, self-expression, and, ultimately, your song writing.

The roots of rock 'n' roll lay in African American blues and gospel, as the Great Migration brought many African Americans to the cities of the North.

Rock 'n' roll, or just plain rock, wasn't really new when it started to gain popularity in the early fifties. The basics of the beat had been around for years, known as rhythm and blues (R&B). Boogie-woogie, a form of R&B that was popular in the late thirties and early forties, is considered rock's closest relative.

Technically, rock 'n' roll and boogie-woogie are nearly the same. Both are eight to the bar, twelve-bar blues, but rock has a greater emphasis on the back beat than boogie-woogie. Add a drummer's snare to the backbeat of a boogie-woogie record from the thirties or forties, and it becomes rock 'n' roll. Rocking was a term commonly used in black spirituals of the South with a religious meaning similar to rapture (ex. "Rock My Soul"). Over time, it picked up a slang meaning similar to dancing, but hinting of sex. At first, its use was confined mostly to R&B, which had a mostly Black audience and, at the time, was called "race music." In the segregated times of the twenties and thirties, it was rare for a Black performer to be accepted by a white audience. The same race music, however, was accepted when it was played by whites, as an African American flavor of Jazz.

One of the major innovators of this genre was Sister Rosetta Tharpe. She was famous in the thirties for her

upbeat electric guitar playing style. She is the original godmother of rock 'n' roll music. She was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2018, and recognized for her contributions in paving the way for other artists in the industry.

In the early fifties, a Cleveland disk jockey named Alan Freed began playing this type of music on the radio and built a strong multi-racial audience. He's generally regarded as the one responsible for popularizing the term rock 'n' roll and went on to organize rock 'n' roll shows attended by both whites and Blacks, further helping to introduce African American musical styles to a wider audience.

Freed didn't invent the name, but he's credited with popularizing it. There are numerous examples of the term being used in songs going back to the twenties. In 1922, Trixie Smith had a song titled "My Man Rocks Me with One Steady Roll." In 1948, both Wild Bill Moore and Paul Bascomb recorded different songs titled "Rock And Roll."

In 1949, Erline Harris recorded "Rock and Roll Blues." Since rock was really an evolutionary step, the first rock 'n' roll song is open to interpretation. Some of Fats Domino's songs from the forties are very close, for example, "The Oakie Bookie," and recordings made by big bandleader Benny Goodman with electric guitarist Charlie Christian are noted.



Chuck Berry. Photo by Universal Attractions (management), public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Sister Rosetta Tharpe. James J. Kriegsmann, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Little Richard. Photo by Bradford Timeline.

Early attempts by white artists to cover R&B songs resulted in weaker renditions that bled the heart and soul out of the originals. Record producers saw the market potential and began to search for a white artist who could capture the African American sound.

In 2005, *Rolling Stone* magazine named Elvis Presley's first single for Sun Records, "That's All Right (Mama)" (1954), as the first artist to achieve this. Other musicologists favor "Rocket 88" by Jackie Brenston & His Delta Cats (1951), "Honey Hush" by Big Joe Turner (1953), or "Sh-Boom" by The Chords (1954).

After the door to rock 'n' roll acceptance was opened, African American performers such as Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and Little Richard began to enjoy broad success as well. White performers, such as Buddy Holly and Jerry Lee Lewis, also found artistic freedom and commercial success.

The diagram shows three guitar chord diagrams: A (x02023), D (xx0232), and E (231020). Below them is a strumming pattern diagram for 168 bpm, showing a sequence of down and up strokes: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &.

# Lyric Reflections

Let's take a look at some lyrics and share our reflections.

## JOHNNY B. GOODE CHORDS

Chuck Berry

### [Verse]

A  
 Deep down in Louisiana, close to New Orleans,  
 A  
 Way back up in the woods among the evergreens,  
 D  
 There stood a log cabin made of earth and wood  
 A  
 Where lived a country boy named Johnny B. Goode  
 E  
 Who never ever learned to read or write so well,  
 A  
 But he could play the guitar just like a ringin' a bell.

### [Chorus]

A  
 Go! Go! Go, Johnny, go! Go!  
 D  
 Go, Johnny, go! Go!

Go, Johnny, go!  
 A E A  
 Go! Go, Johnny, go! Go! Johnny B. Goode

### [Verse]

A  
 He used to carry his guitar in a gunny sack,  
 A  
 Go sit beneath the tree by the railroad track.  
 D  
 Old engineers would see him sittin' in the shade,  
 A  
 Strummin' with the rhythm that the drivers made.  
 E  
 When people passed him by they would stop and say,  
 A  
 'oh, my but that little country boy could play'

### [Chorus]

A  
 Go! Go! Go, Johnny, go! Go!  
 D  
 Go, Johnny, go! Go!

Go, Johnny, go!  
 A E A  
 Go! Go, Johnny, go! Go! Johnny B. Goode

### [Verse]

A  
 His mother told him, 'someday you will be a man,  
 A  
 You will be the leader of a big ol' band.  
 D  
 Many people comin' from miles around  
 A  
 Will hear you play your music when the sun go down.  
 E  
 Maybe someday your name'll be in lights,  
 A  
 Sayin' 'Johnny B. Goode tonight''

### [Chorus]

A  
 Go! Go! Go, Johnny, go! Go!  
 D  
 Go, Johnny, go! Go!

Go, Johnny, go!  
 A E A  
 Go! Go, Johnny, go! Go! Johnny B. Goode

What came up for you while reading these lyrics?

---

---

---

---

---

---

Was there any part you could relate to or liked?

---

---

---

---

---

---

If so, which part did you like?

---

---

---

---

---

---

How did the verses rhyme in relation to each other?

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Healing Trauma with Rhythm

### RHYTHMS IN GROUPS OF THREE AND WITH RESTS

In today's lesson, we'll experience two beat cycles in groups of three and six. We'll use the same Spanish words for "Pan" and "cafe" to represent "TA" and "ti ti" and the equivalent rest symbols.

This symbol ":" represents a "repeat sign."

You'll repeat everything that's in between these symbols ":" and ":"

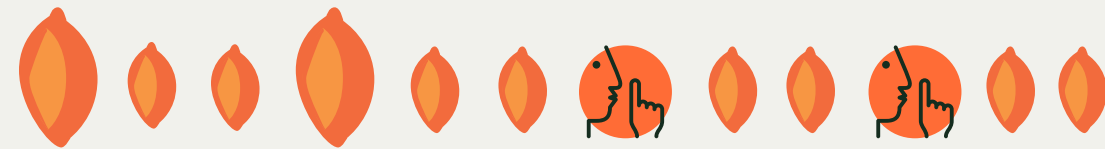
### A Waltz/Ranchera Rhythm

#### STEP 1

In this exercise, the larger bread picture and its Spanish translation, "PAN," that's in all caps, you'll say a bit louder than the rest of the words/syllables. By doing this, you'll create an accent on the first word/syllable.

**Let's warm up:** Begin walking or marching in place (if you can't walk, clap). Take three steps. Stomp once on your left foot and twice with your right foot. The steps are left, right, right.

With each step taken, say out loud or in your head:



": PAN, pan, pan, PAN, pan, pan, Rest, pan, pan, Rest, pan, pan :"

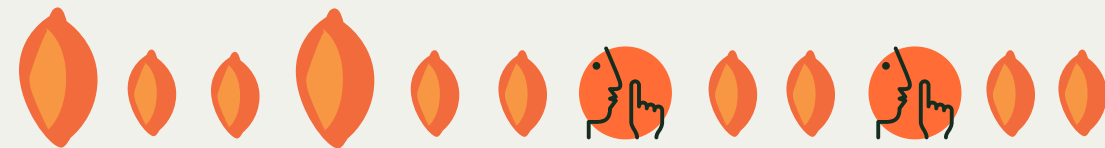
*Repeat only what's in between these symbols ":" to create this rhythmic phrase.*

#### STEP 2

In this exercise, the all caps "PAN" will be replaced by the syllable "TA," which you'll say a bit louder than the rest of the words/syllables. By doing this, you'll create an accent on the first word/syllable.

**Let's warm up:** Begin walking or marching in place (if you can't walk, clap). Take three steps. Stomp once on your left foot and twice with your right foot. The steps are left, right, right.

With each step taken, say out loud or in your head:



": TA, ta ta, TA, ta ta, Rest, ta, ta Rest, ta, ta :"

*Repeat only what's in between these symbols ":" to create this rhythmic phrase.*

## Rhythm for 6/8 Sones/songs, "pan cafe PAN"

#### STEP 3

Again in this exercise, the larger bread picture and its Spanish translation "PAN" that's in all caps, you'll say a bit louder than the rest of the words/syllables. By doing this, you'll create an accent on the first word/syllable.

**Let's warm up:** Begin walking or marching in place (if you can't walk, clap). Take six steps. Stomp your feet in this order: "1 LEFT," "2 RIGHT," "3 LEFT," "4 RIGHT," "5 LEFT," "6 RIGHT"

With each step taken, say out loud or in your head:



": pan, ca-fe, PAN, pan, ca-fe, PAN, pan, ca-fe, PAN, pan, ca-fe, PAN :"

*Repeat only what's in between these symbols ":" to create this rhythmic phrase.*

#### STEP 4

Again in this exercise, the all caps "PAN" will be replaced by the syllable "TA," which you'll say a bit louder than the rest of the words/syllables. By doing this, you'll create an accent on the first word/syllable.

**Let's warm up:** Begin walking or marching in place (if you can't walk, clap). Take six steps. Stomp your feet in this order: 1 LEFT, 2 RIGHT, 3 LEFT, 4 RIGHT, 5 LEFT, 6 RIGHT

With each step taken, say out loud or in your head:



": ta, ti-ti,TA, ta, ti-ti, TA, ta, ti-ti, TA, ta, ti-ti, TA :"

*Repeat only what's in between these symbols ":" to create this rhythmic phrase.*



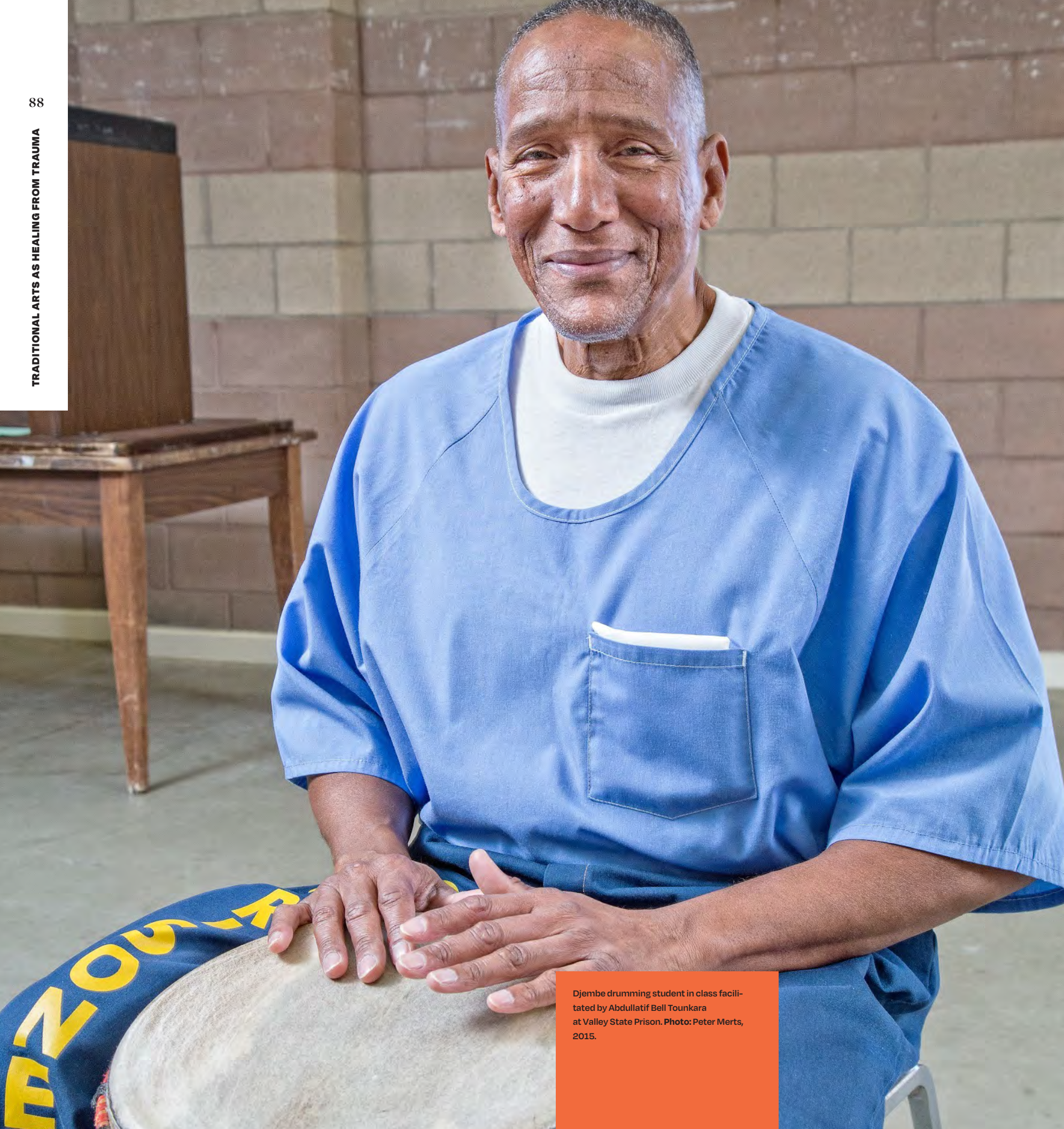




“Just having somebody come into the prison and say you’re not worthless. You might have been set aside from society and kicked out. You’re cast-away right now, but there is some redemptive value in you.”

Theatre and Music Student  
Valley State Prison

Songwriting student in class  
facilitated by Quincy McCrary  
at California Correctional Institution in  
Tehachapi. Photo: Eric Coleman, 2017.



Djembe drumming student in class facilitated by Abdullatif Bell Tounkara at Valley State Prison. Photo: Peter Merts, 2015.

## LESSON

## Introduction to Power of Community

Power of Community

Facilitators: Betty Marín and Quetzal Flores

“ Without community, there is no liberation.”

AUDRE LORDE

In the Power of Community class, we'll learn about how the traditional arts serve as resources in our community to help us stay connected and fight against injustice. The quote above is from someone who described herself as a “Black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet.” She was a leader in fighting against racism, sexism, capitalism, and homophobia and died in 1992 having played a crucial voice in civil rights movements. The quote summarizes a key theme of the class: that through shared work in community, we can work towards freedom. We hope that throughout this class, you'll reflect on your lives and think about the communities and cultural resources in your life in and outside of prison.

The work we've been doing at the Alliance for California Traditional Arts since 1997 is to support traditional artists and organizations so that they can thrive now and into the future. We do this through small grants, programs, and advocacy to acquire broader support in terms of funding and other resources for these artists and groups. We believe the traditional arts are fundamental to a community's well-being, identity, and ability to sustain itself.

### Reflection Questions

Please respond to the questions below and turn them into the CRM so that they can send to us.

What did the first quote by Audre Lorde make you think about? What does it mean to you?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Think about the different communities you have been a part of in your life, both in the past and today. What makes a community?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What are two to three different communities you've been a part of? What did they offer you? What did you offer them?

---

---

---

---

---

---

What made you leave or continue to stay within these communities?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Do you believe you have a community in prison? Why or why not?

---

---

---

---

---

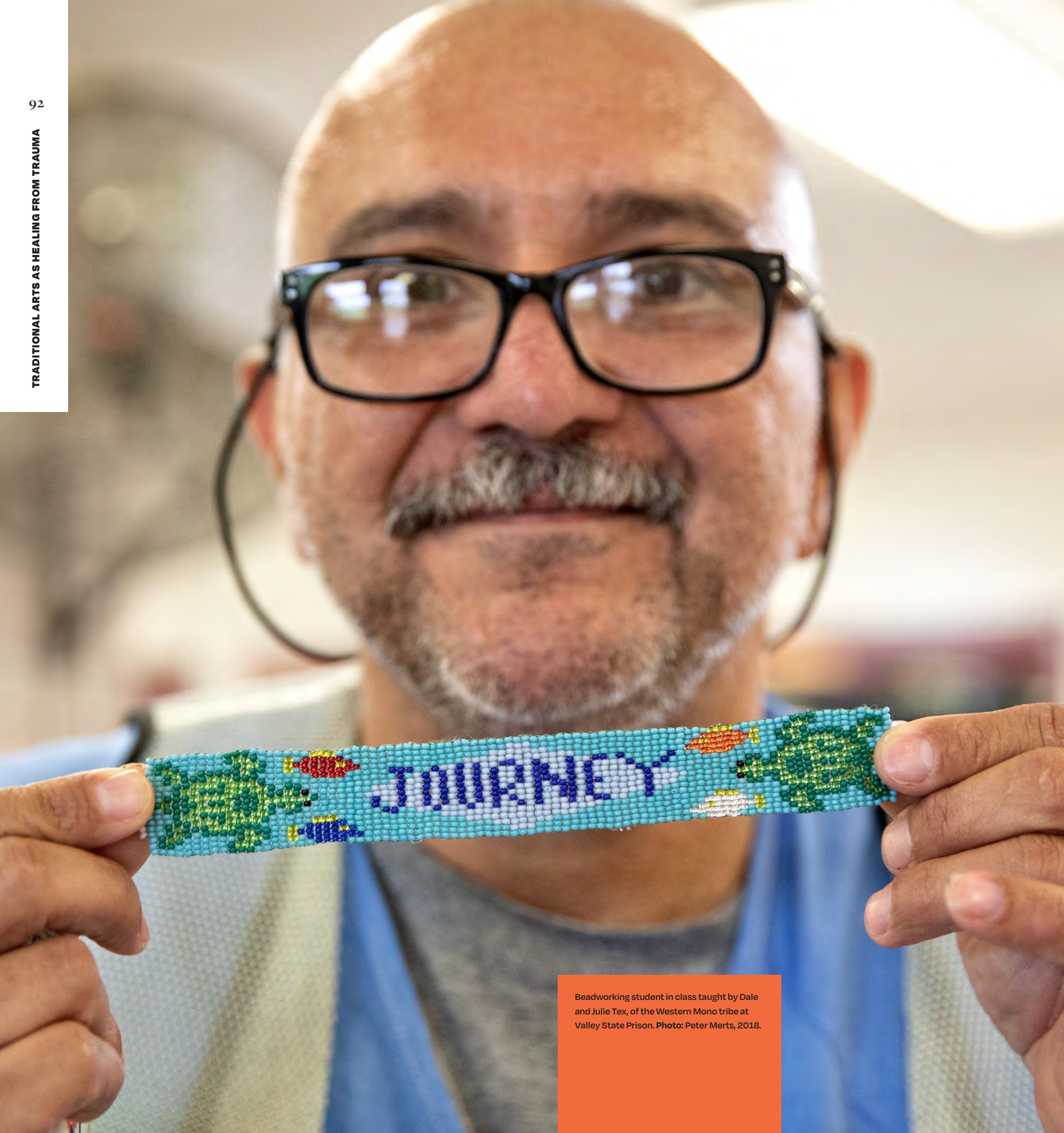
---

---

---

---

---



Beadworking student in class taught by Dale and Julie Tex, of the Western Mono tribe at Valley State Prison. Photo: Peter Merts, 2018.

## LESSON

# Traditional Arts as Healing and Restoration

Power of Community Class  
Facilitators: Betty Marín and Quetzal Flores

The traditional arts are cultural practices tied to a community's common heritage, language, religion, occupation, or region. These expressions are reflective of a community's shared standards of beauty, values, life experiences, and collective wisdom. They are songs, colors, images — all types of sensory experiences that have been preserved and shared through our ancestors. They tell of the past while inspiring creation in the present by utilizing the skills and practices created before. We've asked you to identify and reflect on what this means to you and how it's impacted your life. We've also defined restoration as a process to reconnect with our identity, culture, and community in order to seek healing and transformation. Lastly, we've reflected on restoration and why it's necessary in our lives. We'll now continue on our exploration of all of these elements and how they work together to weave what we call "the social fabric."

### What is the social fabric?

Social fabric is the relationships and connections we make with one another, making us all a part of the common social thread. Like any fabric, when the connections are strong and firmly woven, you'll have a lasting material. When the thread and connections are weak and poorly woven, the material falls apart. In her book, *Emergent Strategy*, Adrienne Marie Brown speaks of "Critical Connection," or building resilient and regenerative relationships. Resilient refers to the ability to be sustained or last despite challenges, and regenerative refers to a quality that promotes restoration and growth. When building our communities, building regenerative and resilient relationships are key parts of remaining strong and facing challenges together, to grow and expand together. In other words, it's not the size of the group, but the strength of the relationships and their roots in sustainable culture that make a difference.





Restorative Quilting participants surrounding quilt produced during workshops. Workshops were led by Juana Mena at Roosevelt High in Boyle Heights between 2019-2020. Photo: Oscar Vargas/ACTA, 2021.

## Restorative Cultural Arts Practice and Restorative Quilting

“The art has helped us to listen, to break those chains, and release some things we have been carrying for a long time.”

**JUANA MENA**  
ACTA Artist Fellow

“Teachers and students at Roosevelt High have done work grounded in the idea of Restorative Cultural Arts Practice (RCAP). RCAP emerged as a theory created and developed by artist and teacher, Omar G. Ramirez. In this work, art and culture are joined together as tools for many different kinds of “restoring”: to bring back decency and dignity to interpersonal relations, to return the work of handling disputes to community members rather than outsourcing it to the punitive arms of government, to repair and renovate the damaged senses of self that are produced by exploitation and oppression. The art practice promoted by RCAP is not about creating art objects for sale or about winning individual recognition for artists, but instead about producing a process that addresses social and emotional needs in order to build collective wellness.

The RCAP process at Roosevelt High School developed as an effort to change the entire culture of the school. It embraced restorative justice as a way to replace the culture of punishment that revolves around suspensions, expulsions, and other forms of disciplinary control with student-led healing circles committed to transforming individual shame and guilt into collective responsibility and accountability. Yet unlike many other less successful school-centered projects that isolate the classroom from the wider world from which students come and to which they return, RCAP addresses the whole life of the student as it transpires in the community with parents and care-

takers, as well as through the intergenerational transmission (passing on) of injury and injustice. RCAP projects involve adults as well as young people. They transform relationships outside of, as well as inside of, schools.

“Restorative Justice and Art comes from a space of healing,” Ramirez explains, adding, “if we support and collaborate with other people, there will be a transformation. “ In this way of thinking, artists and organizers need to connect with the community.

A novel and important innovation in this vision has been the appointment of quilt maker Juana Mena as an Alliance for California Traditional Arts artist fellow. She took on that role because the artists working with ACTA “had that great quality to listen to my story,” to respect her experience and expertise. Once she felt she had been genuinely listened to, Mena initiated a process where others could be heard. “The art has helped us to listen, to break those chains, and release some things we have been carrying for a long time,” she observes. Just as quilts are made by sewing together previously separate pieces of cloth, listening to the things women say to each other offers a way to weave them together as a group. “By listening to people’s stories,” Mena maintains, “you go directly to their heart.” Collective quilt making produces particular art products that tell stories of trauma, but as a process it produces a personal and community zone where partici-



“These [programs] actually give us the chance to be utilized and for the world to see that we are people too, human beings. We just need a little assistance and we can become a treasure of life to others.”

Storytelling Student  
Corcoran State Prison

## LESSON

# Introduction to Cultural Asset Mapping

Power of Community Class

Facilitators: Betty Marín and Quetzal Flores

We've discussed what the traditional arts are, how they work with restoration through Restorative Cultural Arts Practices, and some tools and skills for going through a restorative accountability process.

The second half of the class series will focus on the practice of cultural asset mapping as a tool for building power in community. Below is another excerpt from *SaludArte: Building Health Equity on the Bedrock of Traditional Arts and Culture* and our work in four communities that describes what cultural asset mapping is and what impact it can have.



Sonia Franzi (Yurok/Karuk) [L] learned infant cradle basketry from the Yurok, Karuk, and Hupa tradition under mentor artist and master weaver Dorothy Sylvia (Hupa/Yurok/Karuk). Photo: Jennifer Jameson/ACTA, 2019.

“ACTA’s Activating Cultural Assets Pilot Project was an endeavor dedicated to creating a shared vision of community well-being by identifying and mobilizing community cultural resources. Residents of areas denied outside investment and state-funded services and amenities have to find ways to recognize and build on the value of what they already have. Places that lack material resources are often rich in people who have learned how to be resourceful: critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, and courageous defenders of their own dignity. Their artistry and virtuosity, their determination and imagination, can be of great value to solving community problems.

The participatory cultural asset mapping project that started in 2011 revealed that art is deeply embedded in community life in Boyle Heights, East Coachella Valley, Merced, and Santa Ana. The project created task forces in these areas delegated with surveying what their communities are proud of, identifying specific assets, and creating an inventory of individual and collective skills, competen-

cies, traditions, customs, and knowledge systems that can serve as sources for transformational social change. These assets included places, people, stories, songs, customs, and traditions. Communities following the invitation from ACTA to look inward for “cultural treasures” among “the people, groups, places, and events that reflect cultural expressions that are identified and valued by the community” revealed profound appreciation for local artists and artworks. They recognized them as individuals with great gifts, but also as bearers of collective ancestral knowledge, teachers passing on their wisdom to new generations as performers and makers whose art constitutes a community resource. Respondents also recognized that shared social conditions created cultural treasures held in common. For example, they expressed appreciation for the Hmong language in Merced and the Spanish language in Santa Ana as things of great value. The natural environment was prized as well: respondents saluted the sunsets in Boyle Heights and the warm days in East Coachella.” [end excerpt]

In the Eastern Coachella Valley, a group of women knocked on as many doors as they could in their neighborhood made up of mobile homes filled with families who make a living from working in the fields. They would arrive at each home and ask the families to name the cultural treasure residing there. Responses identified Natividad Gonzalez, a master embroiderer of a Purépecha (an indigenous group in Mexico) tradition called *aguja maravillosa*. Through the weekly workshops that grew out of this recognition, women would gather and, through conversations about their shared interest in supporting their children and making changes in the local schools, they organized and applied pressure on the school district for these changes. This is a path that began with asking: Who are the people that sustain our culture in our community? What are the places that represent our identity and that we feel we belong to? And what are the events that celebrate our culture?

Below is an excerpt from a statement, or *communiqué*, they created that summarizes their work and goals together.

“We are women who are learning and enjoying the teachings of Natividad Gonzalez, of her delicious dishes, her beautiful embroidery, and her hospitality. We are Hispanic women of different cultures who come together for our love of art. We are women who are proud of our cultures and who are learning from each other as we rescue our traditions. We are taking initiative in making changes, and we are workers, friends, *compañeras*, daughters, mothers, and professionals. We are strong women who want to change our community and help our children excel in their education in order to reach college and have a better future to obtain better options outside of the fields.

We come together because we like to learn and share with one another. In this space we can get to know each other more. Through our conversations, our worries come out, and while we share our experiences, we learn how to support [each other] and resolve some [of these] problems. In coming together, we have formed a women’s support group for the women of the North Shore and its surrounding areas, including Thermal, Mecca, Oasis, Coachella, Indio, and Cathedral City. Even though we are tired after a week of work, we come together to destress while we share and enjoy a delicious meal and a pleasant chat.

Our intentions in participating in this workshop are to learn Purépecha embroidery that is part of our ancestral knowledge. Many of us have seen this type of embroidery but did not know this art form. In participating, we learned how to embroider and started to fall in love with the art form. Our curiosity to learn this embroidery called *aguja maravillosa* [marvelous needle] opened the door to learning Purépecha words and more about the culture through this art form.

We want to remain united to continue advocating for everything we want in our communities and to demand improvements for our families and that we are supported in these needs. We want to be able to attend our school and community meetings. We need transportation and accessible schedules so that everyone has the opportunity to attend. It’s been several years that they have not begun construction of the school in North Shore and it is urgent that they begin now. We need resources and our community’s support to have these services in the community, such as better street lighting and more transportation for our schools and community. We also want to have more opportunities to enrich our lives with art workshops, folk dance, stores that offer fresh fruits and vegetables at accessible prices, and to strengthen our community with a clinic in North Shore. As a community we must not remain silent. Our power grows when we unite to demand what we deserve.

We propose to achieve our goals with active and dedicated participation. Hard work, responsibility, perseverance and dedication are all necessary for us to reach our goals. All of the women who have joined together to write and share this *communiqué* are field workers who harvest grapes, limes, oranges, chilies, green beans, dates, onions, tomatoes, strawberries, corn, figs, lettuce, sweet anise, watermelon, cantaloupe, garlic, squash, and many more. Not only do we work the fields during the harvest, we also prepare the lands so that they can bear fruit, all without setting aside our responsibilities to our families and homes.

Even so, we arrive with energy and dedication to [work on] the embroidery. We, the women, are the strength that enriches and uplifts the Coachella Valley.”

## Reflection Questions

“Even though we are tired after a week of work, we come together to destress while we share and enjoy a delicious meal and a pleasant chat.” How does this quote talk about restoration and cultural practice?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

How can creating a map or list of the people, places, and things help us keep our cultures alive? How can this lead to building power? How is this story an example of that?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Think about this quote: “Places that lack material resources are often rich in people who have learned how to be resourceful: critical thinkers, creative problem solvers, and courageous defenders of their own dignity.”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---



---

Can you name one or two cultural treasures in your immediate community or context? Why do you consider them cultural treasures and why are they important?

---



---



---



---

**Affirmation**

At the end of each session and as part of a daily practice, we are going to ask that you affirm yourself, us, and the larger community, however you define that, by telling us the following:

**I FELT**

---



---

**I HEARD**

---



---

**I UNDERSTOOD**

---

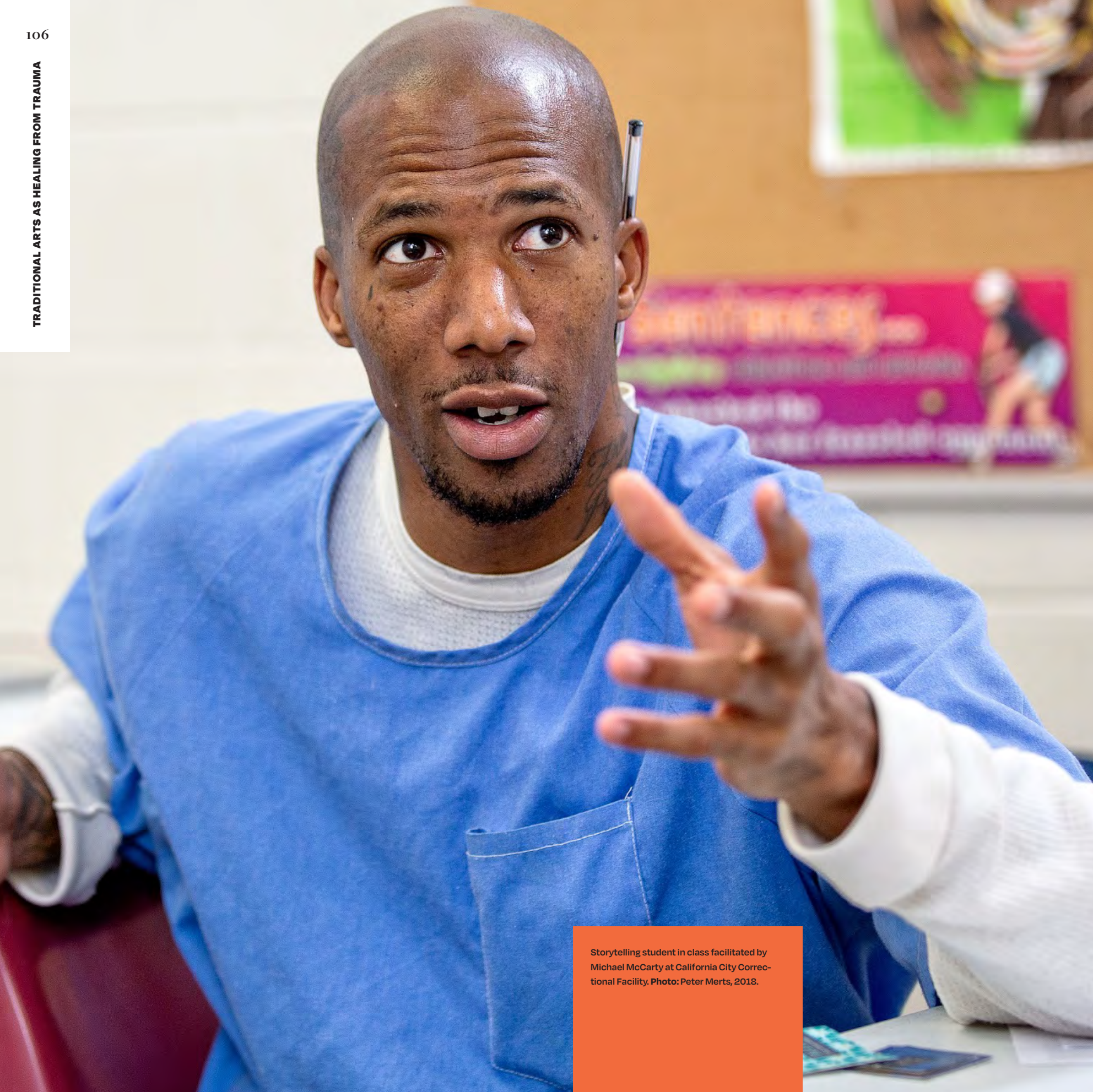


---

“ True art is not confined to geographical location. It can transcend even into a lonely cell. Men sitting in segregated housing units who don’t have nothing but a song. If it wasn’t for that one song they have, they would have lost their mind. Art stretches and goes beyond the borders that humans set.”

Gospel Choir Student  
Valley State Prison





Storytelling student in class facilitated by Michael McCarty at California City Correctional Facility. Photo: Peter Merts, 2018.

## LESSON

## How to Sustain and Transfer Knowledge

Power of Community Class

Facilitators: Betty Marín and Quetzal Flores

### Cultural Asset Mapping: How to Sustain and Transfer Knowledge

In traditional cultures, knowledge is sacred. Cultural bearers are holders of knowledge and carry this obligation with great responsibility. One of the core responsibilities of a culture bearer is to ensure that information is passed down so it can continue to be available for future generations. This is to say that each culture bearer inherits a system or a way of passing on the information that spans generations.

#### Why is this important?

Let's talk about tamales for a minute. In order for me to have enjoyed the amazing flavor of a tamal, many generations of people had to carry the information forward. Tamales can be traced back to 8000 B.C. That's 10,000 years ago!!!! Think about that for a second. So, since 8000 B.C., cultural bearers from my cultural past have been sharing this tradition forward until it landed in my grandmother's hands in the 1940's and finally with me in the 1980's. Understanding this obligation, I began to host tamaladas, or tamal making parties, where this info can be shared with my son, nieces, nephews, and anyone else who would like to learn. I do this because this is how my grandmother taught me.

#### What is sustainability when applied to culture and community?

A sustainable community takes into account and addresses multiple human needs, not just one at the exclusion of all others. It's a place where people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives feel welcome and safe, where every group has a seat at the decision-making table, and where prosperity is shared.

It takes a long-term perspective — focusing on anticipating and adapting — to change in both the present and future.

A sustainable community manages its human, natural, and cultural resources to meet current needs while ensuring that adequate resources are available for future generations.

So, when we're talking about sustaining and transferring cultural knowledge, we're creating a plan to make sure this vital information you've mapped has the resources it needs to continue thriving for generations. Even if, as previously mentioned, there's a system in place to pass this information on, we have to commit to this being a part of our work.

### Reflection Questions

What are some ideas you have for supporting the sustainability of the practices from the cultural resources you named?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Are there any cultural resources that might work well together to make a stronger sustainability practice?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What are the opportunities for programming these practices? What is the process to create programming?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Affirmation

At the end of each session and as part of a daily practice, we are going to ask that you affirm yourself, us, and the larger community, however you define that, by telling us the following:

#### I FELT

---

---

#### I HEARD

---

---

#### I UNDERSTOOD

---

---



Danza Azteca students and instructor Marty Natividad at the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility and California State Prison in Corcoran. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2019.

## Closing Affirmation

We are living in unprecedented times where white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy have all clearly demonstrated an agenda that has been and continues to be harmful to the safety and well-being of the planet and everything existing on it.

This moment also brings a tremendous opportunity and obligation to collectively breathe, listen, and invest in processes that create a mobility outward into smaller regenerative, sustainable, interconnected spaces of solidarity, healing, and cooperation.

In the traditional work of Restoration, affirmation is an everyday occurrence. Being seen, heard, and considered are reminders of our connections and obligations to the communities from which we emerge. We would like to take this moment to affirm that in these BIPOC and working class communities in the US, there are a tremendous amount of cultural resources that can be leveraged to build and strengthen local systems of Restoration and healing. These systems, rooted in traditional values, are vital contributions to deconstructing the oppressive systems that harms us, and working towards self-determination for ourselves and our communities. This is what's at stake. This is the intended impact of this work.



Drawing students taught by Wenceslao Quiroz and Fabian Debra at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2018.

## Glossary of Multiple Definitions

This glossary was created as a collective exercise amongst the artist facilitators from the Traditional Arts as Restorative Justice program to be in dialogue about how we all understood different concepts central to both sets of curriculum.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

- The act of following through with what is set/said.
- Responsibility.
- Doing deep, critical self-reflection to understand a harm you have caused and the multiple dimensions of impact. Changing behavior and learning new behavior.
- Accountability is our responsibility to others, including when we hurt them.

### AFFIRMATION

- To validate oneself through reminding ourselves of successes we may not think of.
- Speaking, thinking, and acting in ways which validate yourself and others.
- Embracing and celebrating what we create and share about ourselves and communities.

### ANCESTORS

- The generations of humans before us who learned to exist and left skills and goods for us to continue to exist as they did.
- The people that came before us that informed our lives and cultural traditions.

### COLLECTIVE SONGWRITING

- A gathering of multiple participants who are able to tell a story that's also a melodic work of their combined experiences, ideas, and beliefs.
- Being in community with music and in music with community.
- A process to create a song, shared lyrics, and music that represent a message, an affirmation, or form of protest by a group of people.

### COMMUNITY

- People who survive symbiotically, tied together with similar lived experiences, cultural traits, and necessities/desires.
- Mirroring experiences of particular populavarious spaces and settings for connectivity.
- Interconnected and reciprocal practices of being with and for one another.
- The groups of people that we choose to support and learn from.

### COURAGE

- To work through the uncertainty of fear in order to attempt to achieve a goal.
- Taking risks with our words and actions, often outside our comfort zone, in order to learn about ourselves.

### CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Practices and processes to ensure that cultural practices last for many generations.

### HEALING INFORMED PRACTICES

- Activities and different processes with the intent of creating healing.
- Culturally relevant practices that resonate with personal experience for healing.
- Cultural practices that center healing as the method and the goal.
- Practices that incorporate ways to address the harms in our lives and ways to process and heal from them.

**INTENTIONALITY**

- Acting with the purpose to add or modify.
- Effective and transparent delivery in messaging.
- Transparently having an intended impact.
- Spending time to be clear and honest and putting effort into creating those actions.
- We must have our minds focused on the main points of our lessons (INTENTION) and trust that our intention will come through to our students.

**PARTICIPATION**

- The act of engaging in the task at hand. Abilities may vary between people, but attempting to dedicate your attention and thinking skills to the process.
- A contribution of assets to the dynamic of space that helps shape our paths.
- The practice of being in community. Access.
- Participation is about fulfilling our intrinsic need to be in relationship with others and to share our own experiences and voice — to be validated by the collective.

**RESTORATION**

- To help something get back to what it was, when it was its most whole.
- Reclaiming the truth of what something is, rather than what it's made out to be. Repairing a disconnect.
- To be held by others while learning how to hold yourself accountable for the healing and well-being of the self and community.
- Restoration is a process to reconnect with our identity, culture, and community in order to seek healing and transformation.

**RESTORATIVE CULTURAL ARTS**

- Restorative Cultural Arts represent utilizing process and skills learned through our community in order to restore ourselves to our most true form.
- Arts and Culture are beliefs, ways of thinking, customs, songs, plays, visual art, and more that tell stories of communities.

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

- The ability to seek “justice” for everyone involved, not limited to punishment for one person in order to seek revenge.
- A set of practices that center people’s personal stories as the first step in addressing harms and approaching healing.

**STORYTELLING/STORYSHARING**

- The ability to express experiences and ideas through physical and vocal communication.
- The sharing of one’s personal, lived experience in the most vulnerable state for transformation.
- Being vulnerable and sharing intimate parts of yourself and your lived experience.
- Telling our life experiences so that we can learn about ourselves and our communities and so that those stories can be passed down as sources of strength and identity.
- Functional Storytelling — USEFUL STORIES! Using storytelling to detail one’s restoration and transformation.

**THERAPY**

- The process of healing by addressing the trauma at hand.

**TRADITIONAL ARTS**

- Songs, colors, images — all types of sensory experiences that have been preserved and shared through our ancestors. They tell of the past while inspiring creation in the present by utilizing the skills and practices created before.
- Ancestral, Cultural, and Ceremonial art practices transcended through various teachings and rituals.
- Systems of creating, practicing, and innovating in community.
- Traditional arts are the cultural practices that shape a community’s everyday life, sense of wellbeing, creativity, and growth, from food, to religion, to music, dance, spirituality, movement, and more.

**TRANSFORMATION**

- To change from one thing to another. It may still carry similar qualities to the entity before, but transformation requires a noticeable change.
- Transformation is to return to true self, which is concrete and not just change.
- Process/commitment of “undoing what we have become to instead become human as process,” as bell hooks says.
- Transformation refers to the changes that we can make in ourselves to feel like whole human beings, as well as with the ability to reconnect with others in our communities and beyond.

**TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE**

- The ability to transform the lens of “justice” in order to prevent the need for restoration in the future.
- A process to repair past harms that seeks to heal and change those involved, along with creating new structures so that those harms are not committed again.

**VULNERABILITY**

- To be able to step away from the possibility of an attack on our ego through expressing our truth, even if it may be seen through a lens of judgment.
- Operating from a point of power and courage to expose intimate parts of yourself.
- Our openness to take risks with our emotions and stories in order to connect with others.



Drawing Student in Fabian Debora's and Wenceslao Quiroz's class at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of California Arts Council, 2018.

# Resources & Related Reading

## Publications

All available at [actaonline.org](http://actaonline.org).

### ***Weaving Traditional Arts into the Fabric of Community Health, 2011.***

The briefing shares findings from a study conducted by UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities, led by Dr. Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola, that showed that ACTA's traditional arts programs impacted participants' mental health through measurable improvements in their self esteem, emotional connection to culture, and sense of personal achievement and collective energy.

### ***Building Healthy Communities: Approaching Community Health Through Heritage and Culture in Boyle Heights, 2017.***

Written by Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson and Citlalli Chávez, this report is intended for anyone interested in better understanding how heritage-based arts practices can contribute to community empowerment, comprehensive neighborhood revitalization, and better health outcomes. The case study examines the Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project from 2011 through the fall of 2015 in Boyle Heights.

### ***SaludArte: Building Health Equity on the Bedrock of Traditional Arts and Culture, 2020.***

Co-authored by Dr. George Lipsitz of UC Santa Barbara and ACTA, this bilingual publication explores what can happen when traditional artists engage cultural practices to address social determinants of health like structural racism, poverty, and other conditions that impact our ability to lead healthy lives where we live, work, and play.

## ACTA Videos

### ***Voices for Change: Collective Songwriting in Boyle Heights, 2016.***

A key engagement and social change methodology contributed by local traditional artists, including Quetzal Flores and Martha Gonzalez, is collective songwriting. A communal practice with strong roots in Chicana activism, collective songwriting workshops bring community members together to openly discuss local issues that affect their lives and to channel their voices into music with meaning.

### ***Las Mujeres de los Tejidos Purépecha: Building Healthy Communities ECV***

ACTA organized a regular meeting of women around the practice of embroidery from the indigenous Purépecha people of Michoacán, Mexico, who have settled in the farm worker communities of Mecca and North Shore in the Eastern Coachella Valley (ECV) of Southern California. The classes were led by master artist Natividad González Morales and in collaboration with Building Healthy Communities' Schools Action Team of ECV and the cultural empowerment organization Raices Cultura.

### ***Restorative Quilting***

Learn how ACTA helps seed restorative justice practices in the community of Boyle Heights through the transformative work of Building Healthy Communities Artist Fellow and quilter, Juana Mena, at Roosevelt High School in collaboration with mothers involved with the Parent Center.

View videos of our work on [here](#).

## Videos featuring ACTA's Arts in Corrections work

### ***ACTA's work at California Correctional Institution (CCI) in Tehachapi***

The video features 13-week artist residencies in storytelling, transformational drawing, and songwriting, a rehabilitative arts program at CCI to support inmates transitioning out of long-term solitary confinement to general population housing.

### ***Rhythms of Change: ACTA at California Rehabilitation Center***

As part of their 13-week program, artist residents specializing in Afro-Colombian percussion and son jarocho music taught the techniques and histories of their art forms, while creating a culture-affirming practice and communal experience.

# Artist and Advisor Biographies



**Rosanna Esparza Ahrens** is a graphic artist/altarista (altar maker)/fashion designer. In the last fifteen years, Rosanna and her mother Ofelia have collaborated in several large altar installations. In 2014,

Ahrens collaborated with her mother and sister in ACTA's Building Healthy Communities Program in Boyle Heights where she worked with undocumented/uninsured residents at Ramona Gardens and Pico Aliso Housing Projects, creating personal wellness shrines. This project was instrumental in fostering and empowering wellness networks within an established community. She has been an ACTA Arts in Corrections instructor at California Institution for Women since 2018.

**César Castro** is a master Jarocho musician who began his studies as a musician in middle school in Veracruz, Mexico. He has since worked with various performance groups and also started a music center in Veracruz and has taught workshops at cultural centers throughout Mexico. César has been an

artist provider with ACTA since 2014, and has worked at California State Prison, Corcoran as well as in Pleasant Valley State Prison, North Kern State Prison, California Rehabilitation Center, and California Institution for Men.



**Ofelia Esparza** is an artist/educator/altarista (altar maker) and NEA National Heritage Fellow born and raised in East Los Angeles where she still resides. She is a retired classroom teacher having taught in the Los

Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) for thirty years and continues as an educator and lecturer in her community. Esparza and her daughters have been part of ACTA's program, "Saludarte." Working with commu-

nity members from the Ramona Garden's and the Pico Aliso Housing Projects, Esparza conducted art and health empowerment workshops over a period of several weeks. Esparza is an accomplished artist, painter, printmaker, and altar maker who has been an art instructor, an exhibiting artist, and a volunteer at Self Help Graphics & Art as well as Plaza de la Raza for more than thirty years. She is currently an artist fellow with ACTA, giving altar-making workshops in the Building Healthy Communities Boyle Heights initiative and in ACTA's Arts in Corrections Program at the California Institution for Women since the fall of 2018.



**Quetzal Flores**, ACTA Program Manager, is a Grammy Award winning Chican@ musician, producer, and cultural strategist/organizer raised in East Los Angeles. Born to activist parents, he inherited a deep-rooted accountability to

community and social justice. Quetzal has studied multiple forms of Mexican traditional music and is the founder and musical director of the Grammy Award winning Chican@ band, Quetzal. Since 2012, Quetzal has served as a Program Manager for the ACTA's health equity work in Boyle Heights, Santa Ana, and the Eastern Coachella Valley. As a songwriter, he has contributed over one hundred compositions and has established a unique and influential voice that has impacted younger artists. From 2016 to 2020, he worked as Director of Cultural Vitality for the East LA Community Corporation overseeing internal and external facing cultural processes that build power within community.



**Amy Kitchener**, ACTA Executive Director and Program Director, is a folklorist who has worked in the public sector since 1991. She brings her experience as an ethnographer, skilled in entering new communities and design-

ing relevant programs. As ACTA's founding executive director, she is well versed in arts program design, project

management, and administration. Since 2008, Amy has recognized the health outcomes of traditional arts practice and set about documenting those effects through research collaborations with UC Davis. She centered physical and mental health benefits as a principal program area for ACTA and a critical area for the contribution of traditional artists. As Program Director, Amy oversees the overall vision for our Arts in Corrections work, including this publication.



**Betty Marín**, ACTA Program Manager, is a cultural worker from Wilmington, CA. Her work uses popular education and language justice to create spaces that encourage learning, dialogue, and solidarity between different

communities. Currently much of this work happens with the LA Tenants Union, and previously with the language justice collective, Antena Los Angeles, and several other independent projects. With the Alliance for California Traditional Arts, she supports artist fellows to integrate the traditional arts and cultural practices in health equity campaigns, co-curates a roundtable series to share resources and create exchange between traditional artists, and co-manages a community-based sound archive about stories of cultural belonging and struggle in Boyle Heights. She graduated with an MFA in Art and Social Practice from Portland State University. As a student, she edited a book titled *Art and Education*, centered on a conversation between her and artists and educators Pablo Helguera and Luis Camnitzer.



**Luis J. Rodriguez** has talked, read poetry, and conducted healing circles and writing workshops in prisons and juvenile facilities throughout California (including San Quentin, Folsom, Soledad, Lancaster, Chino, and juve-

nile facilities in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and San Diego counties) and former California Youth Authority prisons in southern and northern California over the last thirty-five years. Rodriguez was the official Poet Laureate of Los Angeles from 2015-2017. Rodriguez is known as one of the country's leading urban peace and gang intervention experts in the country. Having personally experienced incarceration, he has spent over forty years working with gang and other troubled

youth in Los Angeles communities. Rodriguez joined the ACTA family in 2015 and he currently teaches with ACTA at California State Prison, Los Angeles County.



**Jasmin Temblador**, ACTA Arts in Corrections Program Manager, received her BA in Anthropology from UCLA and an MA in Cultural Sustainability from Goucher College. Jasmin joined ACTA in 2017 as the Program Coordinator for

the Arts in Corrections program, and as of November 2019, she serves as the Arts in Corrections Program Manager. Jasmin works closely with folk and traditional artists in collaboration with CDCR staff to bring traditional arts programming into twenty California state prisons. Jasmin is one of the class facilitators for Power of Community, and Facilitating Community Healing - Salud'Arte for the sister program, Traditional Arts and Healing from Trauma.



**Federico Zuñiga Jr.** is a Los Angeles based traditional arts practitioner, multi-instrumentalist, and teaching artist. He holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Music Performance from the Los Angeles College of Music. He has been cultivat-

ing the practices of son jarocho, cumbia Colombiana, and Afro-Peruvian music for eighteen years. He is an active member of the Los Angeles Latinx alternative music scene. He performs often with son jarocho groups Los Cambalache and La Marisoul of La Santa Cecilia. Additionally, he performs with Eduardo Arenas, of Chicano Batman, in his solo group É. Arenas. Federico works alongside Veracruzano master musician, César Castro, teaching son jarocho for the ACTA Arts in Corrections Program. He teaches son jarocho for the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and is a debut fellow/teaching artist for the Young Musicians Foundation. At YMF, Federico works alongside MacArthur Genius recipient and YMF Artistic Director Vijay Gupta.



ALLIANCE *for*  
CALIFORNIA  
TRADITIONAL ARTS

Alliance for California Traditional Arts  
Fresno (Central) | Los Angeles | San Francisco  
[actaonline.org](http://actaonline.org) | [@CalTradArts](https://www.instagram.com/CalTradArts)