

Traditional Arts as Restorative Justice

A WORKBOOK FOR
BUILDING WELLNESS
IN COMMUNITY





Traditional Arts as Restorative Justice:
A workbook for building wellness in community

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"Extinction" by Shawn Chambers, 2018, ink and colored pencil. Created in Drawing Class taught by Wenceslao Quiroz and Fabian Debora. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2018.

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Acknowledgements



We'd like to acknowledge and honor teaching artists Vaneza Mari Calderón, Fabian Debora, Quetzal Flores, Betty Marín, Michael McCarty, Omar G. Ramirez, and all the artists who have taught with our program in the past, whose dedication and commitment to traditional arts as healing and restoration is paving a path of empathetic responses to harm and trauma.

Restoration is a process



to  reconnect
with our
identity,
culture,
& community

in order to
 seek healing
& transformation.



1. Rene Fisher Mims performs at the 2018 Djanjoba Festival of Los Angeles from Souly Dance Arts as part of an ACTA Living Cultures project. Photo: S. Narang/ACTA.

2. Mentor artist Nzingha Camara [R] teaching her late apprentice, Amber Tell, West African dance forms of the Bambara people in Leimert Park, Los Angeles. Photo: J. Jameson/ACTA, 2018.





Music workshop at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi taught by Juan Perez and Matt Amper. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 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 restoration.

Traditional Arts as Restorative Justice

The curriculum developed for the Traditional Arts as Restorative Justice 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: Storytelling, Restorative Drawing, Collective 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 and we weren't able to implement the last component of the class, a festival focused on celebrating the cultural resources in the prison; therefore, the curriculum in the book doesn't reflect this piece.

The curriculum was, by and large, developed for people who physically cannot be with their families and wider community, acknowledging the possible ways that may impact their individual health and well-being. 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.

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 Healing from Trauma**, was 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.



Transformative Drawing Class participants with instructors Omar G. Ramirez and Fabian Debra at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi.

Songwriting student at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photos: Eric Coleman/ACTA, 2017.



Curriculum



Collective Songwriting

Artist Facilitators:
Quetzal Flores and Vaneza Mari Calderón

This module focuses on co-creation through the Collective Songwriting method. A communal practice with strong roots in Chicana activism, Collective Songwriting will bring participants together to openly discuss Restorative Justice, its core values, and its practical application as a way to affect their healing. Artists and participants share a reciprocal space of storytelling and creativity, mobilizing toward a shared goal of channeling their voices into music that can serve as a map to restoration. This process of collective songwriting relies on collaboration that builds patience, respect, accountability, and reciprocity among participants.



Restorative Drawing

Artist Facilitator:
Fabian Debora

Through traditional arts practice, process, and aesthetics, this module will examine artist principles and drawing techniques and tools (in this case, graphite, color pencil, and paper), and will make use of Restorative Justice Principles (which focus on the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with self, victims, and the community at large). Participants will be challenged to develop and/or expand their technical abilities while engaging in critical thinking about their work as artists. The course objective is to increase students' knowledge base to include still life and figure drawing, line, shading, color, but most importantly the use of symbolism in order to facilitate discussions during the workshops to study, challenge, and identify new ways of seeing themselves in their world.



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'll 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 those who are incarcerated and those who work within the institution.



Storytelling

Artist facilitator:
Michael McCarty

Storytelling is integral to restorative justice as it creates space to ask questions and to talk about not only what happened, but also the impact of those actions. 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. Informed by the griot traditions of Africa, this module also taps into intergenerational and ancestral legacies of community knowledge and ways of knowing to help participants develop a sense of far-reaching belonging.



Facilitating Community Healing - Salud'Arte

Samples of curriculum not included due to COVID-19 limitations

Artist and Cultural Facilitators: Vaneza Mari

Calderón, Fabian Debora, Quetzal Flores, Betty Marín, and Michael McCarty

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've identified through performances, demonstrations, and workshops designed to cultivate appreciation and understanding amongst the various segments of the larger prison community.

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 Restorative Justice 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 experienced and participated in past 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 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 Restorative Justice program.

We are committed to:

Supporting the right of incarcerated people to restore and transform their lives through traditional and cultural arts practice.

Sharing, improvising, and innovating models of Restoration.

Assuring the curriculum and all its lesson plans are accessible to all participants.

Promoting investment by centering lived experiences.

Supporting willful, joyful storytelling.

Being culturally sustainable, sensitive, and reflective of the served population (gang subculture) while providing critical and challenging engagement through shared cultural aesthetics, practices, and processes.

Holding space for individual restoration and transformation in order to create models and pathways towards building community.

Providing tools and language to articulate restoration and transformation.

Being intentional with every piece of our curriculum. Intention is power and gives focus.

Building healthy communication for restoration and transformation.

Restoration + Storytelling = Restorying.
Once you know your story, you can reshape that story to your needs and audience.

“We’re not just lost souls, we’re your family. We’re your brothers and sisters. We’re your children. We’re your uncles. We’re your relations.”

Storytelling Student
Valley State Prison



Peter de Guzman [L] and Jasmine Orpilla [R], performing Pangalay dance during ACTA's Traditional Arts Roundtable event. Photo: Timo Saarelma/ACTA, 2019.

LESSON

Introduction to the Traditional Arts

Power of Community Class
Facilitators: Betty Marín and Quetzal Flores

"The need of identity, who you are. Unfortunately, school doesn't teach you this. The history of what we went through. So, unless you get in the midst of what is going on traditionally, you are not going to know who you really are. Unless you know where you came from, you don't know where you are going."

Male Brazilian Capoeira practitioner

What are the traditional arts?

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. California is extremely rich in the traditional arts based on the indigenous peoples of this state, the long presence of Mexican communities, the migration of descendants of enslaved Africans, and the extensive immigration from those and other countries from around the world.

Some traditional arts have been brought to California from other countries or regions and have taken root here, becoming interwoven with the state's cultural landscape and identity, while other traditional arts have prospered on the more than 130 tribal reservations and rancherías in this state. Japanese bonsai; Cowboy poetry; Hmong reverse appliqué embroidery; Mexican corridos (storytelling narratives) and mariachi music; African American quilts; Native American basketry, ceremonial regalia construction, and ritual music/dance; South Indian Bharatanatyam dance; Western saddle making; Chinese qin instrumental music; Portuguese fado singing; Native Hawaiian hula kahiko, chant and dance; and Filipino rondalla music ensembles are but a few of the many hundreds of distinctive forms found in this tremendously diverse and culturally rich state.

How are the traditional arts passed across generations?

An important component of the traditional arts that may be different from other art forms is that there is a clear understanding that the knowledge embedded in those traditions needs to be transmitted or passed on to the next generation for the culture to survive. This often happens within families—for example, with a grandmother teaching her granddaughter weaving or a father teaching his son drumming—but can also happen through broader networks within these communities, i.e. between people not necessarily connected through a bloodline.

Why are the traditional arts important?

These cultural practices give communities a sense of identity and inform the different ways that the community organizes itself, whether for celebrations, shared work, or their own leadership structures. The traditional arts strengthen a community's sense of spirituality and self-esteem, as well as its sense of self and history, which supports how they imagine and plan for their future.

Traditional arts are like the social glue in many communities, creating a sense of connectedness and the foundation for a community to work together to address injustice and other forms of harm. Through the practice of traditional arts, often centered on intergenerational relationships and the creation of sacred spaces, these communities describe how they're healing from historic traumas and restoring their communities, despite the centuries of violence and attempts to erase them.

Just as communities change over time, so do their traditional arts and other cultural practices. This collective wisdom evolves based on the context, current needs, and resources in a community. The traditional arts are very much alive in these communities, being adapted, expanded, and grown by each generation that shapes them.

Master tabla artist, Pandi Swapan Chaudhuri, trains with his 2019 ACTA apprentice Rohan Krishnamurthy in North Indian tabla forms. Photo: S. Saraswat/ACTA.



“ Are we helping those who are having a hard time?... Are we doing the best we can for them, too?... We can't really consider ourselves healthy when we have rampant substance abuse, or rampant alcoholism, or rampant diabetes... So, we are all striving to do better.”

Male Karuk Regalia maker



Performers from 2019 ACTA Living Cultures grantee organization Senderos perform a Mexican traditional dance at a Bay Area artist gathering. Photo: J. Jameson/ACTA.

“ In my family, storytelling is wellness... because it puts my kids back in touch with my grandmother, of people that they never got to see. It inspires them to carry on their culture. It's not so much a physical form; it's a mental state. That's what we try to achieve in our family is a better mental state. So what happens then is laughing, talking, disagreeing, agreeing, and listening, and then the stories come in. So you're communicating on such a higher level than you would... even at the dinner table.”

Female Pomo Native American basketmaker

Reflection Questions

What traditional arts or cultural practices did you grow up with? This could be traditional food, music, storytelling, spiritual practices, dance, or other examples. What is one story that comes to mind when you reflect on these?

What role did they play in your family and community? When were they practiced and how?

What impact did they have on you?

How were they taught to your generation or past generations, if at all.

What issues, if any, did you feel prevented your community from practicing its traditional arts and what impact did that have on you and others around you?

What is a traditional art that you practice now or that you would like to learn and why?

Are there others in the prison that share similar experiences in the traditional arts you've mentioned? How are your experiences the same or different with these traditional arts?

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

“ I feel like this is going to be my redemption in a way, when I get out. Not to prove anybody wrong, but just to show myself there was more to my life than the gang lifestyle. It gives you a tremendous sense of hope.”

Mexican folk guitar student
Avenal State Prison





Music participants at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi taught by Juan Perez and Matt Amper. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2018.

LESSON

Introduction to Restoration

Power of Community Class
Facilitators: Betty Marín and Quetzal Flores

What is restoration?

Restoration is a process to reconnect with our identity, culture, and community in order to seek healing and transformation. Transformation refers to the changes that we can make in ourselves to feel like whole human beings, as well as the ability to reconnect with others in our communities and beyond.

Why do we need restoration or transformation anyway?

Many of us may find ourselves, our families, and our communities in positions of powerlessness, hurt, violence, poverty, and other situations.

How did we get here? Restoration is also about understanding the forces that have contributed to our place in society. Those forces involve racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression that make it harder for some communities to be well in our society.

Restoration, however, is not about returning to an imaginary, idyllic version of a traditional culture; it's about reconnecting with values of humanity, accountability, wellness, and participation in community that have existed in many traditional cultures since the beginning of time.

Humanity is what makes us human, our ability to love and express compassion.

Accountability is our responsibility to others, including when we hurt them.

Vulnerability is our willingness to take risks to support our growth and that of others, even if it makes us uncomfortable.

Wellness is our ability to be in good health mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally.

Participation is about fulfilling our intrinsic need to be in relationship with others and share our own experiences and voice, to be validated by the collective.



1. A segment of Barbara Carrasco's mural "L.A. History: A Mexican Perspective." ©1999 Barbara Carrasco.

2. This tribute to Latin American revolutionary Che Guevara was painted in 1978 at the Estrada Courts Housing Complex in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles. Photo: UC San Diego Library.

3. This historical mural was conceived in 1973 to reinforce the positive contributions of Spanish, Mexican, and Mexican-American men in Chicano history. Photo: UC San Diego.



What are examples of restoration in our society?

Much of this violence can be traced back to colonization, when indigenous societies were removed from their lands, forced to work, and decimated through disease, while colonizers also attempted to erase their culture and beliefs. Restoration can also take the form of cultural practice. For instance, in the '60s, '70s, and '80s, Chicanos, Chicanas, and Chicanes (gender neutral¹) began to use murals in Los Angeles (and other parts of the country) to restore a sense of identity and belonging, and to counter narratives (stories) of their communities as solely criminals without culture, joy, and community.

While these cultural practices played a significant role in strengthening the community's sense of identity, history, and cultural wealth, the movements they were born in weren't perfect. These movements were also often guilty of reproducing forms of violence like sexism. Women in particular have had to call in their brothers who may have been taught to be machos as children. This is a cultural legacy that can be tied to colonization and beyond. Colonizers tried to rob indigenous men of their own sexuality by controlling and raping the women in their community and by trying to control men's bodies and minds, through the attempted destruction of their social and religious practices. Machismo can be seen as a response to this.

¹ Our society is expanding its understanding of gender beyond female and male to include genders that don't fit into these two options. In order to refer to other genders, some people use the x or the e, like in Latinx or bienvenides (Spanish word for "welcome").

Reflection Questions

Think about your own story. Think about all the forces that contributed to where you are today. Examples of forces could be political or economic, or social within your own family, broader community, and society. Reflect on these by telling a part of your story and describing some of these forces below.

As you reflect on these forces, how does that change the way you think about your own life or where you are now?

What aspects of your story prevent you from moving forward and processing what you've gone through and where you want to be?

Where would you like to bring more love (humanity), accountability, or participation to your life?

How would you define Restoration and Transformation in your own words?

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

“ Art broke in here. You don’t have to worry about me breaking out. You have to worry about art breaking in.”

Gospel Choir Student
Valley State Prison





La Cultura Cura altar created by Luz Marlene Cordero in collaboration with her teachers Ofelia Esparza and Rosanna Esparza Ahrens. Quilt created by Juana Mena. Photo: Oscar Vargas/ACTA, 2020.

LESSON

Cultural Organizing and Restoration

Power of Community Class

Facilitators: Betty Marín and Quetzal Flores

As you learned in a previous class, traditional arts are cultural practices that are systems of creating, practicing, and innovating in community. They can include Ancestral, Cultural, and Ceremonial art practices transcended through various teachings and rituals. In Betty's and my (Quetzal) community, one of the ways in which traditional culture has impact is through something called Cultural Organizing.

Cultural Organizing is a way in which culture bearers, or people who are holders of tradition, leverage their traditional practices to support the facilitation of power and cooperation in the struggle for social justice. Facilitating power means facilitating a group process where those involved can understand their own power and the changes they can make when they come together with others. Different from social justice organizing, Cultural Organizing centers the traditional practices as an essential piece to building equity, power, and importantly, healing and restoration. In other words, practicing the tradition is more than just fun or even therapeutic. It's (re)generating and sustaining a sense of belonging, provoking imagination, and rearranging *the story of who we were told we were to the story of who we say we are*—an important piece of restoration.

ACTA as an organization has invested deeply in Cultural Organizing across the state. We've spent the last ten years working in communities like Boyle Heights, Eastern Coachella Valley, Santa Ana, and Merced. As part of our work in the Eastern Coachella Valley, we collaborated with a family of Purépecha women to create traditional embroidery workshops in the driveway of the master artist, Natividad Gonzalez. This became a critical space where community members felt safe in community while being able to imagine and advocate for a healthier future for their children in public schools. In Boyle Heights, altar makers, painters, quilters, mariachi musicians, culinary artists, and yes!, even traditional artists who were formerly incarcerated, are working as Cultural Organizers to support people who are experiencing displacement, housing insecurity, mental and physical health challenges, the criminalization of youth, and much more.

And of course, ACTA's robust Arts in Corrections program with thirty traditional artists teaching in sixteen different institutions across the state. In putting traditional artists inside these institutions, we're offering more than just "art classes," but connections to community. Each of these traditions is deeply embedded in community. The communities where these traditions are practiced often are the same communities where many of the participants, like yourself, come from. In this way, what's being offered is a connection—a mobility outside of your current location and situation into the healing and restorative embrace of a community.

Reflection Questions

Please respond to the questions below and turn them into the CRM so that they can send to us. We hope to hear from you!

What do you understand about Cultural Organizing?

What questions do you have for us in regards to Cultural Organizing?

Can you describe a form of Cultural Organizing you have witnessed or experienced at any moment in your life?

Thinking about the cultural practice or traditional art you identified in the previous class, how can this be leveraged to generate connection and belonging?

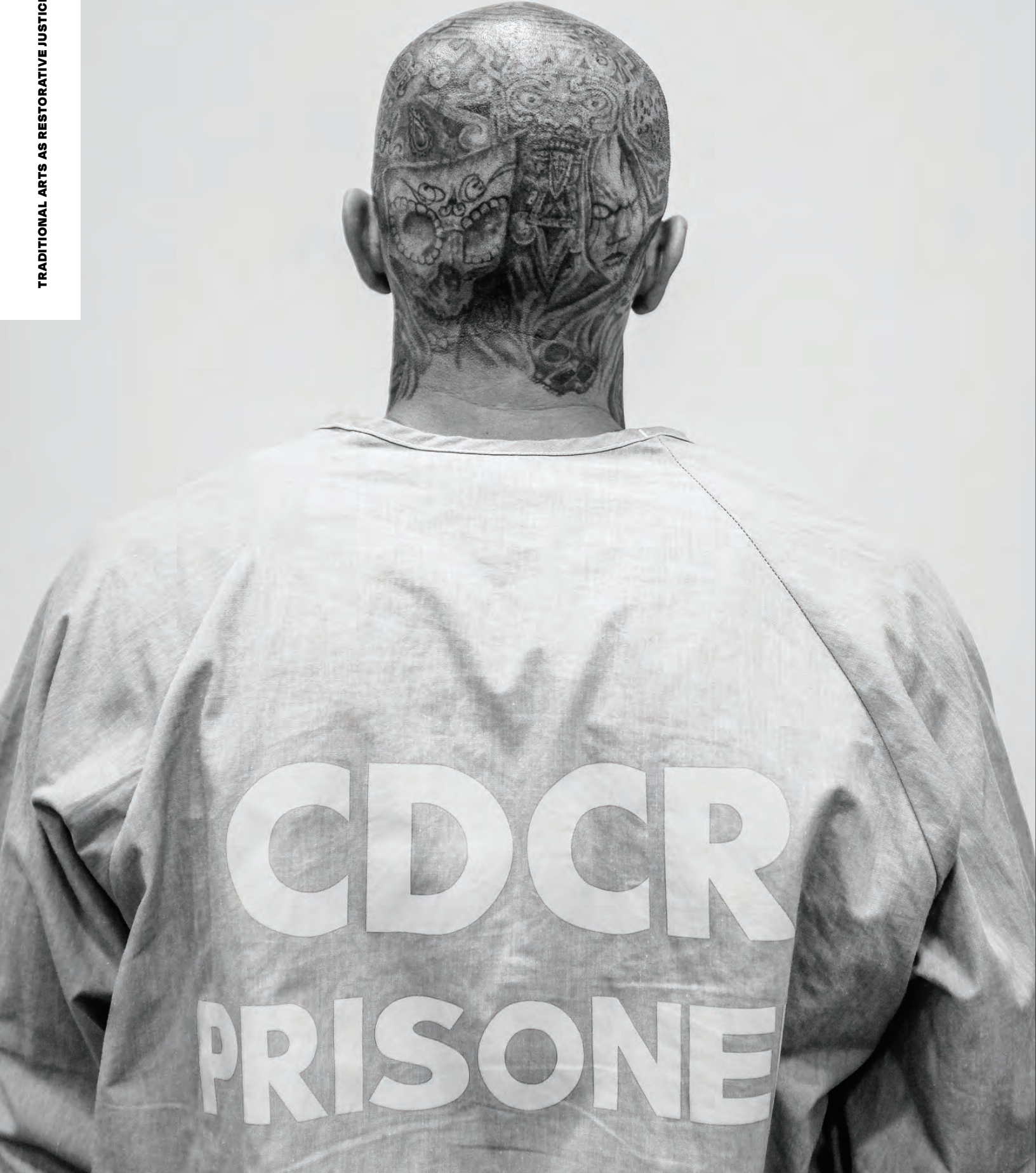
Affirmation

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



“ I need for you
to forgive
yourself.”

Music and Theatre Student
Valley State Prison

Songwriting student at California
Correctional Institution in Tehachapi.
Photo: Eric Coleman, 2017.





Jaranas at Diego Almazán's workshop in Playa Vicente, Veracruz, México. Photo: Amy Kitchener/ACTA, 2019.

LESSON

Tools of Restoration

Power of Community Class
Facilitators: Betty Marín and Quetzal Flores

“A healing for one is a healing for all.”

OMAR RAMIREZ

Why is this important?

As you continue to reflect on how restoration and traditional arts can work together, we want to describe some specific concepts and tools that can be used towards restoration and healing.

The quote “Healing for one is a healing for all” says it all. Once we identify that a harm has occurred, it’s very important that each of us hold a piece of the healing. This can happen in very small to very big ways. A critical piece to begin healing is accountability. In Restorative practices, accountability is the way in which people operate from a point of obligation to stop harmful behavior and transform themselves in the process. Again, this doesn’t happen in isolation, but instead in community. While the individual is working on holding themselves accountable, the community is working on finding ways to be supportive and to hold that person, while they hold themselves accountable.

Accountability “Road Map”

An Accountability “Road Map” sketches out a process to give it structure while clarifying intentions and goals that will allow you to get a sense of the trajectory or path and the big picture. Because accountability processes are never linear or clear cut, we use a “road map” instead of an agenda. Road Maps have ample room for construction, roadblocks, and detours. They help you maintain a sense of your overall goals while remaining flexible and open to re-routing paths and re-imagining the journey once you’ve started. The practice of accountability can happen in many ways. Below is one method of accountability that can be useful when harm is caused.

Identifying Behaviors

1

The first step in this process is that the person must have an awareness and understanding of the actions and behaviors for which they are being called out or in.

2

Accepting Harm Done

Building on the understanding of what specific behaviors led them to this accountability process, the next step is to acknowledge in what ways these behaviors were harmful, even if harm wasn’t their intention. This is the seed of one of the most frequent goals in the process: building empathy, the ability to understand the feelings of someone else.

3

Looking for Patterns

Making comprehensive change to prevent future assault requires broadening the focus beyond the isolated incident(s) that precipitated this process. This means identifying and naming the history of abusive/harmful actions and contextualizing these behaviors in their underlying assumptions and socialization. For instance, is my harm rising out of how I was raised, my own traumas, or what I learned in society about who I should be?

4

Unlearning Old Behavior

The process of breaking habits starts with identifying harmful dynamics and then deepens beyond naming to analysis and understanding. This step involves gaining an awareness determining the kinds of situations that trigger or enable abusive or harmful behaviors before developing clear strategies to avoid and diffuse the potential path for harm.

5

Learning New Behavior



Somali women gather to share their oral poetry traditions, handicrafts, and henna art at the San Diego Center for Bridging Communities. Photo: Lily Kharrizi, 2007.

Building new positive/healing patterns of behavior goes hand in hand with breaking down the old harmful patterns.

One of the tools in this stage is role play, where a person can rehearse how they express consent when agreeing to do something or how they display graceful acceptance of criticism, etc. Also important is becoming familiar with their resources to support positive and new behavior (affordable therapy, sites to find jobs, a clearly defined network of supportive friends, exercise, etc.). This phase is very much about understanding ways to build new behaviors so this skill becomes sustainable and fueled by self reliance. The traditional arts can be a huge resource in finding new behaviors and learning to be accountable in a supportive community.

Reflection

Tell us a story about a time where you created harm or witnessed harm. You don't have to use actual names or specifics.

How could the Accountability "Road Map" have been useful in this situation of harm?

Is there anything in this process that's not there that you'd like to see?

Do you have any questions about the Accountability "Road Map"?

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



“ To go back to the prison cell and to think of things to draw and then actually doing it, I will feel fulfilled. I feel I have accomplished something. I started to tap into different parts of my creativity that I didn't know that were there.

Transformative Drawing Student
Corcoran State Prison

“Owl,” George Angel LaGuer, pen and color pencil on paper. Drawing class taught by Wenceslao Quiroz and Fabian Debora at California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2018.





Tu Eres Mi Otro Yo by Fabian Debora, 2008.
Courtesy of the artist.

LESSON

Introduction to a Restorative Cultural Arts Practice

Restorative Drawing Class
Facilitator: Fabian Debora

We'll make personal connections to help us reidentify with the truth of who we are, toward a path of transformation.

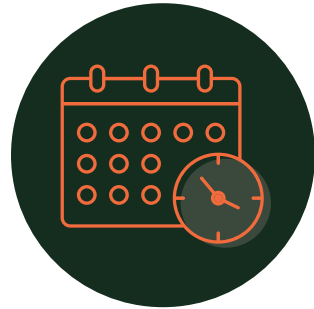
In this introduction, we extend the invitation to step into a journey, which is driven by various restorative arts processes, as a path for transformation. In this commitment we hope to return to our truth by reconnecting to those core values that have been far removed by circumstantial barriers, as well as internal barriers caused by social injustices. As transcended by our Ancestor's elders, families, and most importantly through our existence, we hope to reclaim the importance of those values. In tending to the "fire" of our core, we can then take the steps necessary to open the door into ceremony, reclaiming the values that have helped shape our true identities.

REMEMBER:

There is strength, knowledge, and wisdom within our lived experiences.

Approach and Framework

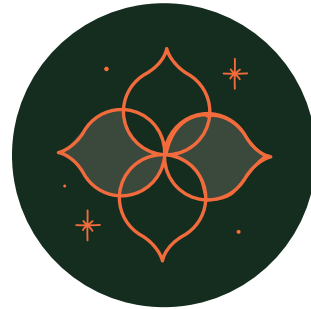
In these tasks, we invite you to a practice for individual and spiritual growth. Through this restorative approach, we'll work on a return to self and the ripple effect that can bring to communities by tapping into and nurturing what you already bring: presence, strength, resiliency, and your gifts. In this practice, we'll utilize various arts exercises to help you **re-connect**, **re-identify**, and begin to **re-imagine** what life can be when you take full ownership of your mind, body, and spirit for a healthy way of living.



RITUAL

For our "ritual," we recognize that we've developed a "Routine," or "Rutina," which serves as the start of our day. In this we take pride and develop a discipline driven by personal character or, at times, by the institution. Whatever the reason, you've made a choice to practice this on a daily basis, according to the "ceremony" or event.

Examples: Maintaining your space or cell; going to the yard, the chapel, or the tienda (commissary); or even going to board hearings.



CEREMONY

"Ceremony" is to be considered a process, sometimes one as simple as getting through the day. However, in ceremony there's an intentionality that serves as an invitation to be "open" and mindful as we rediscover the feelings of the experience and as we begin to re-identify new meaning to our emotional and spiritual connections. A "closing" is a reflection of our experience within the task or event we've intentionally prepared for.



JOURNEY

With the "Journey," we'll begin to reimagine our futures in a healthier way as we gradually integrate back into personal relationships and communities, and what they may have to offer. To do this, we put into practice new ways of responding to events that have impacted us in negative ways. Doing so will help shift our perspectives on how we view the world. By reclaiming our power through personal discoveries in this restorative practice, we can then reach a healthier way of living.

Ritual—Preparation
Ceremony—Process
Journey—Experience

DEFINITION

re·stor·a·tive

adjective

having the ability to restore health, strength, or a feeling of well-being.

"the restorative power of long walks"

Task I:

We remind you to only share what you are comfortable in sharing. We shouldn't share anything personal that would incriminate us. Please take the time to answer these questions as a part of your first assignment. As I have shared my story and what I do, I would also like to get to know you. This is an opportunity to be fully honest with yourself as this is your journey.

What does Restorative mean to you?

Have you ever participated in any Restorative process? Tell me about it.

As we get ready for this Ceremony/Process, what do you think you need to be fully present?

What brought you to want to participate in this class?

“It became a weekly safe zone where I no longer felt I was in prison. We got to learn about Omar and Fabian [the instructors] and ourselves in how we relate to each other. Those of us in that class grew a unique bond even though we were different races. This made it all that much more of a powerful time in my life that I’ll always remember.”

Al, former Transformative Drawing Student
California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi

LESSON

Medicine Bag

Restorative Drawing Class
Facilitator: Fabian Debora

With this step in the journey, we’ll create our very own Medicine Bag. This is a traditional practice which will allow us to identify our needs and healthy intentions for purification, grounding, peace, and honor. This symbolic restorative art exercise will help us discover the use of arts as tools for transformation. We’ll be utilizing the interpretation of medicine as practiced by the Native American Indigenous people. It’s important to know that all traditional arts start with a ritual, such as a meditation, prayer, or song, just to name a few. In this workshop/ceremony, we’ll center ourselves as we compose our drawing as the opening ceremony.

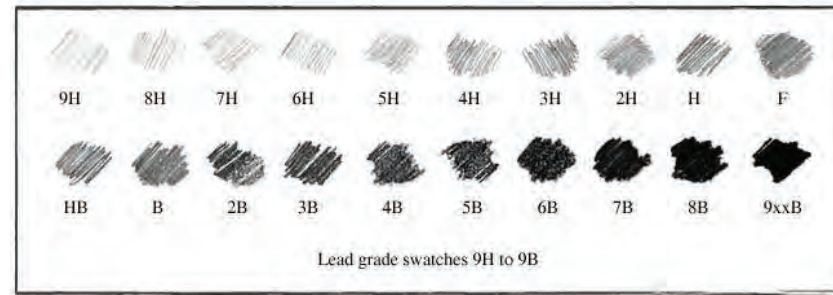


Task I: Shading Techniques and Rendering

MATERIALS

Graphite pencils with lead grades of 4B, 3B, 2B, HB, and 2H, and an eraser

GRAPHITE GRADING SCALE EXPLAINED

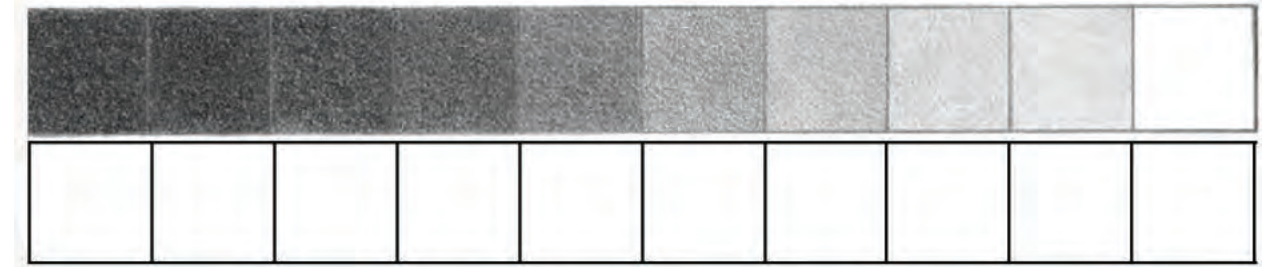


There are two graphite grading scales used to measure the hardness of a pencil's graphite core.

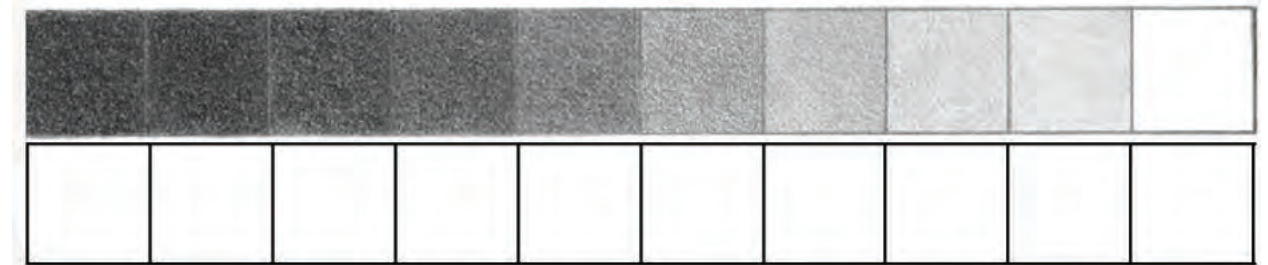
In this part of the process, we'll practice how to shade by applying different levels of pressure on the pencil as we layer graphite to reach the value we're trying to capture in the practice section below.

Practice Section I

Because we're in a ritual setting, please take your time to become mindful and centered with your thoughts, emotions, and spirit.

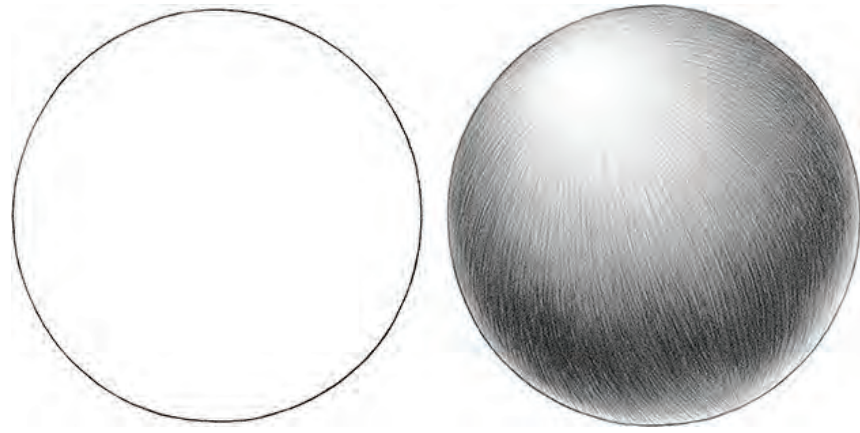


An extra practice section, in case you would like to start over.



Practice Section II

In this part of the ritual/exercises, we'll practice shading a sphere. We use this shape and shading approach because it's similar to that of the Medicine Bag.



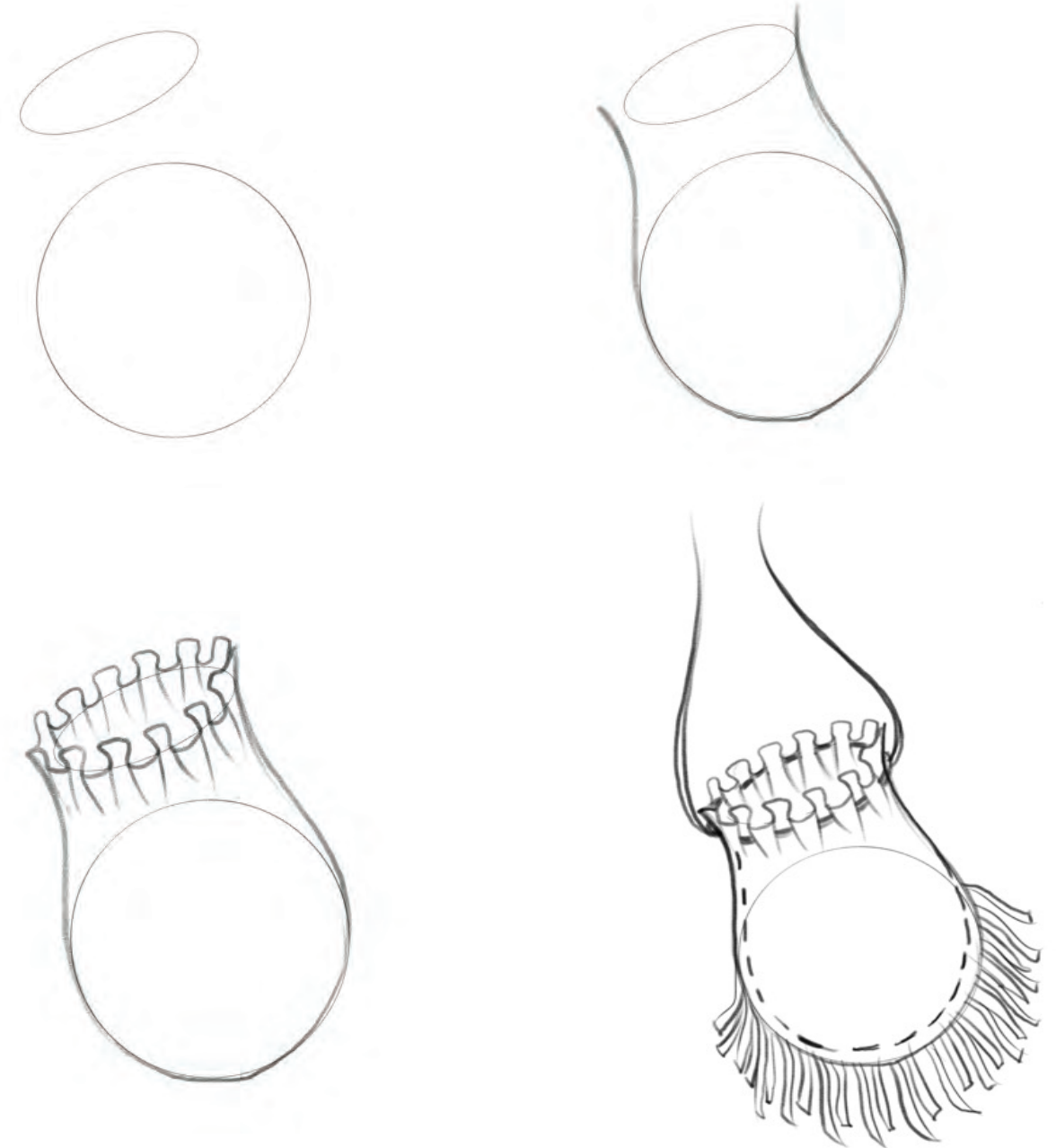
*Please use the circle to your left to practice the shading shown in the sphere referenced on the right.

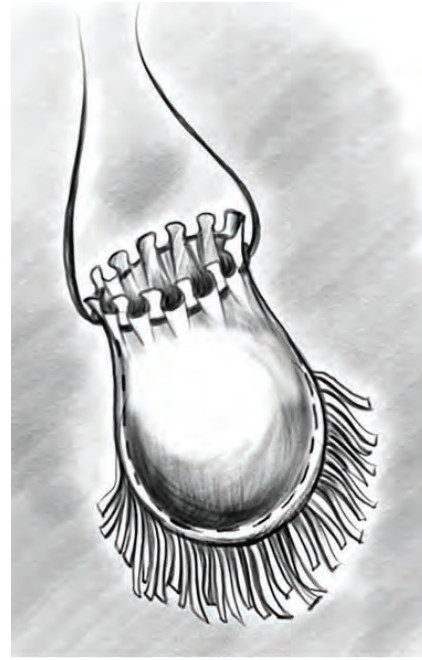
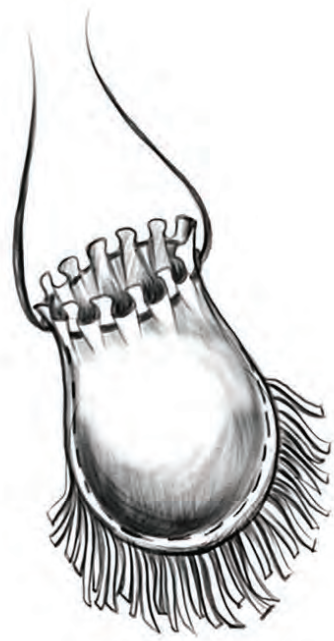
Practice Section:

Task II

In this task, we'll draw our Medicine Bag. Please follow the steps below to learn how to compose and draw from shapes, a technique that will help you with the subject's proportions and placement.

Here are the steps to follow as we begin this ritual of drawing our Medicine Bag. The invitation is to always be mindful of your thoughts, emotions, and spirit.

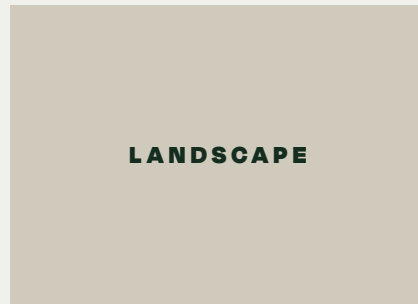




Portrait vs. Landscape

Here, we'll learn the difference between Portrait and Landscape format for drawing, an important part of composition. The correct format helps with the presentation of the subject matter (artwork).

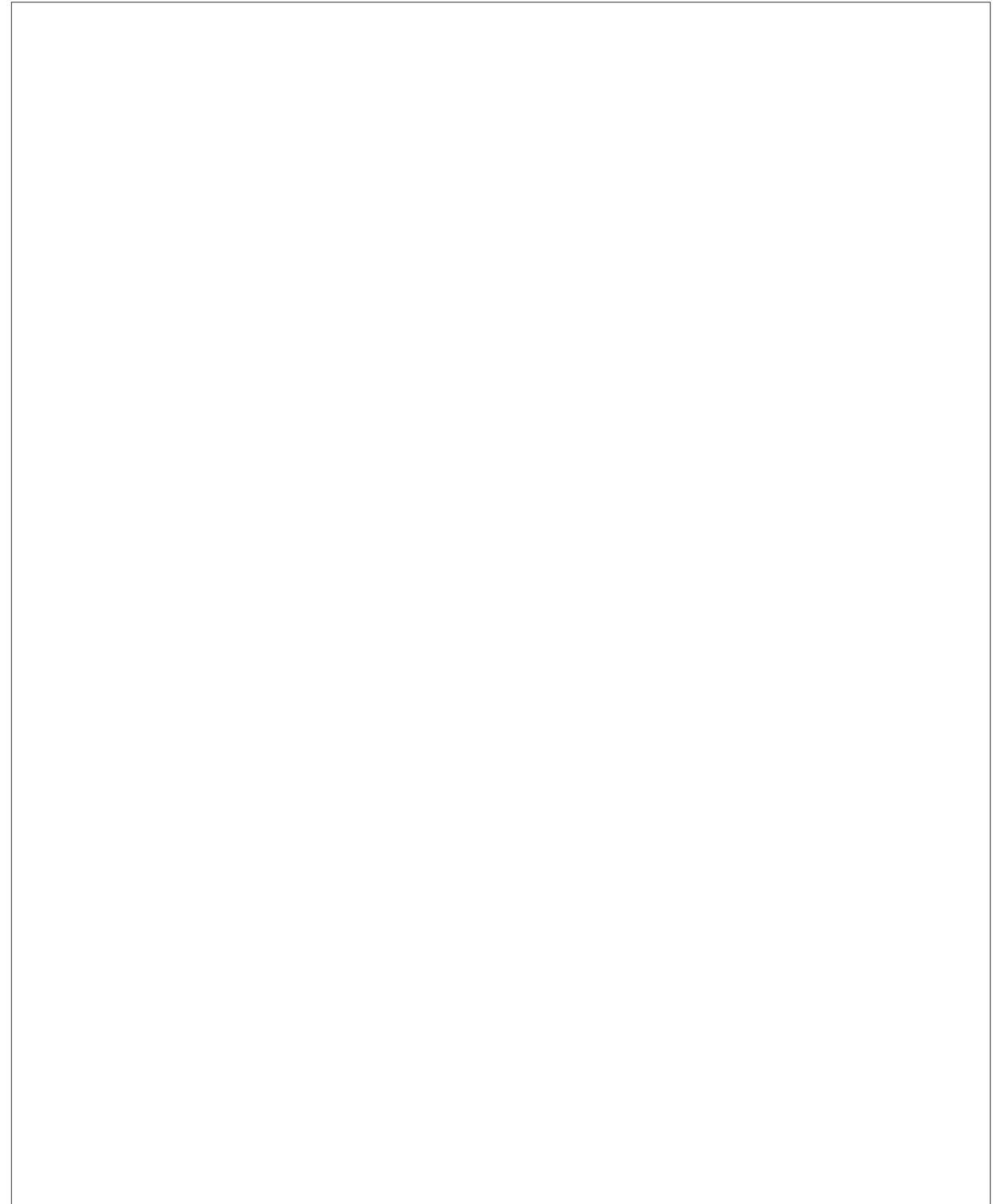
As we move through this workbook, we'll be drawing in both formats.



Personal Medicine Bag Drawing

PORTRAIT TEMPLATE

Please make use of the whole drawing space and scale your drawing to fit.



Once you finish drawing your personalized Medicine Bag, you're invited to reflect on what took place while drawing. Please take the time to reflect on these questions.

What were some of your thoughts while you were drawing?

What emotions did you experience corresponding to any of your thoughts? What were those feelings?

Who came to you while in this ritual? Children, family, friends, etc.

Now you can take the time to personalize your Medicine Bag with a symbol or initials that have a sacred meaning for you.

As we get ready to make this offer of medicine to be placed into your bag, everything we bring forth is sacred and comes from an Indigenous practice and teachings passed down by our elders. We never want to remove you from your belief, but we welcome you to another way which can also help us connect to our individual existence in spirit, while keeping in mind that various teachings differ according to the region and tribe. This approach comes from my lived experience and my time shared with an elder who embraced us in the reservation Muhu Tasen - Red Owl in Chumash.

I invite you to practice the purpose and power of the four sacred elements as guidance into ceremony/process. It's always with intention that we receive these teachings and practices.



SAGE

Sage is a plant native to California that comes in a variety of types. White sage is the most known for its potent aroma in burning. Sage is made into bundles which are used for ceremonial purposes. In this case, we would place a few sage leaves into our Medicine Bag. This is medicine with an intention to purify our spirits and our space from any negative energies that may be distracting our thoughts, hearts, and paths. The smoke is what carries our prayers, asks, wishes to be protected, and needs to be delivered. In this way, we'll use sage for purification.



STONE

A Stone symbolically grounds us to Mother Earth, entrusting her to take care of us. Now, place a stone into our Medicine Bag to find our grounding and to be reminded of this connection as we continue with our journeys. In this way, we'll use a stone for grounding.



TOBACCO

Tobacco, when received as a gift, is recognized as a gesture of respect and honor. Tobacco is used in ceremony and prayer. In this way, we'll use tobacco to represent honor.



SWEETGRASS

Sweetgrass is used by many Native tribes in North America during prayer, smudging, or purifying ceremonies and is considered a sacred plant. Smudging the smoke from burning sweetgrass is also good for prayer and for meeting personal needs when asking the creator for peace and positivity. In this way, we'll ask for peace in our lives.

Please take the time to be present and allow your mind to be cleared of anything that may be of worry, that may bring doubt, or anything that's distracting you at this moment.

Take the opportunity to look at your Medicine Bag drawing and know that this will carry your medicine in connection to those personal things that need tending to, the strength you need to keep you centered and grounded, and the people in your life you carry deeply, who are there for you physically and spiritually.

The medicine in this Medicine Bag will also invite things into your life that will bring you peace. Please be intentional with what you share, for there is strength and power in this.

Find a quiet time or space to be with self and spirit.

Now we'll have a conversation with our creator and higher power, God of our understanding, as we reconnect to our medicine.

We remind you to only share what you are comfortable in sharing. We shouldn't share anything personal that would incriminate us.

When you think about your life, your journey, and where you currently are in your path, what do you think needs to be purified? *Thoughts, actions, behaviors, etc.*

How would purifying these things impact your family and communities?

What do you feel may need some grounding in your life? *Worries, chaos, loss, etc.*

“It makes you feel good, drawing. So many years of all the madness. Just being in a cell and everything that goes on around here. It’s nice to draw even if I can’t do it good. It feels good.

I wish I could draw this picture without me wearing this prison shirt right here. If I keep taking these classes maybe it will happen someday.”

Drawing Student
California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi

LESSON

Sacred Braid

Restorative Drawing Class
Facilitator: Fabian Debora

RESTORATIVE DRAWING

Various Indigenous cultures have many different definitions and meanings around the braid’s importance. It can embody social status, unity, or other elements specific to tribal ceremonies, just to name a few.



Task I

As we prepare to create our symbolic braid drawing, the invitation is to begin our daily ritual to help us become centered. We invite you to remove all distractions from your mind and make sure your body is in a comfortable setting. Now, we begin to call upon the spirit to be one with this next exercise.

You can do a breathing exercise or you can revisit any previous rituals that have helped prepare you.

For this exercise, you'll need a graphite or color pencil, whichever you have access to. We'll be utilizing the shading techniques from the previous exercise to help bring texture, style, and likeness to the rendering of the subject.

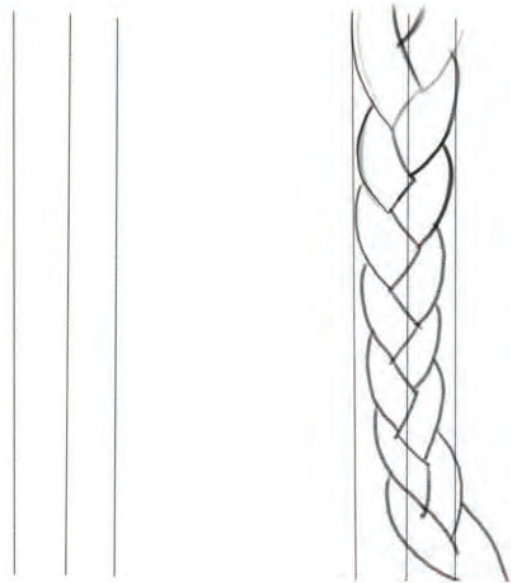
Here are step-by-step frames to help us initiate this drawing. Please make sure to sketch softly, so you can easily erase any unwanted lines.



Person identified as squaw of Spotted Tail. Brule Sioux, 1872.
Photo: National Archives Catalog.

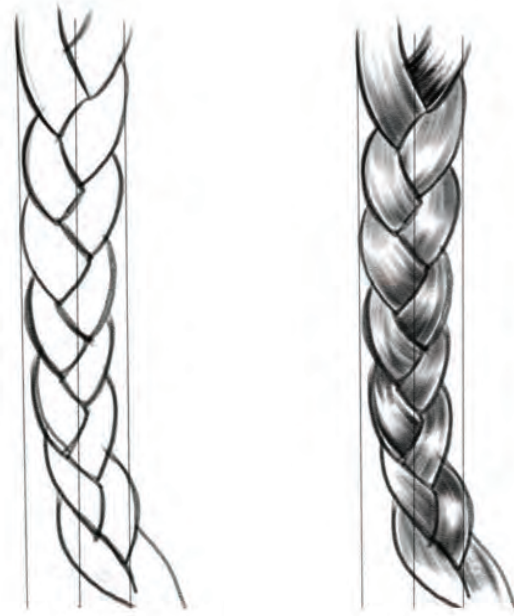
Step 1 and Step 2

Draw placement lines as shown below to arrange shapes.



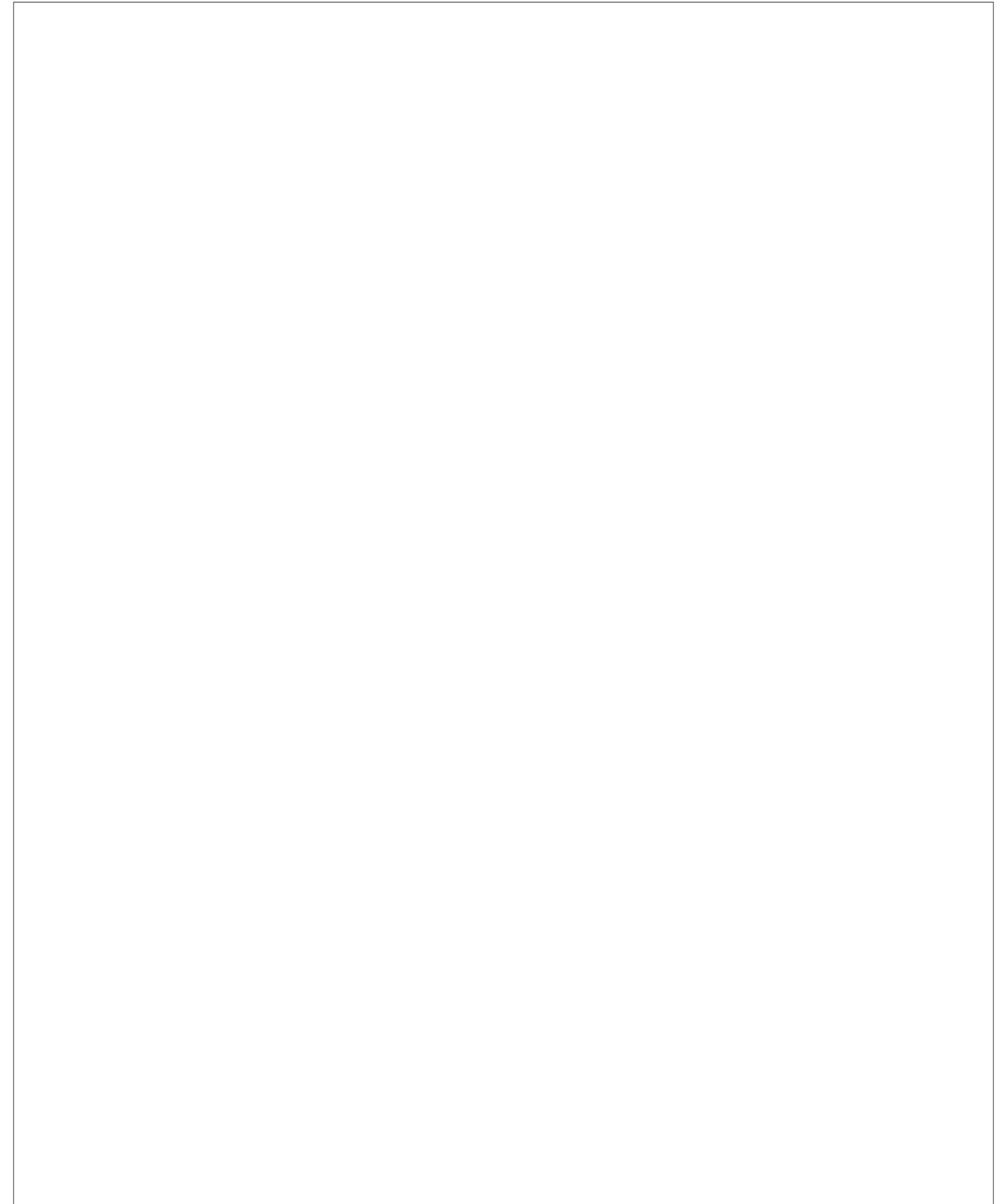
Step 3 and Step 4

Refine lines and soft shading.



Step 5

Shading and rendering with a graphite or colored pencil.



Task II

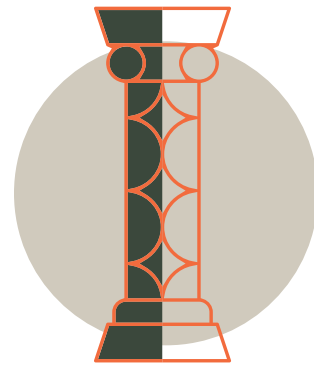
In this exercise, we recognize that there are three strands to make a braid and, together, the strands signify strength. In this invitation, we call on the pillars of our existence that have helped shape our identities.

Here, we'll identify these pillars in a generational order. First, we'll call in the Ancestors who came before us. Second, we'll reach in and call on our immediate Family. We then acknowledge the various Communities that we're part of or that have supported us in any way or manner. In this there is strength to help us within our journeys. As we make these connections, we're reminded of the gifts that we carry and that have been handed to us by these pillars.

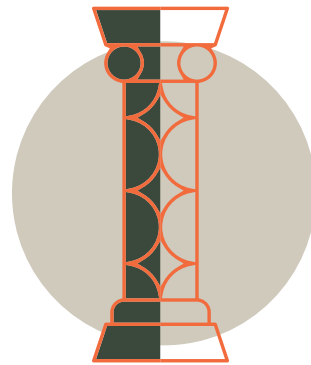


Photo: Betty Marín, 2015.

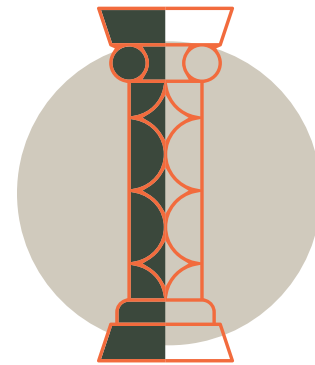
ANCESTORS



FAMILY



COMMUNITY



Here, we can begin to restore any relationships we may have had and have lost sight of.

This is medicine.

Reflect on those **Ancestors**. Who are they? *Grandparents, late uncles, aunts, elders, etc.*

What are some gifts they've given to you? *Life lessons, memories, support, etc.* Please write their name and the gift or gesture.

Reflect on the feelings and emotions they bring to you when you think of them. What are they?

Reflect on those **Family** members. Who are they? *Immediate family and those who have made an impact or left an impression on your life, etc.*

What are some gifts they've given to you? *Life lessons, memories, support etc.* Please write their name and the gift or gesture.

Reflect on the feelings and emotions they bring to you when you think of them. What are they?

Reflect on those Communities and its members. Who are they?
Ex: Mentors, organizations, churches, and those who have made an impact on your lives, etc.

What are some of gifts they've given to you? *Life lessons, memories, support, etc.* Please write their name and the gift or gesture.

Reflect on the feelings and emotions they bring to you when you think of them. What are they?

Please take the time to look back at your answers to these questions. Identify common themes and threads as they become clear.

Let's weave the braid strands into one.

Here, we'll share the connections and personal discoveries we made as we bring it all together.

The common themes and connections I have made in these three pillars are:

How they have helped shape me and helped me become who I am:

Thank you for your courage.

As we close, are there any questions or comments?

“ The stories that
 we write, the
 stories that we
 tell bring us back
 to who we really are.”

Theatre and Music Student
 Valley State Prison



Storytelling students with instructor Michael McCarty at California City Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photo: Peter Merts, 2018.

LESSON

Introduction to Storytelling and Restorative Justice

Storytelling Class

Facilitator: Michael D. McCarty

An Intro to Me and My Story Creation Workshop

Michael D. McCarty

Greetings and salutations, y'all.

How the heaven are ya??? I am Michael D. McCarty, professional storyteller and your storytelling guide. Yes, I run my mouth for a living. Been doing it as a full-time profession for close to thirty years. And I love what I do!

I've been giving this class as part of the Arts in Corrections program since 2014 in a dozen California prisons. Early on, common questions were, "What the heck is storytelling?" And "Why should I care?" So, I'll answer those questions with . . . a story.

I was giving a class at High Desert Prison and one of the fellas shared this with us. He'd been in for about thirty years and had just had his parole board hearing. He was nervous as hell and kept "messing up." They stopped him and told him he wasn't ready and to come back in ten years.

The following week, I was at Pleasant Valley Prison, and a brotha who'd been in my class for almost two years informed me that his parole board hearing was happening in a couple of days. I asked if he was ready for it and he assured me that he was more than ready. Saw him the following week and asked him how it had gone. "I used sixteen of the stories I'd developed in your class at the hearing. At one point when I was asked a question, I said that I had a story that would provide the answer." All three of the panelists scooted forward and leaned in to hear the story answer. They had experienced what we call story

"When the storyteller tells the truth, she reminds us that human beings are more alike than unlike..."

MAYA ANGELOU

"Give people a fact or an idea and you enlighten their minds; tell them a story and you touch their souls."

HASIDIC PROVERB

"It is the story that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it, we are blind."

CHINUA ACHEBE



Storytelling student with instructor Michael McCarty at California City Correctional Institution in Tehachapi. Photo: Peter Merts, 2018.

trance, which can happen when a story is well told. I say it again. It can happen when a story is well told! If the story sucks, ain't nothing happening except people trying to get away. We all know those people who tell the never-ending story. Or that story that takes so many useless twists and turns that you get dizzy. Don't do that.

Everyone has stories to tell. I'm going to show you how to find, develop, and tell your stories. And... how to tell them well!

How are storytelling and restoration connected?

I want to share another story about how storytelling and restorative justice are connected. In one of my classes, I had an inmate who was very active in the class telling variations on classic folktales. One day during my lunch between sessions, he asked if I knew why he was in prison. I did not and he proceeded to tell his story. At the age of sixteen, he shot and killed his father, stepmother, one of his brothers, and one of his sisters. He was tried and given a life sentence. Most of his cellmates didn't know about his crime.

Towards the end of our 13-week session, he began telling versions of the story in the third person. Over the summer, there was a spoken word event that he participated in, still telling his story in the third person. The event was posted to YouTube. The first day of the fall class, he told the story in the first person. His friends in the class thanked him for sharing. The following week, he told me that he'd graduated from a yearlong Domestic Violence training program during the week and ABC News Fresno was there and when they'd asked him why he'd taken the training, he'd told them his story. A portion of the interview was on ABC News.

A couple of months later, he started receiving letters and phone calls from nieces and nephews he hadn't known existed, wanting to visit and otherwise establish communications with him. One day he got a Special Delivery letter from the wife and son of the brother he'd killed, saying they'd learned of his remorse, had forgiven him, and that they wanted him to be part of their lives.

He has a parole hearing soon and his family hopes for his release. Restorative Justice happens!

“ My poetry helps me remember the beauty of life. It's through my poetry and through this class, and the things they have taught us, that I can sit here in front of you today and tell you whether I go home in a year or whether I'm here for ten more years.”

Theatre and Music Student
Valley State Prison



Storytelling student at California City Correctional Institution in Tehachapi.
Photo: Peter Merts, 2018.

LESSON

Titles and Storytelling

Storytelling Class

Facilitator: Michael D. McCarty

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

MAYA ANGELOU

The primary exercise you’ll experience in my workshop is called “Titles.” It’s an exercise that I developed for myself while writing my book (still being edited). Once I determined that I wanted to tell stories about learning from and overcoming life’s struggles, I sat with a pad of paper and started thinking about various life experiences. As an experience came to mind, I gave each event a title. I wrote about fifty titles. I chose twenty-something of these titles as the chapters for my book.

When doing this exercise, focus on coming up with the titles. Developing titles into stories comes later. Typically, I’ll ask you to come up with three, five, or ten titles. Each title is a potential story. Write them down!

There’s a tendency to try to first think of a story, but that comes later. Let the titles pop out of your mind. The stories come later.

The Wise Father

An old man in Axum had a large family. He had seven sons. These sons always quarreled with each other. Each one wanted to inherit his father’s money and land. One day, the old man became very ill. He knew he was going to die soon, so he sent for his seven sons. All the sons came. Each one wanted to know what he would inherit.

But the old man gave them nothing. He sent them all into the forest. He told each son to bring back two sticks, and they went out.

Each son returned from the forest with two sticks. Then the father put the sons in a row, the oldest son first and the youngest son last.

The old man said to the oldest son, ‘Put one of your sticks across your knees and try to break it.’ The boy did this and the stick broke. Then the old man told the second son to do the same thing, and the second son broke one of his sticks also. The old man continued down the line and repeated his instructions until each son had broken one of his sticks.



Community members at *SaludArte* book launch during performance of collectively written songs, part of Building Healthy Communities Boyle Heights. Photo: Timo Saarelma/ACTA, 2020.

LESSON

Introduction to Collective Songwriting

PART ONE

Collective Songwriting Class

Facilitators: Vaneza Mari Calderón and Quetzal Flores

MESSAGE TO STUDENTS

Hello students! We wish you a new day of creation with this work. A word to guide our work for today is: **candor (being open and frank)**.

Let's dive into learning and processing what we learn through honest reflection. Thanks for your investment of time in this packet.

What is Collective Songwriting?

Collective Songwriting is a method we (Vaneza Mari Calderón and Quetzal Flores) frequently use in community spaces. Simply put, it's a way to create music in a community setting through dialogue about a particular subject that is impacting everyone. This cultural convening methodology uses *convivencia* as its principal driver. *Convivencia* is the deliberate act of being together with and for one another. In doing this, we're centering the "sociality of sound" and making the gathering and process of creating music together more important than the outcome. A second principal aesthetic is *Testimonio*, or as Rina Benmayor says: "A voice that is oppositional and propositional, involves an urgent voice of resistance to social injustices, an urgency to speak out." Lastly, this collaborative process centers the lived experience of participants as "the knowledge."

Collective Songwriting reorganizes our current relationship with music, putting community members and their experience at the center of the creative process, all while reinforcing the function of arts processes in social movement as not ornamental but essential. Each workshop is an exercise in communication, dialogue, agency, and autonomy, hence community building.



Collective corrido writing workshop at Pacoima City Hall as part of Building Healthy Communities initiative and the Invest in Youth Campaign, led by BHC Artist Fellow Vaneza Calderón and her apprentice Marcos Macias. Photo: Timo Saarelma/ACTA, 2019.

LESSON

Introduction to Collective Songwriting

PART TWO

Collective Songwriting Class

Facilitators: Vaneza Mari Calderón and Quetzal Flores

MESSAGE TO STUDENTS

Hi! We are moving along in our journey of sharing our community building process with you.

Arriving:

Let's get ready to focus our minds on the information we're about to learn. For this exercise, let's think about the word, "Gathering." We're working towards gathering our thoughts, experiences, and our ability to focus. We'll bring this spirit with us as we complete the packet.

Please follow the steps below.



3 SECONDS

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
SAY IN YOUR HEAD: gath	SAY IN YOUR HEAD: er	SAY IN YOUR HEAD: ing
breathe in INHALE	hold your breath	release your breath EXHALE

Repeat this cycle three times.

YOU ARE NOW READY TO MOVE ON! HAPPY LEARNING!



IMAGINING

Participatory democracy

Imagining

As we mentioned in our previous lesson, Collective Songwriting has four distinct and fluid moments: Testimonio, Dialogue, Imagining, and Collective Knowledge. Now that you've had a chance to learn about Testimonio and Dialogue, let's move on to Imagining and Collective Knowledge.

Imagining is essential! In order for a human being to engage in a process of Restoration, they must imagine. If we want to thrive, we must imagine. Imagining means going beyond the confines or limits in front of us to arrive at a different place, moment, idea. Imagining is another way of saying dreaming. We must dream! It's healthy to dream. Dreaming is mobility in an otherwise immobile situation.

When we get to this point in Collective Songwriting, the ideas from **Testimonio** and **Dialogue** begin to transform into collective dreams. When we dream individually it can be powerful. When we dream in a collective, it's an unstoppable force. It's often said that we must become "our ancestor's wildest dreams." As a facilitator of Collective Songwriting, this is both amazing and difficult to hold. We want to make sure participants are feeling limitless and also tied to or connected to one another through a community obligation. In other words, we want our participants to feel a responsibility to one another in their participation.

To the right, you'll find the lyrics composed during the songwriting session pictured above. This was a hybrid-corrido song that really emphasized the chorus section, playing it after each verse. "Emma" exists through the collective story told by the participants. "Emma" represents all of the youth voices who are on a path toward breaking the curse of generational trauma and who will be our future leaders leading with dignity and respect for all, especially the youth. This was created within the Invest in Youth campaign that grew out of the Building Healthy Communities work in Boyle Heights. It has become a citywide movement that just achieved the establishment of the City of Los Angeles' very first youth development department. This corrido was created with youth in the Highland Park neighborhood, as we continued to collect youth narratives in different parts of Los Angeles to inform what this department would be.

Dreaming is refusing an unlivable destiny and choosing a path of emergence.

"El Corrido de Emma de East LA," April 2019

ORIGINAL BILINGUAL LYRICS

TRANSLATION

CHORUS

Emma is my name
I grew up en East LA
for the system
we will change the game today

CORO

Mi nombre es Emma
Me crié en el Este de Los Angeles
Al sistema,
Hoy le cambiaremos su juego

Es el 9 de abril
por algo estoy aquí
contare del poder
que tengo en mi

It's April 9th
I'm here for a reason
I'll share the power
That's inside of me

Con voz en alto dire
en busca de mi sueño andare
Dedicada luchare
hasta alcanzarlo

I will say loudly
I will go in search of my dream
Dedicated, I will fight
until I reach it

Education is the way
to keep the gangs away
I'll be okay with
opportunities and resources

La educación es el camino
Para mantener alejadas las pandillas
Estaré bien
Con oportunidades y recursos

Este adiós no es para siempre
las estrellas alcanzaré
volveré y lo comprobare
con la luz que yo logre

This goodbye's not forever
I will reach the stars
I'll come back and prove it
With the light that I achieved



Los Angeles skyline. Photo: Alexis Banioff, via Unsplash.

Affirmations

Please finish these sentences.

I am capable of

I am able to

I believe in

My voice is

I can

My mind can

You are worthy. Have a great week!

“ We all started figuring out what we’re good at, what tools we can bring to the table with each other. We really don’t have a connection outside on the yard with each other, but when we come in here, we find a way to pull together in a very strong and unique way.”

Music and Songwriting Student
California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi





Master Artist Dixie Rogers and apprentice Julia McCovey in Karuk/Yurok baby basket weaving in Humboldt County, CA.
Photo: Shweta Saraswat/ACTA, 2018.

LESSON

Beginning Your Own Cultural Resource Map

Power of Community Class

Facilitators: Betty Marín and Quetzal Flores

Living in a society where everything is based on need or on what's missing, it takes a lot of work to shift that way of thinking to focus on assets or resources. Oftentimes when we're faced with problems big and small, there's a tremendous opportunity for us to look at ourselves and our surrounding community for the resources necessary to create solutions. When solutions are created with community, solutions happen for community as well. When doing cultural mapping, it can be very helpful to exercise the solution-oriented muscle, meaning responding to problems by thinking and being creative about solutions.

Additionally, leave no stone unturned. Dig as deep as you can. When we're doing cultural mapping in our community, we have to remind ourselves that cultural resources are everywhere, like the community elder, the single mother, and the infinite amount of people who know how to make delicious, traditional food, to name just a few examples.

Reflection prompts

On your own...

Create a list of all the people, both in your immediate environment and your life before prison, that promote the culture you share in a positive way, either through practicing some traditional or cultural practice or by supporting others to learn.

These could be "bearers of collective ancestral knowledge, teachers passing on their wisdom to new generations as performers and makers whose art constitutes a community resource."²

As you think about the cultural resources in your community or context, consider people who promote our languages, bring people together, encourage yours and others' development, promote cultural practices, and use tradition as a form of connection.

² Lipsitz, George and ACTA. *SaludArte: Building Health Equity on the Bedrock of Traditional Arts and Culture*, pg. 38. 2020.

In other words, who are the people that sustain your culture in your community, both inside and outside the prison?

Create a list of the places in your immediate environment, as well as outside of prison, that you feel comfortable in and where you're able to share, learn, or engage in some sort of cultural practice. In other words, what are the places that represent your identity and that you feel you belong to?

What are the events that celebrate your culture inside and outside the prison?

In conversations with others you trust in the prison who may or may not be participating in the class, discuss the cultural treasures they would identify and how those examples fit with your own ideas. Does that allow you to add to your list?

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



"Herding," Miguel Disarufino, 2016, charcoal on paper. Created in Drawing class taught by Wenceslao Quiroz and Fabian Debora. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2016.



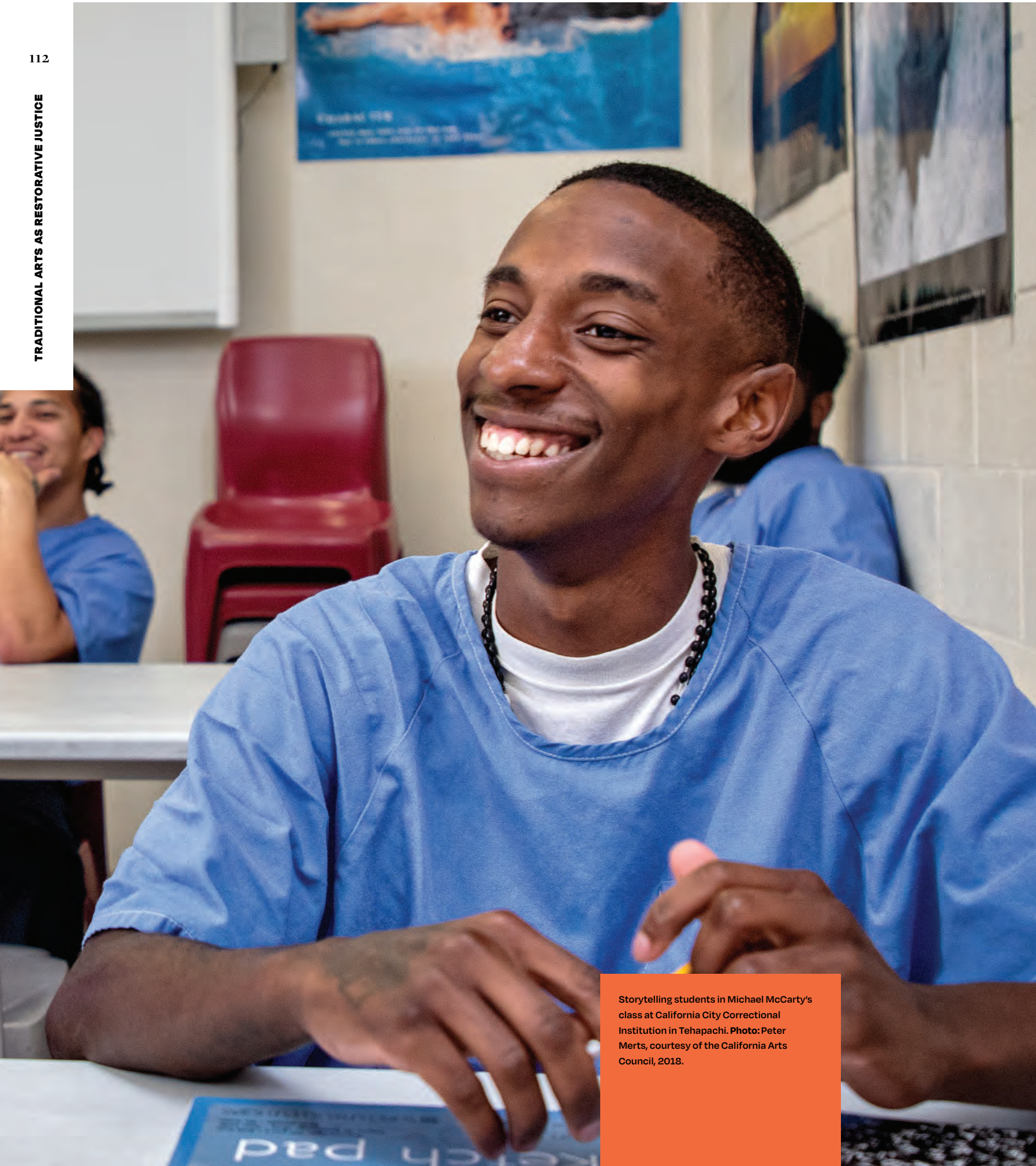
Danza Azteca students and instructor Marty Natividad at the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility and California State Prison in Corcoran. Photo: Peter Merts, courtesy of the California Arts Council, 2019.

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 harm 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.



Storytelling students in Michael McCarty's class at California City Correctional Institution in Tehapachi. 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 to be in dialogue about how we understood different concepts central to this 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 populations within various 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 students 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.

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



Vaneza Mari Calderón is a musician from La Puente, California. She began playing mariachi music at ten years of age and has played the guitarrón (mariachi bass) for the past twenty years. Her professional career in music

began when she joined the Grammy-winning Mariachi Divas in 2005, and in 2015, Calderón co-founded the mariachi-inspired trio, La Victoria. She's been involved in projects with the ACTA's Building Healthy Communities Boyle Heights working with ex-gang members and people re-entering the workplace after incarceration. Calderón has been an ACTA-AIC instructor at Ironwood State Prison since 2018.



Fabian Debora has been creating art since his childhood. Beginning his art career in 1995 as a member of the East Los Angeles Streetscapers, Debora was mentored by many Chicano artists and muralists. Over the years, he's created

murals throughout East Los Angeles and has continued to develop his style through work on canvas. He has been showcased in solo and group exhibitions throughout the United States, including in Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Kansas City, and Brooklyn. By conceptualizing and interpreting his personal experiences as well as the experiences of his community, he believes that he too can effect change. He's determined to continue to expand his horizons and to fully and honestly express himself through his art. Fabian joined ACTA's Arts in Corrections family as a teaching artist in 2017 and currently teaches at the California Correctional Institution.



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's contributed over 100 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 designing

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 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.



Michael D. McCarty studied medicine and received a degree from the University of Illinois, Chicago, and the Midwest College of Oriental Medicine. McCarty made a life transforming decision in 1992 while working in Los Angeles

at the TURNAROUND Drug Detoxification Center as an acupuncturist. He realized that the power of storytelling had the same potential to help motivate and heal people. It was at this point that he invested in becoming a full-time professional storyteller. McCarty has travelled locally, nationally, and internationally sharing stories and encouraging people to think about and tell their own stories. In addition to performing, he encourages his patrons to connect him to communities and facilities where he can

meet people, provide motivation, and connect to youth. This outreach has developed into a vast experience of facilitating workshops in a variety of community spaces with diverse populations and performing his works at major cultural centers, museums, and libraries. Michael has been a teaching artist in ACTA's AIC programs since 2014 at California State Prison, Corcoran Valley State Prison, California Correctional Institution, and California City Correctional Facility.



Jasmin Temblador, former 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 served as the Arts in Corrections Program Manager between

November 2019–August 2021. Jasmin worked closely with folk and traditional artists in collaboration with CDCR staff to bring traditional arts programming into eighteen California state prisons.



ALLIANCE for
CALIFORNIA
TRADITIONAL ARTS

Alliance for California Traditional Arts
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