



HABLAMOS JUNTOS BROADSIDE PROJECT

Artist: Lorraine García-Nakata
Title of Piece: “Friends No Matter What”
Medium: Charcoal & pastel on paper
Dimensions: Height: 7 feet, Width: 4 ft 2 inches
Date: 2008

Description: (Please limit description to 1 simple line, fewer than 10 words)
“This drawing is one in a series of large drawings depicting various phases of my youth in the 1950’s through early 60’s.”

Website(s):

blog: lorrainegarcianakata.blogspot.com
visual art web site: <http://lorrainegn.com/>
music site: <http://lgn1.bandcamp.com/track/we-the-people?permalink>

There are categories of questions. One is about Chicano/a artwork, mentor, and careers in the arts. The second group of questions is learning about the artwork and developing visual literacy. Please submit your answers in digital format if possible.

1. *Let’s get personal. Tell us about your artwork and the importance of Chicano/a artists as role-models. What education and skills are needed for an art career?*

- **My cultural heritage is:**
My family came to the US from México in 1914. I identify as Chicana when solely referencing my family Mexican origin and identify as Latina when referencing being part of a larger community of other Latino cultures.
- **I was encouraged by or mentored by:** *I was mentored by my*

grandfather Basilio Prado in many ways. Later I was encouraged by my sixth grade teacher Mr Edward Inwood who gave me his oil paint set because he felt I would make better use of it than he. In 1964-68, while in high school, I studied voice under Richard Hull and learned to play guitar and sang with Steven Greene.

I was then mentored in ceramics by both Everitt Lynch and Steven Tse in Washington State. In 1973, I became one of the Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF- an artist collective) “pilots” and we encouraged and supported each other

- **My education/training included:** *I was self taught in my very early years (elementary-high school), then became an art major in college where I trained in sculpture (wood, stone, polyester resin, clay, welding metal), painting, drawing, and then went on to teach ceramics, drawing in a junior college in Washington State. I have always enjoyed writing and started to enjoy it in high school.*

- **What were/are your major influences?**

There were many influences, especially my direct experiences and observations during significant cultural/social shifts from the 1950's to the 1960's. One outcome of the 1960's was ethnic studies and literature written by people of color (first voice) which allowed me to explore important wisdom of Indigenous cultures and ancient cultures of México/Latin America. This was very significant and continues to inform all areas of my life, including my work as an artist and as a parent.

- **How old were you when you started your artwork?** *I knew I would be an artist when. What was the reason you started creating art? I turned to art when I felt. The dramatic experience that made my art have even more meaning to me was.*

At five years old, I just knew I would be an artist. At two years old, my mother said I began to sing. I could draw what I wanted at a very early and also loved singing. I sang before I could talk. There was not any single dramatic moment that gave my work meaning. Since life has always been tied to art, its meaning has flowed from everyday life. I have also learned a great deal about life through the process of creating my artistic work. Trusting your internal messages and also learning to see beyond what is obvious, the creative process, is equally important.

- **I would tell young artists:** *If you have the desire to be an artist, start and never, never give it up. You don't have to choose between being a good parent, work responsibilities, and your creative work. You just have to commit to your art and you'll make time and adjustments to keep it alive. It*

will keep you “alive.” For young women, the outside social pressure to give up your art is even stronger than it is for males. So, be a tenacious and know that it is a political act to commit to a life as an artist. It won’t be easy, but no matter your gender, you’ll be glad, very glad, you continue to create. There are people that will step in to help you. They were there to help me and I have, in turn, helped young writers, filmmakers, visual artists, and musicians so that they develop and continue their work.

- **When did you make your first sale of your artwork?** I started selling my oil paintings when I was a high school sophomore.

- **Biography:**

I am an artist navigating between visual art, music, and writing. I am also recognized as an arts/culture specialist with extensive experience in arts and cultural policy. My visual artwork has been exhibited on a local, regional, national, and international level and tends to be large scale. Mediums I enjoy include drawing, painting, mixed media, printmaking, installation work, and sculpture. For many years I’ve been drawn to sing, write lyric, and play the guitar. Writing is another passion and I am working to complete a book, a personal back story to my experiences as a third generation descendant of México whose grandparents came to the United States in 1914. Since 1974, I’ve been member of world-renowned Chicano artist collective, Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF), and in 2003, the California Arts Council awarded me a Visual Arts Fellowship. I was appointed to the San Francisco Arts Commission, appointed by the US Congress as Commissioner exploring creation of a National Museum of the American Latino, and currently Advisor to the San Francisco Latino Historical Society. I continue to live and work in San Francisco.

2. *Looking at the broader picture, can you help students develop visual literacy of artworks presented, develop their critical thinking, and creativity?*

- **Describe your art medium?** *I currently work in pastel and charcoal on paper because it is flexible and I can draw seven-foot high and larger sized drawings. I shifted from painting and sculpture to refocus on drawing when I became a mother because it allowed me to stop, meet other family and work responsibilities (without the work drying), then return to complete the piece. Now that children are grown and away, I can again paint and sculpt for hours on end.*
- **What is the intent of the work? How is your art a way to tell your**

story? *You make choices about what you want from your artwork. I chose to let the unfamiliar creative terrain and process reveal important aspects of the human condition and how we can live to our full human potential. "Friends No Matter What" pushes against fear of cultural differences and offers a view of how we can benefit from knowing each other. Creating work also helps me to gather my own life energy and diminishes the ability for outside forces to rob me of my inner strength.*

- **Your artwork creates a dialogue with the student as they relate to and interact with your work. How could a viewer look more closely at the details of your work? How could he/she be more intimately involved with your artwork?**

The young girls in this drawing are friends and stand back to back as a symbol that they are from different cultures. They wear blindfolds that appear to be a game they are playing, yet represent that they are yet too young to fully understand all that life imposes on them. Their clasped hands show a commitment to stand with each other, stronger together, no matter what.

- **What would you like them to experience and notice? (You might consider hidden clues, seeing something unexpected, connections between facts and feelings, art and life, or how they might be inspired to create their own stories and artworks.)**

This piece is autobiographical and set in the late 1950's, earliest 1960's before federal civil rights and other related legislation made racial biases and other hate-related actions unlawful. More recently, I have observed and re-experienced what I term as the popularity of "retro racism," and this piece illustrates how some of those biases are trying to impose themselves back into our lives and why the "Friends No Matter What" necessity still applies.

- **What (unique) skills have you developed as an artist?**

Because art is more than learning technical skills (which give you more ways to express), the creative process itself allows you to be comfortable with what is not familiar to you and strengthens the ability to hear and trust your inner knowledge. Indigenous cultures reference this as an aspect of "precious knowledge." That comfort of not knowing for sure how things will come out, really helps in navigating and informing other sectors of your sometimes very challenging life.

- **How do you think art impacts our culture?** *There are many distinct Latino cultures, our experiences are highly diverse, and those experiences affect/inform all areas of our lives, including culture and the artistic work we create. Art is a powerful, a very powerful way to*

communicate and it is a lifelong way to explore what we become —and we are always in the process of “becoming.”

Thank you for contributing to this exciting and important journey with us.