HABLAMOS JUNTOS

TOGETHER WE SPEAK

NARRATIVES ON LIFE BY
Renaissance High School students

INSPIRED BY THE ARTWORK OF
Museo Eduardo Carrillo &
Pajaro Valley Arts artists
Hablamos Juntos
Together We Speak

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PUBLISHED APRIL 2016

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TEACHER: Lynn Clausen

SCHOOL: Renaissance High School

WRITING PROJECT ASSISTANTS: Brian Goulart, Lealani Manuta, Yesenia Matias Chavez, Debra Niemira, Bonnie Ott, Kiana Pineda, Victoria Rader

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MUSEO EDUARDO CARRILLO: Betsy Andersen

EDUCATION CHAIR, PAJARO VALLEY ARTS: Arlene Gotshalk

YOUNG WRITERS PROGRAM DIRECTOR: Julia Chiapella

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR: Mariah Goncharoff

EDITOR: Stuart Rodriguez

COVER AND BOOK DESIGN: Justin Carder
We dedicate this book to family, friends, teachers, staff, the United Farm Workers, and our homies.
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The *Hablamos Juntos* project is a unique opportunity to bring contemporary Latino art to young people who may know little about it. Engaging youth, particularly Latino and immigrant youth, in looking at and interpreting this art gives insight into cultural material that is in some way familiar to them. Seeing Latino images that deal with personal themes, issues of immigration and labor, as well as memories of community life, opens the door for youth to reflect on their own lives.

The artistic expression of the Latino artists in this series has relevance to the adolescent development of the young writers. They struggle with their own identities going through an educational system that rarely affords them a curriculum that reflects their own heritage or experience. Through the images of the Latino artists, these young students can express their understanding of the artwork in both its aesthetic and cultural content. The students’ writing reveals a kind of cultural reclamation where they can explore personal narratives inspired by the artist’s images.

The many artists whose work is used in the series reflect a variety of genres including painting, drawing, print, installation, sculpture, and glasswork. Many of these artists have long careers in art and social justice. Some have engaged in public work. In addition, their life experiences as Latinos from diverse backgrounds makes their visual imagery an alternative narrative to mainstream society, one that is much closer to the lives of the students.

“Hablamos Juntos” translates as “to speak together” or “to communicate with each other.” In the bridging of the humanities, students can use a slow looking technique to draw out the details and meaning of the art works in order to write from a shared perspective. The role of the writing mentors helps students strengthen the skills they need to elicit their own memories and reflect upon them. The writings sometimes connect to memories of the journey to this country or memories of the home they left behind. The artwork can trigger a remembrance of a family member, such as a grandfather or a recollection of the struggles and labor of their community.

These young writers give us insight into stories often silenced in the traditional classroom. Their narratives are touching and powerful for us as artists, because in some instances we had similar experiences in our early life that inspired us to make the art. In reading the student writing a circle from our memories to theirs is created.

The relationship between visual narratives and written work has always existed in the Latino community. Visual artists exist alongside writers like Sandra Cisneros or the playwright, Luis Valdez. In the art world, the images created in our generation were rarely visible, but through this project they are now disseminated and circulated with the same commitment to public discourse that drove the early Chicano movement.
It was our belief then as it is now that our community narratives are part of an alternative chronicle of American life. In this rich project our visual language is resonant in the words of these young writers and reminds us of the continuity of community life and culture for the many immigrants whose labor has helped to build this nation. I know the writings in this series will energize not just the students, but also their families and most certainly inspire us as artists to continue our work.

—Dr. Amalia Mesa-Bains, visual artist and MacArthur Fellow
In this book you will see how we students expressed ourselves through writing.

For the Hablamos Juntos project, we were told to pick images from California-based artists that would inspire us to write stories about ourselves. We had to find a connection to our lives. On the first day, a woman named Betsy came to talk to us about three artists’ pieces. We had to find key words to describe them. Then we chose our top three choices from a group of pictures of the artists’ work. We got the pictures you see in the book.

We had trouble writing and trying focus. At first we didn’t want to do it, but with all the help from our WPAs we became more focused. They helped us look deeper into our stories and it became easier. We took a lot of time doing this writing.

We didn’t want our names on the project because it became very personal to us. At the beginning we didn’t like that it was so close to our actual lives, but we ended up liking it because it became more valuable to us. We really had to work on the steps of writing, instead of just writing one time. It became clearer that writing is a process.

When Yermo Aranda came to speak about his culture and path as an artist, it made us more interested in art and expression. We really connected to him and his art because things that he experienced and expressed in his paintings are things that happen in our lives, such as losing loved ones.

This is the first time we’ve ever had the chance to share our work and express ourselves in a group. This project caught us by surprise because we thought it would just be another school assignment. We didn’t realize it would be put into a book. It was more than we expected. In the end, we finally got to see how our stories looked and it made us feel proud of ourselves.

—Leilani Hernandez and Kalen Zamora, Renaissance High School students
Our Gang by Xavier Jiramontes
The picture reminds me of my family, because my family used to be greasers. A greaser is someone who works on cars and gets dirty from the grease.

When my family immigrated to Watsonville from Michoacán, Mexico, they bought a house in a white neighborhood. The people around them would stare at them like they were some kind of aliens. They would drive by in their cars and yell out all kinds of racist names like “beaner,” “wetback,” “greasers,” and “aliens.”

But despite all that my family stayed on the block. My mom would cry herself to sleep every other night because she couldn’t handle the stress from all the racism. My dad would get mad about the racism and drink to the point that he couldn’t function at home. A few times he hit my mom due to his drinking problem but through all that, they hung in there, and had me two years later.

As I came into the world, things started to cool down in the ‘90’s. There was still some racism in my childhood. There were some kids who would bully me by physically attacking, verbally harassing, and excluding me from all their activities. I was scared to tell anyone about the kids who would bully me.

One day, I finally stood up for myself because I was fed up. I hit the main kid who was bullying me. Even though I got in trouble for it, it felt good. That’s when I told someone about what was happening to me and why I hit the kid. The person I told was my mom and she started to cry with me because she knows what it feels like to be bullied because of her ethnicity.
Antepasados in the Orchard by Amalia Mesa-Bains
This picture reminds me of my grandpa because he used to come here to work. He came here to support my family, and he taught me to work hard so you can get what you want.

When I go to Mexico, I hang out with my grandparents. I always go to their house to eat or do other stuff and sometimes we go shooting in the forest. The trees remind me of my grandpa because he has told me he worked in apple orchards. It was hard work.

When I hear the song “Puro Michoacán” I remember my grandpa because he used to play it when he was happy. This past December I visited my grandpa in Mexico. One day a lady went to my grandpa’s house and told him that his cows were loose. My grandpa told my cousin and me to get the cows back to the corral. We tried but the cows wouldn’t move, so we didn’t put them back. After a while my grandpa started hitting the cows. He made them move back into the corral. He was brave.

My grandpa has always been a hard worker because he first came here illegally, through the desert. He came like that every year to work. After he worked hard to get here, he got his papers and brought my dad over. My dad worked here, too. He has taught me that if you work hard, you will always get what you want.

I am proud of my grandpa because he helped me come over here so we could have a better life.
Two Brothers Fighting by Eduardo Carrillo
Photo: Jesse Bravo
In this image, I see two young boys who are fighting, and we don’t know why. They look like brothers and I don’t think they should be fighting. I am against violence. My brother and I sometimes argue but we don’t use violence. My mother always taught us not to fight with each other because we only have each other. Also growing up in a Mexican family, our father never let my brother disrespect a girl.

This picture gave me a lot of understanding about Mexican culture and how people struggle to accomplish their goals in school. The times I have gone to Mexico I have personally seen many young teens barefoot and hungry. Their families can’t always provide for them as needed because Mexico does not have good paying jobs. I would like to help people in need because it’s very sad and disturbing to see other young children want what you have.

Growing up I would visit my grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends in Tizapan el Alto, Jalisco. I would see lots of violence, from young children to men and women fighting each other. My grandmother would always tell me that I should never have to see this anywhere else but Mexico. Honestly, I shouldn’t have to see this anywhere. I always thought about why they fought each other at such a young age. There are many reasons behind that. A lot of kids fight because they have a very rough childhood and have so much anger inside them which leads to violence. Another reason could be that these kids fight for money, like boxing matches. It’s awful to see children fight for something so invaluable; we let money control our way of living and we see it as power in the world. They should have good paying jobs in Mexico so all this rage could stop and people could stop killing so many innocent families.

Teens and kids start selling drugs and killing people from nine years of age. These people are called “Narcos.” These people are the most feared in Mexico because of the violence. The innocent families are very endangered because of them. They are scared to even take a walk outside to the grocery store because they might get their head cut off, get shot, or even threatened to have their babies killed or possibly sold.

I believe that Mexico doesn’t invest into schools and communities because the government thinks, either way, it will get trashed by vandalism. Despite all this, growing up as a Mexican American makes me proud of my race because most jobs here in the U.S.A. usually ask for a bilingual person. I love my culture and I will never be ashamed of it.
**It started off as a good day** until there was a knock on the door. I opened it and there was a probation officer and four to five cops. They asked me, “Is Miguel home?” I asked them, “Why?” They didn’t tell me. That’s when my brother came out and they took him away.

The barb wires in this picture made me think of a lot of difficult times I’m still going through. It made me think about my brother Miguel and my boyfriend Angel, who went to the Juvenile Hall in Felton.

It reminds me of my brother, Miguel, because nothing at home was the same when he was locked up—the house became very quiet. He’s one of my closest brothers. I would tell him everything, and he would always be there for me even though he wouldn’t really say much. I still miss him because he was there to listen to me when no one else would. When they took him I felt as if my stomach dropped; it was one of the worst feelings ever. I felt as if I was never going to see him again.

I couldn’t really focus on anything and I would keep everything to myself. My mom fell into a deep depression. She didn’t want to talk to anybody. She would never come out of her room and would hardly eat. My dad was hardly ever home. When he would come home, he would usually be drunk. He started drinking even more after they took my brother. It felt as if everything was falling apart.

This picture also makes me think of the time my boyfriend Angel went to the Juvenile Hall in Felton. When they told me they had taken him I felt sad, and if someone brought him up, I would feel like I needed to cry. I also felt like I wasn’t going to talk to him for a while, and I needed him because I would tell him my personal stuff.

I would always ask myself why he was in there. His mom wouldn’t tell me anything about him. I kept calling his mom, but she wouldn’t answer. She would always decline my calls. There was only one time she did answer and told me he was going to court. I asked if I could come and she said that she “didn’t know,” but it seemed as if she didn’t want to take me with her. When she hung up, she didn’t even say “bye” or anything.

She just left me talking.
Tree by Hector Mendoza
Untitled (Portrait of Woman) by Judithe Hernandez
MARIA’S CHILDHOOD WAS DIFFICULT. She grew up in a neighborhood where guns were like fireworks at night. Houses were falling apart, with broken windows. It was a very lonely neighborhood. Parents kept their kids inside the house in fear of a wild bullet hitting them. Everything was quiet in the day, but at night you could hear the loud gunshots, the police sirens. Police rushing to find a dead body dumped on the side of the road. It was something many people faced and accepted as their life, and that was it.

Maria’s parents were two field workers. Most of their lives were spent in the lemon fields, working from sunrise to sunset just to put some tortillas with beans on the table. Her mother was a really loving, supportive person, a hard-working Mexican woman. She struggled so her two kids didn’t have to.

Her father was a very serious person, a person who never showed his feelings. Hard like a rock from the outside, but soft as a rose from the inside. Her brother was an alcoholic, lost in drugs and gangs. As kids, they used to be close but they departed in different ways.

Then, there was her favorite person in the world, her uncle “Chuy.” Everyone knew him as that. He was her mother’s brother, a handsome young man with an honest face.

One day, Maria was home alone. Her parents were out working in the field. She heard a knock on the front door and when she opened it to see who it was, her uncle Chuy walked in.

“Are your parents home?” Chuy asked.

“No, they are out working,” Maria replied. “I’ll go get you some water.”

Minutes passed while they spoke to each other. He told her some jokes and they started to laugh.

“You’re not that young girl anymore,” Chuy said to Maria.

“Thank you?” Maria said, a little uncomfortable. She heard the sound of the front door open and close, and both her parents walked in.

“Hey, what brought you here?” Maria’s dad said.

“I just was passing by and decided to visit,” Chuy said.

Chuy left the house, but Maria felt something strange. She felt like her own uncle was looking at her differently, but she didn’t pay much attention to it.

The next day her uncle came again to visit. He knew Maria was home alone and that her parents were out working. Maria let him inside. As they were talking, he stood up and sat next to Maria.

“What time will your parents be home?” he asked.
“They had a lot to do today, so, late,” Maria replied. She felt something in her stomach. It wasn’t a good feeling. She knew something bad was about to happen. Her uncle was getting closer and closer with every second that passed.

“I’ll get you another glass of water,” Maria told him. As she walked to the kitchen, she saw how her uncle looked at her.

Maria walked to the kitchen, opened the cabinet, and took out a glass. She was afraid and shaking. She dropped the cup, and pieces of glass went all over the kitchen.

Then, it happened.

She felt something behind her. She closed her eyes and tried to ignore it at first, but she was dying of fear. She turned around and saw that it was her uncle. She saw in his eyes that he didn’t see her as a little girl anymore.

He pushed her against the counter and his hands went everywhere. Maria struggled, trying to push him away, but she couldn’t do anything against a guy twice her size.

After what felt like forever, he finally finished and got off her. He left the house as if nothing had ever happened. Maria cried, and realized that she had just been raped by one of her closest people in the whole world. She was panicked and scared.

She didn’t know what to do. She just hoped it was all a dream, that it had all happened in her head.

But then Maria accepted reality. She had just been raped.

She got up and decided to take a shower, to try to remove everything that happened. It didn’t help much and she still felt terrible.

Hours passed. Maria stayed under her bed sheets all day, crying. She was waiting for her parents to get home, for someone to make her feel safe.

Eventually, she heard the front door open and the two voices of her parents talking to each other. She ran to them, crying.

“Qué le pasó, mi hija?” her dad asked.

“Él abusó de mí,” Maria said, crying.

“Quien abusó de tí?” her dad said.

“Chuy, Papá,” Maria told him.

They didn’t say a single word.

The next night, Maria was in her room. She had spent the whole day locked in there, suffering and crying by herself.

Outside, she heard that her parents had a guest over. She heard laughing, heard Chuy’s voice. Heard the opening of bottles in the other room.

She wept.
eRace #3 by Pablo Cristi (story on next page)
Murdered Apache Ghost Dancer by Frank (Pancho) Rodriguez
This picture reminds me of the time I tagged up my local alley. It took me a whole night to tag up all of them around the block. Once I finished, I got home and took a shower and cleared myself of all the paint on my fingers. After I got out, I went straight to my bed and fell asleep.

I liked walking every day through the alleyways, looking at all my tags. It was like that for weeks until the city brought a bunch of little kids to paint over it. It made me feel annoyed.

One night, I walked out of my house after seeing all my alleys tagged. I was irritated because the person who tagged over my tag didn’t live in my neighborhood. I walked two minutes to the alley, put my hood on to protect myself from the cameras, and proceeded to tag the first fence. After spraying for thirty seconds, I tagged over the other person’s work, taking back what was mine.

I walked home, cleaned myself of the paint, and went to sleep at 3 a.m. I did this because I wanted to let people know who lives in this neighborhood. I am territorial.

Once they see the tag, you know it’s our territory, and only specific people can tag the neighborhood.

My grandma is short with long black hair and brown eyes. She is nice. She always cleans my room, even when I tell her I’ll clean it later. She is always cooking and cleaning around the house, even at my aunt’s. My grandma is special to me because she took me in when I was a couple of months old.
THE PICTURE I PICKED OUT reminds me of my Uncle Georgie. My Uncle Georgie is a buff, “tall ass foo” and he’s all tatted up from his neck down to his legs. My uncle has a tattoo of a strawberry with four seeds that represents his loyalty to Watsonville. He also has a California bear tattoo and a teardrop tattoo. When people see my uncle they are usually scared of him because of how he looks. Actually, my uncle is a very cool guy to kick back and relax with.

One day he told me something I will never forget. He said to me, “Don’t be gang banging because I don’t want you to end up like me.” When he told me that, it touched me because I know what he’s going through. He doesn’t want me to end up like him because he’s in the gang. Once you’re in the gang you have to kill. You’re always in danger and your family is at risk. You’re not your own person anymore. You lose your freedom because you have to do what El Mero Jefe says. If you don’t do what he says, you’ll get shot at.

When my uncle and I hang out, we go mobbing through Watsonville, si no we go to downtown San Jose and check out all the good-looking ladies. Sometimes Uncle Georgie takes me to Salinas to shop and we pick up my girlfriend to go to the movies. We go mess around town and when it gets dark, my uncle takes us to the beach with his girl. We stay there ‘til sunrise.

My Uncle Georgie had a kid and now he just kicks back and takes care of his little one. He has stopped gang banging.
Self-Portrait by Ivan Rubio
When I see this picture of the portrait of Frankie by Edward Ramirez—a grown-looking man and his long hair—he looks like he has been going through a lot, because the way he looks is just so sad. In the picture, he is sweating and he looks tired—even desperate—and as he is desperate, he doesn’t look really happy at all. He doesn’t look very comfortable at all. If I were in his place, I would feel horrible, because it looks as if he was in jail. And not just that, but he also looks like he has been through a lot in his life.

This photo reminds me of something awesome in a movie I really liked. The movie reminds me of this picture. I was growing up in a certain kind of childhood while watching this movie. This childhood made me do a lot of things I shouldn’t have done, but I did anyway. It makes me go back because I still have memories of those times when things weren’t going well in my life, but that’s probably because I was a kid, and at that age I didn’t really understand how most things worked. But now that I do, it brings me back to those days and those memories I have of the past.

The movie I am talking about is called “Blood In Blood Out,” and what reminds me of this movie is the guy in the picture. He looks a lot like a character in that movie and it takes place in the same place where this picture seems to be, in jail. This picture makes me think he’s in jail because of the bars, and how hard and rocky it looks. The guy in this picture reminds me of one character in the movie. It looks like him because of his hair and his tattoos, and probably his attitude, too. Another thing I think about this picture is that the guy looks very dramatic and probably is in jail or in pain because of something he regrets doing. He might be disappointed with something he did in the past and is mad at himself and regrets doing it.

Something else this picture has me thinking is he could be working and he got a little time off, like it’s his lunch break. I’m saying this because the expression on his face looks very tired and like that face I make when I’m either mad or needing a little break from something I’ve been working hard on. I also think maybe he’s in pain because he doesn’t look really healthy. It’s making me think he might be regretting something he did in the past that could affect his entire life. He might need a little help. The way his face shows that kind of expression makes me think that he’s got something going on, and it might not be good.

Another thing this picture reminds me of is my gym workout because of the way he looks. He seems tired and has sweat on his face from working out hard or something like that. It also looks like he might be outside from working out with his boys and someone got a shot of him while resting. He also might be working out and be really active. If he is, then this is very inspiring to me because I like it when people are really active. It inspires me to do the same and become a better and healthier person.
Alma by Viviana Paredes
Photo: Ian Green
My grandparents live on a ranch in Zinapecuaro, Michoacán, Mexico. My grandma is always happy. She’s always caring for people. She has short, light brown hair and is always smiling because she likes to see she is a good mother and grandmother to all of us. I remember she would take care of my cousins and me. While we played outside on the weekends, our grandma would always make our favorite dish, pozole.

My grandfather might look like he’s mad, but inside he is a kind man who works hard to give the best to his children and grandchildren. I remember he would always wake up at 4 a.m. to take his cows to El Monte. While his cows would eat, he would plant vegetables and fruit. Then he would go home, eat, and go back out to sell his fruits and vegetables.

I was born in Zinapecuaro, Michoacán, Mexico. I lived at my grandparents’ house with my parents and sisters. We were always a happy, loving family, but once I turned two, my parents decided to go to the United States to provide my sisters and me with a better future. They left us behind with our grandparents while they got a place for all of us.

When I was five, I graduated from first grade, and those were the last weeks I had with my grandparents because it was time to reunite with my parents. My sister and I didn’t want to go. We felt like we were leaving with strangers. We didn’t remember who our parents were. My grandparents explained to us what was happening and why we had to go with them. They made us understand that these were the people who gave us life, and that because of them we had clothes, an everyday meal, a place to live, and toys to play with.

I can’t deny my life here in the U.S.A. has been good, because now I understand a lot, like how my parents had to leave us behind and how they had to sacrifice for the future we have. Now that I am a bit older, I know they did the right thing in leaving us behind, because I have received a better education here.

Even though there are better opportunities here in the U.S., I would like to see my grandparents again. I miss going with my grandfather to take the cows and sheep out to eat and walk. I miss my grandma’s cooking—I remember while she cooked, my cousins and I played outside or walked with my grandpa at the Monte. I’m really excited to go see my grandparents because I will receive the love I missed from them these past 12 years. We will all be happy to see each other again. We will all have time to make new memories.

No matter what happens, I will always be happy with my grandparents.
Make' Em All Mexican by Linda Vallejo
Leslie Hipolito Ortiz

The artwork I chose reminds me of my Grandpa because he was a hard worker in life. He never gave up on the things he wanted and that meant he wanted his children to have a better life.

I connect pride with this image, because when I look at it, it reminds me of the things that my Grandpa did to help people in Mexico and California. One year, my Grandpa wanted to become a citizen of the United States to help families in Mexico. I would help him practice the words for his citizenship test by testing him to see which answers he got correct. We would practice what he got wrong again and again and then he would tell me to test him again.

For him to accomplish this, he had to learn the names of all the states and some state capitals. He also had to learn and speak in English. As an older man, it was even more difficult for my Grandpa to speak English—something he had never done in his life.

My Grandpa and I were close. When I would come home from school, I would always go check up on him, like on the things that he needed help with, even though he liked to do things by himself. He was motivated, stubborn, and never gave up.

Grandpa talked to me about when he was a child and had to start working at a young age. He told me he didn’t want his children and his grandchildren to live the life he had to live. He would also tell me to “do good in school” so I could have a better job and a better life than he had.

Even before my Grandpa came to the United States from Mexico, he had the reputation of being a good man. He helped a lot of people when he was in Mexico, giving the needy money or food when they had nothing to eat. He helped them build their homes, providing whatever was needed. It didn’t really matter if Grandpa knew the people or not. Everyone he helped was extremely grateful. Everyone had a fondness for him, and loved him. Grandpa was a noble man; he was selfless and a great man.

Then one day, the doctors found out that Grandpa had diabetes, which resulted in him losing a leg up to the knee. When he went back home, I was happy to see him, but I didn’t like the fact that he was missing a leg. Then some months later, they had to cut off his other leg. When he came home, I couldn’t stand seeing him like that. Grandpa bravely struggled but had a lot of trouble doing anything.

It became clear that, for Grandpa, more was missing than his physical legs; he valued and was losing his independence. He was one who liked to do things for himself. I would offer my help but he didn’t like it when you did things for him.

One year passed and one day I was picked up from school and taken to the hospital. When I got there, I went to a room where I saw my Grandpa connected to machines. He was lying down and looked so fragile. There was no resemblance to the Grandpa I knew. My heart broke seeing him like that. I couldn’t take it.
When my Grandpa passed away, the people here in the United States that he helped all went to his viewing. There were so many of them that if you were in the back of the crowd, it was impossible to see my Grandpa. Getting through the crowd was like swimming upstream. When the people in Mexico found out my Grandpa passed away, they honored him with a memorial mass and prayers.

Grandpa’s legacy is one of kindness and love. He touched everyone he met. He lived and led by example and always “walked the walk.” I will forever remember and cherish my memories.

Mi abuelo sigue vivo en mi corazón, y nunca lo olvido.

Juan Mendoza

I relate to my mom and this picture in many different ways. As an example, I had to wake up with her every morning and go to work when it was cold and wet. My mom worked in the fields to get us money and things that we needed for school.

I feel bad because my mom went through all this just so she could put food on the table, and buy us all the things we needed and wanted. She is selfless but pushes on because of her love for us.

**Juan Mendoza**

When I see this painting I see my mom. It is due to its sadness and the oppressive emotions it displays. I also like what it stands for—the United Farm Workers.

This artwork connects me to my mom because she worked in the strawberry fields. She had to work in the fields because she didn’t go to school and she didn’t know how to read. I know that working in the fields is not easy because I’ve also had to work there.
Breaking the Fast by Carlos Francisco Jackson
**MY FRIENDS ARE IMPORTANT TO ME.**

This picture reminds me of my friends. I grew up in a neighborhood that had a lot of kids. I remember the days we used to play all kinds of games until the sun went down. This is the way I bonded with most of my friends: long sessions of cops and robbers and all kinds of other crazy stuff that drove the neighbors nuts. Things such as ding dong ditch and constantly breaking things while playing soccer. Everyone used to get into it. It was me and the homies: Danny, Armando, Ulysses, Carlos, Paulino, Marcos, Brandon, Junior and my brother Fabian. There was even a group of girls who were as crazy as us that liked to join in on the fun.

I remember one time my friend kicked a door so hard it fell off and everyone scattered. I also remember a time when we put dry ice in a coke bottle and it created a loud explosion and pissed everyone off.

There are a lot of other things we did for fun but most of it is illegal or inappropriate so I won’t talk about it.

So far, this was the best part of my life. As soon as I entered high school everything changed. Many of the people I hung out with moved away and the few that were left, including me, started smoking weed.

The title of this artwork is called “The Portal.” This symbolizes the transformation I made from being a kid to the high school teenager I am today.
**What I Like about Construction** is that it’s outdoors and you get to experience new things. You get to work as a team and get paid a very good amount of money. And you’ll be having fun. People thank you for the great job you do and it makes you feel good when they compliment you on the job you worked hard on.

I see myself working in construction and earning lots of money like my brother. I haven’t seen him struggle. He has his life together, always bringing money home for his two kids and for his wife. I also see him getting everything he wants.

My plan to get this job is to graduate from high school and go to college for two years. I want to take construction classes to learn a little bit more about it. I might also go to university just in case I want to have my own business. It may be a good idea because someday I might get tired of working for someone. If I go to college I might build my own business and have people work for me instead of me working for someone.

It was an easy thing for my brother to work in construction because a friend of his invited him to work. He first started by cleaning around the construction area, bringing material to people when they needed it. But one day his boss gave him some books and plans of construction to study. He studied really hard and now he’s not struggling in his work. He also moved up a lot. When his boss goes on vacation, my brother is the one in charge, which makes him the manager of the business.

It’s dangerous to work in construction. My brother got hurt once. He broke his leg but that didn’t stop him from working. He kept on no matter what happened. Another reason it’s dangerous is because wood can fall on top of you or you could get hit with heavy materials. My cousin got injured while he was using a nail gun. He was using the nail gun and all of a sudden the nail jumped and hit his finger.

When I start working, I would like to buy some land and make a big house for my girl, my girl’s mother, and my parents. It’s a great idea because my parents and my girl’s mother get along really well. Also, I would love to have kids in the future and I would like them to have a great place to live. In order for that to happen, I’ll need a plan for the house. The other important thing I would need is help from experienced workers to build the house. I would also need to hire some expert electricians.

I think construction would be a great job for me because it earns good money. I want to be exactly like my brother. I’ve looked up to him since I was in elementary school. I always dreamed of working with him and that day actually came when I worked with him in Redwood City. We had fun and I actually learned some things about construction.
La Ofrenda by Yreina D. Cerváñez
Friends No Matter What by Lorraine García-Nakata
The message I see in the picture is trust. Trusting someone for me is when you can count on someone and not be scared to tell them anything. The art shows how the girls hold hands, how both are blindfolded and are back-to-back, and how they are there for one another.

I have someone whom I can trust just like in the picture. Her name is Nayeli, my aunt. She has long dark hair and she is tall and pretty. She also has a great personality. She’s always in a good mood and she’s very funny. She always keeps me on track by saying, “Stay in school and finish your credits.” She cares about my education and wants me to graduate. Nayeli has a four-year-old daughter who also has a good sense of humor, just like my aunt. Nayeli is my mom’s youngest sister and even though my mom is always there, I’ve seen her as a second mother.

Some memories we have include going over to her house and helping her clean and cook. We then watch TV or take my little cousin to the park. During the summer, I help her out at work, working farmers markets in San Jose or sometimes in Carmel. Once, we went to Lake Tahoe with one of my other aunts and we had fun playing in the snow with my little cousins. Anytime I want to go out to a friend’s house, she’s usually the one who takes me over. If we have a family party coming up, we go shopping together for an outfit. I think she’s the only person I can trust and be close to because we grew up in the same house for a couple of years, so I got used to calling her by her first name.

She’s very important to me because she helps me out all the time. I also try to help her out by watching my cousin whenever she has work or needs to go somewhere. The same thing is happening with her daughter and me, because I started babysitting her when she was one year old. She always wants to sleep over with me even if my aunt doesn’t have to work. She sometimes stays with me three days a week.

Everyone should have someone to lean on when they have bad days and someone to talk with about their good days. I hope to be as important to my cousin as my aunt is to me.
¡LA CULTURA ES UN DERECHO HUMANO!
La cultura es un derecho humano. I believe this because it’s a right to have freedom. You choose whether you do right or wrong. I’m Mexican and I’m proud of that—I wouldn’t change it even if I could.

I’ve experienced a lot in my life. When I was in my P.E. class, George, the security guard at Aptos High, came to get me. He told me I had change back into my school clothes, and he looked at me change just in case I wanted to throw away anything. As soon as I walked to the office, the sheriff was waiting for me. He questioned me, handcuffed me, and took me to his car. A couple of minutes later, he came with my homie.

All I wanted was for my family to be proud of me, not for my parents’ work to go to waste. First of all, I love my family, but what hurts me most is when I hurt them. I chose this drawing because it reminds me of my family and that I’m free.

When I was 16 years old, I wasn’t doing so good, so I ended up in juvenile hall. I spent three months of my life in there. It was hard for me because I was used to being outside. Now I’m able to go see the sun, trees, and flowers, hang out with my friends, and see everyone I love.

I thanked God when that happened, because in there I had time to reflect on who I wanted to be and become. I was very angry with myself because I knew I let my whole family down. What kind of role model was I to my younger brothers? I want them to take every chance they get to be successful, and for them not to fall for false friends that want to use my brothers just when they need them. I want them to graduate and to not follow my steps, because I know they will regret it. I regretted everything I did—I lost my freedom when I was in juvenile hall, reminiscing about everything I did. That’s all I could think about on my way to the hall.

Being free is everything. That’s why la cultura es un derecho humano.
Chicano Park Mural (Varrio Logan) by Victor Ochoa
This picture reminds me of what I am proud of. I have eight tattoos on my body, all in different places.

They all mean something special to me. The one that means the most to me is the one on my wrist. It’s special because it’s my brother’s name. He means the world to me because he’s like my second dad. He raised me like his own. When I was 16 he got deported, but we still communicate. He sounds sad some days and happy on other days, so I added a rose in bloom so that every time we talk and he sounds sad, I tell him, “You’re like a rose that is blooming. First you start off closed and then over time you start to open up, and now you have a beautiful personality, just like a rose. They’re beautiful once they are open.”

The next tattoo I have is a Hawaiian flower with my little sister’s name under it on my shoulder. I got it because she’s the youngest, the baby. She can be rude to me sometimes and if you see us together it may seem that I don’t like her, but I do. I carry so much love for her because she is my baby sister.

The tattoo I have on the back of my neck is my Mom’s name. This name means the world to me. She is my queen, my Dad, my Mom put into one, and I would give my all to her. She gets upset with me sometimes and tells me a lot of stuff like, “Why do you keep on getting tatted? Kalen, you disappoint me. You make me get mad at you for things I ask you not to do. You never ask me if you can go out, and when you do you end up getting tattooed. You make me not trust you anymore, Kalen, and only god knows why you do these things.”

If my mom were to listen to me, I would tell her the real truth behind all my tattoos. I would love to tell her I’m just too scared to talk to her, but if I had the chance, I would tell her, “Mom, relax. Listen to me—it’s my body. If I want to mess it up, it’s on me, not you. I get these tattoos because they mean something to me, and I don’t just get them for the fun of it or to look cool and be like others, like you think.”

I also get them because when I feel sad or angry, the needle releases the way I feel, and it just feels so good. I’d say, “Mom, you need to understand that I know there are other ways, but this is just my way of expressing who I am.”
It was a hot summer day around 2:00 p.m. when my family decided to go to the beach. I thought it was a perfect day to go to the beach. The sun was out and it was really hot.

When we got there, it was about 3:00 p.m. The sand felt hot under my feet and the sound of the waves was relaxing. The best feeling was when I was with my family because when I was sitting down with them, it felt nice inside. I also don’t get to spend much time with them like I did that day, so that moment is really special to me. Once we got home we made a BBQ for everyone to eat. When my dad and uncles started playing cards, I went inside with my cousins to watch a movie.

Another time I enjoyed being with my family was when I went with my uncle to the snow not too long ago. It was by Fresno and it was so much fun to be with all my family. It was really cold and slippery. While my mom and family were playing with the little ones, my cousins and I went a little bit higher up the mountain with the trucks to make donuts and just mess around. It was fun trying to control the Silverado—it was so slippery, the trucks weren’t getting enough traction on the ground. I almost flipped over in the truck! I was going so fast I nearly lost control.

I remember another time I went to the lake. It was another hot summer and we thought it was just perfect to go to the lake to swim, fish, go on the boat, and spend time together. It was fun—the fresh water cooled me off from the hot sun and the wet dirt felt nice under my feet.

I want to thank Mother Earth for all these places, because no one made them. They were all made by Mother Earth. She provides for me and my family.
Maternal Tree by Guillermo Aranda and Ralph D’Oliveira
Photo: Edward Ramirez
The Artist Dreaming of Immortality in His Grandmother’s Backyard by Eduardo
**My Grandpa’s Farm is This Painting.**

About a year ago, I was herding sheep on my grandpa’s horse, Prince. I’ve been riding horses since I was five and I love it. When I ride, I feel free. There is time for myself and time to think. I’ve been doing this for a long time, since I was eleven. My uncle, a cowboy, taught me how to saddle the horse, then he showed me how to stay behind and make noises and ride one side of the herd to the other.

The landscape is comforting, like a hug to me. I don’t have to deal with people or technology or busy streets, cars or restaurants. Instead of those sounds, I hear the wind lightly brush the tall grass, the stomping of Prince’s hooves, and the click of Prince’s saddle chains.

Next to my parents, Prince is the closest thing to me. He’s more than just a pet—he’s like a best friend. Prince is a dusty white horse. His left eye is blue and his right eye is brown, so to me, that makes him unique. I talk to Prince a lot. He has an attitude; if I ask him anything about Peacup, the pig he’s with, he snarls and blows his nose at me.

Prince is like my support system. I talk to him about whatever’s bothering me; I remember this one time I felt like I was overwhelmed with the new changes that were taking place in my life. I went to wash Prince, and while I was washing him I started talking about everything that was going on. I know it’s kind of crazy to talk to a horse but it helped me sort of relax and get what I needed off my chest.
Dolores/Artist’s Mother by José Lozano
I think this art is trying to explain a Latino woman’s role. It’s describing what a woman does at home and what a woman is supposed to be expected to do. This art is showing everyday roles for women.

Another thing that caught my eye in this art was the faces in the background. For me, they are trying to explain something like relatives. The woman always has eyes on her, who check up on her and what she is doing.

The woman in the art is a paper doll, which describes her as a woman who does anything others tell her. The artist was thinking of her mother as a paper doll, treating her as her own. This is what it seems to me.

This art also caught my eye because of the colors. The colors attracted me because my culture is colorful and I have a colorful history.

There’s another way you could describe this art, but everybody has their own way to do this. Everybody has their own opinion for art that is not like others’. I only see a few things in this art that I can actually describe in my own way—the way I see it.

The paper doll is how I treat others, telling them what to do. This made me remember how I used to treat others. I would be the bossy one out of all my friends and family. But that has changed—I mean, I have changed. I don’t boss others around anymore. I let them do them and treat them with respect.
There are many people who love to do different things for their hobbies. My favorite hobby is being a mechanic.

Why? Because I love working with tools and using my hands.

My dad and brother were the ones who showed me different types and styles of engines from different cars and that is when being a mechanic began to interest me. I haven’t gone to any car shows yet, but it’s my goal to be in one with my dream car. My dad loves to work with cars, too; he has shown me basically everything I need to know about fixing different types of cars.

My dream car to have in Watsonville is a 2007 Nissan Skyline R34. It is one of the best and fastest cars made. I really love this car because it looks so cool and is super fast. Also, it has such an amazing deep sound when it’s turned on. It’s like a quote I heard, “To some, cars are nothing, but to others, a car is life.”

I would love to work on the R34 every day and see my progress. How I plan to accomplish my goal is to finish high school and some college, and work hard every day.
I choose this picture because when I look at it, the first thing that comes to mind is my beautiful cousin and grandpa who passed away. I don’t think I’ll ever forget about loved ones who passed away, especially because we made a lot of memories.

Some of the memories I have with my grandpa were made when we would go horseback riding. He was always riding his horse and he would also ride bulls. He would also give me a lot of advice and tell me about what his childhood was like.
Ouch. My first reaction is a gut-clencher. “New World” denotes greed and power, and the colonization of native life. I see the backstory, and the remnants on an “altar” as an attempt to “remember.” I see religion and “savings one’s soul” as the modus operandi to feed that greed and power. Coincidence that the background is bloody red? “Wonderkammer” translates to “curiosities and rarities.” Sounds like a euphemism, no?

Debra Niemira

Community Member and Writing Project Assistant
My muscles ache, too. His labor goes unnoticed by many, but not by me. I appreciate the hard work my students put into their project—their work may go unnoticed by many, but not by me.

UCSC Student and Writing Project Assistant

Yesenia Matias Chavez

Luis de las Flores II by Juan Fuentes
I HAVE FRIENDS IN INVISIBLE PLACES—the places everyone sees, but doesn’t know.

UCSC Student and Writing Project Assistant
Coming to Santa Cruz for college after growing up in a very suburban town has opened my eyes to so many natural settings. I sometimes find myself wandering in the forest in total awe of the beauty around me.

UCSC Student and Writing Project Assistant

Wildcat Canyon Series #6 by Daniel Galvez
**Elizabeth Albor** was born in Watsonville, California, and is 15 years old. She has two brothers and is the only girl in the family. She is excited to have her story appear in this Young Writers Program publication.

**Enrique Ayala** was born in Los Angeles, California, and is 15 years old. He has four brothers and no pets. He is excited to have his story appear in this Young Writers Program publication.

**Angel Campos** is in 10th grade at Renaissance High School.

**Juan Contreras** is in 10th grade at Renaissance High School.

**Osvaldo Cortez** was born in Watsonville, California, and is 16 years old. He has two brothers named Victor and Cesar, a sister named Miriam, and a dog named Coco. He is excited to have his story appear in this Young Writers Program Publication.

**Daisy Delgadillo** was born in Watsonville, Ca. and is 17 years old. She has one brother named Juan. She is excited to have her story appear in a Young Writers Program publication. She loves to sing more than anything in the world, and her favorite things to do are dancing, makeup, and hanging out with friends. She loves writing and is happy to have her story appear in this book. Her favorite thing to write about is Mexican Culture. She lives with her mom and brother, and wants to be a Border patrol officer when she grows up. For now, she likes to socialize with friends and family!

**Anthony Garcia** was born in Watsonville, California, and is 17 years old. He has two brothers and one sister and a dog named Pablo. He is excited to have his story appear in this Young Writers Program publication.

**Oscar Gonzalez** was born and raised in Watsonville, California, and is 16 years old. He has one brother named Francisco and one sister named Esperanza. His favorite things to do are work, play video games, hang out with his girl, and play soccer. He hopes to graduate and start working in construction with his brother.

**Leilani Hernandez** is 17 years old and loves her family more than anything in the world. Her favorite things to do are hang out with her friends, get together with her family, go to parties once in awhile, go out somewhere different with her friends, or just stay home to babysit.

**J.M.M.** was born in Watsonville, California, and is 18 years old. He has one sister. He is excited to have his story appear in this Young Writers Program publication.

**Jose Juarez** is 17 years old and loves his family more than anything in the world. His favorite things to do with his family are to go out on adven-
tures and discover new things. He hopes that the reader of this book likes his story.

**L.R.** was born in Watsonville. He has one brother and one sister. He likes to drive through the mountains with his friends while blasting music. He is excited to have his writing in the Young Writers Program book this year.

**Juan Mendoza** was born in Watsonville, California and is 17 years old. He has two brothers and one sister. He is excited to have his story appear in this Young Writers Program publication.

**Josie Moreno** was born in Watsonville, California, and is 16 years old. She has three brothers and four sisters, and a cat named Henry Hill. She is excited to have her story appear in this Young Writers Program publication.

**Jose Antonio Ortiz** was born in Watsonville, California and is 18 years old. He loves adventure more than anything. His favorite things to do are party, sleep, and hang out in the hood. He hopes the readers of this book enjoy his story.

**Leslie Hipolito Ortiz** is 17 years old and loves to sing more than anything in the world. Her favorite things to do are sing, cook and bake, and watch movies. She hopes the readers of this book like her story, which she wrote based on something true that happened to her Grandpa.

**Alexis Rangel** was born in Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico and is 17 years old. He has four brothers and a dog named Terry. He is excited to have his story appear in this Young Writers Program Publication.

**Richard Rodriguez** is from Paso Robles, the 805. He used to live in the ghetto before moving to Watsonville. He likes to hang around with the homies and make money.

**Chris Rosete** was born in Watsonville, California, and is 18 years old. He has one brother and three sisters, and a dog named Chico. He is excited to have his story appear in this Young Writers Program publication.

**Tony A.** is a 10th grade student at Renaissance High School.

**Jacqueline Valdez** was born in Zinapecuaro, Michoacan, Mexico, and is 17 years old. She has one brother named Steven and two sisters name Itzel and Edith. She is excited to have her story appear in this Young Writers Program publication.

**Kalen Zamora** was born in Watsonville, California, and is 17 years old. She has one brother and two sisters. One day, she hopes to pursue a career in tattoo artistry. She is excited to have her story appear in this Young Writers Program publication.
**Guillermo Aranda (Yermo)** was born and raised in National City/San Diego, California. He is a co-founder of “Toltecas en Aztlan” (1968), a collection of multi-media Chicano Artist’s. He is also co-founder and the first Administrative Director of “El Centro Cultural de La Raza” (1971-75), a cultural art center focusing on Latino and Indigenous Art forms. At Centro, he initiated the first Chicano Park Murals in San Diego in April of 1973. Chicano Park is now recognized as a city and state historical site. Guillermo is the co-founder of the White Hawk Dancers and White Hawk Indian Council of the Pajaro Valley, a cultural arts organization providing visual and performing arts workshops for youth.

**Jesus Barraza** is an interdisciplinary artist pursuing an MFA in Social Practice and a Masters in Visual Critical Studies. He is co-founder of Dignidad Rebelde, a graphic arts collaborative. Barraza creates prints that visualize struggles for immigration rights, housing, education, and international solidarity. He believes that through this work he is playing a role in keeping the history of graphic art activism alive.

**Eduardo Carrillo** (1937-1997) was a first generation Mexican American artist who came of age during the turbulent social movements of the 1960’s. He contributed to the rising mural movements of the 70’s. His El Grito mural, commissioned by the City of Los Angeles, is located at Placita de Dolores. In 2018 “Eduardo Carrillo: Testament of the Spirit,” a major traveling retrospective of the artist’s paintings, will begin a two-year tour in the U.S.

**Melanie Cervantes (Xicana)** is a San Leandro based cultural worker who co-founded Dignidad Rebelde, a graphic arts collaboration that produces screen prints, political posters, and multimedia projects. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and is in public collections including the Latin American Collection of the Green Library at Stanford and the Library of Congress. She holds a BA in Ethnic Studies from the University of California, Berkeley. Visit her website at www.DignidadRebelde.com.

**Yreina D. Cervantez** grew up near San Diego, CA. She is an American painter, printmaker, muralist, and teacher. Yreina received her MFA from UCLA. Drawing on her cultural heritage her self-portraits explore Chicana identity, her murals depict struggles within the Chicano/a movement. Other areas of interest are Chicana/o Art, and Xicana feminist art and aesthetics. Cervantez is Associate Professor of Chicano/a Studies at the California State University, Northridge.

**Pablo Cristi** was born and raised in Los Angeles. His work is informed by LA’s mural culture, connecting the politics of the canvas to the politics of the street. Cristi is an educator and community or-
ganizer, leading youths in art and mural projects. He earned his Masters of Fine Arts from California College of the Arts, San Francisco.

**Ralph D’Oliveira** is a California artist. He is co-founder of Jaguar Graphics & Murals, based in California’s Monterey Bay area. He has been a muralist for over 40 years and travels worldwide to paint his commissions. He also paints on canvas with a recent series depicting agricultural landscapes and vegetable boxes.

**Juan R. Fuentes** is a graduate of San Francisco State University. He taught at the Mission Campus/City College SF, the California College of the Arts in Oakland, and in the San Francisco Art Institute’s print department. His studio, Pajaro Editions, is part of Consejo Grafico, a national collective of Latino print studios. His prints and posters reside in various institutions and museums including the Mexican Museum, the National Museum of American Art, and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. among others.

**Daniel Galvez** was born in Calexico, California in 1953 and grew up in Sacramento. He received a BFA in 1975 from California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland and an MA in Painting in 1979 from SF State. He has created murals and site-specific commissions for government buildings, museums, libraries and schools.

**Lorraine García-Nakata**’s artwork tends to be large scale and has been exhibited on a local, regional, national, and international level. She enjoys drawing, painting, mixed media, printmaking, installation work, and sculpture. Since 1974, she has been a member of the world-renowned Chicano artist collective, Royal Chicano Air Force (RCAF), and in 2003, the California Arts Council awarded her a Visual Arts Fellowship. She has been appointed to the San Francisco Arts Commission to explore the creation of a National Museum of the American Latino, and is currently Advisor to the San Francisco Latino Historical Society.

The career of **Judithe Hernández**, acclaimed muralist and founding member of the Chicano art movement, has spanned monumental murals to works on paper. Her work is in collections at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the National Museum of Mexican Art, and the Museum of Latin American Art, among others.

Visual artist and writer **Carlos Jackson** was born and raised in Los Angeles. He attended UC Davis where he received his B.S. in Community and Regional Development and his MFA in Art. He currently serves as an Associate Professor and Chair of Chicana/o Studies at UC Davis.

**Carmen León** was born in San Francisco of Mexican and Peruvian descent. A significant time in her life was studying art in Paris and, later, gradu-
ating from UCSC. The last 30 years she has taught art and continues to paint and sculpt.

Jose Lozano was born in Los Angeles. He spent his childhood in Juarez, Mexico and his adolescence in Fullerton, California. He received an MFA from CSUF. As a visual artist, Lozano has exhibited extensively in Los Angeles and other venues in this country and abroad. An educator, he has published two children’s books: Once Around The Block and Little Chanclas. Lozano also did the artwork—Metro Loteria—for the Metro Expo Line at the Exposition and La Brea station in L.A.

Dio Mendoza (Hector) was born in Uruapan Michoacan. He has lived in the US since the the age of 12. He earned his bachelors degree from the California College of Art in Oakland CA and received a Masters in Fine Art from Yale University. He is currently Professor of Art at CSUMB. Mentorship has played a major role in his art practice.

Amalia Mesa-Bains is an educator, artist and cultural critic. Her art works, primarily interpretations of traditional Chicano altars, reflect both contemporary formal terms and Chicano culture and history. Dr. Mesa-Bains is a nationally known lecturer on Chicano and Latino art. She is a Professor emerita at CSUMB and a MacArthur fellow.

Victor Ochoa is an activist, painter and master muralist. He has painted over 100 murals and is considered one of the pioneers of San Diego’s Chicano art movement. He is one of the original activists at San Diego’s Chicano Park and a co-founder of Centro Cultural de la Raza in Balboa Park. Ochoa is a teacher of art and Chicano heritage.

Cruz Ortiz Zamarron was born in Texas and is a California-based artist who works in painting, murals, sculpture and computer-generated imagery. His art uses scenes from everyday life with an eye toward irony, humor and the realities of living and dying. He graduated from the University of California at Santa Cruz.

Viviana Paredes was born in San Jose and lives and works in San Francisco. In her work, she draws from a rich cultural mix of images and practices that reflect social and environmental interests and ideas. Her art is inspired by complex global dynamics that transcend borders and offer potential for cultural interconnectedness. Visit her website at www.vivianaparedes.com

Edward Ramirez’s cultural heritage is Salvadorian. He grew up in Los Angeles where he started doing photography when he was 13. He documented the rough LA neighborhood he grew up in and found when behind the camera he was able to
freely navigate through his community safely. He received his BA from UC, Santa Cruz.

**Frank (Pancho) Rodriguez** began painting watercolor landscapes at the age of six. Early recognition led the young artist to pursue a broad spectrum of arts including abstract acrylic painting, music, and theatre. Pancho participated in a mural project aboard a Cuban freighter and is a founding member of Los Californios. He is a retired High School Principal and continues to frequently exhibit.

**Ivan Rubio** was born in Vallejo, CA. His parents immigrated from Jalisco, Mexico. He studied at the Academy of Art College in San Francisco graduating as an artist and illustrator. The imagery for his artwork grew out of observing his parents working in the fields and growing up in a rough neighborhood in Vallejo.

**Manuel Santana** is a Mexican American artist who painted, worked in ceramics and made prints. He went to East Los Angeles Junior College and Otis Art Institute on scholarship. He studied printmaking techniques in Mexico. He believed that artists could make a difference in the world and he was involved in the civil rights movements in the fields of Salinas to the halls of Washington DC.

**Linda Vallejo** consolidates multiple, international influences gained from a life of study and travel throughout Europe, the United States and Mexico to create work that investigates contemporary cultural and political issues. Solo exhibitions include the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center in Los Angeles, and the Soto Clemente Velez Cultural Center in New York, among others. Visit her website at http://www.lindavallejo.com

**Xavier Viramontes** was born in Richmond, CA. His parents emigrated from Mexico but later became citizens. Viramontes earned his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and an MA in printmaking from S.F. State University. He taught printmaking at S.F. City College. He has exhibited throughout the world. His work is in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian Institute and other prominent museums.
Hablamos Juntos came about through the skilled and generous nature of Betsy Andersen. As the Executive Director of Museo Eduardo Carrillo, Betsy seeks alliances and builds relationships in ways that extend and enhance the significance of Latin@ art. Her patient tenacity in moving the project forward was a delight.

Pajaro Valley Arts was essential in providing some of the artwork within these pages. Arlene Gotshalk maintained a supportive and steady resolve throughout the process.

Because Hablamos Juntos also involved the creation of posters featuring the artwork and a sentence or two from each of the students’ writing, we are grateful for the grant from the Arts Council Santa Cruz County which allowed us to produce both the book and the posters. Additional thanks go to the City of Santa Cruz for contributing to the project and Amalia Mesa-Bains for contributing the insightful foreword.

Artist Guillermo “Yermo” Aranda spent a day talking to students about the journey his life took on the way to becoming an artist. We are truly grateful that he made the time to connect to the students and give them the opportunity to see how someone was able to work through difficult times and become a patient and compassionate leader.

As always, our Writing Project Assistants were crucial to the writing. They worked with Renaissance High students twice a week for eight weeks, developing relationships, encouraging student voices, and contributing whole-heartedly to the project’s final celebration. Mil gracias to Brian Goulart, Lealani Manuta, Yesenia Matías-Chavez, Debra Niemira, Bonnie Ott, Kiana Pineda, and Victoria Rader. They are true champions. Special mention needs to be made of Mariah Goncharoff: in her role as Volunteer Coordinator Mariah consistently supported not only the volunteers but the Young Writers Program with her smart and enthusiastic professional verve. She is a delight.

Teacher Lynn Clausen took a courageous leap with this project, gamely treading into unfamiliar territory as she navigated students’ relationship with the artwork and their writing process. We’re grateful to her for seeing it through.

And as always, the students who braved putting their experiences and thoughts on paper are to be congratulated. As Leilani and Kalen wrote in the introduction, it was challenging putting their thoughts to paper since what they were writing was so personal. In the end, they triumphed and in so doing, have connected with the world.

—Julia Chiapella
Director, Young Writers Program
BECOME A WRITING PROJECT ASSISTANT

Our Writing Project Assistants are the backbone of the Young Writers Program! Working with small groups of students, WPAs focus on the elements of good writing, encouraging the writer’s voice to flourish. Working as a Writing Project Assistant is a rewarding opportunity to encourage students to define their thinking through writing.

Here are the essential bits about Writing Project Assistants (WPAs) and projects:

- Writing Project Assistants work in the classroom on projects directed by the teacher.
- Projects generally run from four to eight weeks.
- WPAs are fingerprinted and trained prior to being in the classroom.
- Training sessions are held throughout the year and provide strategies and skills for many aspects of writing, student behaviors, and skills.

- We ask for a commitment of at least 2 hours a week for the duration of a classroom project. Establishing trust and consistency with students is important to their success!

OTHER WAYS TO VOLUNTEER

But being in the classroom isn’t the only way you can volunteer. If you have any of the following skills or interests, we’d love your help with the program.

- Editing
- Graphic design
- Fundraising
- Event Planning

VISIT
youngwritersprogram.santacruzwrites.org
FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO PURCHASE BOOKS
The *Hablamos Juntos* project was made possible by a grant from **The Arts Council Santa Cruz County**.
This project caught us by surprise because we thought it would just be another school assignment. We didn’t realize it would be put into a book. It was more than we expected.
—Renaissance High Students

Seeing Latino images that deal with personal themes, issues of immigration and labor, as well as memories of community life, opens the door for youth to reflect on their own lives.
—Dr. Amalia Mesa-Bains, professor emerita at California State University Monterey Bay