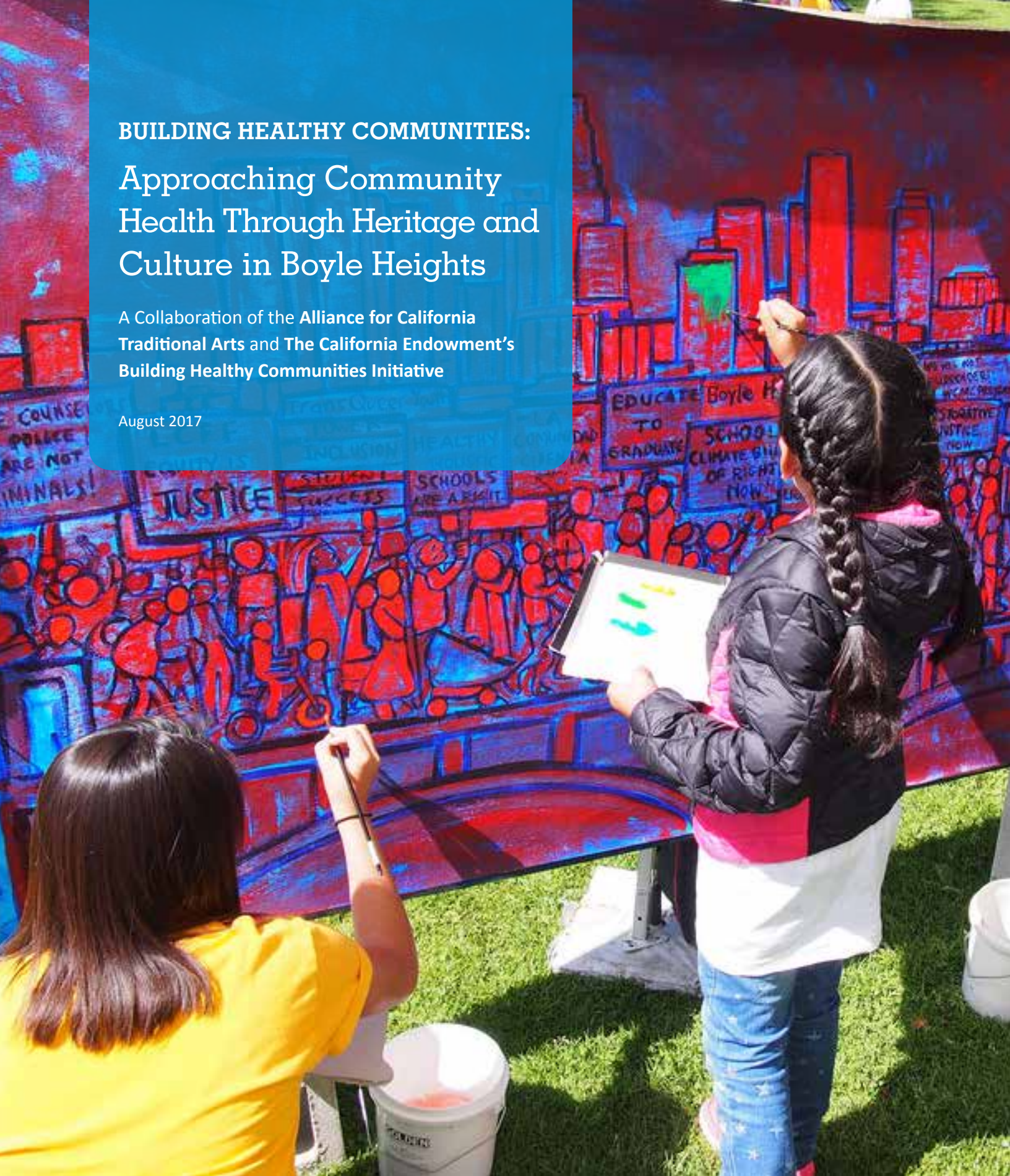


# BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES: Approaching Community Health Through Heritage and Culture in Boyle Heights

A Collaboration of the Alliance for California  
Traditional Arts and The California Endowment's  
Building Healthy Communities Initiative

August 2017



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## About this report

This report is one in a series of occasional papers produced by the Alliance for California Traditional Arts and The California Endowment. This series explores connections between traditional arts and cultural practices and community well being as well as social change processes. This case study examines the Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project from 2011 through the Fall of 2015 in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles. Published August 2017.

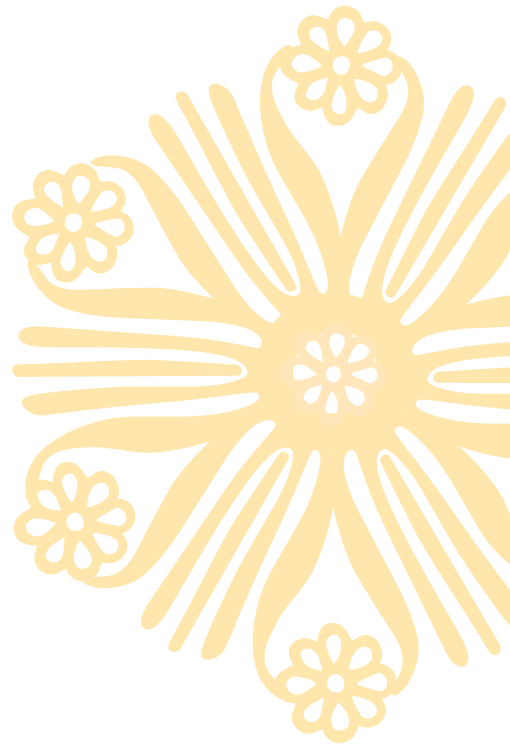


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**Cover photo:** Mural workshop participants, led by local artist Jose Ramirez, paint imagery depicting a community protest across the First Street Bridge into downtown L.A. around local schools campaign themes (“schools not prisons;” “restorative justice now;” “food + bev justice.”)

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# Introduction

**W**hile facing daunting circumstances and challenges as a result of historic and systemic inequities, low-income communities are more than their reported deficits. These communities are also often centers of resilience buoyed by cultural assets—people, places, heritage, traditions, creativity, ingenuity, and soul—that can be cornerstones for community improvement and advancement. Sadly, and too frequently, strategies intended to rebuild and improve neighborhoods disregard the very components of a community that enable people, even in dire circumstances, to live meaningful lives with joy and dignity. Absent consideration of these essential characteristics, strategies to help lift, empower and transform a community in ways that benefit existing residents are woefully inadequate.

With a common interest in better understanding how heritage-based arts and cultural practices can be interpreted as community assets and how those assets can be deployed in support of equitable social change, The California Endowment (TCE) provided the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA) with resources to work with TCE staff and residents in selected sites in TCE's Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative. Work funded by TCE included ACTA-supported community cultural asset mapping, planning for art-based initiatives that advanced BHC goals, execution of those initiatives and documentation and analysis. All of this activity comprised the Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project (ECAPP).

Intended for anyone interested in better understanding how heritage-based arts practices can contribute to community empowerment, comprehensive neighborhood revitalization and better health outcomes, this case study examines the Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project from 2011 through the Fall of 2015 in Boyle Heights, a vibrant neighborhood in Los Angeles, full of challenges, assets and opportunities. More specifically, the case study examines the various phases of the project, from the identification and celebration of cultural assets to the use of selected cultural assets in support of three campaigns that Boyle Heights residents determined as priorities for the community: (a) Health Happens with Prevention focused on increasing access to healthcare and immigrant rights, which addresses the needs of undocumented immigrants not covered through the Affordable Care Act;  
*(continued)*

## KEY TERMS

**Alliance for California Traditional Arts** provides advocacy, resources, and connections for folk and traditional artists. By supporting folk and traditional artists, ACTA helps connect people with their heritage and helps promote the social health, cultural continuity, and diversity of California.

**The California Endowment** is a private foundation whose mission is to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians.

**Building Healthy Communities (BHC)** is an initiative of The California Endowment focused on working on a local scale to create broad, statewide impact that improves conditions and health outcomes in low-income communities. Currently, Building Healthy Communities operates in 14 sites representing California's rich diversity. One of these sites is Boyle Heights, the neighborhood that is the focus of this report.

The **BHC Boyle Heights Hub (The Hub)** is the group of individuals from local community-based organizations who come together to guide the BHC effort in Boyle Heights. The California Endowment provides full funding for Hub staff including a communications coordinator, a learning and evaluation coordinator and a project coordinator. The Hub also has a steering committee that has voting authority and guides key decisions, engages in Hub planning, and strategic direction setting, and resolves issues that surface within the Hub.

**Workgroups** are formed by representatives of partner organizations working on three specific BHC campaigns: Health Happens in Schools, Health Happens with Prevention, Health Happens in Neighborhoods. Work on specific campaigns is shared through Hub Assemblies.

A **General Assembly** is comprised of all BHC partner organizations and their respective members. During these assemblies work on all three campaigns is shared and addressed.

Reference: <http://www.calendow.org/places/>

## Introduction (continued)

(b) Health Happens in Neighborhoods focused on the legalization of street vending, which seeks to create economic development opportunities for families and increase access to food in low-income parts of the city; and (c) Health Happens in Schools focused on improving school climate<sup>1</sup>, which seeks to advocate at city and county levels for policy change to shift dollars from suppression of school violence to a focus and greater resources for prevention through youth/ family programs, mentoring and enrichment programs.

The authors' observations of ECAPP and participation in the project along with interviews and focus group discussions with BHC staff, volunteers and consultants as well as regular input from ACTA staff provide the basis for this report. Participants in focus group discussions and interviews as well as ACTA staff are listed in Appendix A.

This case study also draws from a previous internal report examining four sites involved in the Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project.<sup>2</sup>

Artist **Ofelia Esparza** and her daughter **Rosanna Esparza Ahrens** led the creation of an altar commemorating the Boyle Heights community during *SaludArte*, a cultural and arts festival supported, in part, through ECAPP.



# Boyle Heights Demographics

Boyle Heights is a densely populated neighborhood east of Downtown Los Angeles. The Boyle Heights BHC area encompasses a population of about 90,000 residents, of which more than 93 percent are of Latino/Hispanic descent. However, the neighborhood also has a celebrated history as an ethnically diverse place comprised of immigrants from Japan, England, Germany, Russia, Armenia and also from the eastern, southern and southwestern United States<sup>3</sup>. Boyle Heights is a low-income neighborhood; 30 percent of people live in poverty and the median household income is \$32,377 in comparison to Los Angeles city's 22 percent poverty rate and a median household income of \$49,497<sup>4</sup>. While the neighborhood faces and has received some media and public attention for its significant challenges—including elevated high school dropout rates, gang and domestic violence, environmental hazards and in recent times, real estate speculation that potentially threatens affordability—it also has substantial assets. Boyle Heights has strong community organizations, active elected officials, several infrastructure improvements underway, a vibrant cultural life and strong community identity fueled by cultural entrepreneurs including street vendors and independent businesses as well as activist artists, tradition bearers and cultural organizations.



## POPULATION

≈ **90,000**

- More than **93%** Latino/Hispanic descent
- Historically composed of immigrants from: Japan, England, Germany, Russia, Armenia and other parts of the US

## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

**\$32,377**

in City of Los Angeles

**\$49,497**

## PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY

**30%**

in City of Los Angeles

**22%**

# Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project in Boyle Heights

The Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project in Boyle Heights started through an in-person consultative process between the Alliance for California Traditional Arts and the BHC Boyle Heights Hub. Building on ACTA's existent knowledge of the area and with further information about BHC goals, stage of work and Hub organizations involved, a small task force was formed. Guided by ACTA, the Engaging Cultural Treasures task force, was comprised of key representatives from Hub organizations who were aware of the neighborhood's cultural assets and legacy, and committed to making sure arts and culture were more fully integrated into BHC's comprehensive work.

## PARTICIPATORY CULTURAL ASSET MAPPING

Working closely with the task force and building on existing knowledge of Boyle Heights, ACTA employed its Participatory Cultural Asset Mapping method, which involves on-the-ground work with community stakeholders to identify cultural assets and probe the meaning and value of those assets. Specifically, ACTA held two training sessions to prepare volunteers for identifying and documenting cultural assets. Initially, each volunteer was asked to conduct at least two interviews and attend follow-up meetings to report on progress. Given volunteers' other demands and some logistical challenges, ACTA implemented an alternative strategy. Volunteers, instead, administered short questionnaires at strategic community spaces—such as El Mercadito, an indoor shopping and meeting space that houses numerous vendors of Mexican foods and goods; Mariachi Plaza, a local outdoor meeting space where local Mariachi musicians gather in hopes of being hired (resembling Mexico City's Plaza Garibaldi); Roosevelt High School, a local Boyle Heights high school; CaminArte, an inter-generational art gathering that takes place at Mariachi Plaza on a monthly basis—and at special events including the Dolores Mission Women's Conference and the BHC General Assembly. In total, nearly 100 cultural assets or cultural treasures were recognized.

ACTA believes that Participatory Cultural Asset Mapping is an important dimension of BHC work in Boyle Heights because in uncovering and validating culturally specific assets, individual and collective skills, competencies and traditions or customs surface and often can serve as the foundation for sustainable solutions that contribute to community health.

The Participatory Cultural Asset Mapping method is based on the recognition that some of the most important aspects of human culture are often contained in intangible knowledge systems that are sometimes difficult to grasp. The process helps to transform the intangible into a more tangible medium. When executed in low-income and historically marginalized communities, Participatory Cultural Asset Mapping helps represent an often-unrepresented



Dr. Elena Esparza making a community spiritual offering at the *ActivArte* event about “Detouring Displacement” of neighborhood residents due to gentrification. “Aqui Estamos Y No Nos Vamos/ We Are Here and We Are Not Going [Away].”

## Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project in Boyle Heights (continued)

world-view and facilitates the creation of a more accurate representation of a community's past and present. This depth of understanding is an important prerequisite to sound planning and community participation for change.

To deepen the cultural inventory in Boyle Heights, ACTA partnered with Roosevelt High School College of New Media and Technology (CNMT) and the 826 LA Project to help 10<sup>th</sup> grade history students write about local cultural treasures. Participating students wrote short pieces about 60 cultural treasures. The written pieces were compiled in a book titled *La Vida Diferente: Celebrating Boyle Heights Community Treasures* with a foreword written by Boyle Heights historian Dr. George J. Sanchez and funded by TCE. A special book release event was held at Casa 0101, a local arts organizations, on November 12, 2013, and was attended by many of the young authors and their families. Also in attendance were many Boyle Heights residents who were identified as cultural treasures and are featured in the book. Students read excerpts from their written pieces.

Reflecting on the cultural asset identification process, some participants noted that the concept of a "cultural asset" or "cultural treasure" was not always immediately easy to grasp. Sometimes, people, things, places and experiences that are identified as cultural assets or treasures have previously been taken for granted, unknown, or not initially understood as valuable because they may stray from commercial culture or the norms of the dominant culture in power. For example, in Boyle Heights, street vendors, who generally are regarded as involved in marginal low-earning economic activity without official or legal recognition, were identified as assets because they take pride in the traditional and also innovative food they offer, provide needed goods and services, enliven street culture and contribute to the fabric and feel of belonging and home.

### CELEBRATION OF CULTURAL ASSETS

Having completed the cultural asset mapping process, the Boyle Heights Task Force together with ACTA organized a multi-generational event at Self-Help Graphics to celebrate the cultural legacy of the Boyle Heights community. Self-Help Graphics is a local community arts center that served as an arts incubation space during the Chicano Movement during the 1970's and continues to house and support local artists and cultural events. The event (<http://tinyurl.com/actavid1>), held on a sunny July afternoon in 2012, was attended by over 200 participants and featured a combination of performances

### What are cultural assets or "cultural treasures," as they are often called in ECAPP?

Cultural assets are places, events, customs, community members and groups or organizations identified by community residents and other stakeholders as meaningful key elements with aesthetic and/or historic value that help establish community identity and a shared sense of belonging. In Boyle Heights, nearly 100 cultural treasures were identified. To document the Boyle Heights Participatory Cultural Assets Mapping Process further, ACTA partnered with Healthy City, to develop a new web-based mapping database featuring the information about the identified cultural assets: <http://bit.ly/1wRDkTM>. Healthy City is an online platform that provides mapping tools to help organizations and communities advance social change.



Son Jarocho workshop participants at Cultural Treasures celebration facilitated by master musician, **Cesar Castro** at Self-Help Graphic and Art in Boyle Heights.



## Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project in Boyle Heights (continued)

including Mexican boleros or ballads, Chicano spoken word, a youth theater workshop and videos highlighting cultural treasures. The event also had flower making and printmaking workshops, the sharing of healthy Mexican food prepared by local street vendors and testimonials about the cultural assets identified. The event received support and attendance from the members of numerous local organizations such as the Ovarian Psycos Brigade, a group of women of color committed to bicycling and working to heal the community physically, emotionally, and spiritually by addressing pertinent social issues; writers and the editor of *Brooklyn & Boyle*, a monthly issued publication dedicated to documenting life and arts in Boyle Heights; Self-Help Graphics master printer, Jose Alpuche and others, many of whom were recognized by the community as cultural treasures.

The task force selected several of the cultural treasures identified by the community to be highlighted through video. Local videographer Sara Aguilar conducted the camerawork with ACTA staff providing the interviewing and editing. Videos featured Father Greg Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries, which offers mental health, legal, and employment services to at-risk youth, former gang members, and the recently incarcerated; Ruben Guevara, a singer, songwriter, producer, writer, poet, performance artist, impresario and Ruben and the Jets front man; José Ramirez, artist, author, illustrator, educator, and muralist; Casa 0101, a theater organization which presents theatrical productions, film festivals, other special events, and also offers free and low-cost acting and writing classes; Proyecto Jardín, a collaborative community garden; and Self-Help Graphics, a historically significant Latino arts center and anchor organization for Chicano arts. (All Boyle Heights videos are viewable at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/actavdo/videos>)

The cultural asset celebration in Boyle Heights, was a pause point that allowed the community to stop and reflect, not on the usual narrative about deficit and need, but also on the community's strengths and its resilience. The event, for the task force, served as the joyful culmination of a phase of work and also served as a catalyst, creating a demand for more BHC arts, culture and heritage-related activity. While important as a singular happening, we feel strongly that cultural asset mapping cannot be something that happens only once in a community. At its best it is a recurrent practice that both allows community members to build the skills necessary to re-interpret their community and provides necessary updates to one's understanding of a place as communities change.



Top: Multigenerational traditional Mexican paper flower-making workshop during Cultural Treasures celebration at Self-Help Graphics co-led by **Rosanna Ahrens Esparza** (left) and her mother **Ofelía Esparza**.

Bottom: Boyle Heights youth participants at Hub Assembly during the filming of the “Lights On” music video; a song written in an ECAPP workshop—as a rallying cry for the community to mobilize around the new local control funding formula to change local school budget policies

### CONNECTING CULTURAL ASSETS TO BHC WORK

Following the cultural asset mapping process and the celebration of assets, the task force and ACTA continued to meet regularly to explore a variety of options for creating opportunities to connect the assets identified to BHC work. During the first intensive planning meeting facilitated by ACTA at Casa 0101, the task force reviewed the cultural assets identified and brainstormed a wide range of programs and activities that could connect cultural assets to BHC goals. Ideas that surfaced included diverse programmatic formats ranging from one-day community-wide events to recurrent programming for targeted populations. In the months that followed many shorter planning meetings were held. This planning process, while vigorous and sustained, proved to be somewhat challenging given that local campaigns focused on advancing BHC priorities were being formulated by the three local BHC workgroups and priorities were in flux. In Fall of 2013, the Boyle Heights Task Force decided that additional projects and focused activity would entail organizing a series of participatory arts workshops over several weeks and a daylong culminating event at a local venue. Ultimately, ACTA and the task force designed and executed three 10-week arts workshops and a culminating event called SaludArte—an arts-health event in collaboration with the entire Boyle Heights BHC collaborative. For this activity, ACTA guided the design and proposal development resulting in a grant to East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC), a local community development corporation focused on housing, social services and a range of other community priorities. The design involved work towards advancing three principal BHC campaigns: (a) Access to Healthcare and Immigrant Rights, (b) Legalization of Street Vending and (c) Improving School Climate at local schools. Because the BHC work was framed as policy campaigns, the inclination of TCE and the Task Force was initially to design the arts workshops to support policy campaigns primarily through creative messaging and increased resident engagement. ACTA was reservedly pushing for a more open-ended approach to the workshops taking into consideration the range of cultural assets—artists and tradition bearers, specifically—that might be enlisted to make important contributions.



Local artist **Omar Ramirez** (center, wearing tie) facilitating a Restorative Justice/Youth Radio workshop with Mendez High School students at Casa del Mexicano in Boyle Heights.

## Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project in Boyle Heights (continued)

### BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES ARTS AND CULTURE WORKSHOPS

For the workshop series, ACTA contracted three master artists to facilitate arts and cultural workshops and tasked them with incorporating Boyle Heights BHC campaign themes into their curriculum. ACTA's work included carefully considering the match between the BHC's goals and the artist, the art form, and location of workshops. It also required screening carefully for artists that had the appropriate experience, expertise and nimbleness necessary when working in low-income community settings with families that are often under many pressures. Additionally, ACTA also worked carefully to help the artists navigate BHC processes and information.

The workshop series kicked off with a Son Jarocho/Fandango<sup>5</sup> music workshop, featuring regional folk music of Veracruz, Mexico—a type of music that incorporates improvisational development of lyrics, a call and response singing style, strumming eight stringed guitars called *jaranas* and dancing on a raised wooden platform called a *tarima* which produces a percussive resonance. In this **workshop** (<https://youtu.be/vcZE3xJhbwl?t=3m16s>), master artist Cesar Castro engaged participants in dialogue that led to the development of *versos* or musical verses capturing the struggles of local street vendors to support the work of the group charged with leadership on the Legalization of Street Vending, otherwise known as the **Neighborhoods Workgroup** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcZE3xJhbwl&t=325s>). Over 30 new verses were created, many of which were featured in a book of verses in East Los Angeles Community Corporations' *Posada* (Mexican holiday celebration on the nine nights before Christmas), where over 50 people participated in a procession from Cesar Chávez and Breed Streets to Casa del Mexicano, a historic Boyle Heights building now managed by the East Los Angeles Community Corporation. Embedded in collectively singing these verses in a call and response fashion is a reinforcement of values (cultural, social, political) and a deeper understanding and appreciation for street vending as something that is culturally important and essential to the general health of the Boyle Heights community. The workshops included a group ranging in age from 7 to 70. In a second round of workshops, Castro facilitated a similar process that shifted their focus to needs of the Prevention Workgroup, the group tasked with leadership on Access to Health Care and Immigrant Rights. *Versos* or musical verses during this second series focused on themes related to the need for increasing health care access to the remaining uninsured residents of the Boyle Heights community. Son Jarocho/Fandango classes were facilitated at Casa del Mexicano.

Reflecting on the songwriting workshops, Castro noted that in addition to the critical and thoughtful treatment of policy themes through the songwriting process, it was important for him to stay attuned to the personal development of workshop participants. He noted that before the policy issues could be



Son Jarocho music workshop participants supporting East Los Angeles Community Corporations' community posada in support of Los Angeles street vendors.

#### Health-Related Musical Verses:

Colás  
Queridas compañeras  
Les vengo yo a avisar  
Que sin aseguranza  
Yo ya no puedo más

Me duele ya la espalda  
De tanto trabajar  
No tengo aseguranza  
Po's menos Medi-Cal

(English Translation)  
*Dear friends  
I am here to announce  
That without health care  
I can't live without*

*My back hurts now  
Because I work so hard  
I don't have health insurance  
And not even Medi-Cal*

La Guacamaya  
(Health Care Chorus)  
vuela, vuela, vuela  
como sabes tú  
que la vida siempre es buena  
si mantienes la salud

(English Translation)  
*Fly, fly, fly  
Like you know how  
Life is always good  
If you maintain your health*

## Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project in Boyle Heights (continued)

treated through this creative process, many workshop participants had to first become comfortable with instruments, live singing and music making. Developing that comfort level was in and of itself an accomplishment and an empowering experience for an individual who was new to that process. Beyond the messaging and treatment of policy issues, Castro observed personal and group transformations through involvement in creative process—witnessing participants experiencing a deep sense of accomplishment as they progressed through the workshops and had personal as well as collective breakthroughs.

Ofelia Esparza, a Boyle Heights elder, former educator and fifth-generation master altar maker developed a series of altar (personal shrine) creation workshops. Those sessions occurred at Ramona Gardens and the Pico Aliso housing complexes, sites that were selected by the Prevention Workgroup, the group tasked with leadership on the Access to Healthcare and Immigrant Rights campaign. These classes convened local residents of the respective housing complexes and engaged them in facilitated discussion surrounding the health disparities facing their households and their local community. Classes were structured in a way that allowed residents to create an Altar reflecting their personal health challenges and their personal health goals and intentions aimed at improving their lifestyles. Along with several altar installations, they also created a handmade book of Ramona Gardens public housing traditional *remedios* (remedies).

Esparza, through the altar-making workshops, was able to create safe intimate spaces where people (mostly women), many of whom seldom have the time or inclination to reflect on their own needs and health conditions, could do that. They had the opportunity to articulate and share their stories. Creating intellectual and emotional awareness of personal health led to the possibility of deeper commitment to public health issues and a more powerful and compelling re-framing of them. Moreover, the intimacy of the workshops led to personal bonds among participants.

Lastly, Omar Ramirez, a local visual artist, educator, and long-time radio producer, designed and led the Restorative Justice Pilot Radio classes at Espacio 1839, an entity where he has membership. The local community music and book store

Ramona Gardens residents displaying completed community health *altares* or altars at Legacy LA Offices with their instructor, Master Altar-Maker Ofelia Esparza (front row, third from left).



Restorative Justice Pilot Radio students at radio workshop at Espacio 1839, a local community music book store and collective that houses community radio station, Radio Sombra.

## Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project in Boyle Heights (continued)

and collective houses Radio Sombra, an internet radio station showcasing local DJ's, activists and organizers. Ramirez convened 15 students from Roosevelt, Mendez and Youth Build high schools to learn about Restorative Justice principles, strategies, and local organizing efforts focused on increasing the implementation of this methodology within Boyle Heights schools. These classes featured numerous local guests dedicated to increasing resources and support for improving School Climate initiatives in local high schools. Guests featured during classes included representatives from local organizations such as Inner City Struggle (an organization that works with youth, families and community residents to promote safe, healthy and non-violent communities on the Eastside), The California Conference for Equality and Justice (a human relations organization dedicated to confronting bias, bigotry and racism through education, conflict resolution and advocacy), The Labor and Community Strategy Center (a multiracial anticorporate “think tank/act tank” and national school for organizers), and Homeboy Industries (an organization that provides hope, training, and support to formerly gang-involved and previously incarcerated men and women). Students in the program were tasked with interviewing guest speakers using radio equipment and learned about radio etiquette, diverse research and editorial methods and ultimately produced radio segments for airing. Participants also attended special Los Angeles Unified School District Board sessions on the subject of Restorative Justice and the School Climate Bill of Rights<sup>6</sup>. Using excerpts from the studio sessions and field interviews, participants created four 10-minute radio shows that provide a more holistic understanding of Restorative Justice and raise awareness of BHC's campaign focused on this topic.

Overall, the workshops provided participants with deep and rich opportunities for personal and collective exploration and connection to BHC work. Because the workshops were time intensive and required a significant commitment from participants, they were not always the best fit for all Boyle Heights residents, but for those that did commit and participate, they felt the classes were extremely rewarding.

The connection between the workshops and BHC campaigns was not always instant. One observation was that the creative process is messy, not linear and it does not always align perfectly with the calendar and culture of BHC work. The workshops had many inter-related dimensions that all required tending—getting participants comfortable with the art form; creating safe space where candidness, experimentation and failure was possible and understood as a critical element of progress; treating campaign themes in an informed and thoughtful way and making sure the work was relevant to and properly framed in relation to BHC goals.



*SaludArte* was a day-long arts, culture, and health festival held at Boyle Heights' Hollenbeck Park in 2014. The festival encouraged over 300 participants to engage in interactive arts workshops that stimulated advocacy toward community concerns, such as a mural workshop examining wellness for the neighborhood's youth.

## Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project in Boyle Heights (continued)

Respondents noted in a few instances that, despite ACTA's efforts and contact with BHC staff and given the complexity and evolution of the issues addressed through BHC, more information and opportunities to engage the issues prior to the workshops would have been helpful. Some respondents also noted the importance of understanding what the workshops offered beyond direct impact on policy issues, primarily in terms of messaging. They called attention to the need to also recognize and emphasize the importance of personal transformation and the deliberative process of participants arriving at their own understanding of community and policy issues through exploration of personal feelings and experiences as revealed in creative process.



Collective songwriting workshop at *SaludArte* festival facilitated by local band, *Quetzal*, members.

### **CULMINATING EVENT: SALUDARTE**

To culminate the workshop series, the task force, Boyle Heights BHC and ACTA designed and coordinated *SaludArte*, a day-long arts, culture and health festival in April of 2014. *SaludArte* attracted more than 300 people including Boyle Heights residents, partner organizations, and their respective members at Hollenbeck Park. The event featured 15 different arts and cultural workshops that included: song creation, papier maché, yoga, Afro-Colombian drumming, and Japanese Obon dance.<sup>7</sup> *SaludArte* allowed participants to engage in discussions about pressing Boyle Heights BHC Campaigns while learning an art/cultural practice that could be instrumental in raising awareness or in connecting community members in advocacy purposes. For example, a conversation about advocacy for youth development was paired with a mural making arts workshop, which led to the creation of a mural featuring the ideas and creativity of Boyle Heights Youth at *SaludArte*. Another workshop allowed event participants to engage in creating different papier maché forms, including hearts, illustrating a connection between creativity and wellness. During the workshop, participants discussed BHC efforts focused on bringing health access to the remaining uninsured locally and across the state. The remaining 13 workshops created similar spaces that paired up an art/cultural practice with local BHC Policy campaigns.

In addition to the treatment of policy themes, creative messaging and expansion of resident engagement that were BHC's priorities, another outcome of this work and this particular event has to do with people's exposure to new forms of expression and movement as well as the recognition that civic action could be joyful and fun—something they aspired to do again, even with their families. (A video compilation of the three workshops and *SaludArte* event can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcZE3xJhbwl>.)



### NEW FORMS OF BOYLE HEIGHTS BHC ARTS AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT: ACTIVARTE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITY IN HUB ASSEMBLIES

In the summer of 2014, ACTA, together with the task force, continued new iterations of cultural work focused on propelling the efforts of the BHC workgroups, the collaborative as a whole, and the residents associated with collaborative organizations taking action around BHC campaigns. The design of this new project was informed through the experiences and observations collected through the previous cycles of work. Some of the most notable observations on BHC's part called for the design of the cultural work to be even more seamlessly aligned with messaging the work of the respective Boyle Heights BHC workgroups. To address this, ACTA designed two cultural activity formats to integrate local arts and cultural practices. The first was a series of three cultural interventions called *ActivArte* focused on current workgroup campaigns. The second was a collaboration focused on integrating arts and culture into the Hub Assemblies, yearly assemblies coordinated by each campaign workgroup focused on uplifting the larger framework of each campaign.

#### **ActivArte**

The series of *ActivArte* interventions kicked off in September 2014 in alignment with the BHC-Boyle Heights Neighborhoods workgroup focused on youth empowerment and anti-displacement initiatives, and was called “*ActivArte Detouring Displacement: Community-Building con Arte, Cultura y Educación.*” The *ActivArte* cultural interventions brought together several local artists, many of whom had been identified as cultural treasures in earlier stages of this work. These artists joined together with Latino MacArthur Fellows or “genius grant” award winners, known as Los Macarturos, who were in Los Angeles for a meeting organized by Radio Bilingue, the national Spanish language public radio network. The two groups gathered to design and facilitate a range of cultural activity and workshops on Mariachi Plaza in Boyle Heights.

Ofelia Esparza, along with her daughters Rosanna Esparza Ahrens and Elena Esparza facilitated an outdoor altar workshop addressing issues of place and belonging in the Boyle Heights community. Elisa Garcia, a member of the Espacio 1839 collective facilitated a reading and discussion of *The House on Mango Street*, written by Sandra Cisneros, a MacArthur fellow. Omar Ramirez facilitated a silkscreen workshop dedicated to the impacts of redevelopment in communities of color.<sup>9</sup>



Latino MacArthur Fellows, Los Macarturos with ECAPP organizers (l-r): Guillermo Gómez-Peña; Citlalli Chavez (ACTA); Ruth Behar, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Isela Gracian (ELACC), Joan Abrahamson, Maria Varela, Camilo Vergara and other Fellowship participants.

## Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project in Boyle Heights (continued)

In the Spring of 2015, ACTA coordinated a second ActivArte event titled *Amate y Asegurate* (Love Yourself and Insure Yourself), a health enrollment event focused on supporting the Boyle Heights BHC Prevention Workgroup. For these efforts, ACTA designed workshops that were available to youth while their parents participated in health eligibility screenings at a local church. One workshop featured a collective songwriting exercise facilitated by Martha Gonzalez and Quetzal Flores, members of the Grammy-winning band, *Quetzal*. Participants engaged in dialogue surrounding local health challenges and opportunities. Those ideas were woven into a song that is reflective of residents' personal experiences and insights. (A video of the song created by the workshop participants is available at <https://vimeo.com/120191653>). The second workshop featured master musician, Cesar Castro, who led youth in a Son Jarocho music workshop focused on developing a healthy-lifestyle version of the traditional Son Jarocho song, *La Bamba*. During the third workshop, local graphic artist, Dewey Tafoya led youth in a silk-screening poster workshop in which youth developed posters that featured images and symbols focused on promoting healthy living habits within their communities.

In May 2015, ACTA coordinated a third ActivArte event to support the Hub assembly of Boyle Heights BHC Schools Workgroup. The ActivArte event was planned to coincide with the timing of a critical LAUSD vote surrounding the Local Control Funding formula. ACTA partnered with local band, *Cuicani*, a socially conscious, multiethnic, World-Soul music collective to orchestrate this public cultural intervention. During the action, *Cuicani* performed "Lights On," a song that was composed by local residents, community organizers, and local leaders to draw attention to the need for transparency and accountability within the local control funding formula budget allocation process. Over 80 LAUSD students, community organizers, and campaign supporters attended this public intervention.

Overall, respondents found the ActivArte events to be successful, noting that they were fun and a welcome reprieve from more traditional BHC approaches to campaign work. Some respondents noted that compared to the multi-week art workshops discussed previously, ActivArte events required less of a commitment of time and because of that were more accessible. The trade-off was that, for the most part, the depth of engagement and opportunities for personal development over time were not available to participants in ActivArte events. There was some sentiment that the benefit of ActivArte events is really seized when BHC has effective follow-up with participants. One respondent asked, "What's the plan for sustaining engagement? Whose responsibility is that?" This is an area that was highlighted as warranting additional attention.



Local band Cuicani, a socially conscious, multiethnic, World-Soul music collective, performing "Lights On," a song written through a collective songwriting process at the Los Angeles Unified School District with Boyle Heights youth activists.





### Cultural Activity in Hub Assemblies

ACTA worked closely with Boyle Heights BHC workgroup members and workgroup co-chairs to design arts and cultural workshops as part of the Hub assemblies. Among other workshops that were featured at Hub assembly activities, ACTA coordinated creative songwriting workshops, printmaking workshops, and corrido,<sup>10</sup> or ballad composition workshops. In order to ensure that campaign themes were incorporated into the workshop facilitation process, ACTA convened with artists prior to the workshops to present key campaign issues, workgroup objectives, and other relevant themes, thus enabling the artists' deeper understanding of campaigns.

Providing cultural support to the Hub Assemblies has at times been challenging, as it requires exposing and explaining different organizing and education methodologies to people who may be unfamiliar with arts-based methods and/or not inclined to participate through cultural practices. In one instance, as part of Hub support work, ACTA worked with the Boyle Heights BHC Prevention Workgroup to incorporate two songwriting workshops as part of a Hub assembly at the Boyle Heights Wellness Center, a community space that reopened in 2014 and was the former General Hospital. This new space aims to inspire and empower residents to take control of their health and wellbeing by providing culturally sensitive wellness and prevention services.<sup>11</sup> In the early planning stage of this assembly, there was consensus that the arts would play an instrumental role in attracting more local residents to this center and as part of the vision of providing culturally sensitive programming. Once the planning process unfolded, however, there seemed to be lack of agreement among some workgroup members about the desired outcomes and role the music workshops would serve at the event.

The focus of the arts elements proposed by ACTA staff in conversation with workgroup co-chairs—reinterpretation of rooms in the facility as art spaces with BHC campaign themes and other arts activity to re-interpret the space—began to be questioned by a larger BHC group that was more in favor of focusing on increasing enrollment numbers and disseminating traditional campaign information to participants. Workgroup participants concerned with these priorities began to question the fit of songwriting workshops with BHC enrollment and campaign goals and posited that the arts activity might even be confusing to participants.



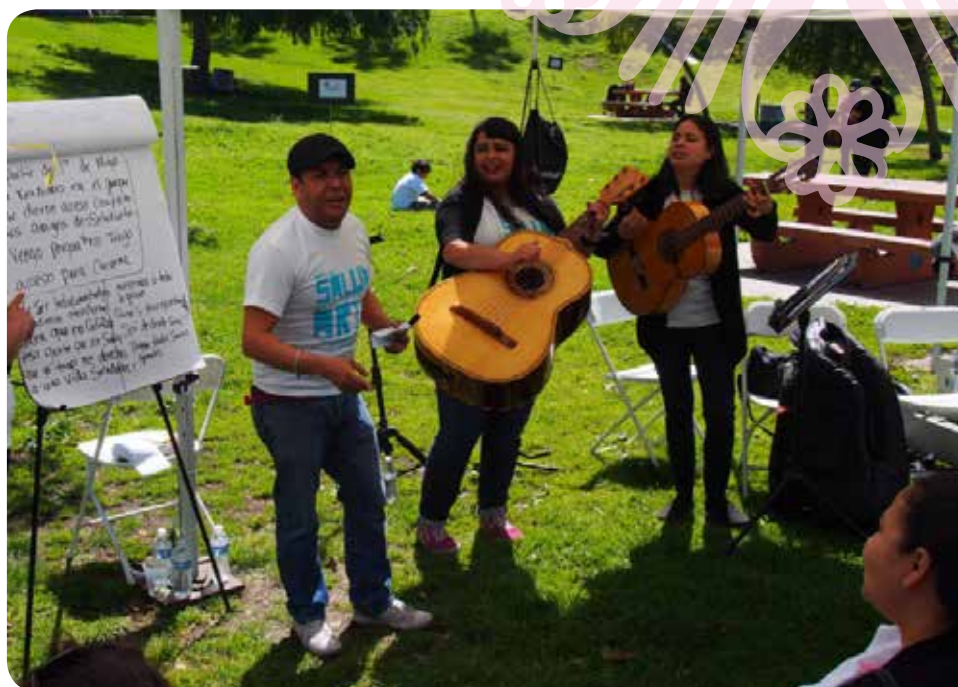
Arts workshop at SaludArte, a day-long arts, culture, and health festival coordinated by ACTA and BHC Hub partners.

## Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project in Boyle Heights (continued)

Overall, as the planning unfolded, the initial intention of ensuring arts and culture was fully integrated into the entire event was lost. In the midst of the planning process, there was a point reached in which some people expressed a preference for the exclusion of the workshops. However, through conversations between ACTA staff and the workgroup chairs, the arts integration elements were reinstated.

On the day of the event, ACTA facilitated the workshops planned in a room separate from the larger event and engaged about 60 participants in two workshops. Workshops were attended by an intergenerational audience who participated in thoughtful discussion, storytelling, and creative expression resulting in the creation of two songs reflecting community narratives about immigration and incarceration. ACTA staff noticed that on the day of the event some workgroup chairs were drawn to the room in which the workshops were happening and they appeared to be impressed by the level of engagement of participants.

At a later evaluation meeting of the workgroup, members expressed approval of the songwriting workshops and reported that several event participants indicated their desire to continue having a creative space as a part of all future BHC events.



Collective songwriting workshop led by musicians Gabriel Gonzales, and members of the band La Victoria, Vanessa Calderon and Mary Alfaro, at the *SaludArte* event

# What Have We Learned?: Implications for Future Programming



The ECAPP in Boyle Heights has allowed for experimentation with a variety of cultural engagement formats through various artistic media, in collaboration with a range of artists and in relation to diverse BHC priorities. The point of a pilot project is to experiment, take risks and learn from the experience. Overall, ECAPP contributed positively to BHC work, but not surprisingly, given any effort to integrate new methods into an existing structure, the road was not always perfectly smooth, and course corrections in the process were important.

Collective Mural, La Puente (the Bridge), led by local artist Jose Ramirez, depicts a community protest across the First Street Bridge into downtown L.A. around local schools campaign themes (“schools not prisons;” “restorative justice now;” “food + bev justice.”).

## IMPACTS OF ECAPP

As noted previously, initially, inherent in BHC’s endorsement of ECAPP programming was a fundamental and primary intention of directly advancing BHC policy campaigns, primarily through enhancing messaging and increasing community participation. While ECAPP programming proved to be beneficial to this end, it also rendered other results that, from our perspective, were no less compelling and, in fact, could be interpreted as important pre-conditions for the kind of deep sustained engagement required for BHC’s long term work.

## What Have We Learned? (continued)

Our research suggests the following:

**① BHC Campaign issues were critically assessed and better understood as a result of both songwriting and radio workshops and this facilitated direct action in support of polices.**

Respondents and artists noted the importance of a deliberative process as they interrogated the issues. This resulted in better-informed and impassioned community members as well as artists. From the altar making workshops, there was certainly the sentiment that participants became more attuned to personal and community health issues and strengthened their resolve to address both. However, reflecting on her experience as the instructor of altar making workshops and how her efforts tied directly to BHC goals, Ofelia Esparza said, “I think it would have been helpful to have people from the health campaign there, at the classes, to explain to people how to enroll in the program alongside with us. Our work did touch upon health but we were trying to reach people culturally and personally. Working together, we could tie everything together. That would be my recommendation.” Another relevant observation from Jennifer Ybarra, the BHC Program Manager in Boyle Heights was that for some people arts activity becomes an important pathway to understand and discuss complex issues. For example, a person may not be inclined to listen to a formal presentation about access to healthcare, but that same person might be open to watching a play about it. It can be an important way in and creates an opportunity for deeper engagement in the future.



Collective songwriting workshop with local Boyle Heights youth.

**② Programming through SaludArte and ActivArte was effective in increasing community participation in BHC, in some instances, especially for youth.**

Task force members were pleased with how arts programming impacted both the numbers of participants as well as their level or depth of engagement. Some respondents said they thought that without arts programming BHC events would be boring. Several said the arts element is enjoyable and people come back because it is enjoyable. David Valdez of the local YMCA and an Engaging Cultural Treasures task force member thought songwriting and video production was truly a breakthrough for youth engagement. He noted that the participants were proud of what they created and the video changed participation at BHC gatherings. The fact that messages could be relayed in non-traditional ways has been extremely important, he thinks. While satisfied that these events can be influential, Valdez and Rosanna Esparza Ahrens, an artist who led workshops in two formats, expressed concern that follow-up with participants as a means to insure sustained engagement is imperative. Workshop participant Learsi Martinez, mused about what the experience could mean to young people: “Through these classes I have been blessed with amazing friends and opportunities. One of those opportunities is to share this music with the high school students I teach. Our youth are in search of an identity, because, for many, their identity has been erased or diminished. Son Jarocho music allows them to return to their roots, to connect to those powerful and strong people that came before them, and to, in turn, be secure in who they are and work for what they wish to see their community to be.”



## What Have We Learned? (continued)

### ③ The articulation and validation of personal stories as expressed through art making processes are a powerful source for personal transformation and connection resulting in greater personal agency and potentially collective efficacy.

Respondents who participated in and/or witnessed the various formats for arts engagement—especially the multi-week workshops—reported feeling supported and more connected in community, and some said they felt they were able to reduce stress through their art practices in communion with other neighborhood residents as well as instructors. In some instances, particularly when pertaining to altar making workshops, respondents connected their participation to a healing process—often physical as well as emotional. Respondents active in music and radio workshops reported feelings of accomplishment and greater personal and collective agency as progress was made in the art form. Maricela Orrala, a Boyle Heights resident and workshop participant, said: “My experience with the Son Jarocho workshops was of high significance for me. It allowed me to participate in several community events in a very fulfilling and fun way. Learning about culture through Son Jarocho has definitely caused a long-term impact in my personal development and social relationships. After the workshops were done I was left with a strong motivation to keep learning, that is why the other students and I continue to get together once a week to keep playing what we learned with Cesar.”



Boyle Heights youth participant at SaludArte.

④ **Heritage-based arts engagement can be an important source of inter-generational activity.** Several respondents recalled that arts activity, particularly during SaludArte and some ActivArte experiences were especially important and popular because people of all ages and whole families could typically participate.

## INSIGHTS ABOUT PROGRAMMING

① **Creating low barriers to initial participation in arts process is essential.** Some participants have experience with art forms presented and can participate fully without hesitation. However, artists reported that for many participants the art making process is a new and sometimes even scary experience. There was also sentiment that it will be important to continue to experiment with multiple formats for engagement that really allows for meeting people where they are. This will require trial and error but the possible benefits are great.

② **Offering multiple modes and degrees for arts engagement is optimal.** Arts activity is one important path to engagement with BHC work. It is a compelling method of engagement for many people, when given a chance. The various formats offered through ECAPP all proved to be useful, but to some extent, in different ways. The multi-week workshops were important deep and moving experiences for people with the determination and/or time available to commit. The one-time pop-up style ActivArte events and Hub Assembly integration efforts offered greater coverage and lower barriers to entry but could not provide the same opportunity

## What Have We Learned? (continued)

for depth of engagement given duration. “When the classes are longer, you can form a community. When the workshops are shorter, the connection is not as deep,” said Martha Escudero, a Boyle Heights Resident and participant in ECAPP arts programming. “I like the workshop series because you begin forming a family...the bonds formed in the classes are deeper, you start building a connection and there is more trust,” said Juana Mena, another participant and resident. That said, the abbreviated pop-up opportunities may be particularly useful to provide the “fun” dimension of BHC work to a large number of participants and helps keep people coming back. Cesar Castro, an artist and instructor suggested that the “pop-up” workshops might be more effective if they occurred with frequency and at a same known community location thus providing residents with consistent opportunities for arts engagement and connection to BHC campaigns.

In all cases, several respondents said they would like to see outreach for arts programming expanded and strengthened.

④ **Don't be afraid of fun.** People want to be involved in activities that are enjoyable and will stop participating if it's not enjoyable. One respondent noted that what BHC seeks to accomplish is serious work, but one should not forget that people need opportunities for joy and levity as well.

④ **If the arts engagement is not carefully framed as part of BHC in an integral way, it is easy for it to be perceived as something extra and even a distraction.**

While only a few, and not with paralyzing results, there were instances when some BHC stakeholders questioned the appropriateness and value of arts programming in BHC work. Arts programming may not be for everyone, but ECAPP did demonstrate that for many people it is an important path to and evidence of all-important engagement.

### ARTISTS, ACTA AND BHC

① **Artists have to be fully informed about BHC priorities, community issues and brought more into the fold of the BHC initiative.** In several instances, artists reported desiring greater connection, better information and more awareness about BHC campaigns and the initiative in general. They also desired a more collaborative relationship with BHC in designing programming. Several artists expressed that they care about the community and the issues BHC is tackling and want to be part of community change in a thoughtful way. They want their work to be more integral—not seen only as a workshop for hire or delivery of a product. Some also expressed that they would like more feedback from BHC about their work as well as opportunities to discuss it.



A young girl proudly displays a print made during the printmaking workshop at *SaludArte*.

## What Have We Learned? (continued)

### 2 Artists need to work with an entity that can help bridge to BHC and understands the creative process and the range of what artists have to offer.

Several artists expressed great appreciation for ACTA's role as a bridge to BHC because they felt that given ACTA's mission and experience, it had a good grasp of the range of ways that artists can engage community and contribute to social change. ACTA also understands the creative process, how artists work and the pace required for some projects. ACTA also has a comfort level with some of the uncertainty inherent in working with artists and getting community members to be comfortable with an arts practice. Moreover, according to Omar Ramirez, ACTA, very importantly, recognizes that a pre-determined output or product might not always be the most valuable contribution at the end of the creative work.

### 3 Artists need opportunities for exchange with other artists involved in similar work to troubleshoot and strengthen their practices.

In the several focus group discussions conducted with artists over the course of ECAPP, they repeatedly affirmed that peer group conversations are extremely helpful and that they would like opportunities to have more of them. Such conversations are important pause points for reflection and course correction. Moreover such a practice would be helpful as new artists begin to participate with BHC and need support in understanding the initiative and their plausible roles in it and they begin to to help address and resolve logistical and practical issues that inevitably come up.

### 4 ACTA's work as an intermediary is important but can sometimes be difficult for others to fully see or comprehend.

ACTA's curatorial role in helping to select, vet and recommend artists that would be good matches for BHC work is essential. Not every artist is suited to work in community contexts and in the ways that are most optimal to advance BHC goals. Reflecting on ACTA's role over the years, some task force members said that while there are many arts organizations in Boyle Heights, ACTA was able to play a particular role in the initiative that others were either not equipped to play or not poised to play, in part, because they are at capacity and performing other functions within community. ACTA provided both additional staff as well as specialized skills, in most instances. Their work to recruit artists and help them navigate BHC, while not always easy, has been essential. For a couple of respondents, there was some initial sentiment that the cultural asset mapping work might have been something that the organizations in Boyle Heights could have accomplished on their own. Upon further reflection these respondents decided that having ACTA leading as a third party was important given



*FandangObon workshop combining fandango arts of son jarocho, music, dance and poetry with Japanese Obon dance and music at the cross-site ACTA convening in which ECAPP collaborators from four BHC sites gathering to share learnings at the Breed Street Shul.*

## What Have We Learned? (continued)

ACTA's expertise and the need for more focused capacity on the task. Artist, Omar Ramirez suggested a way to begin addressing not only a better understanding of ACTA, but of the role of arts and culture in BHC work. He said: "It would be good for ACTA to have an opportunity to train the BHC organizations. I feel that the workshops that ACTA ran that involved organizers were helpful and I feel it was eye opening for organizers. Afterward, talking to organizers, they understood more." Artist Rosanna Ahrens added, "It would be helpful for artists to be a part of the planning step, for us to be at a meeting with ACTA, as a whole, I think that would be more helpful." Another suggestion is to make BHC research reports and other tools that draw connections between arts engagement and individual or community health more available to community members. Since ACTA's initial phase of work in the Boyle Heights region, ACTA has continued to refine its approaches toward cultural engagement and community health to adapt to some of the particular needs and structure of BHC. Currently, ACTA has been invited to continue work in the region and will coordinate and build upon the Activarte and Hub assembly integration activities that were coordinated recently and will continue to coordinate with workgroup chairs and Hub partners to strengthen the connection between the cultural activities and campaign efforts.

⑥ **ACTA's Engaging Cultural Treasures task force has been a crucial player in making ECAPP possible and should continue to function as a focused entity within BHC.** A couple of task force members were concerned with solidifying the task force permanently and even opening it up to include new people who are enthusiastic about and committed to the work—people who might be recruited as a result of their involvement in the workshops and other programming. Reflecting on the years of work together, task force members who have the longest tenure said they appreciated the camaraderie, commitment and collaborative spirit in which the group has worked. The task force members underscored that Boyle Heights has no shortage of cultural organizations, artists and creative people, but without an entity charged with paying attention to this facet of community and marshaling it to support BHC, there is risk of losing an important element of social change in Boyle Heights. As it turned out, while the task force no longer formally meets as a separate entity, BHC Hub members that had been consistent task force members have continued to be vocal and connected. They remain committed to the arts and culture focus through their contributions directly with campaign focused workgroups.



Ofelia Esparza (right) leads a workshop with daughter Rosanna on *altares* at Salud'Arte.



### REVISITING EVALUATION OF ARTS AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION AS A DIMENSION OF BHC

Building Healthy Communities in Boyle Heights is involved in a participatory evaluation process in which key stakeholders, including residents and member organizations, were involved in the development of the current plan and will participate in implementation and dissemination of findings. A key framework for helping to understand how BHC thinks of its work and seeks to assess progress is referred to as the “Drivers of Change.” The Drivers of Change include five elements as described in BHC official literature<sup>12</sup>:

- **People Power:** Across the BHC communities, local residents understand their leadership and change making potential, lifting their voices in public forums, and exercising real power. It is important to emphasize quality of leadership development and organizing over quantity of residents turning out to a meeting.
- **Youth Leadership Development:** Youth development activities prepare youth to take advantage of opportunities, providing spaces for healing, identity development, and engaging in policy advocacy.
- **Enhanced Collaboration & Policy Innovation:** The proposition that achievement of desired outcomes depends to a large degree on the ability of individuals and organizations to collectively set goals, share information, agree on appropriate divisions of labor, work together and hold each other accountable. Tools and mechanisms are made available to facilitate root cause analysis, stakeholder engagement, collaboration, data sharing, and improved local policy analysis and development.
- **Leveraging Partnerships & Resources:** BHC is seeking out new and diverse partners across sectors—from foundations to corporations to policymakers—that can bring new ideas, leverage our investment with new dollars, and/or contribute other resources to multiply the value of TCE’s direct investment many times over.
- **Changing the Narrative:** BHC is seeking to weave a new narrative about community health and prevention; one that recognizes the environmental, political, and economic determinants of health and moves the dominant frame from one focused on personal responsibility and exclusion to one focused on the collective and inclusion. A key component of BHC is developing community residents’ capacity to effectively drive the local dialogue on health away from conventional debates about access to health care and towards including the social determinants: the existence of poverty, racism and hopelessness and the absences of all of the resources and opportunities people and communities need to be healthy, such as good schools, jobs, housing and so on.



Boyle Heights youth participating at Activarte event in front of the Los Angeles Unified School District in coordination with the BHC-Boyle Heights Schools Action Team.

## What Have We Learned? (continued)

For each driver of change, a set of outcomes indicating progress has been identified and BHC remains vigilant to track such indicators. To date, the work related to ECAPP has been lodged within the “changing the narrative” driver given BHC’s initial priority for arts programming to advance messaging and increase community engagement in that process. Our assessment, the assessment of task force members and artists as well as increasingly the assessment of the BHC Program Manager is that the work of ECAPP is actually threaded through several of the drivers of change. Moreover, we think that the definitions of the drivers of change, in some instances, might even be expanded taking into consideration what we are learning about the roles of ECAPP work in BHC.

We see the impacts of ECAPP clearly related to three of the drivers: People Power, Youth Leadership Development, and, of course, Changing the Narrative. ECAPP programming has contributed to People Power in that participants in arts programming have experienced increased expanded agency—either as a result of being identified and celebrated as a cultural asset or through exhibiting progress towards the mastery of a new skill. Certainly, participation in some workshops and use of the art and tools created through the workshops have resulted in people lifting their voices and speaking truth to power as in the case of the Lights On song and videos as well as the radio interviews focused on restorative justice. A particularly poignant example of ECAPP programming contributing to people power has to do with Caridad Vasquez, a street vendor who, despite the informal nature of her small business, was identified as a cultural treasure for her contributions to community vis a vis the delicious and nutritious food she prepares and sells. Early in ECAPP, community members participated in writing a song that was a tribute to street vendors. She reflected on her experience, saying: “When I am valued, when I feel like I am worthy, I feel I deserve more. Only then do I demand and expect more.” This feeling of being appreciated was not only beneficial for her on a personal level; it also propelled her to become more active and involved in BHC.

In terms of youth leadership development, there is evidence that some of the arts programming has been especially effective in addressing this. David Valdez, a member of the task force and leader at the YMCA, a collaborative member, is adamant that the music and video production opportunities made available to young people have been tremendously important in their leadership development and activism. He said they feel pride and ownership of the video they created and they have made an important contribution. Participant comments about arts programming offering important opportunities for whole family and cross-generational participation also begins to speak to the leadership and development value found in these arts practices.



A workshop at *SaludArte* led by Elaine Fukumoto encouraged healthy practices through traditional arts, like Japanese Obon dance.

## What Have We Learned? (continued)



Changing the narrative, concerned with creating a new narrative about community health that points to systemic causal factors and de-emphasizes exclusive personal responsibility for health outcomes, certainly has been impacted through arts programming. Additionally, we posit that other kinds of narratives have also been impacted. Personal narratives have been impacted as is evident in the example of the street vendor's experience discussed previously. A focus on arts and creative practice also has helped to impact one's perception of what being healthy entails. It includes reflection, conviviality and joy. The narrative about neighborhood has also been impacted through the cultural asset mapping which allows a reframing of Boyle Heights—going from a dominant frame that almost exclusively points to deficits to a frame that also acknowledges assets.

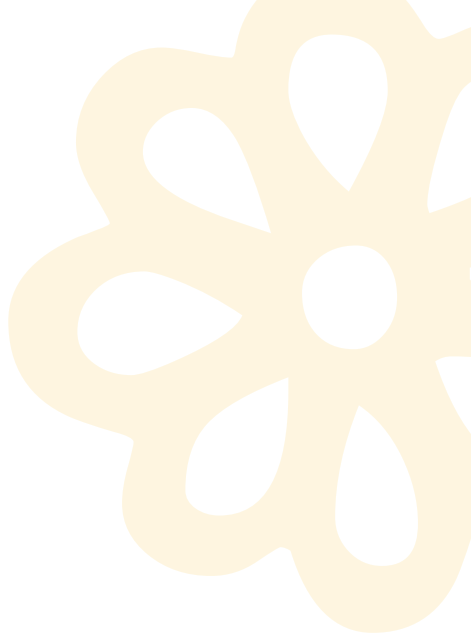
There is also some evidence that arts' programming has contributed to enhanced collaboration and policy innovation. According to Jennifer Ybarra, BHC Program Manager, it is significant that artists are playing such an important role and really connecting to community. Furthermore, this has catalyzed the participation of other local art entities and has also led to an increased interest in arts and cultural engagement on behalf of Hub organizations that had not considered this type of engagement in the past. Overall, given ACTA's work, there seems to be greater interest and support for creating a space for arts workshops as a part of the local campaign work. Additionally, the Lights On song and video has been effective in calling for accountability among all players including local leaders.

In terms of Leveraging Partnerships and Resources, to date there is not a great deal in terms of new money flowing in to advance BHC goals. It is important to note, though, that for the past several years the ECAPP—through the efforts of ACTA, BHC and the project—has been featured at annual meetings of Grantmakers in the Arts, so it is on the radar of a new and different dimension of the philanthropic sector. Perhaps over time this will translate into new resources.

Flower-making workshop participants at cultural assets celebration at Self-Help Graphics with local artist and master altar maker Ofelia Esparza.

## CONCLUSION

Without a doubt, the type of arts programming made possible through ECAPP is an essential dimension of long-haul work towards a healthy, vibrant and just community. Documentation and examination of the contributions of this type of arts engagement within the context of community health and social change is just beginning. The California Endowment and the Alliance for California Traditional Arts together with artists, community leaders and residents in Boyle Heights are blazing new trails—taking important risks and refusing to ignore the community’s capacity to achieve greater justice and equity through its cultural assets.



Son Jarocho class participants participating in community procession outside of Casa del Mexicano, a historic Boyle Heights community space.



## Appendix A: Participants in Focus Groups and Interviews

Report Focus/ Interview Groups	Participants	Type of Participation	Relationship to the Project
<b>Boyle Heights Hub Partners and ACTA Task Force Contacts</b>	Isela Gracian	Focus Group	Member of ACTA’s Engaging Cultural Assets Task Force, Neighborhoods Workgroup Member, Hub Member, & President of East LA Community Corporation.
	David Valdez	Focus Group	Member of ACTA’s Engaging Cultural Assets Task Force, Schools Workgroup member, Hub Member & YMCA Staff Member.
	Fabiola Sandoval	Focus Group	Member of ACTA’s Engaging Cultural Assets Task Force, Prevention Workgroup Member, Hub Member & Maternal and Child Health Access
	Gerson Soto	Focus Group	Prevention Workgroup Member, Hub Member, & Neighborhood Legal Service of LA Staff Member
	Alessandro Negrete	Focus Group	East LA Community Corporation Staff Member, involved in planning process of numerous ACTA-BHC activities.
	Juan Castillo Alvarado	Focus Group	Schools Workgroup Member, involved in planning process of numerous ACTA-BHC activities.
	Jennifer Ybarra	Focus Group	TCE Program Manager
<b>Boyle Heights Artists</b>	Ofelia Esparza	Focus Group	Identified as ACTA Boyle Heights Cultural Treasure, master Altar-Maker, facilitated two, 10-week workshop sessions at two community apartment complexes. First workshop took place at the Ramona Gardens Housing Complex while the second workshop took place at the Pico Aliso Housing Complex. Workshop focused on the creation of health care altars to physically manifest health care goals/intentions. Facilitated various workshops at Hub Assemblies, Activiarte Events, and SaludArte 2014.
	Rosanna Ahrens	Focus Group	Local Community Artist, daughter of Ofelia Esparza, helped with the facilitation of Altar Workshops
	Omar Ramirez	Focus Group	Facilitated two, 10-week workshop sessions composed of High Schools Students from Mendez & Roosevelt High School. Workshops took place at Espacio 1839 and "La Concha", two community-founded spaces dedicated to preserving local creative expression. Facilitated various workshops at Hub Assemblies, Activiarte Events, and SaludArte 2014.
	Dewey Tafoya	Focus Group	Local Community Artist, currently completing a lot of artistic work out of Self-Help Graphics Art Space, facilitated various workshops at Hub Assemblies, Activiarte Events, and SaludArte 2014.
	Missa Della	Focus Group	Member of Cuicani band who rehearsed and performed a restorative-justice themed song that resulted from one of the collective songwriting sessions in support of Schools Workgroup campaign. Band performed song at LAUSD Rally in May 2015.
	Cesar Castro	Interview	Identified as ACTA Boyle Heights Cultural Treasure, Master Son Jarocho musician, facilitated two, 10-week workshop sessions at Casa del Mexicano. The first workshop was focused on creating Street Vendor sones. Second workshop also took place at Casa del Mexicano and focused on the Health Care for All Campaign. Facilitated various workshops at Hub Assemblies, Activiarte Events, and SaludArte 2014.

## Appendix A: Participants in Focus Groups and Interviews (continued)

Report Focus/ Interview Groups	Participants	Type of Participation	Relationship to the Project
<b>Boyle Heights Community Residents</b>	Martha Escudero	Focus Group	Participant of Son Jarocho classes at Casa del Mexicano, participant at numerous ACTA-BHC Hub assemblies, Activarte Events, & SaludArte 2014.
	Alex Guillen	Focus Group	Participant of Son Jarocho classes at Casa del Mexicano, participant at numerous ACTA-BHC Hub assemblies, Activarte Events, & SaludArte 2014.
	Juana Mena	Focus Group	Participant of Son Jarocho classes at Casa del Mexicano, participant at numerous ACTA-BHC Hub assemblies, Activarte Events, & SaludArte 2014. Member of BHC Hub.
	Learsi Martinez	Interview	Participant of Son Jarocho classes at Casa del Mexicano, participant at numerous ACTA-BHC Hub assemblies, Activarte Events, & SaludArte 2014.
	Maricella Oralla	Interview	Participant of Son Jarocho classes at Casa del Mexicano, participant at numerous ACTA-BHC Hub assemblies, Activarte Events, & SaludArte 2014.
	Alicia Diaz	Interview	Participant of Son Jarocho classes at Casa del Mexicano, participant at numerous ACTA-BHC Hub assemblies, Activarte Events, & SaludArte 2014.

## Appendix A: Continued ACTA Staff

Name	Position	Relationship to Project
<b>Amy Kitchener</b>	Executive Director	Overall project director. Supervised project staff and consultants, oversaw all project activities across the four BHC sites. Main liaison with TCE Program Managers and HUB managers.
<b>Quetzal Flores</b>	Program Manager/ Artist	Responsible for the coordination of project activities in Boyle Heights, including: coordinating taskforce meetings, participatory arts workshops linked to BHC campaigns, and the organization of SaludArte event.
<b>Citlalli Chávez</b>	Project Coordinator	Responsible for the coordination of project activities in Boyle Heights, including: coordinating taskforce meetings, participatory arts workshops linked to BHC campaigns, and the organization of SaludArte event. Assisted with the evaluation process focused on interviewing key project participants and co-authored report about key findings.
<b>Maria Rosario Jackson</b>	Board Member & Consultant	Helped in the design of participatory arts activities linked to BHC campaigns in Boyle Heights. Supported the development of a Learning Convening across BHC sites. Led the evaluation team that conducted focus groups and interviewed key project participants and co-authored a report about key findings.

# Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project

## Appendix B: Videos and Links

Title/Description	Video/Web Link
<p><b>ACTA's Building Healthy Communities: Cultural Treasures</b>            An overview of the Building Healthy Communities project, <i>Activating Cultural Assets</i>, where community members recognized arts and cultural assets as central resources essential to health and sustainability.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actaculturaltreasures">http://tinyurl.com/actaculturaltreasures</a></p>
<p><b>Activating Cultural Assets: Boyle Heights</b>            A video highlighting the BHC <i>Activating Cultural Assets</i> project in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid1">http://tinyurl.com/actavid1</a></p>
<p><b>Boyle Heights Cultural Treasures Sharing Event</b>            A video featuring excerpts from the Cultural Treasures Sharing event, where participants presented the cultural treasures identified in Boyle Heights.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid2">http://tinyurl.com/actavid2</a></p>
<p><b>ACTIVARTE: Detouring Displacement</b>            A video showcasing ActiveARTE, a day of dialogue and participatory arts engagement focused on the pressing issue of displacement.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid3">http://tinyurl.com/actavid3</a></p>
<p><b>ACTA/BHC Boyle Heights Cultural Treasure Irene Peña/Proyecto Jardin</b>            Irene Peña with Proyecto Jardin was identified as a Cultural Treasure in the BHC-Boyle Heights <i>Activating Cultural Assets</i> project. In this video, hear Irene speak about this collaborative community garden.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid4">http://tinyurl.com/actavid4</a></p>
<p><b>ACTA/BHC Boyle Heights Cultural Treasures Ruben "Funkahuatl" Guevara</b>            Ruben "Funkahuatl" Guevara, a singer, songwriter, producer, writer, poet, and performance artist, was identified as a Cultural Treasure in the BHC-Boyle Heights <i>Activating Cultural Assets</i> project. In this video, hear Ruben speak about his experience as a Chicano musician.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid5">http://tinyurl.com/actavid5</a></p>
<p><b>ACTA BHC Boyle Heights Cultural Treasures Self Help Graphics</b>            In this video, learn about Self Help Graphics &amp; Art, a visual arts center identified as a Cultural Treasure in the BHC-Boyle Heights <i>Activating Cultural Assets</i> project.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid6">http://tinyurl.com/actavid6</a></p>
<p><b>ACTA BHC Boyle Heights Cultural Treasures Jose Ramirez</b>            José Ramirez, an artist, author, illustrator, educator, and muralist, was identified as a Cultural Treasure in the BHC-Boyle Heights <i>Activating Cultural Assets</i> project. In this video, hear José speak about creativity as a key to a healthy community.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid7">http://tinyurl.com/actavid7</a></p>
<p><b>ACTA BHC Boyle Heights Cultural Treasures Father Boyle</b>            Father Greg Boyle, founder of Homeboy Industries, which offers mental health, legal, and employment services to youth at risk, former gang members, and the recently incarcerated was identified as a Cultural Treasure in the BHC-Boyle Heights <i>Activating Cultural Assets</i> project. In this video, hear Father Boyle speak about the restorative role of the arts.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid8">http://tinyurl.com/actavid8</a></p>
<p><b>ACTA BHC Boyle Heights Cultural Treasures Casa 0101</b>            In this video, learn about Casa 0101, a theater organization which presents dynamic programming, and offers free and low-cost acting and writing classes.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid9">http://tinyurl.com/actavid9</a></p>
<p><b>Collective Songwriting in Boyle Heights</b>            This video is an overview of the Collective Songwriting workshop, part of the Building Healthy Communities project, in which Boyle Heights students and California musicians created music addressing the Local Control Funding Formula, and its implications for low-income communities.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid11">http://tinyurl.com/actavid11</a></p>
<p><b>Lights On!</b>            Lights On! is the collaborative song and music video that culminated from the Collective Songwriting workshop focused on addressing income inequality in Boyle Heights.</p>	<p><a href="http://tinyurl.com/actavid10">http://tinyurl.com/actavid10</a></p>

## REFERENCE NOTES

1. Improving School Climate is part of the work of the Health Happens in Schools workgroup in Boyle Heights. This campaign focuses on increasing fair discipline, a trauma-informed community school mode, anti-bullying programs, and other policies and strategies that ensure a positive climate is one that feels friendly, inviting, and supportive in every school, rather than exclusionary, unwelcoming, and unsafe.
2. “Community Culture Empowering People and Changing the Narrative: Documentation, Analysis, Reflections and Recommendations from the Engaging Cultural Assets Pilot Project.” Maria Rosario Jackson and Jerry Yoshitomi with Citlalli Chávez, Quetzal Flores, Amy Kitchener, Nayamin Martinez, Russell Rodriguez. A collaboration of the Alliance for California Traditional Arts and The California Endowment. Los Angeles. February 2015 sites were Boyle Heights, Merced, Central Santa Ana and the Eastern Coachella Valley.
3. Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, Calif, (2005). Los Angeles’s Boyle Heights. Charleston SC: Arcadia Pub.
4. <https://web.archive.org/web/20160217163109/http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0644000.html>
5. Son Jarocho is the traditional rural music of Veracruz in the Gulf region of Mexico that infuses indigenous, Spanish, and African roots. The son includes coplas or stanzas sung by a “caller” who is accompanied by the hard-driving rhythms of musicians playing unique regional guitars and harp. Jarocho describes the people and culture of southern Veracruz. “La Bamba” is among the best known jarocho songs inside and outside Mexico. Fandangos are community celebrations where members of the community gather around the tarima and participate in dancing, singing, and playing. (<http://www.folkways.si.edu/fandango-son-jarocho-community-tradition-improvisation/music/tools-for-teaching/smithsonian>)
6. The School Climate Bill of Rights are Guiding principles developed and used in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to ensure safe and healthy school environments that support all students in every aspect of their well-being. LAUSD students, staff and parents/guardians value fair and consistent guidelines for implementing and developing a culture of discipline based on positive behavior interventions and away from punitive approaches that infringe on instructional time. (Source: [http://notebook.lausd.net/pls/ptl/docs/PAGE/CA\\_LAUSD/FLDR\\_ORGANIZATIONS/FLDR\\_OFFICE\\_OF\\_SUPE/ATTACHMENT%20C-1\\_1.PDF](http://notebook.lausd.net/pls/ptl/docs/PAGE/CA_LAUSD/FLDR_ORGANIZATIONS/FLDR_OFFICE_OF_SUPE/ATTACHMENT%20C-1_1.PDF))
7. Bon Odori, also known as Obon, is a traditional Japanese summer festival to honor ancestors who have passed on, remember and appreciate all they have done for us, and celebrate their ongoing presence in the lives we enjoy today. The celebration includes music and participatory circle dancing. Highlighting this workshop recognized the historic home of Japanese-Americans in Boyle Heights and evoked cultural parallels with Dia de los Muertos.
8. The MacArthur Fellowship is a five-year grant to individuals who show exceptional creativity in their work and the prospect for still more in the future. - See more at: <https://www.macfound.org/fellows-faq/>
9. <http://www.kcet.org/socal/departures/boyle-heights/activarte-in-boyle-heights.html>
10. Corridos are popular narrative songs that developed in Mexico during the 1800’s; [http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/~media/artsedge/lessonprintables/grade-9-12/form\\_and\\_theme\\_mex\\_cor\\_what\\_is\\_a\\_corrido.ashx](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/~media/artsedge/lessonprintables/grade-9-12/form_and_theme_mex_cor_what_is_a_corrido.ashx)
11. <http://www.thewellnesscenterla.org/ourmission>
12. From BHC official literature. [http://archive.calendow.org/uploadedFiles/Health\\_Happends\\_Here/Communities/Drivers%20of%20Change%20Final.pdf](http://archive.calendow.org/uploadedFiles/Health_Happends_Here/Communities/Drivers%20of%20Change%20Final.pdf)