ArtChangeUS

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[ Captioner standing by ]

[ Technical difficulties on live stream ].

[ Music ]

[ Music ]

[ Applause ]

>> DANIELA ALVAREZ:  Good evening, everyone.  I'm Daniela Alvarez, a researcher and editor from Los Angeles, born and raised in Koreatown.

[ Applause ]

And I forgot, welcome to Imagining a New Map forum!  I'm so excited to get this started.  I'm also the education and REFRAME coordinator for Arts in a Changing America and co lead for REMAP LA.
>> MORGAN CAMPER: Good evening, everyone, my name is Morgan Camper, I'm the co lead for REMAP LA with Daniela Alvarez, also an actress, dancer, theater maker, theater educator. And I'm from Baltimore, Maryland.

[ Applause ]

>> ROBERTA UNO: Good evening, I'm Roberta Uno. I'm a theater director and I'm the director of Arts in a Changing America, I was born in Honolulu and raised here in L.A., Echo Park before gentrification [ Laughter ] I have family roots in Echo Park, Boyle Heights, Silverlake, Watts, and Little Tokyo.

We are so happy to be here in the city that we love and we are so thrilled you are here with us. And we really want to give a big shoutout to ACTA, Quetzal, and Betty for making this program happen in the way it did, with you all connecting first. I could really just feel the warmth in the room, it's amazing.

[ Applause ]

>> DANIELA ALVAREZ: We would like to acknowledge the Tongva peoples and Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians as the traditional, current, and future inhabitants and caretakers of the lands of the City and County of Los Angeles. Yesterday we launched REMAP LA with a Grounding Visit at Olvera Street led by Tongva elders and educators, Julia Bogany and Desiree Martinez, to anchor us in the history of Indigenous downtown LA as we move toward a collective future.

>> This is our third and final program of REMAP LA. We launched with the Cultural Equity Summit in April and did a going deeper training in August. We've conceptualized this third program as an activation. So we know that we started tonight off in an unorthodox way, flipping the paradigm and
connecting audience members by having small group dialogues first, designed and facilitated by our core partner Acta, the alliance of California Traditional Arts.

>> So Arts in a Changing America is a five-year initiative based at California Institute in New York City. And we want to give a very special shoutout and recognition to the president of CalArts, where are you, Ravi Rajan? For his partnership and just it's been wonderful to work with the amazing students, faculty, and staff at CalArts.

We've worked all across the nation, and we never go anywhere we're not invited. So we want to also thank a very special person, Ben Johnson from the L.A. Department of Cultural Affairs who really was the instigator, who sparked the first invitation to do REMAP LA. He's sick today, but we told him, you know, we wouldn't have been able to do this without him.

And we also want to thank our amazing L.A. Core Partners.

>> Alison de La Cruz from the Japanese American cultural and community center, Natalie Marrero from congressa kids, Deborah Padilla, Tamica Washington-Miller, Randy Reinholz and jean Bruce Scott from native voices and Amy kitchener and her team from ACTA. And much gratitude to our L.A. advisors, Dr. Mishuana Goeman from UCLA, Leslie Ito from the armory Center for the Arts, Sophia Klatzker from the Roman Mars foundation and Pamela Villaseno of the Fernandeno Tataviam band of mission Indians.

>> Additionally we'd like to appreciate and thank the Annenberg, Andrew W.Mellon, Ford and California Department of arts and cultural.

And last but not least we'd like to give a big round of applause for our amazingly talented ArtChangeUs team. We have Kassandra who's in the lobby, we have Kapena, Elizabeth Webb, and our amazing fellows Genevieve Fowler who made this amazing event possible, Sara, Vinhay, Evelyn, and Juan Carlos Herrera. Thank you for the help in planning our final super nova event!

>> So ArtChangeUs actually began with 12 partners. They were from across the country, you may recognize those people like Flaviana Rodriguez and Mark Chang and others. But we came together
across artistic discipline, across geography, across organizational budget size to really see how we could join our creative capital and to, you know, advance -- racial demographic change. That is unprecedented in this country. We asked ourselves three very simple questions: One was how can we be resources to each other? Even if we don't have another dollar, how could we recognize that we are our own cultural assets? And then two, what is it that we can do together that we can't do alone? And then three, how do we elevate local knowledge and expertise and shift vertical hierarchies to horizontal relationships of equity?

>> MORGAN CAMPER: So over the last five years, ArtChangeUs has been invited by our core partners across the U.S. to organize REMAPs of differing design and focus. So every REMAP has started with the deep listening process. We launched in New York City then we were invited to the Bay Area where the issue of gentrification was a priority. Next we were invited to Detroit where the exemplary practices of community benefit informed the REMAP. In Richmond, Virginia, our partners brought forth prison abolition and justice reform from the deep vantage point of southern artist. And the pine ridge Lakota territory REMAP focused on reclaiming indigenous knowledge.

And Daniela was just smiling at me because I was supposed to say from 12 to 35 partners, all these beautiful people on this beautiful slide from Elizabeth.

But in the Twin Cities, the issue of inequity and funding to organizations of collar was the primary focus. And in fact, that has been kind of a consistent theme across the country which led to the cultural equity summit in L.A. So we want to thank Holly Significantford and Rosario Jackson and others for their groundbreaking reports and the L.A. Department of Arts and Culture and those who worked on the cultural equity and inclusion initiative and continue to push it forward.

>> DANIELA ALVAREZ: Many workshops may be waitlisted at this point, but check out our website for Workshops led by textile artists & cultural bearers from the Tarahat Women’s Beading Circle of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, Grammy Award-winning artivista Quetzal Flores and trailblazing multi-disciplinary performer Nobuko Miyamoto, playwright Velina Hasu Houston, visual artist & Homeboy Industries mentor Fabian Debora and interdisciplinary artist Evelyn Serrano, writer &
performance artist Gabrielle Civil and choreographer Tamica Washington-Miller, master printmaker & artist Rosalie López, and installation artist Caitlin Abadir-Mullally and writer Kamala Puligandla. I’m so excited I will be taking Rosalie Lopez’s milagro workshop at Self Help Graphics!

>> And I'll be taking Nobuko and Quetzal's workshop at decolonizing through song writing at Casa Del Mexico.

>> And I'll be taking the Tarahat workshop. We'd like to thank Rudy Ortega Sr. Park, Casa Del Mexicano, Native Voices at the Autry, Somos LA Arte Homeboy Art Academy, Lula Washington Dance Theatre, Self Help Graphics, and CalArts.

Can we give them a round of applause, please?

[ Applause ]

Thank you. We are also facilitating a series of trainings in green on the schedule from our cultural community benefits toolkit. Edited by Cezanne Charles. And this was developed by Detroit cultural organizers who were really looking at seeking accountability from developers developing real estate in Detroit with public moneys. So they've looked at how we can use some of these methodologies in the arts to hold what we do accountable to the communities that we say we serve.

>> MORGAN CAMPER: So ArtChangeUs and its core partners are sharing this toolkit with the wider public sector to provide a values-driven and pragmatic approach to shifting our field's institutional practices while building equitable relationships. And this is free and it is downloadable in a PDF format on the ArtChangeUs website and it features five different principles, the first is to build inclusive organizations, the second is to honor indigenous peoples and lands, the third is to commit to cultural equity, fourth create local economic benefits and value and the fifth is to contribute to fieldwide change. So we are so happy because we had our first workshop today at the music center, tomorrow January 23 we will be at CalArts in the Lund if anyone is familiar with CalArts at the L.A. County department of arts and culture will be there on
January 29 and on January 30th we'll be at the Pasadena Armory Center for the arts. So hurry up and register because tickets are going fast.

>> DANIELA ALVAREZ: In alignment with the cultural community benefits principle, an MOU on our website with the transparent budget and funding sources and we've been conscious of where we allocate our resources ensuring that money spent is back to the community through local vendors and businesses. Often this requires much research and creative strategizing, but the resulting relationships developed are part of community building in a real way.

We want to warmly thank REDCAT and ACTA for partnering with us to help make this magical event come to life.

>> MORGAN CAMPER: With deep gratitude, aloha and Amor, we introduce two L.A. treasures, Quetzal Flores and Amy Kitchner.

>> My name is Betty marine.

>> I'm Quetzal Flores, we’re with a traditional art organization that does a lot of different things, we’re going to talk about a lot of those things but I want to start off by giving you statistics. Does that sound boring? [ Laughter ].

Okay, thank you, Michael. All right. These are pretty interesting, actually. So over 200 languages are known to be spoken and read in California. Okay. Think about how many cultural and artistic expressions can be practiced within a single linguistic group and then multiplied by that number. California has more than 100 indigenous languages making it the state, one of the states in the world with the most linguistical, being the most, one of the most diverse linguistical places in the world. All of California’s indigenous languages are endangered and although dedicated efforts towards revitalize from the statewide advocates for indigenous language survival exists, they're still endangered. And then California's home to almost 25% of the country's undocumented population; okay? So those are really important statistics to
think about. When we’re thinking about cultural equity, right? And we’re thinking about REMAPing or reframing the map or reclaiming the map; right?

And so at the organization we support living culture traditions and cultural barriers that are cornerstones of sustainability and health in our communities. So imagining a new map is for us accessing the old map, the really, really old map; right? So what was the map before white supremacy, before capitalism, before patriarchy? Before maps were used to perpetuate domination and extraction of land and people, right? Labor. And so this is where I ask that we begin to depart our inquiry or our creative thought from, right? And this is the point that will allow us to move forward in an informed way.

And so what I want to say is that embedded in these traditional practices, in ways that people share together share resources, build solidarity, coalition, which is why we’re here today. The foundation of our work involves cultural asset mapping. So were you aware this is what you were doing today? No? How’d it feel? Weird, great? Okay. So this is a participatory community-based methodology to identify cultural barriers, artists, groups, expressions, places, organizations that are deeply valued in our communities. We aim to bring greater recognition, resources, and opportunities to participate in traditional practices.

>> So we wanted to highlight some of the voices and characters that are part of the map that has existed. People have been sustaining the cultural fabric of our communities, keeping them strong with or without institutional support in a context where cultural equity is of course, still lacking. So while cultural equity is still lacking, cultural sustainability is defined in our communities through other systems, systems of mentorship and apprenticeship that we have been supporting for the last 20 years. Some of those examples you see on the screen here, Karuk baby basketry, master artists, Chinese Wushu, a traditional sword dance with a master and apprentice. And we also have drawing workshops led by Favian who is actually leading one of the other workshops with Wes in prison. But we wanted to highlight a few stories, next slide, please; a few characters. Maybe some of you know and were mentored by Danagan, a virtuistic artist of cooling tongue which is tuned gongs. He came to the U.S. in, in the 70s to work as a visiting artist at the Washington ethno musicology department. And over time he introduced his music to a lot of the...
FilipinX Americans seeking to connect to aspects of their pre colonial heritage. When ACTA launched the apprentice program, he was the first class of apprenticeship pairs in transmitting his music. He had many dedicated students including Bernard.

So Bernard was one of his students and he carried on his work and he also brought it to new generations including Danny's own granddaughter, Kimberly who didn't have the opportunity to learn the form from her own grandfather. Next slide, please.

So through the apprenticeship between Bernard and Kimberly, Kimberly has now been able to carry on and build from her own grandfather's work, strengthening her own connections to her family and to her community. So Cheryl Morales who one of you, some of you were lucky enough to be in a group with with Alison de La Cruz, she's actually one of the founders, I think some of you heard about it a little bit from the Getty Heritage Foundation United these are traditional dancers, an ensemble coming out of the foundation. The mission of Gafu is to serve Caribbean American and central American afro Latino community in the Long Beach area. The United States, and abroad through cultural education programs, outreach advocacy, and social service programs.

Some of their key programs have been around visibility and the celebration of Garifuna culture, focusing on younger generations understanding their roots and embracing those as their own. They've done this in part through an annual festival in South L.A., where a large part of the population in Los Angeles is based. And also participating in other festivals celebrating Central American cultures. They also have a language program where they're transmitting the Garifuna language.

>> And lastly, this is Makel's music, it's a philharmonic group, Oaxacan group, the practice of Oaxacan music which emerges from indigenous communities and being taught here in Los Angeles and, you know, it's important because this access is helping to keep social fabric intact, helping keep communities practicing their culture, remembering their culture and passing down these traditions generation after generation. So thank you, we're gonna start the rest of the program and we'll see you in a bit.
>> Thank you.

[ Applause ]

>> All right, everyone. So here at ArtChangeUs we emphasize the artist and the art. And we put that in the center of our work. So with that being said, give a round of applause for our five artistic calls that we have for tonight. Woo! First up we have an excerpt from tri step trip written by Delia Birthwait, directed by Roberta Uno, choreographed by Teran Moore featuring Benjamin Turner, Freddy Ramsey Jr., Derek Jackson, Jamal Douglas, Max U. Dell and Jazmin Gatewood.

>> The second time I made it in time for the fight scene but it happened before it started, two Chinese families literally punched each other outside of the theater, leaving us brothers sitting there saying quote, Damn! It wasn't us!

>> So third time, a cop car followed my car around a parking lot for 15 minutes, pulled me over, checked my license and when it checked out, he said he couldn't tell if I checked my tags or not. The tags are color coded for that particular reason. You couldn't see? I don't think you need to be walking around with a gun, player! You can't see! I mean, are you color blind? Clearly not.

>> So the fourth time, I'm walking across the street when this parked cop car flashes his high beams at me. I mean, the shit is awkward, so I'm inclined to wave. Hi, at least. So I keep walking. Then the car speeds towards me. Then it drives off. Like, it was a bluff. Like I was supposed to run first and wonder what I was guilty for later. Bitch, I might be, hey!

Fifth, I'm parked [ Indiscernible ] behind me. [ Speaking away from mic ] [ Indiscernible ] notified that I had been registered in some gang-affiliation. Great, I thought I had to sign up for that.

>> So the sixth time, I get a police escort from closing club to parked car. The cop got his arm out the window, just staring at me and I'm, like, damn, I got dressed up to get looked at, but this is not what I had in mind.
The seventh time, I’m around the corner from my house. That’s it.

The eighth time, I spend the first few hours of the year 2006 outside my apartment complex, face-down. Grit style under an infrared police gun, nervously pointed down.

[ Indiscernible ] Las Vegas.

And the 10th time.

And the 10th time.

And the 10th time.

And the 10th time, I was high, cop stopped me driving in my ride, marijuana got me all paranoid, all I want is to avoid a DUI. I’m be cooperative, officer. [ Indiscernible ] I swear you can search me, I forgot the mushrooms on my pocket I was planning on tripping on Thursday. Hands behind back, back up on the way, put me in the back, Black man, bad day. Arrested me, second cop questioned me telling me it’s a felony, telling me bail will be $10,000 and the judge won’t see me until the end of the week, clothes taken off, driving down the street, how’d I get so lost? [ Singing ].

[ Music ]

Only landline I can’t find is mother’s, and I couldn’t stand that tone. Another brother never had the gun on me but they were gunning for me. It’s custom for me to be in custody, always known I was going to be a subject of the government and of this narrative, turning on my heroes to heroin, a single pair of mothers, just wound up on a system, conference can’t resist like a mother I jumped in to it like fuck it!

>> Fuck it.

>> Ha!

>> Break ground! Tamir Rice. Say the name! Kushner, say the name! Rodney King, say the name! Say the name! Sandra Bland, say the name! Say the name! [ Speaking away from mic ].
>> Context. When I was in college, only 2% of the population was Black. 95% of that population was either raised by African immigrants or in the church or both. As though being Black American alone was only right for a very different type of institution. I was a freshman in college, yeah, I pledged Gamma, a multicultural fraternity. I dropped out as this White kid was hazing.

I just kept thinking slavery. I mean my pro Blackness peaked and I wasn't letting no White folks talk crazy to me. I think I would've taken the hazing from the Blacks. Because Black was always my higher power. Black power. Even when it left me powerless. Something like a slave to rhythm. Never fallen out of step, fallen out of line, but that was always my problem. I had trouble following anything, especially one time!

When I finished college, I'd been in the school system 16 years straight finally decided to go my own way, be as free as Black boy hip-hop seemed to me. And I got a two-month break. Then I was back in a very different type of institution. With its own set of papers and requirements, but essentially it's the routine of things.

[ Cheers and Applause ].

>> All right, everybody. Can you raise your hands if that piece of work personally resonated with you? [ Speaking away from mic ] can you raise your hand if any of you are doing your work around police incarceration or profiling? Okay. Well, for one, give another round of applause for Tri Step Trip. And make sure that you catch Tri Step Trip in its full entirety here in May at the REDCAT.

>> Up next, we have Chicana altaristas, Ophelia Esparza and Roseanna Esparza Ahrens.

>> Hello. My name is Ofela Esparza and this is my daughter, Roseanna Esparza Ahrens. I'm an altar maker, we're altaristas. This is a tradition I learned from my mother who learned from her great grandmother, a legacy of five generations of women making home altars.

My mother was a creative person, she never called herself an artist. But I learned many of the decorative manual arts and paper items that she was called upon to make for the neighborhood. And so I
watched her making her altars, very humble at home like many were at the time but were dressed up for Day of the Dead and other altars she would make throughout the year. But the other Muertos altar was beautiful, adorned with flowers from her garden and the flowers that I helped make with her. A time to tell stories and that is what has been embedded in my mind and my heart for all my life was her storytelling.

I learned about my Mama Pilar, her grandmother, my great grandmother, just listening from the stories my mother told about her and those were stories that have been, that were carried on in all the work that she did. It was very important for her to pass on these stories about my, our ancestors. And so in the altars was the tradition where it really blossomed and I heard these stories, I got to know my great grandmother, Mama Pula intimately, even though I never met her through my mother's stories. And it was not just a devotion or a tradition, it was an obligation that I learned them and passed them down to my own children.

I began making altars at Self Full Graphics where I met Karen and she presented to me making community altars which I did for many years. And all those years I, my children, some of them were very young at the time, some were teenagers always helped me, especially preparing at home making flowers and then again helping, assisting me in building the altar. Along with the workshops that we presented At Self-help Graphics preparing for the day of the dead, a wonderful well-known community event and known nationally and probably internationally now.

The teaching of people from the community about altars, about the significance, about making it as something that's been my life work now for almost, so many years. I started At Self-help Graphics in, making my first public altar there, I say because it was something that I never did outside of my mother's home. Today, one of the things that I always talk about was how making an altar is creating a sacred space because we are talking about remembering the dead, dia de Muertos but also honoring people who impacted my life and the life of others and also the causes in social justice and events that need to be recognized and brought to light through the altars then we, I have taught and listened and shared with many, many people and so one of the things that is the most important to me is that other people carry on
this tradition and I feel that it’s quite a legacy, not only for me but for the people who continue this tradition to be cherished and loved even after death and how this endeavor of making altars brings people together, it calls in their love and community and respect and what is, that is something that all of us can look toward, especially in this world today.

>> So I’m going to catch up to the slides here. Denali studio is our studio, the working studio. It’s a place of creative wellness, the intention for this space is to bring community in and find their own healing, their own wellness through sharing stories through creating installations like we do or through wellness workshops, yoga, meditation, there’s a huge array of things that we do there but the real intention and the idea of Denali is, it’s an Nawat word that talks about the creative spark that animates all life on earth and so in our space we intended it to be like a vortex, an energy vortex of creativity and wellness for the community in East Los Angeles where we’re from. So here you see photos of people taking vegan tamale-making classes and art shows with local artists from East L.A. And, you know, people coming in to just collaborate and talk and share ideas about how we can reach our community, what is the next thing that we can do, what is the vision, what’s on the horizon for our community in East L.A. and how to bring awareness of our culture. So the idea of creating a cultural hub in East L.A. is, it’s a, we’ve been there eight years and we funded ourselves, we’re not a nonprofit.

But we do, we’re associated with ACTA and we do work with arts in corrections, in the women’s prison doing a visual poetry programming and we’re also part of building healthy communities in Boyle Heights. So that really takes up a lot of our time, you know, we have a little shop and people kind of get frustrated because we’re not always there. But we’re open when we’re there and closed when we’re not.

[ Cheers and Applause ].

>> Well, I want to leave you with something that I always tell the people I speak to in schools and universities and public venues, the thing, the essence of my work for doing altars or frendas is my mother told me once that we all suffer three deaths, and that the first death is the day that we give our last breath, the day that we die.
Our second death is the day that we are buried, never to be seen on the face of the earth again, which is so final.

But the final and most dreaded death of all is to be forgotten. So I pass that on to you, your stories with your children and your grandchildren and carry on the stories of your family because that's who you are, that's where you've been and where you will continue to be. Thank you.

>> Gracias.

[ Cheers and Applause ].

>> Thank you, Ofela and Rosanna. I wanted to check and ask you guys to close your eyes for a moment and think of an ancestor who inspires you. How do you honor them in your work? How do they inspire you to be your best ancestor for the next generation? Thank you.

Next up is our former ArtChangeUs Fellow and visual artist, Jazmin Urrea.

[ Applause ]

>> Hello, everyone! Let me take this -- oh no, don't know how. We're just gonna leave it on! [ Laughter ] my name is Jazmin Urrea and I'm a visual artist. I grew up and currently live in a neighborhood formerly known as South Central Los Angeles. South L.A. is considered to be a disadvantaged area of, a food desert and commonly referred to as the hood. But in reality, South Central is a cluster of underserved communities and a place I call home. My home influences me, informs my identity and practice and it serves as subject matter and inspiration.

What inspired me to pursue art as a career choice was a number of things. But the interesting reason is that I was personally victimized by Flaming Hot Cheetos at age 12. Next slide? [ Laughter ].

Doctors at first couldn't figure out what was wrong with me. Eventually, I was diagnosed with appendicitis. The doctors told me that my overindulgence in Hot Cheetos led me to have an irritation in my
appendix. After a month of being hospitalized, I was free to go and guess what? I was told that I could keep eating Hot Cheetos! A couple years later, my youngest sister began to battle with issues of obesity and health-related issues as well. I saw her going down the same path as me so I began making artwork with her about our diets during my undergraduate studies. And this is where the piece Bonbon stemmed from.

Next slide, please! [Laughter] I know, I'm just giving y'all a little taste of that.

So two years later, I entered grad school at CalArts. I started my graduate studies at a time when students were pushing back against the school for their unacceptable hiring practices and for their lack of diversity in staff. I began to think critically about my race, culture, family and upbringing as well as what it meant to be a Latina coming in to a predominantly white space. This predicament gave me motivation to create a voice for myself and to create my thesis or excuse me, my mid res, Jazmin's Quince Anos which you see behind me it was to celebrate and drink horchata and drink and drink some Jamaica.

During my back and forth commute from South Central to Santa Clarita, however, I began to also take notice of the food disparities that were going on between both cities. Santa Clarita has a Whole Foods, Trader Joe's and a Ralph's all within a 10 minute drive or less, and for some of us it could take up to 30 minutes to get access to healthy foods. I also noticed a majority of my pre school students were eating Flaming Hot Cheetos and big juices for breakfast. These factors led me to create my piece Red 40. It was made of approximately 300 pounds of flaming Hot Cheetos, the walls were covered with Flaming Hot Cheetos bags and we pasted 11X17 images of Mexican candies. It focused on raising awareness about the food desert issue in L.A. About 23.5 million people in the U.S. live in food deserts and nearly half of those people are considered low income. So in my practice, I've continued to raise awareness of this issue. This past November, me and 14 other artists got the opportunity to participate in Current L.A. Food, did any of you see or participate in that? It was funded by the Department of Cultural Affairs and my first public art piece that I got to create at Martin Luther King Park located in South Los Angeles.

[Applause]
In Imperishable, I explored the lack of access to food by low income communities and the health risks associated with artificial dyes and additives such as yellow 5, yellow 6, red 40 and all other dyes found in junk food and other processed goods. I translated this issue visually by creating six site-specific sculptures made of Plexiglas, there was concrete in there as well. They were each eight feet tall and they serve as a reminder of the lack of nutritional options in low-income communities.

Coupled with the installation, I also got the opportunity to work with my community of South L.A., I created a month-long series with the Martin Luther King Rec Center where we invited artists, chefs, urban farmers and anyone you can think of to MLK park to have conversations centered around their practice, food access, community building and equity in the city. The conversations were free, open to the public, and everyone was invited. Students got to try vegan food for the first time and the food was made by Chef Angela Means who played Felicia on Friday. I hope you know that movie and she’s from South L.A. too, it was amazing to have her there.

Community members were also able to share their food stories and the changes they'd like to see in the future. So my goal for creating this two-part project was to create sustainability for these conversations to continue and flourish. For me it is crucial to create relationships with community leaders, teachers, artists, and everyone, pretty much to create a platform from change and awareness. Thank you!

[ Applause ]

>> Thank you, Jazmin. So, how many of you have witnessed the generational impact of food deserts within your communities and/or families? Uh-huh. But how many of y'all still going to be eating Hot Cheetos? [ Laughter ].

All right, so next I would like to welcome social justice advocate and violinist Vijay Gupta and the Street Symphony Orchestra.

>> Take a moment.
Take a breath.

Take time.

Take care.

Take heart.

Take hope.

Take a step.

Take a chance.

Take courage.

Take charge.

Take a stand!

Take pride.

Take joy!

Take pause.

Take a breath.

Take a moment.
Take what you need.

Take what you need.

Take what you need.

[ Applause ]

Where's Jay Michael Walker? He's in this room somewhere. Jay Michael taught me and so many of us in this room through his project Todo Los Santos, All the Saints about the history of streets here in our city named after all of our patron saints and all of the angels of our city of nuestra senora de Los Angeles. And we're in walking distance of a street that was named after the patron saint of wanderers and people who make shelters and of violinists. And that is San Julian.

And San Julian Street by some strange twist of fate is the epicenter of the crisis of homelessness today. That in any given night in a community known as Skid Row, 7,000 if not many more of our neighbors experience chronic houselessness. We, musicians of Street Symphony go to Skid Row as a place of sacred Pilgrimage. We are taught in this community, as students of this community that Skid Row is not a place to be erased but is a recovery zone, is a reentry zone.

And that our artistry lies in being a conduit between this place quite literally sometimes this place, this building that we're in right now, and our communities across the city. I believe that we ostracized and criminalized the most fragile and vulnerable members of our society because we have made an agreement to criminalize and ostracize the most fragile and vulnerable parts of ourselves. And that our art now is not only a mental health intervention and a public health intervention but a way for our souls to catch up with our lives. For our lives to touch the hem of our souls and understand or most true calling that we need each other to survive.
And so we’re gonna cue up a video of a project of Street Symphony called the Block Party that was held in collaboration with one of our partners in Skid Row, the Midnight Mission and this is just a 50-second clip of that project.

[ Music ]

Today we got the block party for Street Symphony going down.

>> This is really for the community and by the community and it should just be a jam, like, a celebration.

[ Music ]

>> Why not today is a mixture of community ensembles from Skid Row and perform in the community as well as many professional musicians from the L.A. area.

[ Music ]

>> We will have our line up of six different acts as well as a meal service and we’re expecting around 2,000 individual participants.

This will be my first time playing on the street with Street Symphony with I'm most excited about. I think that is the most authentic act of engagement saying we're coming to where you are, we don't expect you to come to where we are.

[ Music ]

[ Applause ]
My name is Dustin, I'm the director of musical programs with Street Symphony and what Vijay talked about was so heartwarming but I want to talk about the real shit that we do. [Laughter] That's great. But! But, so, just really quickly, I have the pleasure of being part of a process group that we hold called Music For Change and this is a weekly process group with individuals that are currently on parole from long-term or life sentences at the Weingart Center and we use music as kind of a conduit and a kind of vessel for exchange. It's not a space of we bringing classical music or we bringing a certain kind of high art but rather a space where we can actually exchange our art for art back for lessons back and for healing back. And this space has actually become an incredibly important healing space for myself that the work that we get to engage in Skid Row and our community partners and with individuals is not helping, it's helping me. It's about healing myself, healing the trauma that I've endured as, you know, a conservatory music student and as second generation Asian-American as an individual that lives in a city in a country that supports and encourages the systemic violence and structural racism that we live in.

And actually I walk in to the space to learn from my mentors at the Weingart Center and I actually want to invite one of my mentors, Duane Garcia who has, who I've met earlier in 2019, in March of 2019 and has truly shared his love with me and I really don't have anything else to say, I want to open the space to him.

[Applause]

Yeah, my name is Duane Garcia. I can't tell you how happy I am to be here with you. As I look around at you and I look inside of myself and the great changes that have happened within me and now I'm now able to share with others a road to change through the great work of music for change, the program music for change. And Street Symphony. I have a family that I belong to. Yes, I'm the one that's in the
program that did 30 years in prison and that's exactly what it took to change my thinking. And I'm a big supporter of change, thinking change for life. It can happen.

And I find Street Symphony to be kind of like the pied piper and Music For Change to voices that are listening throughout the Weingart and Midnight Mission and the whole Skid Row area. It beckons, it calls to the soul. Music resonates in our very being. And as it happens, I see people that have not necessarily had a good start in life or fell off track somewhere or did not learn life skills in order to cope with the pressures of life and turned to lives of crime and medicating the pain of trauma, childhood or otherwise. We all have it and music is for change, has provided a space where people can start taking a look at themselves and how valuable and how divine they really are. And I'm the one who stays behind because I live in the facility and when my friends from Street Symphony leave, I get to stay behind and I get to do kind of like the follow-up on people who are doing paradigm shifts in their life and some of them don't even know it. They don't even know what that word means, that's all textbook-ish. But when you know when the soul aches bad enough that it constitutes either a change or die, I want to be one of the people like Music For Change and Street Symphony that stands in the gap and says let me reach and pull you up, you reach back and pull somebody else up. And I'm so grateful to be part of this program tonight and part of the change, serving a community that has been nothing but welcoming to me and I'm so very grateful for it. And I'm glad you guys are here tonight. Thank you for being so kind.

[ Applause ]

>> Before we get started, I want to acknowledge Eric Lee playing Viola and Tiffany Chung who's playing violin.

[ Applause ]

[ Music ]
Love one another, be kind to one another. When it gets down to it, the lowest common denominator, we're all we have. Take care of each other. Bless you, thank you for your time tonight.

[ Applause ]

>> Give it up for Duane Garcia!

[ Applause ]

[ Cheers and Applause ].

>> Oh my God, all that talent! Thank you, Vijay and Street Symphony Performers!

[ Applause ]

Yeah! Now, a question for all of you: What do you feel you need to survive, to live, to thrive? Now, please join me in welcoming Quetzal Flores and Betty Marin.

[ Applause ]

>> Hello again. Just a quick shoutout to the amazing facilitators that you all met in your small groups, Cesar Castro, Omar Ramirez, Vanessa, Sharon, Odelia, Martha Gonzalez, Alison de La Cruz, Noko, they're all doing amazing work across L.A., so please read more about them in the program and meet them at the end of the program when we all get to eat and drink.
So -- whoops. Sorry wrong sheet.

>> It's where it says "we're nearing".

>> It was the right sheet! Darn it! Okay. [Laughter].

So, we're nearing the end of our program. [Laughter].

>> Find your light!

>> And like the spirals of traditional arts and culture, we want to come back to the place where we began; began this conversation. Traditional arts remind us to hold on to our memory, to our histories. Our cultural practices are vehicles of belonging, solidarity, and coalition. They are a constant affirmation that we are not alone, our ask today is that we invite one another to build and continue building. That we make intentional moves to be in community with and for one another.

>> And that we're living in a time where White supremacist capitalist patriarchy is ever-present. And unfortunately, as you've seen examples in today and every day in our lives, fighting for a dignified life is the most important thing you can do. We can do. So we're also living in a time whereas my boss, Isela says, radical imagination is not -- what she say? No longer an option. Radical imagination is no longer an option but an imperative; right? Yes. Let's give a hand for that.

[Applause]

And the intersections of our struggles whether it be houselessness or homelessness, immigration, language, land, being queer, or part of the LGBTQ community. These things invite us to assemble, to self-assemble, to not wait for permission to assemble, but to be bold and to be, to take that permission ourselves, to give ourselves that permission and be together like Duane just said you know us pulling each other up and towards one another because this is what we need. We need each other and we have each other; right? And so I'm gonna quote Alison de La Cruz. She's right there. And she says, you know, this idea about, you know, somebody could say well, we're just preaching to the choir, right? And it's not so much, well, I'll quote her. Not only preaching to the choir but singing loudly together and maybe even
writing some new songs, right? In order to do this, we need to draw on our resources as Daniela mentioned earlier, it's not just about capital resource; right? There's so many other things that we have yet we definitely don't have capital resources. But there are a lot of things that we do have that we can leverage to support one another and to build pressure and to advocate for ourselves, not only for more funding, right? But for a new system, for a new system that allows us to cooperate and to proliferate systems of cooperation.

So, I'm going to hand it over to Alo Black. Let's give him a hand.

[ Applause ]

>> Thank you, good evening, everyone.

>> Good evening!

>> I think I'll start by sharing a song and then I'm gonna share some of my observations of the conversations that happened earlier. But this is a song from one of my favorite song writers and singers; Donny Hathaway. He sang:

Hang on to the world! As it spins around.

Just don't let the spin get you down.

Things are moving fast.

Hold on tight and you will last.

Keep your self-respect, your manly pride.

Get yourself in gear, keep your stride.

Never mind your fears.

Brighter days will soon be here.
Take it from me, someday we'll be free.

Those words. Those words remind me about who we are. It's about taking the opportunities we have to offer ourselves to others. And that's what's happening here in this session of REMAP LA. As I walked around and eaves dropped on conversation, I learned that you are some very smart people. I heard some really big words. And I think Omar Ramirez said "operationalize". I was, like, I'm gonna use that one day. So what I want to do, this is your chance to sing. I wrote down some of the conversations, I wrote down some of the things that I heard and I thought we're really insightful and tried to synthesize them into some rally chants, maybe some protest hymns, maybe just, maybe just some REDCAT songs that only stay here, who knows what they are? [Laughter].

But I hope you hear yourself in the words that I chose to write down and make songs out of. All right.

This one is gonna require some hand clapping. If you're not -- if you are rhythmically challenged -- [Laughter] -- please, you know what to do. Okay. So, I need to hear y'all clap like this. Clap, clap, clap. [Indicating.]

Control the narrative, change the language, create a new paradigm, control the narrative, change the language, create a new power dynamic. Control the narrative, change the language, create a new power dynamic. All right. So this is what I heard.

I heard in a conversation, people speaking about how language needs to change because as Quetzal mentioned there's what some may call the White Anglo male normative narrative that permeates all culture and so to sort of overcome the history and the present existence, we have to transform the language so that it really represents us, like, the term they mentioned, marginalized communities. Well, that's not really the term that you use if you come from that community. That's home. Okay?
So I thought maybe we change it to "this marginalized community is full of opportunity." This marginalized community is full of opportunity. This marginalized community is full of opportunity. This marginalized community is full of opportunity. This marginalized community is full of opportunity. And don't you forget it!

[ Cheers and Applause ].

These are opportunity communities. Look around, Black and Yellow, Red and Brown. Sometimes White. That's all right. [ Laughter ].

You know, there are allies in the audience, okay? Allies in the audience. If you have privilege and you're here, thank you for being here. And, you know, I'm not trying to single people out, I think it's important you know that we see you and we appreciate you for being here. You're the ones who get a seat at the table, you can speak, you can speak in solidarity with us for the changes that we're speaking about here. Let's see.

Success. Success. Success is in the experience. I heard a very eloquent woman talking about the markers of success in, you know, organizations, nonprofits and how they measure how well they're doing. What's their impact.

Well, what she said was that it really is about the successes within the experience of the organization itself and the individual who has been participating. Not every organization has millions of dollars to make impact. But the one-on-one impact that an individual has is a success. That was very, very important for me to hear and I wrote it down and so I wanted to share that with you. Success, success, success is in the experience.

Success, success, success is in the experience.

Success, success success is in the experience.

Success, success, success is in the experience.
Success, success, success is in the experience.

And then, one that I want to leave you with is, there’s two. Before I go, make sure I say this one. There was a talk about leveraging assets. So I put it in to, I just synthesized a few things that,

Leverage assets, share your gifts, build a bridge through relationships. Leverage assets there are artists here, there are scholars here, there are philanthropists here, leverage your assets. What do you bring to the table? Share that gift and by sharing that gift you build a bridge and that bridge is the relationship and so that relationship can exist across different parts of L.A. It doesn't have to be just within your community. That's the bridge that's part of REMAPing, bridging from the farthest corners and bringing people together.

And this last one I think is something that is simple but it makes a lot of sense.

When it comes to L.A., you must remember L.A. is a city with many centers.

All of you, all of you come from a certain center in L.A.

So when it comes to L.A., you must remember L.A. is a city with many centers.

When it comes to L.A., you must remember L.A. is a city with many centers.

[ Cheers and Applause ].

Thank you!

>> DANIELA ALVAREZ: We just want to thank again everyone who’s participated, presented, all of the artists who we’ve worked with and especially you guys for joining us tonight!

>> MORGAN CAMPER: Can you all just give a round of applause for Alo one more time?

[ Applause ]

Yes! So please be sure to join us for our artist-led workshops, they're happening throughout the next nine days throughout the city and our cultural community benefits toolkit workshops happening tomorrow, next Wednesday, and Thursday.
>> DANIELA ALVAREZ: And join us outside for some really good food from Todo Breve and help us celebrate the night! Thanks!

[ Cheers and Applause ]

[ End of event ]