

PLACE Collaborative Grant

Partnerships for Listening and Action by Communities and Educators Bringing Theory to Practice



The PLACE Collaboratory was launched in Fall 2018 with aims to bring together a group of academic-community partnerships, involving approximately ten academic institutions from diverse sectors and regions, in a civic engagement initiative sponsored by Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP). The collaboratory aims to distill best practices for such partnerships, to model the role of the humanities and public-cultural work in sustaining them,

and to pursue a strategy of networked collaboration in disseminating them across higher education. Pitzer College, because of the work of the CEC and CASA Pitzer programs and centers, was invited to be involved in this national PLACE Collaboratory and was generously awarded \$30,000 for the next two years.

Pitzer's PLACE team consists of undergraduate student, Ray Hill-Cristol; graduate student, Christian Cabunag, professor, Tessa Hicks Peterson alongside community partners from Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice (Lyzbeth Mendoza, community engagement and policy director; Jessica Hernandez, digital media coordinator, Ramon Morales, community leader) and from the Inland Empire Immigrant Youth Collective, Najayra



Valdovinosoto. This group met weekly throughout 2019-20 and tri-weekly during the summer. They launched a collaborative community photography art project April 14, 2020 with ten community artist participants from ICIJ and IEIYC (primarily undocumented immigrants, from teenagers to grandmothers, brand new artists to seasoned ones, community activists to street vendors). The PLACE team and community artists engaged weekly check-in digital gatherings where participants and team leaders continued conversations to build community, discuss how the photo-taking process was going, shared photography tips and suggested themes, and demonstrated our support for this budding

community. At the close of June, we formally ended the photo-taking portion and engaged in a process for collective editing and curation of photos. Each participant curated their own selection of top ten photos, provided descriptions of each and a biography about themselves. We met to look at and provide feedback on the photos and debrief about the process of taking them, writing and reflecting on them, and thinking together what shape the public exhibit should take.

This final conversation resulted in a number of ideas, including using the photos online in photo galleries of our participating organizations' websites, creating our own website to highlight all photos and the artists, and eventually printing them on large banners so they can be used for in-person events, advocacy efforts, gallery viewing, and perhaps eventually translating them into a digital or print book or zine to be used for educational, promotional and personal uses. The group also hoped to host both a digital launch party, inviting friends, families, participants, team leaders and the public to view the photos and discuss with the artists the process and what it meant to them in meaning-making around their lived experiences of immigration in our region.

We are working on building the website now hope and to launch the website publicly in Fall 2020, and later into other modalities and platforms.