

THE 30 YEAR HISTORY OF THE CAFÉ ON A, Y ADELANTE!



By, Armando Vazquez July 16, 2019

“Think global; act locally in revolutionary self-determination”...Chicano activist dicho

In our (the Café on A familia) current temporary moments of flux and uncertainty (a familiar place!) I wanted to provide the interested activist our kind of mercurial blue print for community building and actions for Oxnard and throughout the country. It is a fluid blueprint to be sure but for the past 30 years Debbie and I followed our hearts in community service and in the process we learned the true meaning of unconditional love.

I moved into the Ventura County area over 30 years ago. Immediately, I decided that Oxnard would be my headquarters for my activist work. I was working as a vocational rehabilitation counsellor in the old California Workers’ Compensation system. I witnessed the devastation of many injured workers’ lives, the suffering of their families and loved ones in a predatory system that was designed to benefit the insurance corporations, the medical industry and the legal profession- at the expense of the injured worker.

My prior professional work had included working as an elementary school teacher, a probation officer, a mental health counsellor activist/advocate and a property management executive in public housing. I worked with mostly low income and people of color who all struggled mightily to make ends meet as they chased the American dream. I have used my writings and art to chronicle the people’s struggles.

About 25 years ago I met my life long business partner, Dr. Debbie DeVries; and in one transformative meeting the direction of my professional work was altered forever. From the beginning we were led by love. We had to be led by faith and love as we had no money, and didn’t really know the city of Oxnard. I remember Debbie asking me where would be the best place to set up shop to begin our activist work. I told her that we should find the city’s housing projects and we would find the population that we would serve.

As it turned out the Colonia housing projects already had a social service center, called the Family Investment Center, a building that housed various local social service providers. The various agencies were providing social services to children, seniors, parents, but there were no services for the hundreds of at-risk adolescent, teenage youth or young adults in the Oxnard

projects. We were provided an “office” the size of small closet and gratefully we opened our doors to the community. It was a no brainer, our target population was going to be the gang affiliated youth and those youth vulnerable to the influences of the gang. Debbie had no experience with this gang youth population, and we had no relationship with this community.

Father Boyle talks about God/Love being always at the periphery of society; where the pain, desperation and need is the greatest. That is where the revolution is to be waged, where we wanted to be.

From the beginning we were flexible, we had to be in the beginning: we had absolutely no affinity with the community, as I noted previously we had no money, and an evolving educational and jobs curriculum: more than anything we had the “ganas, the si se puede” attitude that we could take on the impossible and create transformational magic. The Oxnard Housing Authority managed two large housing projects, La Colonia and Squires, both areas had a “loitering problem exacerbated by gang members”, we were immediately assigned to work with these at-risk youth. In a few months the honeymoon with housing authority management ended badly.

We were thrown out of our closet size office located in the Family Investment Center (FIC) of the Oxnard Housing Authority. The reasons for our untimely eviction from both the two major housing complexes in Colonia and Squires, were bogus. The truth was the palatable fear that the city authorities had when they saw a group of “gang” members congregated outside FIC ready to work hard to turn their lives around, and this was simply too much. The housing authorities feared the youth’s success and unity. So the housing management alleged that we didn’t have up to date and current liability insurance, which was a lie. The real reason we were kicked out of the two huge and acutely problematic public housing projects was that we were working with too many “hard core and dangerous gang” members that in unity could cause righteous hell for them. Together these “gang” youth were a unique problem that the housing authority would not deal with and so they terminated our contract. In truth the city authorities were more concerned with maintaining the miserable status quo of harassing and profiling the “gang” youth rather than giving us and the youth a chance to help create some hope and possibility in the lives of the these youth. To add insult to injury these “hard core gang “ members were doing an incredible job as paid construction demolition trainees in a demolition project that had been initially supported and funded by the housing authorities. In miraculous desperation, the very day , November 11, 1998, that we were kicked out of Colonia and Squires we found the Café on A in downtown Oxnard.

THE CAFÉ ON A:



It was a dark, windy and stormy night, and we were terribly lost, homeless, in the winter of 1998, as Debbie and I went looking for a new office. We had no idea where we would find a new location, what we were absolutely sure about was that we could not let these at-risk youth, who had worked so hard to turn their young lives around and walk away from them. We had a couple of major problems; no money and two groups of at-risk youth from two separate gangs: we needed a centrally located space that was neutral ground for both gangs.

With love guiding us, before the end of the night we had found a new home, the Café on A. We quickly regrouped; we got the youth to work peacefully together. The youth were now unemployed so collectively we all started looking for work and educational opportunities. At the same time we began to remediate and enhance both academic and vocational skills of all the youth.

One of the core and foundational instructional tools in everything that we did was to incorporate the arts in all our programming. I had always had the dream of recreating a community space that emulated the spirit of El Jardin de Flor y Canto, a community-based art center in the heart of the barrio that a group of us CSUN college students founded in the early 1970's in Pacoima, a Chicano majority community just like Oxnard. The arts proved to be our magical connection to the youth; they wrote, rapped, painted, used graffiti and "placa" art to share their life experiences, and in doing so they opened their hearts and minds to their own individual transformational change. It was the art of the youth that guided us in developing the Keys to Empower Youth in the System (KEYS) Leadership Academy, a classroom and community-based curriculum that provided academic remediation, vocational enhancement and direct community activism in community empowerment projects, that we hoped would help in levelling the playing field for these acutely at-risk youth.



THE KEYS TO EMPOWER YOUTH IN THE SYSTEM (KEYS):



Our mission of the Keys Leadership Academy was created to engage the multi-ethnic youth community of greater Oxnard, to proactively create/support efficacious and congruent artistic, cultural and educational enhancement programs, healthy living activities, community service, in support of all our youth populations in our community and their families. We incorporated and developed social justice equity programs and classes that utilized ethnic and culturally congruent programming both of which, of course, are the most effective methods of connecting with our community. The unconditional loving principle and defining philosophy of the Keys Leadership Academy is the active promotion on a city- wide basis of a youth empowerment, leadership, stewardship and service activist model to help promote community wellness and safety, health, which met our mission of ethnically and culturally congruent education, and community wide service programs.

To be clear, unconditional love is about how we promise ourselves to never under any conditions stop bringing the flawed and humble truth of who we are to each other. Much has been said about unconditional love today: in the noise of the egos it has been badly misconstrued as an extreme form of turning the other cheek: pathetic advice to anyone who has been abused or suffers in pain. This exaggerated passivity is quite different from the unimpeded flow of love that nurtures, strengthens and guides who we are. In truth unconditional love does not require passive acceptance of whatever happens in the name of love. Rather in the real spaces of our daily relationships it means maintaining a commitment that no event, condition or circumstance will keep us from bringing all of who we are to each other with pure unadulterated truth and honesty.

Dating back to 1998, the Foundation, EERD (Educational and Employment Resources Development) has implemented the KEYS Youth Leadership Academy. This 10 week after school program has provided intensive academic remediation, tutoring, postsecondary and vocational exploration and college enrolment, as well as a large contingent of well trained and culturally sensitive peer mentors, a structured community- based empowerment and stewardship activities program with at risk youth and their adult and peer community mentors.

The KEYS Youth Leadership Academy has enrolled more than 2,000 youth at Oxnard Community College since 1998. While the core of the ages range from 10 yrs-18 yrs, the program has also been modified to meet younger children (families) with emotional struggles at home and school. This program has been highly successful, and among many other awards and recognition, the Founders and the KEYS Youth Leadership Academy received the designation by the California Wellness Foundation as being one of the nineteen best programs to prevent youth violence within the state. In addition, KEYS Youth Leadership Academy was awarded recognition by the FORD Driving Dreams through Education program. This designation made our program one of eight US programs which dramatically increased high school completion among severely at risk populations and was honored to be recognized by the FORD Driving Dreams grant process.



The OXNARD MUTICULTURAL MENTAL HEALTH COALITION (OMMH):



OMMH has become a recognized and respected voice in addressing mental health in the Oxnard and Ventura County area. The concept of Community- Defined Evidence Practice is our local mission to have our community- defined mental health well practice respected, expanded and included as a viable and effective mental health modality in the current institutional construct. We believe that the historical and effective mental health practices that we have used in our diverse community is handed down from one generation to another are highly effective, user friendly mental health modalities that can only strengthen our local existing institutional mental delivery.

This then helped focus us to the current work that we are doing with the Oxnard Multicultural Mental Health (OMMH) Coalition, where the alienated and marginalized communities of

Oxnard are attempting to craft a mental health wellness movement that is congruent with our unique needs. So as I hear my mother's words loud and clear, I know what to do and I act. I am going back to my curandera ancestral roots; within all us, to an astonishing degree, it is the cure to our physical and mental health. This tool has been there all along; we have just let the noise of institutions, bureaucracy and the doctors, the experts, the functionaries and others contaminate and then control the power of our bodies, minds and hearts.

The noise in the current mental health industry is deafening and driving us literally crazy. The principal best practices mental health model pushed and pedalled in barrios and ghettos is "sit down, shut up, open up and swallow the bullshit and the pill!" How can this pathetic mental health model help us? We would be crazy to go to such a mental health model for service, so we don't go. Within the past month the Latino Committee of the OMMH conducted a short, but very representative survey of mental health needs and practices in the Oxnard. The findings screams out the clear findings that the low income Latino community of Oxnard does not use mental health services; they do not know how to access existing services, and they do not trust the existing mental health service delivery model.

We at OMMH are currently looking at and actively participating in the much maligned and discredited community- defined practices that we have used to ameliorate and efficaciously address our mental health issues for centuries: before they were hi-jacked by the western medical model. We have gone back to the drum, the flute, to the communal dance, to the fire where we wail, scream and chant to release our mental anguish and pain, to sacred herbs and plants to restore the balance between the mind and body. Back to our mother god that will help us restore and find within us our own unique balance of body and mind, and our scared place here on earth so that we can be the hands of God and serve to help our brothers and sisters in our communities. I feel you jefiita; you are in my heart, and it is there as you told me many years ago that I was destined to find the love that heals all.

CHIQUES ORGANIZING for RIGHTS and EQUALITY (CORE):



CORE, circa 2006

Acuna Arts Collective, circa 2016

Since 2004 CORE and Oxnard community activists have been fight to abolish the two Civil Gang Injunctions that currently plague our community. The initial community activism was organic, the homies, the mothers, the girl friends and others affected by the gang injunction began talking to us, seeking out advice and help as the cops began to move in on them. We mobilized as best we could, fought hard and in the end we were defeated. We lost the initial battle of eliminating the gang injunction; it now appears that we may win the war.

It is now 2019 and we are very close in finally defeating this unconstitutional and repressive policing “tool” as the OPD likes to describe the two injunctions. Below is one of the latest Op-Ed articles that I, Armando, wrote that provides an overview of the fight that CORE has waged against the unconstitutional and racist Oxnard Civil “Gang” Injunction.

The Fabricated Crisis: The Oxnard Civil “Gang” Injunction; Oxnard’s equivalency to Trump’s wall

By, Armando Vazquez

February 21, 2019

On February 19, 2019 in the Superior Court of Ventura County the Oxnard Police Department (OPD) and the Ventura County District Attorney (DA) requested, before Judge Kent Kellegrew, the approval of significant and compelling amendment changes to the original Oxnard’s Civil “Gang” Injunctions (OCGI). The OPD and the DA had previously filed a motion at the end of 2018 to amend the OCGI. The local law enforcement decision to file for the amendments was due to a recent injunction- adverse state-wide court ruling against law enforcement and the continued pressure exerted by community based activist groups like Chiques Organizing for Rights and Equality (CORE) in challenging the constitutionality of the OCGI.

At the heart of the ongoing state and Oxnard injunction battle between law enforcement and the local activist communities is the issue of due process rights of the individuals enjoined. Specifically the way that individuals were initially (beginning in 2006) enjoined to the gang injunction was unconstitutional because these individuals were not given a chance to contest (in a local court) their alleged gang membership before they were formally rolled up into the ranks of the enjoined and thereby deprived of critical constitutionally protected rights and liberties.

Never forget that the OPD has enjoined over 1000 individuals since 2006. What is really being revealed, highlighted, and argued now in the Ventura County Superior Court is whether the originally enjoined were deprived of their constitutional due process rights due to the unlawful initial OPD and DA method of service. In a shameless effort to bury their past illegal and unconstitutional questionable actions the OPD and the DA are now before the court admitting that they “may” have illegally served and enjoined thousands of individuals from Oxnard over the past 15 years; ‘but it’s OK judge, we are now mending our unconstitutional ways, and getting it right after 15 years’. This is a systemic, racist and illegal outrage and lawsuits should follow to assure that this grossly sloppy, ill-conceived, and unconstitutional police action never occurs in Oxnard again.

At the February 19, 2019 court hearing Judge Killegrew authorized the Oxnard police to contact six suspected members from Colonia and Southside about amendment changes to the original OCGI. The judge ruled that the “new and improved service” proposed method designed by the DA and the OPD to spread the word among the gangs about the proposed amendments to the original OCGI was legal. Additionally the judge indicated that the proposed method of “service” provided the suspected individuals with written intent of action by local law enforcement and gave the suspected individuals the chance to challenge and participate in the court proceeding. We will monitor how this “new and improved service” by the OPD plays out and how the suspected individuals are actually contacted to assure that their due process rights are not trampled on again.

The Civil “Gang’ Injunctions of Oxnard were secretly and horrifically crafted by a fast and loose out of control law enforcement juggernaut in the early 2000’s that wanted to capitalize and exploit the fears and ignorance of the community. 15 years later the unconstitutional sins and legal transgression of the OCGI are being revealed. Thousands of “suspects” were targeted, served and enjoined by a law enforcement “tool” that violated the constitutionally protected due process rights of every single one of the thousands of Latino individuals that were rolled up by the OCGI. The cops and the DA are now saying in effect, ‘My bad’ and want to move on with their “new and improved” method of legal service and advice.

The Latino, for that matter the entire Oxnard community, must never forget, there has to be public accountability and reparation to those adversely affected by the OCGI. The Oxnard Civil “Gang” Injunction has done deep and irreversible harm to the community for a variety of reasons. The OCGI and the law enforcement accomplices have created this local horrific myth that without the injunction, “gang” lawlessness will once again terrorize the community. Creditable studies have proven over the decades that Oxnard continues to be one of the safest cities (for its size) in the nation.

At the very critical period of 2003-2006, the OPD and the DA were shamelessly reporting that there were over 3000 active gang members in Oxnard. We know now that this OPD assertion was false and misleading. Nonetheless this was the damaging and irresponsible narrative that the OPD used to “sell” the PCGI to the residents of Oxnard.

When the OPD suspended the enforcement of the injunctions in mid-2108 there were approximately 625 enjoined “gang” members. All 625 enjoined today were suddenly “freed” from OCGI prohibitions and conditions by the OPD and the DA. Why? Because the cops and the DA now publicly admit they have trampled on the due process right of all 625 formerly enjoined individuals. Now, with revised injunctions and short term, the cops want to go after 28 “active and dangerous gang” members, they will start with 12 individuals and rollout their “new and improved” constitutional service protocol. The math stinks to high heaven. The fact is there was no, and never has been, an out of control “gang’ problem that could not be addressed by conventional OPD policing.

The OPD and the DA made a pact with the devil way back in 2003. The cops would get another “new, hard-hitting and innovative” policing “toy/tool”, impressive funding law enforcement streams, recognition as a local innovative tough on gang law enforcement partnership for the country to emulate, universal local unquestioned support, and little to no accountability. Who could resist such a deal? The devil is not a good bed partner and now the horrific sins of this partnership are being revealed. Thousands of lives horrifically disrupted by the OCGI, millions of taxpayer dollars squandered, little to no impact on the quality of safety in community.

Perception seems to be everything, the OPD has sold the community a highly questionable community safety bill of goods, and the community has bought it. This is Oxnard equivalency to Trump’s wall; a false, divisive, costly and harmful reality. Oxnard we can do much better, let us

invest in social justice, education, employment, the arts and a social net that catches and help the at-risk, the needy and the disenfranchised of our community.

THE OXNARD PUBLIC LAND PARTNERSHIP:

One of the prominent goals of the national green new deal proposed is the "Green upgrading all existing buildings" in the country for energy efficiency. Our Go Green Oxnard program proposed in the early 1990's to work with the city of Oxnard and all existing "green" non-profits and the county and state government to begin an energy efficiency audit program of all publicly owned properties in the greater Oxnard area. In 2019 we proposed the same green efficiency program with all of the previous partners. This is one of the proposals that we made to the city of Oxnard.



The Transfer of Ownership of Successor Agency Buildings/Properties to the City of Oxnard and the Oxnard Public Land Partnership:

For the past 24 months, The Foundation, EERD has been working with the Acuna Arts Collective, the Oxnard Multicultural Health Coalition, Laborers Union Local 585, CSUCI, CSUN, SEIU, CAUSE, the local Longshoremen's Union, Clinicas Del Camino Real, Montecito Bank, One Love Dance Company, Unity in Recovery, The KEYS Leadership Academy, as well as other strategic community leaders, business, education, and social service stakeholders to create a partnership with the City of Oxnard in an attempt to forge a local, diverse and congruent Oxnard Public Land Partnership plan for the disposition of the current building/property (approximately 39) assets in the Successor Agency current portfolio.

We know that you, the city manager team, are super busy and have a million and one city related assignments on your plate. Due to the nature of the work and the extraordinary events that are currently consuming the city of Oxnard I don't see a slowing of operational management by crisis in the near future. If anyone can bring a steady hand, a bright mind and unwavering professional work ethic to the City Manager's offices, it is you.

That is why I am reaching out to you on behalf of our collaborative. In the current chaos of the city of Oxnard we think that great opportunities could be missed. One of those opportunities is to look at Successor Agency buildings/properties and think outside the box, like so many California cities have already done (Los Angeles, Hemet, Santa Ana, and San Francisco, Moorpark, Thousand Oaks and Ventura, to mention a few) with the “transfer of ownership” clause in California law.

We have done our due diligence, researched the code which allows transfer of Successor Agency Properties to a city for community service enrichment, prosperity, and safety, i.e. California Health & Safety. Code Section 34179 as added by AB X I 26.

We have shared this invaluable research and information that we gleaned with Oxnard city management, local legal, business, educational and social service stakeholders and they all concur with the Acuna Arts Collective that we should sit down and talk about the extraordinary fiduciary possibilities that a “transfer of ownership” and other potential legal “windows”, if explored and acted upon could immediately bring to the city of Oxnard. This is a once in a life time opportunity and can create an incredible out of the box kick start in the future downtown vision and development projects. We have nothing to lose at this time, and the clock is ticking very fast.

The Foundation, EERD (The Acuna Arts Collective) has made several official bids of acquisition, specifically to acquire the Social Security Building (445 South B Street, and adjacent parking lot property) over the past year. We have not received one return courtesy email or phone call, we call on you to help us get a meeting at the start of the year.

Based on past historical inactivity and lack of success on the part of the Successor Agency, we are afraid that in the next six (6) months the Successor Agency will not be able to produce one viable RFQ proposals or actual purchase offers on the Social Security Building and adjacent properties or any other Successor Agency buildings/properties. This total lack of active success will trigger the state of California through their local proxy, the Ventura County Oversight Board, to move aggressively to take over all of the “disposition of assets” activities and actions.

The Ventura County oversight board action will render the city of Oxnard as an impotent/incompetent/inconsequential bystander as the oversight board does as it deems appropriate with our (the people of Oxnard) property and assets. This take over by the county oversight board is projected now to take pace no later than July 1, 2018. Let’s not let this happen, but we must act quickly; time is not on our side.

We have provided the city of Oxnard with more than sufficient professional research material and legal arguments that should at the very least merit a serious meeting of the principal stakeholders (city of Oxnard, downtown stakeholders, local community leaders) with responsible city administrators.

Here is what we are currently proposing to you as the (Interim) City Manager and what we have proposed previously to the Successor Agency and the City of Oxnard. Our collaborative presents this idea with unanimous approval by a very strong and respected ad hoc committee of local CBO's, unions, educational institutions, businesses, students, artists and stakeholder residents of Oxnard.

FLOR Y CANTO: CELEBRATING OUR ART & CULTURAL LEGACY



The mission of Flor y Canto is to re-introduce through our hearts and minds the magical and transformative art and cultural legacy of our local Latino Maestra/os; in our words, songs, dances and images throughout Ventura County. Flor y Canto asserts self-determination and proclaims that we must create, write, sing, dance and celebrate our own liberation legacy because it is uniquely ours to rejoice and share with the world.

The Legacy: We have sadly witnessed the often obscure and soon to forgotten death (both artistically and physically) of far too many of our Latino Artist companeros; and with their death goes the art that they once created. Flory Canto will continue to honor and share with the world their magic while these maestra/os are still alive and assure that they have a place in our local history.

Flor y Canto will interview the maestra/os in their creative environment and video record the interview which will be historical conversation and actual workshop demonstration will be posted on the internet for the world to enjoy. When possible visual and performance exhibitions will be staged locally, honoring the maestra/o of the month.

The Flor y Canto Museum: An institution in Oxnard is required to house the art creation of our maestra/os. The ideal museum will be large enough to accommodate visual exhibitions and performances; as well as having enough space to accommodate "film nights" that will feature the videos of our mestra/os, and host forums, presentations and meet the maestra/os gathering.

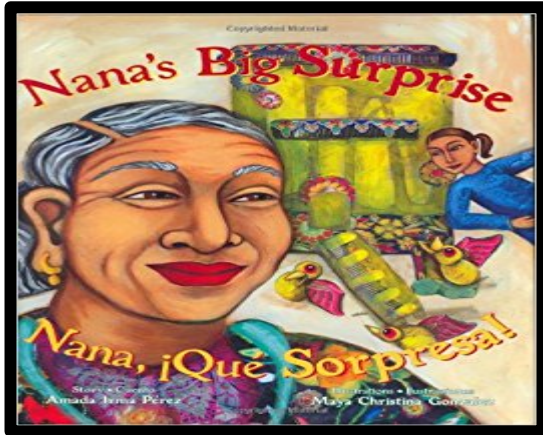
Funding: To fund this important project Flor y Canto will be submitting proposals to the Oxnard Cultural Arts Commission, The California Arts Council, The National Endowment of the Arts, as well as other arts and cultural funding corporations and institutions. Flor y Canto will also work closely with the Acuna Arts Collective to assure that every effort is made by the city of Oxnard and its resident to secure the Social Security building as the designated Flor y Canto Museum.

The following describes several of the Flor Y Canto activities and plans of the Acuna Art Collective:

CELEBRATING OUR ARTS MASTERS: Beginning in July, 2019 AACT officially begins the process of memorializing in word, art, videos and forums Maestra/os of the Oxnard and Ventura County region. The practices of honoring our Art Maestros is not new to the arts world. In Oxnard, it can lead our community to an exciting, new and timely, self-determination introduction to the celebration and academic recognition of the work that our Maestra/os have created in their careers. This honoring of our artists is a gift to us, our children and the society at large. Manuel Unzueta, Chicano Maestro artist, professor and poet will be our first honoree. Manuel has been involved in the Chicano movement since its inception in the late 1960's. His work in Santa Barbara, Oxnard and throughout the tri-counties has resulted in the empowerment of thousands of youth, students and activists. We take particular pride in honoring Manuel because in a real sense Manuel is the epitome of why we must document and memorialize the arts work of our maestros. You may recall that on March 1, 2013 a fire destroyed more than 1000 original arts pieces that Manuel had created over more than four decades. Yes, more than ever we must preserve our arts and cultural treasures in our community.



THE FLOR Y CANTO MEET THE ARTISTS SERIES:



FERIA DE LIBROS: Coming in September, 2019, The Flor y Canto “Meet the Artists” series will celebrate exciting arts and cultural events that will bring renowned artists (all disciplines) to the Oxnard community. We have invited more than 50 local and renowned authors to participate. We will again honor our own master writers, Amada Perez, Florencia Ramirez, Rene Corado Martin Gonzalez, and Dennis O’Leary and other local authors. We will have these master writers read from one or more of their books, followed by the authors panel presentation to the community.

The Dirty Little Secrets Violence Education and Prevention Program was a transformative, redemptive and healing oral and writing program for and by young women who have survived domestic violence and sexual abuse and are talking, acting out and writing about it in a healing group at Cafe on A in Oxnard. The Dirty Little Secrets project design consisted of three parts: gathering oral histories through writing workshops; Public presentation throughout the county of Ventura, the performance of the Gift, a one act play about domestic violence and sexual violence throughout Ventura County: and community education and out using, film-making– video documentary workshops on domestic, sexual violence prevention lectures and seminars, and screenings and public discussions were held throughout Ventura County.

MAESTRA/OS ARTISTS RETROSPECTIVE: Important retrospective fine art exhibitions will be curated and staged that will showcase important local fine arts masters. Our first art exhibition is scheduled for September-October, 2019 and we will have a group master art exhibition that will showcase Jaqueline Biaggi, Armando Vazquez, and Felipe Flores. This Master art retrospective promises to be one of the most important art exhibitions staged in Oxnard and Ventura County.



The Acuna Arts Collective is humbly doing all it can (at no cost to the community) to promote the magical and diverse art scene in the Oxnard region. We are asking the city of Oxnard to continue to partner with us so that we are functioning as wise, fiscally astute stewards, ambassadors and active participants of the local arts in Oxnard.

Continued Arts and Culture at the Acuna Gallery: In the month of January, 2017 we found ourselves in the middle of curating a major art exhibition featuring some of the major works of George Yepes, one of the greatest contemporary artists of the world. We had other local artists complement and support the George Yepes exhibit. Another Opening Night Reception for the Julian Vergara exhibit is now scheduled for January, 2020. The city of Oxnard currently funds an Arts in Public Places (AIPP) program, which is designed to help local artists and art organizations with limited funding and support. As always the AIPP program is facing an uncertain year with respect to funding dollars. Please help keep AIPP alive, thriving and empowering our community through the transformational power of the arts.

PRIMAVERA EN FLOR Y CANTO: PRIMAVERA EN FLOR Y CANTO: We welcomed Summer, 2019 with a variety of dance and performance arts celebration that will include performances by One Love Dance Company of Oxnard, NEMA, Mariachi workshops and performances, and the Flor y Canto Teatro, which shares a series of one act plays. Former KEYS students will perform THE GIFT: A STORY OF REDEMPTION in November, 2019.

We started the One Love Zumbaile Exercise Program at the Café on A, and now we have hundreds of women, their children (and a very few men) taking advantage of this great exercise dance program. The women love the exercise program and the results are astonishing, before our eyes, bodies and minds are being transformed.



FLOR Y CANTO EN OXNARD: Armando Vazquez has been an artist, writer and arts aficionado for over 50 years, and has worked in Mexico, Los Angeles, the barrios of Santa Barbara, San Fernando, Pacoima, Oxnard and Ventura; so along with the privilege of traveling throughout the Americas and admiring, studying and purchasing our magical art and culture he has had the honor and distinct pleasure of curating and coordinating countless arts exhibitions, concerts, performances and lectures in our local community!.

Based on that extensive history we unequivocally believe that the Oxnard region has a uniquely creative and ethnically diverse world class concentration of talented artists. Because of our rich cultural abundance within the city there is no need to again seek outside of our community to “begin again” an arts renaissance in Oxnard, it is here already, all we have to do is make a concentrated effort to engage and support the artist. There is no need to travel outside the city to learn the “secrets of renaissance arts” success from other cities. Oxnard has the artists here, right now, who need to be supported right here in our community. Let us not spend our time, resources and money and be misguided into believing we must look far away. We can celebrate what untapped cultural riches we have right now.

The Café on A/Acuna Arts & Cultural Center in Oxnard created an incredibly successful, democratic, important, culturally/ethnically congruent and eclectic template for art culture on the local level to flourish right here. So instead of spend our limited energy, resources and funds, we can achieve this sharing of cultural abundance here in Oxnard for just pennies on the dollar. We don’t have to look any further! The forgotten artists (many disciplines are richly represented) are here, creating magical art and are in desperate need to receive our local governmental and institutional support (in faith, money, locales, in-kind support).

ACCESS WATER OXNARD:



The after- school KEYS Leadership Academy was conducted from the Café on A. We would invariably be greeted by our students armed with a soft drink or Taquis (poison of the Month), Hot Cheetos, Doritos, or Chicharones. Once in a blue moon a kid would come in with an apple or an orange in her/his hands. We decided to incorporate a healthy living and nutrition module to our regular programming. We reached out to community health partners and began a healthy snack program complete with timely and relevant youth health related topics. We discovered that few of our KEYS youth did any kind of regular exercise and astonishing 97% of our kids could not swim, and the magnificent Pacific shore line just a few miles away.

We began the ACCESS Water Oxnard program about 5 years ago and today we have provided Red Cross certified swim lessons to over 1500 youth, children and their parents. Our short term goal is to get all of our novice swimmers onto the nearby beaches to enjoy one of the most magnificent coastlines in the world, here in Oxnard. Before that can happen on a large scale we need to prepare and train a Junior Life Guard Brigade of Oxnard, so that we are staffing our life guard needs with local home grown youth and adults. Our long term goal is to have certified swim lessons provided to all Oxnard youth free of charge. Our goal is simple: get every youth and parent to become a safe and proficient swimmer. Swim program 2014 introduced Oxnard children and parents to water. Around the same time we began our ACCESS Water Oxnard swim program we decided to start a dance exercise program for farm and factory working women and other women that for whatever reason(s) did not or could not exercise regularly.

Access Water Oxnard is into its 5th year of working to provide low income non-swimming youth of the greater Oxnard area with certified swim lessons. One of the great ironies of city of Oxnard is that even though it has one of the greatest beach fronts in the entire world; yet according to our research we find that more than 90% of low income youth (total community) cannot swim. ACCESS Water wants to change this dangerous reality. We believe that if we teach a kid to swim, in the process we create a conscientious and confident environmental advocate.



THE BLACK AND BROWN YOUTH COALITION:

In the summer of 2011 a group of community folk recognized the potential for increased community empowerment through the strengthening of leadership in youth of color. The Black and Brown Youth Coalition met at the Café on A, and decided to work closer together in a more formalized attempt to organize and mobilize ethnic groups around issues and concerns that uniquely impacted the people of color in the greater Oxnard plains area. One of the principal concerns was stopping the youth on youth violence that was plaguing our community. We felt the best way to address the youth on youth violence problems was to provide skill- based training and gainful employment to our youth.

After more than 40 years of job developing for at risk and low skilled populations, we can report that soft skill training efficacy for at risk and low skilled populations is dismal, and can never replace corporate and governmental commitment, empathy and buy-ins to help a kid land his first job. The corporate businesses have the jobs, and pathetically the community and local government let them squirm off the hook in responsibly connecting with the community growth. In Oxnard local government and CBO's have never been creative or bold enough to make deals or agreements with corporations and businesses to hire youth which would be obvious win-win relationships for all concerned. We must get the business and corporate community involved in providing summer jobs to our youth.

Common sense and progressive social service policy that should make job development and job creation an imperative and vital element of the county. Youth and limited skills adult employment and training program has been all but eliminated. This is sheer stupidity, an immoral affront to our economically disadvantaged county youth, and a horrific waste of taxpayer money. A poor kid needs a job to put money in his/her pocket, to help out the family; to learn invaluable work experience; to feel that she/he is contributing; that she/he is responsible; that she/he is a part of the economic vitality of the community.

GO GREEN OXNARD!



The Café on A/CORE's Grow Green Oxnard Project (GGO!) is a strategic synthesis and strengthening of the community leadership development, mobilization and organizing that the Café on A and Chiques Community Coalition Organizing for Rights and Equality (CORE) has developed for local social justice and democratic self-determination for the last ten years with our acutely marginalized youth, farm workers, and migrant populations.

The Café on A/CORE and its community partners are incorporating into our grassroots work the revolutionary Green Collar Economy movement/ strategy as articulated by Van Jones, as an immediate and practical way to ameliorate two of our biggest community problems: namely environmental degradation and economic exploitation. The Café on A/CORE'S community organizing experience in the greater Oxnard area, coupled with this Grow Green Oxnard project will expand environmental awareness, grass roots democratic participation, help create new living wage green jobs, promote local economic self- determination, enhance the development of human capital, and create a green collar economy movement long overdue in our community.

Poverty, unemployment and the growing economy crisis are daunting, at times psychologically paralyzing issues, for many families throughout Oxnard and the great Ventura county area. The old way of addressing these financial problems, such as trickledown economics, tax cuts and increases, out of control development and construction, the immoral bail out of failed corporations, destructive oil dependency policies, continuing the immoral public funding of the military and the prison industrial complex, got us the worst national recession since the great depression. These failed policies will not bring about the economic turnaround and prosperity that we need to get out of this severe recession. What we need is fresh, yet urgent responses to our current dilemma, that will jump start the local economy.

Green jobs are a new source of living wage jobs for the unemployed, underemployed, the poor and the limited skilled workers, populations that have had historically acute barriers to employment. This population includes youth, high school drop outs, the chronically unemployed and those exiting the juvenile and adult justice systems. And locally, we are talking about a large population of our Oxnard residents who are unemployed, fearful and desperate.

Green jobs are blue collar jobs in green businesses. Green jobs are manual labor jobs in green businesses whose products and services directly improve the local environmental quality of life for all citizens. Green jobs can be created in small and large businesses, as well as non-profit community- based- organizations. These green jobs can be created in the private and the public sector. What is unique and quite revolutionary about these green jobs is that they are almost all

exclusively manual labor jobs where the products and services are produced by workers with limited skills. Limited training is required for most of these green jobs, making them immediately available for the neediest among us.

So what kind of jobs are we talking about? Solar, wind, hydro-electric, power installation, maintenance, development and manufacturing, eco-wise landscaping and construction, weatherizing home and industry, public transportation construction and maintenance, retro fitting wiring and piping in home and industry, as well as other shovel ready green jobs already in existence in Oxnard. Other green jobs are ripe for development and creation the only thing required is the imagination and ingenuity of the local private and public sector to apply our great American know how to this incredible green jobs revolution.

Just think Oxnard, green collar jobs that are relatively high quality, good paying jobs, with relatively low barriers to entry can increase employment in a dynamic green labor market that is literally being created, invented, staffed, and managed now! The combination of these three unique factors means that if we are bold in creating green collar jobs for people it can be a powerful and effective strategy to provide good paying jobs to those folks that have always struggled to get ahead in our competitive economy. Just think this marginalized population can make a major contribution to revitalize the local economy, and at the same time on the receiving end of substantive and life altering employment opportunities.

We must working together to look at our local community in a new and revolutionary way that can create a new capitalist philosophy that embraces the role stewardship of the environment, and at the same time is a true friend of the, the unemployed, the unskilled youth, poor our other marginalized populations in our communities. The exciting part about this Go Green Jobs movement in Oxnard is that those citizens that have been left behind under the old job creation system will be the greatest beneficiaries of this new Go Green Jobs in Oxnard. The poor and unemployed will be the vanguard of this new economic surge in the great city Oxnard. Oxnard let show the nation how to do it, Oxnard lets Go Green Jobs!

This is a suggested, viable curricular description of our Go Green Oxnard, KEYS' Energy Auditor Training program.

Youth Training for the KEYS GGO! Energy Auditor Trainee (EAT) Teams:

Work Schedule: Week One:

Introduction: Energy Auditor Trainees (EAT)

Safety: Review by Energy Auditor Experts in field of Commercial Energy Audit stressing safety on work site.

Instruction provided by experts describing their work and actual examples in specific skills, knowledge, tools, and materials needed to perform the duties of Energy Auditor (Trainee).

Under supervision the EAT will conduct commercial **hands- on energy audit** at the Café on A (official training site).

EAT and supervisors together will **develop the adjusted GGO! Energy Audit Check and Recommendation List**

Practice runs of using and interacting with items on this current and adjusted Energy Audit Checklist to be used in the performance of audits to be conducted in the downtown commercial area of Oxnard will follow.

Evaluation.

Week Two-Six:

Under supervision, the EAT Team will begin conducting commercial energy audits in the downtown Oxnard area (Economic Development Zone). The energy audits conducted by EAT are rudimentary audits and recommendations, and are designed to assist the business to maximize energy efficiency with minimal expense incurred by the business. The duties to be performed by the EAT worker are:

1. Review Building Size/ type and design orientation
- 2 Insulate envelope of building
3. Monitor windows and door types of draught
4. Appliances use throughout the building: fans, pumps, thermostats, and other electronic appliances evaluated for energy efficiency
5. Heating systems evaluated.
6. Lighting systems evaluated. Natural light reviewed and assessed.
7. Hot water systems and usage reviewed and evaluated.
8. Primary/Secondary Heating systems evaluated.
9. Heating systems capacity and insulation review and evaluated.
10. Air conditioning, controls and operations reviewed and evaluated.
11. Primary and secondary space usage and systems utilization reviewed and evaluated.
12. Analysis of business' billing and overall energy costs evaluated in systematic process over last three years with recommendations made.
13. Feasibility of changing/modifying heat and cooling recovery systems analysed.
14. Review of practicality of solar panel installation and usage.
15. Feasibility of bio-mass boiler system utilization analysed.
16. Feasibility of combined heat and power (CHP) unit evaluated.
17. Feasibility and practicality of usage of all alternative energies.
18. Cost saving measures evaluated.
19. Capital investments, tax write offs and grants available for commercial users.
20. Customer Service/ Public relations tools and skills evaluated.

Note: These practical and entry level audits conducted by our EAT teams will

Highlight key energy problems of a building through the energy audit

Select the most cost effective measure (s) or combination of measures to reduce energy usage through improved housekeeping and/or the installation of renewable energy sources.

Provide time frame and a defined payback period for capital investments for small businesses in the downtown Oxnard re-development area.

At the end of each work day the EAT worker and the site supervisors/trainers will review energy audits conducted for the day, and working in teams developed an energy efficiency recommendation list. Upon the development of recommendation check list a follow up appointment will be schedule to discuss energy efficiency recommendation with business.

Conclusion of EAT Summer Jobs Program

Review, Evaluate and Develop a report on the finding of the GGO! EAT summer jobs project, and make a presentation before the Oxnard City Council and the Ventura County Boards of Supervisors on their energy audit findings.

Analysis of Commercial Energy/ end Use Breakdown

Lighting 22%

Refrigeration and Freezers 19%

Computers and Other Electronic equipment 15%

Air Conditioning 10%

Water Heating 2%

Space Heating 9%

Dishwashing/ cooking 11%

Misc. appliances 12%

It is estimated with this energy audits and the recommendations of the EAT team that businesses can save 10- 15% without large capital investment (under \$1000). The goals and objectives of the GGO! project were; **recruit, mobilize, train, prepare organize and engage** 125 youth, and their families around environmental and economic social justice efforts in Oxnard in bringing awareness of the Green Collar Economy and its direct impact to the lives of all the residents with respect to energy efficiency and job sustainability and the green collar movement. This will be measured by youth completion of a leadership training course and increased responsibility on the part of the youth themselves in organizing social justice green engagement action plans. 2. **Energy audits:** trainees/organizers will synthesize and promote basics of green collar economy concepts and promote the local grassroots campaign of environmental and economic self-determination throughout the greater Oxnard area. 3. **Auditor Trainee Process- Mentors and Awareness in Community:** The project will provide training/organizing, empowerment and engagement tools for youth and their families so that they become the catalysts/ driving force in the new environmental and economic work place and throughout the local communities. Out of this organizing effort, the Green Collar Economy community leadership will emerge. 4 Help create Green Collar Jobs with the GGO!community members and their families 5. **Create PR Campaign:** This Project will create a PR campaign designed to target their peers and family members, another affected and marginalized populations of the local Oxnard community about benefits and sustainability of the Green Collar Economy movement in Oxnard.

A cadre of community organized, trained and empowered Green Collar Energy Auditors youth and adult trainees, and a grass roots movement of local green organizers who can help our community residents and businesses save money and reduce energy consumption, while building awareness and sensitivity to environmental and economic issues immediately impacting and affecting lives of the communities being organized and empowered and then will start successfully multiplying. *We are building unique social capital and community capacity by creating a model of green workforce driven by a cadre of disenfranchised and low income youth, farm workers and migrants. In creating and develop this model, we will become among the first mentor/ models of this revolutionary green, social and economic change process in California.*

These are some viable ideas for the future development of a successful, healthy and forward focused Oxnard community. The above scrapbook description includes a brief history,

development and evidence of a youth focused community program, modelled by the Café on A, the Acuna Collective programs in operation since 1998.