



# Tamalpa Institute

*Living more artfully in all aspects of life*

ArtCorps Newsletter Fall 2018



## Welcome to Tamalpa ArtCorps Newsletter!

*If you want a revelation you must make an offering.*

*If you want a healing you must face what needs healing, and you must hold with true compassion what needs healing in others.*

*If you want to dance, dance what matters,*

*Dance honestly,*

*Dance the pain and the joy, the darkness and the light.*

*If you want justice, equality, peace, dance for it without stopping, without giving up.*

*Dance with conviction and with love, no matter what.*

*Feel your body, your heart and your mind while you dance.*

*Feel the world while you dance.*

*Then you will feel what dance really is, and who you really are, and who we can become.*

*If you want healing, if you want justice, if you want equality, if you want love, if you want peace, dance for it.*

*~ Daria Halprin*

Photo by Priscilla Du Preez on Unsplash



This season, in solidarity with the current efforts to empower the voices of women and youth, we are celebrating the work of Tamalpa graduates whose work and visions lie in alignment with these intentions. We hope that bringing these stories to you helps inspire and fuel your own efforts in creating the work you want to see in the world.

## TAMALPA PRACTITIONERS AND THEIR WORK

Tamalpa Practitioners bring the Tamalpa Life/ Art Process® into classrooms, businesses, theaters, design spaces, healthcare centers, therapeutic settings, and diverse communities throughout the world. We've selected a few voices from various backgrounds to highlight how the Tamalpa Life/Art Process® is being used in different contexts, and to illustrate the creativity of our practitioners.

# 2018 TAMALPA PROJECTS AROUND THE WORLD



## KATY MENELL

**Katy Menell** is working with the theme of Journeying from Here to There: Coming Home to the Body. She is offering this work, in Cape Town, South Africa, at an organization offering a residential program supporting and empowering women survivors of domestic violence.

## HEATHER LAMOUREUX

**Heather Lamoureux** is interested in empowering Indigenous women by having them claim their inner leadership and strength through telling their own stories and journeys as they walk into the future. Genocide, the forced assimilation of residential schools and the current neglect of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women are issues demanding reconciliation as well as understanding. She is currently working with youth transitioning out of foster care, self-identified females ages 15-19 years old in Vancouver, British Columbia.



## HELEN-JANE RIDGEWAY

**Helen-Jane Ridgeway** is developing her 'Art as refuge' project, working with refugee women and addressing the humanitarian refugee crisis in Europe and throughout the world. There are thousands upon thousands of 'displaced' men, women and children. She is working with refugees and the Khora Community Center in Athens, Greece.

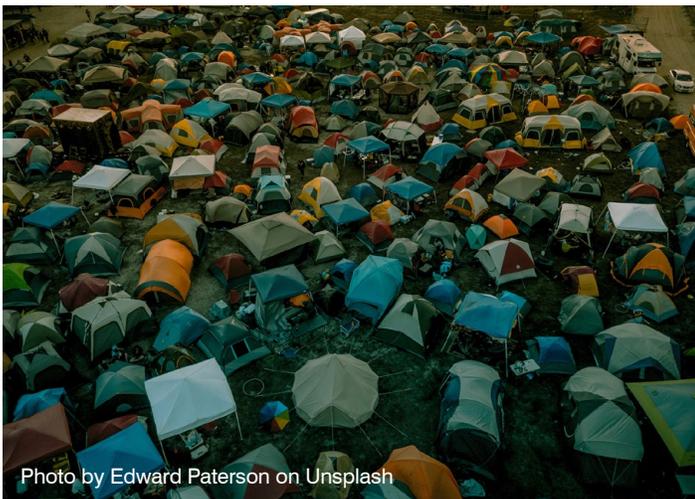


Photo by Edward Paterson on Unsplash

Photo by James Baldwin on Unsplash



## SUJIN MA

**Sujin Ma** is connecting with high school students in Colorado to increase awareness through practicing movement ritual, drawing, writing, authentic feedback and performing. She is encouraging them to explore themes of finding one's life path and acknowledging social dynamics.

## RAHEL EL-MAAWI

**Rahel El-Maawi** is developing an empowering activist community for Black people and other people of color living in Switzerland. Her intention is to explore personal reflection and build a collective strength. The participants are encouraged to find their voices, gain courage from their shared experiences, and use their living-stories to both denounce and change the systematic discrimination in the society.



*Your generosity makes projects like these, and more, possible. To support impactful, creative transformation around the world, make your tax-deductible contribution by visiting [www.tamalpa.org](http://www.tamalpa.org) today.*



## Health Promotion and The Life/Art Process

# Vivian Chávez, San Francisco State University

*My purpose is facilitating peace through innovative teaching methods that bring the whole body into the classroom.*

## Vivian Chavez, Tamalpa Practitioner and Professor at San Francisco State University



### Introduction

I teach college students health promotion. My classes are filled with predominantly multicultural, multilingual, and digitally savvy students. These students tell me that an average college class can be tedious and repetitive. They say they're bored and lose attention during long lectures. Many are starting to take classes online because they feel that if they are going to have a disembodied learning experience, it may as well be through the computer. My courses aim to go beyond teaching health to building bridges between practical embodied healthy experiences in the classroom, life-long learning, and empowerment. Using short written assignments and movement-based expressive arts, I engage students creatively in self-reflection and social analysis. I don't do this alone; inclusion is modeled throughout the semester with students as peer-educators. Together we develop a dynamic classroom with interactive hands-on experiences, respectful

open conversations, and opportunities for leadership in a caring environment.

Almost a decade ago (2008-2009), I took a year-long sabbatical to study new models for health education. When I returned to campus, my Department asked me to present my scholarship at a faculty-student mixer. With heart racing, breath quickening, my body alerted me to the challenge. I could not simply present my research; I would have to embody it. Artfully poised –feet, legs and hips firmly grounded– connecting with everyone in the room through purposeful eye contact, I slowed my breathing, knees slightly bent, in a relaxed confident “stance,” and read from the baseline statement developed during Tamalpa professional training:

I am a courageous, compassionate woman concerned about the general disconnection within and between ourselves, the natural world, and each other.

I value relationships, creative expression, health, and social justice. Culture matters to me. I belong to a global community of dignity and human rights. My purpose is facilitating peace through innovative teaching methods that bring the whole body into the classroom. My calling is to teach health through movement and unleash the transformative power of the arts.

With silence as a resource, I waited for the audience's response before speaking and making explicit connections between art, health, education, and my life. I wanted to show innovative teaching methods in public health with a sense-based language that enlivens the classroom. The voice and gestures accompanying my presentation demonstrated, not just lectured about, an embodied pedagogy that I bring to my graduate and undergraduate courses, not merely an intellectual presentation of research findings.

## Where is the body in the curriculum?

The idea to study at Tamalpa came from many sources, one of which was the experience of having taught Women's Health with a 15-minute "stretch-segment" as part of the academic curriculum. It was an experiment in embodied pedagogy and a visceral response to the physical activity guidelines that recommend adolescents do one hour or more of daily movement and adults at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week (U.S. Dept. of Health Guidelines, 2008). I was frustrated with the paradox that while physical activity is required for health, our built environment is not designed for movement, especially for college students. Thus, my syllabus invited students that semester "to integrate physical activity and breathing awareness as a basic human right." The response was phenomenal! Students embraced whole-heartedly in-class movement with some even commenting that the 15-minute "stretch-segment" was their only physical activity for the week. This experience convinced me that to teach health we must practice health. The following semester I designed a Women & Men's Health course that included kinesthetic awareness. I titled the class, Promoting Positive Health and focused on mental health, stress, food/nutrition, body image, sexual relationships, smoking, alcohol



and other drugs, violence, addiction, and our relationship with nature. Students also learned complex topics such as chronic disease, the immune system, and emerging infectious diseases. They learned health beyond the textbook, through their bodies, in this way answering the question: "Where's the body in the curriculum?" (Shapiro, 1990).

The potential of teaching health through movement is an opportunity to give students more choices, but there is a catch. Movement, and dance in particular, can awaken mixed feelings of joy and inadequacy. Anna Halprin's book, *Returning to Health with Dance, Movement*

*and Imagery*, asks educators, "to understand the messages our body is giving us, rather than analyzing or interpreting in a cognitive way." (Halprin, 2000, p.26) Tamalpa training introduced me to dance as a healing and transformative practice. Tamalpa pedagogy, also called the Life/Art Process, gave me the opportunity to look at each part of my body – and every art medium – as a mirror to reflect and integrate experiences and relationships. In particular, the intermodal "psychokinetic process" and the "three levels of awareness communication model" helped me uncover my "body mythology" through movement, drawing, and writing to study the Self.



## Embodied Pedagogy

The courses I teach are highly rated by students from various majors as well as by foreign students and students with disabilities. My student evaluations note an increase in awareness of the complexity involved in bringing about health as a focus. Students comment on the classroom as a space where they feel safe and not judged: "Because of an acceptance towards each other, there is a willingness to listen and share." "I feel that it is somewhat of an autonomous zone. I don't feel judged here and I care about the other students in the class." "Many people seem comfortable just moving and dancing, talking about relationships or body image and getting to know each other. There are so many friendly people here and I think

these components create a stronger class bond."

I have taught and presented my work internationally in different languages and in other cultures, and I find that the Life/Art Process transcends geographical and national boundaries because art is contextual, intercultural, dynamic, and open. Furthermore, the teaching approach is student-centered, critical, and creative.

In this time of rapid social change, with fear, divisive attitudes, and a widening gap between those with great resources and those with few, Daria Halprin (2003) suggests the interface of art, health and healing as an important pathway to live differently:

*"The healing arts must be fostered, protected, and passed on as one of humanity's most significant legacies and bodies of knowledge. When so much of our communication and learning occurs through computer technologies, disembodied living seems ever more inevitable. As our technological capacities grow, we are looking for ways to reconnect with our bodies, our creativity and our spirits."*  
(p.230)

Echoing African American feminist health activist and writer Audre Lorde's 1984 essay, "Poetry is Not a Luxury", Daria affirms: "Art is as essential to our survival as food, shelter, medicine and the natural environment. It offers a powerful way of learning and communicating knowledge." (p.230) For this reason, when the opportunity arose to take a second sabbatical, I returned to Tamalpa (2017-2018) to once again study with Daria and learn from the Life/Art Process. This time, however, I participated as a witness, observing not only the teaching approach, but how it had impacted my teaching over the

time since I was trained as a Tamalpa Practitioner. We teach who we are (Palmer, 1998); thus, as a woman of color with a complex immigration story and a survivor of childhood trauma as well as domestic violence, my experiences of teaching with the Life/Art Process generate its own particular knowledge.

Understanding the body's intelligence to resist and mirror the social body makes embodied pedagogy the next frontier of education. Hui Wilcox, drawing on the work of Jacqui Alexander (2006), developed a theoretical framework that connects

embodied knowledge to lived experiences, performance, and bodily intelligence.

Her research demonstrates qualitative evidence that embodied pedagogies foster a sense of community and challenge Eurocentric male-centered systems of knowledge production predicated upon the body/mind binary. She notes that in the civic arena, activists use embodied pedagogies to provide emotional access to science-based information and to mobilize for social change (Wilcox, 2009).

## Conclusion

*Stories can also be used to destabilize dominant narratives that limit knowledge to a single worldview.*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009) asks that we "pluralize" our personal story for community resonance. I am aware of the single-story often used to create stereotypes. As the novelist points out on her popular TED talk, "the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete". Expressing the many stories within our own story can "empower, humanize and repair broken dignity". Stories are important tools to disrupt dualistic thinking that reinforces dichotomies like empowered/victimized, professor as knowledge dispenser/student as vessel. Stories can also be used to destabilize dominant narratives that limit knowledge to a single worldview. Thus, abandoning the traditional formula for scholarship, I use Gloria Anzaldua's path of *conocimiento* (2015) in order to embrace and grapple with the paradox of privilege within oppression.

I trust art, music, drawing, role-playing, dancing, and creative writing to disrupt the mind/body dualisms that inform dominant, positivist ideas of knowledge production (Iverson, 2015). Tamalpa training taught me to see my own body as an artist teacher for whom "teaching a subject is not the priority; the priority is to bring out the truth and beauty of each person, as well as in myself" (Otter, 2009).

I am curious to connect the healing force of the Tamalpa teaching pedagogy with other forms of liberation education where students participate and co-create their educational experience. In particular, the Brazilians Paolo Freire (1970, 1973) and Augusto Boal (1974) insisted upon an education where students find meaning about the range of subjects

in their lives while they built community. Through literacy, critical thinking, and theater making, they advocated teachers to stop “banking education,” and opted for pedagogy infused with art and culture to access health experiences in the body and *new* transformative ways of relating to ourselves and one another.



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\*The author has been Chair of the Board of Directors of the Tamalpa Institute since 2014.

Healing



**Finding Peace within “Closed Doors”**

# **Project Pride and Tamalpa Life Art Bridges By Hilit Maniv**

*My intention changed into: empowering the women above all and handle the challenges as they surface.*

## Hilit Maniv,

M.A. DMT (University of Haifa, Israel), Tamalpa practitioner from Israel, Flamenco dancer, and teacher, worked in a residential housing home for abused women for her Level 3 Training Fieldwork Project.



### The Beginning... Project Pride

I remember the first day in the clinical meeting. It was a true shock... it was as if all I feared had come to look me in the eyes. The therapists were speaking about the women, briefly introducing each resident to the “new comers”, updating us with who is living in the house and what their needs were. Women that have been through hell and back: homeless, prostituting, out of jail, foster homes, born addicted to addicted parents, living in shelters, raped, domestic violence, gang related etc. Some had severe mental health issues, all in trauma.

As I was hearing the stories I started to shrink inside, I imagined becoming a very

small ball of fear and anxiety. All I was afraid of throughout my life was in that house. How can I face that? How can I help?

The clinical director’s first words were - you are going to see and be surrounded by a lot of trauma. Find ways to take care of yourself, support yourself. Once you’ve worked here you can work anywhere... You will learn so much and will come to love this place. And so - that is what happened.

Now, after working there for 7 months and just finishing recently, I find myself missing it so much! Missing the women, the staff, appreciating so deeply what they do and understanding how much I’ve learned...

### In my work at Project Pride I facilitated two different classes:

- “*The Expressive Body*” focusing on movement/sound/breath and the arts.
- “*Transformations*” (Grief and the Arts) focusing on relationships (change/lose) and the arts. This group I facilitated with an expressive arts therapist.

### About the residents

Adult women of all ages, all in recovery, all are mothers or pregnant. Most women lost a few children to the system. \*Ronny for instance is 26 and has 8 children. None of them are with her.

\*All names in this article are pseudonyms.

### Body issues, trauma around the body:

All the women I worked with have experienced abuse of different types: rape, domestic violence, etc.

They tried to disconnect themselves from deep feelings and sensations that can remind them of the trauma. They seemed to me as refugees - survivors.

### Women that have the emotional level of an adolescent:

Some started using drugs at a very early age, which has affected their emotional and mental development. This fact required me to find different approaches to the classes: ways to connect to “their world”, empowering them, learning how to create boundaries that are both healthy and creative at the same time.

### Women that mostly didn't get exposed to the arts in their lives:

They mostly saw it as something little children do and felt uncomfortable when



asked to explore a theme through drawing, sounding and especially through movement. Anything unfamiliar to them was usually faced with resistance. I tried to find connections and familiarities in order to have them feel more comfortable.

### Resistant to the arts and especially any movement:

“The body doesn't lie”; the body brings up so much and hence it's unsafe and frightening. Some women would say “this is stupid”, “this isn't relevant to my recovery”, “I feel/look ridiculous” etc. Slowly, with time and building trust with me they got more into it. Some waited for this class all week, expressing that it “makes them feel better”.

## Key learnings



### Safety:

- Establish safety first! Have the same structure for each class. Knowing what to expect creates calmness and trust.
- Always explain! what I am doing and how can it benefit their recovery. When connecting the activities to my intentions and to the women's intentions, they feel they can benefit from the class and will drop their resistance

Awareness of what the women bring today: I started each class with a check in, bringing somatic principals into it: 3 levels of check in, guided breath that brings up a word, what is your intention for today, are just a few examples.

## Hold time and space for the women | Structure

Moving in a circle: Women would start by mirroring me, going over all body parts. Slowly, as they eased into it I would say out loud someone's name, asking to share a movement with us, it could be a specific body part, sometimes a rhythmical movement, or an open one. We would all move it together. The circle of movement became "our circle", moving by shared movements. Women would cheer, express words, laugh out their embarrassment. At times it would become a sounding circle, a clapping circle, a singing out loud circle!

Music holds! Music is a container. Once the music was on women could connect. I had them share their favorite music. I also brought in a variety of uplifting, empowering music, world music that was rhythmical or meditative (while they were writing or drawing) and they loved it!

**An example: I coached the women in a "walking score" and at a point in the dance, we were following each other. Tyler started to get irritated, the walk reminded her of her time in prison, being followed by other prisoners. She was getting very upset, worried and angry. She was shouting out words, expressing what it was bringing up for her and how she's feeling. I switched "the walk" into walking side by side, not touching, feeling the support of a friend that is walking next to you. Her behavior changed in seconds, she calmed down. I asked how was that walk different, how did that feel? Tyler expressed that she could continue walking and feel safe.**

Moving with a partner: remember to allow enough space and time between the women. Avoid touch. If they feel it, it will come from them, don't encourage it. In our Tamalpa level 2 class about trauma with Adriana Marchione we spoke about how touch can be extremely triggering for people handling trauma.

I wanted to dive deeper, remembering that each time we do that, the trauma surfaces and some women get scared/angry/leave. I started to reevaluate what are my intentions? At first, I thought diving deep, finding unknown images, thoughts, movements, stepping into our subconscious is the door to facing our conflicts and finding healing. When noticing how scared and out of control that made the women, I felt I wanted to help them get stronger, believe and trust themselves, love themselves, feel capable and worthy. Those became my most important intentions. I would "touch" on the challenges and focus on the strengths. My intention changed into: empowering the women above all and handle the challenges as they surface.



*You can't start by running, you have to start by standing, then taking a first step.*

Not going into open explorations: I would lose them each time! Women didn't have the emotional capacity to be in an unknown/unfamiliar/new territory, especially when involving their body or movement. They would get irritated, fall asleep, start talking, leave the room... They couldn't go there on any level.

I've learned that with these women it worked the opposite of what I was used to - any type of open score, abstract explorations did not work. I had to first touch on the mental, then the emotional, and the physical usually last. It was like teaching a baby to walk. You can't start by running, you have to start by standing, then taking a first step.

## Choice!

It's a fine balance between allowing choice, letting the women feel they have control, and at the same time holding the scores closed so there is structure and it doesn't feel like chaos to them. The need to choose and to be held at the same time. With time, trial and error, I've realized the best way for me to work with the women was to create series of classes that have arch themes as threads, using different scores and art forms to explore those themes. The connections between the classes eventually created more ease with the themes, more ease to use the arts, a deeper personal understanding and a better sense of "a different approach" that can be healing and helpful.

### Insights:

At times my own trauma arose to remind me who I was and how much I've changed (exactly as the clinical director said). This happened especially in the beginning, when facing the stories of the women, when facing behaviors I didn't know how to handle - women shouting, cursing, leaving the room, blaming me. Tamalpa faculty project supervisor Adriana Marchione, shared this story as a metaphor to support my work with the women: Monkey story.

### The story of the monkey:

*A monkey is screaming and shouting inside a cage. The man is standing outside the cage, wanting to help the monkey and not knowing what to do. He can do one of 2 things:*

*Try to help the monkey by going inside the cage, becoming a screaming and shouting monkey too.*

*Try to call the monkey outside of the cage... Come back to reality, come back to "sanity".*

*I truly hope I have done something good with these women. I know they are carved in my heart and they have taught me so much!*

*Learn more:*

<http://www.ebcrcp.org/services/youth-families/project-pride/>

# The Art of Solidarity by Juli Rees and Amber Field

*In our view, solidarity is a critical element in effectively shifting power away from oppressive forces to create room for justice and social change.*

**Amber Field and Juli Rees**  
are Tamalpa Practitioners who designed a  
workshop called *The Art of Solidarity* to create  
room for social justice and change.



How do we bring about social justice? How do we work together in our differences to bring about the change we seek? How do we remove the barriers in our hearts that keep us separated from each other? We explore these questions through art making and play in *The Art of Solidarity* workshop. If you have been involved with social justice issues for a long time, or just starting out, we all have more to learn and unlearn together.

Art making in all forms—movement, dance, theater, music, drawing, poetry—bring

us into our bodies where we can access the instincts of our nervous system and the wisdom of our heart. While working in the medium of art, workshop participants have the opportunity to move out of habituated ways of communicating, shift patterned dialogue and thinking, and create opportunities to become aware of and shift power dynamics.

We use the Tamalpa Art/Life process, where movement and art making support participants to work with the life experiences, struggles,

conflicts and dynamics that live within all of us.

We call our workshop *The Art of Solidarity* because, in our view, solidarity is a critical element in effectively shifting power away from oppressive forces to create room for justice and social change. Solidarity allows us all to break through the illusion of separateness that oppressive systems perpetuate, and to feel our interdependence and desire for mutual liberation. This feeling of connection is essential in co-creating a just world.

*How do we work together in our differences to bring about the change we seek?*

Building and maintaining relationships based in difference and interdependence is powerful and challenging. We make space for individuals to explore, reflect and deepen their understanding of how their socialization within oppressive systems influences interactions with one another.

We practice techniques for self-regulation, interrupting trigger responses and re-patterning unconscious biases and social conditioning that comes from living in an unjust society. Tensions and struggles amongst participants can be directed toward and explored in and through the art. This allows a distancing or shifting away from the personal to occur.

For instance, in one of our workshops, people made stone sculpture installations, and one participant put a white stone on top of a pile of black stones. A discussion followed where we examined colonization and racism. The world of play allowed us to

uncover subconscious forces and biases in our psyche.

Communication and reflection through embodiment, art making and creative forms enhance our ability to share our lived experiences, listen, and understand each other.



*Click here  
to watch a video on  
The Art of Solidarity*

*Tamalpa ArtCorps provides scholarships to international students with economic challenges who want to train in the expressive arts field and bring this work to communities in need. To support their education and visionary projects, visit [www.tamalpa.org](http://www.tamalpa.org) and donate today.*

# BLOSSOMY PROJECT

## TAMALPA ARTCORPS COLLABORATION PROGRAM with local partners – SANLAAP AND EKTARA

In its 5th year, the Tamalpa ArtCorps program in India was facilitated by Danielle Sokol, Level 3 student.

More than 150 people (women and children, including caretakers) have participated in our 'month long ArtCorps program' in Kolkata, India– offered in partnership with Blossomy Project, dedicated to the rescue, shelter and education of survivors of human trafficking and gender-based violence, rescued child brides, orphans and other vulnerable youth living in precarious circumstances, exposed to violence and subjected to discrimination and social stigma.

### WHAT THE GIRLS SAY



*“Most of the time, we are behind lock and key. We are not able to go outside. In this class, we are learning joyfully. I used to think I would never be able to do anything. But now, I think, “Yes, I can trust myself. “ I feel I can do this outside the shelter too. When I am confused, I can listen to my self, my inner voice.”*

*“Before this class, I thought my life was nothing. When I finished this program, I felt happy. I thought, “I can do anything.”*

*“I liked this class because I learned how to express my feelings with movement. I felt happy. It helped to free my mind and think more positively about the future.”*



**Building Our Future Through Creativity**

# **Weaving Portraits, Movements and Stories**

**By Danielle Sadhana Sokol**

*I hoped to be given the privilege to hear what they had to say, and in the process, witness these young people explore and experience affirmation through the arts.*

## Introduction

This project is a search for joy, beauty, trust, connection and expression. It forced me to confront my own ignorance and feelings of discomfort and hopelessness when faced with the complexity and suffering of human trafficking.

The Tamalpa ArtCorps program in Kolkata, India exists in partnership with the Blossomy Project for the last five years and works with children and teens ranging in age from 8 to 21 years old, who are survivors of human trafficking or considered at risk for trafficking as their mothers are sex workers. For a period of four weeks, I facilitated this 2018 ArtCorps program, offering expressive arts therapy sessions to five different groups of youth in three locations in Kolkata: a shelter home for survivors, a Drop-in Center located in one of the Red-Light districts and at a community center in a slum area of Kolkata.



These children and teens have all experienced unimaginable struggle, hardship and inequality in their young lives. They long to be seen and heard by others, respected, valued and loved. I observed a shared desire for self-expression and connection. Whether they were living in the shelter home, the Red-Light district, or the slum, it is not common for these young

people to have not been asked how they feel, what their dreams are or who they want to be. I wanted to ask them meaningful questions in a way that was compassionate, genuine, safe and creative. I hoped to be given the privilege to hear what they had to say, and in the process, witness these young people explore and experience affirmation through the arts.

## The Shelter



I was flooded with emotion on my first day at the shelter. I felt nervous and excited at the same time. Nearing the shelter, the massive walls caught my attention. I breathed deeply as I realized that the girls were locked up inside the home. They were so excited to see us and called out “Auntie” and said many things that I didn’t understand in Hindi or Bengali.

All I could focus on at that moment was that these girls were behind bars. Their big eyes, contagious smiles and questions helped me to relax and soften as the doors were unlocked and the girls came flying out to greet me for our first session together.

I began with a visualization and movement activity. I asked the participants to imagine that they were seeds that would soon grow into unique flowers or plants that the world had never seen before and I invited them to move however they felt called to. They embodied their imagined plants as they danced, then drew their experiences of blooming onto paper. They shared:

*I felt afraid of what would happen to the flower if someone wanted to destroy it. I thought “how can I protect it?”.*

*Because I brought up this flower with love and care, it shouldn't break. I felt happy. I remembered my beautiful home. My sweet home.*

Over the course of the four weeks, the girls became more comfortable. It was remarkable how, given the time and chance, they began to show how they were feeling through movement. In our third week together at the community center, we did several activities with the intention of continuing to promote trust within the group, including a “Trust Walk”. Then we shared some of their reflections on the last three weeks of our journey.

**Now I know how to explain my feelings, how to meet people and to express my feelings outwardly- anger, happiness, whatever. I can express myself here. I love to work together with the group. I want to learn more things.**

**When I first came here I was very quiet and shy, now I am feeling more open. I like this class because I can share my feelings. I have opened myself.**



## Drop-In Center

I worked with two groups at the center; children from age 7 to 12 and a group of teenagers. I asked “*Who are you?*” and “*What do you like most about yourself?*”. They drew self portraits, gave the drawing a title and included one positive affirmation about themselves.

In my drawing there is a sun between the hills. It is sunrise and these are the rays. It is similar to my life because I always reach, reach and reach. I am a very good tailor. I am good at stitching and I want to study fashion design. My strength is that I am very positive.

This is the first time I did something like this in my life. I am very thankful because self-expression can come out. My strength is that I am very honest.

I wondered what difficulties, stigma and discrimination the teens may have suffered as sons and daughters of sex workers. I was inspired by the strength and resilience I perceived in each one of them. Nearly all were extremely eager to share their experiences. I appreciated their courage and felt grateful and honored to be given the privilege to hear their stories and be welcomed into their lives.

Each of these young people continues to face so many barriers and obstacles in their everyday lives. It is important for them to have hope and dreams for the future in the face of these difficulties.

One of the basic precepts of the work is that as we work on something in art, we are also working on something in our lives, so that our art making is connected to our real-life issues. In one of our classes, we focused on the theme of legs and feet. We brainstormed movements and discussed why our feet and legs are so important to us, then created a poem which became a dance that they performed and witnessed in groups. This activity was one of collective creativity, as well as being a moment for each individual to be seen and to witness their peers.

They created individual images honoring our feet and legs. We discussed all that our legs and feet support us in doing in our lives. In particular, we spoke of how our feet and legs help us to move towards our goals.

Sitting back in the car after many hugs and pictures, everyone's reflections on our time together echoed in my head. I felt so inspired by these young people speaking confidently about reaching their goals, following their dreams and doing right with their lives. A smile came to my face as I recalled them speaking about how they felt more empowered to express themselves and how they were feeling more positive about their future. I felt a fullness in my chest as we pulled away from the Drop-In Center and drove off down the narrow and crowded streets.



*I felt so inspired by these young people speaking confidently about reaching their goals, following their dreams and doing right with their lives.*

## Community Center

We worked with one group of teenage girls three times a week who are part of the community center's youth program. The girls came primarily from Muslim families and arrived to class with their heads covered; some wore niqab veils revealing only their eyes and others wore veils that covered their heads, ears, and neck but you could see their faces.

The director of the program invited the girls to take off their veils during the class.

I reminded them that they could choose to keep their scarves on and could simply do whatever they felt most comfortable with. My priority was to create an environment where the girls felt safe and relaxed, however, I didn't want them to feel like they were being forced to take off their scarves if they preferred wearing them. The director reassured me that it was important for them to have a space where they could take their scarves off outside of their homes.

We took a thread of yarn and weaved it around a body part or piece of clothing and then passed it on. Then began the unthreading process, one girl at a time. As each person unthreaded themselves, I asked them to share one thing that they learned about themselves or one thing they experienced together that they would like to integrate into their everyday life.



**I learned how to express my own feelings. Dancing! Dancing as a group!**

**I really love Movement Ritual. I am actually already practicing at home. It really relaxes me. I would like to teach my friends and family.**

**I can now define very clearly what love is. I know what it feels like...**

**I feel so much happiness when we were here working together. After this class I feel like I can focus on my own goals.**

**After doing the Tamalpa Workshop, I got to learn about the spirit of teamwork and the virtue of trust. I had almost lost my aim in life, I didn't know how to focus back but this workshop made me realize the importance of life and the way to find my goal ahead.**

We did a "tightrope balance activity" where we walked across strings on the ground, one foot in front of the other, hands and arms outstretched, eyes focused ahead. I asked them to imagine themselves walking toward something they would like to bring into their life. After the movement exploration, they continued their dance on paper in the form of a drawing. They titled their drawings and shared their goals they were walking towards.

This is my world. These are my legs and they help me with my goals. Just like from birth or when you are a baby, we must go step by step to reach our goals. As I was moving, I imagined I was flying. One step at a time and then I can fly in life.



Our last day at the shelter home was not an easy day. A huge fight broke out and there was a “lock down” in the home. The screaming lasted for hours. Some girls were visibly upset, and one girl was crying a lot, so instead of doing what was planned we sat together, held hands and breathed together, did Movement Ritual and talked about the importance of supporting, respecting and loving one another. We spoke a lot about respect and how the Planetary Dance is a dance for peace and how we could use this opportunity to dance for peace within the community of the shelter home.

Even though it was an unusually challenging day, it was also a very profound and positive experience. By the end of the day there was a completely different energy in the space than a few hours before. As the celebration came to a close, there were many hugs and tears shed.



## Conclusion



It was amazing to see the development of their capacities of imagination over the course of the four weeks. Through the art making process many of the young girls from the shelter found ways to talk about the longing they felt for their homes and their families without directly focusing on their experience of being trafficked. The teens in the Red-Light District group wanted to discuss their goals and dreams and their hope to transform their future. In the community center, the girls were very uneasy about removing their veils and then toward the end of our workshop time, they would enter the room ripping them off so that they could dance and speak freely. In fact when we were doing video testimonials they didn't want to put the veils on, although I required them to do so for safety reasons, a real reminder of the realities and challenges they live with.

The participants explored the relationship between their bodies, feelings and imagination, dancing, painting, creating poetry, sharing with each other. As they did they reclaimed their bodies as instruments of expression and communication. The feeling of being seen and witnessing in the daily check-in circles encouraged a sense of greater self-confidence. The workshops supported the expansion of participants' creativity in a playful environment while team-building activities encouraged trust. Group discussions seemed to help these young people begin to reflect on their dreams and encouraged them to plant seeds of hope for building a different and promising future.

Seeds of hope need to be cultivated and cared for. I am happy that we explored what these hopes and dreams can look like. This project raises many questions: how can we broaden the vision of dance and the expressive arts as tools to support people and groups that have experienced trauma? How can these projects become more permanent and sustainable within these communities? How can programs be developed that involve not only the clients of these organizations but also the staff in order to support the often exhausted staff members while also bridging the gap between what the participants experience within the workshops and outside of the sessions?



**I am no longer in Kolkata but continue to find myself processing all that I experienced and learned during my time there, about myself, the Tamalpa work, the challenges that these participants face in their daily lives, the healing power of art and the incredible resilience of the human soul. My hope is to continue to plant such seeds and bring this work out into the world.**

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