



# 2023 TRUE NEW MEXICO NEWSLETTER

YOUNG BLACK AND AAPINH NEW MEXICAN ARTISTS  
LOOKING TO DISMANTLE THE TRICULTURAL MYTH



On Saturday, May 27th, at the Orpheum Community Hub, the True NM 2023 "Self Portraits" exhibit showcased a collection of artwork by young AAPINH and Black New Mexican artists. This exhibition was put together by True NM, an annual antiracism, youth-centered arts-based project developed as a collaboration between the New Mexico Asian Family Center (NMAFC) and the New Mexico Black Leadership Council (NMBLC).

Now in its third year, the 2023 True NM cohort of 13 youth artists looked to build cross-racial solidarity, explore identity, and dismantle the state's tricultural myth. They created artwork and presentations discussing their experiences being AAPINH and Black in New Mexico guided by the prompt "What's your True New Mexican story?"

**"It felt good knowing people had similar experiences as me." - Mariam, youth artist**

## MEMBERS OF THE 2023 COHORT:

**Asmi Bhandari, Coby Kebe, Duc Pham, Hadiya Rezaie, Hasti Pannah, Kara Stricklin, Mariam Samadi, Mika Gayles, Negin Saify, Quang Pham, Tabitha Maghee, Tamie Dinh, and Yaeka Gayles**



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# SATURDAY ARTIST WORKSHOPS

## CREATING CONNECTIONS

The 8-week program provided youth artists with the opportunity to learn from five local guest artists from the Black & AAPINH community. Speakers included photographers Sheldon Hamilton and Hyunju Blemel, mixed media artists J P and Helen Juliet Atkins, and spoken word poet Jazz Cuffee. These experiences coming together to create cyanotypes, adorn a community rope with individual pieces and write poetry proved beneficial for not only the youth artists, but also for the presenters.

**"[I learned] I have a voice and that my story should be heard." - Mariam**



Each week the cohort also engaged in icebreakers to build connections with one another and group discussions around racism. Discussion topics addressed culture, language, societal expectations and experiences with racism in Albuquerque.

**"Be comfortable in being uncomfortable." - Quang, youth artist**

**"It is important to accept who I am." - Duc, youth artist**



**"Working with young people has always been a passion of mine. I hadn't lead a workshop in sometime and I left so inspired - such strong beautiful voices who remind me of my own." - Jazz Cuffee, guest artist**

**"A lesson from the workshops I will carry away with me is to always be open to learning more about my identity and heritage." - Youth artist**



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# PRESENTATION PREPARATION

**EXPLORING THEIR STORIES** Each young artist created completed works of art, wrote their own artist statements to accompany their pieces, practiced presenting and sharing their stories, and partook in a professional photoshoot to document their artwork in preparation for the 2023 showcases and final exhibition.



**"In a way so that I felt like I had a voice and like I could make a change."  
- Mariam**



**"I met new people and got to hear many different perspectives."  
- Youth artist**

As the youth participated in the program, their parents noticed the benefits of their involvement. The independent art work requirement motivated youth to manage their time, take responsibility for their creations and reflect upon their identity. The presentation aspect helped them develop public speaking skills, confidence and gave them an opportunity to articulate their ideas.



**"[The program] helped me express my ideas into an image." - Duc**

**"It helped me communicate things that I wasn't able to before." - Youth artist**



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# THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY SHOWCASE

**TELLING THEIR STORIES** True NM artists representing the 2021, 2022 and 2023 cohorts were invited to speak and share their artwork at The Wilderness Society 2023 Retreat at the Tamaya Resort on May 2, 2023.



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# EXPLORA X STUDIO SHOWCASE

**EXPANDING THEIR REACH** In partnership with Explora X Studio, the 2023 True NM artists were invited to display their artwork, present their stories, and engage with more community members on June 1, 2023.



**"The community rope is awesome!"**  
- Explora attendee

**"I loved meeting everyone! All the artists had such interesting stories to tell, I loved it."**  
- Explora attendee

**"Had a good time, loved the snacks!"**  
- Explora attendee



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# SELF PORTRAITS EXHIBITION 2023

The public Self Portraits exhibition was held at Orpheum Community Hub on May 27th. Over 100 community members of all ages joined to meet the artists and celebrate of AAPINH Heritage and Black culture in Albuquerque.



**“This event was empowering and healing for individuals and communities.”**  
– Orpheum attendee



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# 2023 TRUE NEW MEXICO COHORT



Thank you very much to all who made this program possible!

## WE WOULD LIKE TO GIVE AN EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- **AAPI Civic Engagement Fund** for making this project possible through the Anti-Racism Intersectional Justice Grant!
- Each of the **2023 Youth Artists** and their supportive **families and friends!**
- **New Mexico Black Leadership Council staff**, specifically Kindra Hill and Cathryn McGill for providing support and guidance
- **New Mexico Asian Family Center staff**, specifically Sachi Watase, Huong Nguyen, Zee Azibo, Bruce Cheng, Amy Pompeo, Sarah Lau, Yuko Kobayashi, and Mahbooba Pannah for providing additional program support
- **Ayami Nakanishi**, our UNM intern (and now a college graduate!), for supporting all artists and staff throughout the program
- **Guest Artists**, Helen Juliet Atkins, Hyunju Blemel, Jazz Cuffee, Sheldon Hamilton and J P, for sharing their artistry and inspiring us all
- **Community Photographers**, Bruce Cheng, D'Ali Roberts, Tara Armijo-Prewitt and An Pham, for beautifully documenting this program
- **Community Cooks** who provided Filipino, Korean, Afghan, Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese and Soul food at our 2023 Exhibition
- **Orpheum Community Hub staff** for providing the exhibition space
- **Explora X Studio creative staff** for partnering with True NM and supporting our showcase
- **The Wilderness Society** for partnering on our first 2023 showcase



TRUE NM IS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH GENEROUS CONTRIBUTIONS. PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A DONATION TO CONTINUE THIS VALUABLE PROGRAM FOR BLACK AND ASIAN YOUTH.

For more information about True NM and to view the artwork, please visit us at [www.truenm.com](http://www.truenm.com).



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