

SAMPLES

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS

KEITH KNIGHT,
MAT SCHWARZMAN
AND MANY OTHERS



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SAMPLE CHAPTER

CONTACT



Cultivate trust, mutual understanding
and commitment as a foundation
for your creative partnership.

Welcome!

We are in **Contact** territory, the first of five territories of the community-based arts process.

Contact is the place where you and your group begin exploratory workshops and interactions with the community. Here, the group takes stock of their experiences, assets, assumptions and expectations. Anxiety-producing questions can come up, like: Am I good enough? Creative enough? Committed enough? Can I get along with all these people? This is also the time when basic group decisions need to be made. Which art forms and styles are we using? What issues and themes are we going to investigate? And even more basic, How are we going to behave with each other? It's a lot, and you as a leader need to be simultaneously *aware* of the challenges and *confident* the group will meet them all successfully.

Listen to the people we're about to visit. They will help us begin thinking about and planning for success.



CHRIS EDAAKIE



Zuni Nation

RHOESSA JONES



San Francisco, CA

Hey, we're slowing down. We must be arriving at the first stop!

Our first destination lies a few miles off the famous “Route 66” in northwestern New Mexico in one of the oldest and most traditional communities in North America –

Zuni Pueblo.



For more than 900 years, the Zuni people (who call themselves the “A:shiwi”) have lived under the watchful eye of their sacred Corn Mountain.



For most of that time, the Zuni have been known throughout the region for their abilities as farmers, hunters and gatherers. Working in the harsh soils and waters of this rocky mountain plateau, the Zuni had an intimate and widely envied relationship with nature.

But now, like many communities in the United States, the Zuni are faced with an epidemic of staggering proportions –

diabetes.

One half of all Zuni adults over age 50 currently have the disease.



In 1998, the Zuni Tribal Council began a long-term campaign to reduce diabetes through grassroots prevention education.

The Healthy Lifestyles program uses Zuni stories, signs, symbols and rituals to motivate changes in living habits that improve the health of all 10,000 residents.

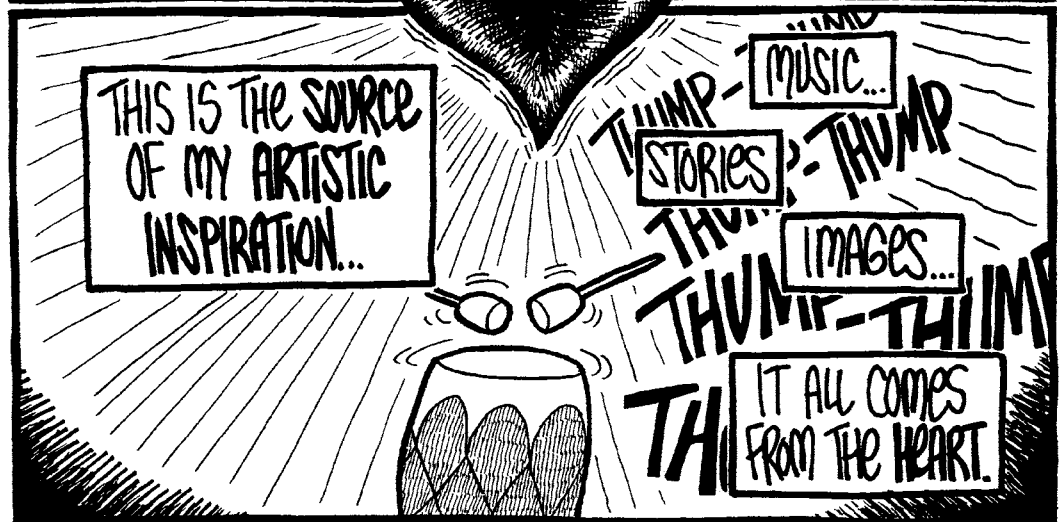
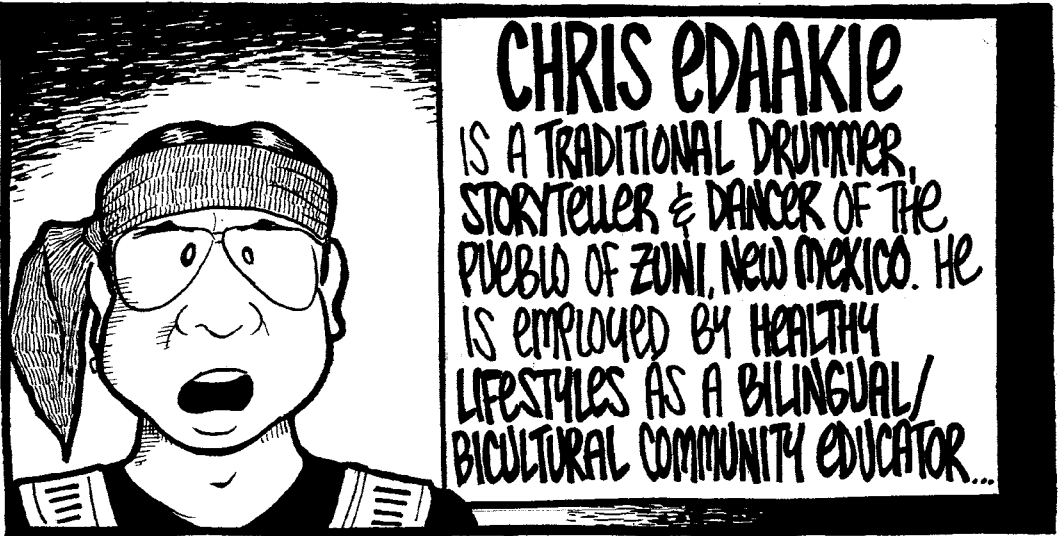
Contact with community is central to this life-saving program, that begins at birth and extends through eldercare.

And the approach works – within a few short years, the terrible statistics are beginning to improve.

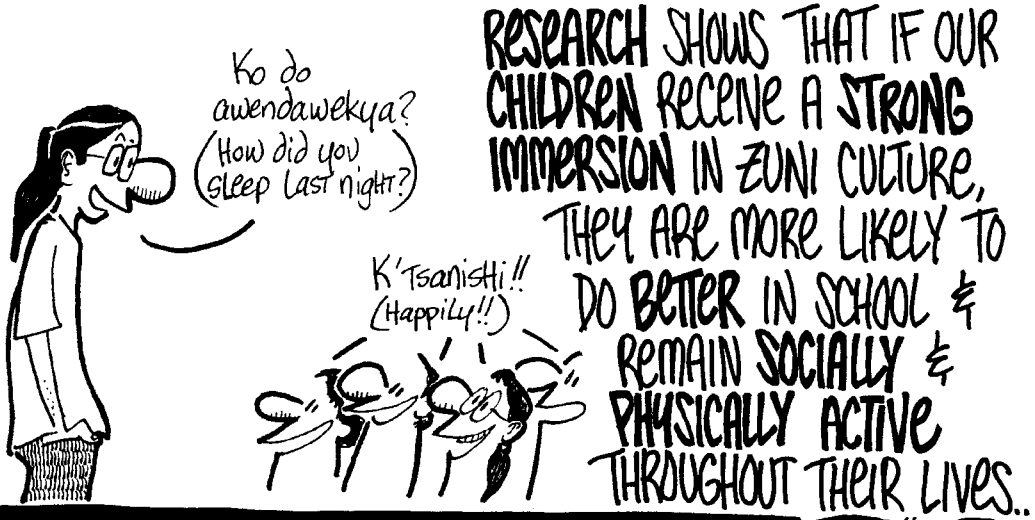
What makes Healthy Lifestyles so effective?
One important element is their cadre of amazing bilingual/bicultural teens who serve as 21st Century artist-educator-activists.

Let's find out how they make Contact in the story we call "I-Am-Going-But-I-Shall-Return."



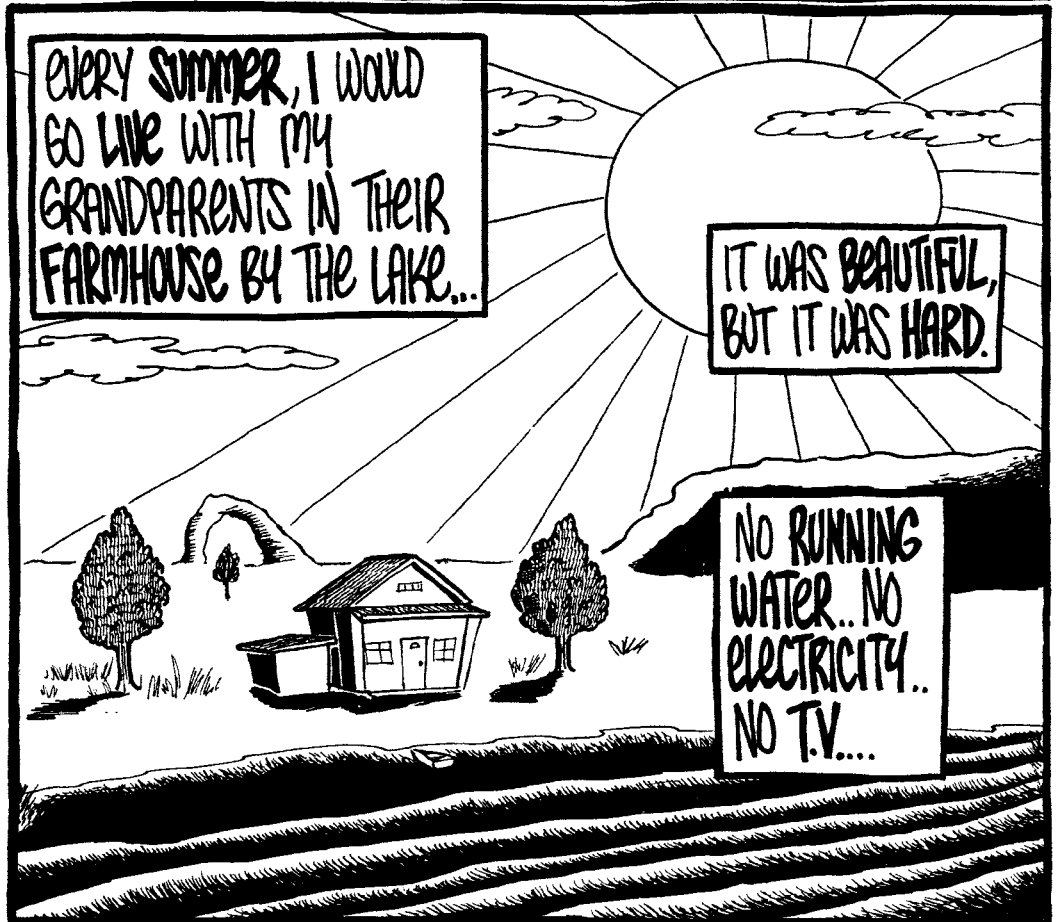
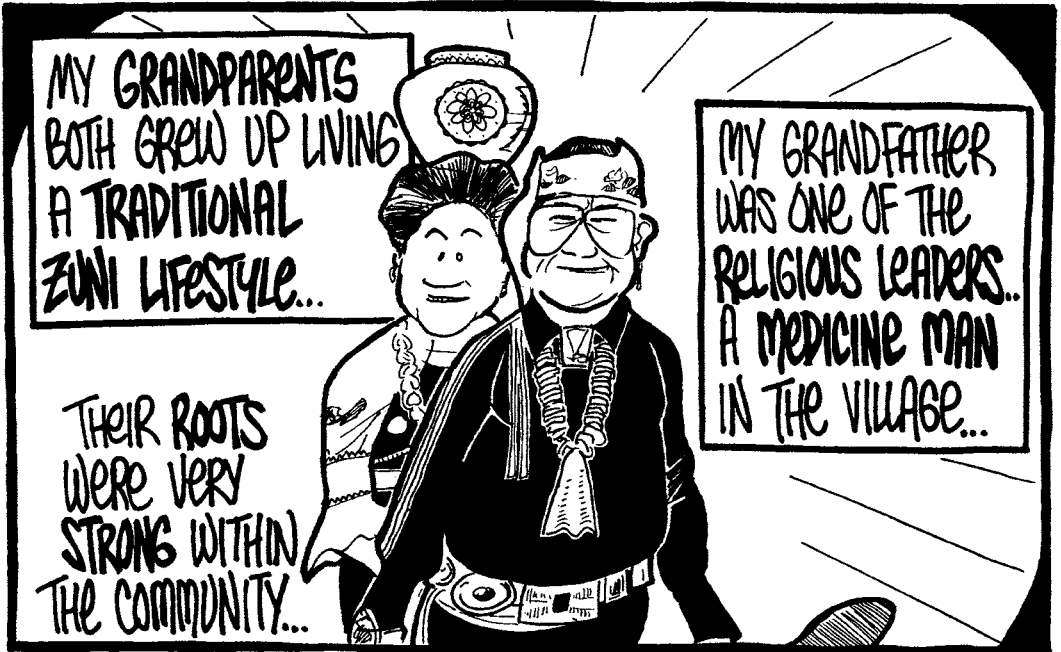


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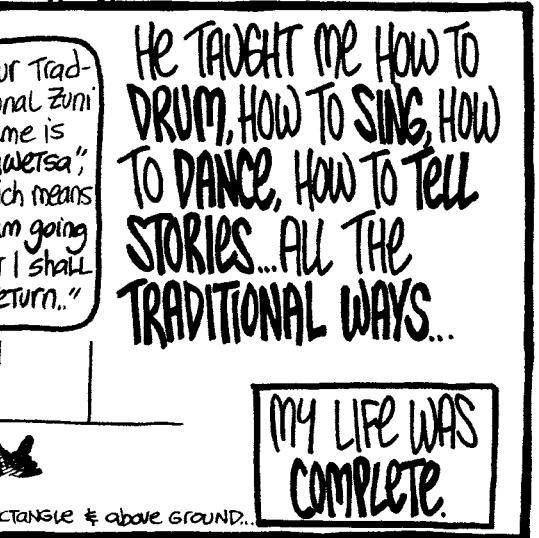
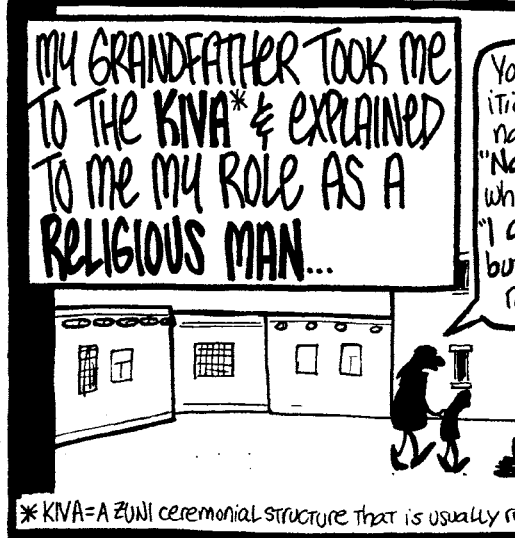
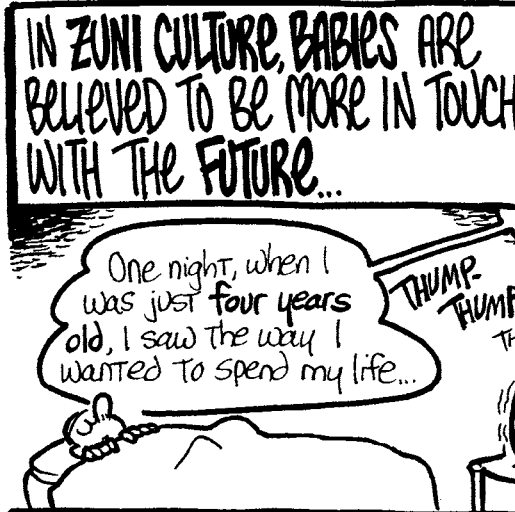
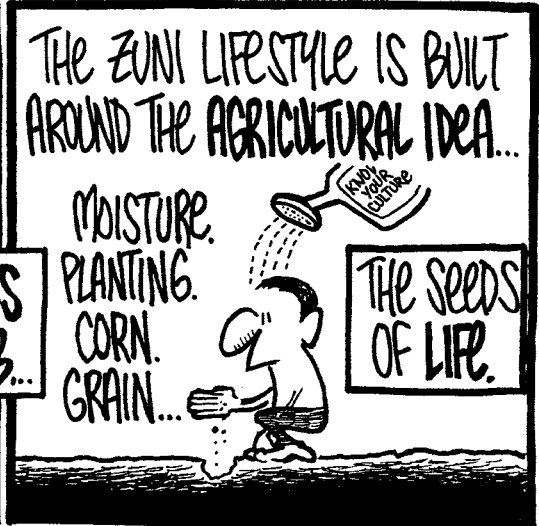


..FOR A WHILE, THERE, I WASN'T TOO SURE WHERE MY LIFE WAS HEADED...

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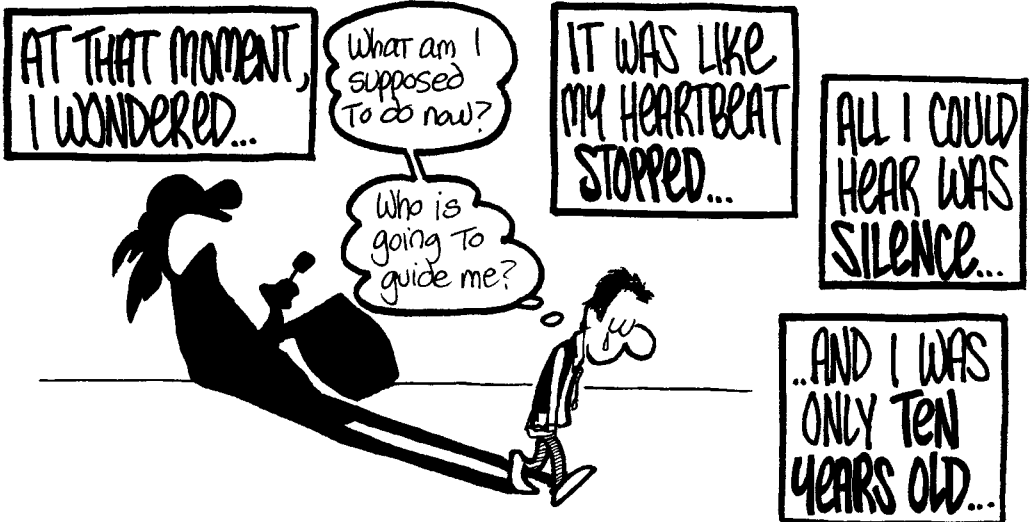


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* KIVA = A ZUNI ceremonial structure that is usually rectangular & above ground.

Art by Keith Knight, copyright 2005



Art by Keith Knight, copyright 2005

"I LOST MY WAY.. I STOPPED SO-CIALIZING.. LIKE MY TRADITIONAL NAME SAYS, "I LEFT."

EIGHT YEARS LATER, I WAS WAITING TABLES IN A CHINESE RESTAURANT IN GALUP, NEW MEXICO, WHEN I FELT A CUSTOMER'S EYES ON ME...

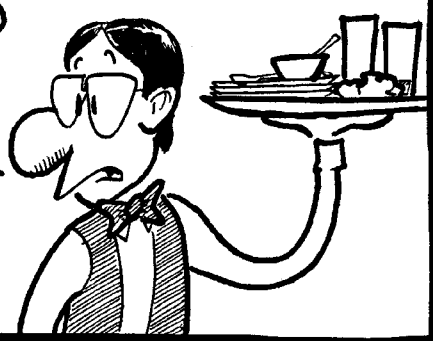


I RECOGNIZED HER AS A ZUNI WOMAN, BUT DID NOT KNOW HER NAME....

CHRIS EDAAKIE?

Yes?

I'm going to make you an offer you can't refuse...



I'VE BEEN WORKING FOR THE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES PROGRAM EVER SINCE..

Art by Keith Knight, copyright 2005

THE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES STAFF IS DEDICATED TO STEMMING THE TIDE OF DIABETES & RELATED ILLNESSES WITH EARLY INTERVENTION THRU THE TEACHINGS OF ZUNI CULTURE & TRADITIONS...

VINTON
PROGRAM
COORDINATOR

Many of our people thought it was their destiny to be diabetic & die early...

Lecturing people to change their eating habits & lifestyles was **NOT** the way to go...

My daughter has been attending classes at Healthy Lifestyles for a little over a year now...

She's in a dance group...

She gets great exercise.

And it's given her a LOT of confidence!!

She's in the same dance group as one of my nephews...

And one thing that I've noticed is when they have programs, & they're getting ready to perform...

...my daughter is one of the leaders who teaches the others how to dance...

Art by Keith Knight, copyright 2005

"We needed to TAP INTO THE HEART OF OUR PEOPLE IN A WAY THAT WILL ENGAGE THEM... INVOLVE THEM... ART HAS A WAY OF DOING THAT..."

THE STAFF IS RELIED UPON TO BE AS CREATIVE & VISIONARY AS POSSIBLE.. INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY WITH FLYERS, POSTERS, GIVEAWAYS AND CULTURAL EVENTS...



Can you show what you teach the other kids?



"WHEN THE ELDERS SEE THE CHILDREN DANCING IN THE TRADITIONAL WAY, IT INSPIRES THEM TO BECOME MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE..."



We here at Healthy Life-styles Take the issues our people care most about...



That is the key to finding the heartbeat.



Art by Keith Knight, copyright 2005

INSIDE THE CRAFT CIRCLE

TIP



TOPICS

- Is there a specific location you identify as the center of your community?
- What are the shared experiences and events of your community?
- What might represent the heartbeat of your community?
- How does the heart of your community beat in you?

TECHNIQUE: CULTURAL INVENTORY WORKSHOP

Derived from exercises of the East Bay Institute for Urban Arts, Oakland, CA

DURATION

1 to 3 hours

OBJECTIVES

- Art: Gather information about the artistic assets and capacities of the group.
- Learning: Explore cultural diversity.
- Social Change: Build connections between members of the group.

MATERIALS

- Pencils/pens, paper
- Music (optional)

IN ADVANCE

Prepare a list of Assets & Capacities questions written on a chalkboard or large sheet of paper.

Suggested Asset Questions:

- What's a favorite joke or story you remember from childhood?
- A favorite song?
- A favorite logo?
- Who's the elder you most admire and why?

Suggested Capacities Questions:

- What cultural skills and knowledge have surfaced in the small group?
- What different styles of cultural expression can you identify?

STEPS

1. Organize into circles of two to four people and distribute writing supplies.
2. Unveil Assets Questions only.
3. Give everyone a few minutes to think about the Assets Questions and take notes about them. Music may help reflection.
4. Give each person a turn sharing his/her answers within their circle. (2-minute limit per person is generally good for this)
5. Unveil Capacities Questions.
6. Give circles time to discuss and answer the Capacities Questions, and designate a spokesperson. (10-15 minutes)
7. Have circles report on their discussions to the whole group.
8. Reflect on themes that may be common to each group.

VARIATIONS / FOLLOW-UP

- Have participants ask family members and friends the Assets Questions and record their answers.
- Have small groups render their Capacities Answers on a large piece of paper and use the list for ongoing reference.
- Think of other questions to ask in order to uncover the signs, symbols, rituals and stories that people bring to the creative table.

NOTE

- This workshop can stand alone, but it is best used as a preparation for collaborative projects.



For our next story, we go to

San Francisco, California.



The 13th largest city in the United States, with its picturesque hills, moderate weather and stunning ocean views, San Francisco is considered by many to be the most beautiful city on earth.

And yet, even with all this beauty, there are serious problems.



In California, the Golden State, the prison population has risen 800% in the last 25 years, making the California prison system one of the world's largest.



In San Francisco (as in most of the US), the rate of growth for female inmates has exceeded that of male inmates each year since 1981.

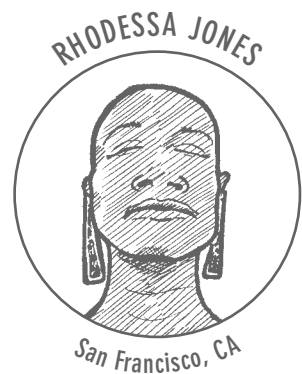
Women of African American and Latin American descent are five times more likely than European American women to spend time in jail at some point in their lives.

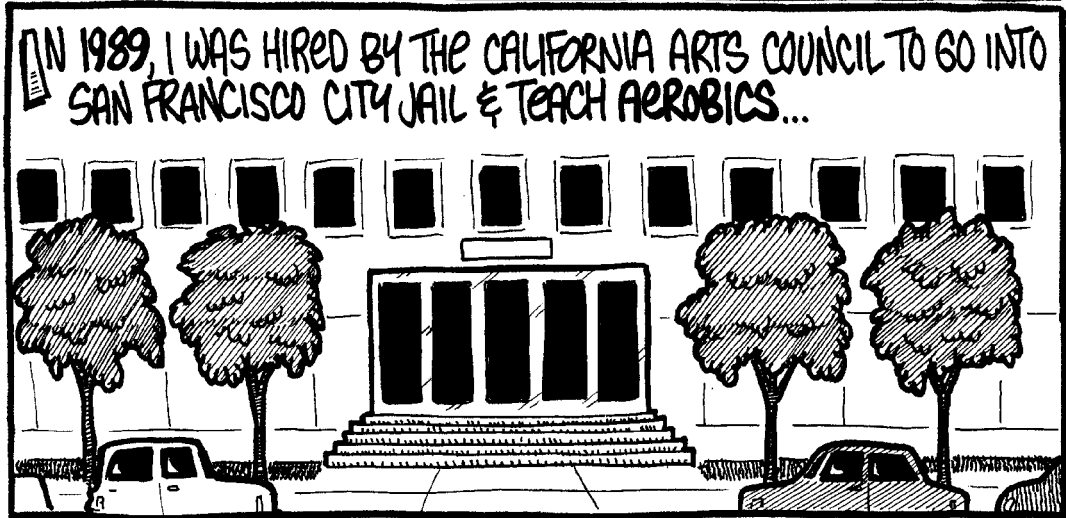
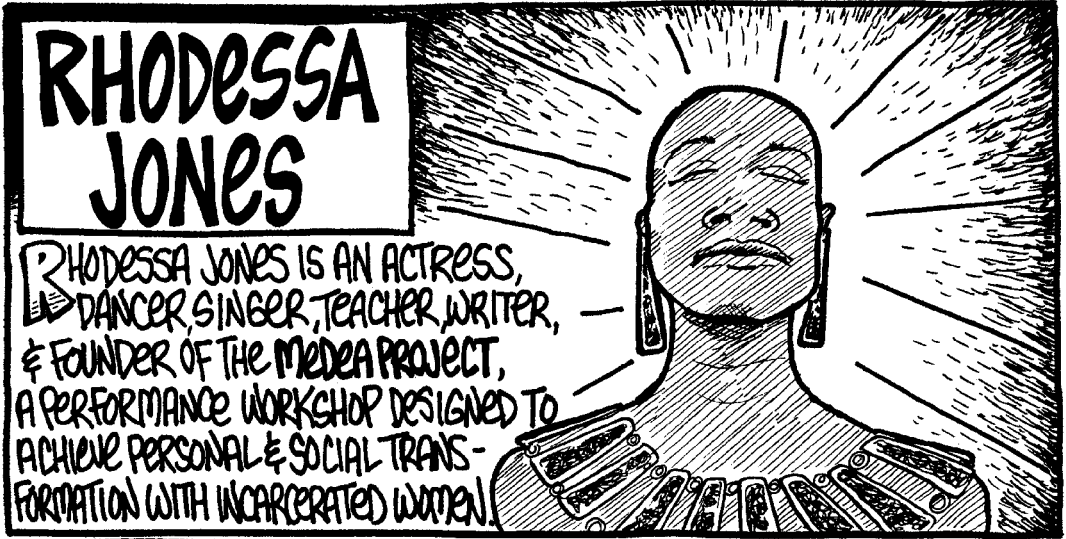


Dancer, actress, singer and playwright **Rhodesa Jones** did not know what to expect her first day as an artist-in-residence in the San Francisco County Jail at San Bruno.

But she set aside her personal assumptions, and as a result a new theater company was created that has since helped hundreds of women exit the revolving door of prison life.

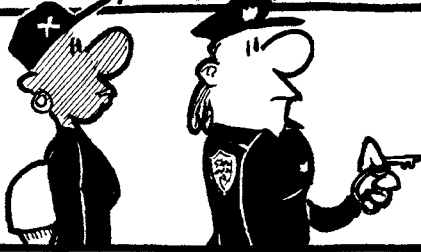
Here's her story...
"More Than Aerobics."





Art by Keith Knight, copyright 2005

AND WHY DID THEY THINK THAT I SHOULD BE THE PERSON THAT THEY APPROACH? I AM NOT, AND NEVER ASPIRED TO BE, AN AEROBICS TEACHER...



MY VERY NATURE IS: HOW CAN I MAKE A DIFFERENCE WITH MY WORK?

I DIDN'T WANT TO JUST COME IN & TEACH AN 8-COUNT DANCE STEP...



I WANT YOUNG WOMEN TO MEET THEIR BODIES WITH THEIR MINDS THROUGH CONVERSATION, IMPROVIGATION, & EXPLORATION THAT DIRECTLY CONNECTS TO THEIR LIVES..

I WAS AMAZED AT THE AMOUNT OF WOMEN IN JAIL... AND HOW YOUNG THEY WERE...

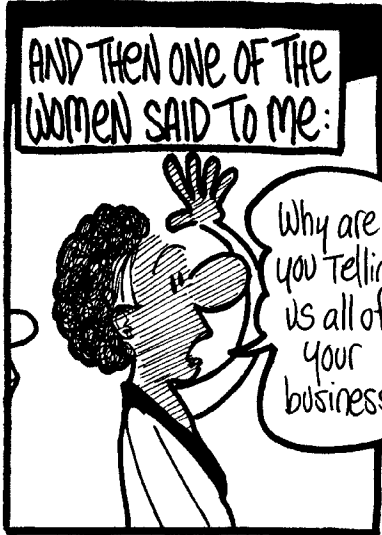


WHEN I MET THE GROUP, I GOT RIGHT INTO IT...

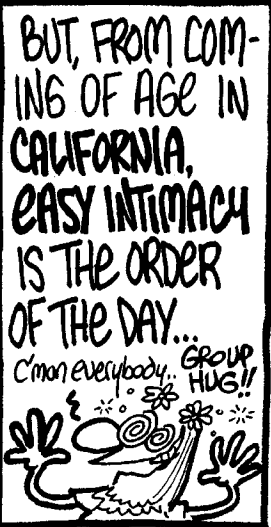


I MOVED, & AT THE SAME TIME TALKED ABOUT WHO I WAS & HOW I ARRIVED AT THIS PLACE AS A DANCER.. AS AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN GIRL..

Art by Keith Knight, copyright 2005



IT REMINDED ME THAT CULTURALLY, AFRICAN-AMERICANS WERE INSTRUCTED TO KEEP IT HUSH-HUSH.. YOU DON'T TAKE THINGS OUTSIDE THE FAMILY... YOU DON'T BE TELLING EVERYBODY NO BUSINESS...



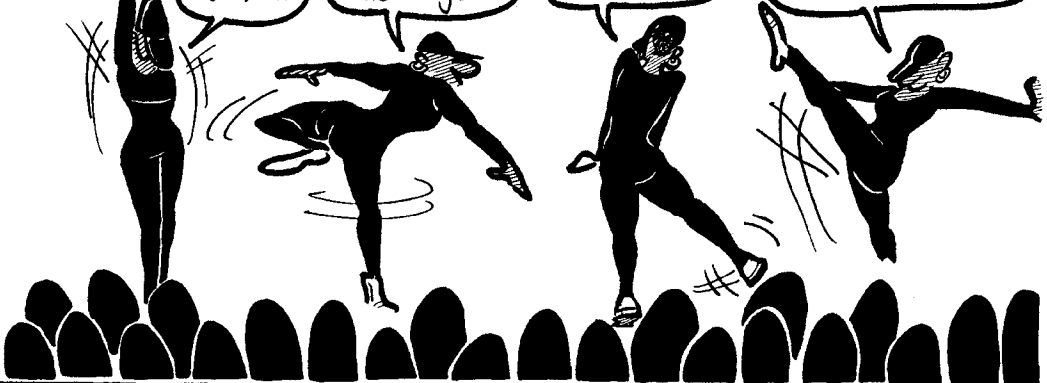
I RESPONDED WITH:

I am a bridge builder...

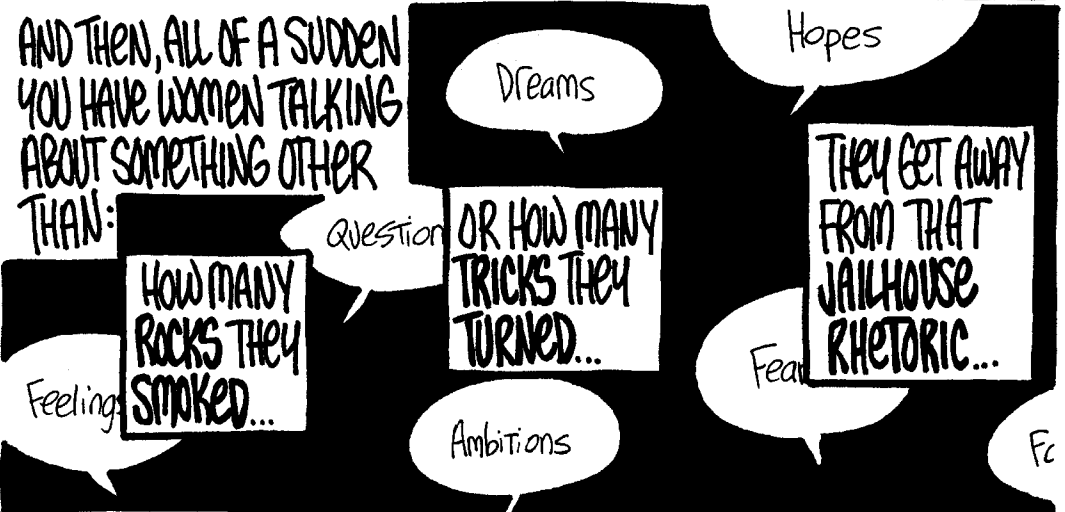
And this is all about building the bridge..

--That will take us all out of here...

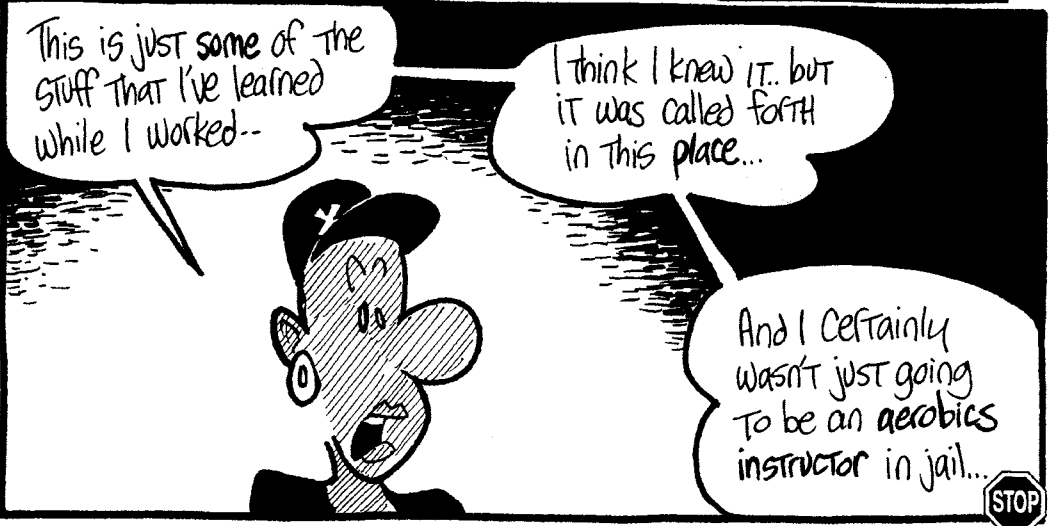
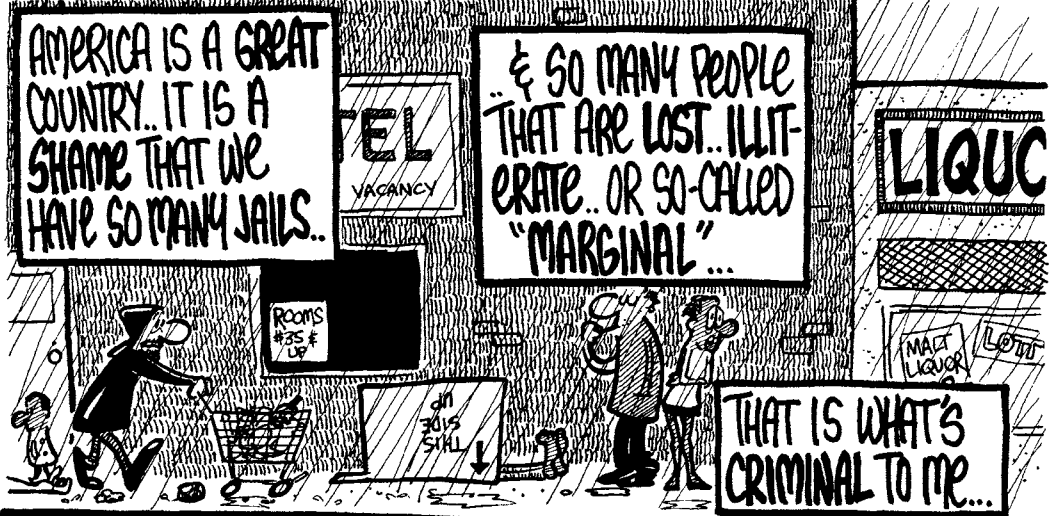
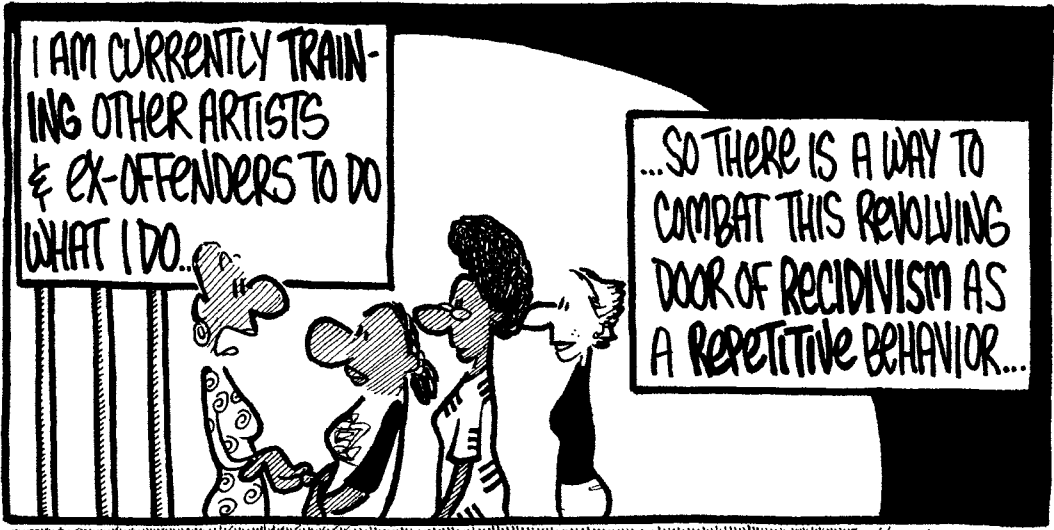
My fantasy is to close jails... To create other institutions...



Art by Keith Knight, copyright 2005



Art by Keith Knight, copyright 2005



Art by Keith Knight, copyright 2005

INSIDE THE CRAFT CIRCLE

TIP

Be as honest and open with yourself as you are asking others to be.



TOPICS

- Why might people in a community resist participating in a project?
- What personal barriers might get in the way of open communication?
- What assumptions might you have about a community and its people?
- What common goals do you and the people in the community share?

TECHNIQUE: BODY AND SOUL / BODY AND SOUND EXERCISE

Derived from exercises of Rhodessa Jones, San Francisco, CA

DURATION

1 to 2 hours

OBJECTIVES

- Art: Use personal stories as the basis for artistic expression.
- Learning: Establish personal learning and developmental goals.
- Social Change: Build group purpose and unity.

MATERIALS

- A quiet space where the group can move freely
- Tape or CD player and a piece of contemplative music
- Drawing and writing paper, pens/pencils (distributed in advance)

STEPS

1. Ask participants to find a place in the room to lie on their backs (shoes off and eyes closed).
2. Play an excerpt of the selected music, and verbally encourage the group to imagine themselves five years in the future.
3. After 10 minutes, ask everyone to draw something using the music as inspiration.
4. Display the drawings on the wall.
5. Ask participants to view each other's work and write their response to each drawing.
6. Invite participants to share excerpts of their writing with the group.
7. Discuss how the exercise helped to cultivate trust and understanding in the group, and what common goals emerged.

VARIATIONS & EXTENSIONS

- Use the writings as a source for composing lyrics, poetry, monologues, etc.
- Help participants develop a contract with themselves and the group to pursue the visions that come out of this exercise.



Additional techniques and other resources: www.xroadsproject.org

SAMPLE RESOURCES

RESOURCES

TRAILBLAZERS

In order to understand the core concepts of the community-based arts movement (see Glossary for definitions), we sought the wisdom of these thinkers:

1. On **art**:

“The human species has had an evolutionary history of about 4 million years. If we presume to speak about art history, we must take into account this entire period.” — BIOLOGIST ELLEN DISSANAYAKE

2. On **community**:

“Each community boasts a unique combination of assets upon which to build its future. A thorough map of these assets would begin with an inventory of the gifts, skills and capacities of the people who are part of that community.”

— SOCIOLOGISTS JOHN P. KRETZMANN & JOHN L. MCKNIGHT

3. On **community-based art**:

“The motivation of aesthetic or creative activity is the impulse to make ‘it’ better, when ‘it’ is one’s dynamic relationship to others. In this sense, all art is community-based.”

— THEATER ARTIST/ACTIVIST JOHN O’NEAL

4. On **consensus**:

“Consensus is based on the belief that each person has some part of the truth and no one has all of it...”

— QUAKER, AND MEETING FACILITATION TRAINER, CAROLYN ESTES

5. On **culture**:

“To truly know ourselves, it is necessary to not merely be in the cultural world but to change it.” — ANTHROPOLOGIST PAUL WILLIS

6. On **democracy**:

“Cultural democracy is predicated on the idea that diverse cultures should be treated as essentially equal in our multicultural societies. Within this framework, cultural development becomes a process of assisting communities and individuals to learn, express and communicate in multiple directions, not merely from the top down.

— CULTURAL PLANNERS/SCHOLARS DON ADAMS & ARLENE GOLDBARD

7. On **identity**:

“‘Identity’ as a phenomenon of human consciousness depends much more on how those in one’s immediate environment ask questions, give directions, frame time and space, and reflect expectations, than it does on verbal declarations of collectivity or acceptance or on common labels.”

— ANTHROPOLOGIST SHIRLEY BRICE HEATH AND EDUCATOR MILBREY W. MCLAUGHLIN

8. On learning:

"There is no teaching without learning. Both take place in such a way that those who teach learn, on the one hand, because they recognize previously learned knowledge and, on the other, because by observing how the novice student's curiosity works to apprehend what is taught, they help themselves to uncover uncertainties, rights and wrongs." — EDUCATOR PAULO FREIRE

9. On objectives:

"When I think of the future, I think of ...a society where many peoples can live and share the same world without killing, exploiting and ruling each other. Whenever I consider my objectives in a particular situation, it is that vision which drives my efforts."

— SINGER/SCHOLAR BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON

10. On partnership (also known as collaboration):

"Nobody does anything by themselves in an institutional or community setting. Giving and gaining respect make it possible to build the relationships required to operate effectively in these places."

— ARTS ADVOCATE BILL CLEVELAND

11. On power:

"Without power, there is no social change. Each of us needs to discover and exercise the power within us that enabled Rosa Parks to choose not to go to the back of the bus without waiting to see if others would join her." — ACTIVIST GRACE LEE BOGGS

12. On people power:

Your task, actors, is to be
Explorers and teachers of the art of dealing with people,
Knowing their nature and demonstrating it you teach people
To deal with themselves. You teach them the great art
Of living together. — POET/PLAYWRIGHT BERTOLT BRECHT

13. On social change:

"True social change is a never-ending process. Our alliances and our sense of historical continuity create the binding solidarities that are our greatest defense in the battle for social justice."

— VISUAL ARTIST/SCHOLAR AMALIA MESA BAINS

ARTIST PROFILES



Chris Edaakie



Rhodessa Jones

I-AM-GOING-BUT-I-SHALL-RETURN Pages 5–17

- ARTIST** Christopher Edaakie
- ORGANIZATION** School Healthy Lifestyles
- HOME** Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico
- MISSION** To create a bridge between the young and the old, the past and the present, to remember our proud heritage and to use this to keep our people strong and healthy.
- ADVICE** During this lifetime, learn as much of your roots as possible, know where you come from. Our elders are like a great library, respect them and learn from them. Use this knowledge to help others find their place in this world.

MORE THAN AEROBICS Pages 18–28

- ARTIST** Rhodessa Jones
- ORGANIZATION** Cultural Odyssey (sponsor of the Medea Project)
- HOME** San Francisco, CA
- MISSION** To address the cultural and social needs of the female incarcerated population.
- ADVICE** It is not enough to want to “do” community-based art. You have to come to understand this work as an act of survival for yourself and the communities you hope to serve. Be interested in all people and all things ... they are your mentors.
- URL** www.culturalodyssey.org