



American Friends Service Committee

Pan Valley Institute

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PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION

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AFSC CELEBRATES CENTRAL VALLEY IMMIGRANTS CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND CONTRIBUTION TO THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL WELLBEING OF THE REGION

Fresno, Calif. – Throughout the summer, the American Friends Service Committee Pan-Valley Institute will present the 2015 Tamejavi Culture and Arts Series.

The Tamejavi Culture and Arts Series consists of public, story-based events featuring the visual arts, theater, dance, spoken word and cultural celebrations of the Valley’s local immigrant communities. The events are the culmination of the Tamejavi Cultural Organizing Fellowship Program, which encourages immigrants to become advocates and leaders within their communities. Through their participation in the program, new immigrants demonstrate how they are building a sense of place and belonging through the wealth of art and culture they have to offer.

“This program aims to provide fellows with the tools necessary to form a deeper understanding of their communities, and gives Central Valley immigrants the unique opportunity to share, analyze and reflect on their individual and collective stories,” said Pan-Valley Institute Program Director Myrna Martinez Nateras. “By sparking a community dialogue, fellows are able to begin working toward the ultimate goal of inspiring community action and social change, serving as a voice for those who would otherwise go unheard.”

The fellows, made up of Mexican Indigenous, Salvadorian, Hmong, Cambodian, Punjab and African American immigrants, have spent the past 18 months interacting in a multicultural environment, where they organized and hosted cultural exchanges within and beyond their own communities. Within their learning groups, the fellows studied their community’s pressing concerns while gathering cultural and artistic assets.

At various events throughout the summer, the fellows will communicate their findings through public projects. Their presentations illustrate stories of resilience to war trauma, cultural colonization, social inequity, intergenerational cultural gaps and immigrant youth identity definition.

The series, which began in March, will culminate with a grand finale at the Tower Theater on Sept. 12.

Follows is a schedule of upcoming events, which are free to the public.

Continued . . .

...Tamejavi Festival continued

Indian Kitchen: The Healing Spices and Herbs Outdoor Market

Saturday, June 20 at 5 p.m.

Memorial Park, Livingston

This presentation by Dolly Solomon will depict the use of plants and herbs that have been important to all Indian tribes or cultures.

Are you Hmong? Spoken word and multimedia presentation

Saturday, July 11 at 5 p.m.

Fresno Art Museum Bonner Center

In her presentation, Chelsea See Xiong will address the stereotypes and ideas of what makes a person Hmong.

The Resilience of the Nigerian Igbo Tribe

Sunday, July 26 at 5:30 p.m.

La Plaza Arte Americas, Fresno

This presentation by Reginald Maduako will explore the persistence, perseverance and unyielding hard work of the Nigerian Igbo tribe.

Hmong Clothes: Embracing a Timeless Piece

Saturday, Aug. 8 at 6 p.m.

Fresno Art Museum

Gao Van's presentation will consist of four mini-skits on the importance of Hmong clothing on cultural identity.

Culture and Migration of Salvadorians

Saturday, Aug. 22 at 7 p.m.

La Plaza Arte Americas, Fresno

In his event, Walter Ramirez will showcase the music, poetry and other performing arts that identify the Salvadorian culture and the experiences that forced them to migrate to the U.S.

Please join us for an intimate look at how these emerging immigrant leaders learned to get in touch with their native cultures and traditions and sought ways to incorporate those into their communities here in the U.S. Putting a voice to the nation's complex immigration problem and teaching fellows how to overcome the challenges they face is at the heart of the Tamejavi Culture and Arts Series.

"We hope to humanize the prevailing immigration debate," said Martinez Nateras. "The ultimate goal is for these stories to serve as the inspiration for building more welcoming communities – those that acknowledge immigrants new and old as positive contributors to the Valley's economic, social and cultural wellbeing.

For more on the Tamejavi Culture and Arts Series, please visit tamejavi.org or call (559) 222-7678.

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The Pan-Valley Institute of the American Friends Service Committee (PVI-AFSC) is the coordinating organization of the Tamejavi Festival. Established in 1998 as a project of AFSC, Pan-Valley Institute's mission is to create a place where immigrants and refugees can gather to learn from each other and rebuild their world. AFSC is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. Its work is based on the belief in the worth of every person and faith in the power of love to overcome violence and injustice.