



## Colorado Art Therapy Association Fall Newsletter - 2021



*Escuela de Guadalupe Mural*  
Tony Ortega  
Denver, CO  
2015

## Community Letter

Dear Colorado Art Therapy Association Members,

I am truly astounded and humbled to work alongside art therapists. Between the Every Human Project workshop, the collaboration with Latino Cultural Arts Center and the participation in the Annual Meeting, I am flooded with a sense of togetherness. Art therapists have such an innate way of coming together, honoring voices, and hearing the call of communities, that feels like magic. I wanted to take a moment to start this letter by sharing my love for you all. Thank you so much for making this year be filled with *Hope, Connection, and Solidarity*.

For this reason, COATA is working towards creating new offerings for next year.

Therapists often dedicate themselves to healing the community, so COATA wants to make changes to be able to pay all art therapists who offer workshops and trainings in addition to offering a virtual training platform. We hope to create these new opportunities to honor our community starting with our new website. COATA is navigating ways to support you all as healers, artists, and human beings. Not just in knowledge and skills, but in nourishment and care.

In addition, we recognize that there continues to be more healing that needs to take place. With the Taliban gaining power in Afghanistan, many people had to flee their country with the hope of finding safety elsewhere. Many Afghan refugees are being welcomed in Colorado to start anew. You can read this Denver Post article on how to help Afghan Refugees in Colorado: [How to Help](#).

As always, the work remains unfinished. Remember to practice self-care, community-care, soul-care and rituals to revive and nourish our souls and bodies. We will continue tackling this one step-at-a-time, to best serve the Colorado community.

Sincerely,  
Jacenta L. Irlanda  
President, Colorado Art Therapy Association

## Colorado Art Therapist in the Spotlight

### Meet Sneha Gaikwad, LPC, ATR-BC

Gaikwad is a Board Certified Art Therapist and Licensed Professional Counselor. She believes that the road to healing often begins in finding your voice and expressing your inner self through art-making.

She is passionate about helping individuals and families of all ages, who are struggling with mood disorders, trauma, and addiction. She also has interest in creating expressive spaces for BIPOC individuals, immigrant families, and women.

Gaikwad engages in community-based work through facilitating a BIPOC art therapy group through the Eating Disorder Foundation and she teaches art for enrichment at a local high school!



Read the Gaikwad  
Interview.

# Local BIPOC Collaboration, A Hit



*BIPOC individuals and facilitators (above) create art together during workshop.*

On September 18th and 19th, Colorado Art Therapy Association members, Valerie Epstein-Johnson, LPC, ATR-BC, Jacenta Irlanda, MA, LPC, ATR and Lara K. Rutledge, MA Art Therapy Candidate, partnered with Social Justice Therapist, Nicole Xenos of Painted One Healing, to support Denver-based BIPOC artists in a community-based art workshop: *Every Human Deserves Resilience*.

This workshop was hosted at the Globeville Rec Center, an art and recreation space, now maintained by the Birdseed Collective in the Swansea-Globeville neighborhood, a traditionally under resourced area in Denver, Colorado.

For two days, therapists joined with professional artists Moe Gram, Danielle Seewalker and Karma Leigh to help facilitate a workshop based on Gram's Every Human Empathy Campaign. This art-based workshop provided a supportive space for BIPOC community members to come together to engage in therapeutic resources, have hard conversations and to create art together.

During the workshop, therapists helped to maintain an environment that was trauma-informed as artists introduced art-making prompts and discussions related to intergenerational resilience. Using a wide range of rigid art materials, like cardboard, fabric, magazine

Creating a space for community members to have hard conversations about family trauma as well as the opportunity to reflect on ways to move forward, provided a tremendous opportunity to promote healing, while also respecting the innate wisdom for healing that community members already have.

Each member brought a unique perspective and approach to the art-making process. After the workshop, members commented that they felt they were in a place where they could begin to 'do the work' to heal from their family's past. Facilitators reflected that this workshop fulfilled a strong need for community healing and strengths-based resources for BIPOC individuals in the community.

American Art Therapy Association contacted the Colorado Art Therapy Association to inquire about the event. They requested to include a feature about the event in an upcoming blog post. The Colorado Art Therapy Association will share details as soon as the blog is published.

In addition to receiving attention from the American Art Therapy Association, the Colorado Art Therapy Association and Moe Gram recently received the InsiteFund Grant through RedLine Contemporary Art Center in order to fund future workshops and provide payment to facilitators. Stay tuned for more information!



clippings, colored pencils, markers, oil pastels, chalk and charcoal, community members were encouraged to work on a single art piece for the duration of the workshop. Artworks were inspired by group dialogue surrounding the themes: “*What does resilience mean to you?*,” “*How do you honor your ancestors?*,” and, “*What do you want to carry forward for healing?*”



*Art therapist facilitators outside of Globeville Rec Center, Valerie Epstein-Johnson (top), Lara K. Rutledge (middle), Jacenta Irlanda (bottom) .*

### **Resources:**

[Moe Gram's Every Human Empathy Campaign](#)

### **Facilitators:**

[@mi\\_moegram](#)

[@karmaleigh](#)

[@seewalker\\_art](#)

[@arttherapyco](#)

[@painted\\_one\\_healing](#)

[@birdseedcollective](#)

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## Partnership with Latino Cultural Arts Center Takes Off

Throughout the art-making process, volunteer Colorado Art Therapy Association members are there to hold space for anyone who is showing signs of dysregulation. Art therapists act as third hand and offer support and encouragement in this 'art as therapy' environment.

Alongside art therapists, Latino Cultural Arts Center artist coordinators deliver a presentation about the art project for the workshop,



*A nicho to be placed on an Ofrendas, or home altar (image above). Nichos are created to honor the memory of a loved one in your community, who has passed.*

The Colorado Art Therapy Association has been engaging in a cross-collaborative partnership with the Latino Cultural Arts Center of Denver on Ofrendas: 2021.

Ofrendas: 2021 is the first annual program of its kind by the Latino Cultural Arts Center; and they hope to make this program a yearly event in the Denver-metro community in celebration of Dia de los Muertos and to support members in their community who grieve.

A series of workshops are being held throughout the month of October, where participants can engage in the creative process in community while gaining support from local artists and art therapists.

At the workshops, Colorado Art Therapy Association volunteers provide psychoeducational support to participants around expressive arts therapies, grief and loss as well as skills for how to increase resilience.

and explain the historical significance of the project and how it relates to Dia de los Muertos. They guide participants in the art-making process. Some art projects at workshops include: creating nichos, marigold paper lanterns, incense holders and barriletes.



*A Dia de los Muertos home Altar, or Ofrendas (above), where objects to honor the dead are on ritual display.*

**Colorado Art Therapy Association is seeking Spanish and English-speaking art therapist volunteers to support Ofrendas: 2021 workshops.**

Interested? Click [here](#) to register.

**Learn more about the Latino Cultural Arts Center:**

[www.lcac-denver.org](http://www.lcac-denver.org)  
@lccadenver



COLORADO ART THERAPY ASSOCIATION  
IS A PROUD PARTNER OF  
LATINO CULTURAL ARTS CENTER AND:



**OFRENDAS** 2021



A Fresh, New Look Online





A very warm thank you to Colorado Art Therapy Association Website Chair, Lindsay Ritscher, for designing our brand new website!

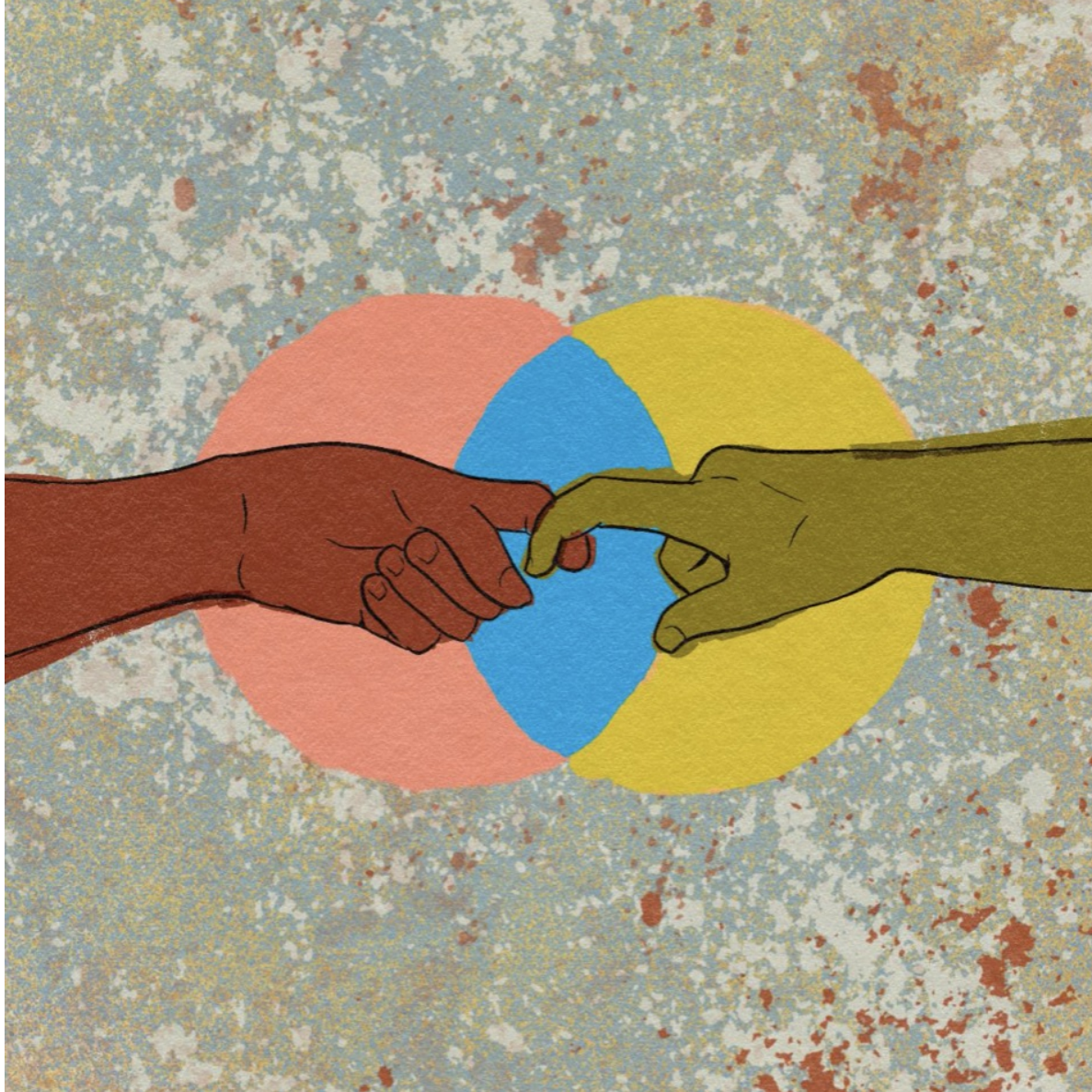
**This new site comes fully equipped with:**

- an art therapist directory
- a digital resource page
- past art therapist interviews and newsletters
- and more!

Check out our new site and tell your friends:  
[www.arttherapycolorado.org](http://www.arttherapycolorado.org)

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## Annual Member Virtual Art Show Goes Live



This year, we have chosen to focus on *Hope, Connection* and *Solidarity*. Moving forward, we want to continue upholding the meaning of these words by honoring the identities of *You, Me, and We*.

Due to the pandemic, this year the Annual Art Show has been moved to a digital platform and has been uploaded to a virtual gallery for you to visit and explore!

The virtual exhibit will remain up for the month of October before the images are transferred to be housed on our website for the year.

**Check out the virtual gallery [here!](#)**

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## Annual Member Meeting Re-cap

Colorado art therapists came together in person and over zoom on October 9, 2021, for the Annual Meeting to honor *Hope, Connection*, and *Solidarity*, while moving to celebrate identifies with *You, Me, We*.

Colorado Art Therapy Association was so grateful to have a new presenter,

Colorado Art Therapy Association also welcomed returning presenter, Nora Swan-Foster, ATR-BC, LPC (below, right) who presented on *The Symbol of the Tree Through a Jungian Perspective*. Nora guided participants through the symbol of the tree through various mythologies across cultures. Afterward, she



Sonia Fregoso, LMFT (below, left) agreed to share her time with us for the meeting. She engaged art therapists in a discussion surrounding *Tarot and Therapy Through a Decolonization Lens*. She mirrored how beautifully Tarot can be integrated into art therapy and ways to uphold the roots of Tarot which was created by the Romani people in India as a means for survival and guidance.

For the first time, Colorado Art Therapy Association invited a Colorado spoken word artist, Ralonda Simmons (below, middle) to share the day with us. Ralonda shared her spoken word poetry with art therapists, speaking the truth of her feelings facing the world as a black woman, celebrating her body, and honoring her ancestry. She performed messages that sunk deeply into the bodies of her audience. It was truly a performance that encourages us to continue moving forward to create change in the mental health world for all people. After her performance, art therapists were encouraged to spend time creating response art.

initiated and led an art experiential for art therapists to explore their own tree symbol. She held a space that invited participants to bear witness to the powerful and familiar image of a tree that each person carries with them.

The meeting felt like such a wonderful way to gather together for nourishment and knowledge. Colorado Art Therapy Association is extremely humbled and grateful to have such a wonderful art therapy community and to our presenters/performers. We look forward to the next Annual Member Meeting and hope to continue building new relationships for the art therapy community.

Special thank you to Sonia, Ralonda, and Nora for making our annual meeting that much more connecting!

**Follow their work:**

@angelcityholistictherapy  
@ralondathepoet  
@swan\_foster



**Mental Health Resources, Relief and Aid  
to Support the Afghanistan Crisis**



**Photo Reference:**

*Children play in a camp for internally displaced people in Kabul, Al Jazeera [Felipe Dana/AP Photo].  
Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/9/13/u-n-seeks-600-million-in-afghanistans-most-perilous-hour>*

**National Suicide Prevention Hotline**

*We can all help prevent suicide. The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.*

1-800-273-TALK (8255)  
or text 838255 to chat

**Amala Hopeline for Youth**

*'Amala' means 'hope.' Managing stress can be overwhelming. We are here to help! We are a FREE Warm-line (Help-line) that provides peer support for you. No matter what you are going through, you can reach out for help here with AMALA. You can text in our line for the same support Wednesdays and Sundays 6pm-10pm anonymously.*

**Veteran's Affairs 8/17/21 blog post**

*Veterans who served in Afghanistan may be experiencing a range of challenging emotions related to the U.S withdrawal from the country and the events unfolding now. Veterans who served during other conflicts may also be feeling strong emotions as they may be reminded of their own deployment experiences.*

**Headstrong**

*Headstrong provides at no expense, confidential and stigma-free mental health treatment for military members, veterans, and their families regardless of service era or discharge.*



## Women for Afghanistan Women

We are ready to provide culturally sensitive support, basic needs, trauma-informed mental health counseling, education and social services, housing, transportation, and immigration legal support. We want our new community members to know that they are and will not be alone. We will be there for them until they can stand on their own.

## Islamic Relief USA

*Islamic Relief USA is accepting donations to help families struggling with hunger in Kabul, Balkh, Herat and Nangahar provinces.*

### Reference

MyAATA Blog. (2021, August 23). Mental Health Resources to Support Coping with the crisis in Afghanistan. American Art Therapy Association. Retrieved from: <https://arttherapy.org/news-resources-support-coping-with-crisis-afghanistan/>

## About the Cover Artist: Tony Ortega



Tony Ortega holds an MFA in drawing and painting from the University of Colorado and is currently a professor for Regis University. He is the recipient of the coveted Governor's Award for Excellence in the Arts (1999) and the Mayor's Award for Excellence in the Arts (1998). He has been a working artist and teacher for the past 36 years and is known for his vibrant, colorful artwork.

Tony Ortega's lifelong goal is to contribute to a better understanding of cultural diversity by addressing the culture, history and experiences of Chicanos/Latinos through his art. His work can be found in Denver Art Museum, Los Angeles County Museum and the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center. He has exhibited extensively in United States, Latin America and other parts of the world.

## Become a COATA Board Member

**We are seeking to fill the following positions:**

*Vice President  
Secretary  
Treasurer  
Government Affairs Chair  
or co-chair with another board member*

### **Board Member benefits:**

Free membership  
Free trainings and workshops  
Free art submissions to the Annual Art Show  
Networking opportunities  
Great experience and Resume builder



*This musical Ofrenda provides comfort to mourning relatives and performers. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.texasstandard.org/stories/artists-musical-ofrendas-bring-comfort-to-listeners-and-to-performers/>*

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