“Art is a tool that an ally could use to unearth the myth of meritocracy, find the cracks and fissures in the institutional foundation, and to begin to force a paradigm shift toward justice. We must empower our students, through arts integration, education, and activism, to be allies to the oppressed and correct the wrongs of an unjust system.”
–High School Science teacher, Berkeley High School, Berkeley, CA

Contributor: Alameda County Office of Education

The purpose of this module is to build community and create allies that will advocate for justice by:

• Filling in the gaps of our collective histories to lift up the stories that are often omitted.
• Expressing, respecting, and honoring our stories of human struggle: forced removal, economic challenges, immigration policies, resilience, hope, and triumph.

Many people have taken, or were forced to take, journeys of migration due to government policies and/or the drive to seek a better life; these are the journeys that have us living where we now reside. This learning experience lifts up the stories that reflect our multiple journeys. By exploring and using art, creating “suitcases” and writing letters in the voices of the journeyers, participants can express their stories.

The workshop at the core of this module, Movement and Migration: Honoring Personal and Collective Journeys, comes from the Alameda County Office of Education’s Arts Integration Specialist Program, http://www.artiseducation.org/what-we-do/our-programs/integrated-learning-specialist-program. In this dynamic professional development program, teachers learn how to use the arts to teach critical thinking so that students understand the world as it is today. In turn the students will be able to employ their skills, knowledge, and creative voices to envision and reconfigure a just world of tomorrow.

Target Audience: Educators, youth, community service workers, and others

Materials: Computer, projector, screen, collage materials: maps, scissors, glue, 9” x 12” x 4” mailing boxes, masking tape. Optional: paint, brushes, oil pastels, markers, fabric.

Please be sure to use the PowerPoint in the presentation format, otherwise the hyperlinks will not work.

Time: The facilitator makes the determination based on the time available. Sections can be divided and used in many ways. This can be a full-day workshop of 5-7 hours, or may be broken into components of 2-3 hours or even hour-long sessions.
SECTION 1: Recording Life Journeys and Paths

Learning Goals:

• Utilize the art of poetry, song, and metaphor to record and share our unique and individual paths.

• Discover strengths and values that have developed from this journey.

Estimated time: 20 minutes

Instructions: Read, Watch/Listen, then Reflect for 2 min. Follow with dialogue in groups of two or three using the questions below.

Born in 1875, Antonio Machado was to become one of the premier Spanish poets of his generation. Machado's poetic voice influenced 20th Century poets Octavio Paz, Derek Walcott, and Giannina Braschi. The following poem reflects the constructivist epistemology, which could be called a “philosophy of action.” Later, the Spanish singer Joan Manuel Serrat wrote music for this poem, turning it into a popular folk song.

“Caminante no hay camino”
Caminante, son tus huellas el camino, y nada más;
caminante, no hay camino, se hace camino al andar.
Al andar se hace el camino, y al volver la vista atrás
se ve la senda que nunca se ha de volver a pisar.
Caminante, no hay camino, sino estelas en la mar.

- Antonio Machado from “Proverbios y cantares” in Campos de Castilla, 1912

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English translation:
Wanderer, your footsteps are the road, and nothing more;
Wanderer, there is no road, the road is made by walking.
By walking one makes the road, and upon glancing behind one sees the path that never will be trod again.
Wanderer, there is no road—Only wakes upon the sea.

Listen to “Caminante no hay camino”
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=jGuMiBXOjY)

Raúl “Pipo” Zerquera, a Cuban living in the small fishing village of Casilda in Cuba, sings “Caminante no hay camino,” the famous poem of the Spanish poet Antonio Machado.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. What are the stories or ways that your people have come to be where they are now?
2. What are the strengths and values that are now part of your own life’s story?
SECTION 2: Watching the Good Trains Go By

Romare Bearden’s Watching the Good Trains Go By

The artist Romare Bearden captures the African-American experience of migration in this collage from 1964. We look closely at Bearden’s work of art to see a story of culture, movement, and migration.

Learning Goal:

- Examine how our individual and collective journeys are reflected in and inform our cultures.

Estimated Time: 20 minutes

Instructions:

Romare Howard Bearden was born on September 2, 1911, to (Richard) Howard and Bessye Bearden in Charlotte, North Carolina, and died in New York City on March 12, 1988, at the age of 76. His life and art are marked by exceptional talent, encompassing a broad range of intellectual and scholarly interests, including music, performing arts, history, literature, and world art. Bearden was also a celebrated humanist, as demonstrated by his lifelong support of young, emerging artists.

Recognized as one of the most creative and original visual artists of the twentieth century, Romare Bearden had a prolific and distinguished career. He experimented with many different mediums and artistic styles, but is best known for his richly textured collages, two of which appeared on the covers of Fortune and Time magazines, both in 1968. An innovative artist with diverse interests, Bearden also designed costumes and sets for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and programs, sets, and designs for Nanette Bearden’s Contemporary Dance Theatre.

Now go to SFMOMA’s Website: (http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/interactive_features/23) and launch “The Art of Romare Bearden.” Click on What is “Visual Jazz”? Click on the top right image, called Watching the Good Trains Go By, 1964.

Ask the group to explain what is going on in the image. Paraphrase what people say. Spend 10 minutes mining the work for meaning. Consider these questions:

What do you see? What makes you say that? What more can you tell?

Then, click on the speaker icon and listen to the audio clip by Winton Marsalis.

What additional meaning does this music give the art?
Reflect or discuss in groups of two or three.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

1. What insights did you gain from Bearden’s collage and Marsalis’s commentary about the African American experience?
2. What do trains symbolize in different cultures? Do they have different meanings based on who is telling the story?
3. Can you relate this to your own story of movement and migration?
SECTION 3: Movement and Migration

Workshop: Movement and Migration: Honoring Personal and Collective Journeys

This learning experience honors all of the stories that have shaped our past and present. Participants reflect upon and learn about migration experiences and create a “suitcase” with artifacts that represent the long arc of history. Written journals and theater pieces express and emphasize our diverse backgrounds and experiences, thus helping participants understand the power of and lessons in our respective paths in tandem with our longing for wholeness and belonging.

Facilitator’s Script: The United States of America holds many stories that speak of and to multiple histories, cultures, and identities. First Nation peoples did not arrive from another shore, but were pushed off their lands and have suffered immeasurably ever since. The United States is known around the world as the “Land of Opportunity.” It is a place inhabited by people who have journeyed from around the globe in hopes of escaping violence or achieving economic, political, or religious freedom. However, there are also those who were brought forcibly, as well as those who served as tools toward the lofty ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The concept of a hemisphere without borders indicates that migration is a natural evolution of movement. People who historically moved freely, often guided by spirit, are now told they do not belong here or are not wanted here.

Learning Goals:

• To share our respective memories and journeys related to movement and migration, which invite and expand our capacity to respect, value, and honor difference.

• To articulate the struggles and triumphs of our families, our communities, and our people, so that we might be able to understand our historical migrations.

• To find value in both our sameness and our differences.

Estimated Time: The facilitator makes the determination based on the time available.

Sections can be divided and used in many ways: It can be a storytelling session that stands alone as a 2-hour workshop. In this case, instead of actually making the “suitcases,” participants can share their stories and journal entries. This section can also be a full day art workshop that is 4-6 hours or two sessions of 2-3 hours, or smaller 1-hour sections. (This would include 3 hours for setting the context and creating visual art and 3 hours for writing, theater, and critique/sharing/closing.)

Instructions: Part 1 includes setting the context and making the visual art “suitcases.” Part 2 includes writing the journey letter, acting the stories, and closure. The activities can be broken down into smaller, one-hour sections.

This module works well if people have been given the assignment to bring in the biography of a person who has either immigrated or migrated to the U.S. (Metaphorical and spiritual journeys are also welcome. People may bring photos and biographies of loved
ones, historical heroes and sheroes, political and/or artistic figures, community members, etc.)

Materials: Collage materials: maps, scissors, glue, 9" x 12" x 4" mailing boxes, masking tape
Optional: paint, brushes, oil pastels, markers, fabric

Part 1: Journey Context and Creating Symbolic “Suitcases”

a. Community Building – 15 minutes

   Building community is essential to help everyone trust each other and feel safe. Begin by asking everyone to sit in a circle with their feet flat on the ground, hands resting on laps, eyes closed. Ask them to focus on their breathing and to imagine themselves in their favorite, most comfortable spot. Ask them to picture what is in that spot, feel the air in that spot, hear the sounds there. Tell them: “Imagine a circle of three loved ones around you. Each gives you something for a journey you are about to take. Examine each object and its cultural meaning. Place the objects in your suitcase. Open your eyes. Turn to your neighbor and tell them what you received and why you were given that object.” Ask a few people to share something they received and why.

b. Create a symbolic “suitcase” for a chosen person – Up to 2 hours

   Can also be divided into smaller sections, based upon the time the individual or group facilitator/teacher has.

   Each participant creates a “suitcase” to express a lived or imagined history and culture that informs their identity and/or values today. They may bring photos and a biography of their chosen person—from ancestors and family members to historical heroes and sheroes, political and/or artistic figures, or community members. If their personal past is unknown, they may wish to explore adopted family members, friends, other community members, and/or imaginary ancestors.

   Construct a “suitcase” with the mailing box and tape. Cover the outside with paper, fabric, or tape, creating a box that is representative of the person’s life and journey. Once the outside is finished, decorate the inside with images, colors, textures, and objects that represent the person’s life and journey. Create a handle with cardboard/tape, string, wire, or rope.

   Optional and encouraged if time is available: Make a map or passport or symbolic object to go inside of the suitcase.

   Give artists a time check when there is 45 minutes left, 30 minutes, 15 minutes. After clean up, put suitcases on display.
c. Closing -- up to 45 minutes

Set each suitcase down with the subject's name visible. Ask everyone to move around the room and take a gallery walk. Assure the class that a more formal gallery walk will happen next session when we learn about each person’s story.

Reflection questions: Using the following reflection questions, people may work in groups of 3 or 4.

1. What was challenging about this exercise?
2. What was inspiring or creative for you?
3. What, if anything, would you like to add to your suitcase?

Part 2: Writing Letters Home

a. Reflection and Imagination – 15 minutes

Begin by asking everyone to sit in a circle with their feet flat on the ground, hands resting on laps, eyes closed. Ask them to focus on their breathing, to place themselves on the journey, and to embody the traveler. Tell them: “Picture what is happening. Notice where you are, who is there with you, and how you feel. What emotions are you experiencing?” Ask a few people to share something they encountered on their journey.

b. Writing the Letter – 30 minutes

Please note that letters can be written “by” anyone from the past, including the traveler as a child. Have participants answer these questions in letter form, in order to fill in details about their person’s journey:

1. What part of this person’s history in their homeland is part of their identity? (Or, what part of their homeland's history has become part of this person’s identity?)
2. What did this traveler encounter when they journeyed here? What did they bring? What did they leave behind?
3. Did the traveler experience challenges and obstacles? Excitement and new vistas or visions? What did they do to overcome difficulties? How did they embrace their new way of life?
4. Write how the traveler adapts to a new culture/society. Do they assimilate/fit in? Did they keep cultural values? At what cost?

c. Traveler Letter – 15 minutes

Now have participants write a short letter as if they were the traveler. The letter may be to a loved one back home, or to someone who helped the traveler get here.

d. Sharing the Letter – 10 minutes

Ask a few volunteers to share their letters with the group.
Part 3: Journey Theater from Destiny Arts (http://www.destinyarts.org/) – 1.5 hours

Movement Sculpture Warm Up:

Break larger group into groups of three. One person in each group is the “sculptor,” the other two are "clay."

**Note: Share this rule of theater with the groups:** Always respect the body of the other person. Some people do not want to be touched. Ask before beginning poses. Instead of touching the “clay,” you can demonstrate (model) the pose you want and use sign language (hand and foot gestures) to direct. This is a way of practicing boundaries.

Give them the word "struggle" to sculpt. The sculptor places the two people in body poses, and then places themself into the sculpture. They all look at the group. Now the next person is the sculptor, and the word is "triumph." Sculpt; view. Next person, word is "respect." Sculpt; view. If time allows, ask each group to come up with transitions between the three sculptures and perform for the group. Present the movement sculpture sequences to the whole group.

**Reflection/Discussion Question:** What did you notice?

**Journey Theater:** Once again, break the larger group into groups of three. Ask each person to read his or her letter to the smaller group, while the other two people create a movement score or sculptural body montage. Take turns until each person gets to work out their performance (10 minutes per person/letter). Suitcases can be used as props. Perform each letter to the whole group.

**Reflection/Discussion Questions:**
How did hearing other journey stories give you a broader perspective? How did movement theater help you articulate each other’s struggles and triumphs? How can work like this bring us together to fight injustice?

Part 4: Gallery Walk of Suitcases (If running this as a consecutive workshop) – 15 minutes

Place all of the suitcases on display with their objects and letters. Options for critique:

a. Give each person paper and pen to write comments to each other: what they see, what it makes them think about, and what it makes them feel. At the end of the gallery walk, each participant returns to their own suitcase and reads the notes left for them.

b. People share suitcases in small groups and discuss a few things they learned about each other.

**Closing – 15 minutes**
In pairs, discuss the following:

1. How did this work help us to more deeply understand the migration experience?
2. How can we encourage respect and understanding in order to live together in spite of our historical and cultural differences?
SECTION 4: Journey from Aztlán to the Promised Land

Learning Goals:

• To discover the importance of oral history for keeping cultural tradition alive.
• To explore collective intention or solidarity and its impact on community.

Estimated time: 20-30 minutes

Instructions: Read the story aloud. Then in groups of three, participants answer the reflection/dialogue questions.

A Wisdom Story:
The Aztecas, who were also called Mexicas (meaning “people of the earth”), were a tribe who migrated from a place called Aztlán. Aztlán (“land of the herons”) is said to be located somewhere to the northwest of the Aztec capital. It was there that the Aztecs emerged from the earth-womb itself in the time of genesis. In these origin myths, they emerged from the bowels of the earth through seven caves (Chicomostoc) to live in Aztlán before migrating on to Tulá (believed by some to be the legendary Tollán—capital of the Toltecs). Aztlán is described as an earthly paradise located on a beautiful lake far to the northwest of Central Mexico. Some conjecture that Atzlán was as far north as modern day New Mexico or even California, but the exact location is still unknown.

According to the records/codices kept by the Aztecas, their ancestors lived a life of plenty in Aztlán, because of its bountiful trees, water supply, fish and fowl, and other natural resources. An abundance of white-plumed waterfowl in the area led them to call it Aztlán, meaning either “land of the herons” or “land of whiteness” in the Azteca language, Nahuatl. It is told that the Aztecas abandoned Aztlán for two reasons: The first is that they were being heavily taxed for food and goods by a neighboring hostile tribe; secondly, their spiritual leaders were instructed by their gods to travel and build a city (and a better life) for the tribe wherever they beheld an eagle with a snake in its beak perched atop a cactus. They marched southward and witnessed such a spectacle in the middle of a lake in the Valley of Mexico, where they founded Tenochtitlán, circa 1325.

The image displayed in the Powerpoint presentation is a depiction of the departure from Aztlán. This image is from the Boturini Codex, which was painted by an unknown Aztec author some time between 1530 and 1541, roughly a decade after the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Pictorial in nature, it tells the story of the legendary Aztec journey from Aztlán to the Valley of Mexico. (Source: Wikipedia.)
Reflection/Dialogue Questions in Triads:

1. This story is an example of oral history, that which has been passed down by word of mouth. What is an example of oral history that exists in your family or culture that you carry with you?

2. This story relates a movement of a people over a great distance and for more than 250 years. What do you imagine could have kept this migration alive for this many years?

3. Can you find examples of “vision,” “solidarity,” and “community” in this story? How or why might that be important for moving forward?
SECTION 5: Action Steps & Resources

Action Steps:
Support Race Forward’s “Drop the I-Word” Campaign.
(https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/drop-i-word-campaign)

Resources

Books:


Alameda County Office of Education
www.acoe.org
www.artiseducation.org

Destiny Arts
www.destinyarts.org

KQED SPARK!
www.kqed.org/arts/programs/spark
Artists on movement and migration: Consuelo Jimenez Underwood, Hung Liu, Victor Cartageña

Consuelo Jimenez Underwood
www.fiberscene.com/artists/c_underwood.html