



HEART & SOL COLLECTIVE

Sol Connection

SUMMER SOLSTICE

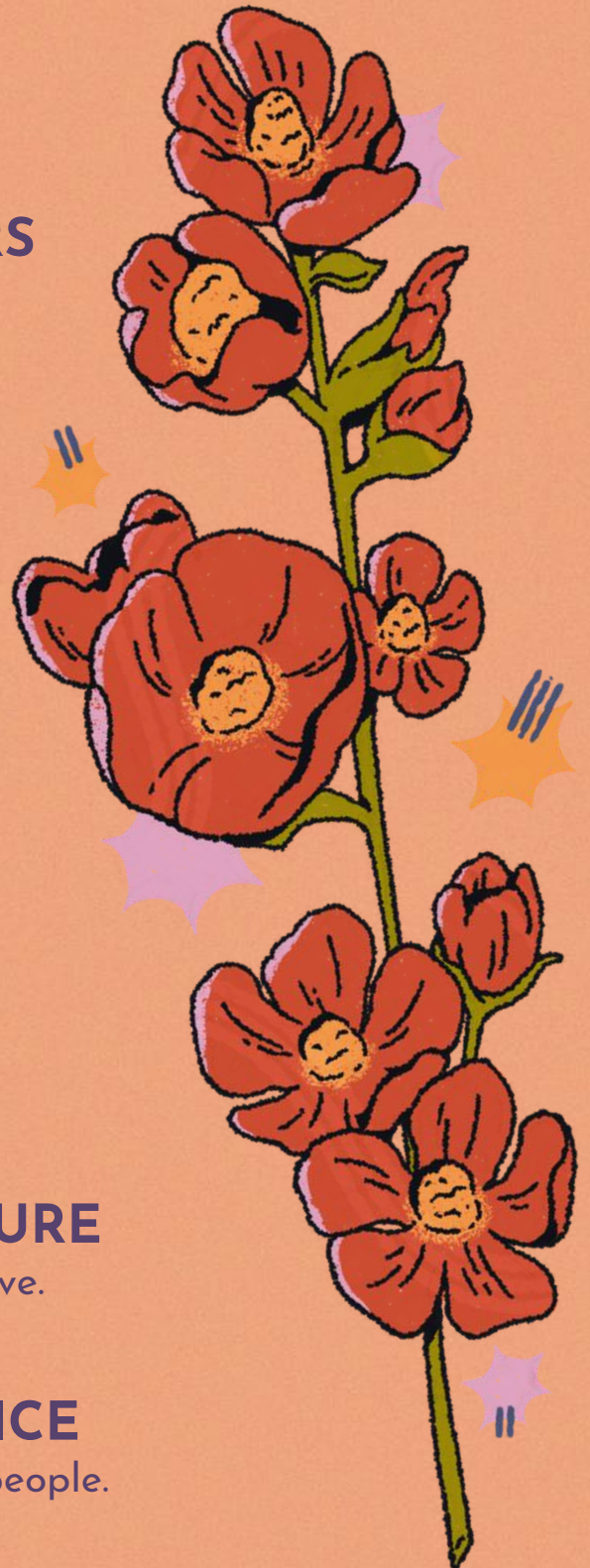
Letting the heat rise! Guided by the warmth
of our ancestors and the fire of today,
we resist, we rise, we reclaim.

JUNE 2025

VOL. 2 ISSUE 2

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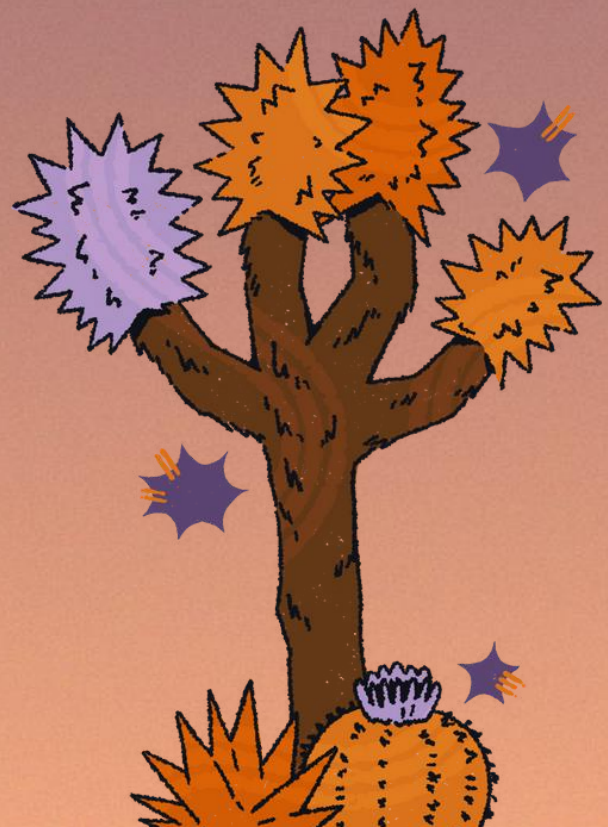
Rick R. Ledesma

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Founders Corner

Summer 2025 at Heart & Sol Collective

By Kaleigh Mancha (she/her)
and Rikki Jenkins (she/her)



Are you awake?

If Spring is about gently stretching into awareness as we embrace new life beginning to sprout, Summer is the scorching desert sun, requiring resilience & energizing us with its life force! Things are heating up in the desert.

As we blaze into summer, we at Heart & Sol are feeling lit-reinvigorated with new energy! Where's all this new energy coming from? Well we added a new board member ya'll, Nina Bailey! Check out her article on death doula care. Also, our 1st board President

Cristina Hernandez has finished her 2 year term so we have a new President rolling in, Brandi Anderson! We got a whole article (re)introducing our board to the community a few pages ahead.

This past Spring, we secured a new partnership with Project Maryland to help keep our period pantry at The Solidarity Fridge Project stocked & we were out in these streets with our interns supporting & hosting multiple events every month! One of our favorite events was Black Maternal Health Week, with multiple events stewarded by Tiara Flynn (Phenomenal



Mama) & a handful of amazing community members. We also led our 1st Spanish lactation-centered workshop, facilitated by Taryn Cortini, which had a great turnout with lots of positive feedback.

One of our Spring interns, Lila, secured an ARPA scholarship for her work with us & our other intern, Sumer, graduated with her master's degree! We selected our summer intern, Victoria Marshall, a graduate Public Health student with the University of AZ Global Campus.

Victoria is ready to meet ya'll at all of our upcoming events! Speaking of which... we have our 1st ever Queer Parenting & Family Planning workshop this month. As always, our workshops are free, gender inclusive & family friendly. Our website now features a calendar of events, in addition to our newsletter & socials. If you want to subscribe to our newsletter, you can do so on our [website](#) or [Linktree](#).

This Juneteenth, we proudly recognize Black freedom, resilience, and joy—honoring the legacy of those who



fought for liberation and the generations continuing that work today. As an organization rooted in reproductive justice and community care, we remain committed to advocating for access to culturally competent healthcare, education, and support.

What are we really excited about for Summer? How about our fundraising collab with Mothership Coffee!! We were able to collaborate with their roasters to create a unique blend & name that honors who we are.

Madre Tierra.

Want to support us & a community-centered local business? Mothership's stores will have our bags available for sale starting in July & so will we! You can purchase bags of coffee on our website, in their stores, at any of our events, OR at our 5th

anniversary party in September.

The message from our last edition about sustainable advocacy & enduring community connections being the foundation of our activism still rings true. We love to see & hear how people are connecting with each other or uplifting the community. Want to share your story or work in our next edition? Email us! Are you a birth worker looking for community? Come to one of our BIPOC Birthworker Meet Ups hosted by Sunfolk Midwifery or attend our Medicaid Paneling Workshop + Mentoring Program.

Come hang out with us this Summer!

Con amor,
Kaleigh Mancha & Rikki Jenkins

Board Member Updates

New Leadership in Full Bloom
Meet the Board at Heart and Sol Collective
Photos by Kristina Alexis
[@KristinaAlexisPhotography](#)



As the summer sun rises high, so does our collective power—reignited by new leadership and the continued evolution of our Heart & Sol family. We're proud to introduce **Brandi Anderson** as our new Board President! A former intern and current MPH graduate, Brandi brings a passion for public health, faith-rooted values, and deep love for community. We also welcome **Brenda Hernandez** as our new Vice President. With over a decade of experience in program management, event planning, and health equity work, Brenda is deeply committed to QTBIPOC liberation and cultivating healing spaces that center compassion and empowerment.

With every new chapter comes heartfelt gratitude for those who helped shape the path. We honor **Cristina Hernandez**, our founding Board President, and **Edna Martin**, our outgoing Vice President—a doula, IBCLC, and healer whose leadership has grounded us in care and intentionality. Their contributions have laid a strong foundation for all that is to come.



Brenda H (left), Brandi A. (right)



Frances Young, our new Treasurer, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and certified perinatal mental health specialist. Her research focuses on birth trauma among women of color and its ripple effects on families. Frances's passion for culturally sensitive care, paired with her love for teaching and motherhood, brings invaluable depth to our leadership team.

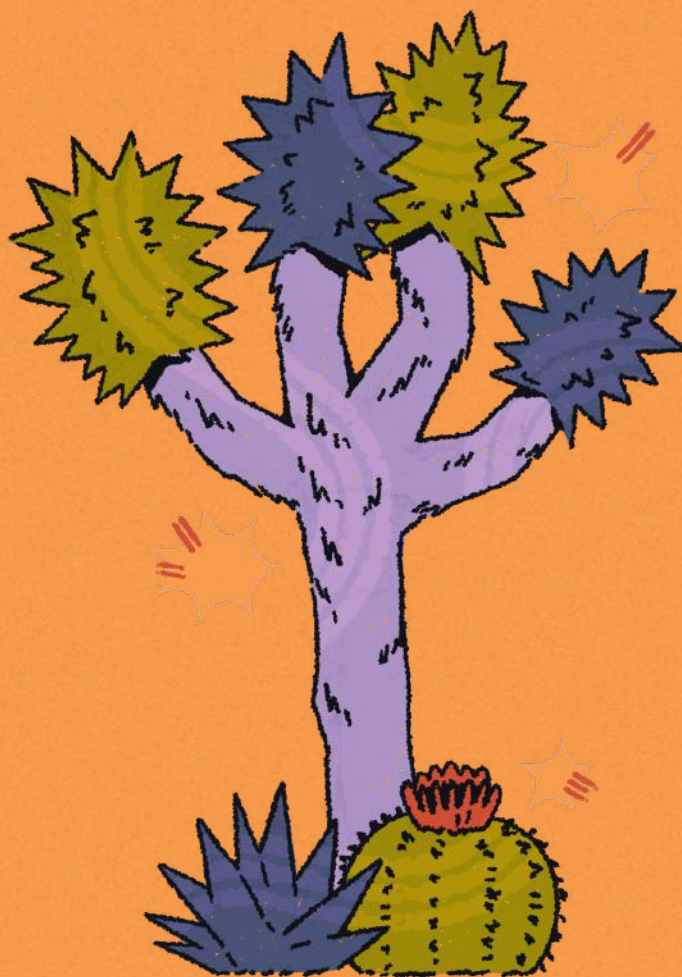


Dr. Erika Abad, now serving as our Board Secretary, is a queer Latine poet, curator, and professor at Nevada State University. Erika's work centers cultural memory, kinship, and belonging—infusing our collective with intentional artistry and powerful storytelling.



Nina Bailey, who joins us as a new member, brings her expertise as a death doula, deepening our capacity to support families through end-of-life transitions with compassion and dignity. Her presence reinforces our commitment to full-spectrum care rooted in love, respect, and radical support.

Together, this board reflects the heartbeat of Heart & Sol –where care work meets cultural work, and where reproductive justice is a sacred, embodied practice. We are so excited for this next season of growth, restorative justice, and collective action.



Madre Tierra

**Pre-Order
Madre Tierra**

DRINK
LIKE A
MOTHER

MORE INFO [HERE!](#)

Birth Story

My Path to Motherhood: The Birth of My Son, Jason Carter

By Frances Young (she/her)

The desire to be a mother, without an active mother of my own, was a journey I was willing to take, because I absolutely could not wait to bring a child of my own into this world. My pregnancy was beautiful and I wanted time to slow down. Stress and unhappiness in other facets, but I was in my own pregnant bliss. I sang to my son, talked to him and loved my big belly that kept him safe from this world that was not so-great at the time.

I had an offer for a doula from a trusted person I knew, but was misguided from accepting, when my intuition told me otherwise. I chose a hospital birth. I did the first-time mom hospital tours, birthing classes, but was still so scared of the actual birth. My worst fear: a forced c-section. A c-section in general, but one



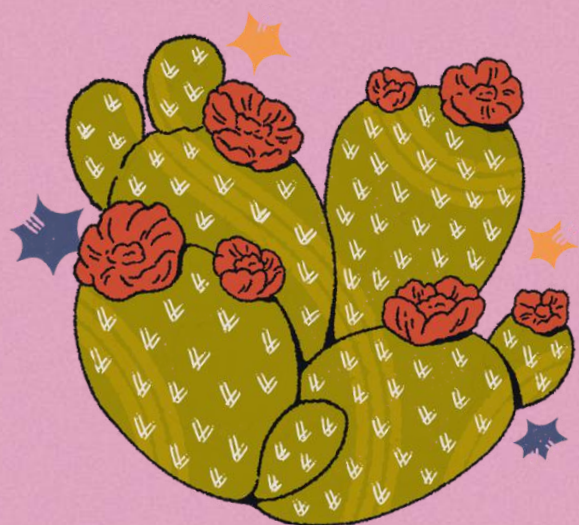
with even a 1% doubt if it was really a necessity, was the heaviest fear.

I wanted a natural birth without any medication, even after birth, because I was so excited to breastfeed my son. I knew I could handle it and wanted to be a mom for so long, that at 29 years old, I wanted to feel it all and felt grateful to do-so. I was at my 40-week appointment

and I suddenly had sky-high blood pressure, resulting in a same day induction. I do not have any family in-state, so I remember calling my family in tears in the parking lot as they all jumped in their cars. Blood pressure checks every 15 minutes and Pitocin made an intolerable pain I thought I could handle. I will never forget the nurse turn pale when she checked for dilation and told me, "Frances, I feel a butt-cheek." I did not even know what that meant. I learned quickly as she's calling nurses and doctors to the room. My son was breech, my water was already broken, and now I hear the nurse calling for the hospital OB to come confirm with an ultrasound.



I sat there in shock and lost my voice. I can advocate all day, but there, I was not myself. Next thing I know after a questionable, rushed ultrasound, I have paperwork in my hands, an OR cap on my head, without even being able to catch my breath.



I blink and I am in the OR and have a very bad reaction to the anesthesia, resulting in non-stop shaking, nausea, and a collapsed lung. I hear my son's first cry, my heart starts to race, and I ache to see him. They bring my son to me, but I cannot hold him due to the pain I was experiencing. I watched as they walked him away from me.

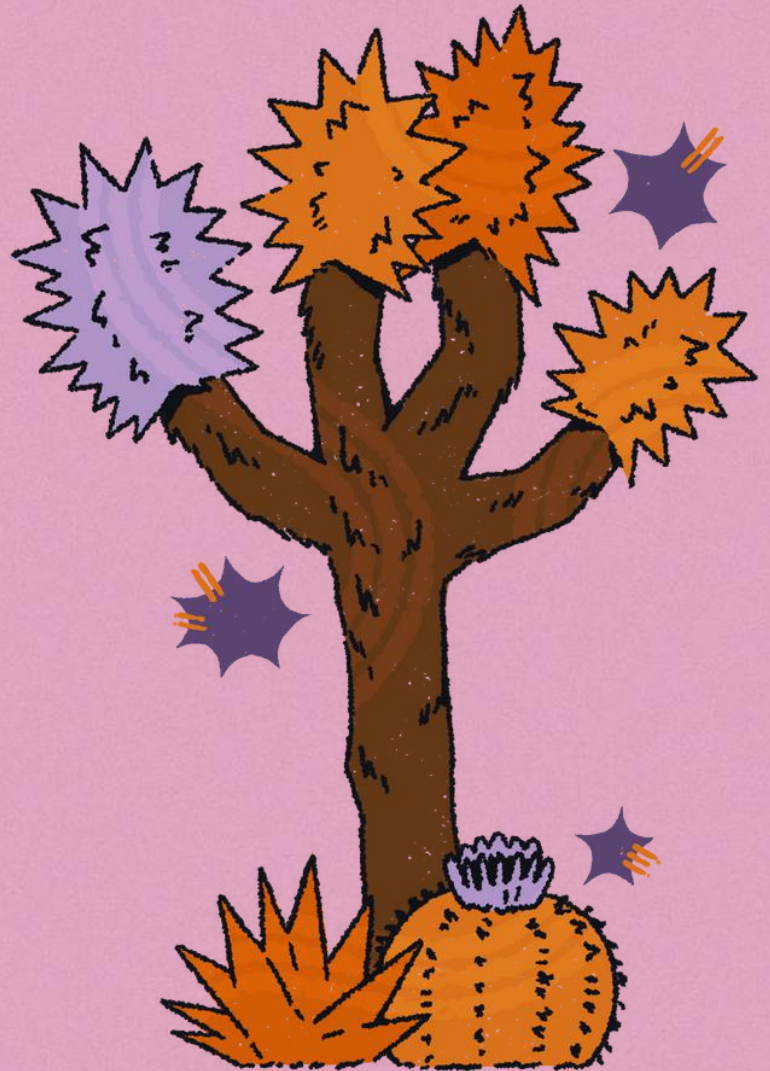


survived for my son. I would do it all over again for him, but with all the support I needed so badly.

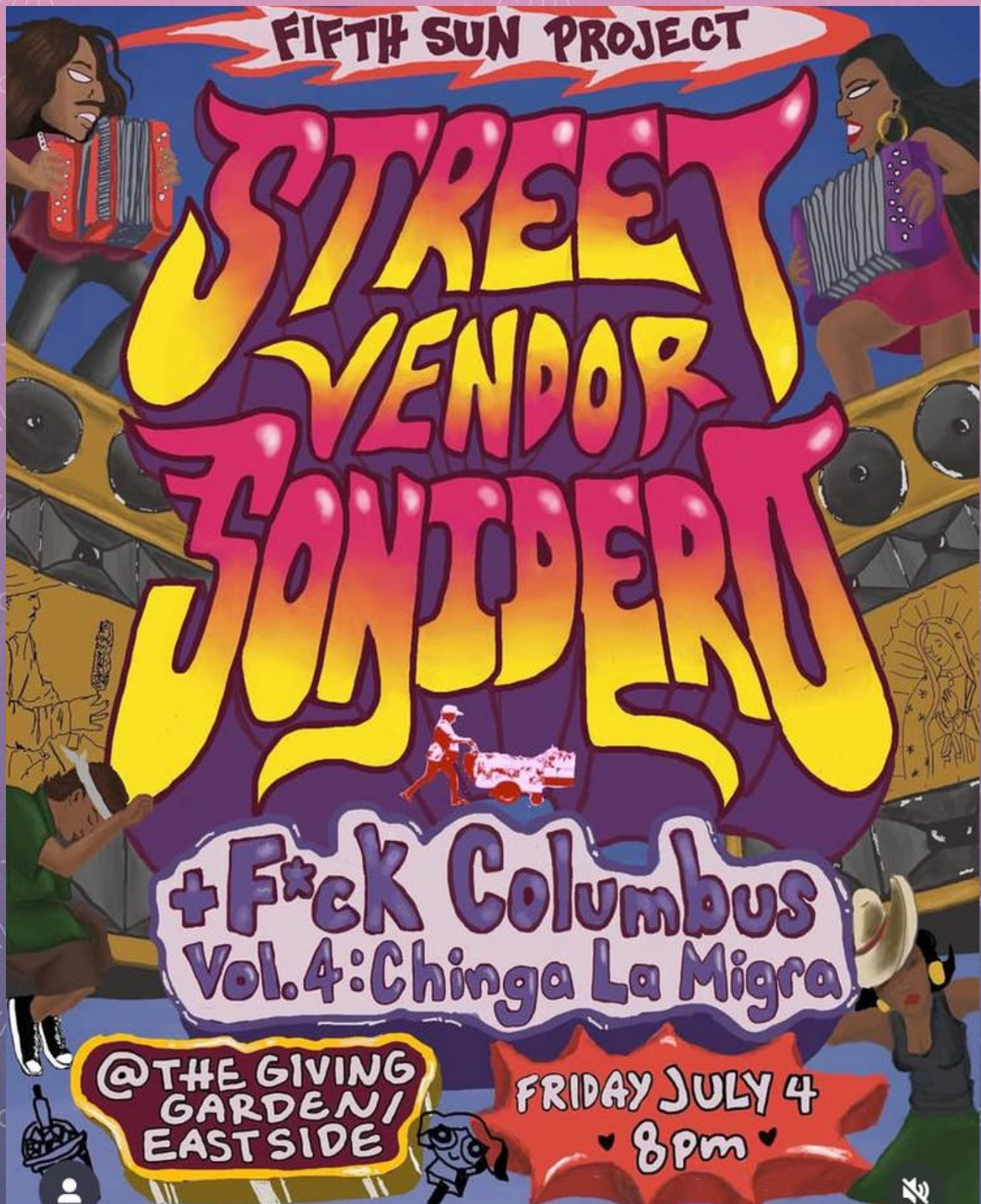
7 years later, my sonshine is still shining his light and I am so proud to be his Mom.

Socials: @lv_therapist

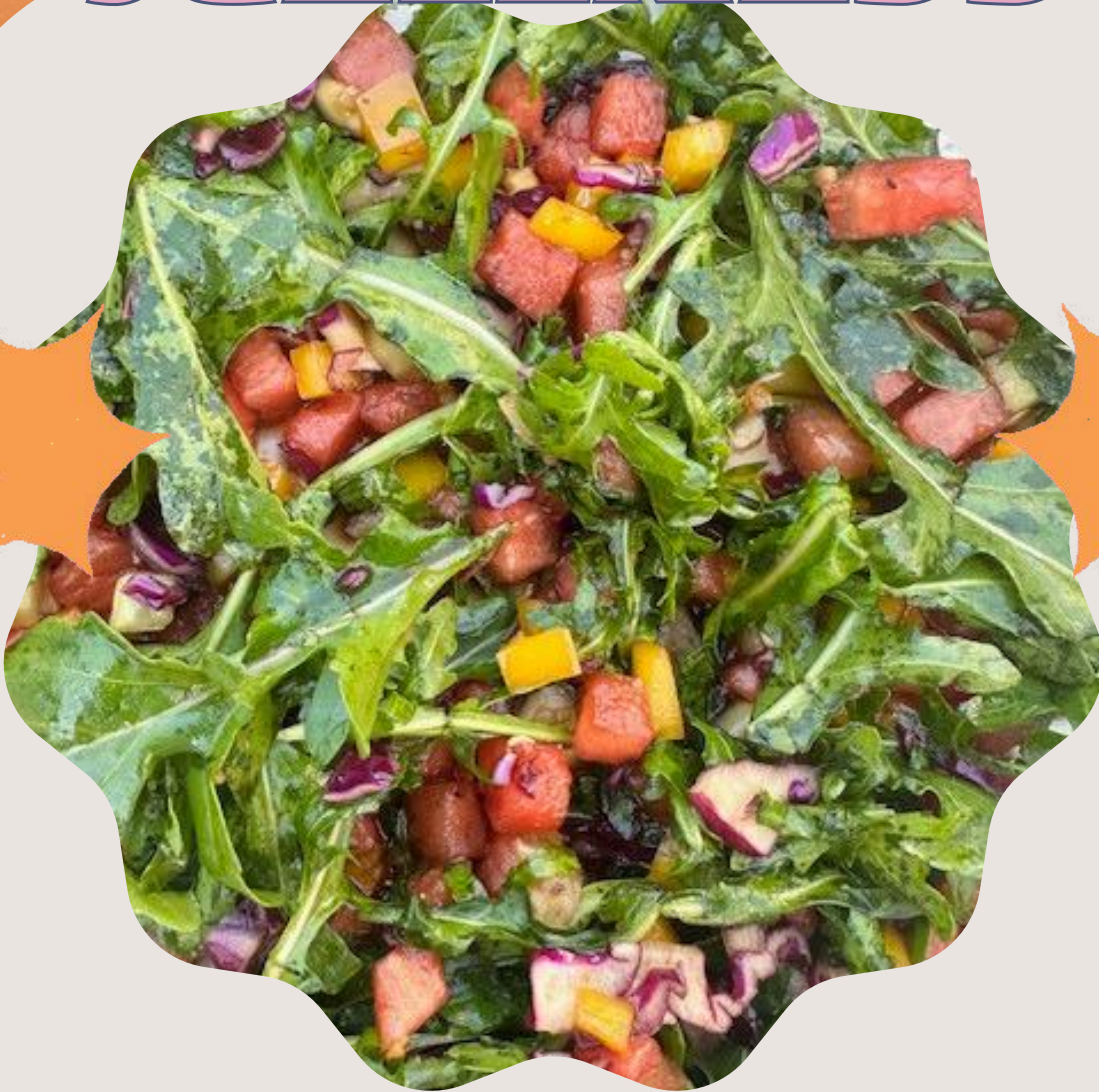
Where is my voice? I hear that I'm losing blood and there is a panic. They finally put my son on my chest and it isn't this joyous experience that I thought. I am in so much pain and I can't stay awake. They take a forced picture, and then my son I prayed so long for, is off to the room with his Dad. No pain meds, because I wanted "pure" breast milk for my son. Devastatingly, my milk supply never came in. I felt this panic that my son is in this scary world and was so much safer in my little womb I had for him. Anxiety, panic, depression, and fear were all heavy during postpartum. My village was far, and my marriage was lonely. I



Event Spotlight



FOOD & WELLNESS



COOKING IS AN ACT OF LOVE

Fresh Summer Sweetness

By Cheyenne Kyle (She/Her)

Cultural Background: Garifuna
Belizean & African American

Socials: @ObodoCollective

Cheyenne is a Las Vegas-based farmer, Chef, and educator committed to restoring our sacred relationship with the Earth. Through her work, she helps individuals and communities grow food, medicine, and resilience by weaving ancestral wisdom with regenerative practices. With a deep belief that the land holds the power to heal both people and place, Cheyenne's work nurtures sovereignty, sustainability, and soul.

1. Where did you learn this recipe?

This is an original recipe inspired by the need for something hydrating and delicious to nibble on during Las Vegas summer months

2. What significance does this recipe have for you?



I began developing this recipe during a time where I wanted to treat myself luxuriously inside and out, each ingredient provides wonderful health benefits

3. Does your family/ cultures have any sayings or quotes about food/ eating / nourishment?

"A full belly makes a happy heart."

Watermelon Summer Salad

Salad Ingredients:

- 3 cups seedless watermelon, medium dice
- 2 cups arugula, loosely packed
- 1 cup cucumber, medium dice
- ½ cup red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ cup bell pepper (any color), shaved or julienned
- ½ cup red cabbage, thinly sliced

Vinaigrette:

- 3 tablespoons soy sauce (use tamari for gluten-free)
- 1 tablespoon honey (or agave for vegan option)
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2-3 drops toasted sesame oil
- ¼-½ teaspoon chili flakes, to taste
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- ½ cup red cabbage, thinly sliced

Instructions:

1. Prep the Salad:

- a. In a large bowl, combine the diced watermelon, cucumber, arugula, red onion, bell pepper, and red cabbage.

2. Make the Vinaigrette:

- a. In a small bowl or jar, whisk together the soy sauce, honey, chopped garlic, sesame oil, chili flakes, salt, and pepper until well combined.

3. Combine & Toss:

- a. Pour the vinaigrette over the salad and toss thoroughly, ensuring everything is well coated.

4. Marinate:

- a. For best flavor, let the salad sit covered in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour before serving. It's even better the next day.

Note: Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge and enjoy within 7 days.

Do you have a recipe you'd like to share with our community? Consider sharing your favorite meal with us in future issue! Email us at hello@heartandsolcollective.org.

Event Spotlight

Death Cafe

A CONVERSATION OVER TEA

Hosted by:

Nina Rose & Kaelani Queen

What to Expect:

- Warm tea provided by Maati's Tea Time
- An inclusive space centering Black, queer, trans, fat, Indigenous, disabled, and marginalized experiences
- Gentle prompts to explore your feelings and thoughts about death, grief, and planning
- Free resources to help you start your end-of-life planning journey

Date & Time: Saturday June 28th,
12pm-2pm

Location: Multicultural
Bookstore

Donation: \$10 (all proceeds go to
Zepp Wellness and assistance
with keeping the cafes active)

2027 N. Revere St.
Ste. B2
Las Vegas, NV 89106

RSVP HERE



ZEPP
WELLNESS CENTER





Reclaiming Death: A Communal and Cultural Call to Remember

By Nina Bailey, she/her

Death is a deeply uncomfortable topic—and for good reason. It stirs grief, fear, and uncertainty. In a culture built on avoidance and individualism, we often deny death until it forces itself upon us. But as a Black woman who holds multiple intersections, I believe we must confront death—not with fear, but with care, clarity, and collective responsibility.

For many marginalized people, death has never been a gentle

process. Fat and disabled people face discrimination in healthcare and frequent conversations about “quality of life” that devalue their existence. Indigenous communities continue to lose elders, knowledge-keepers, and language through systemic neglect and environmental destruction. Black queer and trans people face heightened violence in life and often invisibility in death. Many of us are not granted dignity when we die—because we were denied



it while alive.

As a death doula, I hold sacred space for individuals and families navigating the end of life. I sit beside beds and couches, in homes and hospital rooms, on Zoom calls and front porches. I facilitate hard conversations, help people make plans, and support the emotional, spiritual, and logistical work of dying. I do this with reverence for who they are and the legacies they carry.

I often say: we plan for birth, weddings, baby showers, and retirements—why not death?

What if we treated death like birth? What if we approached it

with intention and ceremony—gathering care teams, sharing stories, lighting candles, or playing someone's favorite music? What if we spoke plainly about what we want when our time comes, who we want with us, and how we want to be remembered?

These aren't morbid thoughts. ***They're acts of love and liberation.***

Talking about death doesn't summon it, or as some of our elders may say "trying to put them in the grave early," It softens its edges. When we name our wishes, we release our loved ones from guessing and guilt. We affirm our humanity. We resist a system that sees our bodies as problems to be solved instead of people to be honored.

But none of us should do this work alone. Just as birth requires community, so does dying. We need more care pathways—people who bring meals, sit in stillness, read poems, change linens, hold space, and grieve alongside us. We need tools that reflect our values, not just checkboxes on a

legal form. We need room to honor fat bodies, disabled bodies, trans bodies, Black and Indigenous bodies in death—just as we fight to honor them in life.

This is ancestral work, and it's also revolutionary.

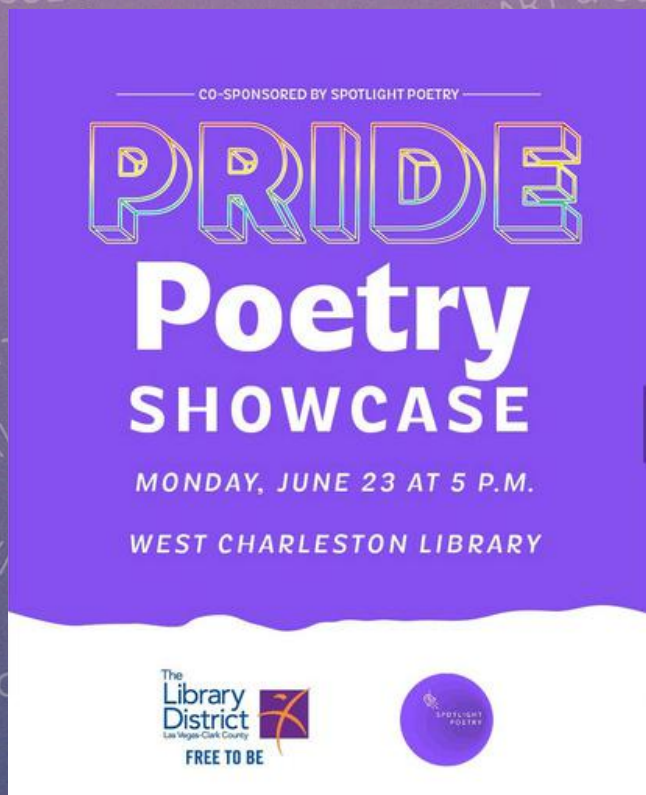
So I invite you to begin the conversation:

- What does a good death look like to you?
- Who do you want holding your hand?
- What cultural or spiritual rituals feel important?
- What legacy do you want to leave behind?
- And how can you show up for others in your community when they're dying, grieving, or planning?

Death doesn't have to be the end of connection. When we reclaim it—together—it becomes a space for deep love, shared memory, and healing. Let's remember how to do this in community, not in silence.



Upcoming Events



Finding Family in Unexpected Places: My Journey Through Infertility and Foster Care in Las Vegas



By Victoria Marshall (She/Her/Hers),
Intern at Heart and Sol Collective

I'm Victoria Marshall, a proud Las Vegas native, wife, and mom to a vibrant 11-year-old son. As an intern at Heart and Sol Collective, I'm learning what it means to truly advocate for myself and others—especially women navigating the silent battles of reproductive health.

For years, I have dreamed of growing my family. My husband and I started trying to conceive again when our son was three, hopeful that another child would soon join our world. But the months turned into years, and hope often turned into frustration and heartbreak. In October 2024, I finally received a diagnosis: secondary unexplained infertility.

It's hard to explain how isolating this journey has felt. My doctor prescribed Letrozole and, like so many women, I followed every instruction. But the medication came inconsistently, my cycles grew more unpredictable—sometimes skipping months, sometimes lasting nearly two weeks and so heavy I could barely keep up. For three years, my pap smears have been abnormal. I've been told I have benign precancerous cells, but no one seems to take my concerns seriously, even knowing my mother's history with cervical cancer. She went from similar symptoms to stage 4 diagnosis, and the fear sits heavy in my heart.

Despite sharing my medical history and advocating for answers, I've often felt dismissed. This is why I chose Heart and Sol Collective for my practicum. I want to learn to speak up—not just for myself, but for every woman who feels ignored, minimized, or shamed for her struggles. Reproductive health, infertility, and period challenges are too often swept aside, especially for women of color.

But even as doors closed, another opened. My husband, my son, and I began to talk about foster care. The more we learned, the more it felt right. Fostering is not a consolation prize—it's a calling, a way to open our hearts and home to a child who needs family just as much as we do. We're at the beginning of this process in Las Vegas, and it's both daunting and hopeful. There is as much paperwork and waiting as there is dreaming and planning, but every step is a reminder that family is built in many ways.

If you are struggling with infertility, facing tough diagnoses, or considering foster care, know that you're not alone. Your voice matters. Your pain is real. And there is a whole community here—at Heart and Sol Collective and beyond—ready to stand with you, listen to you, and fight for you. My journey hasn't been easy, but it's taught me that sometimes, family finds us in the most unexpected places.



Mutual Aid

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area

Apply to become the next

Artist-in-Residence

Encouraging the understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of Red Rock Canyon NCA through art

Fall 2025 program dates:

- Application deadline: June 30th
- Artist selected by: August 1st
- Residency: October 19th - 25th
- Culminating event: November 22nd

Who can apply:

- Open to ages 18+
- Local artists
- Any artistic discipline
- All experience levels

Please send application submissions and questions to air@friendsredrock.org



Scan for application and information



25TH ANNIVERSARY

ART IN VEGAS

Do It for the Culture



Rick R. Ledesma's Cultural Archive

By Kaleigh Mancha (she/her)

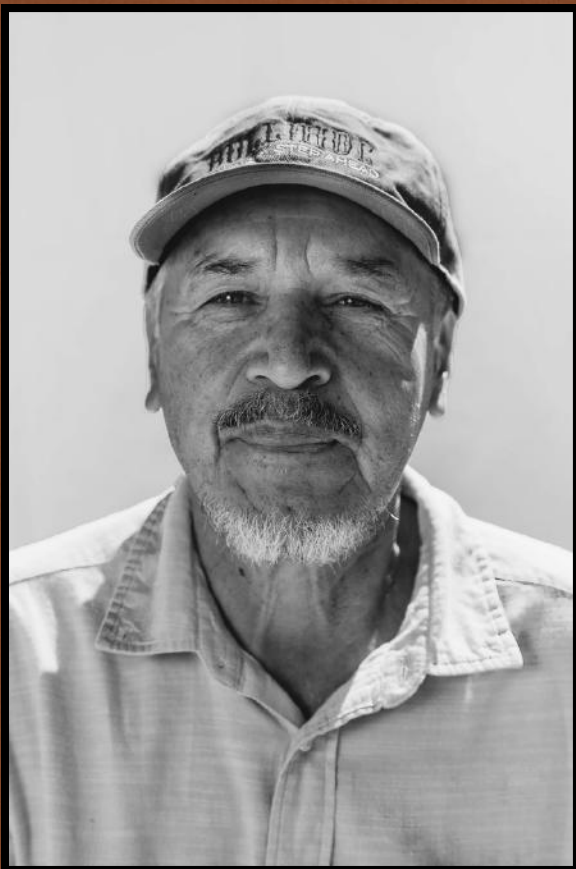
Rick R. Ledesma is a 1st Gen Mexican-American / Chicano photographer born in Oxnard, California. Having spent over a decade in Arizona, he picked up his first digital camera & started documenting the lives of community members. Now living in Las Vegas, he has collaborated with various communities within Nevada, helping document current issues & supporting cultural awareness projects & events.

I went to the Punk Rock Museum with my fam to support a fundraising event for Artists Resistance Through Solidarity, who is making a documentary about local artists. A.R.T.S is a WOC led foundation dedicated to providing small grant opportunities for BIPOC artists. Here, I was introduced to Rick & the way he described his art inspired me! He is the definition of "Do It for The Culture"!



How would you describe your art style? Are there any recurrent themes in your work?

I'd consider my art style / work to be documentary. I've been fortunate to be able to work alongside many people in the Vegas community, allowing me to document important issues & cultural movements that are ignored by local news / media. Documenting events, creations, art and love shared between



different people. The recurrent theme is - **human existence & perseverance**

What medium(s) do you use & why? Has this changed over time?

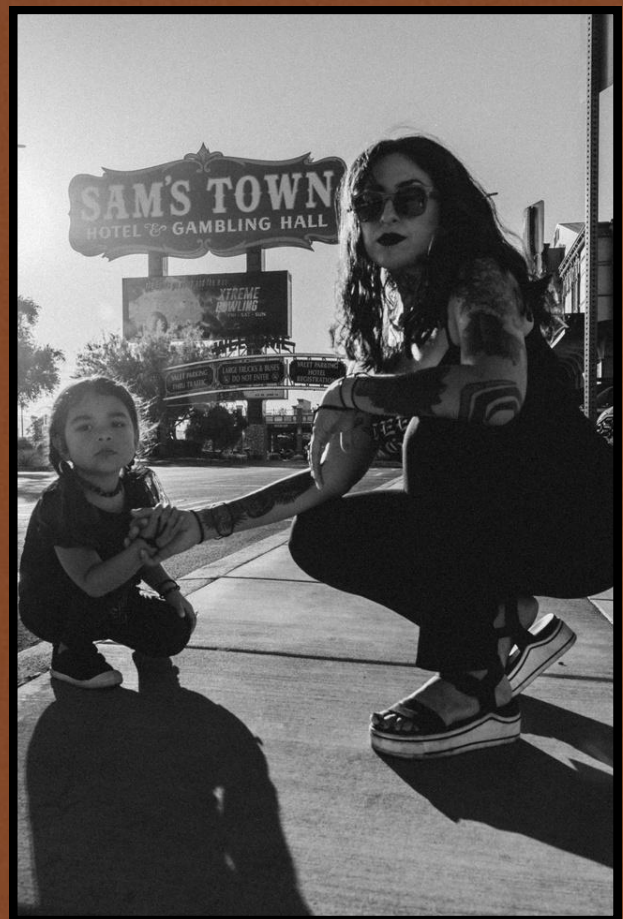
The mediums I use are both digital and film (photography) and within the last few years I've invested time and energy into doing more video & graphic work as well.

Film photography was a class I had for a semester during high school, but due to lack of funds I couldn't continue. After MANY years of appreciating other people's work - I decided to give it a shot & purchased my first digital camera (2017).

Photography is an evolving medium, especially now more than ever, so my work has taken many turns in the last few years. From different lenses to different color compositions and ways to create an image. Digital is mostly used for paid work and film for my personal projects allowing me to slow down the process.

What compelled you to become an artist/ creator?

Honestly, I never sought out to be an artist. In the past I've looked at myself as an instrument to share stories & document what I felt were important moments in our local history & timeline. In recent years, putting the time & effort to visualize ideas for better storytelling has turned my artistry up a notch. The term "artist" is something new (to me) that I'm still trying to identify with as I am still learning how to compose, create & use images as an art form to get a message across.





How has your cultural /racial/ ethnic background played a role in your art/ creations?

A lot of the work I do is centered around my cultural & ethnic background. I grew up in California & that alone exposed me to different layers of my own culture & ethnicity. Being first-gen Mexican-American, I was able to enjoy & learn things that pertained to the “different sides” of my background due to knowing both Spanish & English.

I was able to view life through the lens of a mother who feared for her & her children's safety due to not understanding English and trying to find financial stability.

But also view life through my own experiences & opportunities I was presented with, which helped shape who I am today and what I want to explore, document & share through my photography. Those same experiences that connect with my culture / ethnicity have led to working & sharing stories of what's going on in our communities & I'm then able to share those with people who



aren't aware.

Who or what inspires your work?

My work has been inspired & developed from many interests I had as a child and now as an adult. From family portraits I remember as a kid while visiting the homes of family-friends to the tattoo & lowrider culture I was visually interested in as a teenager while looking through the magazine section at my local grocery store. From the lucha libre / wrestling I watched on tv with my older brother



growing up, to the punk & hardcore shows I attended during high school. Then being introduced to zines via those same outlets and learning about different cultural & political movements that have happened or were happening in real time. All of that & more has inspired me in one way or another.

If you could give one piece of advice to new artists, what would you tell them?

My advice to ANYONE is, find your creative outlet.



Everyone has a creative side, you just need to find it and tap into it.

Whether it's photography, painting, drawing, writing, creating things digitally or with your hands.

We all have it and once developed can lead to a better life & social experience. Can help with depression, mental health or simply be an escape from the mundane 9-5 life that many dislike.

Socials/ Contact Info:
Website : www.RickRL.com
Links: [@Rick.RL](https://www.instagram.com/Rick.RL)



Mutual Aid



MUTUAL AID FUND APPLICATION FOR HERBAL CONSULTATION SERVICES

- Scholarship for community members (pregnant, postpartum, or caregivers)
- Herbalists Without Borders – LV Chapter offering: 10 scholarships/month (valued at \$1,500 total)
- Free – use promo code: HeartSolComm100
- Must complete this form and the onboarding form linked in it
- First come, first served

www.heartandsolcollective.org

Know Your Rights, Project Your People: Reproductive Justice in an Era of Deportation

By Brenda Hernandez
(She/Her)

As many of you have seen, there are countless videos of families being torn apart by ICE deportations. So many Latinx families are directly impacted. I come from a mixed-status family, and I've had family members deported—children and grandchildren separated, left to know each other only through photos and videos. I wish my Tío Lalo and Tío Abel could see how their family is growing, but they're in another country, far from the life and love they helped build.

Being undocumented in the U.S. is incredibly hard. You're always living with that fear—"What if ICE comes for me today?" Every day things like finding a job, accessing health care, or simply traveling without a "real ID" feel like risks. That's the reality so many of my family members live with. While there's more visibility

now, let's be real—deportations are not new. Family separation has happened under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

But we, the people, still have rights. And it's our responsibility to stay informed and share vital information like **ICE Directive 11032.4**. I first learned about this directive through [@themamattorney](#), who breaks down legal info in ways that are accessible and life-saving. Please follow her for more. Here's what you need to know:

ICE Directive 11032.4 protects **pregnant, postpartum, and lactating people**, stating they should **not be detained** unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. If someone in your community is detained, here's what to do:

1. Pull up ICE Directive 11032.4 and request services and a case review. This includes:

- A medical exam within 24 hours
- Monitoring for medical and mental health needs
- Access to prenatal, postpartum, and nursing care

2. This care must include:

- Pregnancy tests
- Specialized prenatal care
- Labor and delivery planning
- Postpartum and lactation support
- Access to pregnancy termination (if available in your state)

3. ICE must review the case:

- Weekly: to assess if detention is still needed
- Monthly: to reassess under the law, assuming detention is not appropriate

4. Protect yourself:

- Print out the directive
- Highlight what applies to you
- Take screenshots
- Memorize the directive

- number in case your belongings are taken
- Reminder: Invoking this policy can shorten detention times

5. Allies, this part is for you:

- Help mamas in your community by printing and sharing the directive
- Talk to folks—especially if you know someone working in ICE or detention centers
- Officers themselves may not know their agency's own policies

We must fight back with knowledge, with each other, and with unshakable love for our people.

Reproductive justice doesn't stop at the clinic.

It's about immigration, housing, safety, and the right to raise our babies with dignity and a united familia.

Let's stay loud, stay ready, and protect our communities. For more local information on immigration follow

[@Mojada_Inc](#)

[@fifthsunproject](#)

[@arribalasvegas](#)

[@solidarityfridge](#)



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