



Critical and Creative Expression for Indigenous Youth  
Lake Atitlán, Guatemala | Austin, Texas

# *Unlocking Silent Histories*

*Annual Report*

*2015*

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# Letter from our Founder

Dear Friends and Supporters:

*It has been another amazing year for Unlocking Silent Histories. This year we celebrate an impressive 16 original youth-produced films, directed by 19 students in five different communities. In Level 1 workshops led by our Program Leaders, these films contribute to our already diverse and mounting collection of themes that provide a glimpse into Indigenous cultural life as seen through the eyes of youth. Also included in this year's compilation, are two Level 2 team productions. The teams were comprised of participants from our Maya Traditions Chapter.*

*We are truly excited for the youth who have successfully created, written, documented, and produced films that reflect a perspective of their worlds. We are even more struck by what we learn with and from the youth. While the result of participation is the completion of media artifacts, the process by which these artifacts come about is the center of our focus. What youth interactions and practices teach us about learning, about seeing, and about engaging directly informs the constant reshaping of our work and how we approach the three stages of engagement that we identify as Learn, Create, and Share.*

*It is this gaze that is the focus of our very first annual report. To tender insight into the ways in which USH operates and unfolds, we structure this report into these three sections: Learn, Create, and Share. In following this flow of our process, we offer a window into activities that align with these stages, and into the relationship between learning and film production. We intend to elucidate the multi-dimensional layers of our work including:*

- How youth are using technology and film production as a medium for creating Indigenous youth-driven and defined learning engagements.*
- How film leverages critical inquiry and creative expression.*
- How learning, technology, film, and productions become adopted in the local context and are adapted in local visions and to local purposes.*

*With this insight and guided by our evaluation systems, our organization continues to grow, bringing about new partnerships and presentation opportunities. Thus, we close 2015 by simultaneously commemorating the milestones of our new documentary shorts and the emerging understanding of how to shape learning in a way that resonates with our participants and connects with their local contexts.*

*As always, we extend a very special and warm thank you to all our donors, supporters, and followers. It is each and everyone one of you who have made this work possible and helped us to achieve the international visibility our students deserve.*

*Appreciatively,*

Donna DeGennaro  
Founder and Executive Director  
Unlocking Silent Histories  
347.746.1240



# Mission

*Our mission is to spark the potential of indigenous youth to critically analyze how they are represented in the media and creatively express their worlds from their perspectives through documentary films that contribute to cultural preservation and understanding across generational and geographical boundaries.*



# Belief

*At USH we acknowledge that indigenous cultures and languages are an integral part of our world's human diversity that should be valued, documented, and preserved. We believe that indigenous youth are critical agents in determining the methods of capturing, sharing and reviving their languages and cultures through digital media. Guided by local leadership, our technology-enabled program actively engages youth in co-creating positive and enriching learning environments with their peers, drawing on and connecting to their local context and cultures. In taking ownership of learning and connecting it to their lives, our youth build the confidence and aptitude to be stewards of their cultures as well as navigate and initiate social change.*

# Learn...

## Local knowledge and voice are foundational to authentic learning

Local knowledge, at USH, is defined as the ideas, practices, and norms associated with a given context. Our learning designs are grounded in the belief that local knowledge and voice are foundational to authentic learning. It is from local knowledge and voice, that learning goals originate. Our focus on local knowledge, voice, and its connection to learning is largely in response to the historical events surrounding the education of Indigenous youth. Specifically, colonial domination played (and continues to play) a role in formalizing education as a mechanism by which to dismantle and degrade indigenous knowledge and voice. At USH, youth draw on Indigenous knowledge and voice to determine the definition of learning as well as its process and its content.

### **Student Spotlight**

Milthon is 12 years old and a first-year student from our new community of Quiejel, Chichicastenango, working with Program Leader Carmen in 2015. Milthon chose to focus his film on the weaving traditions of his community, and used two principal interviews to tell his story: one with his mother, a master weaver of more than 45 years, and another with his classmate's grandmother. Milthon listened attentively to these women share their craft, and when we presented the film to the community, many women remarked how interesting it was that Milthon, a male, would take interest in sharing the art of the women in the area. Although it seemed an unlikely topic for a young boy, it interested Milthon to learn more about his mother's work through her own words. Milthon reported that he had never before thought to ask his mother such questions about her weaving process, although he witnessed it every day, and that learning from her through the interviews helped him to better understand his mother and her love of her work. In listening to local knowledge, Milthon is developing his own voice. This voice is expressed in his documentary short: "Weavings of Quiejel".



## Community connected themes encourage critical and creative expression

Connecting student learning to community inquiry ignites the learner's motivation to critically analyze their lives and creatively express their views. Indigenous communities are often described as having a strong bond because of the historical and reverberating value placed on communal tribal living. Communities are important to First Nations and Native peoples and within them there are "protocols of being respectful, of showing or accepting respect and reciprocating respectful behaviors, which develop membership, credibility and reputation (Tuhiwai, 2012). Youth participating in USH explore community issues and work with inter generational members of their communities to more deeply explore and understand these issues.

### **Student Spotlight**

Beto, a 19 year old and a first-year student from San Juan, working with Program Leader Chema in 2015. Like many students, Beto had some difficulty in selecting the topic he wanted to explore for his film. He originally settled on "Education," and with that in mind, began going out into the community to interview youth. On one of those occasions, as Beto surveyed his surroundings, he noticed a young boy named Emilio, who he often saw on the street selling eggs, sitting alone in the central park and looking distressed. Beto began to talk with Emilio, and this turned into a formal interview in which they discussed Emilio's thoughts about having to work as a child. A common practice in the community because of scarce economic resources, Beto had also worked as a child and was therefore able to connect personally with Emilio in sharing his story about this issue. The interview with Emilio caused Beto to reflect on his own childhood and think critically about the community-wide issues, pondering what circumstances necessitated childhood labor and what could be done to stop it. This, then, became the theme of Beto's emotional and beautifully composed film, "*Child Labor*". This community-connected theme, that also had a personal connection for Beto, brought out his critical thinking abilities and allowed him to express his opinions and feelings on the matter in a creative format.



## Youth have the capacity to direct their own learning & author their own stories

(Hi)stories are personal and contextual. One's interpretation of history is deeply rooted in our experiences and are understood through one's own lenses. We provide youth an open and supportive space to deconstruction their realities and envision how to express their worlds. This is particularly important for Indigenous youth as more hegemonic narratives have created a partial collective memory. Often in conflict with Indigenous home culture, norms, and practices, these narratives have informed the organization and perpetuation of traditional schooling, producing a distance between Indigenous youth and personally meaningful learning. At USH Indigenous youth navigate their communities, generating films that shift the spotlight to Indigenous perspective.

### Student Spotlight



Rosa and Juanita, 22 and 20, are sisters from Santiago Atitlán, as well as Ana and Juanita, 22 and 21. These four young women participated as first-level students working with Program Leader Carlos in 2015, and decided to make a film together as a group. From the very start, they had a strong desire to focus their film on the armed conflict and its impacts in their community. This very important topic is also a difficult story to tell, because many community members are still afraid to share their stories about the war, especially in front of a camera. But despite those potential challenges, Rosa, Juanita, Ana, and Juanita pressed forward with this topic, taking charge of scheduling interviews with community members they knew were well informed about the

events. They closed their film with a message directly from them, meant to inspire hope in their community. Although these young women were not alive during the majority of the internal conflict, they chose to author this story, demonstrating how deeply embedded the town's history of violence is within their collective memory.



## Create...

### Level 1 Productions

Guided by our Program Leaders, Chema, Carmen, and Carlos, 19 youth from 5 communities participated in our Level 1 workshops. Our Program Leaders travel to various communities to run these learning engagements. Specifically, the leaders cultivate inquiry, ethnographic, interview, and camera techniques – in partnership with the youth. During this process, the youth acquire computer skills including saving, organizing and accessing files and production software facility. The students identify topics to investigate and document and engage in the process of their own learning.



#### Quiejel Films

Fruit Crops  
by Ana Mariela Sucunu Calgua

Weavings of Quiejel  
by Milthon Macario Morales

**Carmen**, a 20 year old from the town of Chuaxajil, took on a position as Program Leader and Team Administrator in 2015. Her high school studies focused on education and she holds a Guatemalan teaching certificate. With the support of the Maya Traditions Foundation Education Program she is studying Social Work at a university. She became involved in Unlocking Silent Histories in 2012, and completed her first film called Nature. Our first Youth Educator, she led a group of students in Chuacruz. This year, she led two groups of students in the communities of Chuaxajil and Quejel. Carmen speaks K'che' and Spanish.

#### Chuaxajil Films

The Grinding Stone  
by Manuela Cecila Ixmata Chox

Soil Contamination  
by Antonia Emerenciana Marroquin

Medicinal Plants  
by Franklin Velarmino Tzoc Carillo





### **Santiago Atitlán : Yo Respondo y Tu? Films**

Threads of Life

by Diego Antonio Petzey Quiejú

Life

by Abraham Mendoza

Religion of Santiago Atitlán

by José Ratzán

Lake of Life  
by Nicolás Sol

Teen Pregnancy  
by Diego Petzey Quiejú

Doña Choca (Mrs. Twenty-Five Cents)  
by Tony Say

Sports of Santiago Atitlán  
by Domingo Sisay Tuch

**Carlos** is 21 years old and is a proud native of San Juan la Laguna, Solola, Guatemala. Carlos studied in Guatemala City for two years before completing his high school diploma in his hometown, focusing on Computer Science. Carlos began working with Unlocking Silent Histories in 2012, and as a program participant, produced his first documentary called "Success", which explores community definitions of that topic. Carlos became a Youth Educator in 2012, leading a group of students in San Juan, and accepted the role of Technology Administrator in 2015. Carlos led 2 groups of participants in Santiago Atitlan. Carlos is fluent in Spanish and Tzu'tujil.



**Chema** is 20 years old and a native of the Tzu'tujil population from San Juan la Laguna, Solola, Guatemala. Chema focused his high school studies on education, and obtained his Guatemalan licensure in primary school teaching. He began working with Unlocking Silent Histories as a participant in 2012, creating his first film, "Fighting Women". Chema became a Youth Educator in 2013, leading a group of students in Santa Clara la Laguna, and in 2014, he led one group of students in Patanatic and another in San Juan la Laguna. He accepted the role of Publicity & Finance Administrator in 2015. Chema speaks Spanish and Tzu'tujil.

### **Santiago Atitlán : House of Birds Films**

Armed Conflict

by Juana Dolores Damián

Rosa Concepción Damián

Juana Pablo Ajchomajay

Ana Pablo Ajchomajay



### **Patanatic Film**

The Foundation of the Aldea Patanatic

by Bryan Anthony Zapeta Zapeta

and

Paula Francisca de Leon Zapeta



### **San Juan la Laguna Film**

Child Labor

by Alberto Cholotio Ixtamer



## Level 2 Productions

In 2015, Level 1 graduates from the Maya Traditions communities of San Juan la Laguna, Chirijox, Santa Clara la Laguna, and Chuacruz advanced to Level 2 of our program and worked together to create two new films as production teams. Our Level 2 program is a way to keep students involved in filmmaking for community change after completing their first projects. Thus, our alumni continue to form part of the organization as we continue to grow into new communities. The films created in Level 2, in association with Adobe Youth Voices, Javier Borrayo, and Project SERES, are “Beautiful Woman” and “Manuel Yojcom Mendoza: Life Without Limits.” These films demonstrate the progression in skills our advanced students have attained, and were screened to an international audience in Antigua, Guatemala as well as accepted into Guatemala’s International Film Festival. Finally, “Beautiful Woman” was accepted into the Boston Latino International Film Festival.



### *Beautiful Woman*

Synopsis: An indigenous perspective on mythologies surrounding the beautiful Lake Atitlán, told through interviews and culminating in a call to action for the region to care for and preserve the remarkable natural resource that is the lake.

Director: Jessika Tó  
Producer: Chema Vásquez  
Cinematographer: Carlos Vásquez  
Sound: Ana Churunel  
Editor: Carlos Vásquez  
Translation: Carlos Vásquez & Jenn Miller Scarnato  
Music: YouTube Royalty Free Audio Library



### *Manuel Yojcom Mendoza: Life without Limits*

Synopsis: The inspiring story of a young Indigenous man, Manuel Yojcom Mendoza, from San Juan la Laguna who has achieved great successes in life in spite of his physical limitations.

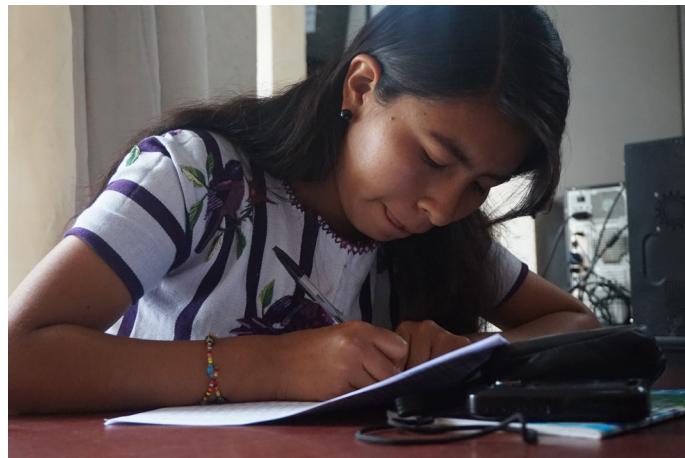
Director: Franklin Cholotio  
Producer: Carmen Tzoc Portillo  
Cinematographer: Emilio Tzoc Portillo  
Sound: Catalina Tambriz  
Editor: Mirna Churunel & Franklin Cholotio  
Translation: Franklin Cholotio & Jenn Miller Scarnato  
Music: Franklin Cholotio



# Our Impact

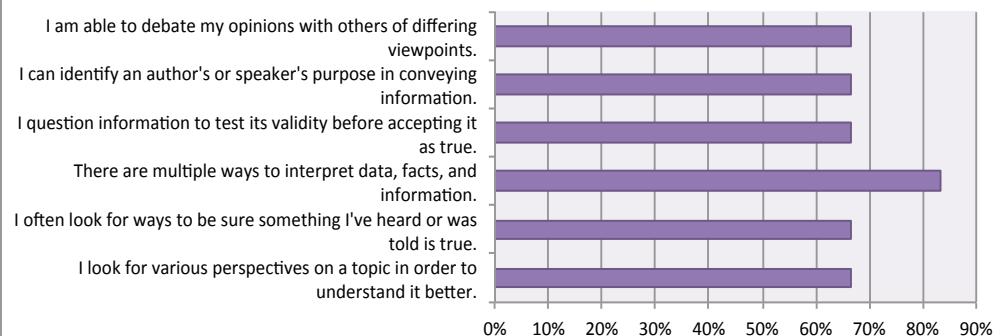
Our project's goals are interrelated and multi-fold, all based on delivering a tangible, positive impact to the communities with whom we work. These goals include:

- 1) Encourage cultural revitalization efforts through youth involvement in cultural documentary production.
- 2) Re-connect youth to their cultural heritages by providing them a medium through which to explore and express their cultural identities.
- 3) Foster cross-cultural and cross-generational dialogue through film screenings and cultural events.
- 4) Increase awareness of issues facing the region's indigenous communities.
- 5) Build local capacity for ongoing efforts in cultural preservation and sustainable growth.
- 6) Foster critical and creative inquiry through media literacy and technology.



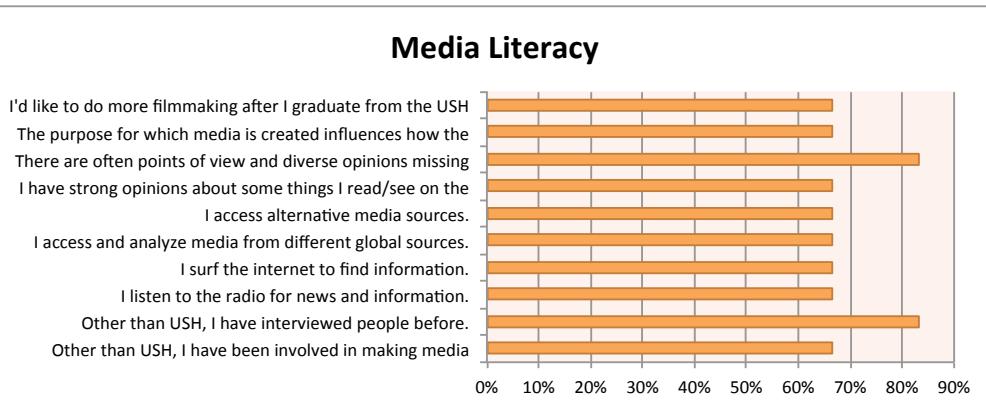
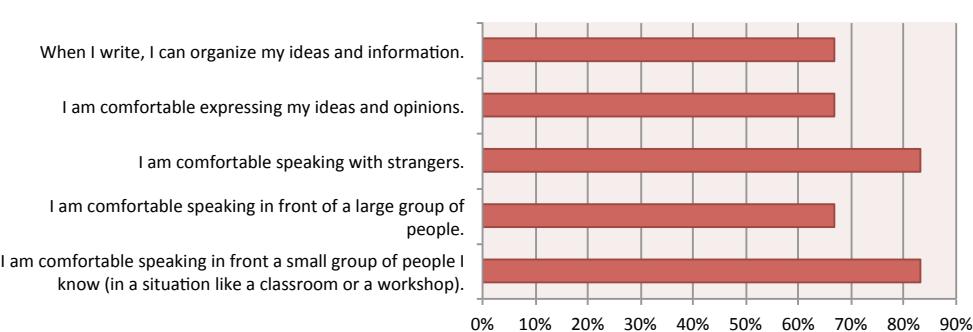
We are committed to ensuring our project's success by working toward measurable outcomes. We administer surveys at the beginning of our program and again after they complete their films to assess program impact. These assessment tools are organized into four major categories that guide our work. These include Critical Inquiry, Creative Expression, Media Literacy, and Technology. Under each of these themes, we have created a set of questions that allow youth to self-assess their skill levels. The data charts illustrate youth self-reported growth between the first time we met them and when they finish their films.

## Critical Inquiry



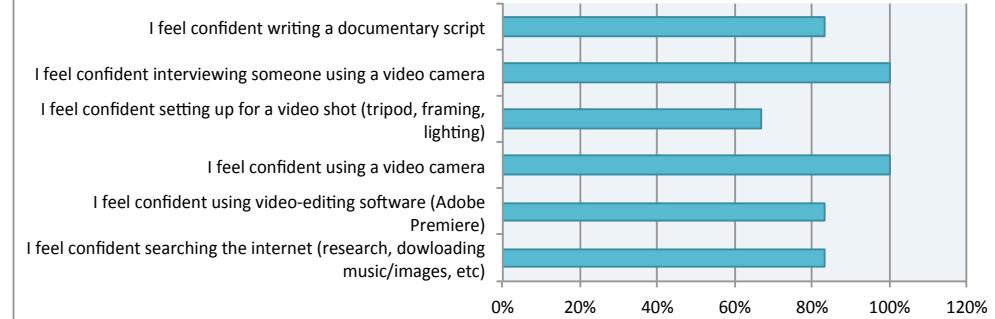
**Critical Inquiry:** Within this theme, we are interested in understanding changes related to a critical read that fosters a multiperspectived view of the world.

## Creative Expression



**Media Literacy:** This category assesses the ways in which youth see themselves as critical consumers and producers of media.

## Technology



It is important to note, the quantitative data that we collect is further analyzed and supported through qualitative records. Together, these data inform the ways in which to adapt and modify our work to the local context and enable us to achieve the greatest positive community impact, with the aim to improve our efforts to provide a unique cultural attraction and maintain tourist interest for a sustainable future.



# Share...

As part of aspiring to promote cultural understanding, we work with the youth to organize a variety of different ways that they can share their work. In 2015, we have support our vision of having cross-cultural and cross-generational conversations through Community and International Screenings.

## Community Screenings

Sharing their work within their own communities underscores that student films are meant to serve their communities, and creates opportunity for dialogue amongst community members. Interviewees are always invited to participate in screenings, as well as other local community members who do not appear in the films, to allow their voices and feedback to be heard as well. These screenings are thus a chance to connect the community to the students' films, create meaningful conversation about the films' messages, and continue to include local voices in our work. This year we held community screenings in Quiejel, Patanatic, Chuaxajil, and Santiago Atitlán.



Chuaxajil



Patanatic



Quiejel



Santiago Atitlán



## International Screenings

### La Galeria, Panajachel

This year, we organized a larger screening for our Maya Traditions Chapter youth from various communities to come together and see one another's films, while sharing them with an international audience. At this screening, we recognized our students' work by presenting them with Certificates, handed out by their Program Leaders. Students engaged in a lively post-screening question and answer session with the audience, fostering a significant cross-cultural exchange, and allowing them to express their viewpoints and explain their filmmaking processes.



### Antigua, Guatemala

Our youth traveled to Antigua once in March and a second time in June to present in two very important cultural institutions in Antigua. CFCE is a museum that aims to contribute to the modernization and reform of the state in Latin America. Casa Herrera is research, conference and teaching facility operated by UT Austin.



Centro de Formación de la Cooperación Española (CFCE)



Casa Herrera

### Film Festivals



**Boston Latino International Film Festival (November 2015):** We were among great company in our Premiere showing of "Beautiful Woman" at the 13th Annual Boston Latino International Film Festival. We had a surprise visitor during our projection of Beautiful Woman!. Juanita of Santiago Atitlán was selected to speak during our post screen discussion, "I am very happy to be in a different country and to hear a story in my language, and other languages of Guatemala."

**Icaro Film Festival (August 2015):** We were extremely honored and excited that two of our documentary shorts, Beautiful Woman and Life without Limits, were presented in the Icaro Film Festival in Guatemala City, Guatemala. This widely attended and notably recognized film festival took place on August 28 and 29, 2015. Icaro was created by Casa Comal, a civil association dedicated to the development of a sustainable film industry in Central America. Icaro is the largest festival in the region.

# *Project Salud y Paz*

In addition to our community presentations, we began a partnership this year with local organization Project Salud y Paz to present youth films to volunteer groups. These presentations, which include student filmmakers present to interact with the audience, give viewers a cultural orientation to Guatemala and the experiences of Maya communities in the region.

Here is some of the feedback from audience members we've received:

*"I enjoyed the variety of films shown and thought the students did a fabulous job! I came in with very little knowledge of life in Guatemala or the issues people face. It was very helpful to be able to interact with the students and ask questions about anything unclear."*

*"All were a wonderful representation of their culture and Guatemala, and although referred to as a developing country, this work is very promising and positive representation of their work to come."*

*"This was a wonderful program! These young men and young woman were articulate, deeply concerned about their community, and show real talent in making the videos. I would think this program is really empowering to the indigenous youth who participated."*

The cross-cultural dialogue that we are able to facilitate between filmmakers and audience members is a crucial component of our presentations, creating connections through film. More than 75% of audience members gave our presentation a 10/10 ranking. 100% of audience members reported that they gained cultural knowledge about indigenous Maya communities, and 100% of audience members felt they gained an enhanced understanding of issues facing Maya communities as a result of our presentations.

**\*\*If you or your community group/organization/school would like to schedule a presentation, please contact us at [info@unlockingsilenthistories.org](mailto:info@unlockingsilenthistories.org).**



# *Organizational Growth*

## *Local Leadership*



### **Announcing our Program Manager - Carlos Agustín Vásquez Mendoza**

One of our organization's guiding principles is creating local sustainability by building local capacity. In 2015, we worked with three Program Leaders, who each had varied administrative roles and responsibilities in addition to their work as educators in the field. As 2015 came to a close, we decided to empower one of our Program Leaders to deepen his skills and increase his input to the Guatemala program by fulfilling a new role - Program Manager. After an in-depth interview and evaluation process, we are happy to announce that Carlos has taken on this role for 2016. As Program Manager, Carlos is now in charge of leading groups of students

in three different communities, and is undergoing an intensive training process that will allow him to independently carry out the USH program in Guatemala. In this new role, Carlos is making significant contributions to curriculum design, administrative reports, equipment maintenance, monitoring and evaluation processes, communication with partner organizations, and organizational goal-setting. We are happy to have him remain involved with us in this new role that exemplifies our commitment to building youth leadership capacity.



### **Global Program Director - Jenn Miller Scarnato**

Since 2014, Jenn Miller Scarnato has been working with Unlocking Silent Histories in various capacities as our organization has grown and changed. During 2015, Jenn worked as our Guatemalan Field Director, focusing especially on building local leadership capacity within our cohort of Program Leaders. Jenn's role has also included creating and implementing organization-wide structures and processes that will allow us to expand beyond Guatemala, as we become a truly global organization. In order to best

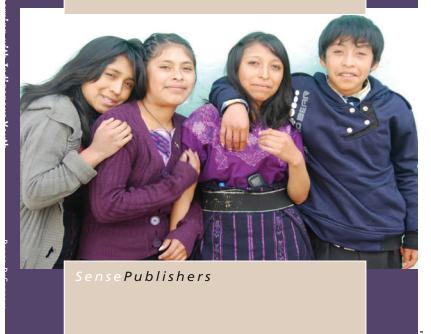
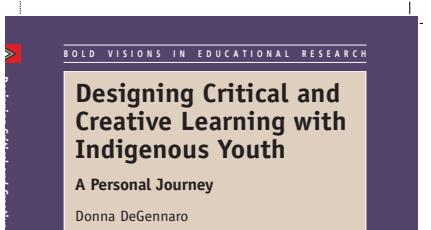
support our organization's continued expansion into new countries, Jenn is now acting as our Global Program Director, allowing her to support not only our team in Guatemala, but our emerging new chapters as well.

## *Learn More...*

We are excited to announce our newly published book. The book traces how Unlocking Silent Histories emerged and how youth voice was instrumental in shaping and solidifying our learning approach and methodological principles. Join us in reliving this journey. We hope you enjoy it!

The book is available online or through mail, email or fax.

Sense Publishers  
Order Dept. P.O. Box 51907  
Boston, MA 02205  
Email: [paul.chambers@sensepublishers.com](mailto:paul.chambers@sensepublishers.com)  
Fax: 781-335-1676  
<http://tinyurl.com/z8bwnc>



# Executive & Advisory Boards

2016 kicks off with a strong and active Executive and Advisory Boards. Growing our managerial and consultative base, we are better positioned to expand our work withing and beyond Guatemala. We were fortunate to receive enthusiastic interest and inquiry that transpired into dedicated commitment to our visionary mission and work. The team consists of individuals with diverse and complimentary skillsets and experiences. Join us in greeting our new board members as well as welcoming back familiar faces that continue to dedicate their valuable time to USH.



**Chairman:** **Hillary Meinheit** has spent the past 20+ years working in the film, television and commercial industries. Her career has focused on overseeing the production of creative content for several production companies including but not limited Momentum Films, Palomar Pictures and Great Guns Productions US, with the latter she ran the US Commercial Production branch as the Head of Production. Hillary produced both national and global campaigns, managing the logistics of million dollar projects and events. Ms. Meinheit's passion to serve has allowed her to take on positions as Finance Director for a US Congressional candidate, as well as being involved with several Boards, including: North Carolina Business Council, former Chairman of the Cape Fear Economic Development Council, Vice Chair of the North Carolina Production Alliance and the world renowned Cucalorus Film Festival. Most recently Hillary has turned her focus on working and bringing attention to Down Syndrome and is a the creator of documentary series that is currently in development. Hillary is thrilled to bring her extensive background, professional network of colleagues and friends to Unlocking Silent Histories, and sharing the beautifully composed and uniquely told stories of indigenous cultures worldwide.

**Vice Chairman:** Originally from Venezuela, **Luis Altuve** is a global citizen, with in-market experience in Latin America and Europe. He is bi-lingual/bi-cultural, with high-level expertise with the Multicultural market in the U.S., and Latin America's culture and business environment. Mr. Altuve currently serves as Lead Director, Multicultural and Consumer Marketing Center of Excellence at Prudential Financial, where he is responsible for building consumer marketing "best-practices" across the organization. He is a classically trained CPG marketer with over ten years at a VP/Director level with brand and product experience, working for some of the most-respected branded consumer companies in the world including Kellogg's, Wrigley and SABMiller. Mr. Altuve's inspiration comes from his daughter, who has overcome many educational challenges growing up through her perseverance, and whom has been involved in many humanitarian efforts focusing on children with needs since she was 14.



**Secretary:** **Jennifer Baker** graduated with a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Oklahoma. She subsequently obtained her JD from OU, where she served as an Articles Editor for the American Indian Law Review and received a Certificate in American Indian Law. Jennifer spent 3 years working at DNA-People's Legal Services, Inc., nonprofit legal services corporation that operates on and around the Navajo Nation, before moving to the Denver area to enter private practice. Jennifer's legal practice focuses on representing Indigenous Nations and individuals in areas including sovereignty, tribal governance, contracts, and environmental issues. Jennifer has also spent her free time over the past several years helping educate and organize several indigenous communities to take action against threats to local water sources and has been heavily involved in opposition to the Keystone XL pipeline, which was recently rejected by the Obama administration.

**Ingrid Sub Cuc** is Kaqchikel and Q'eqchi' Maya from Sololá, Guatemala. She grew up in Sololá and moved to the US at age 12. Ingrid went on to pursue her passion for Indigenous rights and medicine in the US graduating with a B.S. in Biology from Whitworth University in Washington State. Ingrid has returned to Guatemala various times throughout her years spent abroad, working as an intern and volunteering for health organizations in Guatemala. She has also participated and worked for various institutions in the U.S. Ingrid currently works for Cultural Survival, an Indigenous Rights organization, based in Boston with a sister organization in Guatemala. She is the program assistant for the Community Radio Project that works to legalize community media access for indigenous communities all over Guatemala. She speaks English, Spanish and proficient Kaqchikel.



**Elizabeth Novogratz** is a writer and editor in NYC. She has helped many people from different sectors shape and tell the story of who they are and what they've done in the world. Elizabeth built and created the content for The Well Daily, a wellness and meditation website and has co-authored three published books with a fourth on the way. She studied Anthropology at the University of Montana -- and will never cease to be amazed by the lives and traditions of others, and most importantly by the stories that they tell. She is excited and honored to be a part of Unlocking Silent Histories.



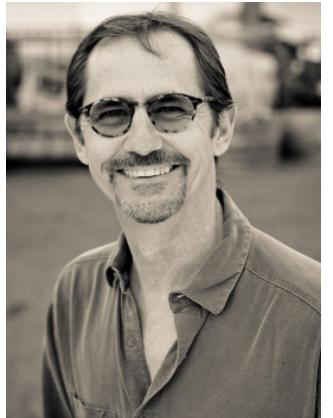
**Rachel Bodkin-Fox** is a passionate advocate for global development and volunteer engagement. She served three years as the volunteer Congressional District Leader in NC-7 for the ONE Campaign, and was a founding member of the ONE Moms Advisory Council where she participated in the first ONE Mom's trip to Kenya in July 2011. Rachel has been featured on ABC World News, Good Morning America, and PBS. Locally, she is an honorary board member of the UNA-USA Coastal Carolina Chapter, chairs the committee for the annual UN Women Walk to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Wilmington, is secretary of the North Carolina USNC-UN Women, and a board member of One Way Out Kenya. Rachel holds a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing from Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis and is currently a graduate student at UNCW pursuing a Master's degree in Public Administration with a concentration in Non-profit Management, where she is director of the Building a Better Wilmington Campaign.

### *Advisors and Creative Consultants*



**Rick Duque, PhD**

Dr. Duque's research focuses on the global diffusion of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) like Internet, mobile phones and digital video technologies across developing regions of the world. Rick has been one of USH's long time advocates, supporters and collaborators.



**JK Presnal**

Jk (Jim) is a veteran independent film producer. He is also the Founder and Former President of Community Film Studio Santa (CFSSB) Barbara, the world's first non-profit, all-volunteer, community-centric motion picture studio. Jim has generously contributed his expertise to guide our Level 2 productions.



**Chico Colvard**

Chico founded and curates the UMB Film Series. His award-winning film, FAMILY AFFAIR, premiered in competition at Sundance (2010) and was the first film acquired by Oprah Winfrey for her cable channel OWN. Chico critiques our youth films to support of our quest of fostering authentic voice.

## *Looking Ahead*



In 2016, Carlos will work with three new groups in the communities of Nahualá, Santiago Atitlán, and San Juan la Laguna. We are looking forward to more new movies, with new voices, contributing to the preservation of culture, tradition, language.. as seen through the eyes of Youth!



Say hello to Feli, Lilian, Fede, Herlinda, Imelda, our newest group of students in our new Maya Traditions Foundation. community of Nahuala!



Please welcome Pedro, Guety, Isabel, and Pedro. Our 4th group from San Juan la Laguna. Carlos recruited these youth as part of his vision to more firmly establish USH in his community.



Introducing Elías, Flor, Chico, Veronica, Andres, and Maria - our newest group of program participants in Santiago Atitlan! We're excited to work with them this year with our partners Natik and La Puerta Abierta!

# Save the Date!

On our way to the Smithsonian (see next page), we are hosting several events to share our great news. Please save the date, share our events, and join us to celebrate the work of our talented emerging filmmakers!

## Amplify Austin:

Amplify Austin Day is an annual community-wide day of online giving in Austin, TX. The 24-hour period provides an easy and fun way for the entire Austin community to give together while helping local nonprofits. As an Austin-based nonprofit organization, USH is participating, with a goal of raising money to continue our work in Guatemala and at the same time expanding to US based locations. Please join us in our efforts to raise awareness about USH and to share the amazing work of the participating youth.

**March 8, 2016**  
Rio Rita's  
Happy Hour & Music  
1308 E 6th St, Austin, TX  
78702  
5 PM - Close



SAVE THE DATE | March 8-9, 2016  
#AmplifyATX  
24 hours to crank up the giving.

**March 9, 2016**  
**Jos Coffee Downtown**  
Coffee and Conversations  
242 W 2nd St  
Austin, TX 78701  
9 AM - 6 PM

## Gallery Event:

Unlocking Silent Histories (USH) invites you to join us in a multimedia exhibition that provides a glimpse into past and present Maya life. These media include films, photos, paintings, and weavings - each providing a different perspective as we weave together the past and the present. This event is part of USH's "Journey to the Smithsonian Screening Series" that celebrates the incredible news that Unlocking Silent Histories and its partner organization the Maya Traditions Foundation will be featured at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian this coming September in both New York City and Washington D.C. Joining us in this celebration is world-renowned artist Byron Armando Rabe presenting his Mayan influenced art, and Guatemalan-based non-profit organization supporting Maya artisan women and promoting health and wellbeing, Worthy Village. Join us in supporting this once in a life time opportunity for the Maya youth and artisans involved in our organization.

**Piano Craft Gallery**  
**Opening Night Fundraiser**  
April 1, 2016  
6:00 PM - 10:00 PM

Gallery Exhibit  
April 1 - May 2  
793 Tremont St.  
Boston, MA 02118

**PIANO CRAFT GALLERY**

# Smithsonian Bound

It is with great enthusiasm that we announce that Unlocking Silent Histories will be featured at a Maya Cultural event at the **Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian**. We will share this incredible opportunity with our partner, the Maya Traditions Foundation. This once in a lifetime invitation signifies the value of our work. This invitation from such an important cultural institution comes just 3 short years after beginning USH in the rural hills of Chirijox. Through the generous support of the Smithsonian, our Program Leaders – Carmen, Carlos, and Chema – will travel to the U.S. to present and discuss new youth-produced films that illuminate Maya cultural heritages and languages from their world views. Three Maya artisans from the Maya Traditions Foundation, will also accompany us to demonstrate the ancient art of traditional backstrap weaving.

The collaborative event is an opportunity for the youth and weavers to celebrate and share their Maya identities, and be recognized for their resilience, knowledge, and traditions. This experience also becomes a learning event that our Program Leaders will carry back to their communities. The new perspectives and knowledge that our Maya staff gain during their U.S. stay will ultimately translate to their continued work with new filmmakers in their communities. Additionally, the global visibility Unlocking Silent Histories and Maya Traditions Foundation will enjoy through this important event will deepen the positive impact we have on our Maya communities in Guatemala, and that they have on us.

**September 9 - 12**  
**New York City**

One Bowling Green  
New York, NY 10004  
212-514-3700

**September 15-18**  
**Washington D.C.**

4th St & Independence Ave SW  
Washington, DC 20560  
(202) 633-1000



# Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge and give a special thank you to our generous donors, partners and collaborators. We could not continue this work without you!

## Donors



The Pollination Project is an organization that gives seed grants to social change leaders. In partnership with their donors, they also provide second round impact grants to projects that illustrate the most promise for inciting social change. In 2015, USH participated in The Pollination Project's *True Wealth Challenge* and received one of their prestigious *Impact Grant*. With *True Wealth Challenge* funds, our Program Leaders held a celebration thanking community elders for their willingness to share their stories on film. Through the *Impact Grant* award, we are expanding and refining our youth leadership emphasis, focusing on leadership at all levels of participation in USH.

The University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) awarded several grants that will contribute to our work. These include a Cahill Grant, a Community Engagement Grant, Dean's Research Mini-Grant, and two Department Fund Awards. The research-related funds will enable our USH Team to conduct comparative research studies across community implementations. The teaching-related monies will support a virtual service learning exchange where USH youth will receive stipends for contributing their knowledge of culturally responsive learning engagements to UNCW graduate students enrolled in a social Justice Topics in Education course.



In collaboration with our staff, Board Members, Advisors, Partner organizations and several volunteers, we ran an Indiegogo campaign. The contributions from both former as well as new followers, donors and supporters allowed us to purchase cameras for our new students, covered travel for youth from several rural communities together for film and technology workshops, and aided the organization of several film screenings.

## Partners and Collaborators

We would like to acknowledge and give a special thank you to our generous supporters and donors. Even the smallest contributions go a long way. We could not continue this work without you!



**Maya Traditions Foundation:** We began our work by partnering with this inspiring organization who works tirelessly to empower and improve the quality of life for Maya women artisans and their families. Connecting on a vision of generating local capacity, we have collaborated for three years to provide youth with a platform to tell their stories and amplify their voices. We are grateful for MTF's initial and continued support, assisting us in developing strong relationship and dedicating resources and staff along the way.



**ADECCAP:** We formalized a partnership with this Indigenous Maya led organization in 2015. Located in Santiago Atitlán, they have supported our expansion, opening a USH chapter and making it possible to offer our program to youth in this community.



**Project Salud y Paz:** In 2015, we began to partner with this health, healing, and education focused organization. USH presents youth films to incoming volunteers, providing them with a unique, insider view to the cultures and traditions of Indigenous communities..



Adobe Youth Voices (AYV) ignites young people's Creative Confidence—the ability to harness creative skills to solve problems—thereby empowering them to find their voice and make it heard. USH was awarded an AYV grant to participate in media production workshops.



SERES unleashes youth leadership for a resilient future by enabling young people to step into the roles of innovators, change agents, community organizers, problem-solvers and future makers that are leading the transition towards a better tomorrow.



## **Give the Gift of Creative Voice**

### Get Involved, Be Part of the Story!

*www.unlockingsilenthistories.org  
info@unlockingsilenthistories.org  
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Critical and Creative Expression for Indigenous Youth  
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