

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair and glasses, wearing a dark sweater, playing a light-colored acoustic guitar. She is smiling and looking down at a young child in the foreground. The child has a pink flower in their hair and is wearing a colorful patterned dress. In the background, another person in a white shirt is also playing a guitar. The scene is set indoors with warm lighting.

Annual Report 2023



La Peña Cultural Center

  @lapenaculturalcenter | www.lapena.org

3105 Shattuck Ave. Berkeley (Huichin - Ohlone territory), CA 94705

Origins

La Peña was established in 1975 in Berkeley, California as a community space inspired by the “**peñas**” of **Chile**, which are community gatherings centered around music, food, drink, and culture where people connect with each other around current issues. Founded by a group of Latin American & Californian allies as a direct response to the **military coup** in Chile that overthrew the democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende on Sept. 11, 1973, La Peña opened its doors and became a key space for **community meetings, anti-imperialist activism, grassroots organizing, artistic exploration, and intercultural solidarity.**

Since then, La Peña has become the home, hub and catalyst for hundreds of diasporic communities promoting social justice and intercultural understanding through the arts, education and community action.



Left: September 11th, 1973 Memorial (2023). **Right:** Collective Women-led Action “NUNCA + (dictadura)” (2023)

What We Do

Rooted in the Latin American and Caribbean diaspora, La Peña Cultural Center collaborates with and unites communities by preserving and celebrating cultural traditions; producing creative new works; and nurturing global grassroots social justice movements with artists, activists and allies.

With the community's support, La Peña presents a broad spectrum of events over the year, including weekly roots arts classes for children and adults, special

workshops and masterclasses, community jams and gatherings, virtual programs like interviews, documentaries and live music videos, and in-person events. Our in-person events take a wide spectrum of formats that go from concerts to panel discussions, theater and dance performances, book launches, film screenings, art exhibits, fundraisers and more.

La Peña also commissions and produces special projects in collaboration with both local and internationally renowned artists.



Left: Casa Borinqueña Fundraiser (2023). **Right:** Fist Up Film Festival, Opening Night of Short Films (2023).

Who & How We Serve

La Peña brings together community leaders, educators, activists, teaching artists, students, musicians, dancers, poets, and visual artists from diverse social and cultural backgrounds, ages, and ethnicities. While the Latino & Caribbean community is the main group towards which our efforts are directed, we strive to be a safe place and hub for our greater ecosystem by centering historically marginalized identities and experiences accross the globe.

There is a diverse spread of representation within our staff, board, committees, and volunteers in terms of the communities that we serve and opportunities for voices to be heard. Offering continuous open calls and pathways for professional development are a big priority for us to make our team be based on equity and diversity. We make sure that every opportunity

at La Peña is mutually beneficial and sustainable, creating strong networks that go beyond a specific project or event in order to build a community that shows up and really takes care of each other.

In addition, we offer community-led programming opportunities that allow community members to collaborate with us on producing events of their interest and/or utilize our space autonomously. We offer opportunities for groups that are deeply rooted in the Bay to perform, educate and create in the space so that we always maintain a rich and current cultural context from which to make our decisions. This focus is intended to make us fulfill our mission very intentionally and reflect the world we want to live in both externally with our broader community and internally as a team.

Our Pillars

With the community's guidance and support, we are able to hold space at La Peña for a rich and broad spectrum of programs that honor and enact our mission of promoting social justice and intercultural understanding through the arts. These events include concerts, panel discussions, community gatherings, masterclasses, film screenings, art exhibits, fundraisers & more, and each of them is a crucial piece of our **Programming Vision**, which is divided into the following eight pillars:

Roots Arts: Preservation & Promotion

Community Celebration & Solidarity

Emerging / Local Artists: Support & Representation

Social Justice Movements: Allyship & Collaboration

Collective Memory & Historical Grounding

Popular Education: Connection & Discussion

Cultural Strategy & Professional Development

Historical Archives & Digital Documentation

Roots Arts: Preservation & Promotion



Top: Afro-Cuban Masterclass with Lázaro Pedroso (2023). **Bottom:** Community-led weekly roots arts classes.

La Peña is a cultural homeplace where every week, children and adults study the musical and performance traditions that have nourished struggles of resistance, sustained cultures, and contributed to the well-being of communities in Latin America and beyond. Roots Arts classes encourage us to think beyond consumer approaches in order to become producers of our own culture. Check out our calendar at Lapena.org!

Roots Arts: Preservation & Promotion

Our work and impact put into numbers...

10

Weekly roots arts classes and rehearsals: Son Jarocho, Capoeira, Adult and Youth Bomba & Plena, Afro-Peruvian Dance, Latin Folk Music, Yoga en Español, Percusión Afro-Cubana, La Rumba me llama, and the La Peña Community Chorus.

16

Roots arts gatherings, students showcases, and community jams led by local culture bearers: Cuban Rumba with Bruce Williams, Puerto Rican Bomba & Plena with Shefali Shah & Héctor Lugo, and Mexican Son Jarocho with María de la Rosa.

9

Special roots arts workshops and masterclasses: 7 Salsa, Bachata & Merengue Dance Class Series led by Juliana Mendonca; 1 Afro-Cuban Music Masterclass with Lázaro Pedroso; and 1 Son Jarocho Workshop with Mexican ensemble Saltapatrás.

650+

Community members benefited in 2023 from our Roots Arts classes, workshops, and jams, connecting with others and learning from vital cultural traditions!

Community Celebration & Solidarity



When working at the intersection of the arts and social justice, it is essential that we prioritize the co-creation of **safe and welcoming spaces** in which our communities can get together, celebrate their whole selves, and uplift each other with tenderness and respect. In addition to dedicating full programs to honoring our community's interdependence, diversity, creativity, and resilience, we advance this culture of mutual care by setting up clear expectations and accountability through our **Community Agreements**, which we establish with and for the community, and share at the beginning of each of our events.

Top to bottom: ¡BAILA! Community Dance Party (July 2023); *Canto Telúrico* Concert (April, 2023); *Sudamericanto* Tribute to Nueva Canción (Nov, 2023).

Community Celebration & Solidarity

Our work and impact put into numbers...

10

¡BAILA! Community Dance Parties, one of our most popular monthly series. These events create a safe and inclusive space for folks of all backgrounds to enjoy latinx dance and music, while actively supporting local musicians, teachers, and grassroots organizations. This event happens 10 times a year and welcomes over 300 people per night.

5

Special community-led events specifically intended to showcase, uplift and celebrate our community's history, talents, and resilience: *I Have a Dream* Concert, *Canto Telúrico* Concert, Bomba y Plena Student Showcase, *Sudamericanto* Tribute to Nueva Canción, and a Fundraiser for Casa Borinqueña.

3000

Community members came to La Peña to enjoy these special events, meeting people from different cultures and backgrounds, and connecting with their community through art, live music, and dance!

Emerging / Local Artists: Support & Representation



Top: Empowering People of Color Open Mic (Oct, 2023). **Bottom:** Summer Tianguis & Holiday Mercado (2023).

At La Peña we recognize that in order to create strong, free, and thriving communities, we need to create paths for creativity to be encouraged and properly developed. Our Empowering People of Color Open Mic series, along with our Yearly Art Exhibition, our Summer Tianguis, Holiday Mercado, and Artist Directory are ways by which we celebrate and support emerging/local artists through a lens of equity and inclusivity.

Emerging / Local Artists: Support & Representation

Our work and impact put into numbers...

90+

Emerging / local artists —musicians, poets, singer-songwriters, comedians, and dancers— went on stage to perform at our *Empowering People of Color Open Mics*, which we now hold 6 times a year in the Spring and the Fall.

70+

Local vendors and artisans participated in our two seasonal (and very popular) vendor fairs: Our Outdoor Summer Tianguis & Block Party and our End-of Year Holiday Mercado.

200+

Artists featured in our online Artists Directory, which celebrates and supports the work of local musicians, visual artists, filmmakers, educators, cultural producers, and authors. The directory is created with the community and grows every month.

Social Justice Movements: Allyship & Collaboration



A big part of La Peña's mission is to **nurture grassroots social justice movements** in the understanding that the fight for our liberation needs culture not only as an ally or as a campaign strategy, but as the actual foundation that allows us to imagine, desire, and enact radical change in the first place. We support these movements and organizations in different ways depending on their needs and their models of operation. **Fundraisers, community discussions, workshops, cross-promotion strategies, and online shout-outs** are some of our main forms of collaboration that we use. Learn more at Lapena.org!

Top to bottom: Mapuche Kimün Gathering (March, '23); Thangs Taken: Rethinking Thanksgiving (Nov, '23); Beyond Walls Film Screening at Fist Up Film Festival (Oct. '23).

Social Justice Movements: Allyship & Collaboration

Our work and impact put into numbers...

20+

Partners with whom we actively worked in solidarity with their transformative missions, including Sogorea Te' Land Trust, Fundación KAJFV BUDI, Working Films, CURYJ, Mujeres x Nunca Más, Mujeres Unidas y Activas, Bay Area Cuba Solidarity, among many others.

600+

Community Members came to La Peña this year to participate on film screenings, demonstrations, live performances, and discussions that specifically amplified the work of social justice movements in Latin America, the U.S., and beyond.

100+

Local and global social justice organizations, movements, direct action groups, nonprofits, and community centers are featured in our Online Resources Page. This page is continuously updated thanks to community feedback & suggestions.

Collective Memory & Historical Grounding



Left: Sept. 11, 1973 Memorial (Sept. 2023). **Middle:** Thangs Taken (Nov. 2023). **Right:** Día de Muertos (Nov. 2023).

La Peña is historically rooted in the **International Solidarity Movements** that responded to the U.S.-backed coup that, on September 11th of 1973, overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende and inaugurated seventeen years of dictatorship in Chile. Today, upholding that legacy of deep cultural and political rebellion, we sustain yearly programs that are intended to keep our memory alive, ground our present in the lives of our ancestors, and pass our knowledge on to the new generations. Our **Sept. 11th, 1973 Memorial**, our **Día de Muertos Celebration**, and **Thangs Taken** are good examples of this type of events.

Collective Memory & Historical Grounding

Our work and impact put into numbers...

400+

Community members came to La Peña during our month-long commemoration of the **50 year anniversary of the U.S.-backed coup in Chile**. We held five events that included memorials, film screenings, concerts, and political demonstrations.

100+

Community members came to La Peña with their families to celebrate **Día de Muertos**. We hosted a special night dedicated to Victims of State Violence, specifically for Indigenous communities worldwide and peoples from Palestine.

250+

Partners, grassroots organizations' leaders, Native artists, and community members came to La Peña to participate on the first **Thangs Taken: Rethinking Thanksgiving** event held in our space since the pandemic. A powerful night!

Popular Education: Connection & Discussion



One of the main pathways through which we push our culture forward is by providing different opportunities for us to **learn from each other**, discussing complex and timely topics that shape the way we interpret the present and imagine the future. **Youth and adult workshops, masterclasses, and film screenings + Q&A's** are examples of this type of programming that seeks to be accessible for the community and very diverse in its content. Thank you to our partners, collaborators, and culture bearers who open a space for us to ask the questions that need to be asked today!

Top to bottom: Son Jarocho Zapateo Workshop with Saltapatrás (May, 2023); Fist Up Film Festival Q&A discussion (Oct. 2023); Inside Biden's Cuba Policy with journalist Liz Oliva (Nov. 2023).

Popular Education: Connection & Discussion

Our work and impact put into numbers...

11

Events specifically dedicated to bringing community together to learn about cultural traditions, current political issues, Indigenous worldviews, and grassroots social movements. This year, gatherings included 8 documentary film screenings + Q&A's with their directors, producers, and protagonists.

40+

Artists, researchers, community leaders, and cultural bearers came to La Peña to share their lived experiences and expertise with the community in order to create a positive impact, inspire discussion, and foster understanding.

500+

Community members participated in these events to gain skills and insights on issues relevant to them. Topics included Latin American music, international U.S. policy, police violence, Land Back Movements, prison abolition, & others.

Cultural Strategy & Professional Development



A big priority for La Peña is to **support and enrich our local cultural landscape** by providing opportunities for artists and cultural workers to gain skills that are relevant to their professional goals. This year, we piloted three ways to do this:

1. Audiovisual trainings:

sessions where our team of professional sound engineers and videographers transmitted their knowledge and technical skills on to our staff.

2. Artistic mentorship: an opportunity for emerging visual artists to create a new mural in our space under the guidance of experienced muralists.

3. Video and multitrack audio recordings: sessions where local and travelling musicians record their material live in our space.

Top to bottom: Oscar Autie and Jiovani Valdivia during a training session; muralists and mentors in front of new mural; Mara Hruby recording her music (2023).

Cultural Strategy & Professional Development

Our work and impact put into numbers...

4

LP staff members gained new skills and professional experience during our audiovisual training sessions: Deyline Moreno, Ashly Flores, Jiovani Valdivia, and Angélica Casas Murillo were trained on filmmaking, live editing, live recording, and audio mixing.

3

Young artists collaborated for the first time in the design and execution of a new mural at La Peña under the mentorship of artist Cece Carpio: Lauryn Marshall, Kahalla, and Angélica López painted «A place to call home» inaugurated in May, 2023.

6

Bands/musicians developed high quality portfolio material and work samples through our video and multitrack recording sessions: This pilot program offered free recording services to artists to advance their careers & create archival material for the future.

200+

Community members received professional photos of their performances at La Peña to support the creation of their websites and their future networking, collaboration, and promotional needs.

Historical Archives & Digital Documentation



"A Place to Call Home"- The Making of a new mural at La Peña
a short documentary

Short documentary “A Place to Call Home: The Making of a New Mural at La Peña” directed by Clara Pérez Medina, produced by Corey Raynor, and edited by Carlos Pino (La Peña, 2023).

Understanding that La Peña is a 48-year-old living monument with an invaluable history, we are committed not only to expand the reach and accessibility of our current programs through live streamings and recordings, but we are also focused on making La Peña’s five decades of cultural work available for the community to learn about it and get inspired. Thanks to the efforts of our Archive Committee and our Production Crew, we have developed a **robust digital strategy** that includes digitizing and categorizing our archival materials, and continuously documenting our programs for both our current and our future generations. Stay tuned for the updates of this work-in-progress and watch our videos on our Youtube channel @lapenaculturalcenter!

Historical Archives & Digital Documentation

Our work and impact put into numbers...

12

Professional videos—including two short documentaries— were produced by La Peña this year to showcase some of the main aspects of our work as a cultural center while also offering high quality materials for artists to advance their careers. Together, these videos have 5,000+ views online.

1389

Audiovisual materials and printed posters from La Peña's archival collection were digitized this year and their metadata was made available for researchers thanks to our Archive Committee and California Revealed.

750+

Item-level records from La Peña's archival collection of print materials, audiovisual recordings and digital files, **will be catalogued in 2024** thanks to the work of our Archive Committee and the support of California Revealed.

Building Bridges: Old & New Partnerships



These are some of the artists & cultural workers featured in our Online Directory. See more at Lapena.org/Artists.

La Peña is characterized by basing its main programming decisions on the unique and diverse needs of the community that it collaborates with. We are honored and proud of being partners with such a rich array of artists, community organizers, activists, teachers, and arts administrators who make our work make sense. If you'd like to collaborate or be in partnership with us, contact us at Lapena.org!

Building Bridges: Old & New Partnerships



Some images from our trip to DC, which include a presentation at the Chilean Embassy, a meeting with Francisco Sabaté, Legislative Assistant of Congresswoman Barbara Lee, and a community gathering at Teatro de la Luna.

This year, we had the opportunity to travel to Washington DC to position La Peña as a living monument of solidarity and cultural resistance among a new community of supporters. On this trip, we connected with potential stakeholders and new collaborators who we believe will positively impact the way that La Peña is able to build and sustain its programs with the community in the long-term. Thank you to Fernando García and the Embassy of Chile, to the Molina Family Latino Gallery, to the Office of Congresswoman Barbara Lee (12th District, California), to Otros Dreams en Acción (ODA), to Teatro de la Luna, to our friend Jazmin Mora, and to so many other people who made this happen!

Be Part of this Community of Change-Makers!



INVEST
in your
COMMUNITY



CO-CREATE
the
WORLD
that we all
DESERVE



Support the
ARTISTS
that
INSPIRE
YOU



To become a member of La Peña, visit [Lapena.org/members](https://lapena.org/members). Setting up your account takes less than a minute!

This year, we launched La Peña's First-Ever Membership Program, which gives the opportunity for our community to be both the supporters and the beneficiaries of all the beauty and radical change that we create together! This program is a direct investment in the community that we want and need, and it allows us to build a model where cultural and economic value feed each other's needs and hold space for growth.

Cost: \$20/month or \$150/year (auto-renewal, cancel anytime).

Benefits: Free entrance to our monthly BAILA parties + 25% OFF all La Peña Events (with a guest!) + 25% OFF Space Rentals.

How: Go to [Lapena.org/members](https://lapena.org/members) and become a member today!

Stay in Touch & Get Involved!



Group photo at the end of our Empowering People of Color Open Mic (December, 2023).

At La Peña, we have many pathways for our community to contribute to our mission and be part of our efforts to create a more equitable, creative, and exciting future for everyone. Check them out below & see you soon!

- 1) See our calendar of events and contact us: [Lapena.org](https://lapena.org)
- 2) Subscribe to our weekly newsletter: [Lapena.org/email-list](https://lapena.org/email-list)
- 3) Present a project or idea: [Lapena.org/proposals](https://lapena.org/proposals)
- 4) Rent our space to host your event: [Lapena.org/rentals](https://lapena.org/rentals)
- 5) Donate: [Lapena.org/donate](https://lapena.org/donate) or Volunteer: [Lapena.org/volunteers](https://lapena.org/volunteers)
- 6) Follow us on social media: [@lapenaculturalcenter](https://twitter.com/lapenaculturalcenter)
- 7) Be a featured artist in our directory: [Lapena.org/supportartists](https://lapena.org/supportartists)