

# EVALUATION OF THE KUAMKA COMMUNITY HEALING ARTS PROGRAM AT HOMELESS CHILDREN'S NETWORK

## 2023-2024 EVALUATION



REPORT PREPARED BY INDIGO CULTURAL CENTER



**INDIGO**  
CULTURAL CENTER

FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN'S NETWORK



**HOMELESS  
CHILDREN'S  
NETWORK**

# GRATITUDE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## TO OUR ANCESTORS...

“We honor the gifts, resilience, and sacrifices of our Black ancestors, particularly those who toiled the land and built the institutions that established the City of San Francisco’s wealth and freedom, despite never being compensated nor fully realizing their own sovereignty. We acknowledge this exploitation of not only labor, but of our humanity and through this process are working to repair some of the harms done by public and private actors. Because of their work, we are here and will invest in the descendants of their legacy.”

~ San Francisco’s Reparations Plan Report, 2023



## LEADING WITH GRATITUDE

We express deep gratitude to the San Francisco Office of Economic and Workforce Development and Dream Keeper Initiative whose generous funding made this evaluation possible.

Thank you to the entire Homeless Children’s Network community. This has taken a collective effort, and everyone has come together seamlessly to bring it full circle.

Thank you to the **Kuamka Community Healing Arts Program** partners and community members who contributed to this evaluation. People who provided their expertise and time included: healers, families, advocates, community organizers, practitioners, trainers, and community leaders. Your experiences are the valued knowledge we seek to uplift. Thank you for so graciously sharing your expertise, time, energy, vulnerability, and wisdom. You helped us truly see the sense of community and cohesion within and among the Black community(ies) of San Francisco.

Thank you to Rio Holaday for the vibrant, customized art work. Your process of getting to know the programs and the data not only make this report more meaningful, but this process helped us understand the data and the work at HCN in more expansive and integrated ways. To learn more about Rio’s work, please visit: (@rioholaday on Instagram) or ([www.rioholaday.com](http://www.rioholaday.com)).

Thank you to our very own, Krystle Canare, for the fabulous design of this report.

Thank you to our amazing Indigo Cultural Center team your assistance and amazing attention to detail in entering, managing and analyzing various aspects of the vast amounts of data for this evaluation. And for all the additional administrative and emotional support required to move this work to completion in such a short amount of time.



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# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

In 2024, Homeless Children’s Network engaged Indigo Cultural Center to conduct an external evaluation of the **Kuamka Community Healing Arts Program**,<sup>1</sup> an Afri-centric healing arts-based program for Black artists in San Francisco that provides expressive arts training and technical support for facilitating community-based workshops.

The main objectives of this report are to:



Describe the **Kuamka** program in a way that contextualizes it as one aspect of Black community mental health,



Describe the **Kuamka** participants,



Demonstrate whether key objectives were met, and



Share feedback about experiences and impact from **Kuamka** participants.

*1 In Swahili, Kuamka means “to awaken,” or “the awakening.”*





# INDIGO CULTURAL CENTER: A NOTE ABOUT THE AGENCY & PEOPLE CONDUCTING THIS EVALUATION

The Institute of Child Development Research and Social Change at Indigo Cultural Center is an action-research firm that specializes in infant and early childhood research and evaluation conducted with an anti-racist lens. Indigo Cultural Center (a predominantly BIPOC-staffed organization) is led by executive director Dr. Eva Marie Shivers who identifies as an African American cis-gendered woman. Dr. Shivers led this current evaluation with a small team that consisted of a bi-racial Black and Mexican American woman, a Black woman, two Filipina/Filipina American women, and one white woman.

Indigo Cultural Center’s mission is to conduct rigorous policy-relevant research on mental health, education, and development by partnering with community agencies and public agencies that are dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth and families in BIPOC communities. Since its inception, Indigo Cultural Center has employed the use of **community based participatory research** in all our evaluations.

What this means is that we use a collaborative model and working style that involves our clients - who we prefer to call ‘partners’ - in the planning, implementation, interpretation, and dissemination processes of evaluation. We recognize the strengths that our partners bring to each evaluation project, and we build on those assets by consulting with our partners initially and at key milestones throughout the project, integrating their input and knowledge into all aspects of the project, asking for feedback on a regular basis, and seeking consensus on key issues and outcomes.





# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

We begin this evaluation report by including a description of several background factors and the context in which this program took place. Over the past several years, there has been a call to decolonize the field of mental health. One important way we can do this is by expanding the construct of wellness to include a more explicit focus on community mental health in Black and Brown communities. It is increasingly imperative that we not perpetuate the mainstream pathology-narrative of people in our communities by failing to acknowledge the broader forces that impact the well-being of communities that have experienced historic and current marginalization and oppression. Community-based programs designed to promote healing, wellness, and positive mental health do not simply unfold in isolation. The work that Homeless Children’s Network embodies is emergent work that will always reflect the time and space in which it is happening.

Indeed, African and Pan-African philosophy teaches us that “all things have an impact on each other, and this interconnectedness and interplay is universal” (Marumo & Chakale, 2018).



## VOICE AND TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS REPORT

The authors of this report employ the use of feminist methodology and use of first-person voice (e.g., ‘we’, ‘us’)

(Leggat-Cook, 2010; Mitchel, 2017).

- Throughout this report we use the terms Black and African American interchangeably.
- We do not capitalize white but capitalize Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to challenge the power of whiteness, decenter it, and elevate Black and BIPOC perspectives.
- We use LGBTQIA+ as an acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual” with a “+” sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of our community.
- We use queer to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities.
- We use gender rather than sex as an inclusive term that acknowledges that gender is socially and contextually constructed and is a multidimensional facet of identity.



*All things have an impact on each other, and this interconnectedness and interplay is universal.*

*Marumo & Chakale*

## **BLACK COMMUNITY IN SAN FRANCISCO**

The City of San Francisco is often lauded for its diversity and progressive values. However, after decades of structural racism, the Black population in San Francisco which was once 13.5% has eroded to 5%. The Black San Franciscans that remain are largely segregated in communities that have experienced marginalization, exclusionary policies, and other forms of discrimination and oppression. Once considered the ‘Harlem of the West,’ San Francisco has been home to a vibrant population of Black residents since the city’s inception. For one to fully comprehend the present circumstances and trends within the Black San Franciscan community, it is vital that we revisit the rich history of Black San Franciscans and their continued impact on the city’s culture and growth.<sup>2</sup>

## **WORLD WAR II**

During World War II, Black Americans from the South were recruited by employers to fill the need for shipbuilding labor and jobs left vacant by Japanese Americans who were forcibly sent to internment camps. While Black Americans were heavily recruited to San Francisco, they had few options for housing and were often funneled into what are now considered historically Black neighborhoods such as the Fillmore District, the Western Addition, and Bayview-Hunters Point.

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent review of Black San Franciscan history, please see: “African American Citywide Historic Context Statement, 2024, Prepared for City and County of San Francisco, San Francisco Planning Department.” Retrieved on July 26, 2024: <https://sfplanning.org/african-american-historic-context-statement>







## POST-WORLD WAR II

During the Post-World War II period, Black Americans were faced with housing shortages as GIs and Japanese Americans returned to San Francisco and anti-Black discrimination in the private housing market left them unable to purchase homes. Black communities quickly became overcrowded and under-resourced. Moreover, competition from returning GIs, the closing of shipyards, and lack of representation from labor unions led to high unemployment rates among the Black community.



## 1960 - 1979

In the late 1960s, racial tensions continued to rise against the Black community. During this time, the 1949 Housing Act allowed the city to demolish and reconstruct neighborhoods considered “slums”. Thus, a significant number of homes and places of business in Black neighborhoods such as the Fillmore District were demolished (Whitney, 2024). This led to an exodus of Black-owned businesses and Black residents from the city. In 1970, there began a significant decline in San Francisco’s Black residents since the 1920s, when it was 13% of the city’s population.

## 1980-2009

By the 1980s, redevelopment projects were completed, but new homes were too expensive for the majority of former San Francisco residents to afford. Then, the 1990s-2010s brought tech booms which created a strong demand for skilled tech workers in the Bay Area and increased rates of gentrification of historically Black and immigrant neighborhoods in San Francisco, contributing to rising costs of living and further displacement of the Black community.





## 2010 - PRESENT

Looking ahead to the last decade, Black San Franciscans have been faced with even more challenges as they continue to experience rising police brutality and use of force compared to white people (Balakrishnan, 2023) and disproportionate rates of hospitalizations and mortality from COVID-19 compared to whites (Cho & Hwang, 2022). Now, the Black community makes up only 5% of the San Francisco population and continues to decline as Black Americans face the lasting impacts of gentrification, discrimination, and anti-Blackness.

Since the murder of George Floyd and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, the City of San Francisco has begun to acknowledge historical racist policies that have disproportionately impacted the Black community. The city has made more direct efforts toward revitalizing Black communities (Health Commission City and County of San Francisco, Resolution No. 20-10; Office of the Mayor of San Francisco, 2021; San Francisco Human Rights Commission, 2020, 2023).

The overall vision and goal of one of the biggest revitalizing initiatives is the Dream Keeper Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to address and remedy racially disparate policies within the City of San Francisco so that the dreams of young African Americans and their families are no longer deferred, and they have the needed resources and support to thrive in San Francisco. The first round of funding and grants focused on nine (9) impact areas such as: economic mobility; narrative shift; capacity building; education and enrichment; art and culture; and health and well-being.<sup>3</sup>

With continued, targeted, and intentional support for the Black San Franciscan community, we may look to a future where Black families can live and continue to nurture their legacies in San Francisco.



<sup>3</sup> The City of San Francisco Dream Keeper Initiative: Funding the Dream  
<https://www.dreamkeepersf.org/funding>





Mural by Serge Gay Jr at Polk Street and Larkin Street



## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

The Black community has made significant and lasting impacts on the civic, cultural, and economic conditions of San Francisco. For example, the Fillmore district became known as the “Harlem of the West,” a place of rich artistic expression and thriving businesses owned by Black entrepreneurs.

Additionally, San Francisco is home to the rise of many Black community leaders and civil rights activists, who worked diligently to combat racism and discriminatory practices. One example of community leaders who left a lasting impact on San Francisco is the “Big Five,” a group of Black women and mothers whose goals were to improve conditions in Black neighborhoods experiencing severe poverty and discrimination, such as Bayview and Hunters Point. These Black women worked to overturn wrongful evictions and secured funds for infrastructure projects in Bayview-Hunters Point.

Despite the longstanding history and significant contributions to San Francisco, Black residents and the Black community are often overlooked and forgotten. Community organizations like Homeless Children’s Network exist to uplift and preserve the rich history of Black San Francisco by attending to the holistic well-being of its residents.

“In many shamanic societies, if you came to a medicine person complaining of being disheartened, dispirited, or depressed, they would ask one of four questions. When did you stop dancing? When did you stop singing? When did you stop being enchanted by stories? When did you stop finding comfort in the sweet territory of silence?”  
~ANGELES ARRIEN





HCN staff at 2023 HCN Retreat in San Francisco, CA



# HOMELESS CHILDREN'S NETWORK HISTORY

Since 1992, Homeless Children's Network (HCN) has empowered toward a brighter future children, youth, parents/caregivers, and families in San Francisco who are experiencing or are at risk of homelessness, formerly homeless, or in generational poverty. HCN was founded by the directors of six homeless and domestic violence shelters to establish a standard of care for San Francisco. Now, HCN is the hub of a Provider Collaborative of over 60+ service agencies and community-based organizations in San Francisco. Their mission is to decrease the trauma of homelessness and domestic violence for children, youth, and families through direct mental and behavioral health services as a response; to empower families; and to increase the effectiveness of collaborative efforts among service providers by unifying a city-wide collaborative to end homelessness and poverty. Three notable and distinguishing factors that describe HCN's work include: a 32 year-long history of building trust-based relationships with both community members and providers; the integration of a strong Afri-centric framework that guides their approach to their clinical mental health and their community mental health services; a committed focus on amplifying the voices of marginalized communities; and the integration of an Afri-centric approach to providing services that includes engaging Black communities in the design and implementation of solutions, including the evaluation of HCN's impact.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For more history about Homeless Children's Network, please visit: <https://www.hcnkids.org/history>

## AFRI-CENTRICITY IN HOMELESS CHILDREN'S NETWORK'S PROGRAMMING & APPROACHES

For Black people in this country and around the world, community and interconnectedness - **ubuntu** - is and always has been a vital part of our existence and healing. **Ubuntu** is a term that originates from the Bantu people in South Africa. Ubuntu encapsulates a set of closely related value and belief systems throughout the continent of Africa and throughout Pan-Africa (including the U.S.) that emphasize interconnectedness and humanity towards others. This value system ultimately comes down to the following, "an authentic individual human being is part of a larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world" (Mugumbate & Admire, 2020).



All the programs at HCN and the organizational culture (including who is hired to do Black community mental health work) are influenced and based on an Afri-centric worldview. 'Afri-centricity' refers to a way of considering social change and human dynamics that are rooted in African-centered intellectual and (pre-colonial) African philosophies. The main values and concepts that ground an **Afri-centric worldview** include the "interconnectedness of all things; the spiritual nature of human beings; the collective / individual identity and the collective / inclusive nature of family structure; the oneness of mind, body, and spirit; and the value of interpersonal relationships" (Graham, 1999, p. 258). Regarding mental health, Afri-centric theory is used to help explain and understand African-centered therapies and 'treatment.' HCN's Afri-centric framework is presented below.



- Affirms Blackness
  - Is trauma-informed
  - Is love-informed
  - Focuses on self-acceptance
  - Focuses on resilience
  - Identifies unique areas of strength
  - Normalizes individuals' experiences
  - Reframes the stigma of mental health among the Black community (including using art as a healing tool)
- 
- Acknowledges the range of spiritual practices used within the Black community
  - Encourages community members to believe in their capability and choice to engage in their own healing
  - Integrates family and community members into practice
  - Offers space to process collective grief and fear without judgment
  - Addresses barriers to accessing resources and basic needs
  - Facilitates difficult conversations





# HCN'S KUAMKA COMMUNITY HEALING ARTS PROGRAM

## LITERATURE REVIEW: THE IMPACT OF HEALING ARTS PROGRAMS IN BLACK COMMUNITIES

Creativity and embodied expression through art has a rich tradition as a modality for healing in Communities of Color and other communities affected by oppression (Cantrick et al., 2018; Sunderland et al., 2023), and particularly in Black communities (Chioneso et al., 2020; Cooper, 2020; Doby-Copeland, 2019; Johnson, 2016). Creative expression supports a sense of collectivity and shared identity in the Black community while challenging traditional (centered on whiteness) ways of healing and expression (Chioneso et al., 2020; Cooper, 2020). Art can connect Black communities to forms of expression passed through generations, including storytelling, mask-making, dance, music, and spiritual practices (Burrowes, 2019; Chioneso et al., 2020).

Artistic expression as a vehicle for understanding ourselves and our environment can also facilitate disruption of oppressive social constructs and systems (Burrowes, 2019; Goessling, 2020). Relatedly, the arts are also a form of activism and community organizing, with Black artists serving as agents of change (Chioneso et al., 2020; Johnson, 2016). In addition, artistic expression is a form of Black joy and celebration, further contributing to individual well-being and resistance (Brown, 2016). Literature on community-based, Afri-centric arts programs is minimal. Theses and dissertations referenced here reflect important work yet to be published in peer-reviewed journals, which can be a complicated and not easily accessible process. Contributions from Black-led, Afri-centric healing arts programs could address a critical gap in the literature.





How one is portrayed in art can have continued benefits or consequences depending on the artist. African people, particularly African Americans, have been subjected to harmful images and caricatures for hundreds of years now. This can consist of artistic representations like the Sable Venus, or more abstract imagery like phrenology and other modes of assessing the African body (Harris, 1994). Through obscuring roads to education and ostracizing Black artists, alongside devaluing native African art forms, colonizing nations like the U.S. are able to make African people the subject of extensive critique without the ability to object to their representation (Harris, 1994).

In contrast to their historic representation, African Americans have innovated artforms through the harmful conditions they have been placed under. The shared history of enslavement, Jim Crow, policing and white supremacist policies, encouraged further pursuits of expression (Barlow, 2018). An appreciation for past African arts fueled revolutions like the Harlem Renaissance where identity formation was not just active, it was encouraged. This exploration of self was commonly encouraged in African faith systems, embodying self-exploration. Artistic revolutions in African spaces have exposed many spaces for faith to be implemented that are prime for attention (Robertson, 2003).

Healing arts groups engage with participants hoping to inspire expression and reflection, ultimately leading to identity formation. The self-reflection in open artistic expression can nurture a greater sense of self. This is what the namesake Kuamka holds. The term is Swahili in origin and means “to awaken,” or “the awakening” (Robertson, 2003). This awakening is both reflective and contextual. People of African descent may be asked to engage with native African languages, being open to fully embracing the practice and the space (Robertson, 2003). The hope is to reinspire African people that their expression, their worldview, is affirmed and worthy of attention.

The Kuamka program has been in development since 2021. It represents an expansion of what is considered mental health. This program also nurtures artists, healers and community members who can share their strengths. Kuamka centers the term “Ubuntu,” meaning “I am because you are,” calling to the idea that whatever strengths a community member acquires the community holds, collectively.





# KUAMKA PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Homeless Children’s Network developed the Kuamka program in 2021 in partnership with the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) and Dream Keeper Initiative (DKI) to support the facilitation of community healing groups. Kuamka is an Afri-centric healing arts-based program for Black artists in San Francisco that provides expressive arts training and technical support for facilitating community-based workshops. Kuamka is rooted in the cultural identity of Black San Francisco and its rich tradition of artistic expression. The inspiration and power of the arts play a vital role in bringing Black communities together in times of need, strength, grief, and joy.

In Swahili, Kuamka means “to awaken,” or “the awakening.” The intention is that each artist will awaken their expression of healing within themselves and their purpose within the community. The program is led by an HCN facilitator (who is also a Black community artist in San Francisco). The facilitator’s role is to guide Kuamka artists to act as visionaries for their artistry and to teach them ways to share that vision with others. HCN designed this program using an Afri-centric perspective, identifying art and healing techniques that are widely used in the Black community to center the program’s approach. Kuamka empowers Black artists to recognize their creativity as a source of communal healing and it exists to provide the Black community with the tools to engage in sustainable wellness practices through expression.



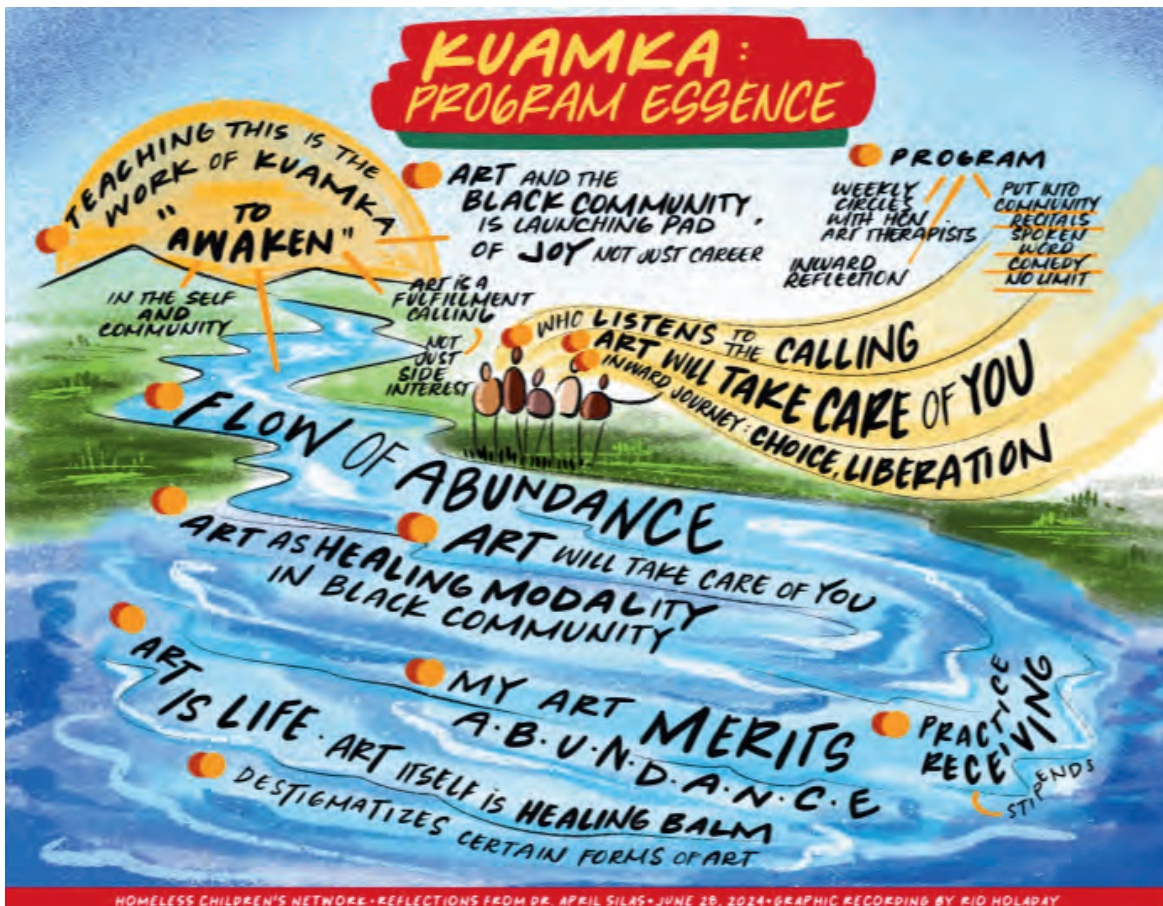




Kuamka is a 9-week program which includes six-weeks of intensive workshops where artists learn to see their own potential to be healers in the community. During the program, the artists engage in activities related to self-reflection, healing, building knowledge of mental health and trauma, connection to each other, to their ancestors and to history, and artistic development. Moreover, the Kuamka facilitator meets weekly with artists in one-on-one breakthrough sessions, which serve as a processing space for discussion and perspective building.

After the six-weeks, artists are tasked with hosting up to five community-based workshops within a 3-week span. During this time, they hone their skills in event management, marketing, and community outreach. HCN provides financial and logistical support to help artists successfully host these workshops in various communities to encourage neighborhood vitality. In this way, artists learn the meaning of being a “cultural worker” in the community. This year, Kuamka artists provided a total of **45 workshops** to the community. See **Appendix A** for the list of workshops provided to the community and their descriptions. Artists offered workshops in the following artforms:

- Poetry
- Slam poetry
- Singing
- Painting
- Dance
- Meditation
- Open mic
- Storytelling
- Rap
- Community discussion
- R&B
- Vision board
- Songwriting
- Acting





## COMPONENTS OF THE 2023-2024 KUAMKA COMMUNITY HEALING ARTS PROGRAM

During the 2023-2024 fiscal year, HCN organized two Kuamka cohorts (9 weeks for each cohort) with a total of 19 participants who identified as Black, and the majority of them living in San Francisco. The program included a range of experience and expertise level and acknowledges that everyone is on their own journey for growth. Kuamka recognizes that healing arts can manifest through a range of artistic avenues.

Cohort members explored an expansive array of art forms, including:

- Cooking
- Journaling
- Meditation
- Performing Arts
- Spoken Word
- Sports
- Digital Art
- Sketching
- Singing, Songwriting, and Rap
- Dance/Choreography





# KUAMKA EVALUATION

## KUAMKA EVALUATION: PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1 Were Kuamka program objectives and service goals met?
- 2 How do Kuamka participants rate and describe their experiences with Kuamka and the impact of Kuamka?
- 3 How does the Kuamka team at HCN describe the ‘catalysts for success’ that enabled them to meet their objectives?

## METHODOLOGY

### PARTICIPATORY PROCESS

Since 2007, Indigo Cultural Center has built a strong reputation as a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) organization with partner-clients across the country; whereby evaluation design, implementation and dissemination activities are closely aligned with our partner’s ongoing service delivery to establish and maintain continuous quality improvement.

HCN leadership and the Kuamka team at HCN collaborated with us on the following phases of development: evaluation design, survey development, data collection outreach, and interpretation of findings.

### PHASES OF DATA COLLECTION

The evaluation for the Kuamka program had three phases.

**Phase one** involved reviewing the progress of program objectives and performance measures set by the funders and HCN leadership.

**Phase two** involved the distribution of a survey that included rating scales and open-ended questions.

**Phase three** involved the HCN’s participation in an interview to explore the approach(es) and conditions necessary to make this program a success.

We relied heavily on the methodology of storytelling in the qualitative aspects of our data collection in Phase three. Inspired by the work of S.R. Tolliver (Recovering Black Storytelling in Qualitative Research, 2022), we were interested to uplift alternative ways of knowing that foregrounds Black narrative traditions. Here at Indigo Cultural Center, we are also on our journey of decolonizing our ways of gathering data and conducting community evaluations by decentering more mainstream, white-centered qualitative methods.





# FINDINGS

## ANALYSIS APPROACH

**PHASE 1:  
DATA  
AGGREGATION**



**PHASE 2:  
FEEDBACK SURVEY  
EXPLORATORY ANALYSES  
& CODING**



**PHASE 3:  
INTERVIEW DATA  
CODING**

**PHASE ONE:**  
To track performance measures, we simply aggregated data points from HCN’s administrative database.

**PHASE TWO:**  
To analyze the participant feedback survey, we conducted exploratory analyses on the rating scales. For the open-ended questions we coded those responses using a priori and emergent coding.

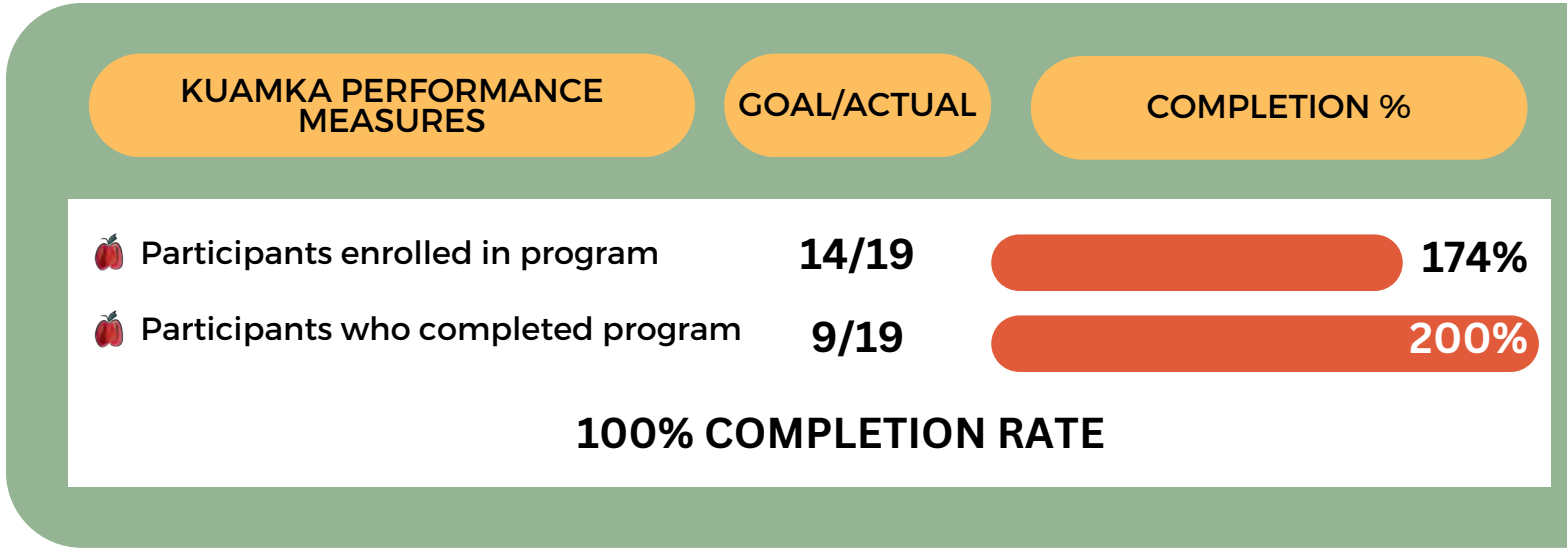
**PHASE THREE:**  
To analyze interview data from HCN staff, we utilized two main types of coding the interview transcripts. The first was a priori coding, because some of our codes emerged based on the questions that came from our focus group script. The other type of coding process we used was emergent coding (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2021). Because our questions were broad and exploratory, we aimed to capture concepts, experiences, and meanings that surfaced from the words and stories in the transcripts. Emergent themes are a basic building block of inductive approaches to qualitative social science research and are derived from the worldviews of research participants themselves.



## RESEARCH QUESTION #1: WERE KUAMKA'S PROGRAM OBJECTIVES MET?

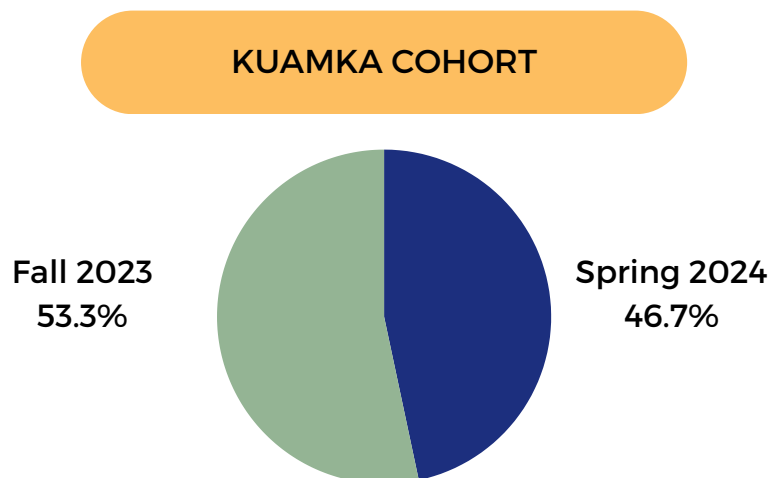


Nineteen (19) Kuamka artists successfully completed and graduated from the program (100% completion rate). The Kuamka team significantly exceeded their original contract goals of 9 artists completing the program. This was no small feat and can be attributed to **intentional** and **thoughtful** program planning by the Kuamka team in establishing **one of the only** Afri-centric healing arts-based programs in San Francisco.



## GATHERING DATA FROM KUAMKA PARTICIPANTS: WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE KUAMKA FEEDBACK SURVEY?

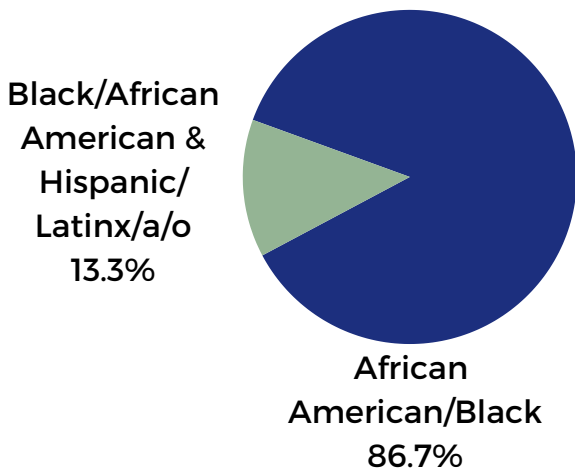
Artists' experiences and perspectives of Kuamka are highlighted in the following pages and provide insight on the impact of Kuamka's intentional and thoughtful implementation and planning.



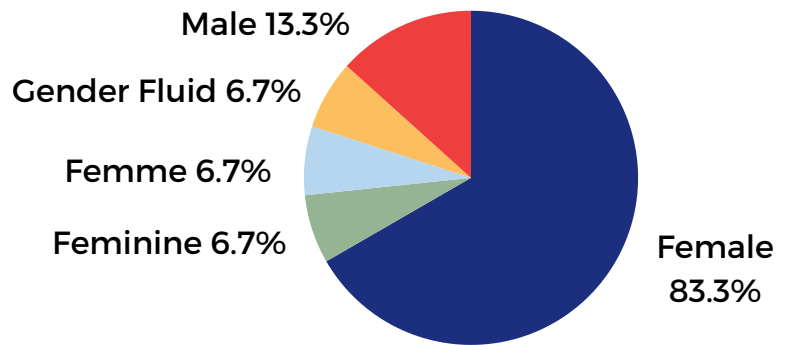


## WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE KUAMKA FEEDBACK SURVEY?

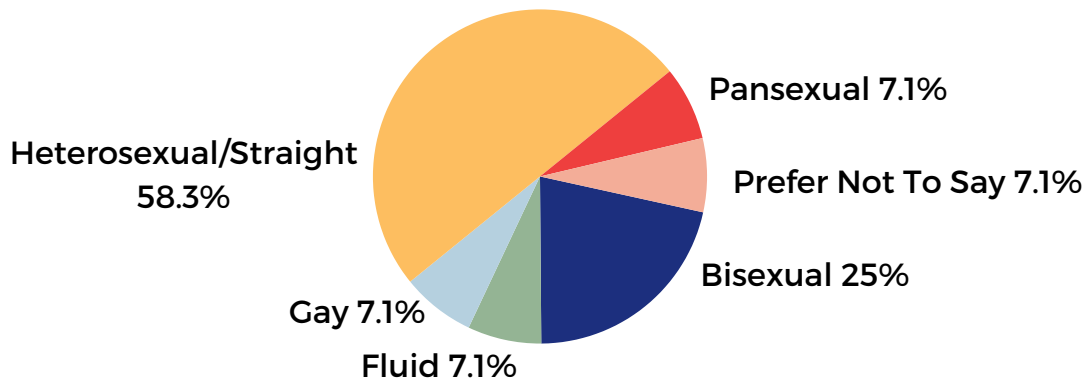
### KUAMKA PARTICIPANT RACIAL IDENTITY



### KUAMKA PARTICIPANT GENDER IDENTITY



### KUAMKA PARTICIPANT SEXUAL IDENTITY





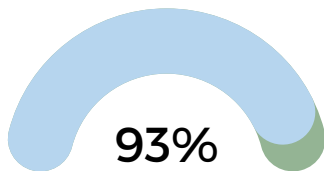


## RESEARCH QUESTION #2: HOW DID KUAMKA PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCE THE IMPACT OF THE PROGRAM?

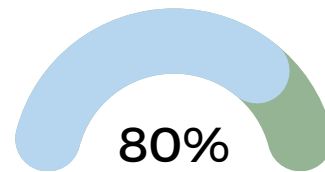
We surveyed fifteen (15) Kuamka artists from the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Eight (8) artists from Fall 2023 and seven (7) from the Spring 2024 cohorts participated in the survey.

The majority of participants identified as Black/African descendant (100%), female (67%), and participant ages ranged from 19-40 years old (Median age = 22 years). Artists were asked questions about their overall experience with components of the Kuamka program such as their experiences with peers, perceptions of the one-on-one breakthrough sessions, experience hosting individual workshops, and perceptions of mental health.

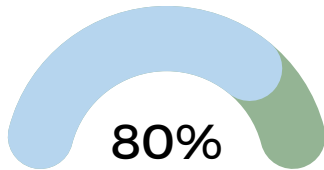
Feedback regarding the program was **overwhelmingly positive**.



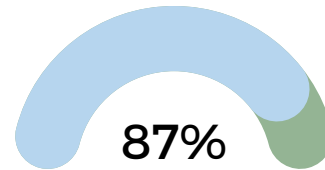
Participants agreed or strongly agreed that the **Kuamka team** was helpful in their ability to navigate and complete the program.



Agreed or strongly agreed that **their PEERS** were helpful in their ability to navigate and complete the program.



Agreed or strongly agreed that the program provided them with enough support, tools, and resources to **move towards their professional goals as an artist**.



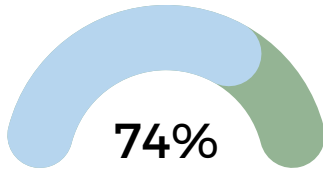
Agreed or strongly agreed that they were provided with the proper support, tools, and resources to **successfully build and host community workshops**.



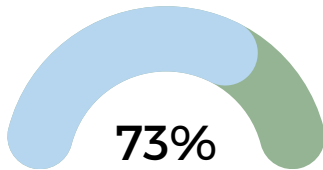


## KEY COMPONENT OF KUAMKA: ROLE OF 1:1 BREAKTHROUGH SESSIONS

An essential component of the Kuamka program is the one-on-one breakthrough sessions with the HCN trainer.



Agreed or strongly agreed that the one-on-one breakthrough sessions were **helpful in their ability to navigate and complete the program.**



Agreed or strongly agreed that the sessions **promoted their growth as an artist.**

“

It's a 'breakthrough session' for a reason- you are breaking through something, inward or outward, building space for yourself to recreate your own path. You are the author of your own story. You are creating space for evolution.

~ HCN Facilitator

”





## OPEN-ENDED FEEDBACK: 1:1 BREAKTHROUGH SESSIONS

Kuamka artists were prompted to provide open-ended responses about their experience with the one-on-one breakthrough sessions. From those responses, we identified themes explaining the **IMPACT** of the sessions on artists' experience. Specifically, artists explained that the sessions were **helpful** (45% mentioned) and **insightful** (27%). Additionally, others discussed how the one-on-one breakthrough sessions served as a **space for connection** (27%).

### KEY THEMES: IMPACT OF 1:1 BREAKTHROUGH SESSIONS

*(listed in order of most salient)*



Helpful (45%)



Insightful (27%)



Space for Connection  
(27%)

Artists were asked what was **MOST HELPFUL** about the one-on-one breakthrough sessions. Several artists identified that the sessions served as an important **processing space** (45%) which provided **new perspectives** (27%). Artists also explained that the space was **supportive** (27%) and a **safe space** (18%) for them. Responses from artists explain how impactful and important these sessions were in supporting their awakening (Kuamka means 'awakening' in Swahili) and growth.

### KEY THEMES: HELPFULNESS OF 1:1 BREAKTHROUGH SESSIONS

*(listed in order of most salient)*



Processing Space (45%)



New Perspectives (27%)



Supportive (27%)



Safe Space (18%)





“...I think that going into Kuamka, I knew who I was as an artist...the breakthrough sessions were more helpful in learning how I want to share that with others...”

~Kuamka artist

“The breakthrough sessions were a way to reintroduce me to myself.”

~Kuamka artist

“The one-on-one breakthrough sessions helped me in organizing my thoughts and goals effectively about what I wanted out of this program. I think having someone just check in with me about workshops and being able to have assistance when I needed it was great...”

~Kuamka artist



## KEY COMPONENT OF KUAMKA: HOSTING WORKSHOPS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY



The purpose of asking Kuamka artists to facilitate workshops was to strengthen artists' connection with the Black community by utilizing their artform as a tool for healing, to inspire artists to host **more workshops** for the community in the future, and to promote the message that art is valued. Kuamka artists facilitated a total of 45 workshops during the program.

In addition to teaching various artforms to the community, **the workshops offered focused on the following themes:**



**The significance and history of art and performance in the Black community**



**Using art for self-discovery - learning to be one's authentic self**

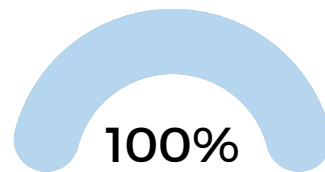


**Self-expression**

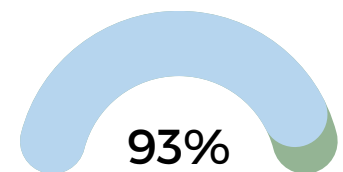


**Self-love and affirming oneself**

Kuamka artists were asked about what it was like hosting workshops for the community. Responses from Kuamka artists showed that the workshop experience was **overwhelmingly positive**.



Artists felt **prepared** to facilitate their workshops.



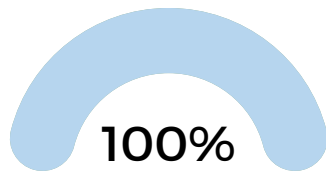
Artists felt **supported** during the process.

# FINDINGS

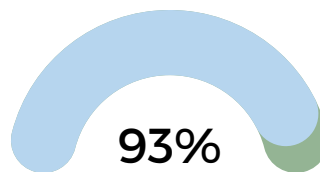


Kuamka is unique in that the program provides the space and materials necessary for artists to facilitate their workshops. When artists were asked about what was most HELPFUL in participants' ability to successfully host workshops, several stated that having access to the space (45%) and materials (27%) made the experience go smoothly. Additionally, several artists gave credit to the one-on-one breakthrough sessions (27%) for contributing to their ability to successfully host their workshops.

Kuamka artists came in with a range of experiences in workshop facilitation, with some participants having never hosted a workshop before, to others being well-versed in coordinating and conducting workshops. Despite this range of experience, 100% of artists stated that they would like to facilitate more workshops in the future, and over 93% feel confident in preparing and hosting more workshops in the future.



Artists stated they would like to facilitate **more workshops in the future.**






Artists feel **confident** in preparing and hosting more workshops in the future.

Artists were asked about how it FELT facilitating workshops. 100% of artists' responses reflected a positive experience with facilitating their workshops. More specifically, 64% of artists who responded identified a sense of **gratification** by hosting workshops. 21% of artists expressed a sense of **empowerment**, and 29% explained that **being able to connect with community members/workshop participants** was a rewarding part of the process.

**"I felt I was in purpose... and giving back always feels rewarding!"**




## KEY THEMES: CATALYSTS FOR WORKSHOP SUPPORT

*(listed in order of most salient)*

-  Having Access to Space (45%)
-  Having Access to Materials (27%)
-  Having One-on-One Breakthrough Sessions (27%)

## KEY THEMES: WORKSHOP EXPERIENCE

*(listed in order of most salient)*

-  Sense of Gratification (64%)
-  Able to connect with community members in workshop (29%)
-  Empowered (21%)

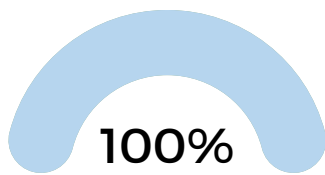






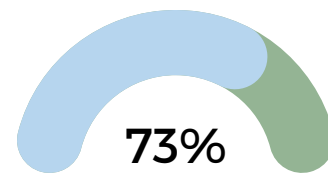
## KEY COMPONENT OF KUAMKA: KUAMKA'S ROLE IN HEALING

An overarching goal of Kuamka is **healing** and **self-reflection** by providing a safe, secure, and affirming program (**100% of participants agreed**). Over 73% of artists agreed or strongly agreed that Kuamka helped them with their healing journeys. Additionally, 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they know where their healing journey may go next. Another emphasis of the program is understanding one's identity as an artist. 60% of artists agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them understand their identities.



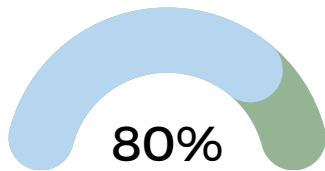
100%

Artists agreed or strongly agree that Kuamka provided a **safe, secure, and affirming program**.



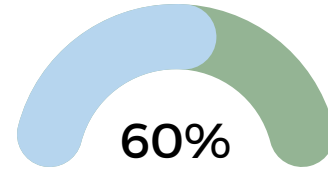
73%

Artists agreed or strongly agreed that Kuamka helped them with their **healing journeys**.



80%

Artists agreed or strongly agreed that they know where their healing journey may go next.



60%

Artists agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them **understand their identities**.



“Being in a full room with other Black artists and creatives was very fulfilling. I felt in good company with other people who are in pursuit of their dreams or their most artistic selves, it was a hopeful space.”

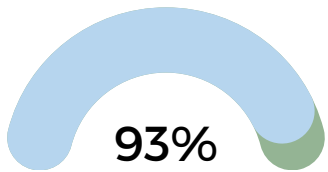
~Kuamka artist



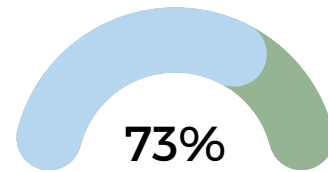
# FINDINGS



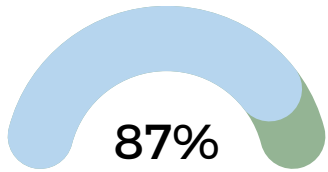
Each aspect of Kuamka allowed participants to enhance and build upon their connection with the Black community. When asked about the workshop facilitation experience, over 93% of artists felt that their workshops had a positive impact on their community. Additionally, over 73% of artists felt like the **program provided them with a community of artists**, nearly 87% felt **connected to other Black artists** in their community, and 80% felt more **connected with the community** overall.



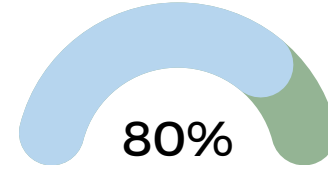
Artists felt that their workshops had a **positive impact on their community**.



Artists felt like the program **provided them with a community of artists**.



Artists felt **connected to other Black artists** in their community.



Artists felt more **connected to their community** overall.



“I've always been a recluse type but being able to stay visible in a room full of artists that have all evolved in different ways was rewarding and liberating”

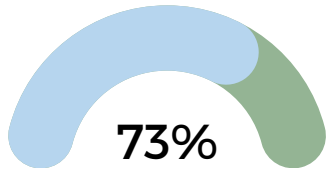
~Kuamka artist



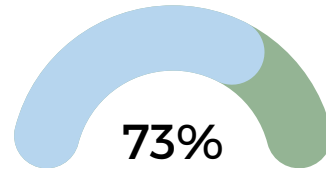
# FINDINGS



Not only did Kuamka serve as an outlet for artists to **establish a sense of community**, but it serves as a vessel for **building connections**. Over 73% of artists agreed or strongly agreed that Kuamka helped them **feel more connected with others**. Moreover, 73% of the artists described the **community and connection** as their favorite part of Kuamka.



Artists agreed or strongly agreed that Kuamka helped them **feel more connected with others**.



Artists described the **community and connection** as their favorite part of Kuamka.



“My favorite part of Kuamka was the opportunity to be in community.”

-Kuamka artist

Kuamka artists were asked about **how it felt** to be in community with other Black artists. From their responses, artists shared themes of **felt community and no longer being isolated** (25%), **empowerment** (25%), and excitement (17%). Additionally, some expressed that being in the program with other Black artists “felt like home” (17%).

## KEY THEMES: HOW DID IT FEEL LIKE BEING IN A ROOM WITH OTHER BLACK ARTISTS?

*(listed in order of most salient)*



In Community and No Longer Isolated (25%)



Empowered (25%)



Excitement (17%)



It Felt Like Home (17%)





## RESEARCH QUESTION #3: WHAT DID IT TAKE TO MEET AND EXCEED PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND IMPACT PARTICIPANTS' OUTCOMES?

Kuamka is staffed by a full-time facilitator who is a Black artist within the San Francisco community. HCN intentionally hired a facilitator who is full-time, allowing them to be fully attentive and thoughtfully plan lessons according to participants' expressed needs. As a result of coming from the Black community in San Francisco, the facilitator was better able to understand artists' experiences and perspectives. This is true of many of the HCN programs, which are implemented by the people and for the people, meaning that those who run the programs do not come from an outsider perspective, but come from within the communities they serve. From this perspective, the Kuamka team was able to plan the program to center around the Black artist experience in San Francisco, reflecting on the history, culture, and current conditions in which Black artists currently work.

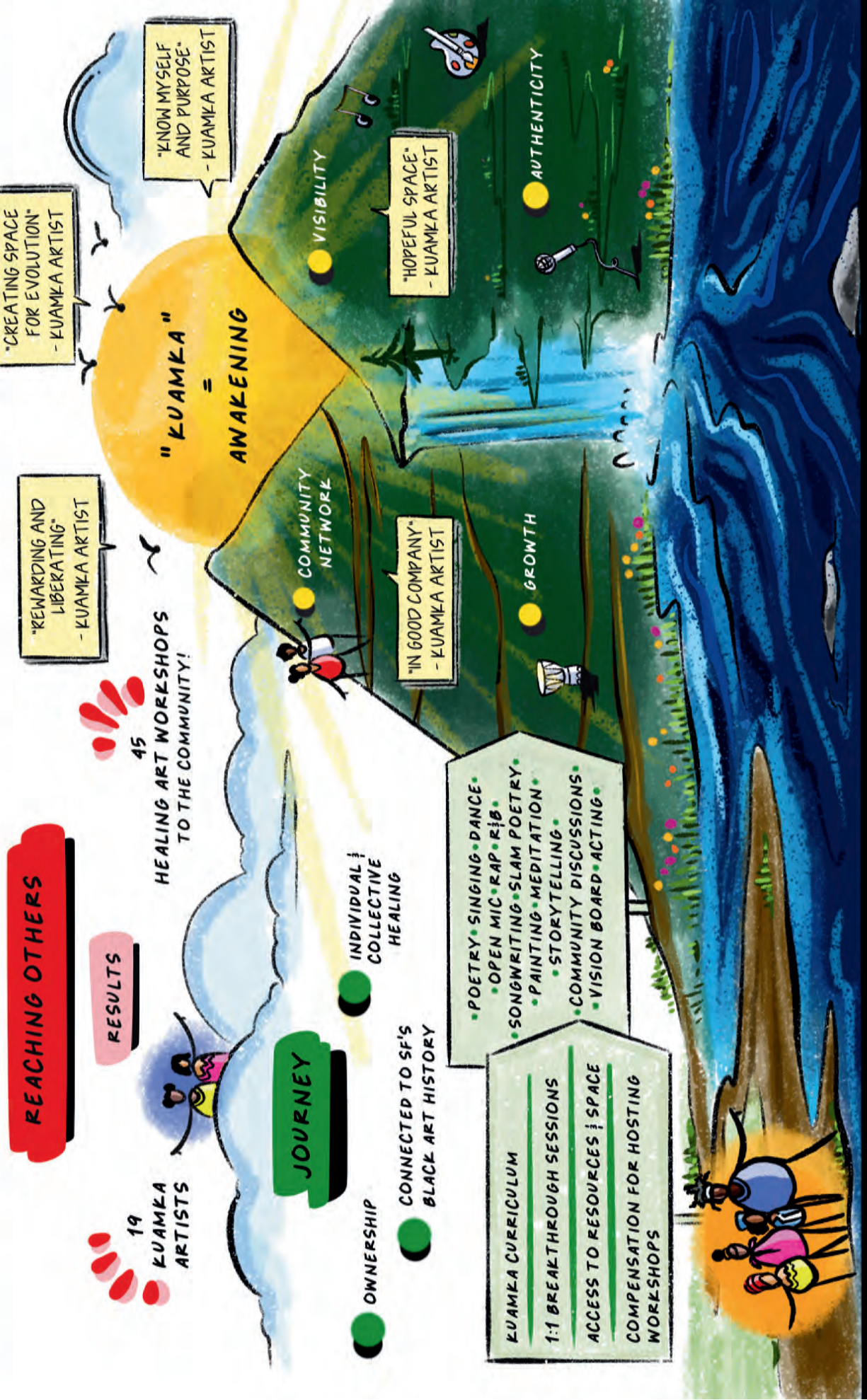
The Kuamka team also made deliberate efforts to eliminate barriers to participation. Throughout the program, the team was flexible in meeting dates and times to ensure that all artists could participate and get the most out of their program experience. Another method to eliminate barriers to participation was providing artists with the materials and workshop space necessary to successfully host workshops. In addition to tangible workshop support, HCN acknowledged the importance of paying artists for their time. Artists were provided \$600 for attending the six-weeks of intensive workshops and \$500 for each workshop hosted (up to 5 workshops), promoting the message that art is valued and art is a vital component of our collective and individual healing.





# KUAMKA

A JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION : HEALING FOR SAN FRANCISCO'S BLACK ARTISTS : COMMUNITY







## DISCUSSION

Homeless Children’s Network (HCN) developed the Kuamka program in 2021 in partnership with the Dream Keeper Initiative and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD) to support the facilitation of community healing groups. Kuamka is an Afri-centric healing arts-based program for Black artists in San Francisco that provides expressive arts training and technical support for facilitating community-based workshops. Kuamka is rooted in the cultural identity of Black San Francisco and its rich tradition of artistic expression. The inspiration and power of the arts play a vital role in bringing Black communities together in times of need, strength, grief, and joy. In Swahili, Kuamka means “to awaken,” or “the awakening.” The intention is that each artist will awaken their expression of healing within themselves and their purpose within the community.







## HIGHLIGHTED FINDINGS

Nineteen (19) Kuamka artists successfully completed and graduated from the program. The Kuamka team significantly exceeded their **original service goal of 9 artists completing** the program. This was no small feat and can be attributed to **intentional** and **thoughtful** program planning by the Kuamka team in establishing one of the only Afri-centric healing arts-based programs in San Francisco.

The Kuamka artists were asked questions about their overall experience with components of the Kuamka program, such as their experiences with peers, perceptions of the one-on-one breakthrough sessions, experience hosting individual workshops, and perceptions of mental health. **The Kuamka artists' feedback regarding the program was overwhelmingly positive.** 93% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the Kuamka team was helpful in their ability to navigate and complete the program. 87% agreed or strongly agreed that **they were provided with the proper support, tools, and resources to successfully build and host community workshops.**

Kuamka artists responded that the 1:1 breakthrough sessions with the Kuamka facilitator was the most helpful component of their experience. Relatedly, **100% of Kuamka artists reflected that the Kuamka program promotes healing and self-reflection by providing a safe, secure, and affirming program.** Additionally, the vast majority of the Kuamka artists strongly agreed that **Kuamka helped them with their healing journeys.**

Kuamka's emphasis on Afri-centricity promotes community involvement and the importance of being connected to one's community. Our findings indicate that Kuamka improved artists' connection with other Black artists and the community in general. A major component of HCN's Kuamka program involved **Kuamka artists facilitating workshops in the Black community.** The main purposes of Kuamka artists facilitating workshops were to strengthen artists' connection with the community by utilizing their artform as a tool for healing, to inspire artists to host more workshops for the community in the future, and to promote the message that art is valued. **Kuamka artists facilitated a total of 45 community workshops during the program.**

When we asked Kuamka artists what it was like hosting workshops for the community, they responded that the workshop experience was overwhelmingly positive. 100% of artists felt prepared to facilitate their workshops, and over 93% felt supported during the process. Kuamka's overarching goal is to help artists utilize their artforms as a tool for communal healing. Our findings indicate that Kuamka provided artists with motivation to continue working within the community and sharing the power of their artforms. The fact that 100% of Kuamka artists surveyed shared that they would like to continue hosting workshops in the future helps us understand how Kuamka has empowered artists in their agency to promote community healing.



## IMPLICATIONS

### Practice Implication

Art has long been recognized as a healing and therapeutic tool for all ages. The act of creating or engaging with art can provide a means of processing emotions, a way to gain more self-awareness, and a means to foster a sense of agency (Johnson, 2016). For Black artists whose history is marked by systemic racism and oppression, art becomes a vital channel for addressing intergenerational trauma and promoting healing (Harris, 1994). The artists who engaged with HCN's Kuamka program reflected that the 1:1 Breakthrough Sessions and the healing component were highly valued aspects of participating in the arts-based program. This finding is consistent with HCN's Afri-centric framework and approach to Black community mental health, which among other things centers and elevates the role of the arts, including music, dance, and creative expression.

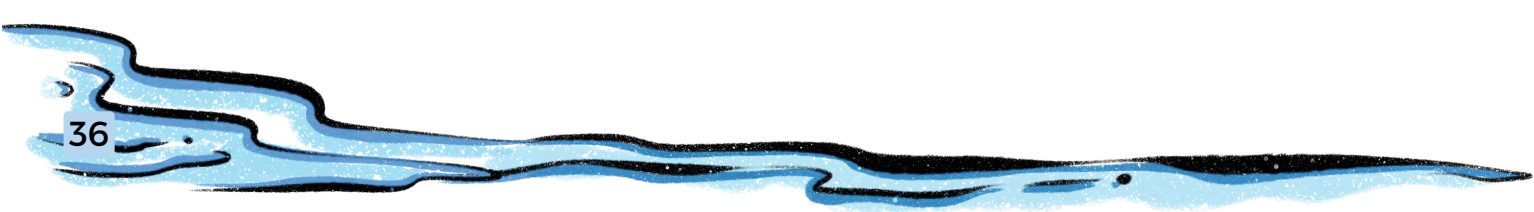
HCN's Kuamka program reclaims art as a therapeutic modality that has been used as a means of healing and improving individual health for centuries (Junge & Asawa, 1994).

### Community Implication

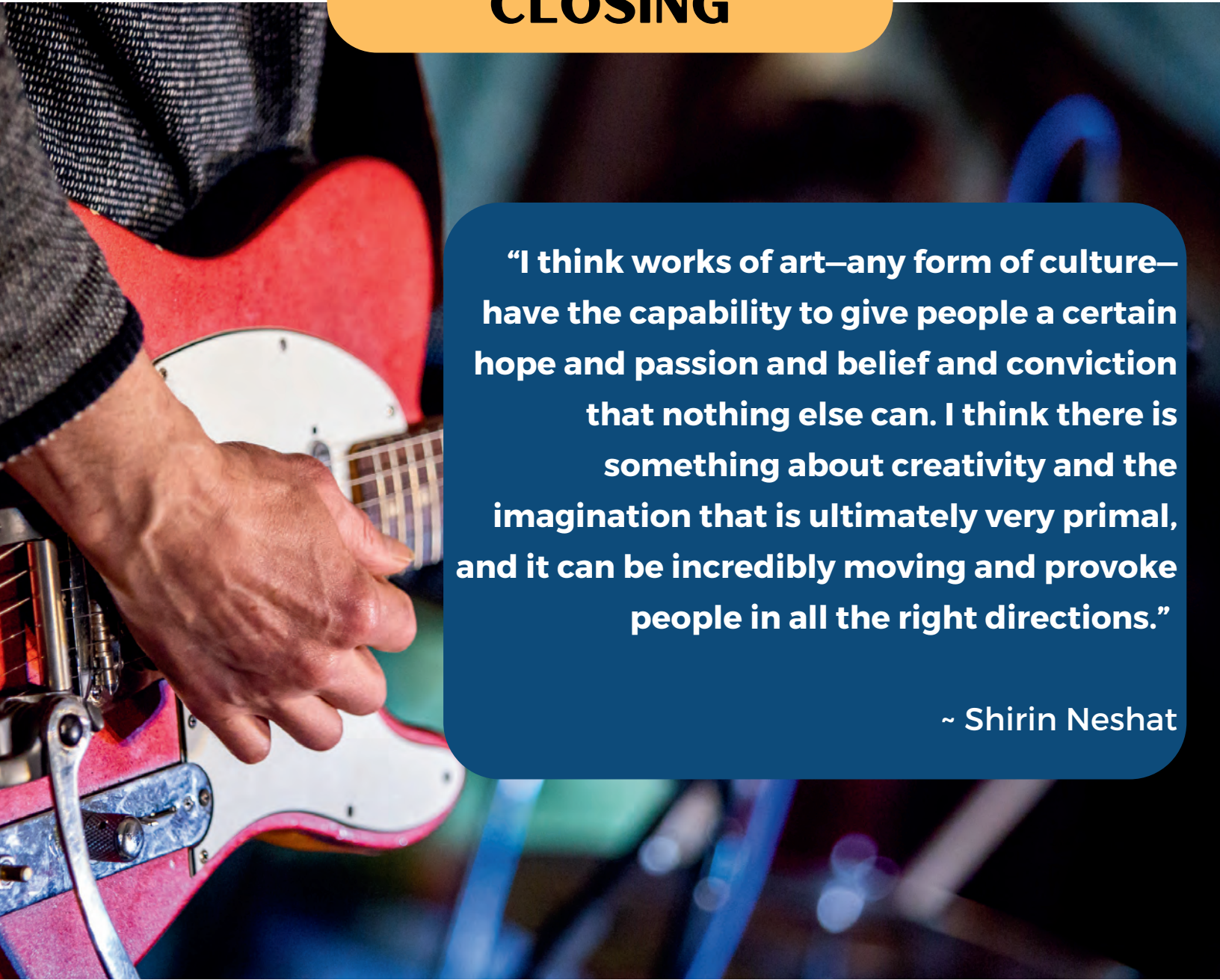
The essence of the Kuamka program highlights the importance of Black art spaces, cultural preservation, and preserving history in San Francisco. Black history and art is integral to San Franciscan (and American) history. Expanding and uplifting the work of Black artists is needed to combat erasure. From spoken word to visual arts, Black creators have used their creativity to preserve history, amplify voices, and cultivate healing within our communities. Programs like Kuamka are essential in keeping the culture of the Black community in San Francisco alive and well.

### Policy Implication

It is imperative that policy makers, stakeholders, activists, and funders within San Francisco truly appreciate the urgent need to continue to fund and support healing arts programs like HCN's Kuamka. These programs impact more than just the individual artists. For example, the workshops that Kuamka artists facilitate throughout the Black community in San Francisco provide art resources and tools for the community to utilize in their own mental health and healing journeys. In addition, these art workshops also promote community connection, belonging, and inclusion. Indeed, the bonds of sharing culture through art unites us, and cultural expression and even cross-cultural appreciation is most often manifested through the arts (Napier et al., 2014).



## CLOSING



**“I think works of art—any form of culture—have the capability to give people a certain hope and passion and belief and conviction that nothing else can. I think there is something about creativity and the imagination that is ultimately very primal, and it can be incredibly moving and provoke people in all the right directions.”**

**~ Shirin Neshat**





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<https://www.kalw.org/show/crosscurrents/2016-02-24/a-brief-history-of-black-san-francisco>



# APPENDIX A WORKSHOPS HOSTED BY KUAMKA ARTISTS

#	Workshop title	Date	Description
1	Love Letter to You	11/29/23	During this workshop they were to start a conversation around what they love about themselves. Find 3-5 words that would help them in learning how to write about their love to themselves. Write a poem about what love looks like to them.
2	Letter to your past self and future self	12/1/23	Write a poem or short letter to your younger self. Things you would change and advice you would give to you as a younger individual. What do you want to see in the future for you. 1 page letter.
3	Fundamentals of Singing	12/1/23	Learning about the history of singing and the history behind alto, soprano, base & more. Learning the fundamentals of what it takes to start singing and singing from your diaphragm.
4	Poetry workshop	12/1/23	Learning to create poetry & the learning of one's energy. Utilizing peace and love to write freely about yourself.
5	Movement & Dance workshop	12/2/23	Focusing on movement and dancing to different rhythms of music. Learning the first steps of choreography.
6	Open Mic Night @ Depot	12/4/23	Open mic for Black creatives to freely express their artistic talents. Poetry, rap, singing, painting & dancing.
7	Poetry workshop	12/4/23	This will be about the benefits of poetry and learning about the importance of using your voice for change and uplifting the black community through rapping and music.
8	Rap workshop	12/4/23	Using rap videos to discuss different forms of uplift, positivity, and change.
9	Poetry workshop	12/4/23	Learning about expressing through Slam poetry & watching videos from where the history of it came from
10	R&B workshop	12/5/23	Playing a game called "Guess those lyrics" and R&B soul Trivia to see what people know about singing and history.
11	Fundamentals of songwriting	12/5/23	Learning how to sing through the fundamentals of music and being able to learn from the greats through videos and activities.

#	Workshop title	Date	Description
12	Rap workshop	12/5/23	"What rapping is" and what it has done for our people in the Black community.
13	Rap workshop	12/5/23	Putting together your own rap about what the present, and future may look like to you.
14	Introduction to self-expression	12/5/23	Introduction to learning about self-expression. What it means to be free.
15	Slam poetry workshop	12/5/23	Roots slam poetry - the roots of what it means to express and what Slam poetry can do for us a black community.
16	Kreative Kaleidoscope	12/5/23	Unlocking your inner artist.
17	Power in Identity	12/6/23	Vision board session
18	Paint with me	12/6/23	Paint with me (Sunset) - painting to express feelings of nature and the beauty of living who you are.
19	Guess that songwriter / producer	12/6/23	Playing games around musical knowledge on singing producers and learning of what genre they come from and more.
20	Spirit Poetry	12/6/23	Spirit poetry - writing a poem about spirituality means to you. Breaking down the impact of it.
21	Nourish the mind, body, and soul.	12/7/23	Nourish the mind, body and soul. Write about what that means to you in your own space and create a poem.
22	Paint & Sip - Spoken Word	12/7/23	The ability to paint your inner feelings & utilize your creative genius to write a poem around your paintings. Great way to present and express both verbally and physically!
23	Back to your roots	12/7/23	Back to your Roots- Who do you carry with you?

#	Workshop title	Date	Description
24	What it means to be "you"	12/7/23	Learning what it means to be "You" unapologetically.
25	Meditation workshop	12/8/23	Meditation, peaceful thoughts, and a togetherness circle to bring in the positive energy and self-love.
26	Healing is Appealing Part 1	12/8/23	Part 1/2 Going to another mental space to heal yourself internally to move forward externally.
27	Healing is Appealing Part 2	12/8/23	Part 2/2 Going through guided activities to help you understand your healing is way important than a job.
27	Majorette workshop	12/8/23	Choreography workshop on techniques of dance in different ways of expression.
29	Open mic	12/8/23	Open mic for self-expression of healing through poetry. Letting go and letting art become the guide.
30	Round table discussion	12/8/23	Reflection on the past and present of dancing and healing through poetry.
31	Intro to Storytelling	12/8/23	Intro to Storytelling- Speaking Truth to your narrative
32	What's your tag?	12/9/23	What's your tag? What makes "You" You?
33	Painting workshop	12/9/23	Painting through pain
34	Painting workshop	12/9/23	Learning the fundamentals of painting
35	Art workshop	12/9/23	Why art is so impactful in the Black community
36	Paint workshop	12/9/23	Paint about what the environment needs and why art is being so devalued.



## WORKSHOPS HOSTED BY KUAMKA ARTISTS

#	Workshop title	Date	Description
37	Show & Tell	12/10/23	Show and tell what you feel theatre has shown you & what does being an actor in the black community represents.
38	Poster showcase	12/10/23	Make a poster board that showcases all of your self-confidence, self-love and self-peace.
39	Rap workshop	12/11/23	Make a rap using words that only describe you & perform it.
40	Writing workshop	12/11/23	Write about yourself using only positive affirmations
41	Chances in life	12/13/23	Coin activity based on chances in life and mental health
42	Round table discussion	12/13/23	Healing together through a round table discussion on healing as a Black community
43	Nature and Love	12/13/23	Write about what nature feels like to you. Does it feel good? Bad? Or both?
44	Poetry and Painting	12/14/23	Using both poetry and painting to find healing through self-love.
45	Open mic	12/15/23	Mini open mic for artists to present their true selves through their favorite pieces of art / poetry. End with fullness and peace.