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Uprooted/ reRooted

A case study of socially engaged art practice
and collaborative design for a more just future

tamarind

The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program's
Restored Spaces Initiative

Uprooted/ reRooted

A case study of socially engaged art practice
and collaborative design for a more just future



Acknowledgments

This case study was collaboratively researched, conceptualized, and written by:

Beth Enson, Writer

Shari Hersh, Director of Environmental Justice, Mural Arts
Gamar Markarian, Design Strategist

Graphic Design by: Gamar Markarian

Copy Editing by: Emma Wu

Proofreading by: Emily Cooper Moore

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Mural detail, tamarind. *Uprooted/reRooted* © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.

Top Center:

Mural detail, tomato. *Uprooted/reRooted* © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.



Uprooted/reRooted Project Credits

A Restored Spaces Initiative project

ARTISTIC TEAM: *Uprooted/reRooted* was created by lead artist Marion Wilson and Restored Spaces founder Shari Hersh alongside muralist Eurhi Jones, and Community Design Leaders Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, and Agnes Ockovic.

COLLABORATORS: Dr. Luz Ruiz and her third-grade class and Priscilla Hopkins and her third-grade classes at William Cramp Elementary School in 2017; mural assistants Maria Roman, Mike Reali, Russel Craig, Lucy Velez, Jose Villalobos, and Yanitza Pascual; Eric Okdeh and the artists at SCI Graterford; Marilyn Rodriguez and workshop attendees at the Mural Arts Philadelphia Porch Light Kensington Storefront; Brad Carney and the Mural Arts Philadelphia Art Education class at Kensington CAPA; William Reed, Alfonso Alford, and Deanda Logan from William Cramp Elementary School; Julius Ferraro and Ciara Williams from the Mural Arts Restored Spaces team; participants in Mural Arts Philadelphia's Guild program; David McShane, Zambia Greene, Michael Whittington, Carlos Vasquez, Ryan Spilman, Greg Christie, and Frisco Brown from Mural Arts.

COURTYARD COLLABORATORS: Philadelphia Orchard Project: Phil Forsyth, Alyssa Schimmel, Robyn Mello; Mario Mohan, Stacey Lindbloom, and Lawrence Davis; Interpret Green: Craig Johnson.

PARTNERS: William Cramp Elementary School, Philadelphia Orchard Project, Interpret Green.

FUNDERS: City of Philadelphia, City of Philadelphia Mayor's Office of Education, FAO Schwarz Family Foundation, The JPB Foundation, PTS Foundation, Stavros Niarchos Foundation.


Uprooted/reRooted © 2018 City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Marion Wilson, Eurhi Jones, Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Agnes Ockovic.

2019 ADDITIONAL CREDITS PHASE 2

COLLABORATORS: Community Design Leaders Jamie Dixon, Mileika Flores Medina, Kathy Garcia-Soler, Mildred Gonzalez, Rosalene Isaac, Delfina Jimenez, Mayra Rivera, and Katty Soler-Prado; mural assistants Diana Gonzalez, Laila Islam, Brianna Hayes, Selina Zhou, and Jenny Yim; Kyla van Buren, Kathy Poole, and Michael Bules from Mural Arts; poets Raquel Salas and Beth Enson; and Ieva Sayles and Connie Johnson from William Cramp Elementary School.

PARTNER: Providence Center Teen Leaders Academy and Charito Morales.

FUNDER: PwC.



Why this Case Study?

This case study provides a penetrating look at the successful strategies, positive outcomes, and salient learning that emerged from *Uprooted/reRooted*, a longitudinal project at William Cramp Elementary School in Philadelphia that provides a model of attending to relationships in the service of addressing the impacts of environmental racism through collective action. Environmental justice requires that those people most impacted by environmental harms envision and are the decision-makers of the solutions. Initiated by the community and produced by the Restored Spaces Initiative, a program of the Environmental Justice department of Mural Arts Philadelphia, the project was undertaken in partnership with the school, artist Marion Wilson, key participants, and ultimately with other artists, non-profits, community members and leaders. Wilson says that despite the statistics of scarcity that have been used to describe the Fairhill community, this project on every level grew out of an experience of collective abundance. “Within a ‘food desert,’ we shared meals and grew food; within a ‘heat island,’ we grew trees; with no public transportation, we took field hikes. As a team of 50 women we created a matrilineal project of love and joy.”

The project took on a radical reorganization of the relationship between artist and community in pursuit of a vision both local and planetary, both personal and communal, resulting in collective authorship of artworks and creative processes that held profound meaning and beauty. *Uprooted/reRooted* used numerous strategies to redress environmental racism and to foster horizontal collaborations based on equity and respect for local expertise. Care and concern pervaded the myriad large-scale and intimate encounters through which community members drew on local skills and creativity to identify and reimagine under-utilized spaces within and around the school, transforming one such space from a barren and forbidding place to a vibrant, welcoming garden with hand-made hardscaping and lush botanical murals which reflects the actual vitality and resilience of the community and serves as the site of ongoing community collaborations. The strategies and perspectives explored through *Uprooted/reRooted* catalysed a community to articulate obstacles, envision alternatives, and bring these visions to reality. David Harvey, Distinguished Professor of Anthropology & Geography at The Graduate Center, CUNY, writes, “The right to the city is far more than

the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.”¹

The aspiration for this case study is to provide a model of collaborative creativity that, in the words of the New Alphabet School, can “scale rhizomatically,”² connecting like-minded projects and practitioners through the web, word of mouth, and the synchronicities with which the planet sometimes provokes needed and life-giving disruptions. New Alphabet School is a self-organized school providing international colloquia (online during COVID,) whose focus on criticism as a practice of shared responsibility and care has been inspiring. We hope *Uprooted/reRooted* can become one node in a collaborative network of projects sharing methods, vocabulary, learning, and inspiration to generate positive change on a scale much greater than each individual organization or social practitioner can achieve.

1 Harvey, David. “The Right To The City,” *New Left Review*, September/October 2008. <https://newleftreview.org/issues/1153/articles/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city>

2 From “Caring.” Conversation by Helena Reckitt and Elke Krasny, part of *New Alphabet School* virtual event June 2020. *HKW/New Alphabet School*. https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2019/new_alphabet_school/texte_new_alphabet_school/new_alphabet_school_caring.php

Restored Spaces Initiative projects operate at the intersection of socially-engaged public artwork and environmental justice activism, addressing specific issues of environmental racism via creative disruptions to the status quo in pursuit of foundational change. Restored Spaces focuses on four main goals in each of its projects:

- Environmental and Climate Justice
- Community Capacity Building
- Equity and Horizontal Collaborations
- Care and Re-knitting Social Fabric

In an effort to rectify and activate around environmental justice issues, Restored Spaces facilitates projects that come directly from communities, centering their visions, expertise, and knowledge. Environmental hazards disproportionately affect marginalized communities, especially communities of color. To imagine and practice a more just future, projects must prioritize dismantling the systems that maintain these disparities and build relational networks, both in their goals and in their practice.

The Restored Spaces Initiative, founded by Shari Hersh, supports communities to create self-sustaining projects that grow directly from their own priorities and take collective action to address harms affecting their specific neighborhoods as well as the systems of harm affecting ourselves, our families, our communities, and our planet. Communities, artists, and activists pursuing environmental justice choose to partner with the Restored Spaces Initiative due to its work at the crux between the strategic

‘Projects that make foundational improvements to the urban fabric must emerge from the communities themselves and grow directly out of the community’s priorities, using grassroots research and exploratory cultural experiences to engage people’s stories, interests and challenges rather than responding to policy and institutional priorities.’- Paraphrased from Lucia Sanroman, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

“We hold important that each of us needs to be critical thinkers, good decision makers, and give principled leadership... (We) change ourselves to change the world... and among other things, move from individualism to collectivism.” -William Goldsby, *Reconstructing Rage*

Top Left: Mural detail, quenepas (Spanish limes). *Uprooted/reRooted* © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.

and the tactical,³ allowing them access to the strategic advocacy of the initiative's parent organization, Mural Arts, and its long-standing relationships with allied entities in city government and the non-profit sector. The projects that emerge from these partnerships create horizontal collaborations and collective authorship, and foster friendships and communities of care to re-knit social networks and transform the urban environment. Restored Spaces Initiative projects raise questions in an open-ended, mosaic approach. Their creative interventions shift perspectives to effect structural and policy change, creating socially-engaged public art at sites that become community spaces and strategic hubs for cooperative thinking, spatial inventiveness, and environmental restoration.

³ In his article "Socially Engaged Contemporary Art: Tactical and Strategic Manifestations," Thompson identifies the strategic impulse of larger arts organizations to effect structural change through long-term engagement with strategy-oriented institutions like community centers and government entities. He distinguishes this strategy from tactical projects facilitated by individual artists or small ad hoc groups to catalyze new ideas that shift perspectives and encourage nuanced, intersectional awareness. Thompson, Nato. *Socially Engaged Contemporary Art: Tactical and Strategic Manifestations*. *Animating Democracy: A Working Guide to the Landscape of Arts for Change*. <https://animatingdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/LCrane%20Trend%20Paper.pdf>

Right:
Uprooted/reRooted © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.

Following Pages, p. 8 and p. 9

Top Left:
Pictured (L to R): Dr. Luz Ruiz, Alyssa Schimmel, Marion Wilson, and Agnes Ockovic.

Bottom Left:
Pictured (L to R): Michael Reali and Eurhi Jones. Photo by Marion Wilson.

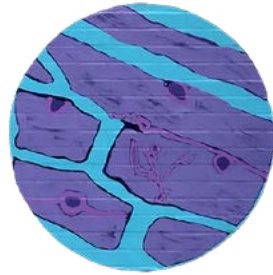
Top Right:
Mural detail, tamarind. *Uprooted/reRooted* © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.






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Project Brief/ Project Goals

From its inception, *Uprooted/reRooted* has followed the lead of the community in setting the agenda for the project. After the community worked with The Trust for Public Land to complete a green schoolyard on the south side of the school, community members advocated for further involvement and transformation of the school's outdoor spaces, including murals to bring beauty and color to its walls. The Restored Spaces Initiative became involved in the next stages

of reimagining the outdoor spaces in response to this articulated desire by the community. With the goal of creating opportunity for the community to lead the process, Restored Spaces explored making a Hub space at the school where social and cultural activities and sharing could happen, through placing an Artist in Residence there. The vision was to support a collaborative model of working with the community toward shared goals.



Project Collaboration

An impressive cast joined forces to create *Uprooted/reRooted*. Community Design Leaders (CDL) Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, and Agnes Ockovic; the Restored Spaces Initiative led by Shari Hersh; Artist in Residence Marion Wilson; and William Cramp Elementary School were the central partners in conceiving the project. During the initial concept phase, the central partnership team expanded to include Philadelphia Orchard Project, which developed a detailed and creative curriculum on plant science for the students at Cramp Elementary, and, at the end of the first summer, muralist Eurhi Jones, who brought muralist skills and experience, as well as deep

listening skills and a mission in climate change activism. Numerous additional partners contributed vital resources, perspectives, and energy along the way, including the Providence Center and Charito Morales; poet Raquel Salas Rivera; Craig Johnson of Interpret Green; William Reed, the Cramp community school coordinator, who tirelessly helped in expediting schedules, setting meetings, and troubleshooting; Julius Ferraro, who coordinated the Mural Arts crew, and assisted de-paving contractors to navigate weather conditions and tight school schedules; Kyla van Buren, who spanned two different groups of CDLs at both Cramp and

Southwark Schools; Mr. Alford, the Cramp Elementary building engineer, who spoke at the project dedication and supported the domestic violence awareness aspect of the project; participants at Porchlight, a project serving people in recovery; inmates at Graterford Prison; and the hundreds of community members who have taken part in various aspects of the project to date along with members of the Restored Spaces team and other teams from Mural Arts Philadelphia. All of these people have had equal value to the project, and their efforts were equally instrumental in creating the numerous positive results. Hersh oversaw all of these complex and intersecting elements of the project; handled the many technical and logistical challenges that presented themselves daily, requiring sensitive and thoughtful management to preserve positive relationships with every participant; and ensured that the overarching goals of the project and of Restored Spaces were met on an ongoing basis.

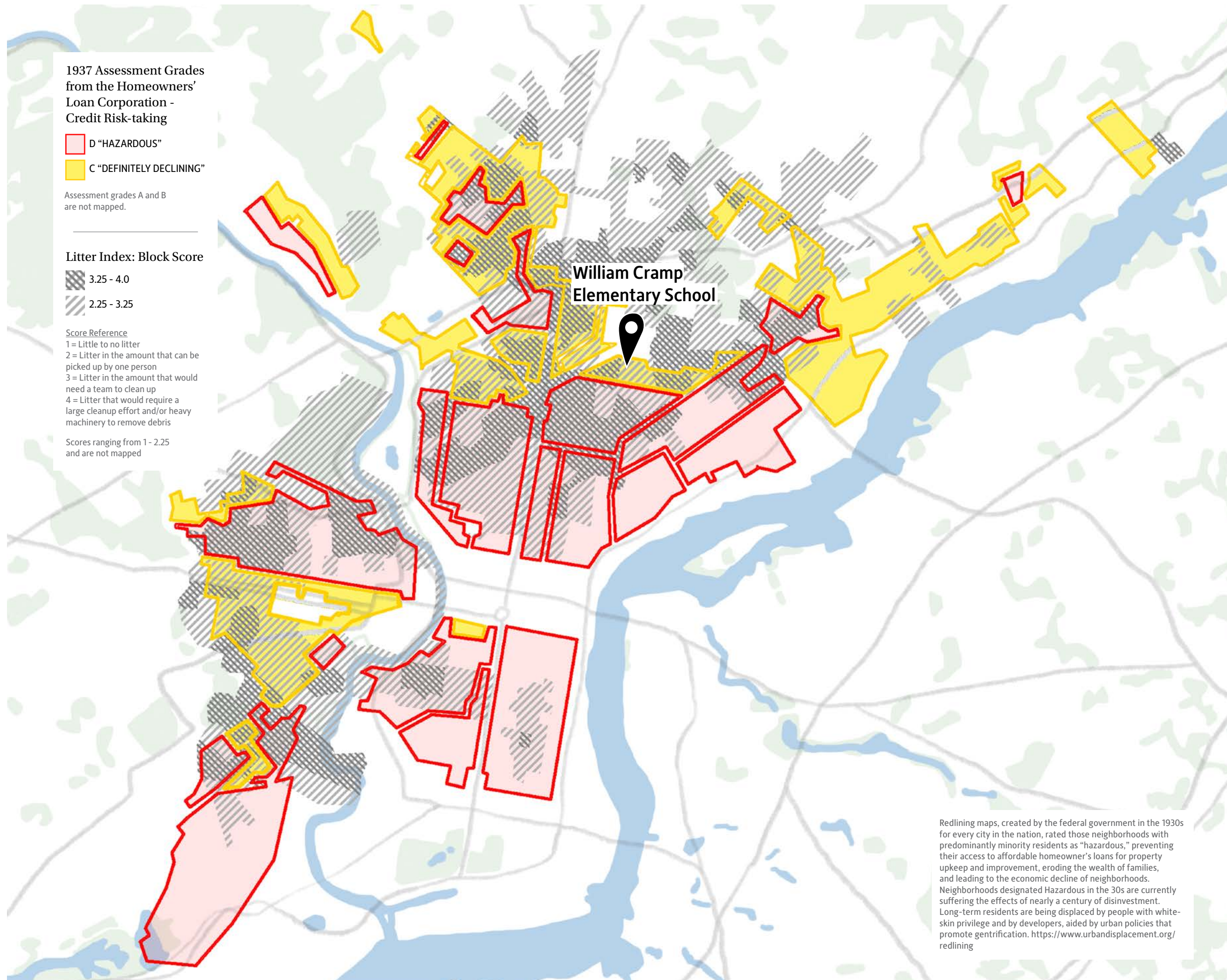
The multivalent leadership team of *Uprooted/reRooted* generated a multitude of sub-projects. Each member of the team drew upon personal and organizational connections and partners in pursuing their aspect of the project. *Uprooted/reRooted* developed a fractal quality with a unifying theme: horizontal collaboration that sparked an atmosphere of shared inspiration, learning, and creativity.



Top Left:
Mural detail, plant cells. *Uprooted/reRooted* © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.

Top Right:
Drawing of a cell by a third-grade student in Dr. Ruiz's class.

Bottom Right:
Uprooted/reRooted © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.



Redlining maps, created by the federal government in the 1930s for every city in the nation, rated those neighborhoods with predominantly minority residents as "hazardous," preventing their access to affordable homeowner's loans for property upkeep and improvement, eroding the wealth of families, and leading to the economic decline of neighborhoods. Neighborhoods designated Hazardous in the 30s are currently suffering the effects of nearly a century of disinvestment. Long-term residents are being displaced by people with white-skin privilege and by developers, aided by urban policies that promote gentrification. <https://www.urbandisplacement.org/redlining>

The Site

The Restored Spaces Initiative expends a great deal of time and resource in selecting the sites for its projects, using a rubric of community-identified need that examines the environmental harms a community is enduring in terms of heat islands, lack of accessible green space, fresh food deserts, and the crime and litter that result from policies of redlining, gentrification, and scarce public resources. The map provided overlays redlined neighborhoods with the litter index to indicate how a high litter index is related to disinvestment. (See sidebar.) Government entities and funders often have specific requirements in selecting a site or a theme, but Hersh is adamant that the site and the content of a project emerge from the community itself. She chooses to undertake projects in response to articulated community priorities, where groundwork has been laid for transformation to take place. Despite years of disinvestment, the Fairhill section of Kensington remains a strong and vibrant community. William Cramp School was selected as the site for *Uprooted/reRooted* for this quality as well as for the existing community-identified need for remediation, and for the site's capacity to provide a shared green space for the neighborhood. William Cramp Elementary serves a low-income, primarily Puerto Rican community, with additional residents from across Latin America. Prior to the inception of *Uprooted/reRooted*, the school participated in a Philadelphia School District initiative to greenscape school campuses to manage stormwater runoff, in partnership with The Trust for Public Land and the Philadelphia Water Department. This earlier project involved students in project design and feedback, resulting in the replacement of asphalt with artificial turf, play equipment, a running track, and plantings, among other amenities.

Map Design by Gamar Markarian

Map References:

- <https://cleanphl.org/>
- <https://nextcity.org/features/view/redlining-race-philadelphia-segregation>
- <https://controller.phila.gov/philadelphia-audits/mapping-the-legacy-of-structural-racism-in-philadelphia/>

The Context

William Reed, Community School Coordinator at Cramp Elementary, describes the misperceptions that neighborhoods like Kensington receive in the media and public imagination. “For future practitioners who hope to duplicate the success that Mural Arts had, it is helpful to remember some key facts about similar neighborhoods. Many of the neighborhoods which stand to benefit most from a similar project often have a reputation which elides the vibrant patchwork of relationships and social networks which sustain the neighborhood community. In the case of Kensington, the neighborhood had been labeled ‘the badlands’ and had been the site of many news stories focusing on the negative parts of the neighborhood. These labels omit the fact that similar neighborhoods often have a long history of disinvestment, redlining, and other practices which have left them with fewer resources than other, more affluent neighborhoods. However, despite these practices, residents of the community have, out of necessity, become very resourceful about connecting with one another, finding resources and networks of support. In addition to this resourcefulness and resiliency of the residents, oftentimes there is a small core of dedicated activists in the community. These organizers and activists can lay the groundwork for a successful community-led project. In the case of Cramp School’s project, that was manifested by the local community development corporation, HACE and their Neighbor Advisory Committee Program Director, Stasia Monteiro, who organizes residents and holds monthly community meetings.

Also important was the Providence Center’s Community Organizer, Charito Morales, whose youth development program there provides one of the area’s few outlets for young people. Additionally impactful was Cramp School’s Principal, Deanda Logan, and her cultivation of over 50 partnerships to serve her student’s needs. This laid the groundwork for opening the school to the community, working with outside community organizations, as well as collaborating with parents and community members. Also, to a smaller degree, the school conducted a needs assessment and organized a committee with parents and community members through the community school program. These provided some of the insights and parent contacts that would go on to be utilized by the Mural Arts project.”

Top Right:
Uprooted/reRooted in process, April 21, 2018.
Photo by Steve Weinek.

Bottom Right:
Uprooted/reRooted dedication at Cramp Elementary School, October 23, 2019. Photo by Michael Reali.

Following Pages, p. 16 and p. 17

Left:
Dr. Luz Ruiz with her student during north courtyard transformation, April 21, 2018. Photo by Steve Weinek.

Top Right:
Uprooted/reRooted © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.

Bottom Right:
North courtyard transformation, June 2017.
Photo by Marion Wilson.



“

This project represents a space of creative learning, where students, families, teachers, and other community members gather to make connections between family traditions, growing food, and an appreciation for nature. It is a great learning space with many opportunities to teach ecological literacy.”

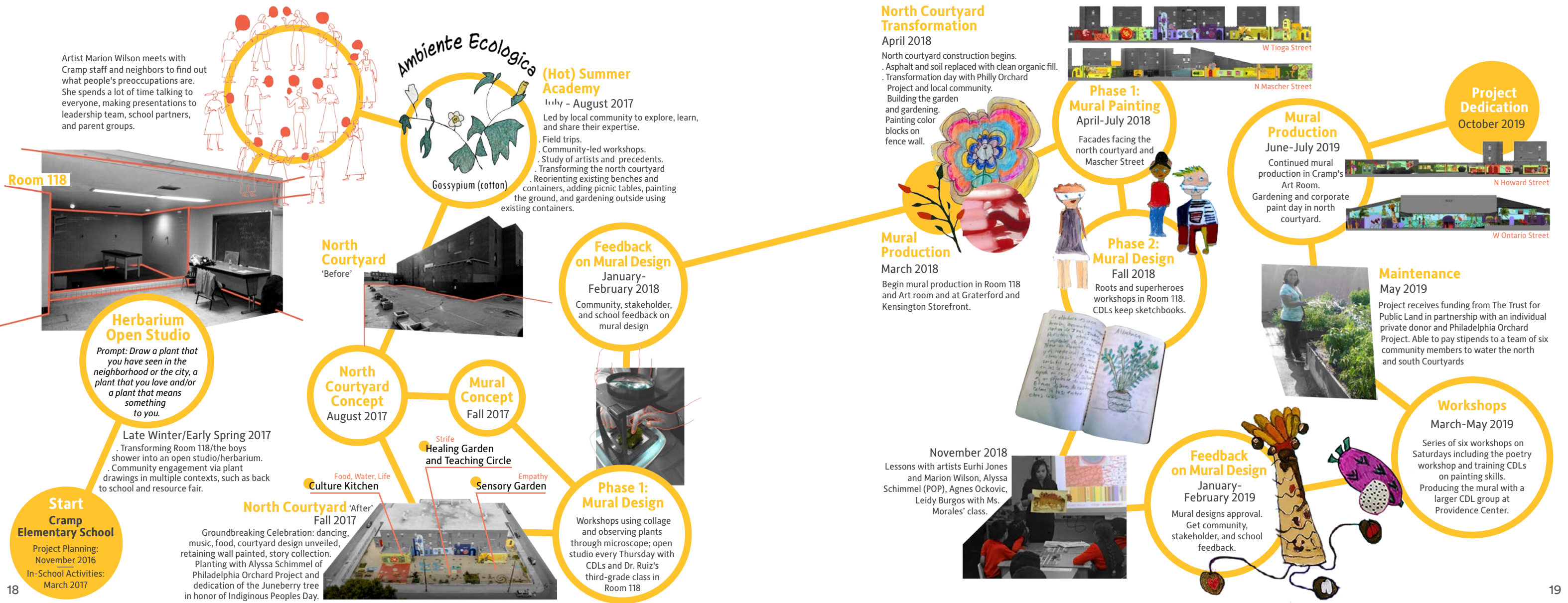
Dr. Ruiz



Project Timeline



Top Left: Mural detail, sunflower life cycle. Uprooted/reRooted © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.





Community Design Leaders during Summer Academy. Pictured (L to R): Delma Rodriguez, Agnes Ockovic, Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Delia Colon. Ambiente Ecologica Summer Academy, August 2017. Photo by Marion Wilson.

“

This project was creating something without words, something that speaks to all people. Gardening is a language of its own, and we all see it differently, experience it differently. Some never experienced a garden at all. I wanted to take our project and show the neighborhood that there can be beauty, healing, and substance even in the darkest places. That there is hope for neighborhoods that need the beauty, healing, and unity that a garden can bring to all walks of life.”

Leidy Burgos



Top Left:
Herbarium drawing "Sunflower" with Dr. Ruiz's third-grade class. Ink and fabric on rice paper.

Bottom Right:
Uprooted/reRooted © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.

Glossary of Artistic Process

Collective Authorship: Creativity is a communal rather than an individual endeavor, group ownership of the artwork is prioritized, and creative actions arise from the synergy of the group.

Community Capacity Building: To use the project as a regenerative ingredient, "to recognize, build on and work to maximize the local area assets [and expertise] of individuals, families, organizations, and others to share and nurture an improved quality of life within that local area."⁴ To deploy the resources sustaining the project for maximum benefit of local social and economic capital.

Community Expertise: Recognition that local residents possess skills, treasures of their own and familial experience, and the most accurate knowledge of their neighborhood's features and realities. Local residents are best positioned to be decision-makers with the experience to identify assets, foresee challenges, and devise workable solutions within their own community.

Community Hub: A physical location dedicated to creative projects and interactions, where community members can consistently experience a meeting of minds and a mutual outlet for their creativity for community benefit. The site becomes what Ray Oldenburg defines as a Third Place, separate

from home or workplace, where people gather to imagine, socialize, and discuss, fostering the core of civic engagement.⁵

Community Design Leader: A member of the community serving as a paid citizen designer, exercising the power to transform their community and themselves, while gaining lifelong design and leadership skills.⁶ Community Design Leaders generate collective, mutually beneficial change aligned with their own priorities and expertise. Hired at the onset of the design process, they play an essential role in co-producing all phases of the project, participating intimately in generating and developing concepts and designs, building, making, painting, and conducting evaluation.

Complicating a Topic: Using a variety of perspectives to deepen people's understanding of the contexts, forces, and systems behind current conditions.

Creative Interventions: Temporary art practices or installations that interrupt mindsets and provoke shifts in perspective. These can include gameplay; activities including drawing, writing poetry and storytelling; and small-scale public artworks that require a second look. Art interventions address situations outside the art world to effect positive change.

Environmental Justice: A global recognition that environmental destruction is racialized, harming people of color and underdeveloped nations far in excess of white, middle-class peoples;

and an agreement that those most harmed by environmental racism be in charge of designing the remediation and restitution. First identified by the United Church of Christ's report "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States" in 1987, drafted and adopted in 1991 at the National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, and put forward in the "Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing" in 1996 (<https://www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf>).⁷

Grassroots, Collaborative Research: Using site analysis and evaluation, guided observations, and artist study and drawing, project participants gather information and perspectives to inform project design. Involves participants in conceptualizing, negotiating, designing, and testing solutions to collective problems.

Horizontal Collaboration: Creating structures and processes that subvert power hierarchies to access the intelligence and creativity in the room in a relational network for mutual benefit. This horizontal power structure extends to the agencies and organizations partnering in the project, encompassing the entire team, not just the immediate participants, artists, and designers.

Shared Knowledge Base: A body of information generated and exchanged by participants that informs and provides meaning to a project, drawing on a wider context and providing visual and semantic cohesion to the project as a whole.

Friendships and Relational Networks: The network of close, authentic relationships and friendships that arise between participants through sharing life experiences past and present, and taking time for extended conversations, enjoying meals, and relaxing together. Relational networks are the key element in re-knitting social fabric constantly torn by violent and oppressive social policies and realities. This connects to the ethics of caring that forms the foundation of Restored Spaces' work. Principal Deanda Logan stated, "The beauty of the building translates into people's hearts and there's more kindness and caring and warmth and we're very, very grateful for that."

Site Selection: Restored Spaces uses a complex overlay of environmental, economic, political, and social criteria to identify potential sites for its projects. This rubric involves the existence of environmental and economic harms at the site, centers the needs of communities over the political or administrative expediency of a potential choice, and prioritizes communities that have articulated goals for change and have invited Restored Spaces to take part in their urban transformation.

7 Palmer, Bryan. "The History of Environmental Justice in Five Minutes." *Natural Resources Defense Council*. <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/history-environmental-justice-five-minutes>.



4 Price-Spratan, Townsend and Goldsby, William. *Reconstructing Rage: Transformative Reentry in the Era of Mass Incarceration*. New York City, Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. 2012.

5 No author listed. Trust for Public Places, "Ray Oldenburg." <https://www.pps.org/article/roldenburg>.

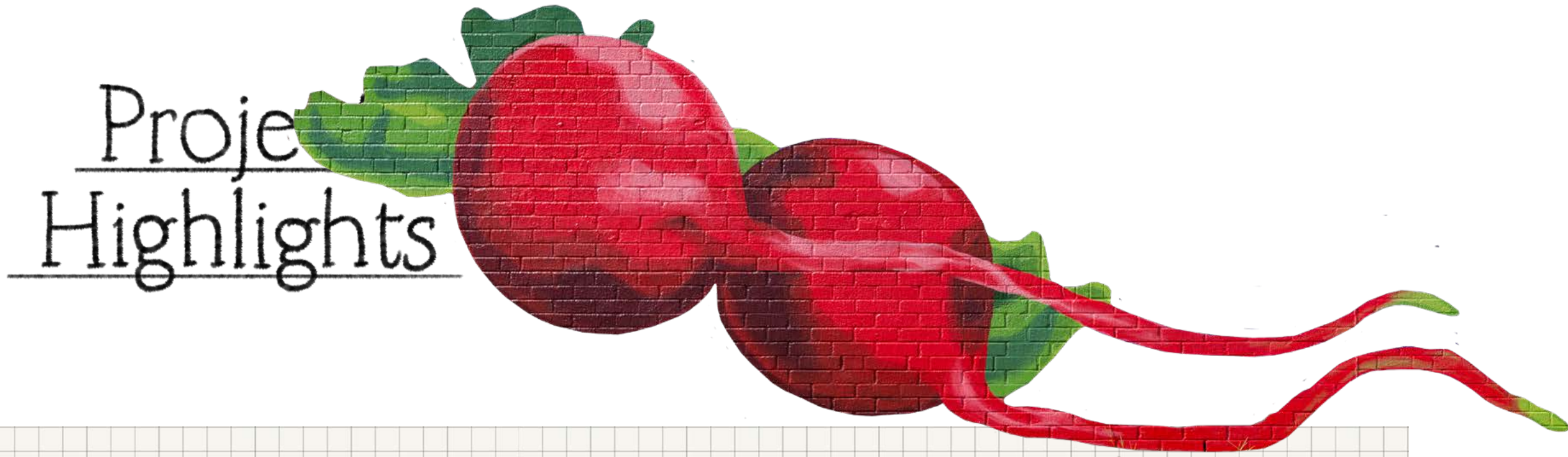
6 Harvey, David. "The Right to the City." *New Left Review*. #53, September–October 2008 <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii53/articles/david-harvey-the-right-to-the-city>.



Planting The Spiral.
Photo by Marion Wilson.

“Through projects, we share knowledge and collectively learn to practice and build a more just future. We become practitioners of change as we redress environmental issues.”

Shari Hersh



01

**Creating a Shared
Knowledge Base
and Drawing as
Literature of a Place**

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02

**Centering
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and Knowle
*Conocimier***

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03

**Horizontal
Collaboration and
Making Together**

- p. 56

Top Left:
Mural detail, beets. *Uprooted/reRooted* © City of
Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos,
Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic,
Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community
members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North
Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.



1. Shared Knowledge Base and Drawing as Literature of a Place

Uprooted/reRooted focuses on experiences of emigration and immigration, and relationship with and study of plants as a metaphor and defining cultural practice. In addition to the use of plants in traditional cuisine and medicines, plants provide a way to find and build belonging, connect in a new land while maintaining ties to the old, and tend to the tension that persists in inhabiting two worlds. The Cramp School chose migration as the project's point of departure; this formative life experience served as a basis for shared knowledge and perspectives from the outset. Wilson, who for a decade has been building non-hierarchical collaborations through drawing, designing, and gardening, began *Uprooted/reRooted* with a school and community plant herbarium. On treated rice paper, students and family were invited to draw local or familiar plants, vegetables, or trees. This was a way to build ecological literacy through plant identification and also to build a collective portfolio of drawings. Wilson comments that drawing is so often a private, individual practice; she was interested in making drawing a public, shared activity that could become a non-verbal, common language for the project. She held open studio sessions each week at the "hub space" in a repurposed

boy's locker room, and welcomed the community to attend drawing workshops and seed-starting activities there. The group evolved to include regular adult attendees who became the Community Leadership and Design Team, whose members were later termed **Community Design Leaders**, or CDLs, a group of dedicated parents and community members who midwived the project as a whole.

The project was augmented to include the team's vision to include greening of the north courtyard. Restored Spaces hired CDLs to help bring this plan to fruition, honoring the **local expertise** that emerges from daily, lived knowledge of place and from shared formative experiences as equal to that arising from professional training. CDLs have an equal say on important decisions with artists, designers, and other project staff. Paying participants for their contributions dignifies their time, energy, expertise, and creative intelligence, and channels vital financial resources into the community.

Marion Wilson and the CDLs organized a summer academy, titled *Ambiente Ecologica*, to serve as the incubator for the courtyard project design and to further draw out and share community expertise. *Ambiente Ecologica* took place outside in the north courtyard in the broiling sun, and attendees braved the heat to facilitate workshops to share their skill sets and take part in the creative process of transforming that forbidding space. Participants led workshops on their areas of interest and expertise, including traditional cuisine of Puerto Rico and herbal remedies. Wilson remembers, "It was pretty rugged, like urban courtyard camping or something. But it was important to inhabit that space the same way that teachers and students were currently



Top Left:
Original collage on the north courtyard by Lillian Fontanez and her granddaughter.

Top Right:
Mural production in Room 110. Pictured (L to R): Marie Roman and Eurhi Jones. Photo by Marion Wilson.

Bottom Right:
Original artwork by Marion Wilson. The 12-year herbarium. Photo by David Broda.



“

I used the dictum in collaborative projects that ‘everyone does everything’ - a strategy learned from Doug Ashford of Group Material.

The image of what we called ‘the pizza’ was revelatory for me. Normally murals are designed by a lead artist and then community members paint the lead artist’s design. It was a profound experience for me (a painter with 20 years’ experience) to re-paint the drawing of a third grader - to channel his thinking, his mark-making, and sense of color as I was making it large. It was a complete democratizing experience and to me is the underlying strength of the mural. We all arrived with sensibilities and skills that we traded and shared throughout.”

Marion Wilson

experiencing it during the school year. With architectural trace paper, I gave out site plans of the courtyard and collectively we drew dozens of designs before we came up with the three themed gardens. ...Drawing as well as sharing food together and just sitting together and being in that space became a language that we could share and collect around.” Some of the plants in the herbarium were chosen to populate the gardens, and served as the specimens for Dr. Ruiz’s third-grade classroom to learn about plants and horticulture.

Wilson intentionally introduced CDLs and participants to the work of a wider circle of artists during *Ambiente Ecologica* in 2017. CDLs and Cramp parents, many of Puerto Rican birth and descent as well as from all over Latin America, studied contemporary Latin American artists, contemplating how their work explores social and political themes relevant to the community. This research awakened participants to the complex and profound ways that prior artists have grappled with issues of identity and social justice, expanding participants’ visual and conceptual vocabularies. She writes, “Through the billboards and candy stacks of Felix Gonzalez Torres we discussed collective loss and empathy; and through Doris Salcedo’s work we came to understand how a space of seeming absence could be reimagined as a place with presence. Through conversations about these artists’ images we developed the themes of strife, domestic violence, food abundance, empathy, and play.” Doris Salcedo later had the opportunity to visit the Cramp site and witness the project that her work in part inspired. *Ambiente Ecologica* took many field trips over the course of the summer, visiting the Underground Railroad Gardens, the gardens at Fairhill Cemetery, local arboretums, as well as other orchards and gardens in the vicinity,

to gather ideas and learn about local greenspace design. Field trips provided another opportunity for the team to share unstructured time, get to know one another, and develop trust and connection.

This period of workshops, reading, observation, drawing, and discussing became the core of the project’s shared knowledge base from which to work together on the project’s visual and conceptual design, underpinning the project’s cohesion. Shared knowledge arose from informal discussions centered on non-privileged bodies of knowledge and experiences of deep concern, value, and power to participants. The New Alphabet School upholds “forms of knowledge production that stem from anecdote, informality and collectivity, in contrast to increasingly marketised formal educational systems.”⁸ The informal discussions during *Ambiente Ecologica* included reflection on cultural and social traumas of colonialism and encounters with mainland USA racism, helping form relationships of trust and solidarity among the participants that moved the project toward a deeper territory of reference.

The school and schoolyard of Cramp Elementary became a **Community Hub** for the project, where students, teachers, artists, and community members met to conduct research, reflect, discuss, draw, write poetry, plan and design, plant and harvest, share meals and recipes, and form friendships. The site became a Ray Oldenburg-style Third Place (see glossary).

⁸ From “Caring.” Conversation by Helena Reckitt and Elke Krasny, part of New Alphabet School virtual event June 2020.

Left:
Pictured (L to R): Leidy Burgos, Marion Wilson, Agnes Ockovic.

Bottom Right:
Mural study for south wall.

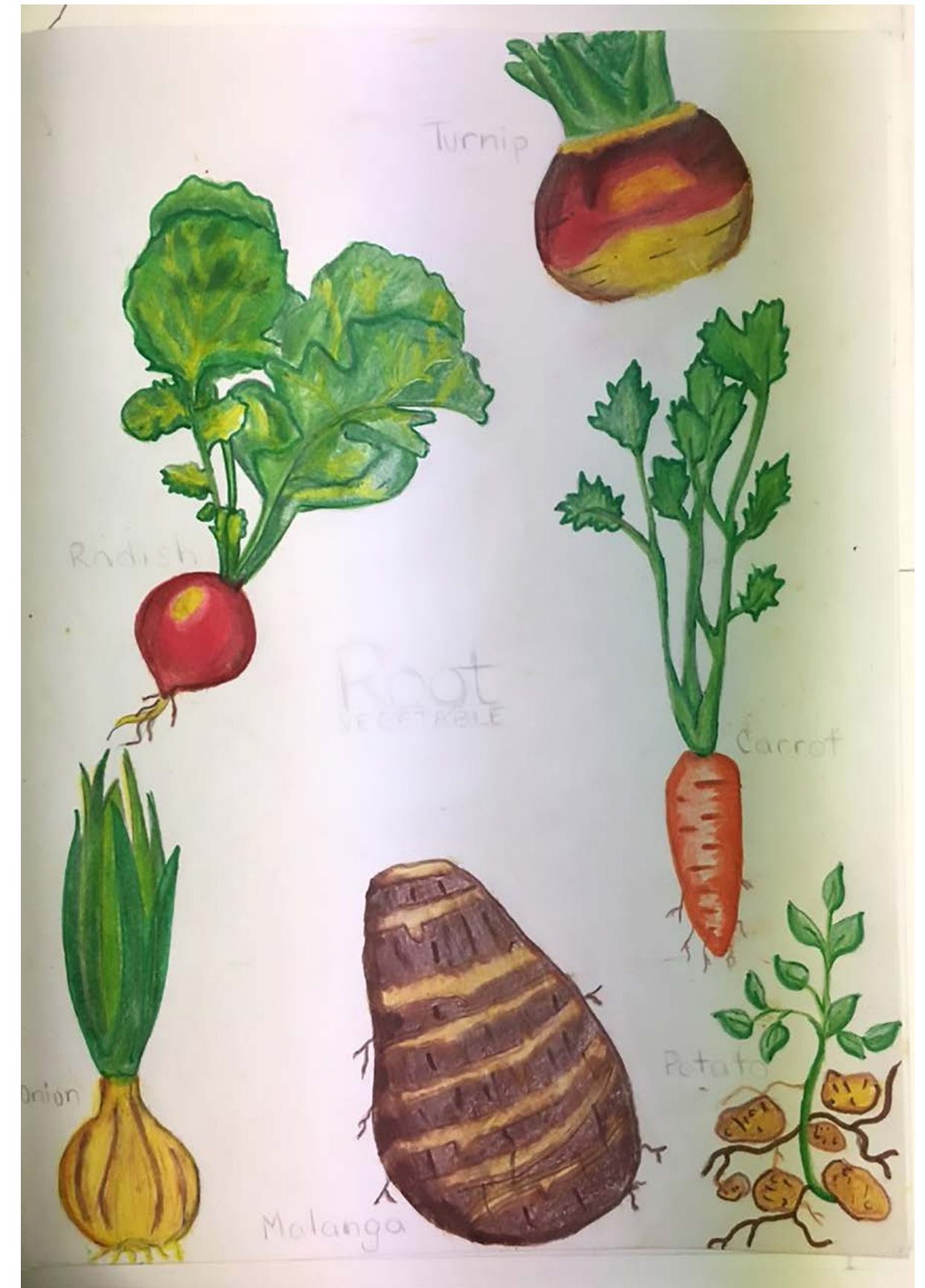




Studies for the north courtyard. Original artwork by Marion Wilson.



Original design of north courtyard by Agnes Ockovic.



A page from Leidy Burgos' sketchbook.

This Third Place filled a profound need; one participant shared that before the project commenced, she had felt “encerrado” (imprisoned) in her home. The team did extensive outreach to their community, tabling at events to invite people to participate in *Ambiente Ecologica*, attending design workshops, and participating in other smaller events of shorter duration, to offer a wide range of opportunities for the community to develop personal connections via the project. *Ambiente Ecologica* also provided occasions for participants to teach classes on topics of personal significance. Taking leadership in this way validated participants’ knowledge and expertise, disrupting the internalized oppression related to class and ethnicity that can interfere with people’s self-concept and capacity to challenge unjust social structures. The slow development of the project allowed for participants to grow into their roles, and develop the strong, lasting relationships with each other and Wilson that supported the magnitude of the project they were undertaking.

Ambiente Ecologica helped CDLs locate their project in a larger context of Latin American artwork focused on liberated expression and social justice. Wilson spoke of bringing “more artists into the room.” Ockovic reflected, “Me dio mucha oportunidad de sacar de mí ...y desarrollar... el arte que yo tenía escondido.” (It gave me a lot of opportunity to unpack and develop the art that I had hidden inside of me.) CDLs documented their learning through notes and drawings kept in project sketchbooks. Agnes Ockovic’s sketchbook became a crucial tool for documenting both the progress of the project, her heritage recipes, and her own inner unfolding. The sketchbooks formed

an ongoing, multi-lensed record of the project’s progress, an archive of drawings by CDLs, students, community members, and artists which became part of the literature of place and the shared knowledge base of the project.

As project participants progressed from drawing botanicals to growing live plants to researching and leading *Ambiente Ecologica*, from designing to constructing the green space and gardens in the schoolyard, from designing to helping paint the four aspects of the wraparound mural for the school building, successive phases of the project have provided rich material for a plant science curriculum co-designed and implemented with Philadelphia Orchard Project by the school’s former third-grade teacher, Dr. Luz Ruiz. She reflects, “The project represents a space of creative learning, where students, families, teachers, and other community members gathered to make connections between family traditions, growing food, and an appreciation for nature. ... It’s a great learning space with many opportunities to teach ecological literacy.”

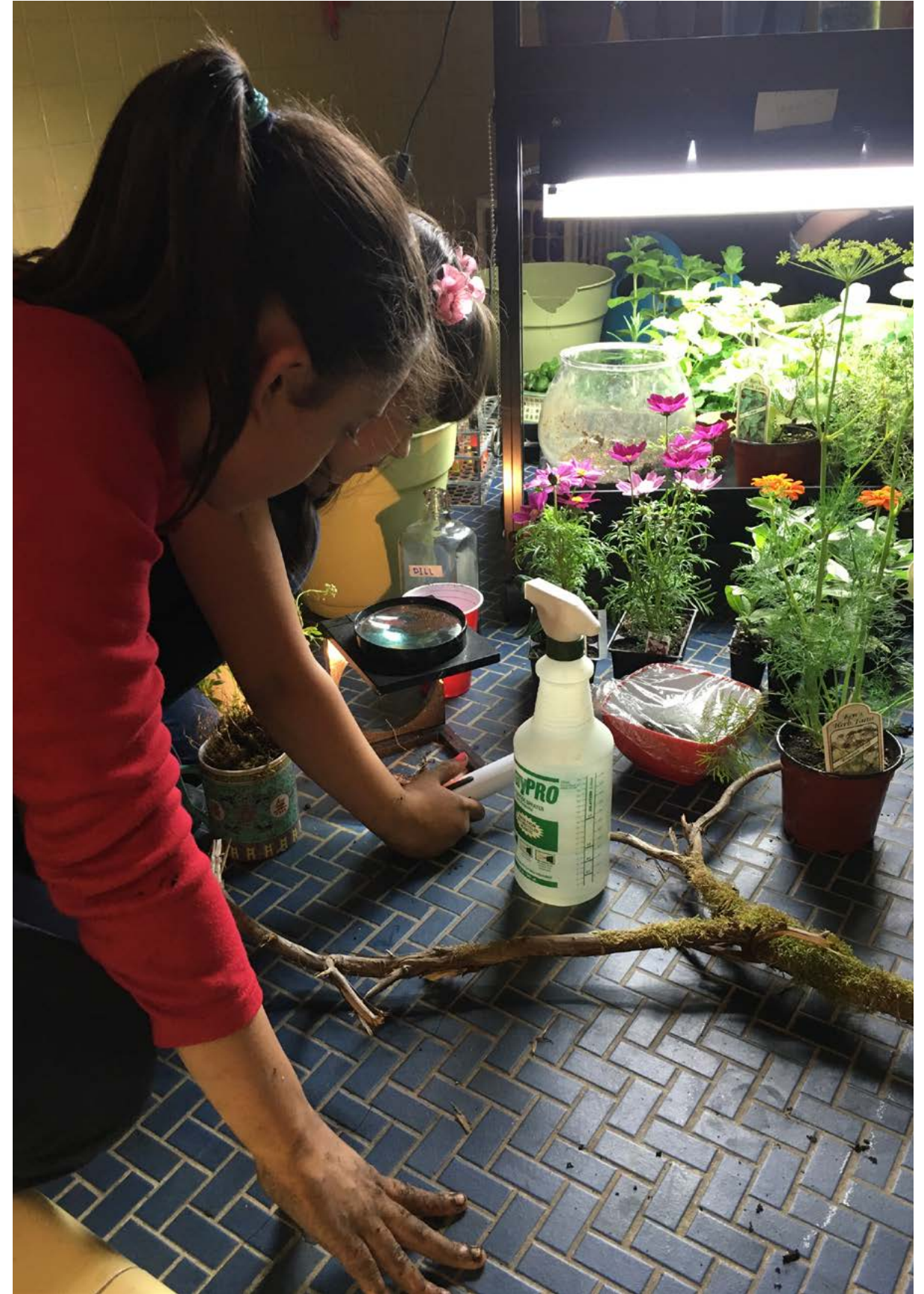
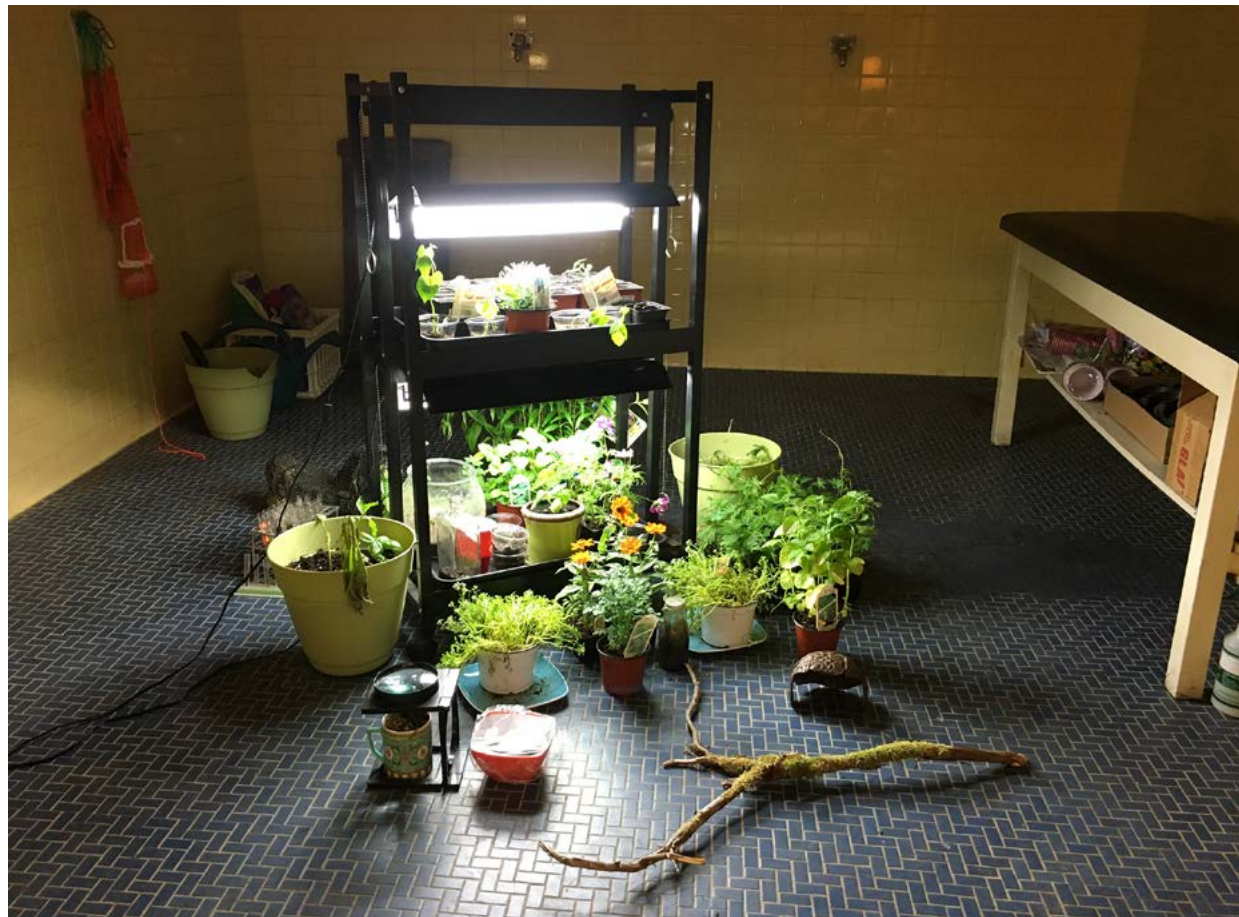
Team members also worked with Eurhi Jones, Marion Wilson, and classrooms of students to develop the design and motifs for the murals, creating imagery inspired by source materials including contemporary Latin American art; botanical drawings and photographs of plants, flowers and seeds; and the children’s and community’s own live and microscope observations. Jones, an experienced muralist with a sophisticated sense of color, practices deep listening to issues of social justice and climate change to develop connections and relationships with participants. She

is a member of Sustaining All Life, an international climate change project devoted to transformational listening activities that help activist organizations work together better through sharing their stories, developing strong relationships both internally and externally, and addressing racism, classism, and oppression. Initially, Jones painted murals “to bring nature to the cities,” which led her to think more directly about climate change. She has since become a climate artist interested in the interdependence of the food chain, and uses her mural practice as an element of her work as a climate activist. Decades of experience with murals enabled her to pull together the multiplicity of participants’ drawing languages and make them into coherent elements

of the *Uprooted/reRooted* murals, organizing them conceptually, and sensitively integrating participant and student designs. Being a mother herself, Jones found commonality with the many other mothers participating in the project; her extensive relationships with project participants allowed her to find exactly the drawing or text she needed to complete the mural designs. Her technical expertise resolved the many challenges of the site, including enormous walls with almost no windows, and layers upon layers of brown paint that had been used to cover graffiti over the years. Perhaps most importantly, she was able to subsume her own sensibility to achieve the shared vision of the whole, a critical skill in service to collective authorship.



Bottom Right and Following Pages,
p. 36 and p. 37:
Field trip to Room 118 artist residency studio.
Photo by Marion Wilson.

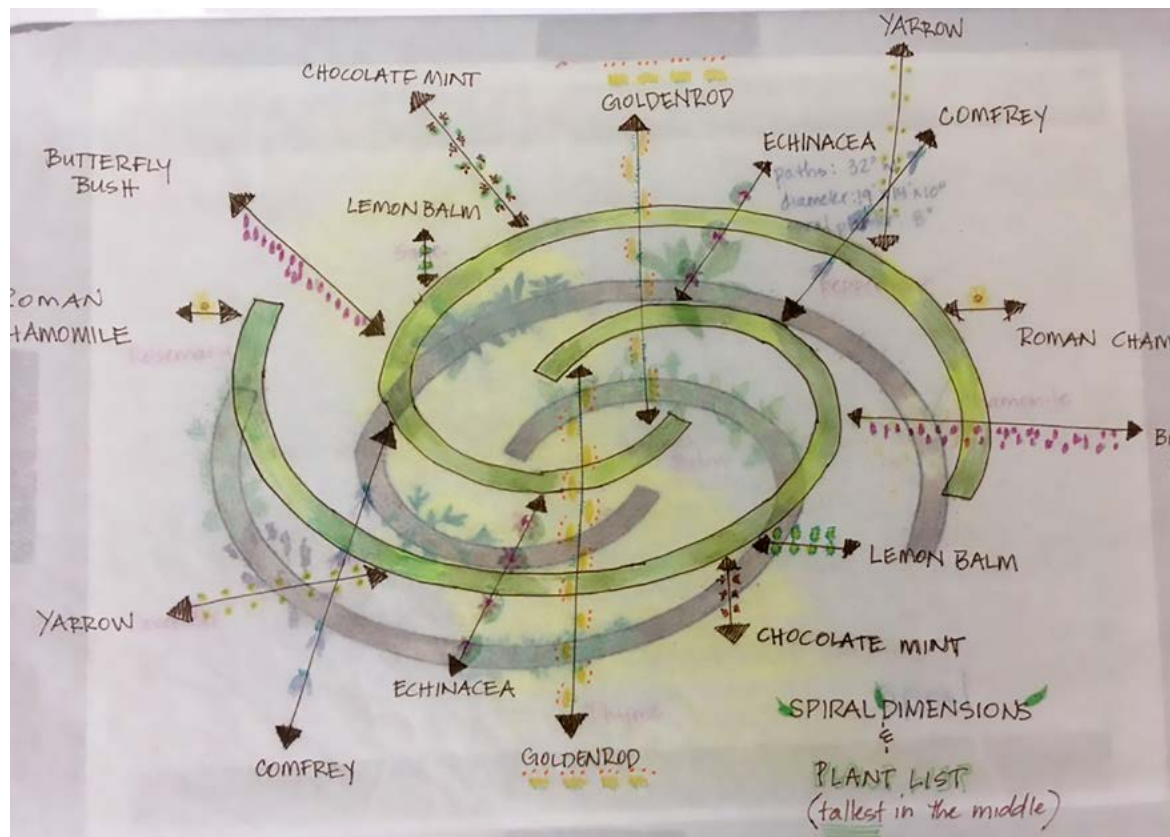




Summer Academy, August 2018. Photo by Marion Wilson.



Original artwork by Lillian Fontanez.



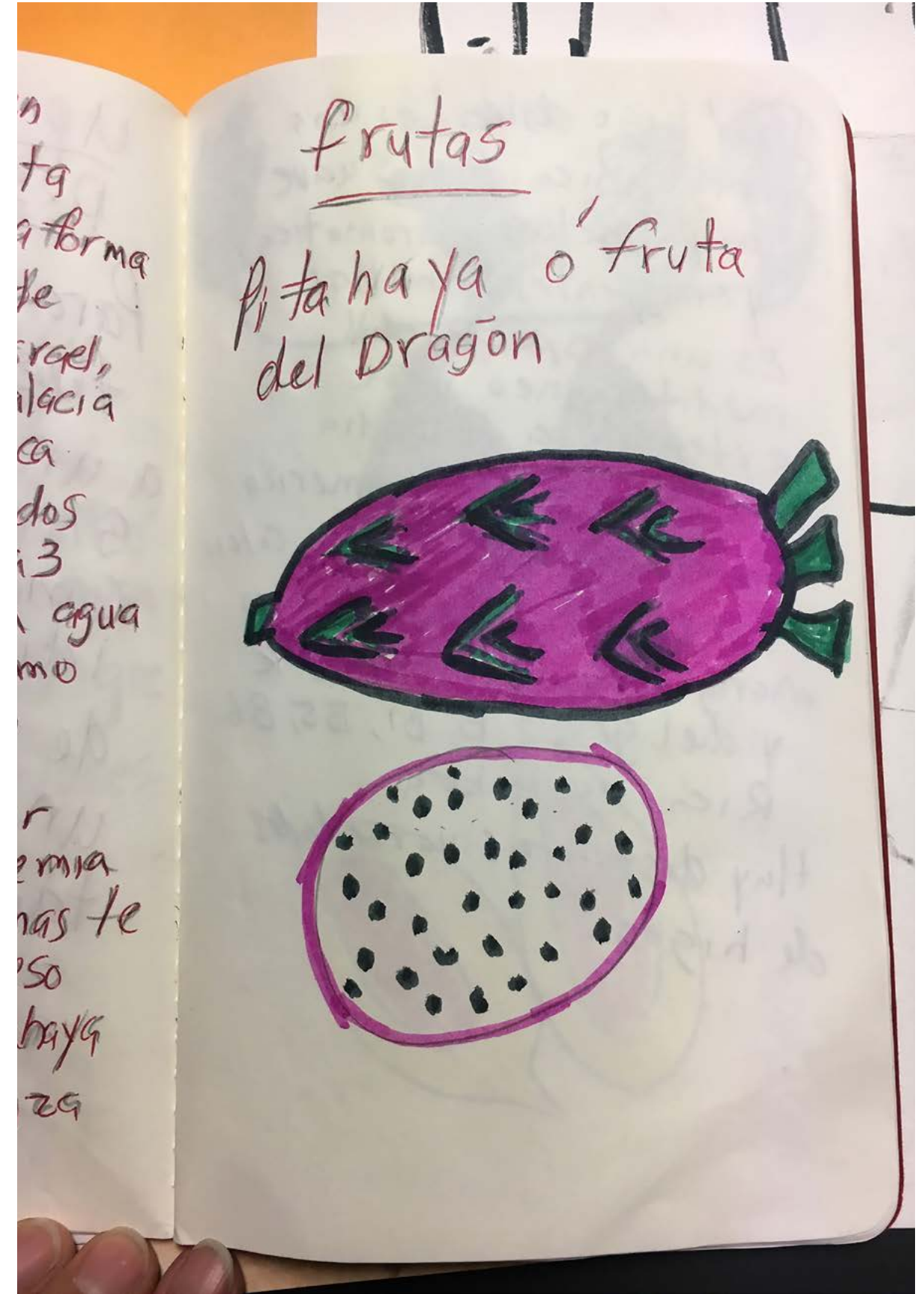
Design and planting scheme of the Spiral in the north courtyard by Marion Wilson.



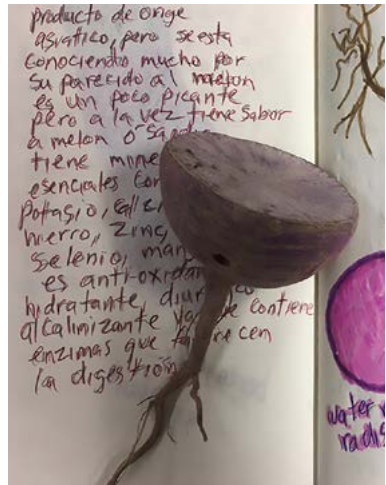
Uprooted/reRooted in process, June 21, 2019. Photo by Steve Weinik.



Drawing workshop at Cramp's resource fair.
Photo by Marion Wilson.



A page from Agnes Ockovic's sketchbook.



Top Left:
A page from Agnes Ockovic's sketchbook.

Right:
Ambiente Ecologica Summer Academy, July 2017.

Following Pages, p. 44 and p. 45

Top Left:
Summer Academy. Photo by Marion Wilson.

Bottom Left:
Fall harvest from the north courtyard in Room 118. Photo by Marion Wilson.

Bottom Right:
Collage of the seating with planters for north courtyard by Leidy Burgos.

2. Center Local Experiences and Knowledges/Conocimientos

Like the Slow Food movement, *Uprooted/reRooted* advances the values of Slow Art, devoting extensive time to developing the relationships of care and concern that have given rise to a deeply cohesive project design and development process. Wilson has cultivated community stewardship and ecological learning while favoring non-dominant bodies of knowledge alongside academic pursuits, land-based cultures over consumerism, and collective authorship over individual artistic expression.

The Team connected *Uprooted/reRooted* with the school's chosen theme of migration, using plants and art to talk about the processes of uprooting and rerooting that accompany displacement. They invited community members from the surrounding neighborhood to join the project and share their knowledge and skills, to take part in the Ambiente Ecologica workshops, and to design and facilitate workshops with students at William Cramp Elementary about their *conocimientos* (traditional wisdom) concerning herbs and traditional healing. The word *conocimiento* contains a profound history and pedagogy in the Americas, reaffirming the earth-based cultural knowledge and resulting political

perspectives of colonized people in the face of colonizing world views seeking to erase that knowledge and awareness. To experience being taught in class by a person of one's own ethnicity and in one's own primary language, about cultural wealth belonging to one's own heritage, is hugely validating for first and second generation immigrant students.

During Ambiente Ecologica, participants researched and envisioned the development and design of *Uprooted/reRooted*. They explored concepts relating to migration and displacement, identifying the relevant themes of empathy, healing, strife, and culture, especially in relation to food and agriculture. These themes became the basis for the designs of the three zones in the north courtyard (Culture Kitchen, Healing Garden and Teaching Circle, and Sensory Garden) and the murals for the four facades of the school. Participants also grew a garden containing some of the plants included in the herbarium. The three primary CDLs drew on their individual areas of interest and expertise to devise the designs and meanings of the three contiguous gardens. The Culture Kitchen, brainchild of CDL Agnes Ockovic, holds the raised beds where ingredients for *sofrito* are grown, and embodies the values of Food, Water, and Life. The Healing Garden and Teaching Circle addresses the theme of Strife. Its raised beds contain calming and soothing herbs like lavender, thyme, and calendula, embraced by a semicircle of benches lending to contemplation and learning, as envisioned by Leidy Burgos, who shared trauma healing modalities with the project. The Sensory Garden, designed to appeal to the youngest students at the school with an array of pleasurable colors, flavors, and scents, embodies the theme of Empathy. Situated right





outside the Head Start classroom, it was masterminded by CDL Lillian Fontanez, who was inspired by her grandchildren and her love of all children to create a playful, sensory environment, including raspberry and blueberry bushes, and a walking spiral. Burgos comments, “This project was creating something without words, something that speaks to all people. Gardening is a language of its own, and we all see it differently, experience it differently. Some never experienced a garden at all. I wanted to take our project and show the neighborhood that there can be beauty, healing and substance even in the darkest places. That there is hope for neighborhoods that need the beauty, healing and unity that a garden can bring to all walks of life.” Ockovic describes her experience of *Uprooted/reRooted* in these words:

“... algo lleno de amor, porque al principio esto era como un desierto cementerio... Y pues el amor que yo le tengo a la siembra y al ver la producción de lo que uno siembra. Por eso me llamó muchísimo la atención, porque cuando sabe que hace las cosas con amor, todo florece.” (see sidebar for translation)

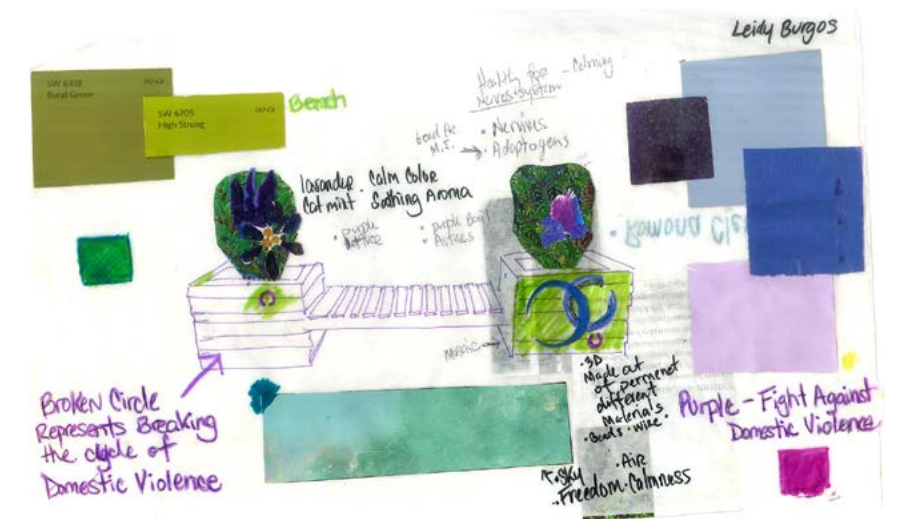
She speaks with pride of the praise offered by neighbors and visitors. The colorful beauty of the prize-winning gardens tended by volunteers have added so much to the school and the neighborhood. She describes the Red Garden as a site of cultural transmission and preservation:

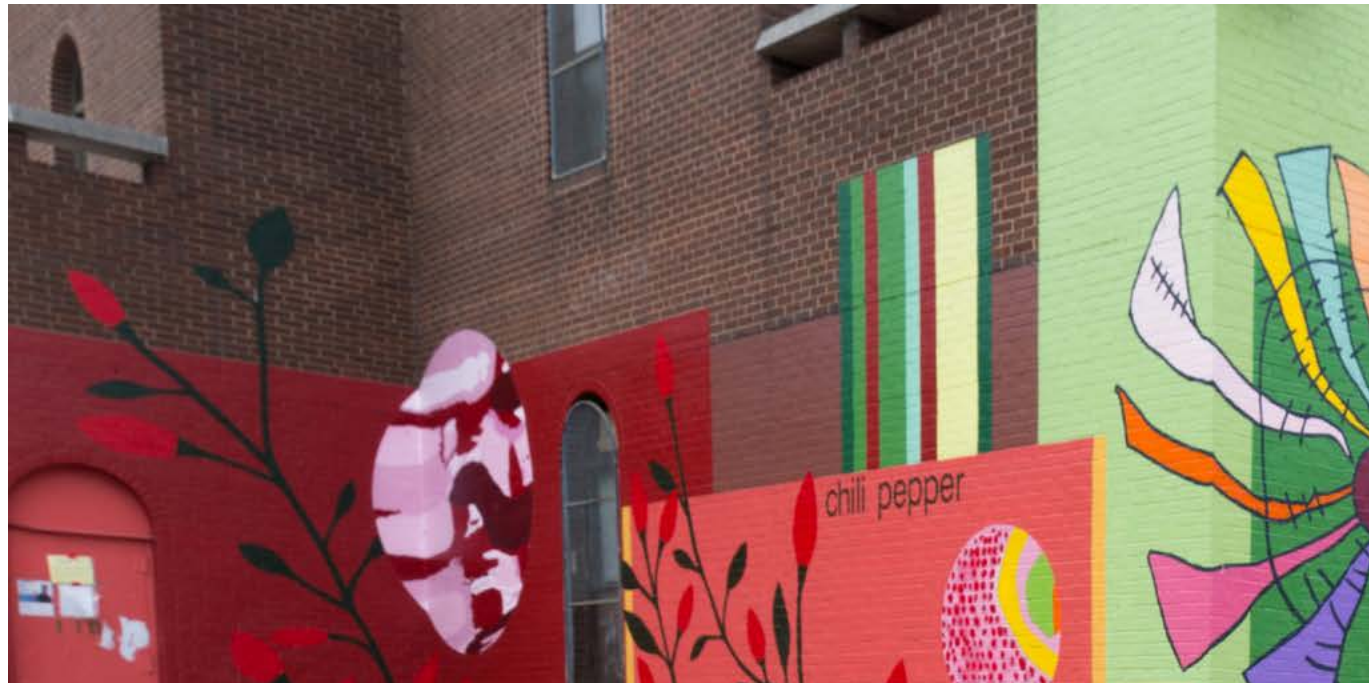
“Invitábamos a personas que querían sembrar ciertas cosas, pero mucha gente no sabe mucho de plantas... Entonces yo me decidí a atender el jardín sembrando lo básico para hacer sofrito y sembrar otras plantas que me gustaban... Entonces yo iba mayormente a regar en las tardes y venían los padres a buscar a los niños de la escuela. Ellos me veían y me preguntaban. ‘Mire, para qué esta planta y para qué sirve?’ Y yo les explicaba y daba recetas para preparar ciertas comidas. Por ejemplo con la albahaca, que abunda mucho en el patio, se puede preparar pesto. Yo le decía de cada planta que tenía su uso y yo quedé muy satisfecha porque muchos de estos padres son jóvenes y no sabían de para qué servían estas plantas... Le decía yo, cada cosa que yo tenía de mi conocimiento.” (see sidebar for translation)

Eliciting and centering marginalized bodies of knowledge like Agnes’s herbalism and gardening, or like the disciplines of sketching and writing outside of academic settings, is a critical element of creating truly **horizontal collaboration**.

“...something full of love, because at the beginning it was all like a deserted cemetery... And then the love that I have for sowing and to see the produce of what one sowed. For that reason the project really drew my attention, because when you know you’re doing things with love, everything flowers.”

“We called people to ask if they wanted to plant certain things, but many knew nothing about that... So I decided to serve in the garden planting the basic ingredients of sofrito... [Later] I used to go to water mostly in the afternoons, when parents were coming to pick up their children from school. They would see me and ask, “What is this plant for? And this one?” and I would give them recipes for what to make with basil, which was very abundant on the patio. Recipes like how to make fish. I would tell them the uses of each plant and I was astonished because many of those parents excused themselves, they were young and didn’t know the uses of the plants... Stomach aches, nausea, I know and I told them, everything I had in my traditional wisdom.”





Receta

Limón para transformación, a rebirth. Ajo for accent, onion for emoción, pimienta para color y intensidad. Albahaca brings back exquisite dishes and long lost amistades and makes a medicinal tea for colds and headaches. Recao closes cycles, parsley braces, salt balances. Rice signifies life, the purity of each one of us, unidos al raíz.

Cilantro! Beautiful plant! At my touch, sus ramitas delicadas sueltan esa deliciosa aroma that penetrates memorias de mi isla the palm tree that grew on the patio unnoticed under moon and sun. Her large body rooted, sole guardian of the afternoon, she dreamt alone, free in the wind, huntress of the clouds, always solitary and cool. Tamarindo, tu dulce paladar! En lo profundo de mi caldero all the ingredients wait for me to drop my yellowed leaves, close another cycle.



Left:
Uprooted/reRooted © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.

Top Right:
Drawing workshop in Cramp's Art Room. Pictured (L to R): Kathy Garcia-Soler, Katty Soler-prado, Mildred Gonzalez, Rosalene Isaac, Leidy Burgos, Agnes Ockovic, Delfina Jimenez, Mileika Flores Medina, and Mayra Rivera. Photo by Marion Wilson.

Bottom right:
Drawing workshop in Cramp's Art Room. Pictured Mildred Gonzalez and Jamie Dixon. Photo by Marion Wilson.

Delfina Jimenez watering the north courtyard. Photo by Agnes Ockovic.

Sensory Garden - Empathy

Seeds and Sprouts

Mural on school building facade facing N Mascher St



North Courtyard & mural on school building facade facing W Tioga St

Cellular View of Plants

Community Garden - Summary of Project

Roots and Flowers

Mural on school building facade facing W Ontario St

Healing Garden and Teaching Circle - Strife

Mural on school building facade facing N Howard St

Fruits and Vegetables

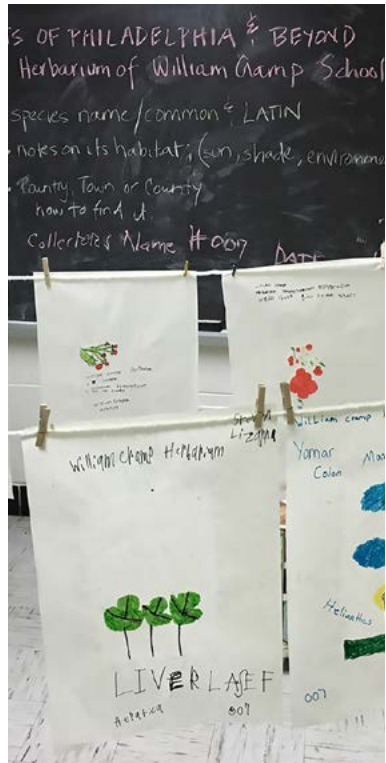
Culture Kitchen - Food, Water, Life

Uprooted/reRooted



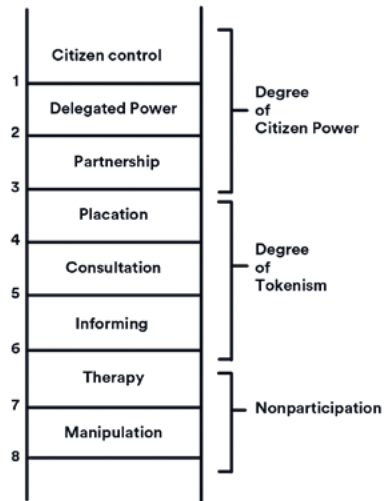


Pictured (L to R): William Reed, Jane Golden, Marion Wilson, Shari Hersh, Agnes Ockovic, Luz Ruiz, Lucy Velez, Doris Salcedo, Leidy Burgos.



3. Horizontal Collaboration and Making Together

Shari Hersh, Director of Restored Spaces Initiative, introduced horizontal collaboration to *Uprooted/reRooted* in reaction to the ways in which most public art projects are structured, upending systems of status and subverting power hierarchies to generate equity and make space for the intelligence and creativity of community members. She organizes projects that deconstruct dominant forms of artistic practice, using the Ladder of Citizen Participation developed by Sherrie R. Arnstein⁹ to critique the insufficient ways that participants are included in many public art projects. Hersh emphasizes the importance of making these distinctions about the kinds and degrees of participation. The projects she sponsors through the Restored Spaces Initiative achieve the Partnership level of Citizen Control in Arnstein's schema, in which participants do not merely provide content suggestions, or feedback on artists' drafts, but have decisive creative control through all phases of a project. The equity aspect of the project design included revising the structure of decision-making, and pushing against the challenges of paying participants for their expertise. Hersh possesses a deep motivation to change the status quo, using a model that is anti-capitalist and atypical of the



The diagram is based on the original 1969 illustration of Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation as it appeared in the Journal of the American Planning Association.

commonly-ascribed role of the artist as genius. She is deeply interested in exploring the conditions that allow for horizontal collaboration to take place so that communities have agency in designing their own projects in partnership with professional artists and designers, and teams of Restored Spaces practitioners.

Horizontal collaboration requires technical knowledge, fortitude, and experience, and signals to the whole cadre of participants that their voices and perspectives have equal weight and equal power. Hersh honors and treasures the practitioners she has found who possess these capacities, which are essential to undertaking horizontal collaboration. Without these, she states, "The obstacles cannot be surmounted."

Forms of "participatory art" can have an ameliorative approach to social problems that fail to engage their structural causes. Restored Spaces continues to explore how to position projects to create systemic change as well as local transformation, seeking a level of possibility within the process that leads to collective action. CDLs have contributed aesthetically and materially to the complete transformation of all four external facades of the school building with a botanical mural. They co-lead the design and fabrication processes for the entirety of their outdoor courtyard transformation: gardens, landscaping, and art. Their central role in conceiving and developing the project in collaboration with Wilson and Jones is one of the most salient features of *Uprooted/reRooted*, essential to creating horizontal collaborations and to achieving collective authorship, two of the project's priorities.

Charito Morales of the Providence Center observed, "The mural is so contextual and reflective of the community. Everyone identifies with it. It gives the youth and community a voice. ...The project broke the status quo. People no longer accept that it's normal to live in a litter-ridden neighborhood and stop living so hopeless. ...We need to have colors, we need to have flavors."

Uprooted/reRooted explored many preconceptions about creative control and authorship deeply rooted in Western culture. The project was profoundly collaborative, with ideas generated, evaluated, and brought to fruition by the group as a whole, not by a single individual. The work ethic that prioritizes efficiency and expediency through solo agency was questioned in the light of the project

goal to build multiple skills sets and capacities within participants and their community. Relinquishing individual authorship calls into doubt the ability to claim a personal body of work. All team members were well-versed in social practice and deeply concerned with issues of social and environmental justice. The project challenged all team members to evaluate their thoughts and feelings about creating a fully horizontal collaborative project in which no one voice predominated or claimed authorship.

In its second year, *Uprooted/reRooted* continued to facilitate community leadership of design and production processes and of shared ownership of the garden by the community and school. At an assessment at the end of the Fall

Top Left: Herbarium drawings in Room 118.

Bottom Right: *Uprooted/reRooted* in process April 21, 2018.



⁹ Originally published as Arnstein, Sherry R. "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," JAIP, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.



semester, CDLs and project staff determined that *Uprooted/reRooted* needed one dedicated space in which to complete the mural panels (painted in sections on parachute material.) Hersh suggested working with Charito Morales and her youth program at Providence Center, because of shared values and goals relating to interrupting oppressive hierarchies, and because of how committed the teens were at the first paint day. The team settled on the idea of one marathon, round-the-clock week of painting mural panels at Providence Center. A partnership invitation was extended to Morales and Providence Center to continue to build the relevance of the project in the wider community, and to strengthen relationships across organizations.

Poetry took on a leading role in the second phase of the project, as poet laureate of Philadelphia, Raquel Salas Rivera, led workshops exploring the theme of “roots” with both CDLs at Cramp and teens at Providence center. Hersh notes, “We prioritized poetry as a way into the roots theme and to expand the field of engaged parents and staff, to further underscore the community’s vision of itself.” The adults’ poems

served as source material for a collaborative poem, *Receta*, included in the mural overlooking the Culture Kitchen garden. The themes of uprooting and rerooting are emotionally palpable in the imagery of lost landscapes and beloved recipes embodied in participants’ writing.

Partnering with Providence Center cultivated the relationships and community investment which resulted in an extremely inclusive creative process, generating themes and artwork that resonated with the community. The well-attended poetry workshops resulted in a second wave of CDLs being hired and trained to complete the painting of the murals that were applied to the Cramp facade. Final painting sessions took place over the spring and summer of 2018, once school was released and the Cramp art classroom was available for this purpose. This team of CDLs comprised Jamie Dixon, Mileika Flores Medina, Kathy Garcia-Soler, Mildred Gonzalez, Rosalene Isaac, Delfina Jimenez, Mayra Rivera, Katty Soler-Prado, and Lucy Velez as well as original members Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, and Agnes Ockovic.

Top Left:
Lucy Velez painting a section of the mural in Room 110. Photo by Marion Wilson.

Bottom Left:
Uprooted/reRooted in process, April 21, 2018. Photo by Steve Weinik.

Bottom Right:
North courtyard transformation day, October 10, 2017. Photo by Steve Weinik.







Uprooted/reRooted in process,
June 21, 2019.
Photo by Steve Weinik.



Community Garden, Summary of Project
Cellular View of Plants
W Tioga Street Facade



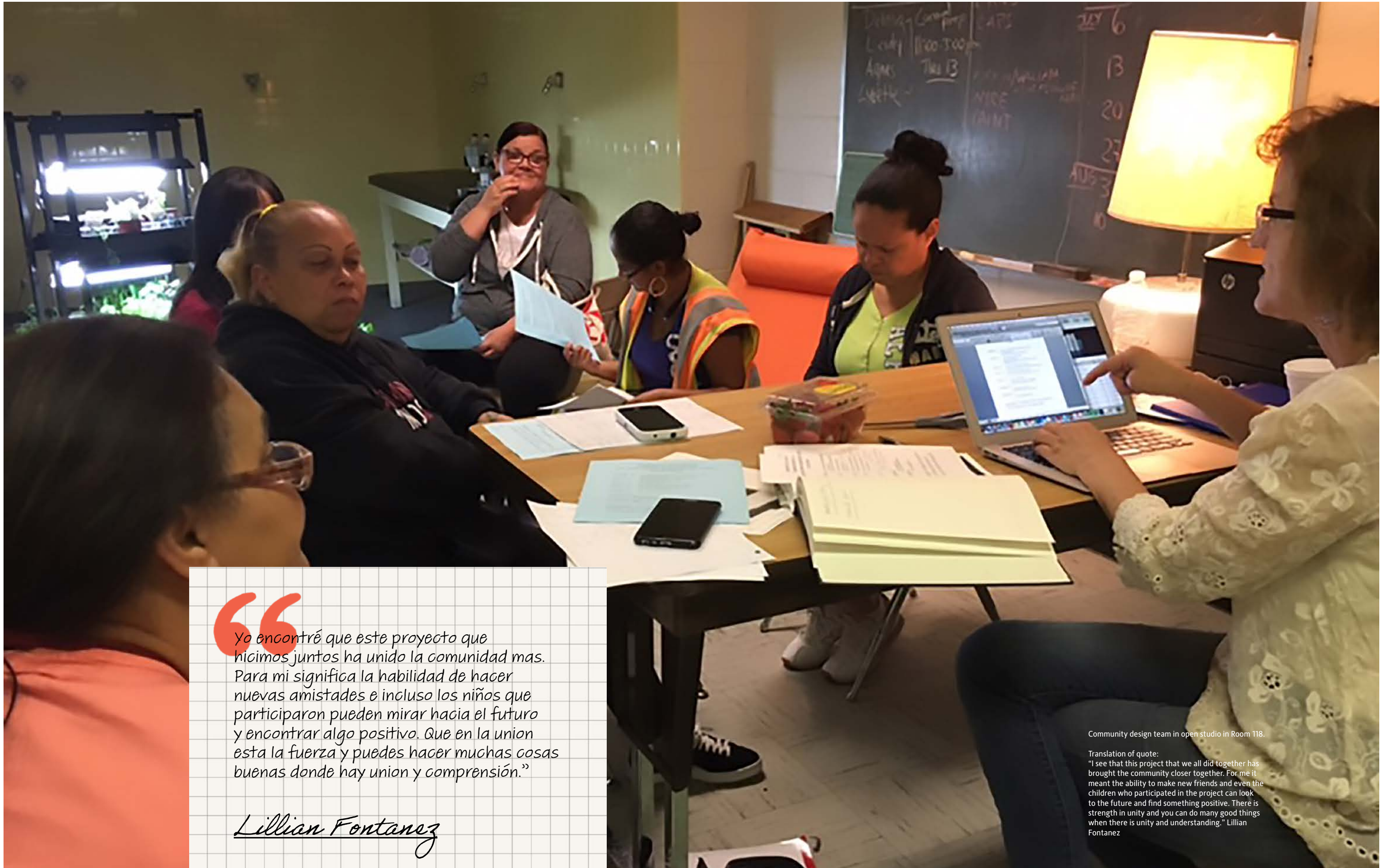
Sensory Garden - Empathy
Seeds and Sprouts
N Mascher Street Facade



Healing Garden & Teaching Circle - Strife
Roots and Flowers
W Ontario Street Facade

Culture Kitchen - Food, Water, Life
Fruits and Vegetables
N Howard Street Facade





“

Yo encontré que este proyecto que hicimos juntos ha unido la comunidad mas. Para mi significa la habilidad de hacer nuevas amistades e incluso los niños que participaron pueden mirar hacia el futuro y encontrar algo positivo. Que en la union esta la fuerza y puedes hacer muchas cosas buenas donde hay union y comprensión.”

Lillian Fontanez

Community design team in open studio in Room 118.

Translation of quote:
“I see that this project that we all did together has brought the community closer together. For me it meant the ability to make new friends and even the children who participated in the project can look to the future and find something positive. There is strength in unity and you can do many good things when there is unity and understanding.” Lillian Fontanez



Planting the Spiral in the north courtyard, April 21, 2018. Photo by Steve Weinik.



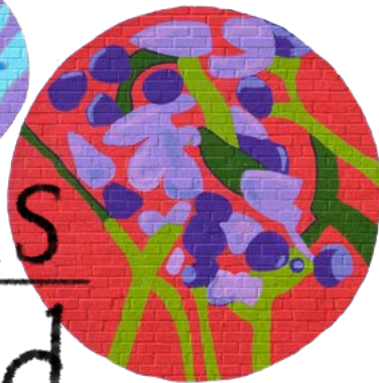
“

En el año 2017 me encontré en la escuela Cramp una reunión. Y cual sería mi razón para estar ahí. La razón era poner color y verdor a un lugar que estaba sombrío. Y si me dedique ya que era para darle alegría. Pintamos, plantamos, se nos lleno de alegría nuestros corazones y los de los demás. Hice mis amistades que las llevo en mi corazón porque ellos no se imaginan lo grandes que son para mi. Los guardaré en mi mente por siempre hasta que muera. Son parte de mi razón de la vida.”

Agnes Ockovic

Eating together. Pictured (L to R): Agnes Ockovic, Leidy and Joseph Burgos, Shari Hersh, Lucy Velez, Maria Roman, Michael Reali, Julius Ferraro. Photo by Marion Wilson.

Translation of quote:
“In 2017, I came across a meeting at Cramp School. That meeting became the reason for becoming part of the project. The reason was to add color and greenery to a place that was gloomy. And so I dedicated myself to giving the space some joy. We painted, we planted, and that filled my heart and those of others with a lot of joy. I made great friends that I carry in my heart and I will keep them in my mind forever. They are part of my reason for life.”
Agnes Ockovic



Lessons Learned

Uprooted/reRooted provided the opportunity to test the strategies contributing to horizontal collaboration and shared authorship. The project achieved a surprising degree of success and ensured authentic community ownership moving forward, but it was also a challenging journey with so many lessons learned:

- Prioritize friendship and neighboring as infrastructures of care. Eurhi Jones and Marion Wilson agreed that working as a community and being intentional about care and reciprocity was an integral component to ensuring mutual and collective growth. Furthermore, participants said that meeting regularly and intentionally made this growth possible.
- Horizontal collaboration resulting in shared authorship was an outcome acknowledged by all participants. It constitutes a foundational value for Restored Spaces that will be pursued in future projects. It remains an ongoing challenge and an aspiration in that it contradicts the long-standing hierarchies upon which our class society is structured.
- Creating a shared knowledge base, and centering traditional and informal knowledge, proved highly successful in creating desired outcomes. Expanding the shared knowledge base to include collective definitions of horizontal collaborative practices and shared authorship can help sustain these shared values and deepen the prioritization of these concepts and processes by the group.

- Teach-ins, discussions, and partnerships focused on environmental and social justice can contextualize and situate the project, expand the community's awareness of and alignment with the project's intent and structure, and scaffold future change efforts.
- Expand regular, larger-scale opportunities for reflection before, during, and after the project, that include awareness of the project's structure as well as its artistic process. Integrate evaluation and shared meaning-making into the entire arc of the project. Continuous outreach must be conducted to bring together constant, ongoing opportunities for reflection.
- Holding a formal dedication event at the conclusion of the project is an essential moment of celebration in a project. Speakers often share stories of meanings in a culmination event. Opening the moment up after the formal speakers, in more of the style of a Town Hall Meeting as described by Ernesto Pujol, generates a chance to create memories of the project that encode meaning.¹⁰
- Trust the talent and expertise in the room. Orient projects to reflect the assets of local participants and bring forth treasures and knowledge/conocimientos. For example, the project benefited greatly from Agnes's hidden talents and Leidy's ability to talk about the "hidden" issue of domestic violence. Their capacity inspired the other team members; these gifts arose due to the risk-taking strategy of making space for talents to emerge.

¹⁰ Tavani, David. "Questions of Practice: Ernesto Pujol on Reciprocal Relationships with Communities." The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2017. <https://vimeo.com/239999844>.

- Shared authorship and horizontal collaboration yielded artworks of communal resonance. Ockovic observes, "Mucha gente puso su granito de arena para que el proyecto se realizara colectivamente y de una mejor manera." ("Many people added their grain of sand so that the project could be actualized collectively and in a better way.") Fontanez reflects, "Yo encontré que este proyecto que hicimos juntos ha unido la comunidad mas. Para mi significa la habilidad de hacer nuevas amistades e incluso los niños que participaron pueden mirar hacia el futuro y encontrar algo positivo. Que en la union esta la fuerza y puedes hacer muchas cosas buenas donde hay unión y comprensión." ("I found that this project which we made together has united the community more. For me, it means the ability to make new friendships, and includes the children who participated who can look toward the future and find something positive. That in unity is power and you can do many things well where there is unity and understanding.")
- The artistic practice of using sketchbooks was surprisingly effective and underscored the importance of keeping a meticulous visual record throughout the project.
- Use care to describe the community in its rich actuality of social networks and resilient survival strategies, rather than reenact media portrayals focusing only on the lacks and challenges experienced by the community. Principal Deanda Logan states, "It's an extraordinary community filled with wonderful people."
- Develop a large enough collaborative team to share the work of initiating and maintaining connections and ongoing upkeep of community gardens so that no one member of the team carries too much weight.

Top Left:
Mural detail, plant cells. *Uprooted/reRooted*
© City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program /
Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones,
Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students
& community members, Cramp Elementary
School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by
Michael Reali.

Right:
Uprooted/reRooted © City of Philadelphia
Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian
Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic,
Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community
members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449
North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.





Uprooted/reRooted © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photos by Michael Reali.



The Project Now



While COVID-19 has interrupted the flow of *Uprooted/reRooted*, CDL Agnes Ockovic has been caring for the gardens, assisted by Interpret Green, Philadelphia Orchard Project, and Mural Arts Philadelphia. It is an important milestone in the community's ownership of the space and its maintenance. The garden is blooming and full of life; Agnes shared pictures of the fruiting figs, growing tomatoes, zucchinis, and herbs. The friendships between CDLs are also ongoing, as they keep tabs on each other's health and circumstances. Regardless of challenges, the project has succeeded in its goals, and participants are enthusiastic about its continuation.

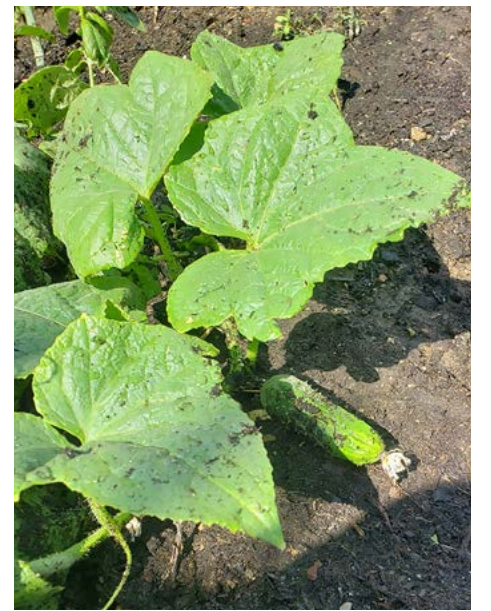
Cramp Elementary Principal Deanda Logan observes, "The project is a testament to the strength and the wonderfulness of the community that oftentimes is not shown in a positive light. It says a lot about the school and

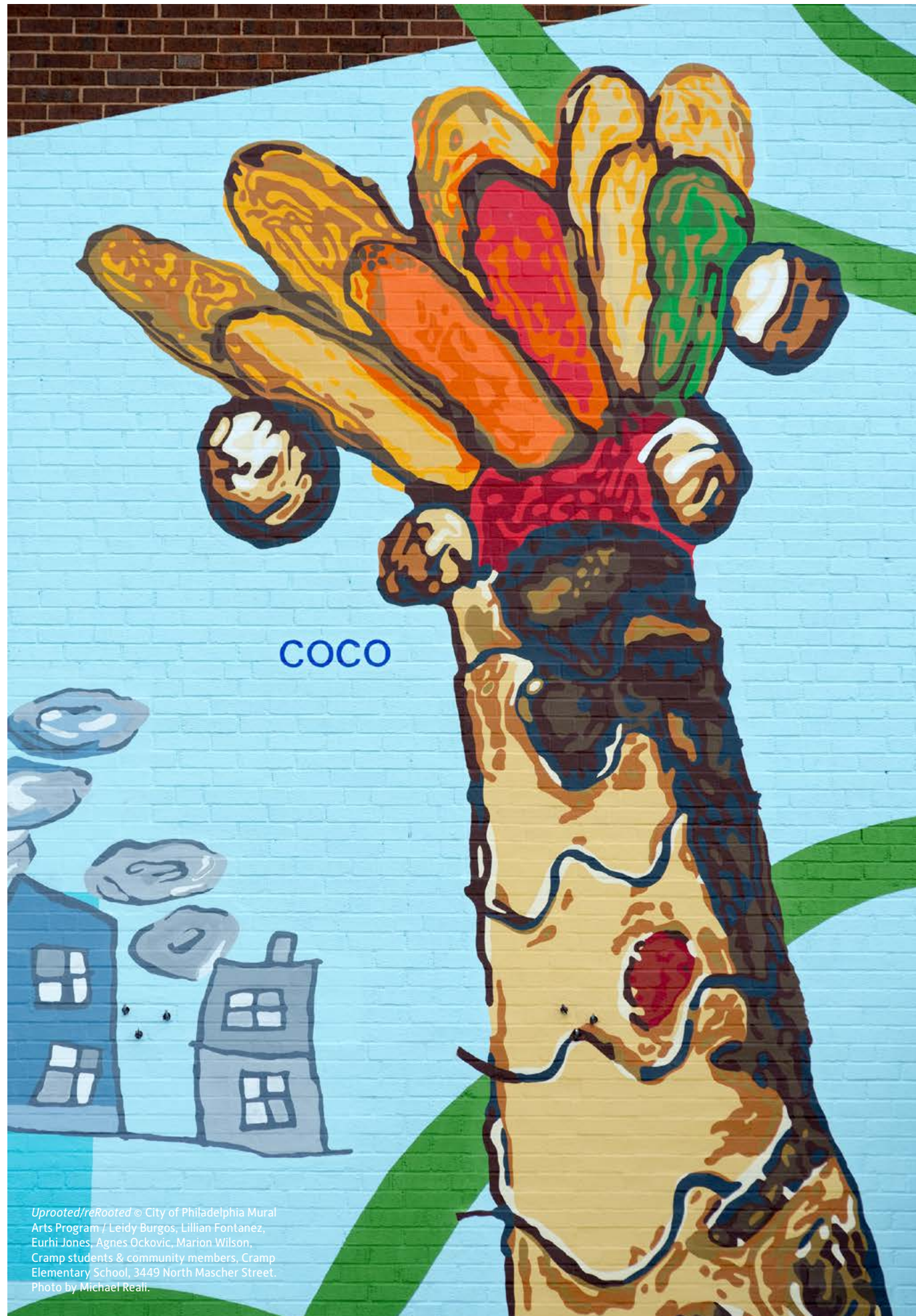
that it can get things done as a result of team effort. And about the stability of the school. This project was a game changer — now people have a positive perception of the school." A project can help transform community perception of a school or institution. The entire community benefits on an emotional level as feelings of belonging and pride replace alienation. Alyssa Schimmel of the Philadelphia Orchard Project says, "It's been encouraging to see how Cramp's neighbors and families have been connecting with the orchards and gardens. Children excitedly run after butterflies in the gardens, sample fresh raspberries from the vine, and flowers passed through the fence-line helped to comfort neighbors experiencing grief. While we're out tending the gardens, we frequently hear neighbors expressing their thanks for supporting the school's green spaces."

Top Center:
Mural detail, figs. *Uprooted/reRooted* © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.

Right:
Maintaining the north courtyard, July 20, 2020. Photos by Agnes Ockovic.

CDL Agnes Ockovic, July 20, 2020. Photo by Craig Johnson.





Uprooted/reRooted © City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program / Leidy Burgos, Lillian Fontanez, Eurhi Jones, Agnes Ockovic, Marion Wilson, Cramp students & community members, Cramp Elementary School, 3449 North Mascher Street. Photo by Michael Reali.



We are encouraged by the continued engagement of the community even under these adverse, unplanned conditions. Restored Spaces will continue to support organizing at the site in spring 2020 using gameplay to establish criteria for a Request For Proposals modeled on the Neighborhood Yes Fund, a community-directed granting program at Bartram's Garden. The Yes Fund is designed to transfer capacity through dollars and technical support for small community projects and programs. Mini-grants made by Mural Arts, similar to Yes Fund grants, would allow participants, neighbors, and staff to further animate the space — from future seasons of *Ambiente Ecologica*, to cooking or herbalism workshops. These grants would further support the capacity of the Cramp team to take on full ownership of the space and direct their collective energies towards maintaining and activating the space according to their priorities and talents.



Top Right: Herbarium drawing "Clover leaves" with Dr. Ruiz's third-grade class.

Bottom Right: From the Migration Series, a drawing of a coconut tree by a third-grade student.



Uprooted/reRooted dedication
at Cramp Elementary School,
October 23, 2019.
Photo by Michael Reali.



Pictured (L to R): Joseph and Leidy Burgos and Principal Deanda receiving the 2018 Garden of Distinction award at the Philadelphia Flower Show.

Lincoln Financial Mural Arts Center
at the Thomas Eakins House
1727-29 Mt. Vernon Street
Philadelphia, PA 19130

General: 215.685.0750
Tours: 215.925.3633
info@muralarts.org



f muralartsphiladelphia
@muralarts
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muralarts.org

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