

They will always lead you back to your center.

Oşúun

Míiyuyam notúng Marlene' Dusek yaqaa. Noon Payómkawichum pi Ipai-Kumeeyaay pi Kupagawish pi Latinx pi Czech. This piece was made during my time in the master's program in Environment and Community at Cal Poly Humboldt during the current/continuing global pandemic, uprisings, and climate devastation. People who influenced and empowered my thinking and process in this piece included women warriors/weavers from my family, my mother Donna Calac-Dusek and Grandmother Louise Osuna-Calac, and from my tribal communities weavers Myra Masiel and Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner. Nosuun looviq to Dr. Nancy Perez's and her Radical Futures class. Another class that inspired this work was abolition ecologies with Dr. Renee Byrd. I was able to expand on and answer critical questions posed to me in my master's exam with great guidance and inspiration from Dr. Cutcha Risling-Baldy and Dr. Andrea Delgado, who were my advisors. I am also grateful to many of the local native artists who I share this space with today as this was the first gallery show I attended as a undergraduate student looking up to many of these folks.

I am weaving a story like my ancestors would weave their sóyla into their túkmal. I am attempting to use the paper and my art piece as my basket to heal from colonial violence, gender-based violence, and trauma while also harnessing strength, power and good medicine from the land and my relatives. Through the camera lens I work to create our historical/present day narrative. My identity as an artist is complex and I draw on that as well as I weave both my Kumeeyaay ancestry and Payómkawichum into this piece. I come from the Osuna/ Trujillo family on my grandmother's side, who is both Payómkawichum, Kumeeyaay and Latinx. My grandfather is a qáalaq (Calac) and is Payómkawichum and Kupa. The strength of my family, community and ancestors is what has led me here and on this journey.

This piece had me thinking through concepts of my cultures, land back, baskets back, reclamation, reconnection, continuance, feminist & queer theory, land and relative justice, Indigenous women's rights, abolition, visual sovereignty, rights of mother nature, settler carceral logic, ecocide, and settler colonialism. As an artist I ask myself: How have I, and my family used baskets to continue to heal from colonial trauma, and from missions? How do baskets like our bodies become a prisoner in the walls of a museum and the missions? How has weaving always held the resistance?

Culture, Prayer, Resistance.

To Exist is to Resist

We must work to abolish these systems that were made to irradicate the voice, very being of the "California Indian", of our baskets, of the memory of our plant relatives, of the memory of our cultures, of the memory of the knowledge passed down of living in balance with the land and all relatives.

(READ BELOW)

History Overview/ Women/ Gender/ Indigenous Peoples California History

When you think about the history of settler colonialism in the region that you research, what would you highlight to demonstrate the connection between settler colonialism, land dispossession, and gendered violence?

How might an intervention into the historical analysis of gendered and sexual violence that occurred during the mission system, rancho system, or even gold rush, operate in your work with material cultures, such as baskets, or in developing new representations of historical narrative through contemporary art or visual sovereignty?

The traditional territory of the Payómkawichum people extends along the coast of so-called Southern California, near 'axáchmay or so-called San Juan Capistrano, in the north and the panáa'o Encinitas/Carlsbad area in the south to the valleys of the coastal mountains and pa'áa'aw, Mt. Palomar in the east. Today this area is also misnamed as northern San Diego, Riverside, and Orange counties. Due to settler colonialism, our lands have been stolen, separated, developed, and mismanaged for hundreds of years. Our peoples and descendants are now spread across the lands and off traditional lands. These lands are occupied territories of the Payómkawichum atáaxum and their neighboring tribes, the Kumeyaay, Cahuilla, Acjachemem, Tongva, and Cupa peoples. Due to colonization from the Spanish mission systems, Mexican Rancho Period, and California statehood, our peoples, although from different villages and areas, had one sovereign authority. We are now separated into reservations with individual sovereign authority. From 1875 to 1893 the individual seven Payómkawichum reservations are established under authorizing Congressional legislation and executive order. Which has led to present day seven reservations made of the Payómkawichum people (with mixed ancestry from other local tribal groups and ethnicities).

These reservations include the Rincon, Pala, Pauma, Pechanga, La Jolla, San Luis Rey, and Soboba. Although we are one group of tribal people from different villages, we are now spread across on and off-reservation with one specific tribal band still fighting for federal recognition, the San Luis Rey Band. There are also as many tribal lineal decedents who are unable to be enrolled because of blood quantum politics. The way we identify as Indigenous peoples were not based on colonial measurements of blood quantum or by reservations. Currently though many bands operate on this type of membership requirements instead of acknowledging inherit traditional ties and relationships to traditional families, clans, villages, and the land. Some of our tribes are even disenrolling and/or not enrolling our own people or our own families because of colonial greed. We are the Payómkawichum, the Atáaxum, and we are identified by our extensive village systems up and down our waniichum, now misnamed the San Luis Rey and Santa Margarita rivers and from the coastal regions to the mountains inland.

Payómkawichum (People of the West) or Atáaxum (The people) is how we traditionally refer to ourselves. Because of Spanish colonization and the mission period, settlers tried to strip our names, languages, and culture. They misnamed us the “Luiseno’s” in reference to the closest Mission, San Luis Rey de Francia founded in 1798. The eighteenth California mission built was built by the hands of our peoples and other neighboring tribal peoples starting in 1811 and completed in 1815. When we completed this structure, at its time it was the largest building and mission ever built-in so-called California. The church has been rebuilt a total of three times. It’s considered the “King of Missions” and was considered the “Most Prosperous” because of the highest population of Native peoples, native slaves, native prisoners, held here. 2,869 California Indian people, at this time it was considered over three times the mission average in 1825. Many of my ancestors were held here. Mission San Luis Rey at its height in the mid 19th century, expanded itself and its foreign agricultural methods and extraction methods onto 950,400 acres of our stolen lands, waters, and the river. Once it was

completed, we became prisoners and slaves on our own land. For me this mission is the King of Murder. King of Violence. King of Rape. King of Slavery. King of Flogging. King of Prisons. This structure is not one to be celebrated because of the sick history of this place and how they treated our peoples.

Today we see the denouncing of the misnaming of “Luiseños” or “Mission Indians” and the reclaiming & returning to our traditional names. But it is important to note most of our sovereign nations and community members identify strongly as Luiseño and have a deep history with it. The names I prefer to use are Payómkawichum or Atáaxum. As I write this piece, I am weaving a story like my ancestors would weave their *şóyla* into their *túkmal*. Esselen and Chumash scholar Deborah Miranda in the work, *Bad Indians* explains the importance and power of telling and reclaiming our stories as “Story is the most powerful force in the world- in our world, maybe in all worlds. Story is culture. Story, like culture, is constantly moving. It is a river where no gallon of water is the same gallon it was one second ago. Yet it is still the same river. It exists as a truth. As a whole. Even if the hole is in a constant change. In fact, because of that constant change. All my life, I have heard only one story about California Indians: godless, dirty, stupid, primitive, ugly, passive, drunken, immoral, lazy, weak-willed people who might make good workers if properly trained and motivated. What kind of story is that to grow up with?”.¹

I am weaving a story like my ancestors would weave their *şóyla* into their *túkmal*. I am attempting to use the paper and my art piece as my basket to heal from colonial violence, gender-based violence, and trauma while creating our historical narrative using my Payómkawichum traditional language and photography. My identity as an artist is complex and I draw on that as well molding both my Kumeyaay ancestry and Payómkawichum. I come from the Osuna/ Trujillo family on my grandmother’s side, who is both Payómkawichum, Kumeyaay and Latinx. My grandfather is Payómkawichum and Kupa. I ask myself: How, as an artist, can I rewrite this history, told by us? How

can I bring power back to our story? How can I use baskets to heal from the colonial trauma from missions, and rebuild back to our world? How can we abolish these systems that were never made for us?

~~*Mission Indian, Luiseno, California Indian Mission Basket.*~~

Payómkawichum
túkmal, qéepish, 'arúusut, misámşash, pá'kwut,
wila'áakash, 'ápmal, la'áakash.

Like many of our neighboring tribes and tribes throughout the occupied territories of misnamed California, baskets are beings, and they are central to our communities in so many ways. Our tightly coiled baskets, the intricate designs, and open weaved baskets of willow or şóyla are deeply connected to the land and tell our stories and histories as native women. This is the knowledge we, as Payómkawichum women, have always had, and its knowledge was passed down to us by the first beings, the Káamalam. The very first place baskets made their presence was in the creation of this place and the first children. Spider women was our first weaver and teacher. This is a part of our creation as humans and in our creation stories. When our world and place were made, we were given specific instructions and taught to care for our lands, relatives, people, and communities. These are the instructions our youth and community learn at very young ages, and the instructions to do so are deeply a part of our coming age ceremonies, along with the use of baskets throughout our ceremonies, subsistence for food, and management of the lands for the materials, and everyday use.

The use of baskets has transformed throughout social change, and women have had to sell basketry to survive and pass on knowledge in times that the nation-state outlawed it². The elimination of the women, let alone the women weaver also was continued by settlers when they would admire and steal (rob graves) baskets, then eliminate the weaver's name and completely disrespect the weaver whom the basket relative was buried with. Both women and baskets become an object in the settler's

eyes. Nothing to be respected and honored. As Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner and Kyle Whyte point out, “patriarchy is a fundamental part of the structure of settler colonial erasure.”³ When we look at the connection between settler colonialism, land dispossession, and gendered violence. We see heavily how these times within our history and dynamics of white supremacy and settler power target Indigenous women, their bodies, and position women as disposable just as they have the land and all relatives. It’s targeted our bodies and our baskets in similar ways. Counter to how our Payómkawichum laws and community are to honor, respect, and treat women and baskets with the highest regard. Colonial patriarchy is and has been inherently violent to Indigenous women. We’ve seen this carried out continuously by different colonial regimes and eras, from the raping’s and killings of Indigenous women to Indigenous women being sold as slaves and wives, and the tried colonial stripping of culture and language from women. ⁴For Payómkawichum women, this has been eras of violence and harm by Spanish, Mexican soldiers during the mission and rancho period, only to be continued to be carried on by so-called California statesmen and settlers in 1850, to headhunters and then in boarding schools. All California women have been subjected to and still are subjected to a settler-colonial reality that sees us as disposable, as a threat to a system.

During the Spanish Mission period in so-called Southern California, settlers, soldiers, and priests tried to control our bodies and minds as women. Native women of these lands were the first prisoners during Spanish colonization. Dr. Cutcha Risling-Baldy points out the reasoning for this in her chapter, *Ninis’a:n-na:ng’a’*. “Women especially once centrally important to native societies, were targeted for gender violence because of how important they were to culture and politics in their communities.”⁵ Spanish *monjerios* for Native women and girls is where cages and carceral rape and logic started their roots—logics of submission and domestication through heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity. The first study of fucked up and sick actions to “assimilate us,” abuse us, control us and lock away our women and girls till marriage was through the *monjerio* in the missions. Charles

Sulpeveda, Tongva, and Acjachemen scholar attests to this in his paper *Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing Kuuyam as a Decolonial Possibility*. He describes the *monjerio* as “the all-woman dormitory functioning as prison, was institutionalized in order to enforce domestication through heteropatriarchy as a central tenet of Spanish imperial domination of its expanding empire.”⁶ “They tried to control our minds, bodies, and our culture. Trying to strip us of everything that made us whole, made us powerful. More powerful than the weak, small-minded, and idiotic monsters they were. What a weird thought to think they could ever get rid of the Indigenous woman and her medicine, her power, rid her of centuries of connection to land. Rid of the Indigenous being and any memory of Indigenous life, including the plants, animals, and ecology.

Baskets, like “California” Indian Women and girl’s bodies, became objects and not being. Through the patriarchal colonial lens together we become commodity, resource, a means to extract, exploit/sell, and eradicate any memory of Baskets, “California” Indian women, and land in settler colonial society they. all becomes property, resources. No longer are we seen, treated, or respected as sacred life. Plants and water are disposable, just like the people. Just like bodies were stolen, imprisoned, murdered, and killed, so were baskets, anything that held memory was caged. Caged in a *monjerio*, in a boarding school, in a prison, in a reservation, in a museum, object not human. Baskets were stolen, destroyed, sometimes bought but mostly stolen, then given to collectors to sell at top dollar and to museums. The fetishization of baskets and California Indian women have strong connections. There are so many stories of how baskets were acquired during various Settler rules, most end in trauma and tragedy. They would travel far from home, sometimes sprayed with toxic pesticides or chemicals, and stored in basements and cold sellers of museums and universities. Locked away like women and girls in the *monjerios*. Back then, in creating this piece (below), I could be jailed and beaten for weaving, for telling a story, for gathering, for speaking in my language, for being me. State-sponsored genocide of all native peoples and their culture, especially women and children. This

genocide still carried on today with tribes being subjected to the only small reservations, blood quantum politics, another form of carceral logic of walls and the missions. Eliminate ourselves. Settler colonialism is our prison. We see how they have pumped our rivers empty of the water right in front of our eyes. Jailed/killed our people. Sterilized our women, and separated our children from their families, but despite this all, we still hold on and continue. We regenerate. We all have lived this history together. Now how do we heal?

Stephanie Lumsden draws this connection when she says, “Reproductive justice for Native peoples must include their stewardship of traditional territories, ability to participate in ceremony, access to cultural practices, and the freedom to have and raise children. In order for California Indian peoples to claim a future, reproductive justice and tribal sovereignty are essential. Incarceration undermines tribal sovereignty and limits the reproductive capacity of individual Native people. Since incarceration threatens the future of tribal nations, it behooves California Indian peoples to include prison abolition in their expressions of tribal sovereignty.”⁷ The violent plotline of settler colonialism and genocide is to cage the savage, cage the woman, separate families. Here we have drawn the connections between the dispossession of Native bodies from land, from land itself, and the perpetuation of gender violence against Native women and girls.

California genocide is written on the landscape. It shaped not only the way the state and federal government continued to approach Native peoples as “problem” but also generations of people would come to understand native cultures, histories, and futures.”

- Cutcha Risling Baldy

Developing new representations of historical narrative through contemporary art.

A visual sovereignty piece.

(Photos Used in Digital Manipulation)



Title: *Mission Garden and arch at Mission. San Luis Rey in. Diego County, C.A.* (Circa 1970s)

-Elouise Perkins ⁸



Title: *Memeyuu temevaa Mary Ayal Osuna?* (Photo of a photo, taken by MDusek at San Diego Museum of US. Collection of Family archives.)
Original Photo info: *Mary Ayal Osuna* weaving in Warner Springs 1928. San Diego Museum of Man
 -Unknown Photographer⁹



Title: 'á'wolum , 'amáayum

-Marlene' Dusek¹⁰

1.



2.



3.



1. **Title:** yúulalash ¹¹
 2. **Title:** panáal¹²
 3. **Title:** şóyla¹³

-Marlene' Dusek

Title: *They will always lead you back to your center. oşúun* ¹⁴

-Marlene' Dusek



Much of this history is not told nor highlighted in colonial society. I am an Indigenous woman, a descendent of grandparents and ancestors who were subjected to the mission systems, ranchos, statehood, and boarding schools. As a descendent of weavers whose baskets are still held captive by carceral logic in some settings behind glass or in a basement I work to use different interventions or modes to bring this violent history to light and work towards liberation and freedom for us all, to work for our land back, to work to get our cultural items back and heal. I can use my pieces to teach but, most importantly, heal. As Indigenous peoples, we have used different modes/mediums to try to tell our current and historical narratives, but we also create a tool to combat intergenerational

trauma and trauma we are experiencing currently to resist colonial domination. Like the loss of our lands, the poisoning and unjust taking of the waters, the taking of our wetlands for materials to harvest. The wars we are waging to protect it all and how we weave responsibility with action to nourish our communities, and our futures are critical now more than it ever has been.

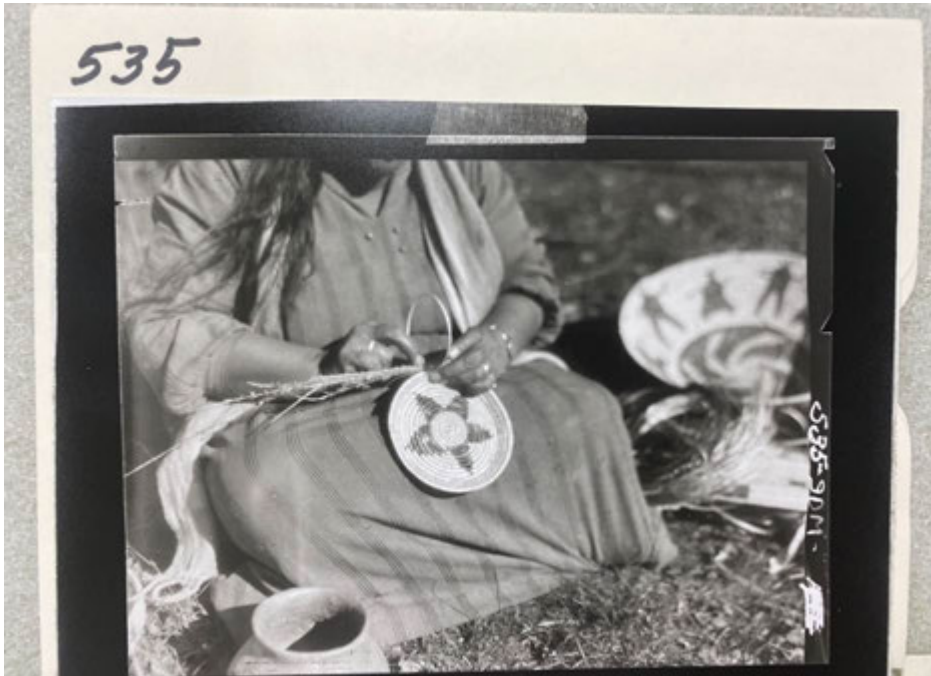
I wonder if this is what my Kumeyaay relative Mary Ayal Osuna thought about when she had her picture taken (woman weaving in my art piece above) during the terror, trauma, and tried extermination of her time while she weaves. Did she know I would weave her into my story? A relative of mine who I found waiting for me in the archive. Where she was stored away in a box, her memory held in a prison. The title in which I gave her photo is, *Memeyuu temewaa. Mary Ayal Osuna*? Which in Kumeyaay is asking someone while they are sitting down how they are doing? The beauty of her basket and story was caged in a box, cataloged, and numbered. I wondered how long it's been since someone visited her and asked her how she was. I wondered who she was weaving this basket for or who took her photo? Did she give consent? When I create my works, I am constantly in play with how I can disrupt violence, heal from trauma, and shift power back to the people, to the land, to the plants, to the animals, to our families. I will always be reconnecting back, and it's a beautiful journey. How the ancestors continue to lead us all back even after and during land being used as a tool of dispossession and the tried domestication and submission of native women and our bodies. All these methods were meant to disconnect us from our creation stories, culture, past, and future, but our medicine will always be too strong, which is what the empire fears the most. Deborah Miranda has shown this over and over throughout her scholarly works that “Story *is* the great healer—of people, of histories, of imbalance.”¹

Here we are, feet rooted in place, heart rooted in land. Connecting to family, weaving with other women, resisting, talking story, just being who we were intended to be. I use the arches of adobe bricks because I want to redistribute power to our people who were forced to build the missions. I

cringe every time someone says they love Spanish architecture when they see the missions. I mean, don't get me wrong, if they weren't colonizing, raping, slave-owning ass wholes, I might have a different outlook, but in this case of this archival photo taken in the '70s of some remaining arches at "San Luis Rey Mission" many local native peoples were responsible for building and making the adobe bricks without pay and flogged severely if opposed. Many of my relatives were at Mission San Luis Rey and Mission San Antonio de Pala. My piece also reflects and embodies the reclaiming and dismantling of the *monjerio* and the redistribution of power and medicine back to our women. The prison was created to tame the native woman. As Deborah Miranda says, "They had us make adobe walls for our own prisons." ¹This photo honors our women and many generations of weavers. It frees our women and our stories from the colonial confines and brings us back into existence. My mother's basket sits in the front of the background photo, with mine behind hers. The words read choo'onum pomohovanpi loovi [all;people ;their future; believing ;be good].

Nosuun looviq to Deborah for making us think and question what folks who we find in the archive might be subjected to. *Bad Indians* is a genius work by Miranda, pushing us to explore the archive, the current situations of folks in photos taken by white folks. *Bad Indians* pushes us to make our individual interpretations and build stories of our sovereignty, of our family's sovereignty and bring power back. I wonder if women in the *monjerios* thought they would ever see their families again, let alone be able to weave with them. Weave with their mothers. Have memory of their mothers, let alone remember the plants she taught you to gather. But somehow, the knowledge continued, prevailed, and held memory in within them, in the wind, water, plant relatives. The memory is all around us and within us. All of it is weaved as a part of our story, but we will always find our way back to our center, chamşúun. Back to our people, our culture, the land, the plants, as protectors of this place. Just like we made the adobe bricks of our own prisons, our ancestors weaved the future for me

that I live here now, sitting here typing this, and that will break anything down and make it crumble that tries to cage me, my people, our plant relatives, the baskets. Téngalish.



Title: *Memeyuu temewaa Mary Ayal Osuna? (535&534)* ¹⁴

Info: Mary Ayal Osuna weaving a star design into her basket at Warner Springs. A relative of mine. This photo was recovered at the San Diego Museum of Us, where my mother and I looked at all of our families' collections and memories of relatives in photos, in baskets. Pieces of our history and culture that called to us to come recover them. I took this photo.



Photo 524 had a stamp on it from Snell and Shafer, but it has been concluded by Marys granddaughter, Bonnie. This photo was a reprint made. Charles Snell was born in 1928 so he could not be the photographer. Interesting enough Snell worked at the Museum of Man where he photographed artifacts and exhibits.

I think about how some of our stories and baskets have never made it outside those walls of the Museum of Us, just like Mary Ayal Osuna's photo of her weaving with our relatives to weave her túkmal. I took this photo while visiting the San Diego Museum of Us. The kind woman there pulled all our family names of what they held in their collections. I had mixed feelings while I lay my eyes on many baskets and photos that my mother and I had never seen before. Meanwhile, surrounded by others basket relatives that crowded the shelves of the room we were in. If you look at what these various colonial institutions, such as universities, museums, art collectors, technological advances with selling capabilities, and bidding platforms, like eBay or paywalls, they create the same prison and all hold hostage our direct lines to our culture, stories, and relatives and view them in this manner of high price and relic depicting us as not here. They purposely omit us from the narrative and keep our relatives from us. While there have always been and now are many Indigenous peoples who have fought for and worked to tell their narratives and resist colonial patriarchy.

Going back to my digital photo collage and what it represents for me, it represents abolishment of a system that is designed to kill me, and it represents freedom for us all. Human and nonhuman. Free from missions, monjerios, prisons, walls, cages, slavery, violence to our bodies, free from museums, free from environmental destruction. All these industrial complexes come along with colonialism, and I want that all to burn to the ground and stop imprisoning and treating us all as disposable. Bodies, Baskets, Plants, we all have been subjected to the same violence and pain by this system. In colonial control, everything is in the extractive zone.¹⁵ Our weaving materials are subjected to so much violence, just like ourselves. I wanted to have my Ancestors hold me just like Tamáayawut holds and nourishes our plant relatives. I wanted the plants to support Mary again, just as they once did, whose beautiful memory still sits in that box. But I know our prayers will overcome in my heart, and her memories will be brought back to family.

Our rock relatives with paintings from our Ancestors from our wiqénish ceremonies lie surrounded by tract housing. Some were destroyed, and some still stay because of how hard our people have fought to protect them. When I visit our gathering places like pa'áa'aw in the picture where some of our plant relatives live. I pray that our grasses will be culturally burned again to renew this place. I pray to my ancestors and thank them for this life. I speak to the land in the language. As I gather, I hear the songs of my people. I hear the cackles from the many women who gathered there before me. I am reminded of the strength of yúulalash and the many baskets she's given herself to. Our cultural ways will always lead us back to our center, back to the start, back to healing, back to our hearts center - noşúun.

When we are called to the archive just like I was by my ancestors at the Museum of Us, it is like being reintroduced to family for the first time in generations. We are reclaiming our voices, our peoples, our relatives, just as Deborah Miranda captures in her work, *Extermination of the Joyas*: “None of these archival materials came from unfiltered Indian voices; such records were impossible both because of their colonizing context and the prevalence of an oral tradition among California Indians that did not leave textual traces. The difficulties of using non- Indian archives to tell an Indian story are epic: biases, agendas, cultural pride, notions of Manifest Destiny, and the desire to “own” history mean that one can never simply read and accept even the most basic non-Native detail without multiple investigations into who collected the information, what their motivations were, who preserved the information and their motivations, the use of rhetorical devices (like the passive voice so prevalent in missionization histories; “The Missions were built using adobe bricks” rather than “Indians, often held captive and/or punished by flogging, built the Missions without compensation”)”

What brings me power and ease from all this trauma and violence is that it is “California Indian” people everywhere creating, pushing back, telling history, reclaiming our narratives, and aiding to critical discourse. We are powerful people, and I find so much strength in that. Just look around in this gallery.

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