June 29, 2020

Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority
Urban Grant Program
Attn: Megan Dreger
Grants Administrator
33 Las Colinas Lane
San Jose, CA 95119

To whom it may concern,

Last year, I was lucky enough to be a participant in POW!WOW! San Jose. For nine days I was immersed in a completely surreal experience. A week of adventures, painting, shared meals, and conversations passed too quickly. One amazing experience seemed to be chased by another and another until it was the last backyard barbecue and the sad but very satisfied artists danced and clapped, singing a warm farewell to the week.

I think part of the reason the week passed in such a whirlwind was that I didn't know what to expect. In my naive premonitions I imagined days filled with painting and some socializing if possible. When I received my itinerary and the festival actually started, I was shocked and delighted. Before we even began painting, the artists and staff convened multiple times. We went hiking, had a barbecue, and went to a skating museum all before the week officially started.

As the week progressed and we began our murals, even more adventures ensued. One of the most memorable to me was visiting Spade and Plow, a local organic farm that caters to restaurants and households through subscription boxes. We planted baby chard and were rewarded with a delicious outdoor lunch of tacos made with homegrown slaw and sauces. Before POW!WOW! I wasn't even aware that there were still farms in San Jose. This experience really made me think about San Jose and the land it was built in. I knew that this area was fertile and an array of crops were once grown, but had no idea that a new generation of farmers were keeping this tradition alive. This experience and realization was immensely inspiring and in a way reintroduced me to my own city. Now, I am more aware of San Jose's unique culture and my family receives Spade and Plow's biweekly farm box!

Following our Spade and Plow trip the POW!WOW! Family shared a frankly eye opening multi course dinner at Braise in Willow Glen after a long day of painting. The best part of the evening was that the meal we shared used produce from Spade and Plow. It was a really wonderful treat to experience the farm to table concept in its practical details.

Asides from the day trips, delicious meals, adventures, and of course painting, the most impactful part of POW!WOW! for me was the people I met and the conversations I had with them. I was already familiar with many of the artists and their diverse work. However, I was completely unprepared for the kindness and wisdom each artist and staff member offered me. I was never looked down upon, even though I was younger and far

less experienced than them. Instead, the artists offered me valuable insight on their careers, schooling, various ways of creating art, and their advice for the future. As a bit of an art nerd, this was crazy fascinating. But, as a young artist this was truly the greatest gift I could ask for. I rarely find the opportunity to speak to professional artists and hear their stories. Through POW!WOW! I was fortunate enough to hear the testimonials of numerous successful professional artists and gain some of their invaluable insight on art and life. I now know a network of super cool artists and organizers and insanely, can call them my friends. For this, I am immensely grateful for the POW!WOW! San Jose family and all of the work they do to enrich the lives of muralists and locals alike.

Best regards,

Rista White (POW!WOW! San Jose Artist 2019)
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