

Igniting Scholarship and Social Action through the Power of Story

By Lisa Cacari Stone

Transdisciplinary Research, Equity and Engagement Center for Advancing Behavioral Health (TREE Center) NIMHD Grant # U54 MD004811-06
treecenter@unm.edu

Narratives are stories that string together events to construct meaning and establish discourse about who we are as a people. The power of story is to heal, to define who we are from resilience, strength and to retell our legacies of hope and bridge our ancestors with our lives today as we prepare the next generation to aspire to liberation and transformation. Yet, much of what we see in the media today portray communities of color from a pejorative lens- such as criminals, lazy, inept and more. This is not who we are. **So, it not enough to challenge the stories out there but to tell them ourselves!**

The TREE Center's vision is rooted in the power of story- both in training/mentoring URM's and in growing the community engaged scholarship with/by our communities most affected by the burdens of social and health inequalities.



-Art by Taslim van Hattum, LCSW, MPH, National Council for Behavioral Health

As a founding event, our **Community, Scientific Advisory Committee** kicked off our first strategic planning meeting with the May 3rd Ignite talks. The evening reception and networking set the stage for disseminating/implementing community knowledge as science and validating the power of "voice" from within as a social and racial justice tool/mechanism in health research! Ignite talks are a series of events where speakers have five minutes to talk on a subject accompanied by 20 slides, for 15 seconds each, automatically advanced. See: <http://www.ignitetalks.io> Ignite Talks PBC was formed as an independent organization focusing on

supporting Ignite events around the world and promoting public speaking. Our dynamic presenters received standing ovations by over 50 partners who came together including behavioral health leaders from: the Departments of Children Youth and Families and Human Services, Dine Policy Institute, Burrell Border Health Policy Institute, National Latino Behavioral Health Association, First Nations Community Health Source, congressional field offices, state representatives, mental health consumers/advocates, National Council for Behavioral Health, county health officials and more!

- Ryan Sanchez, Pueblo of San Felipe/Cochiti – *“Youth, Resiliency and Power”*
 - Kee J.E. Straits, Quechua – *“Stories of Spirit in Native Communities”*
 - Evelyn Rising, UNM HERO, African American from Hobbs, NM – *“Creative Opportunities out of Trials- A Hat Queen Celebrates Her Legacy of Service”*
 - Francisco J. Ronquillo, UNM HERO, Mexican American – *“Growing Our Own”*
- The audience was truly electrified and “set fire” to the spirit of the TREE Center.

