

The infl uenc e of Samu el Mart inez in the Fru itval e Dist rict

[Samuel Martinez Discusses History and Traditional Healing](#) from [Natalie Rodriguez](#) on [Vimeo](#).

[Samuel Martinez](#) is a part of the history Oakland's [Fruitvale district](#) as a therapist, healer, social justice worker, activist, writer and traditional dancer. During the [Urban Relocation](#) program of the 1950s, he and his mother were relocated to the Oakland housing projects where they faced [racial inequality](#) and discrimination, which he says have "made him stronger."

After refusing to join the Vietnam War, at 18 years old he became an anti-war activist and joined the [Chicano Moratorium](#). As a parent and organizer he helped create [El Centro Infantil de La Raza](#) and served on the board of directors.

Martinez is a [Licensed Clinical Social Worker](#), who contributed to the creation of a mental health department at [La Clinica de La Raza](#). He [refers](#) to himself as a "Social Justice Healer offering a Traditional Healing Praxis." His praxis began with his mother's traditional teachings of healing and in 1977 he incorporated the theories of Paulo Freire's [Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#). In 1971 [La Clinica de La Raza](#) was established in the [Fruitvale district](#) in order to provide accessible health care for the neighborhood's Latino population. La Clinica opened its first mental health site named [Casa del Sol](#) in 1978.

In his backyard, Martinez leads community *TemesCalli*'s or Sweat Lodges for family and extended family alike. Martinez says that the meaning of *TemesCalli* stems from "Calli" which means home and "Teme or tema is in a prayerful way." He says that the prayer lodge is "the creation story in our five senses because we are beings of the five senses."

As an author he has published several books including [The Indian Dream: Surviving the American Holocaust](#) and [AmeriCaCa—The Sounds of Silenced Survivors: Surviving America's Campaign to "Kill the Indian, Save the Child."](#)

Amor Eter no: Eter nal Love for

Amy "Corazón" George-Cortez, art curator, along with husband and tattoo artist, Salvador "El Chamuco" Cortez have co-owned [Amor Eterno Tattoo and Art Space](#) in the [Fruitvale District](#) for approximately two and a half years. This Saturday, June 8, 2013 the couple celebrated the unveiling of their new and larger space and art gallery. The name *Amor Eterno* translates to Eternal Love from Spanish. On the invite that was put out through the [Amor Eterno blog](#) and [Facebook event page](#), the Cortez's explain that the name was chosen based on the love that the couple share for each other, their love for art and tattoos, for their family "and the community of Oakland."

Cortez has been tattooing around the Bay Area for 10 years now. His wife has been curating for

Art, Tattoos and Oakland

roughly the same amount of time. One of the goals of [Amor Eterno](#) according to Cortez is “to make art accessible to everyone, especially the community.” He also hopes that they “keep people inspired and keep people understanding the power that is art.” Now that the shop has expanded George-Cortez expects to use the shop for “everything,” including performing arts.

The Downtown area of [the City of Oakland](#) has recently been recognized as being one of [America’s Top Twelve ArtPlaces 2013](#), according to [Artplace](#). Cortez says, “Oakland has always been an art place, it just never got the due credit because of the bad reputation.” The galleries that are curated by George-Cortez at their shop feature the work of local artist.

The Fruitvale District has recently made the news for high crime rates including robberies and prostitution, however, [Amor Eterno](#) is not alone in its effort to bring more art to the community. Oscar Cisneros, artist and owner of [Tu Tienda Azteca](#), which re-opened in the Fruitvale District a week ago, attended [Amor Eterno’s](#) unveiling. Cisneros recently noticed another gallery that opened up near his own shop. “It’s a good thing,” says Cisneros, about more art being brought to the Fruitvale District. “We’re trying to make our own true kind of art scene here in the Fruitvale San Antonio area,” said Cortez, “Fruitvale has always been a beautiful place.”



Amy "Corazón" George-Cortez of Oakland, Calif., watches the blessing of the Aztec Dancers at Amor Eterno Tattoo and Art Space in Oakland, Calif., on June 8, 2013. The dancers blessed the unveiling of the new space and art gallery. (Photograph by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University).



George-Cortez personally welcomes guest to the reception of Amor Eterno Tattoo and Art Space, in Oakland, Calif., on June 8, 2013. "We like to create an environment that's comfortable for people just to come relax, be able to look at art," said Cortez, "and not have to worry about any kind of stigma or anything like that." (Photo by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University).



Cortez shows us his Grandfather's television remote control, which is a part of his shrine at Amor Eterno Tattoo and Art Space, in Oakland, Calif., on June 8, 2013. "He watched the world change through this," says

Cortez. He believes that the remote control, which his grandfather carved in Spanish after the letters had faded, is the closest thing to a work of art that his grandfather ever made. "It's my greatest treasure," he says. (Photo by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University).



Cortez shows us his "altar" at Amor Eterno Tattoo and Art Space, in Oakland, Calif., on June 8, 2013. On his shrine Cortez has religious artifacts of different religions, photographs and treasures he holds dear, including his grandfather's first television remote control. (Photo by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University).



George-Cortez thanks guests for coming to the event at Amor Eterno Tattoo and Art Space in Oakland, Calif., on June 8, 2013. The event invite states, "It is the love and support from our family, friends and clients who have made it possible for us to grow." (Photo by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University).

In the Fruitvale District of Oakland there are almost 30

Exposure of students to crime in the Fruitvale District of Oakland

schools and day care centers, there is also a high rate of crime. According to [CrimeMapping.com](https://www.crimemapping.com), within a two-mile radius of the corner of Foothill Blvd. and Fruitvale Ave., there have been more than 300 crimes that have been reported in the month of May. Elizabeth Guerra, a Student Coordinator and After School Teacher at Learning Without Limits, a school within the Fruitvale District, says that in eight years of experience in working with students after school she has worked with many students who have been affected by crime. Guerra has had students whose families have been victims of home invasions, whose “mother’s have been robbed”, and has even “done a memorial for a student [who was] murdered.”

View [Fruitvale Schools](#) in a larger map. Infographic by Natalie Rodriguez

and



Jefferson School in the Fruitvale District of Oakland, Calif. Elizabeth Guerra is a Student Coordinator and After School Teacher at Learning Without Limits, one of two schools within this campus. Photograph taken on June 22, 2013. (Photograph by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University).

The [Unity Council](#) defines the Fruitvale District as a two and a half square mile area bordered by High St., 14th Ave., Interstate 580, and the Oakland Estuary. The list of crimes reported by [CrimeMapping.com](#), which is linked through the [City of Oakland's Police Department](#), includes crimes such as robbery, assault, prostitution, and burglary. Of approximately 375 reported incidents of crime, 86 of them were assaults, 51 were theft related, and 48 of them were burglaries. Crimes were reported the seven days of the week. There is a high concentration of crimes bellow the Foothill Blvd, which is where more than half of the schools are located.

Guerra believes that students are affected and exposed to crime in schools that are "more down towards that area." "That" area is what she considers to be "down bellow Foothill." International Blvd., which is bellow Foothill Blvd., has made headlines because of [prostitution](#). The Fruitvale

District is considered one of the “hot spots” for robberies in the article [“Oakland: Robbery capital of America.”](#)

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Catalina Palacios, local Health Educator and HIV Test Councilor who calls Oakland “work and home,” is not surprised by the fact that within a matter of days Oakland has seen three police chiefs in office. Within two weeks, articles about the problem of [prostitution](#) in Oakland were published; the trailer for the film [“Fruitvale Station”](#) was released; Oakland made headlines as [“America’s Robbery Capital;”](#) and the city has been through three different police chiefs. Palacios believes that crime in Oakland “is getting worst” with robberies being the biggest problem in the [Fruitvale District](#) where she works and lives.

One day after Oakland was named the [“Robbery Capital of America,”](#) Police Chief [Howard Jordan](#) [stepped down](#) for medical reasons. Acting Police Chief [Anthony Toribio](#) “voluntarily” stepped down two days later. Palacios believes that “the criminals are more organized than [the police] are,” because “they’re downtown playing musical chairs.”

The Fruitvale District

According to the [Unity Council](#), the Fruitvale District has the city of Oakland’s most diverse population. It is known for its

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Latino celebrations such as Cinco de Mayo and [Día de los Muertos](#). The film "[Fruitvale Station](#)" is a movie about the 2009 shooting of Oakland resident [Oscar Grant](#) at the Fruitvale Bay Area Rapid Transit ([BART](#)) station. Grant died at the station after being shot by BART police officer Johannes Mehserle. Recently though, diversity, celebrations and films are not the only thing Fruitvale has gained attention for; now added to the list are also its [high robbery rate](#) and [widespread prostitution](#).

Crimes and the Youth

Palacios who not only lives, but also works in the Fruitvale district has seen the effect of robberies at work and at home. Her neighbor was robbed at 7 a.m. one morning after he stepped out for a cigarette, to which she says that robberies have become so common that "it's like [going] down the street to get some groceries." In working with youth she has also noticed a drop in participation because the youth "get mugged on their way to the program." In other cases, they program participants and their families have been victims of "home invasions."

A second crime that highly concerns Palacios daily is prostitution, particularly when she believes that the girls are under age. Local news station [KTVU](#) published a special report on [prostitution](#) on International boulevard, which runs through the Fruitvale district. According to [KTVU](#) there are girls as young as 13 prostituting.

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As a part of her work, Palacios regularly gives out condoms. Her concerns for the girls are that “they are protecting themselves, and how much say [they] have when it comes to protecting themselves. Are they there by choice or by force?” Palacios shares the story of a young girl who she gave condoms to who “looked like she was 12.” Her pimps, says Palacios, “didn’t look any much older than her.” In addition to her concern for the safety of the girls, Palacios is aware that the prostitution is taking place at all hours of the day and night. With more than four public and private [schools in the neighborhood](#), “Everybody gets to see it.”

Resources



Fruitvale District residents run errands up and down International Blvd in Oakland, Calif., on Friday, May 3, 2013. (Photograph by: Natalie Rodriguez/Full Sail University).

Despite the district’s crime rates Palacios remains hopeful, “It’s beautiful to live in Oakland.” Below is a list of community resources that are readily available in the Fruitvale District.

- [East Side Arts Alliance](#)
- [The Unity Council](#)

- La Clinica de la Raza
- El Centro Legal de La Raza
- The Youth Law Academy
- Native American Health Center