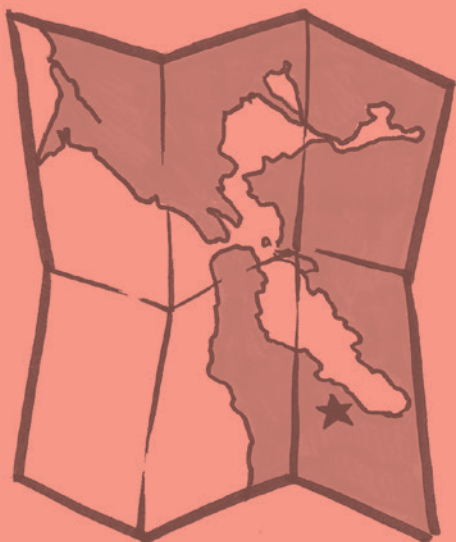


BE-



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PERSPECTIVES from
YOUTH & ELDERs in
PALO ALTO & EAST PALO ALTO

Belonging: Perspectives from Youth and Elders in Palo Alto and East Palo Alto

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Palo Alto, California, USA



Developed by Christine Wong Yap in conjunction with *Creative Attention: Art & Community Restoration* at the Palo Alto Art Center, in collaboration with Eastside College Preparatory School and Avenidas.

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Introduction

Christine Wong Yap

These perspectives on belonging were gathered during my artist residency project at the Palo Alto Art Center. This represented a collaborative effort between the Palo Alto Art Center and community partners: Avenidas (an organization serving older adults) in Palo Alto and Eastside College Preparatory School in East Palo Alto. I am grateful to the champions and supporters at each organization, and to every teen and older adult contributor for sharing their story of belonging with me, and now, with readers.

BACKGROUND

I have been conducting community-engaged projects to learn about the theory and practice of belonging over the past five years. I see belonging as operating on an individual level: feeling safe, seen, and accepted. It is akin to a sense of psychological safety: being able to share your most authentic self without fear of judgment or recrimination. Additionally, regardless of others or outside circumstances, one can also feel a sense of belonging to oneself. Belonging also operates on a social level—as a lens through which issues of equity, inclusion, access, and justice can be seen and examined.

PROCESS

I conducted workshops about belonging with 12 students at Eastside Prep and 19 participants in Palo Alto Art Center's Teen Leadership program. I asked them, "Where do you feel (or where have you felt) a sense of belonging?" and "Do you carry a sense of belonging with you?" If they didn't feel a sense of belonging, they were invited to elaborate upon how they might envision one. After leading them through calligraphy exercises, I invited them to hand-letter statements of belonging, resulting in the artworks seen in the later part of this zine.

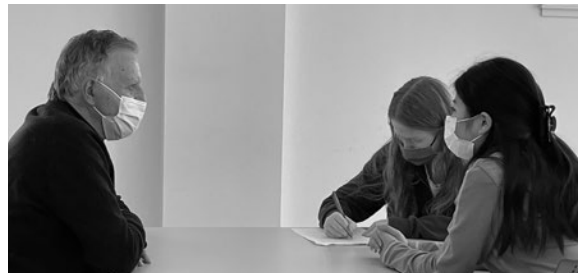


Artworks and calligraphy exercises from a workshop with the Palo Alto Art Center Teen Leadership program.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

In addition, Palo Alto Art Center teens interviewed seven older adults at Avenidas, asking them the same questions. The teens took reference photos to use in a cartooning workshop to create the portraits.

Finally, as part of the concurrent exhibition, *Creative Attention: Art & Community Restoration*, I created an interactive activity in English, Spanish, and Chinese. The public was invited to pin their places of belonging on a map of Palo Alto and East Palo Alto/Lamchin (Ohlone village) or a map of the world. I share a few of those community responses in the maps on pages 6–9.



Clockwise from top left: Shine and Renny interviewing Richard at Avenidas. Elise Hu drawing a portrait of Eileen. Community mapping interactive activity at Palo Alto Art Center (photo: Eimear Picardo). Sara Sierra-García photographing Eleanor outside of Avenidas.

BELONGING: A SNAPSHOT

Many younger contributors feel a sense of belonging at home in their bedrooms, where they can enjoy a sense of ownership and autonomy, which are rarely afforded to young people. Half of the students at Eastside Prep who identified a place of belonging cited home, a relative's home, or their bedroom. This could suggest a strong connection to family. It may also reflect the fact that some students at Eastside Prep live in the dorms, which may instigate a greater appreciation for the family home.

School—including activity-based locations or groups, such as track, art club, or band—was also a popular choice. Libraries, gardens, parks, and the Palo Alto Art Center itself were also oft-cited, speaking to the value of the public commons, especially freely accessible cultural and recreational resources.

The seven older adults' responses varied widely. I suspect that with greater life experiences, economic and social capital, and retirement comes the agency to pursue authentic, self-concordant relationships, behaviors, and spaces. Some seniors spoke about connection via choir practice, bridge club, or simply walking during stay-at-home

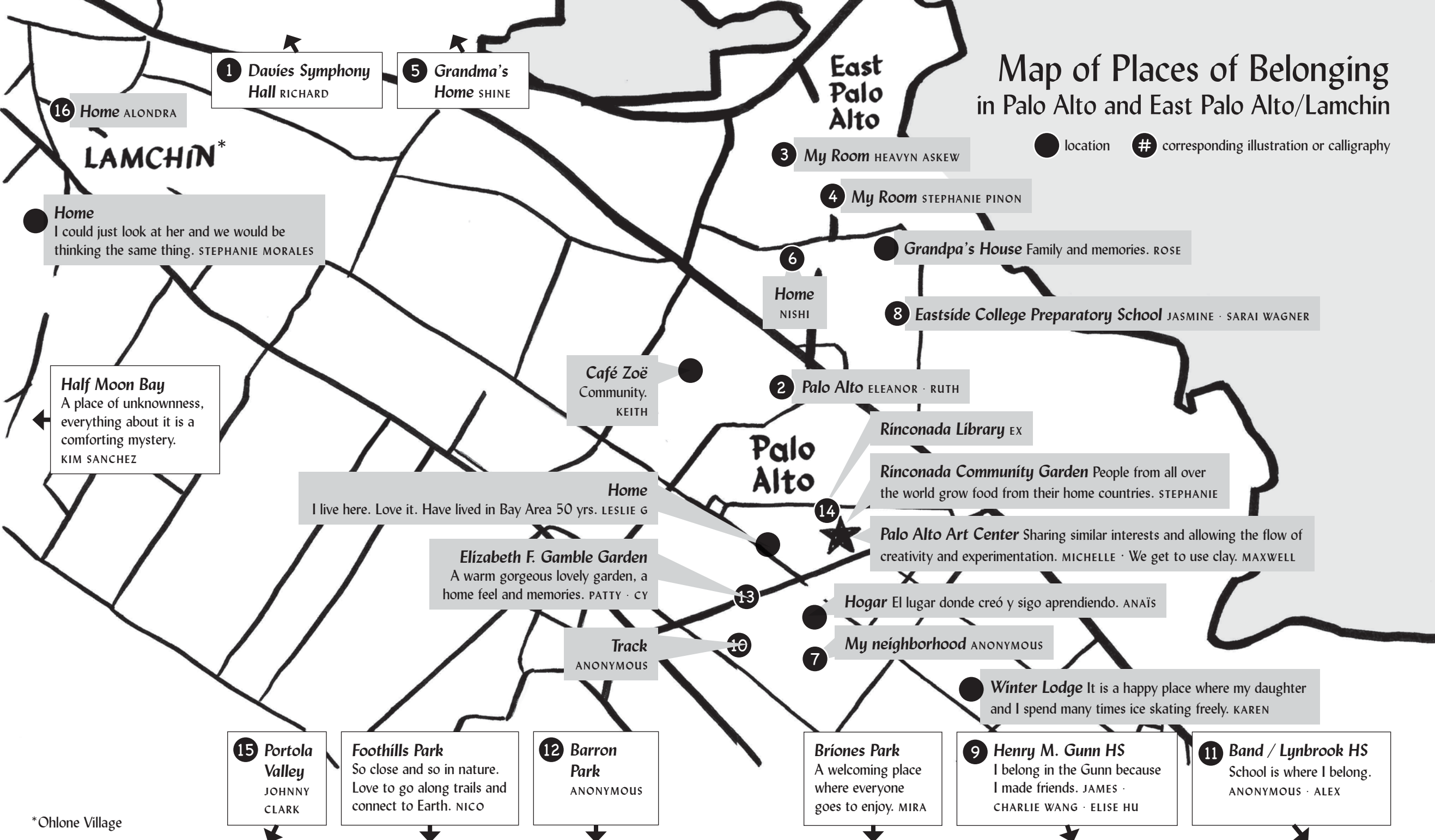
orders. Others shared thoughtful responses about carrying belonging or being responsible for their own sense of belonging.

The locations identified by the public via the community mapping activity included local favorites like the Winter Lodge (a longstanding ice rink) to international countries of origin, reflecting the immigrant families who call Palo Alto and East Palo Alto home.

The perspectives here reflect exigencies and privileges of diverse life stages and demographic positionalities. Through this project, contributors engaged in self-reflection, art-making, and connection—activities which can be grounding in an era of uncertainty and disruption.

Map of Places of Belonging in Palo Alto and East Palo Alto/Lamchin

● location # corresponding illustration or calligraphy



16 Home ALONDRA

1 Davies Symphony Hall RICHARD

5 Grandma's Home SHINE

3 My Room HEAVYN ASKEW

4 My Room STEPHANIE PINON

6 Home NISHI

Grandpa's House Family and memories. ROSE

8 Eastside College Preparatory School JASMINE · SARAI WAGNER

2 Palo Alto ELEANOR · RUTH

Rinconada Library EX

Rinconada Community Garden People from all over the world grow food from their home countries. STEPHANIE

Palo Alto Art Center Sharing similar interests and allowing the flow of creativity and experimentation. MICHELLE · We get to use clay. MAXWELL

Hogar El lugar donde creó y sigo aprendiendo. ANAÍS

7 My neighborhood ANONYMOUS

Winter Lodge It is a happy place where my daughter and I spend many times ice skating freely. KAREN

15 Portola Valley JOHNNY CLARK

Foothills Park So close and so in nature. Love to go along trails and connect to Earth. NICO

12 Barron Park ANONYMOUS

Bríones Park A welcoming place where everyone goes to enjoy. MIRA

9 Henry M. Gunn HS I belong in the Gunn because I made friends. JAMES · CHARLIE WANG · ELISE HU

11 Band / Lynbrook HS School is where I belong. ANONYMOUS · ALEX

Home I could just look at her and we would be thinking the same thing. STEPHANIE MORALES

Half Moon Bay A place of unknownness, everything about it is a comforting mystery. KIM SANCHEZ

Café Zoë Community. KEITH

Home I live here. Love it. Have lived in Bay Area 50 yrs. LESLIE G

Elizabeth F. Gamble Garden A warm gorgeous lovely garden, a home feel and memories. PATTY · CY

Track ANONYMOUS

*Ohlone Village

Victoria
 British Columbia, Canada
 I moved across Canada to go to university here. Started my career there. Had my children there. Many chapters of my life began there.
 LAURA

Colorado
 USA
 TONY BRADO-RODRIGUEZ

North Beach
 San Francisco, California, USA
 I went to school and lived in North Beach for five years. I got to explore the intersection of Little Italy and Chinatown. I connected with the locals that I saw often. I feel comfortable and I know places to go.
 KENNEDY MORGAN

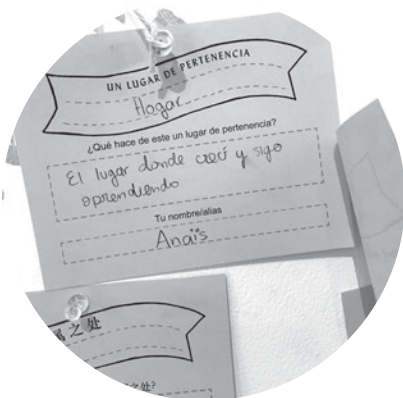
Mexico City
 Mexico
 Family, friends, food, trees, smiles, laughter.
 HELENA

Costa Rica
 LUISA S.

Gwynn Valley
 Brevard, North Carolina, USA
 Its beauty, environment, people, and animals. LILA

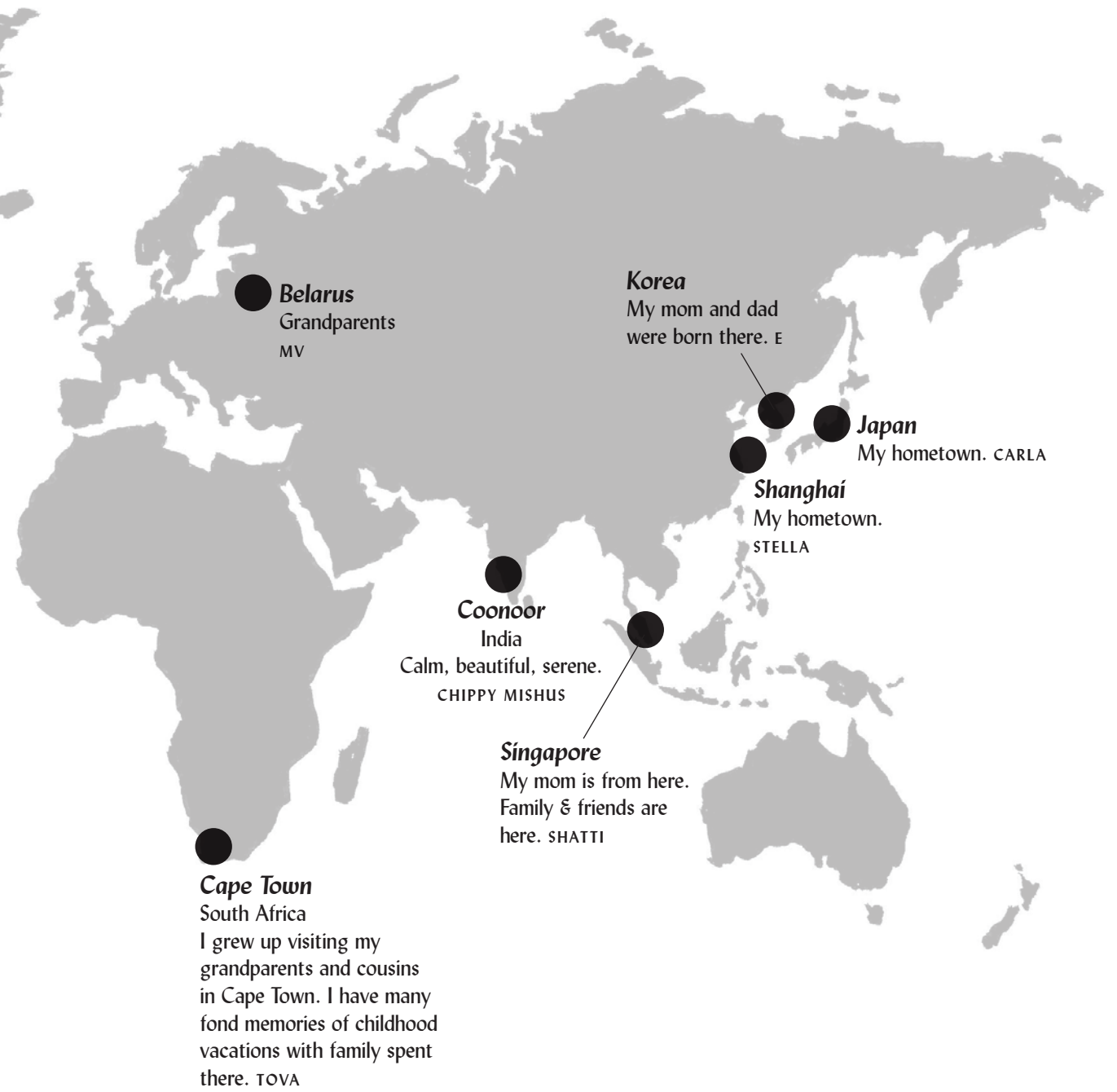
Wayne
 Pennsylvania, USA
 This is where my life shifted and made me into the person that I am today. NIKO RAZAVI

São Paulo
 Brazil
 Have the best friends I could ever ask for.
 ISABEL



Responses are sampled from a community mapping activity at Palo Alto Art Center.

World Map of Selected Places of Belonging



Belarus
 Grandparents
 MV

Korea
 My mom and dad were born there. E

Japan
 My hometown. CARLA

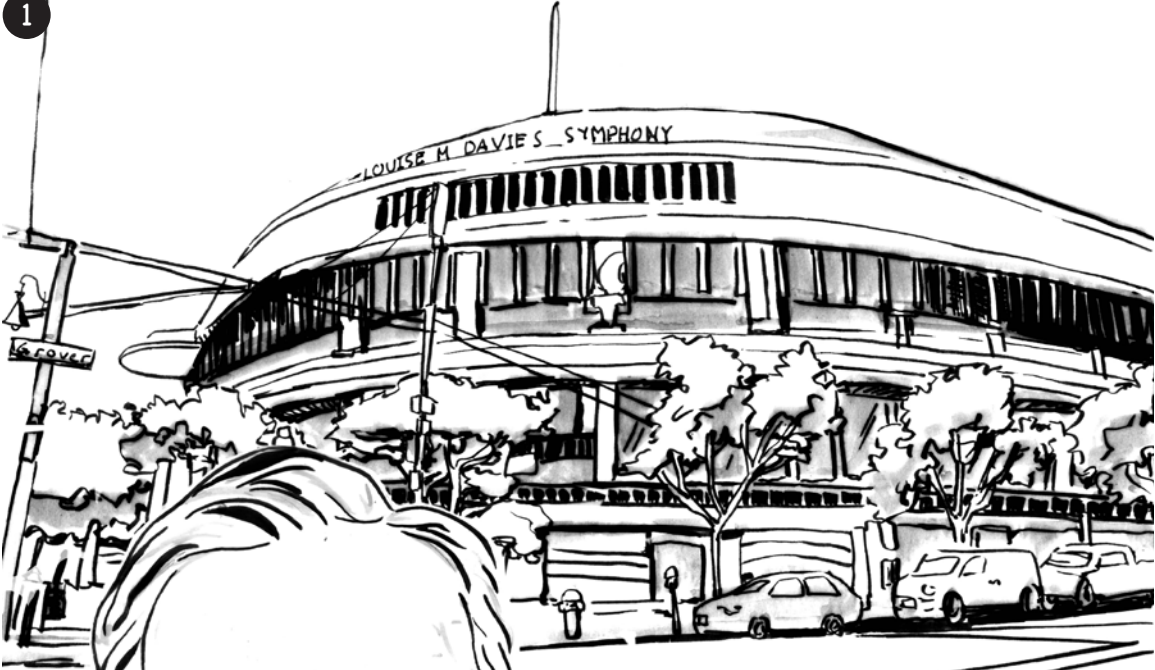
Shanghai
 My hometown.
 STELLA

Coonoor
 India
 Calm, beautiful, serene.
 CHIPPY MISHUS

Singapore
 My mom is from here. Family & friends are here. SHATTI

Cape Town
 South Africa
 I grew up visiting my grandparents and cousins in Cape Town. I have many fond memories of childhood vacations with family spent there. TOVA

1



RICHARD

Davies Symphony Hall
is just an amazing place

You give this
INANIMATE place
so much feeling,
it's not ANIMATED,
but we ANIMATE it

Renny Argast
Shine Lee

2

I BELIEVE
people
ARE THE BASIS
to a good
community

Palo Alto is
a great place
to build
relationships



RUTH L

Mira Singhal



ELEANOR

During the Pandemic,
When I see other people
Walking in Palo Alto...

I think,
"WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER"

I FEEL LIKE SOMEBODY.

Sara
Sierra-García

I DONT FEEL LIKE I *BELONG* ANYWHERE.

I LOVE *ART*, I LOVE TO *CREATE*,

BUT THOSE ACTIVITES ARE ALMOST ALWAYS
ONLY FOR KIDS.

I WISH THERE WERE *MORE* FOR
SENIORS.



LAURA ROBICHEK

Amber
He

I FEEL LIKE
I BELONG
ALMOST
ANYWHERE

AT HOME

AT THE BRIDGE CLUB



MARK

Charlie Wang

I LIKE to KNOW I'M
SURROUNDED by those
I TRUST...

It MAKES me
FEEL SAFE.



Eileen

Marianne
Jeffs

IT'S MY JOB TO
DEFINE WHO I AM
FOR MYSELF

I CARRY BELONGING
WITH ME



ICA P.
ANYA L.
KIM S.

3

MY ROOM

SIMPLY
Me.

HEAVYN ASKEW

4

MY ROOM

COTTON
CANDY
PINK

STEPHANIE PINON

GRANDMA'S HOME

COMFORT
O F
UNDERSTANDING

SHINE

5

Belonging to...

TREE-LINED
STREETS LET
A FEELING OF
PEACE FLOW
THROUGH ME



ANONYMOUS

7

THE
COMFORT OF A HOME
IS FILLED WITH
NARRATIVE &
AUTHENTICITY

NISHI GOYAL

6

8

Eastside Girls Dorm
We're all
PUZZLE
PIECES

SARAI WAGNER

EASTSIDE

Where I Can Be
LOUD
And Laugh

JASMINE

8

GUNN HIGH SCHOOL

WELCOMING
SAFE
HAPPY
BELONGING PLACE

ELISE HU

9

GUNN HIGH SCHOOL

BELONGING
IS MY
EXPERIENCES

CHARLIE WANG

9

10

TRACK
is where
NOTHING ELSE
MATTERS
but the
CURRENT MOMENT

ANONYMOUS

ART STUDIO

SHARING SIMILAR
INTERESTS AND
ALLOWING THE
FLOW OF
CREATIVITY
AND
experimentation

ANONYMOUS

BAND IS WHERE
'BELONG

ALEX

11

12

BARRON PARK

PEACE

ANONYMOUS

BELONGING
IN A PLACE OF
DIVERSITY
WOULD BE
HUMANIZING

DIANE

ELIZABETH F. GAMBLE GARDEN

13

A PLACE OF
PEACEFULNESS
...MAKES...
THE FEELINGS OF
BELONGING

CY

My house
It's the food
&
the music

HAZEL GONZALEZ

HOME
I DON'T
HAVE TO
PUT UP ANY
WALLS

JOCELYN GUZMAN

16 ~ Home ~
·authentic· ·comforting· ·safe·
Is ·me·
·Loved· Where ·Welcomed·
~ BELONG ~

ALONDRA

INVITING
WARMTH SPREADS
AUTHENTICALLY

ILA PERINKDAM

RINCONADA LIBRARY

14

MAN THE LIBRARY
PROVIDES
A
LOUD
WELCOME OF
⇒ A COMFORTABLE
SILENCE


EX

15
PORTOLA VALLEY
FRESH AIR
FOR
MY MIND...

JOHNNY CLARK

17 COLORADO
Freedom
Comfort
FAMILY

TONY BRADO-RODRIGUEZ

18 COSTA RICA
peace
calms
INNER CHAOS

LUISA S.

Collaborators

CHRISTINE WONG YAP is a visual artist and social practitioner working in community engagement, drawing, printmaking, publishing, and public art. She partners with organizations to conduct participatory research projects to explore dimensions of psychological wellbeing such as belonging, resilience, interdependence, and collaboration. She has participated in over a dozen residencies and studio programs. She is based in the San Francisco Bay Area, after a decade of living in New York City. She has felt belonging in Muay Thai and jiu-jitsu gyms, and in printshops and boxing clubs.

EASTSIDE COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL is a private high school in East Palo Alto, California, with a focus on readying first-generation students from low-income families to attend and succeed in 4-year colleges.

AVENIDAS is a community-based nonprofit organization that provides older adults a wide range of programs, information, and services that enable them to stay active, maintain their independence, help their aging parents, or care for a spouse. Avenidas' innovative programs and compassionate staff enrich the lives of more than 7,500 mature adults and their families each year.

PALO ALTO ART CENTER

Created by the community, for the community in 1971, the Palo Alto Art Center provides an accessible and welcoming place to engage with art. We serve approximately 150,000 people every year through a diverse range of programs.



The Palo Alto Art Center is owned and operated by the City of Palo Alto as a program of the Division of Arts and Sciences, Department of Community Services. The Palo Alto Art Center Foundation was founded in 1973 and is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that provides financial support and advocacy to the Art Center through a public/private partnership that allows us to enhance our reach and impact in the community.

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Eileen

PEOPLE IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD
ARE IMPORTANT TO ME. I SEE
THEM EVERYDAY OR ONCE IN AWHILE.

THEY CHECK IN, SAY HELLO,
STOP AND CHAT, OFFERS OF HELP.

BEFORE COVID, WE'D GET
TOGETHER FOR THE HOLIDAYS.