



YOU CAN DO IT MIJA!



BLOSSOMING Con Intencion



Welcome back Mija Community!

We hope that you all are enjoying a fresh start with a fresh new season. As we continue to sow seeds of intention within our community, we are beyond joyful to watch those seeds blossom one by one. Inspired by the beauty of spring and spirit of transformation and renewal that it brings, this month's issue will be focusing on women in the arts and their powerful expressions around identity. But before we dive into that, as always, we would love to share with you what we have been up to and what we are looking forward to!

For the past three weeks, Mija mentors have been visiting four freshman health classes at Taos High School (thanks, Ms. Audrey!). We have been offering sessions on identity, health & nutrition, career paths, activism, and boundaries through art, group circles, and experiential practices in self-defense, movement, and mindful eating. At our monthly visit to Vista Grande High School, we shared a video of a speech that inspired us—from Taos Woman of Impact Maria Gonzalez at the 2026 Taoseña awards—and invited students to reflect on the powerful women in their lives and which of these qualities they already embody or want to work towards. It has been a delight to engage in these practices along with the Mija mentees: to learn what the teens care about and encourage their growing leadership qualities.



We also wrapped up the "Say Yes to the Prom Dress" donation drive with a beautiful private event at Cafe Sagrado. Six young ladies took home dresses, accessories, and self-care kits. We were also able to raffle off hair and make-up appointments for the day of prom thanks to Susan Potter of Salon Sage and Natalie, a local make-up artist. Due to an amazing amount of community donations, the remainder of the dresses remained available at Taos High School resource center The Tiger's Den.

We are currently in the midst of planning our first annual **Mija Teen Summit** for May 2nd focused on vision, values, and voice. We have a few spots left, so be sure to share the flyer with a teen you know who might love this!

Upcoming Events

✦ **MIJA MONDAY**
April 27th

✦ **MIJA TEEN SUMMIT**
May 2nd



MIJA MONDAY Monthly Gathering

Thank you to everyone who joined us last month for a special Mija Monday in honor of International Women's Month!

We enjoyed agua fresca mocktails while remembering and celebrating inspirational women in our lives and communities. We ended the evening with a fun and energizing Zumba session with Neida Sanchez Aragon! Be sure to check her out on Tuesday evenings at Taos Spa! Gracias Neida!

JOIN US on 4/27 for **Mija Monday: Knitting w/ Ale!**

Ale will be sharing the basics of knitting and guiding us through a simple pattern to create a coaster! No experience is necessary—needle and yarn provided for session and to take home!



MUJERES OF MIJA Opal McCarthy



Meet Opal: Mija Program Coordinator and Facilitator
Opal began her work at UNM-Taos in spring 2023 as an Enchanted Circle Corps member and has been nurturing the Mija Program from its origin in summer 2023.

As a poet, teacher, and performance artist dedicated to uplifting women's voices and visions, Opal has found passion and purpose in her work with Mija. After pursuing her BA in Political Science at American University in Washington, DC, Opal embraced writing as an important channel for shaping social change and building community. She earned her MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Minnesota, published her first collection of poetry in 2016, and has taught many academic and community-based creative writing classes. Opal has also worked as a postpartum doula and forest preschool teacher, and she has served as a writing coach in the UNM-Taos writing studio for the past three years.

Heartened by women writers like Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Adrienne Rich who have lived into their own power, Opal approaches her role with the Mija Program as a poet: she endeavors to name the unique strengths and embolden the voices of program members and of women of all ages in our community. She is especially dedicated to creating safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ youth and for women who have experienced trauma.

In her Mija work, Opal loves to support women in building confidence through trusting relationships with each other, and she is honored to be an advocate for the voices and visions of women and teen girls in Taos.

INSPIRACIÓN

Delilah Montoya



Artist with *La Llorona in Lillith's Garden #1, 2004*

Delilah Montoya is a prominent Chicana artist and educator whose documentary photography, printmaking, and installation art examine Chicano culture, identity, and New Mexico history.

Born in Fort Worth, Texas in 1955 to a Latina mother and Anglo father, Montoya was raised in Omaha, Nebraska — though her roots run deep in the Southwest. Her mother hailed from Las Vegas, New Mexico, and family visits to the state left a lasting impression. "Home," for Montoya, is New Mexico. She eventually moved there to study, earning her BA, MA, and MFA in Photography from the University of New Mexico.

Her academic career has taken her across the country, with teaching positions at the University of New Mexico, California State University, and the Institute of American Indian Arts. She currently serves as a professor of photography at the University of Houston.

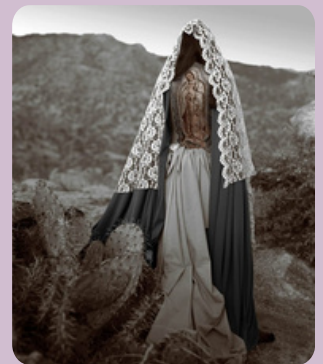
Since the early 1980s, Montoya's work has been inseparable from activism. Rooted in the "Chicanismo" pride of New Mexico, her photography, printmaking, and large-scale installations weave together Catholic icono-



La Llorona in Lillith's Garden #2, 2004



La Malinche, 1993



La Virgen, 1999



Detention Nation, Selene's Dream 2015
Cyanotype body print of Selene, a dreamer who faced deportation

graphy, Mesoamerican folklore, and pointed social commentary on border politics and gender. Her more recent work incorporates mixed media and DNA mapping to probe the complexities of cultural and biological hybridity.

A major retrospective, *Activating Chicana Resistance* — spanning four decades of photography, printmaking, and research — is currently on view at the Albuquerque Museum through May 3rd.



VOCES ALTAS

Leticia Guzman



Leticia Guzman presents *Arroz con Leche & Chingona*

Leticia Guzman is a queer Chicana poet, educator, and organizer from Hayward, California. Serving as the 2025 Hayward Poet Laureate, she has spent over a decade writing and performing poetry that centers healing, family history, and community empowerment.

A Youth Speaks alumna, Guzman began her journey as a youth slam poet, competing at the international Brave New Voices competition in 2017. Youth Speaks is a pioneering organization dedicated to spoken word performance, education, and youth development. Guzman has since returned to the organization as a teaching artist and co-coached the 2025 championship team. Through spoken word, she works to empower her inner child, document her family's history, and uplift others through the power of shared story.

Her writing has appeared in the Youth Speaks anthology *Between My Body and The Air* and in the Steve Martin and Edie Brickell musical *Bright Star*. She continues to live and create in Hayward, California.

Watch a young Leticia share her two most recognizable poems, *Arroz con Leche* and *Chingona*, at The Culture Conference 2018 as she explores the themes she has become known for as well as her raw *Chingona* alter ego.

<https://youtu.be/f9gLLorDM68?si=5x6vRYqnv8ZEXWKR>



CELEBRATE WITH US



MIJA MONDAY

APR
27

KNITTING w/ Ale
Padre Martinez Hall ABCD
4:00 - 5:00 PM

JOIN US for Mija Monday—a gathering space for women rooted in community, support, and empowerment. Come connect with a community of women committed to uplifting one another and cultivating leadership from within.

All Are Welcome!



For more details and updates about Mija Mondays, please visit our website or follow us on social media





The UNM-Taos Mija mentorship program brings together women of all ages to build confidence, make friends, share skills, and create new opportunities. Through mentoring, leadership training, art, and fun activities, we support you to discover what matters to you, and uplift your unique perspective and voice.



Join our Spring 2026 Mija Teen Summit!

- Attend women's empowerment gathering at UNM-Taos on Saturday 5/2 (Breakfast and lunch provided)
- Match with a mentor
- Receive a stipend for full participation!
- Transportation available



TEEN SIGN-UP



Contact: mija@unm.edu
Program Coordinator: 575-737-3736



MIJA WEBSITE + SOCIAL MEDIA

GET IN TOUCH

Looking to collaborate with the You Can Do It, Mija program?

We'd love to hear from you with your ideas, questions, or community happenings!

Email us at mija@unm.edu or call Opal at 575-737-3736.

Interested in becoming a Mija Mentor or an advocate for the program?

[Sign up here.](#)

Follow us on social media and visit our website to stay up to date:

[Mija Instagram](#)

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Get in touch with Newsletter creator Melissa Rorman at mrorman@unm.edu