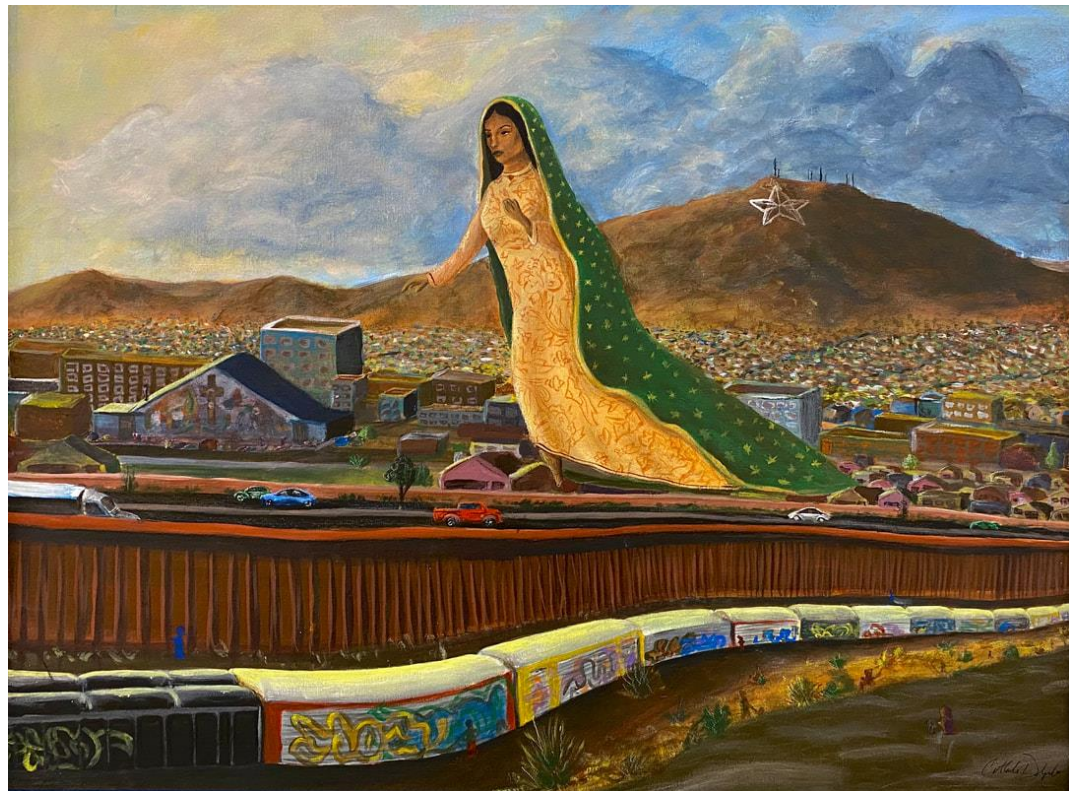




IMAGINING AMERICA
artists + scholars in public life



Providing Passage: Practicing the Worlds We Want

October 3 – 5, 2025
Las Cruces, New Mexico

“Destino Manifesto” by Citlali Delgado, 2023

2025 Imagining America National Gathering

In partnership with **New Mexico State University** and a local Steering Committee, Imagining America (IA) invites participants to gather in Las Cruces, New Mexico for the in-person 2025 IA National Gathering on **October 3-5, 2025**.



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Visit iagathering.org

View the full call for proposals

Updates on travel and hotel information

Link to online form to submit proposals

2025 Imagining America National Gathering

Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life (IA) brings together scholars, artists, designers, humanists, and organizers to imagine, study, and enact a more just and liberatory 'America' and world. Working across institutional, disciplinary, and community divides, IA strengthens and promotes public scholarship, cultural organizing, and campus change that inspires collective imagination, knowledge-making, and civic action on pressing public issues. By dreaming and building together in public, IA creates the conditions to shift culture and transform inequitable institutional and societal structures.

The **IA National Gathering** is an annual convening of more than 500 public scholars, artists, designers, teachers, students, and cultural organizers who are addressing the most pressing issues of our time. Gatherings offer participants a three-day immersive experience in which to connect, dialogue, learn, and strategize on the ways in which the arts, humanities, and design are and may be leveraged locally, regionally, and nationally towards transformative action.

Call for Proposals

Providing Passage: Practicing the Worlds We Want

The 2025 IA National Gathering invites participants to reflect on the ways we provide passage for one another, create havens for safety, and practice connective ways of being together that fortify us for the journey ahead. We especially welcome attention to how art making, creative culture, performance, storytelling, and testimonios provide passage for mutual understanding and collective liberation and make it possible to move towards the seemingly impossible.

Proposals due Monday June 30, 2025.

Providing Passage

The 2025 IA National Gathering invites us to consider how to provide passage for one another and all beings towards a more just, liberatory, and caring future. In ecological terms, to provide passage is to create infrastructure for traveling upstream or through dangerous river crossings towards safety, helping to ensure long-term community resilience. In times of uncertainty and repression, creative and courageous people have worked collectively, at great risk, to provide passage at dangerous crossings towards havens of safety and belonging.

We invite you to reflect on the tensions between safe passage and forced passage, passages of birth and death, and to consider what we must disavow and leave behind so that we do not reproduce troubled pasts and presents. The work of providing passage is not easy and none of it is guaranteed – havens sometimes only provide temporary refuge, belonging is often determined by othering, movements seldom see the full realization of the worlds they helped bring into being. Yet, a proliferation of creative, caring passages is necessary in envisioning and making a different world. In a time where U.S. culture is marked by an isolationist fear of others, consumerist individualism, and social estrangement, we must engage in what Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba call the “ongoing work of charting and experiencing reality together and sharing our joy and grief over the wonders and tragedies of our times” (2023).

The Paso del Norte Region

We take inspiration from the Payhla mur / Bay la mur / Río Bravo / Rio Grande* watershed, which flows from the San Juan Mountains in Colorado through New Mexico and along the Texas-Mexico border, serving as a lifeline for millions. This riverine passage connects and separates the vast and vibrant Paso del Norte region (a geographic cultural area that includes the cities of Las Cruces, El Paso, and Ciudad Juárez). The region forms the binational Borderplex through which thousands of people move daily north to support their families and communities, generating billions of dollars from their labor, and south to visit loved ones and enjoy the interior of Mexico. The Paso del Norte is a permeable borderland whose meaning is made and remade daily by the transits and passages of people and animals.

** The name of the big river is Payhla mur in the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, Bay la mur in the Tortugas Pueblo, Río Bravo in the Spanish language in Mexico, and Rio Grande in the English language in the United States*

Imagining America's 25th Anniversary

Marking the 25th anniversary of Imagining America, this gathering celebrates and conjures *passages*: of time, texts, pathways, and portals that IA has created for public and engaged scholars in the past, present, and imaginable future; and of the life-sustaining ecological, physical, intellectual, and spiritual passages that artists, organizers, and scholars provide as a way forward in the turbulent currents of our time.

An IA-curated track will showcase timely work from the IA network and offer a participatory deliberative space for conference participants to engage in creative dialogue, reflection, strategy, and cultural production surrounding shared concerns and hopes for surviving, thriving, resisting, and building in these times.

Questions for Inspiration

- How do artists, organizers, students, and academic and community-based scholars create a lifeline for people and the planet in times of uncertainty and repression?
- How do we create (physical, spiritual, community, educational, etc.) infrastructure to help beings travel (literally and metaphorically) upstream or through dangerous river crossings to safety and ensure long-term community resilience?
- What are the realities of communities in the Paso del Norte and other borderlands? How might their stories help to upend assumptions about relations across borders?
- How might we think broadly and intersectionally about borders – across scales, space, relations – to consider all the ways we give and take passage as individuals, as members of families, institutions, states, and nations?

Questions for Inspiration

- What are the practices and actions of *providing passage* that offer protection, healing, and collectivity?
- How does cultural organizing, public and community engaged scholarship provide passage for people, ideas, and research?
- How does history provide examples of *providing passage* that allow us to understand the present moment more fully?
- Which textual or artistic passages have inspired deeper understanding of the past, critical analysis of the present, and inspiration towards an imaginable future?
- How can the university be a haven, for a moment in time and space, to create shared belonging? Or can it?
- What will it take for us to build the world we want to survive and even thrive in these times?

Preparing Your Proposal

When preparing your submission, the 2025 Gathering organizers invite you to propose an interactive session in one of the following **formats**:

Share a Presentation About Your Research, Practice, or Artistic Work (5-15 minutes)

- **Lightning Talks** (5 minutes)
- **Projects & Practices Presentation** (15 minutes)

Lead an Interactive Discussion, Workshop or Media/Performance Presentation (60 minutes)

- **Participatory Workshop** (60 minutes)
- **Performance or Media Screening** (60 minutes)

Do Something Different! (ongoing)

- **Creative Works**

The 2025 IA National Gathering takes place from Friday October 3 - Sunday, October 5.
If your proposal is accepted, please be prepared to present on any of these three days.

Session Format: Lightning Talk (5 mins)

- In this brief presentation, a single speaker will share current or past work, creative outputs, media, artistic practice, or community projects.
- Six lightning talks will be scheduled in each 60 minute session, grouped by organizers on shared topics.
- Each speakers will have **five minutes to present**, and the opportunity to integrate shared concepts of their talks into the group discussion that follows.
- **Everyone is welcomed** and encouraged to share in this format as it relates to the gathering theme.
- Speakers may choose to use a visual guide (i.e. poster, powerpoint presentation, video or audio clip), but it is not required.



Session Format: Projects & Practices Presentation (15 mins)

- In this presentation, groups or individuals will share compelling outcomes, lessons learned, methods, or collective change that emerged from community-based projects centering the arts, performance, design, cultural organizing, and/or humanities practices.
- When submitting your proposal, you must **pre-select two themes** that best apply:
 - 1) creative community arts,
 - 2) public engaged scholarship,
 - 3) cultural organizing,
 - 5) institutional culture change,
 - 6) practices of providing passage,
 - 7) borderlands.
- In each 60 minute session organized by theme, three presenting groups will give 15 minute presentations with the remaining time for shared discussion.



Session Format: Participatory Workshop (60 mins)

- Facilitators set an agenda and organize participant activities over 60 minutes.
- The session can focus on specific skill development, artistic or creative practice, participatory performances and movement, guided collective activity, or facilitate an interactive dialogue around a pressing issue or action.
- Workshops must be **highly interactive, collaborative**, and provide opportunities for **group co-creation**.



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Session Format: Performance or Media Screening (60 mins)

- Share a **performance or media screening** related to the IA National Gathering thematic.
- These sessions are scheduled in **an auditorium venue** (pictured below) and presenters will have access to a projector, screen, and microphone set up.
- Note: gathering organizers do not have the capacity to provide technical production support or offer advanced rehearsal space.



Session Format: Creative Works (ongoing)

- Creative, alternative proposals for **visual and/or material work, or collective art-making activities** that are ongoing (not limited to a single session).
- Creative works will be **set up in the IA registration hub** and may include self-directed instructions for participants or be staffed.
- If selected for inclusion in the IA National Gathering, IA staff will reach out for specific set up needs.



How to Submit Your Proposal

The submission deadline is

Monday, June 30, 2025 at 11:59 PM PT.

Each proposal requires the following information:

1. **Session Organizer(s) Information**
2. **Session Format**
3. **Session Title**
4. **Session Description** (350 words)
5. **Session Contribution to IA and the IA National Gathering Theme** (200 words)

If your proposal format is a Participatory Workshop, you will also need to submit:

6. **Session Goals** (200 words)

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Describe the activities that will take place during the session.
Provide context for what you will do or work that you will share.
Explain the nature of any collaborations (*we encourage intergenerational, multi-organizational, and collective sessions*).

Be sure to give enough information so that reviewers can understand what the session is about and what participants may experience/learn from attending the session.

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Share specifically how this session contributes to the work of Imagining America and/or the Gathering's focus on providing passage: practicing the worlds we want.

Contributions to the work of Imagining America should reflect the mission, history, and values of IA (see imaginingamerica.org/who-we-are/we-believe) or connect with ongoing projects within the IA network.

Contributions to the Gathering's focus on providing passage should articulate how the session will deepen participants' understanding of the theme.

How to Submit Your Proposal

If your proposal format is a **Participatory Workshop**, you will also need to submit:

6. **Session Goals** (200 words)

Please describe what participants will do in the session and identify tools, outcomes, or resources that participants will carry into the world from your session.

With as much detail as possible, share specifically what participants will do during the session and what they will take away from the experience.

Describe any tools, outcomes, or resources that will be shared or created during the session.

Reviewers will be interested to hear how participants will benefit and learn from attending your session.

What Happens Next?

- ☐ Proposals will be **accepted through June 30** - submit through an online form available at **iagathering.org**
- ☐ In July, submissions will be reviewed by members of the 2025 IA National Gathering Steering Committee.
- ☐ In mid-July, you will receive a notification about the status of your proposal (accepted or not).
- ☐ All attendees, **including presenters**, must register for the IA National Gathering. Registration will open in mid-June 2025.
- ☐ If accepted, you will submit a final title and description, confirm all co-presenters, and communicate any technology or space needs by early August.
- ☐ The IA National Gathering program, travel and lodging details, and FAQs will be updated on **iagathering.org** as information becomes available.
- ☐ Attend the 2025 IA National Gathering October 3 -5 in Las Cruces, New Mexico!

Questions?

Learn more on the Imagining America
National Gathering website:
iagathering.org

All other questions can be directed to
gathering@imaginingamerica.org
or call (530) 297-4640.

