

Artist uses family photos to honor her Native American history

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Artist Mercedes Dorame used family photos to combine the past and the present. Her series called "Living Proof" shows the true life of Native Americans in America. Photo by: Mercedes Dorame.

A few years ago, Mercedes Dorame got a gift from her father. It was a computer disc with photos of her family. She had never seen some of the people before.

The gift was more than just photos. It gave Dorame a new way to understand her family history. Her family is part of the Gabrielino-Tongva tribe. This Native American tribe has been based in the Los Angeles area for many years. Los Angeles is a big city in Southern California.



The Gabrielino-Tongva tribe is not recognized by the government. When tribes are recognized, they can get benefits. They may get reservation land to live on. They may also get money for certain projects.

The Gabrielino-Tongva is one of hundreds of tribes that are not recognized. So they do not receive these benefits.

No Place To Come Together

Dorame said the group has had problems because they do not have reservation land. They do not have a place to come together, she said. This has been hard for the tribe, she said.

When she got the photos, Dorame started an art project. She projected the photos around her



apartment, the way movies are projected onto a screen at the movie theater. Then she took pictures. She called the result "Living Proof." It brings her family's history into her world today.

She Shows Tribe's Past And Present

Dorame said she took the photos to bring attention to her tribe. The tribe has survived for many years. It has kept its traditions over time. This was not always easy. Native Americans were not treated very well in the past. They were sometimes pressured to give up their culture.

Her photos also show different ideas of who Native Americans are. Many people picture a certain kind of person when they think about Native Americans, Dorame said. However, this is not based on facts. Instead, it is based on a common type of Native American character. This character is often used in movies and TV shows.

Dorame hopes people will be interested in her photos. Then, they may be interested in her tribe, too. She wants them to learn about the tribe's past and present.

Most importantly, she wants people to know that her tribe still exists, she said.



Quiz

1 What is the MAIN idea of the article?

- (A) Dorame was given photographs of her family as a gift.
- (B) Dorame started an art project to bring attention to her tribe.
- (C) The Gabrielino-Tongva tribe is based in the Los Angeles area.
- (D) Native Americans were not treated very well in the past.

2 Read the paragraph from the introduction [paragraphs 1-3].

The Gabrielino-Tongva tribe is not recognized by the government. When tribes are recognized, they can get benefits. They may get reservation land to live on. They may also get money for certain projects. The Gabrielino-Tongva is one of hundreds of tribes that are not recognized. So they do not receive these benefits.

What is the MAIN focus of this paragraph?

- (A) Tribes that are recognized by the government can get land or money.
- (B) The government does not have enough reservation land for all of the tribes.
- (C) The Gabrielino-Tongva tribe hopes that the government will help it complete certain projects.
- (D) Hundreds of tribes are working to be recognized by the government.

3 Read the selection from the section "No Place To Come Together."

Dorame said the group has had problems because they do not have reservation land. They do not have a place to come together, she said.

What does "reservation land" mean in this selection?

- (A) land that is being saved for future projects
- (B) land that people cannot live on
- (C) land that is set aside for certain people
- (D) land that is home to important wildlife

4 Read the sentence from the section "She Shows Tribe's Past And Present."

Many people picture a certain kind of person when they think about Native Americans, Dorame said.

Which word could replace "picture" WITHOUT changing the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) know
- (B) describe
- (C) draw
- (D) imagine