

PURPLE MOON DANCE PROJECT

By Jill Togawa

Twenty Seasons

[Purple Moon Dance Project](#), founded in 1992, will celebrate its 20th season of performances, interdisciplinary collaboration and arts and community programs in 2011!

Purple Moon Dance Project explores the continuum of intimacy between women and illuminates less visible and unheard stories from our communities, through the integration of non-western and western dance forms and aesthetics and interdisciplinary collaboration. Our underlying mission is to contribute to transformation, peace and healing in our society, through the medium of dance.



When Dreams are Interrupted

With support from the East Bay Community Foundation's Fund for Artists the site-specific work, *When Dreams Are Interrupted* invited audiences to witness the rupture of Japanese American communities during World War II. *When Dreams...* premiered last October in Berkeley and was performed this spring at San Francisco's City Hall and Japantown's Sundance Theatre.

When Dreams... was inspired by a redwood tree, a garden and the story of a family torn away from their home in 1942. I learned about the Nakazawas as my own family was about to move into our home on the same property in Berkeley three summers ago. I began imagining what our new neighborhood must have been like 65 years ago when people of color were redlined here and almost half the families on our block were Japanese. I knew that the

Nakazawas, and the African American family who came after them, had somehow made the way for my own multi-racial, two-mom family to be here in 2007.

*How would I go
on if I had to
stop now?*

*and start again
at some*

*undetermined
time in the
future?*

*would my heart
break too?**



As my primary collaborator Ellen Bepp and I began talking in early 2008 we spoke of our own parents' and grandparents' dreams, and of ecology. Just as ecosystems are impacted by damage to one part of it, trauma to one community has long lasting impact not only on the individuals in that community but on all the other communities they touch in some way.

*When Dreams Are
Interrupted....
Where do they go?
Can we put them
together again?
And are we always
trying to finish them?**



In the first rehearsals the artists shared stories of their own experience with loss and departures. And as the piece took shape over the next year, we invited the spirits of the ancestors and elders we met and read about, to come inside our hearts and stay

with us as we worked and began to perform the piece.

"I was still basking for hours after in the reflective mood, the emotions, the history and the perseverance of our ancestors, peers and community. And to be in that backyard anchored the history perfectly! I was inspired to really look at my life ahead, too. ...what can I do to give more to this community...." ~ Berkeley audience member

Reaching Atypical Audiences

The California Arts Council's Creating Public Value Program (CPV) provided valuable support to engage audiences and offer free performances to school groups, camp survivors, neighbors and community members who are not typically arts goers. Together with the James Irvine Foundation's Creative Connections Fund and collaborator Preserving California's Japantowns, CPV funds will also enable us to tour the work to historic towns where it would not otherwise be seen. In Lodi we performed indoors and in an alley of the old Japantown to celebrate a mural dedication, and in July we will perform in Tule Lake, where we have the honor of joining a pilgrimage to the concentration camp where 18,000 Japanese were incarcerated.



"...It was one of the most moving portrayals I have ever seen — It brought home to me what it must have felt

like to be told to give up your home, your farm or business, and your life among friends and family, dispose of all your possessions except what you could carry... Those of us who have not known this kind of experience should be very grateful, inasmuch as this is still going on in other parts of the world."

~ Lodi News Sentinel

When Dreams... continues to evolve, as we adapt sections to incorporate stories and experiences that are specific to each site and community where it's offered. This has been tremendously satisfying and

emotional work for the collaborators who include visual artists, dancers, musicians, technicians, documentors, staff, and community performers who have joined us in Berkeley and San Francisco - each person finding or bringing some very personal connection to the circle. Redwood trees thrive in community with others.

"This performance is very important in understanding what happened in the past and to share with younger generations to promote world peace." ~ Berkeley audience member



*from the text of *When Dreams Are Interrupted*

View an online excerpt from 'When dreams are interrupted' by Jill Togawa with dancers Michelle Fletcher, Ruth Ichinaga, Arisika Razar, Sharon Sato, and Jill Togawa: <http://purplemoondance.org/gallery-dreams.html>

Photo credits: One Thousand Arms, by Bob Hsiang. All others by Theresa C. Thadani: In Your Footsteps, Community Performers, When Dreams Part 1, Reflections.

Purple Moon receives funding from the California Arts Council's [Creating Public Value Program](#), which supports arts organizations in rural and underserved communities through projects making a positive contribution to the individual and collective lives of all Californians and is managed by Lucero Arellano larellano@cac.ca.gov.

