



# Analyze This!



The Official Newsletter of the  
San Gabriel Valley Psychological Association

SGVPA.org

AN OFFICIAL CHAPTER OF THE CALIFORNIA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

May/June 2022

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## Join Us for An UNCONVENTIONAL JJ in May!!

*"Can't Stop, Won't Stop!"*

Friday, May 13, 2022

6:30- 9:30pm

USC Pacific Asia Museum  
46 N Los Robles Ave, Pasadena, CA 91101

All members and non-members are enthusiastically welcome!  
Come and enjoy the food, drink, and conviviality of the evening!

**35% Discount on all New or Renewal SGVPA Memberships!**

Register now by emailing  
Dr. Wayne Kao, or RSVP to Your Evite

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## Continuing Education Upcoming Training

## The Role of Psychiatric Medications in Mental Health Treatment

May 13, 2022  
12pm-1:30pm

Via Zoom  
Further details TBA

SGVPA supports Black Lives Matter and systemic social justice reform. We are making efforts to increase diversity representation in our organization, in our profession, and nationwide.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*"It's been a long time coming, but a change is gonna come"*  
— Sam Cooke

**A**t our first annual Diversity Conference in March, as we culminated our work on increasing awareness of diversity issues, I spent some time reflecting on the work that we've done together, the obstacles that have come our way, and of course, all that we will accomplish together in the coming years.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, we have put together 8 continuing education trainings, 30 continuing education credits, that have all emphasized the importance of diverse conversations, including viewpoints and expertise from mental health professionals, not just from diverse cultural backgrounds, but diverse professional experiential backgrounds.

If the last couple years have shown us anything, it's that we have so much to learn from each other, and that if we commit to creating space for diverse voices, we can find peace with each other, and strengthen our community. I was particularly reminded of this during the Diversity Conference, where I was surrounded by my mentors to my left, and my trainees to my right. In coming together and ensuring that we were hearing from professionals at different levels of their professional careers, we were able to see where we've been, where we are, and where we will be going.

In the coming year, I look forward to strengthening our relationships that have already been cultivated, but also to build new relationships, share wisdom and experience, and to learn and grow.

We look forward with excitement to our first *JJ (January Jubilee) in May*, on May 13, where we will be able to come together in person, break bread and reconnect with each other.

Hoping to see you there!

Respectfully,

Wayne Kao, PsyD  
President

### **Meet the President!**

On-going  
President Wayne Kao, PsyD  
will continue to organize informal  
coffee meet-and-greets to meet  
or reconnect with our wonderful  
membership.

All are welcome!

*Watch the Listserv posts for  
announcements of times and places.*

### **Diversity Committee Meetings**

If you are interested in being involved  
in our Diversity Committee where you  
can stay informed on the activities and events  
that are being planned in SGVPA  
as well as stay up to date on resources  
available to our larger community,  
please contact Diversity Chair Amee Velasco  
at [ameevelasco@gmail.com](mailto:ameevelasco@gmail.com)  
for more information.

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# What is Advocacy?

By Linda Bortell, PsyD

Local Advocacy Network Chair



There *is* life outside of our clinical offices! Specifically, there's life in Sacramento and Washington, DC, which directly impacts all of us mental health professionals in the San Gabriel Valley. *Advocacy* —i.e., efforts to influence legislation—can be

writing letters to legislators and Congress members. It can be participating in the California Psychological Association's annual Lobby Day, where we form relationships with our local elected officials, provide education to staffers for those officials, attend and/or arrange meet-and-greets with local politicians, and attending fundraising dinners. It can simply be giving to our Political Action Committee (CPA- PAC). None of these efforts are difficult, and many can be done from our own offices. So, forgive me for "shoulding" on myself, but advocacy and lobbying *should be* an important part of every psychologist's professional life. [The last sentence really doesn't make sense, although it's funny, because you are kind of shoulding on the reader, not yourself!]. The important part is just to get active!

Here's the problem: Psychologists do not get involved much with advocacy. The most effective way is through SGVPA's LAN (Local Advocacy Network), in order to advocate for *policies important to our profession*. Some people may feel intimidated by the process, and others may feel cynical about the bureaucratic machine itself, and how their efforts may not help anyway. However, it is important to note that many things being determined at the governmental level (e.g., scope of practice, and rates of reimbursement, to name just two) trickle down to us in our offices. We need a presence, and we need money to be able to make ourselves known at the capital in Sacramento. That "presence" is when we can tell lawmakers stories that relate to certain bills, but the donations also help those same people think about consulting with psychologists when they may be deciding how to vote. Currently, if you average out the amount that psychologists give to our PAC, it's less than \$3.00 per person. That's less than a latté at Starbucks! Other allied health professions have *much* stronger PACS, because they donate more..

Personally, I am always happy to contribute to the PAC, because I know that is the voice of psychology in Sacramento. And we need the strongest and loudest voice that we can possibly have. So I encourage *you all* to PLEASE donate regularly to the PAC (there is an online donation form on the CPA website under advocacy on the front page).

Mental health is a priority now more than ever, and legislators need to hear our stories from real clinical practice. Having participated in CPA's Lobby Day many times, I can tell you that when legislators hear from us how their work will impact mental health policies, it's very powerful. I have participated in Lobby Days during which the legislators we are speaking with start to talk about mental health issues in their own family member, or friend. They want to be able to talk about it, and we want to help. At the end of every visit, we hand out the *Guide to Dealing with Distressed Constituents*. This pamphlet was developed by CPA to help staffers at the state and local levels to speak to someone they know who maybe mentally unbalanced. We also offer trainings at local offices for the staff. We demonstrate that psychology is about helping and giving.

This year CPA is sponsoring two bills in Sacramento. AB 2754, by Assemblywoman Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D-Orinda) will allow supervision to be done remotely on a permanent basis. The requirement for in person supervision for a minimum of 1 hour per week was waived by Governor Newsom during most of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the waiver has been extended by the Board of Psychology several times. This bill will make this a permanent change.

The other bill, SB 1428, was introduced by Senator Bob Archuleta (D-Artesia). It will create a new category of registered psychological testing technicians, under the Board of Psychology, to assist psychologists and neuropsychologists in the administration and scoring of psychological tests under the supervision of a licensed psychologist. Francis Collins, MD, PhD, left the helm of the National Institute of Health at the end of 2021. When someone asked him what could have been done differently regarding the Covid pandemic and its vaccination program, he stated that *psychologists* should have been a part of their teams from the beginning. Thankfully, many people in government are now learning how psychologists can to assist in important programs in multiple ways. Our goal is for elected officials and institutions to understand how important it is to involve psychologists,

and have them at the table for discussions of how mental health affects people's ability to recover from medical procedures, be more productive at work, and have more success living full, productive lives. We need also to decrease the shame and stigma around mental health care, among many other issues.

If you are unsure of how to get involved, or want to be a part of the LAN—please contact me! There is plenty to do.

*Dr. Linda Bortell can be reached at [lbortellpsy@sbcbglobal.net](mailto:lbortellpsy@sbcbglobal.net).*

## Poetry to Ponder

Wordsworth was a romantic poet who wrote many wonderful lyric poems. *The Prelude*, from which the following passage is drawn, was his great epic autobiographical poem, in which he described in heroic blank verse the evolution of an inner, subjective sensibility of mind. It took great courage for Wordsworth to offer an epic about his mind, at a time when the notion of the heroic was largely drawn from stories of feats on the battle-field.

The passage below describes what later psychoanalysts and infant researchers have referred to as the primary intersubjective experience of mother and child. Wordsworth was prescient in describing how that first warm meeting of minds between child and caregiver informs and integrates the child's experience of the world.

### **From *The Prelude***

By William Wordsworth  
(1770-1850)

Blest the infant Babe,  
(For with my best conjecture I would trace  
Our Being's earthly progress,) blest the Babe,  
Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep  
Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul  
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!  
For him, in one dear Presence, there exists  
A virtue which irradiates and exalts  
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.  
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:  
Along his infant veins are interfused  
The gravitation and the filial bond  
Of nature that connect him with the world.  
Is there a flower, to which he points with hand  
Too weak to gather it, already love  
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him  
Hath beautified that flower; already shades  
Of pity cast from inward tenderness  
Do fall around him upon aught that bears  
Unsightly marks of violence or harm.  
Emphatically such a Being lives,  
Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,  
An inmate of this active universe.  
For feeling has to him imparted power  
That through the growing faculties of sense  
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind  
Create, creator and receiver both,  
Working but in alliance with the works  
Which it beholds. Such, verily, is the first  
Poetic spirit of our human life,  
By uniform control of after years,  
In most, abated or suppressed; in some,  
Through every change of growth and of decay,  
Pre-eminent till death.

— Submitted by Daniel Goldin, PsyD



The San Gabriel Valley  
Psychological Association Invites  
You to the

# JJ IN MAY

*This year, celebrate SGVPA's annual January  
Jubilee under the stars!*

USC Pacific Asia Museum  
Museum Courtyard  
46 N. Los Robles Ave  
Pasadena, CA 91101

Friday, May 13, 2022  
6:30 - 9:30PM

*35% 2022 Membership Discount  
available to guests in attendance.*

Dinner will be provided.

RSVP to [Dr.WayneKao@gmail.com](mailto:Dr.WayneKao@gmail.com)

*Vaccinations and masks are highly recommended. Requirements subject to change.*

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# Therapy as Ceremony:

## Co-Creating a Sacred Space

By Amee Velasco, PsyD  
Diversity Chair



The tips of the cedar bundle burn to a crisp under the flame of my candle, and fizzle out into curls of earthy smoke. According to Xochicoatl Bello, the facilitator for a year-long ceremonial journey I took part in just a couple of years ago, cedar is a blessing herb, often used in Native American ceremonies as incense and for purification. We burned blessing herbs before each ceremonial gathering as a way to open up portals of communication between our waking, everyday realm, and the realms of our ancestors and other unknown planes. It's a ritual I have now integrated into my own psychotherapy practice.

My client, Jo (not their real name), bounds through my office door right on time. "Hi, Dr. Velasco!" They set their things down on the couch, kick off their shoes, and then we ponder our opening ritual for today's session. Creating a safe space marked by opening and closing rituals for Jo has become a big part of our work together. We started therapy during the pandemic and, per the requirements at the time, held all of our sessions virtually. During one tear-filled session they expressed their disappointment in their progress, and felt disconnected from me. Their brave disclosure initiated the process of shifting our approach to the therapy process. Over the next few weeks, we made plans to meet safely in person, introducing the practice of ceremony as a way to create safety and to support our relationship.

The earliest finding of ritualistic ceremony amongst homo sapiens is dated back 70,000 years ago, in the Tsodilo Hills of southern Africa, during which the San worshipped the python deity of creation. Today, ceremony continues to play a vital role in formally acknowledging or celebrating significant milestones or holy events throughout the human lifespan. My definition of ceremony is a personal one, informed by my own experiences participating in ceremony from various traditions, both indigenous and modern-day. As expected, differences are found across cultures, but they also share similarities.

A Filipino herbalist once said to me, "Spirituality and mental health are one and the same." In ceremony, a higher power or something greater than ourselves is invited into the space. Before Jo even enters the room, I acknowledge and invite in the four cardinal directions --east, south, west and north--as well as the sky people in the heavens and the sacred feminine, Mother Earth, as she is regarded in some cultures. Depending on the culture's tradition, each direction is typically associated with an element and an aspect of our full being: east (air, mental

functions, beginning of cycles), south (fire, passion), west (water, emotions) and north (earth, physical body, ancestors, ending of cycles). When I call in these directions and elements, I am not only setting the intention to honor all these different aspects of our being in the healing process, I am connecting myself to my lineage, my culture and my ancestors, inviting their support as I guide my clients through their healing journey.

Jay Griffiths writes in her essay, *Daily Grace*, "Rituals are doorways to the psyche, between the sacred and the profane, between purity and dirt, beauty and ugliness, and an opening out of the ordinary and into the extraordinary." Ceremony consists of rituals, practices that acknowledge or honor the significance of the event. Most days, Jo and I open session with the ritual of grounding ourselves into our bodies through a series of stretches and breathing exercises. Similarly, we close session by expressing gratitude for our ancestors, or stating words of loving kindness in preparation for Jo to return to ordinary life. Though seemingly unremarkable, these practices not only create a safe container for the therapeutic work, but they acknowledge and celebrate therapy as a sacred journey.

Even though I love my work as a clinician, I've always felt that something was missing—a lingering sense of disconnection that I blamed on the overemphasis of evidenced-based techniques, meeting productivity, and the mountains of paperwork overshadowing the actual personal connections I was trying to develop between myself and my clients. In our quest to keep the mental health system afloat, we lose sight of the sacredness of our work. While my clinical training gave me the language for studying the mind, our poets, artists and ancestors give me the language of healing the soul. What we conventional therapists call processing—expressing empathy, exploring transference, or challenging distorted cognitions—all the interventions we've learned in our graduate training—are all ways to honor what it means to be human, its joys and sorrows, triumphs and tribulations, pain and grief, to rejoice and to heal.

Months later, Jo and I have fallen into a rhythm of co-creating every session, intuitively suggesting what rituals to practice as we open and close the therapy space, mimicking the rising and setting of the sun, the never-ending cycle of seasons. After a particularly vulnerable session, I take extra care with our closing ritual: "May we give gratitude for our ancestors, for guiding us through this delicate doorway of healing." Across from me, I could hear Jo exhale their appreciation.

Dr. Amee Velasco can be reached at [ameevelasco@gmail.com](mailto:ameevelasco@gmail.com).

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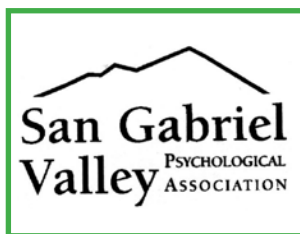
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