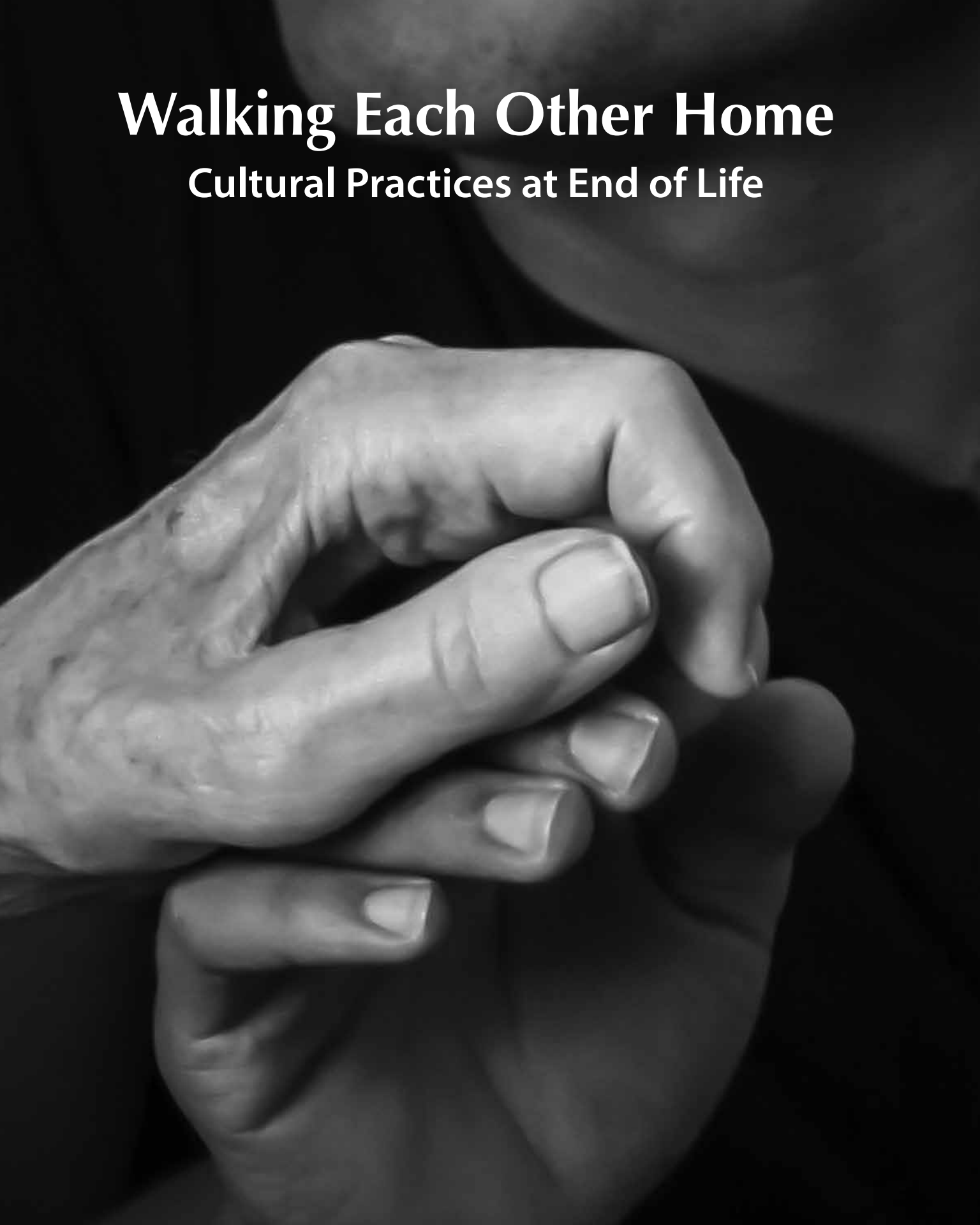
Walking Each Other Home

Cultural Practices at End of Life



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Published in conjunction with the exhibition at Arizona State Museum
September 2022 to February 2023.

Walking Each Other Home
Cultural Practices at End of Life

Produced by the Southwest Folklife Alliance with
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INTRODUCTION

Stories and traditions shared here were documented in Southern Arizona as part of the Southwest Folklife Alliance's End of Life: Continuum project, supported by the Arizona End of Life Care Partnership with funds from the David and Lura Lovell Foundation. The material was presented in an exhibit of videos, images, stories, installations, and interactions at the Arizona State Museum in Tucson, September 2022-February 2023.

At once solo and communal, death, dying, mourning, and honoring are part of the circle of life. With what practices, traditions, adages, and rituals do we address end-of-life planning and preparation, loss, and grief? How do we talk about these moments and make space for the challenges they bring with practicality and compassion?

These ways of being, doing, and yes, ending, too, are at once nuanced, beautiful, and distinct. They are part of our folklife. Looking closely at them can help us understand both ourselves and one another, and bring dignity to an event we will all, at some point, experience.

AT HOME

The home is the inner sanctuary of life and, in many cultures, also the place of death. The living room, bedroom, and kitchen offer powerful opportunities for remembering those we've lost, honoring caregivers, and preparing and planning for the end of life.

We're all just walking each other home.

Ram Dass

HOME ALTARS TO THE ANTEPASADOS (ANCESTORS)

Home altars are one of most celebrated features of the Mexican and Latin American observance on November 2 of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead). The altar bridges the world of the living and that of the dead via photographs of those who have passed on, candles, flowers, favorite foods of those being remembered, and other items to honor the ancestors. Creating and maintaining an altar is one way to acknowledge that death is truly the other side of life. Within that truth, there is room for beauty, sensory experiences, and remembrance.

Altar makers Ofelia Esparza and Rosanna Esparza Ahrens, of East Los Angeles, created an altar in collaboration with the public during the 2019 Tucson Meet Yourself folklife festival.

for reflection...

In what ways do you honor your ancestors or family members and friends who have died?

How does remembering the dead help you prepare for the inevitability of death?

What items would you want people to place on an altar to remember you?

Write or draw a picture of your items in the book.

END-OF-LIFE HOME CAREGIVERS

It requires character to do this kind of job.

Mathurin "Math" Maoundonodji
End-of-life home caregiver

End-of-life caregivers perform intimate and vital tasks for the dying, bringing dignity to the death process and companionship to those who are experiencing it. But these caregivers often go underappreciated and, if working for hire, underpaid. End-of-life caregivers might be family members, paid nurses, home health aides, hospice workers, or others.

It is often said that end-of-life caregivers have a certain disposition, a selflessness that enables them to show up for others. This may be true, but when our own fears of death and dying lead us to see caregivers as "saintly," we forget that they, too, are human beings with their own needs for rest, care, witness, and fair compensation.

The end-of-life home caregivers pictured here were participants in a yearlong ethnographic study carried out by five ethnographers through the Southwest Folklife Alliance's Continuum: End-of-Life program. The project considered end-of-life home caregivers in the context of "occupational folklife," or the culture of work. All caregivers were based in Tucson, Arizona at the time.

Ethnography is a method of documenting culture that teaches us to look into others' experiences, to learn empathy at the most intimate levels of everyday life—and, in this case, death, too. Conversations between caregivers and ethnographers took place during the pandemic, often over Zoom and later in person. The pairs created meaningful relationships, and their conversations not only help us "see" the work of caregivers but also contribute to the field of folklife ethnography, making space for shared grief and prioritizing a commitment to trust and authenticity.

Listen to interviews with the caregivers:
https://southwestfolklife.org/lives-of-end-of-life-caregivers/

Mathurin "Math" Maoundonodji
as told to Charlie Buck

My first job in this country was working at a hotel, then I [transitioned] into a restaurant, then I got a job as a caregiver. Caregiving paid the same as restaurant work. I had to work many hours to make something because wages were not high. The care agency paid $8 an hour, which went up to $10.

Most of the people who work in the caregiving industry are refugees and immigrants. It doesn't require so many language skills, but the pay is not reasonable. The rates should be higher—it's a job that requires a lot of responsibility. Better pay would bring better service and would attract better people to the job. If it continues as it is, there will be a shortage of caregivers. It is not safe—one caregiver will take care of many clients.

If you respect people's dignity, you cannot leave people without proper care. It requires character to do this kind of job. Respect for the person you are serving is very important.

Deborah Young
as told to Amalia Mora

You have to wash the body down before they come pick it up. You have to wash it down, tag the toe, you got to close their eyes. I think that's the hardest part for me—to close their eyes. I just washed up and changed her, you know, made her look pretty. I'm like, "This is you." You know, I was crying while I was doing it and I'm like, "This is you. You always look nice. I'm not gonna let you go out no way else.

Fernando Ochoa
as told to Kathleen Dreier

When I was caring for my mother, I said, "I'm doing this not for me, even though it serves me to do what I'm doing for you. I'm doing this because I love you." There's an extreme sense of gratitude, a satisfying feeling being there for another human being, and someone as special and as close as a relative. It redefined my sense of commitment, my sense of responsibility. It was a huge learning process. You really don't think of yourself as a caregiver. There's a constant mode of concern for that other individual. It toughens you up a bit, you know. Because there's some delicate territory in that level of intimacy.

Yaritza Vargas
as told to Kate DeShiell

What can we do first, before more invasive methods are used? Even small things can make a big difference in pain management, like adjusting a pillow or moving the patient's position. These kinds of small things can put patients into a better state of mind. They let patients know that you care about them and want them to feel better. They are a "promise to the patient." You can't teach patient care or how to make patients feel valued. People either have those soft skills or they don't. You can't teach teamwork, leadership, or empathy. I don't know if there is such a thing as a good death. But when clients are ready for death, it can be good.

Nancy Giesen
as told to Suzanne Morrison

One of my favorite quotes is from Ram Dass: "We're all just walking each other home." I want to tattoo this across my body. With all my people, I inhabit the "We're here now" space with them. I'll have long conversations with them, even if they can't talk. We can find funny things to laugh about. I have a patient who speaks mostly Spanish. He asked me what Spanish words I knew, and I told him "tenedor," which means fork. He just started belly laughing. Of all the things I could have said. It was just one of those days. We can use humor if it's there.

HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Hospice care is provided to patients with a life expectancy of six months or less who are no longer receiving any active or curative treatment of their underlying life-limiting illness.

Palliative care is given to any patient with a serious illness, no matter their prognosis or life expectancy. It is often given along with other therapies. There is no need to delay palliative care. It can be given at any time to benefit patients.

Yu, Qi T., and Paul E. Stander. August 2016. *Differentiating Palliative Care and Hospice Care.* Phoenix: Banner University Medical Center, University of Arizona.

for reflection...

What kind of care do you want at the end of your life?

RECIPES FOR A GOOD DEATH

What is a "good death"?

First posited by the French historian Philippe Ariès and later advanced by the psychiatrist and physician Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, the notion of a "good death" has become a main tenet of the modern hospice movement, bringing concepts such as dignity, peacefulness, awareness, and acceptance to death and dying. But the notion of a "good death" is also complex. What might be "good" for you might be less good for another. Perceptions of "goodness" are often intertwined with religious and cultural beliefs, for better or worse. Does a "good death" imply there is such a thing as a "bad death"? What are the cultural beliefs at work when it comes to preparing for, evaluating, and experiencing death?

Across many cultures, we share food to come together, mourn, and remember those we've lost. Comfort foods provide us solace, and special recipes can help us in times of grief. For many, kitchens—indoors or outdoors—are the heart of this sharing, a hearth where we gather to soothe one another through shared meals and stories.

The kitchen table is also often a safe place to have difficult conversations about death and dying. International movements, such as Death Café and Death Over Dinner, have developed facilitation guides that anyone can use to create safe spaces for remembering those we have lost and for thinking deeply about how to plan for our own death. Favorite dishes and comfort foods can help us feel more relaxed to discuss end-of-life planning and preparation, cultural rituals, and preferences for our own deaths.

for reflection...

What does the notion of a "good death" mean to you?

What kind of care do you want at the end of your life?

What matters to me at the end of life is …

for reflection...

Think about a favorite dish of someone special to you who has passed on.

When did you first have this food/dish?

Who prepared it?

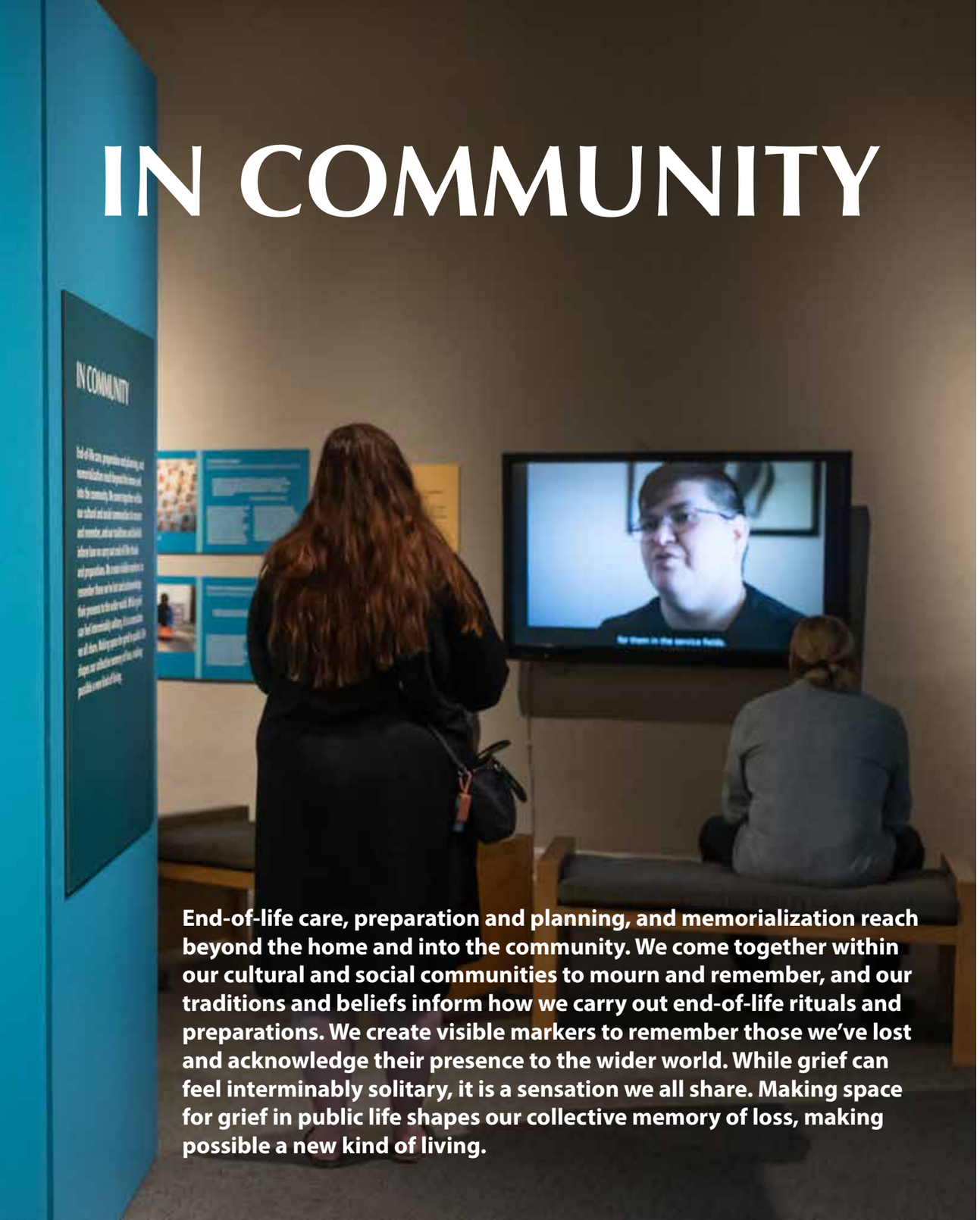
What memories do you associate with this dish?

Is there anything special about the ingredients or the way it is prepared?

When do you have this food/dish now?

What emotions surface for you when you think about this dish or eat it?

IN COMMUNITY



End-of-life care, preparation and planning, and memorialization reach beyond the home and into the community. We come together within our cultural and social communities to mourn and remember, and our traditions and beliefs inform how we carry out end-of-life rituals and preparations. We create visible markers to remember those we've lost and acknowledge their presence to the wider world. While grief can feel interminably solitary, it is a sensation we all share. Making space for grief in public life shapes our collective memory of loss, making possible a new kind of living.

CULTURAL PRACTICES AT END OF LIFE

How we approach death and dying is often ingrained in our cultural practices and traditions. Understanding these differences is important for healthcare workers, clergy, and institutions who work with the dying, their families, and communities—and for all of us as compassionate community members. We can better support those facing the end of life and the bereaved when we respect their wishes and traditions.

As part of its Continuum: End of Life program, the Southwest Folklife Alliance facilitated a series of gatherings in four cultural communities in southern Arizona. Guided by local hosts, the gatherings included a meal, facilitated conversation, and learning exchanges about end-of-life practices, rituals, and traditions. Videos featuring key community members illuminated some of the practices and traditions shared.

Watch videos featuring perspectives from the four communities here.
https://southwestfolklife.org/videos-end-of-life-cultural-practices-in-southern-arizona/

for reflection...

What are your cultural traditions around death and dying?

What conversations have you had with members of your family or community about your own wishes for the end of your life?

A UNIFYING FORCE

END-OF-LIFE PRACTICES IN TUCSON'S JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Rabbis were brilliant. They offered us ways in which we could deeply be in our grief, be supported in our grief, particularly through the mourning period of the first week of shiva, the seven days. That is a long-standing, beautiful tradition that … normalizes this experience of grief.

Sandra Wortzel, Rabbinic pastor

Portraits of Holocaust survivors from Southern Arizona are shared at the Tucson Jewish Museum and Holocaust Center, which offers a place for collective mourning and remembrance. Remembering those who came before is an essential part of Jewish life.

DEATH IS A DOOR WE MUST WALK THROUGH

END-OF-LIFE PRACTICES IN TUCSON'S MUSLIM COMMUNITY

A Muslim will always have in the back of his mind that death is coming, and the preparation for life after is something you do on daily basis.

Lynn Hourani, Muslim Community Alliance

Women pray at the Islamic Center of Tucson, which provides an important site for community mourning and prayer for Muslims. In Islam, preparing for death through actions such as prayer, eating well, reading the Quran, fasting, and going for pilgrimage are part of nurturing a spiritual self and beneficial for the "life after."

LET THEM GRIEVE

END-OF-LIFE PRACTICES IN TUCSON'S LGBTQI COMMUNITY

We have all these people internalizing all this grief and all this sadness … that they mask. Because we're gay we're supposed to be happy all the time. And in fact, there's this whole group of people that are walking around with all this grief that's bottled up inside.

Abraham Varelas, family planning specialist

For lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, rituals and practices around death and dying can be tarnished by the same stigmas and discrimination that happen in daily life. Making space with friends and new families to plan for death, dying, and end-of-life rituals can be both rewarding and essential for LGBTQI people. The AIDS Memorial Quilt—displayed here on the grounds of the annual Tucson Meet Yourself Folklife Festival—offers a way for people to remember those who have died from HIV/AIDS and creates space for mourning rituals and community support.

AFTER DINNER, WALK 100 STEPS

PRACTICES FOR HEALTH AND LONGEVITY IN TUCSON'S CHINESE COMMUNITY

We didn't really like to talk about this stuff in the family. Elderly see it as taboo that you don't talk about death.

Steve Liu, HanLing Acupuncture Healing Center

End-of-life practices in Tucson's Chinese community focus primarily on health and longevity. Keeping the body nimble and the mind focused and still—through activities like tai chi and mah-jongg and healing practices like acupuncture—are pillars of wellness and a long life. Tucson's Chinese Cultural Center hosts the annual festival of Ching Ming, in which people visit the graves of family members to offer food and pay respect, as in China.

MEMORIALIZATION

Losing a loved one may be one of the most painful losses we can endure. Grief can make us feel adrift and alone. Public markers to memorialize the end of someone's life can help us to not only remember those we've lost but also make visible the fact that they were once here. Tangible guideposts like crosses, shrines, vigils, or ghost bikes serve as decorative symbols of comfort to support the grieving process. These expressions of creativity—often very personal—become community cultural comforts, symbolic adornment that speaks to our collective experience of loss.

GHOST BIKES

Ghost bikes are the international cycling community's somber reminder of how vulnerable cyclists are—they can die when hit by passing vehicles. You may have seen one like this around town. Painted white and often decorated with flowers and nameplates, ghost bikes reflect a collective expression of mourning and memorial. In Tucson, these public memorials emerged in 2008. Both folk art and community placemaking, ghost bikes are an important—and unfortunately, too common—part of the city's cultural landscape.

REMEMBERING MIGRANTS' LIVES

Since 1998, over 8,000 migrants have been found dead on the U.S. southern border, according to the U.S. Border Patrol. Alvaro Enciso, a Colombian-born artist living in Tucson, volunteers with the Tucson Samaritans, leaving water in remote parts of the Sonoran Desert to assist passing migrants. Since 2013, Enciso has planted over 1,200 crosses, marking sites where migrants have died in the desert. He makes each cross out of wood and decorates it with a red dot, the symbol for a lost life on Humane Borders maps, as well as a scrap of something left behind by migrants, such a bottle top or an aluminum can. Enciso says his art "brings attention to the nearly 4,000 people who have died in Southern Arizona while crossing the desert to find somewhere in the U.S. a piece of the American dream."

Cross for missing migrant, from "Donde mueren los sueños" (Where Dreams Die), Alvaro Enciso, 2022

for reflection...

What are ways that you honor and memorialize those who have passed on?

Are these practices you do alone? With family? Or in a larger community context?

In 1783 Antonio Reyes, Bishop of Sonora, complained about the popular custom of placing a cross beside the road wherever a traveler had been killed by the Apaches. This, he argued, led to profanation of the holy symbol of the cross, and was a chilling reminder of the stark realities of travel on the frontier. Over two centuries later, the crosses remain, although the automobile has replaced the Apaches as the major cause of death.

The original purpose of the crosses was simple: they showed where someone died suddenly and without the preparation afforded by the Catholic Church, and passers-by could respond to their unspoken plea and pray for that person's soul. Such interactive sites had been part of the roadside since the arrival of the Spaniards in Mexico. In fact, they might be much older.

Jim Griffith

Griffith, Jim. 2015. "Death Markers in the Desert." *In Continuum: Multicultural Practices in Grief and End of Life.* Tucson: Southwest Folklife Alliance.

On January 8, 2011, at a Congress on Your Corner event in the parking lot of a Tucson Safeway store, a gunman shot and killed six people and injured 13 others, including U.S. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords.

In the aftermath of the shooting, Tucsonans created a spontaneous memorial of grief and remembrance on the lawn of the University Medical Center, where Giffords was taken for treatment. People left cards, flowers, candles, stuffed animals, balloons, and signs; and violinists, drummers, and mariachis played music to remember those who had been killed and to cheer on Giffords during her recovery. Many of the items were later preserved and archived.

Giffords survived the shooting, resigned from Congress, and formed GIFFORDS, an organization using political, legal, and policy expertise to advocate for gun safety. A permanent memorial to those killed on January 8 was dedicated in 2021 on the grounds of the historic Pima County Courthouse in downtown Tucson.

September 29, 2015. Diana Valenzuela, center, honors her father, Carlos Figueroa, who was beaten to death in 2003 while living on the streets. After her father's death, Valenzuela formed the Carlos G. Figueroa Foundation in her father's name to remember homeless people who've died on the streets of Tucson.

El Tiradito is a public shrine located in Barrio Viejo, one of Tucson's oldest neighborhoods. Originally dedicated as the "shrine of the sinner," the result of a family love triangle gone bad, it is now a popular urban shrine or altar. People regularly leave folded-up slips of paper bearing prayers in the shrine's adobe wall along with candles to honor those they've lost.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, at-home, outdoor memorials became one way to collectively grieve the loss of a loved one, as formal funeral services were generally suspended. After Jennifer Coughlan, a compassionate nurse, dancer, and circus artist in Tucson, died of breast cancer in May 2021, her family and friends gathered in the yard of the home she shared with her partner to remember, honor, grieve, and celebrate her with words, singing, and an on-site memorial.

Concern for individual and public health during the pandemic forced rituals of mourning and remembrance into virtual spaces. Livestream memorials and funerals helped people gather on screen to remember lost loved ones. In Tucson, an October 2020 memorial held in person and online honored medical professionals and health workers who lost their lives or were impacted by the pandemic.

At the memorial, Brad Dreifuss, an emergency physician and public health specialist in Tucson, expressed the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on medical professionals. Dreifuss formed HCW Hosted, a non-profit organization that provides no-cost housing to medical professionals so they would not place their families at risk. At the time of this memorial, Dr. Dreifuss had been living apart from his wife and daughter for six months.

A boy looked at the backdrop used during a livestream memorial broadcast. The masks pictured were used repeatedly by one ER nurse who did not have access to enough personal protective equipment (PPE).

After losing her brother to cancer, this woman had his handwriting tattooed on her forearm.

Tattoo, car decal and t-shirt memorials are popular ways of remembering the dead. While tattooing is not new, now tattoo seekers occasionally mix the cremains themselves with the tattoo ink, literally carrying the dead around on their bodies. Car decal and t-shirt memorials, like tattoos, allow mourners to express their grief without interrupting the social fabric of everyday life.

Candi K. Cann, author of *Virtual Afterlives: Grieving the Dead in the Twenty-first Century*

This tattoo of a handprint (to scale) honors the loss of its bearer's nephew.

A tattoo honoring a child who passed.

I do memorial tattoos at least 10 times a month. It's common. A lot of times people will want a tattoo of the handwriting of the person they lost. If their grandma gave them a birthday card, for example, they might want the quote or saying written inside. It's about remembering specific moments in time. For me, it's really powerful to do these kinds of tattoos for clients. Tattooing is really soulful, and the connection is that much deeper when someone is using ink to memorialize a loved one.

Marcella Watson, tattoo artist
Church Ink Tattoo Parlor

SPACES FOR GRIEF

Grief is nothing to be ashamed of; it is a normal response to loss. Resources in our community can support you in times of grief—bereavement counselors, doulas, clergy, and support groups can offer both solace and practical help. Events like Tucson's annual All Souls Procession provide spaces for collective mourning and celebration. Making space for grief within public life invites us to embrace this most basic fact of living—death happens. We are allowed to mourn.

In grief, you're so very fragile—it's almost like you've been skinned. Many back away from it. But when you move through or with grief, it's a teacher. The beauty of the community that rises up to greet you—a great mercy. But you do need to give yourself over.

Adriene Jenik, death doula

End-of-life doula Adriene Jenik meets regularly with her doulee to check in on her progress attending to legal documents, make her aware of new resources, and revisit her death plan.

ALL SOULS PROCESSION

The All Souls Procession offers Tucsonans and visitors a way to collectively process and express grief in public. In 1990, artist Susan Johnson created a celebratory procession in downtown Tucson to memorialize her father after his death. Today the event is produced by Many Mouths One Stomach, a collective of artists, teachers, and community activists who come together with the intent to create, inspire, manifest, and perpetuate modern "festal culture." It brings nearly 150,000 people to participate in a two-mile, human-powered procession through Tucson's west-side neighborhoods and along the Santa Cruz River.

While many participants bring practices from Día de los Muertos, the event is radically inclusive in its embrace of all cultures and all traditions. To honor the dead and celebrate life, people dress in elaborate or simple costumes, carry photographs or banners of their lost loved ones, and play music. Community members can place prayers and mementos in the memorial urn, which is set on fire during the "ceremony of care" at the end of the night.

Incredibly moving; the sight of everyone's messages being released by fire to the Universe makes me fall in love with life all over again.

Christine Scheer

Right after I put a letter to my brother in the urn, I turned around, and a photo of him was being projected onto a screen nearby. It was surreal. He died unexpectedly, so I didn't have a chance to say goodbye. Until last night.

Daniel Riley

After the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, hundreds of thousands of people across the globe took to the streets to protest police brutality and its disproportionate impact on Black Americans. In Tucson, some 600 people attended a candlelight vigil for Floyd organized by young Black leaders at the Dunbar Pavilion. This public mourning and outcry illustrates the many forms grief can take in the public arena—from public vigils to loud protests to tireless political action—and how it can fuel demands for change.

CHILDREN AND GRIEF

When children experience the death of someone important, it can be difficult to know how best to explain the loss. Children react differently than adults to grief, and developmental age plays a factor in how a child might respond. Children should not be forced to attend funerals or ceremonies, but finding alternative ways to remember the deceased person is important. Making scrapbooks, looking at photographs, lighting a candle, or telling stories can offer children solace. Children should be given permission to express grief and to mourn in their own individual ways. Finding support groups or professional counseling services can be tremendously helpful for both children and the adults supporting them.

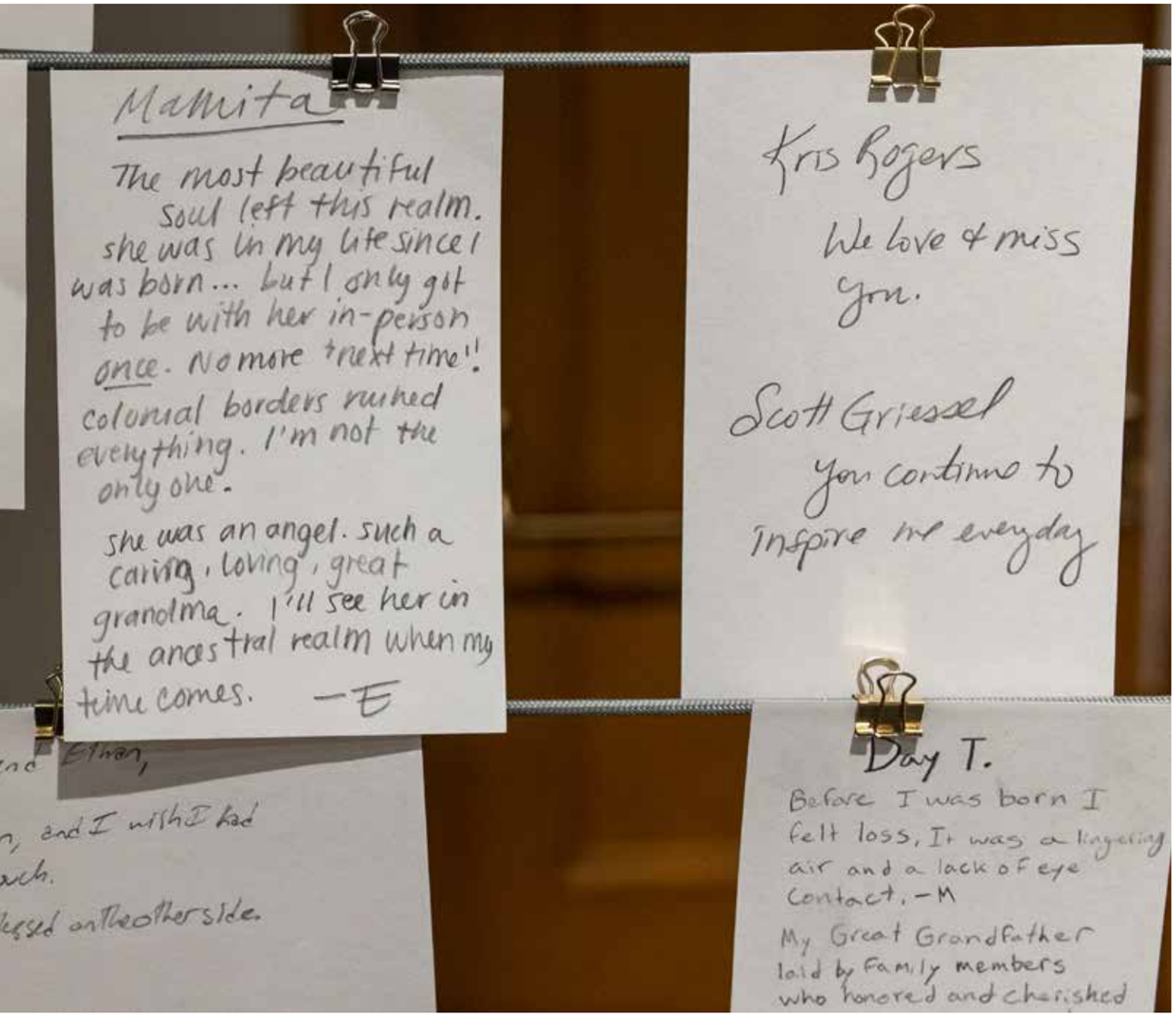
Children are encouraged to express their grief and remembrance of siblings, parents, or other family members lost to homicide at the annual National Day of Remembrance held by homicide survivors' advocacy organizations across the country every September. In 2020, Tucson's Homicide Survivors, Inc., organized the remembrance day at MSA Annex, allowing children and family members to gather, share stories, and publicly grieve.

My father, Carlon Edward Dreier, a.k.a. "Bud," served in World War II as a mechanic and worked as a welder all his life. On Labor Day weekend 2012, I traveled with my son, Logan, then 16, to Wisconsin to see him. Dad was suffering from advanced dementia by then, and I wanted Logan to see his grandpa one more time. It took two hours into our visit before my dad recognized Logan, but he recognized me right away. When he saw me with my camera, he did what he often did to pose—stuck out his tongue as a joke. My dad was particular about personal grooming, and my brother Denny helped him keep it up during the years of his decline.

Logan was patient throughout the visit, occupying himself in his sketchbook when my dad was mentally distant. One moment I'll never forget is when, out of the blue, my dad reached his hand out for Logan as if trying to touch him. Logan reciprocated the action. I'm grateful I captured on camera one of the most tender moments of connection I've ever seen, before or since.

My dad passed away on September 21, 2012.

Kathleen Dreier



Sharing our personal experiences of loss, mourning, and grief can help us remember those we've lost, find solace in our grief, and glean wisdom for how to carry on. Sharing these stories can radically shift the way we talk and think about death and dying.

Through the intense pain of losing someone, there's also this expansion of love. Is feels sacred, or a like spiritual experience to lose someone, as strange as that sounds. The experience of death, specifically after my sister's death, deepened my understanding of, I don't know, God or whatever you want to call non-humanness and nature, and also of my ancestors. I have a more tangible understanding of what their support feels like.

Claire Murtha Paradis

I'm a Mexican American. Something my family does, a tradition when they observe loss or grief or mourning, is the funeral. We always have a mass as soon as possible. My family likes to dress in white because they think it's also a celebration of life rather than just death. We also get together after the mass and eat and just share memories about the person that we lost. After my uncle died, my aunt was very grief-stricken, so we decided to start doing altares. We put cigarettes, 'cause he used to smoke and a little Coke bottle because he used to really like Coke. We mostly did that for my aunt, but it's nice because it helps you remember them as a real person rather than a passing memory. I think we all kind of found some solace in doing that.

Ana Teresa Espinoza

In the Jewish tradition, we sit shiva. Shiva means seven. That's seven days that we sit on the ground. We're not supposed to be comfortable during those days; it's just a time to mourn. From my own experience and then through studying it, it's interesting how day one we just cry and by day two or three, we're able to laugh and cry. And by day seven, we're healed. As someone who works with grief, I see people carrying their grief for years. My dad died when I was 12, and I grieved him for many years, but not with the intensity, so it really helped the process of going from deep sadness to laughter then finding a place of acceptance.

Joan-e Rapine

IN MEMORY OF JAMES "BIG JIM" GRIFFITH

July 30, 1935–December 18, 2021

James S. Griffith, or "Big Jim," as he was affectionately known, earned his PhD in cultural anthropology and art history from the University of Arizona (UA), and went on to direct the UA's Southwest Folklore Center until 1998. In 1974 Jim and his wife Loma Griffith founded Tucson Meet Yourself, an annual folklife festival featuring folk arts, music, dance, and food representing Indigenous, immigrant, and longtime resident cultures of the region.

Jim's books on Southern Arizona and Northern Mexico include A Border Runs Through It: Journeys in Regional History and Folklore; Beliefs and Holy Places: A Spiritual Geography of the Pimería Alta; Hecho a Mano: The Traditional Arts of Tucson's Mexican American Community; and his most recent, in 2019, Saints, Statues, and Stories: A Folklorist Looks at the Religious Art of Sonora. For many years he hosted the television segment, "Southern Arizona Traditions", on KUAT-TV's Arizona Illustrated. In 2011 Big Jim was named a National Heritage Fellow by the National Endowment for the Arts in honor of his service to folklore and the state of Arizona.

Our work at the Southwest Folklife Alliance has long been inspired and guided by Jim's kindness, respect, curiosity, and devotion to observation.

He loved the region we celebrate, and his friendliness, curiosity, and ever-growing knowledge won him fans and admirers from those Indigenous to this land to longtime dwellers and newcomers. Big Jim was also a musician (a banjo player in the claw-hammer style), storyteller, jokester, husband, father, grandfather, colleague, mentor, and friend. He died peacefully at home on December 18, 2021, and is survived by his wife, Loma, children, Kelly and David, and grandchildren, Emile and Arwen. We miss him.

for reflection...

What is a cultural, family, or personal tradition you've practiced or observed in times of loss or mourning?

In what ways has a personal experience of loss changed the way you live your life?

In what ways has a personal experience of loss impacted how you might prepare for your own death?

Have you ever cared for someone at the end of their life? What did you learn from the experience?

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SOUTHWEST FOLKLIFE ALLIANCE

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Cover and title pages: Kathleen Dreier, photographer, 2012

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