

MOTUS THEATER

Moving Stories that Move Us Forward

Motus Theater, Uplifting Personal Stories of DACA Leaders and, with them, our Nation

Motus Theater, a nonprofit theater company based in Boulder, CO, will honor the 10th anniversary of the establishment of DACA with performances of music and autobiographical monologues of leaders with DACA - “**UndocuAmerica Monologues: 10 Years of DACA in Story and Song**” in Denver (May 12th) and Boulder (June 11th, [3 PM](#) & [6 PM](#)). These performances aim to encourage thoughtful reflection on the gifts the monologists bring to this country, and the challenges they still face, after ten years of DACA and immigrant rights advocacy. **The Denver performance was presented and recorded at the Buell Public Media Center - Rocky Mountain PBS MASTERPIECE Studio and it will be [shared with the nation on RMPBS's YouTube channel on June 15th, 2022](#)** - the date when DACA was signed into law ten years ago.

Leading up to the events, Colorado Public Radio will broadcast six of the [UndocuAmerica](#) monologues from Motus Theater’s [Shoebbox Stories: UndocuAmerica](#) podcast on Colorado Matters. Beyond the performance, murals of Motus Theater’s monologists with DACA will be found across the cities of Denver and Boulder with QR codes linking directly to the monologues in English and Spanish. Motus Theater will be sharing their 10 years of strategic storytelling, [films](#), [podcast episodes](#), and [animations](#) with organizations across our country seeking to uplift the humanity of young people with DACA caught in the crosshairs of U.S. immigration policy.

Motus Theater’s performances on immigration have followed the trajectory of DACA. Motus started collaborating with DACA recipients in 2012 to develop and present autobiographical monologues in the touring performance [Do You Know Who I Am?](#), which focused on the educational and work challenges facing undocumented youth. This performance, seen by over 5,000 people, won the DACA performers and Motus many awards, including [“People of the Year.”](#) Since [Do You Know Who I Am?](#), Motus has developed six unique performance projects on immigration reaching almost 300,000 people both in Colorado and across our nation through theater, [films](#), [animations](#), and the [Shoebbox Stories: UndocuAmerica](#) podcast.

Motus’ strategic and artful narrative work on immigration impacted civic society and policy changes in Boulder County and the state of Colorado both directly and indirectly: Everything from Boulder’s decision to becoming a sanctuary city, to becoming the first city in the nation to have an undocumented person serve on a city board or commission, to Colorado state policy enabling undocumented people to obtain a drivers license.

Colorado State House Representative Leslie Herod said about the impact of reading stories of women in Sanctuary in [Women of Resolution](#) (2018): *“I will give a shout-out to Motus Theater, they have inspired me and sparked change, legislative change, from reading these stories. So these women have changed the law.”*

To reach wider audiences, and impact leaders who make decisions that affect the undocumented community, Motus has become known nationally for their courageous collaborations in which they ask [law enforcement](#), civic, political, religious, and education leaders to stand in the shoes of undocumented monologists by reading their story aloud on stage, or as part of Motus’ [Shoebbox Stories](#)

podcast. Notable readers include: Police Chief Art Acevedo, actor John Lithgow, World Central Kitchen founder Chef José Andrés, Univision anchor Jorge Ramos, feminist icon Gloria Steinem, Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors, former NYT op.ed writer Nicholas Kristof, founder of Latino USA Maria Hinojosa, three Congress people, seven Colorado State House leaders, numerous police chiefs, university presidents, judges, rabbis and bishops. Collaborating musicians include: Grammy-winning Yo-Yo Ma, Neil Young, Ozomatli, and Arturo O’Farrill.

Boulder County Sheriff Joe Pelle said about his experience as a reader during Motus Theater’s performance [Law Enforcement Leaders Read Dreamer Stories](#) that has been viewed by over 16,000 people: *“Standing beside these young people, and reading their stories was moving for all of us, and powerful for the audience. But the best experience was learning their stories while we rehearsed, and then spending some personal time interacting with them while we were preparing backstage. Barriers were broken down, relationships formed, and mutual respect established. Relationship building like this, using this format, could probably solve a lot of various issues in many communities across this country!”*

Motus Theater’s arts-based immigration programming has appeared in national media outlets such as *Washington Post*, *Theater Magazine*, *NPR*, *FAST Company Magazine*, *Ms. Magazine*, and *USA Today*. Motus Theater has become, in the words of Anita Khashu, former director of [Four Freedoms Fund](#), **“The gold standard for narratives on immigration.**

Award-winning Univision anchor Jorge Ramos said about his experience reading aloud a monologue of a Motus DACA recipient: *“I’ve been reporting about immigration for more than 30 years. And I’ve talked to hundreds or thousands of immigrants in my life. But it’s very rare when I can go beyond that first encounter and that first talk about their legal situation in which I can get into their personal story. And this is just what happened. I think that if people in this country would listen to stories like this, and really just take a couple of minutes to digest everything that you said, it’ll be a different story.*

Motus Arts & Immigration Performance Projects

- [UndocuAmerica](#) (2018-Current): DACA-mented leaders courageously tell their stories, representing the pain, struggles, and resilience of so many undocumented Americans. ([Project Tour Brochure](#))
- [Women of Resolution](#) (2018-Current): Multimedia performance featuring the stories of four Colorado women who sought sanctuary to prevent deportation and being separated from their families.
- [Law Enforcement Leaders Read Dreamer Stories](#) (Staged 2017; Currently presented as [film](#)): Internationally unprecedented performance in which law enforcement and public safety leaders in Boulder County took to the stage to read aloud the autobiographical monologues of community members who are undocumented.
- [Let’s All Be Americans Now](#) (2017): Multimedia performance exploring the dramatic story behind U.S. immigration history.
- [SALSA Lotería](#) (2015-2016): Autobiographical monologue performance exploring the life, strength, and resilience of Latina immigrants.
- [Do You Know Who I Am?](#) (Staged 2013-2015; Currently presented as [film](#)): Award-winning performance encouraging discussion on the educational, work, and other challenges facing youth who are undocumented.

Podcast

[Shoebox Stories: UndocuAmerica Series](#) (2019-Current): Powerful and moving stories from undocumented leaders caught in the crosshairs of U.S immigration policy read by prominent Americans who are willing to stand in their shoes and see the world, for a moment, through their eyes. Hear Grammy Award-winning artists offer a musical response to each story.

Motus Arts-Based Community Conversations on Immigration

[One Action Arts + Immigration Project](#) (2016): Motus envisioned and created a Boulder County-wide arts-based conversation on immigration with over 50 local organizations and 60,000 participants.

Additional UndocuAmerica Films

[My Mother's Hands](#) (2020): Video interpretation of a Motus *UndocuAmerica* monologue, *My Mother's Hands*, honoring the undocumented domestic workers, and women cleaning businesses, hospitals, and government buildings to protect us against COVID-19. (3min)

UndocuAmerica Animations

- [Wandering in the Desert](#) (2021): Animation excerpt from Laura Peniche's *UndocuAmerica* monologue on Motus' Shoebox Stories podcast read by Police Chief Art Acevedo. (1min)
- [The Most Beautiful Monument](#) (2021): Animation excerpt from Irving Reza's *UndocuAmerica* monologue on Motus Theater's Shoebox Stories podcast read by John Lithgow. (1min)
- [Listen to Your Heart](#) (2020): Animation excerpt from Tania Chairez's *UndocuAmerica* monologue on Motus Theater's Shoebox Stories podcast read by [Maria Hinojosa](#) (2min) or *Motus Monologues* podcast read by [Tania Chairez](#) (2min)

Additional Quotes About Motus Theater's DACA Programming

- **Boulder County Commissioner Elise Jones** said about Motus' first DACA performance, "I went to an amazing, sold-out performance last night called *Do You Know Who I Am?* where five brave Latino immigrant youth tell their compelling stories. Equal parts cheering and crying. If you ever had doubts about the need for immediate immigration reform, you won't anymore."
- **Actor and writer John Lithgow** shared his experience of reading Irving Reza's *UndocuAmerica* monologue: "We're in a moment of crisis, a crisis of empathy in this country. And it seems to me that the whole thrust of this project is to address that crisis... I think it's a wonderful thing to partner you and me and to make my reading of your story a companion piece to yours. It's my way of walking in your shoes."

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