Testimony

VOL 02 — STUDENTS

The Testimony Project

In conjunction with the Community Arts Internship Program at Southern Exposure

Spring 2016

A PROJECT BY ELIZA GREGORY

“I chose to make this project to help you understand the voice of a Chinese immigrant girl. I hope this means something to you, because immigrants are people in San Francisco. I believe if we understand each other more, we can have a happier life together in this beautiful city.”

QIQI

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SOUTHERN
EXPOSURE
CHILDREN WELFARE HOME
Lamjung, Nepal

The Testimony Project asks people to listen to each other. In it, I am trying to find new ways to tell stories so that in addition to the content, even the *telling* promotes equality, tenderness, and compassion.

It has become clear that many people are willfully trying to denigrate, obfuscate, and ignore the experience of being a recent immigrant to this country. I believe in generosity, and the goodness that happens when people reach across perceived barriers to embrace each other. I offer this work in the hope that it helps me and my community learn about ourselves and move toward love.

ELIZA GREGORY

CONTENTS

Claire LaRose, Artists in Education Program Director, and Executive Director Patricia Maloney welcome the public to Southern Exposure for the Artists in Education Spring Exhibition, May 19, 2016.

The Community Arts Internship Program (CAIP) at Southern Exposure offers students the chance to work with a practicing artist in a hybrid course/internship format. In the spring of 2016, teaching artist Eliza Gregory incorporated students into *The Testimony Project*, a broad-based inquiry into contemporary immigration in San Francisco. Students were invited to create an investigation into a topic within the theme of immigration, using materials of their choice.

Eliza Gregory

Teaching Artist
The Community Arts Internship Program
Southern Exposure

We began our time in the CAIP program by talking about justice and representation. How do you tell meaningful stories about things that are going wrong in society without idealizing, victimizing, othering or objectifying the people you represent?

We did an assignment to try and understand how the context in which an image is viewed can dramatically change its meaning. Context itself is very hard to understand, and frequently remains unaddressed in standard art classes, but I feel that–particularly as an image-maker in 2016–you cannot seek to communicate anything without understanding and controlling the context in which your content will reach its audience.

We looked at photographic work ranging from Elinor Carucci to Jim Goldberg. We read the journalistic short stories of Stephen Crane. We talked about the idea of research as art, and art as (and based on) research. And we looked at many different illustration techniques that help communicate relationships between people and places, between one moment in time and another, and between ideas.

Then we began to do some research ourselves. We interviewed each other, and people outside the class. These interviews became the basis for many of the works the students made.

We also pushed ourselves to conceive of how our own identities shift even as we move around the city, let alone shift countries (which many of these students have already done in their lives). We read the "Who Am I Where? ¿Quien Soy Donde?" poem by Rebecca Solnit and Guillermo Gomez Peña in Solnit's book *Infinite City*. We appropriated the format and created our own poems on that topic, which each person laid out for publication in a zine (excerpted here on pages 124–133). It feels important to me that amidst the many disparate conversations about immigration, we remember that the topic is always about identity, and how that identity shifts based on where you are and how other people see you–something that everyone can relate to.

The second half of the term was devoted to conceiving of and creating works of art within a broad project I've undertaken called *Testimony*, an open-ended inquiry into contemporary immigration to San Francisco. Each student selected a sub-theme, a medium, and a method to pursue within this directive, as a way to test out answers to that first question–*How do you tell meaningful, ethical stories about what's going wrong in society?*

Here is what we made.


SECURITY


Just a Dress
A Dress is a Part of a Culture
THE SHIFT

Travel with MUNI to the Lives of Immigrants, detail, Qiqi

Student Work.

One of the remarkable things about Southern Exposure's youth programming is that it frequently involves a public presentation of work. For students whose school work is usually evaluated by abstract measures of teacher approval (grades), presenting work to an audience and having tangible measures of success is an entirely different experience. People come, or they don't. Your work falls off the wall, or it doesn't. People respond to your work as you expected, or not. It looks how you wanted it to, or not, etc. Having real-world consequences shifts your sense of accountability and motivation. And it allows art to become something that has real implications in your life. To me, that is the best way to train artists.

In this section we re-present the work created by CAIP students as their culminating projects, exhibited in May 2016. Many of the artworks are anchored or informed by an interview.

ELIZA GREGORY

Erina

Salamat / Thank You

Security guard uniform set, recycled and crumpled paper and roll, binder clips, excerpted interview transcript
2016

"My grandfather has always been a reticent and proud individual, and does not outwardly express his affection and love in the expected American way. Initially, I resented this about him. I felt as if I had failed to learn wisdom and stories I coveted from him. Completing this project continues to help me embrace my grief about his journey into new realms. I will continue to reconstruct memories of my Lolo's life through collecting oral histories of people who knew and loved him."

Erina Interviews Her Mom

The Excelsior, San Francisco, CA
Spring 2016

In 1985, your Lolo was assigned to a one-time 3–11pm swing shift at the de Young Museum. He didn't have a car and Owl bus lines weren't available. At the end of his shift, he missed the last 43-Masonic bus that would have taken him straight home.

That poor man, I don't know how he ended up going home. But he walked, maybe along Ninth or 19th Avenue. Somehow, he found his way home at around 2am. He's always been sharp. If he took the bus to the de Young, he would have remembered how to exit the park.

I was 17 then. Your Lola and I were so scared. We didn't know what happened to him and didn't own cell phones then. We waited and waited. We felt so sorry for him when he got home.

Of course, it was cold. I wish you could ask him now. How he walked through those Golden Gate Park trails in the darkness. His survival instincts must have kicked in. Remember how in WWII he was exposed to similarly desperate situations—as a child, he was left alone, hungry and cold, looking for stuff to eat and a way to get home.

What would you want to say to him now?

"Thank you." He never gave up. Even if he struggled and switched jobs around. He worked his best in any job he was assigned to. He was recognized numerous times as a model employee. He modeled patience, sacrifice and integrity.

Ang pakikipanayam ni Erina sa kanyang ina

Sa Excelsior, San Francisco, CA
Tagsibol 2017

Nung 1985, naassign siya sa 3–11pm swing shift sa de Young Museum. Pero wala siyang sasakyan. Either nung time na yon, wala ring Owl bus. Namiss niya yung 43 bus na sana derederetso na yun pauwi.

Kawawa naman yung matanda, I don't know how he ended up going home. Baka nakalakad siya sa may ninth or 19th avenue. Nakauwi rin siya ng mga

. He's always been sharp. Kung nagbus siya papunta sa de Young, natuntun niya ring paano makalabas ng park.

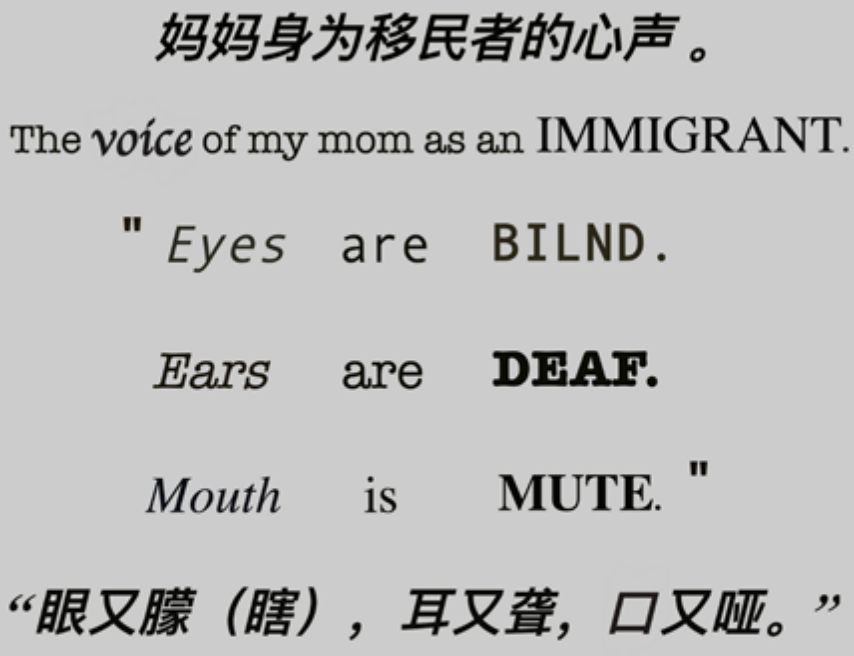
Seventeen ako noon. Natakot kami kasi we didn't know kung anong nangyari sa kanya. We waited and waited and waited. Wala pa kaming cell phones noon. Naawa kami ng Lola mo nung nakauwi siya.

Of course, it was cold. I wish you could ask him now. Paano niya natuntun yung Golden Gate Park, eh diba ang anong ano non, yung trail. I would guess nagkick-in yung kanyang survival instincts. Kasi diba nung war, World War II, ano yan, exposed din siya sa ganyan, na he was probably left on his own, hungry and cold, looking for stuff to eat and looking for a way to get home.

What would you want to say to him now?

"Thank you." He never gave up. Kahit na nahirapan siya and he switched to other jobs. Ginampanan niya faithfully basta may inassign sa kanya. Ilan beses din siya naging parang model employee. Nagmodel siya ng pagtiyatiyaga, sacrifice at tsaka integrity.

Qiqi



Travel with MUNI to the Lives of Immigrants

Acrylic paint, graphite, ink and video installation
2016

“My project is *Travel with MUNI to the Lives of Immigrants*. As the name of this art project suggests, this video will take you on a special MUNI tour! I will take you on a tour of my life and others’ lives. As an immigrant in the United States for about eight to nine years, I still feel a lack of confidence with my English skill. Therefore, I think I can tell you about why a person is not Americanized. I chose to make this project to help you understand the voice of a Chinese immigrant girl. This means a lot to me because I used to be misunderstood by others and I hope this video will help other immigrants too. I hope this means something to you, because immigrants are people in San Francisco and we live together in this city. I believe if we understand each other more, we can have a happier life together in this beautiful city.”

“This is the eye, ear and mouth of my mom and this represents that my mom cannot read English, cannot listen to English and cannot speak English.

This is the phrase that is the most important part of my artwork.

And this is a bus stop and on the bus stop 5 in Chinese Mandarin is ‘myself’ or ‘me’ because it sounds like the word myself and 2 means ‘you’ in Mandarin.”

Qiqi Interviews her Mom

The Sunset, San Francisco, CA
March 12, 2016

Why did you want to come to America?

Because everyone says that America is… heaven…

Why did you exaggerate?

…because, everyone thinks that America is the best.

Why did you say that? Can you give some examples of why people think that America is good?

The USD is more valuable.

Yes. Even I think that, too. The Chinese dramas that I saw said that America is good. Are you comfortable living here?

It is not a matter of comfortable or not, I am here for my children's future, I still need to live here. When I first arrived here, I was not used to here.

Why?

Because living here means working. I only come home to cook. Also, I don't know how to drive a car. When I go shopping, I cannot even speak or understand English.

This is why you guys say that you are blind, deaf, and dumb (cannot speak).

[I am] blind, because I don't know how to read in English. [I am] deaf, because I don't understand English when I listen. [I am] dumb, because I cannot speak in English.

Okay.

琪琦访问她妈妈

加州旧金山日落区
3月12日2016年

你當初為什麼想來美國?

因為人人都說美國是天堂。

為什麼你說的那麼誇張?

所以人人都覺得美國是最好的。

為什麼你這麼說呢? 你可不可以舉一些例子關於別人認為美國是最好的?

美金都比較值錢嘛

是的, 我也這麼認為。我所看的一些電視劇也說美國很好。你在這裡生活習慣嗎?

習不習慣都是為了孩子的前途, 習不習慣都要在這裡住啦。剛來這裡的時候就不習慣。

為什麼?

因為這裡天天除了上班就是回家煮飯。又不會開車, 逛街又聽不懂英文。

正所謂你們說來到這裡眼又瞎, 耳朵又聾, 嘴巴又啞。

因為我不會英文, 所以我不懂字。所以我又看不懂, 聽不懂, 又不會講。

好吧。

Mateo

Mateo: Where was your family from?

Dad: My family was from El Salvador.

Mateo: Where is that?

Dad: It's in Central America.

Mateo: What language did they speak?

Dad: Well they grew up and they only spoke Spanish but when they came to the USA they learned English so now they speak English and Spanish.

Mateo: Can you tell me more about our family history?

Dad: Yeah, my dad's family was from the capital of El Salvador, San Salvador, and they grew up very poor in San Salvador, but my mom was from the coast on the beach - it's called Usulutan - and that was more of a rural area. More like farmers. They grew stuff, but my dad was more in the city, in the capitol.

Mateo: And how they get there?

Dad: They came by plane.

Mateo: Okay.

Dad: Oh no my mom flew but my dad drove here.

Mateo: Okay how- wait how long was it?

Dad: It took my dad a couple of weeks I think because they stopped all over the place.

Dad: They moved to San Francisco. They met in San Francisco.

Mateo: When did they come to the USA?

Dad: They met in 1963 but I think they came 1958 and 1959.

Mateo: How did your parents meet?

Dad: They met here in the USA even though they're both from El Salvador. They met in the USA around my dad's soccer friends. He played soccer for a long time.

Mateo: What was it like growing up with your parents?

Dad: It was good, they were both very supportive of me and my dad worked hard to provide for us. We didn't have a whole lot but we grew up in the Mission District in San Francisco.

Mateo: Oh, wait what did you do there?

Dad: Well we went to school, and my dad worked at a warehouse and my mom stayed home when we were really little until we started going to school and my mom got a job and she worked at schools.

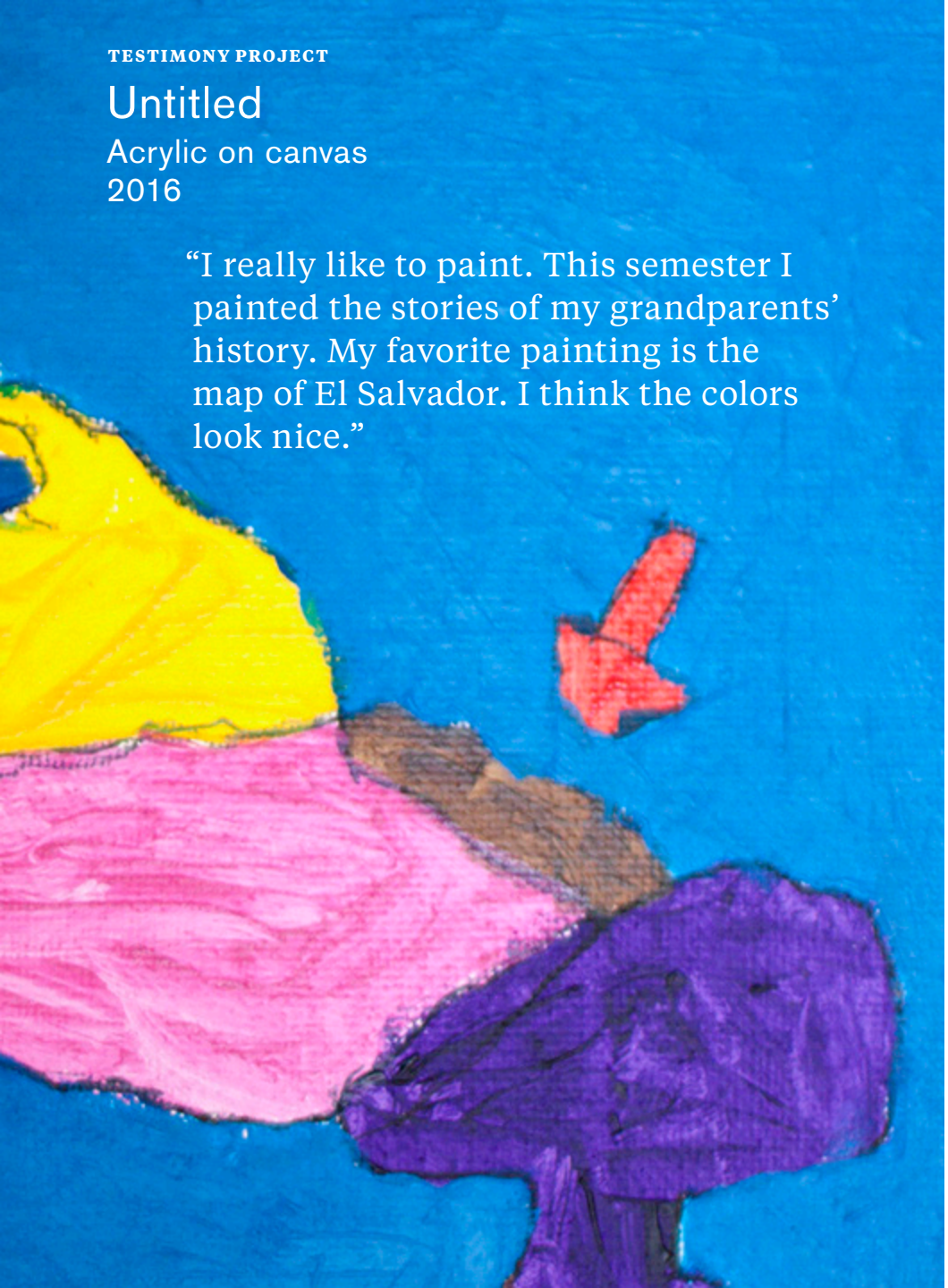
Mateo: Wait your mom-

Dad: She's a teacher's aid.

Untitled

Acrylic on canvas
2016

"I really like to paint. This semester I painted the stories of my grandparents' history. My favorite painting is the map of El Salvador. I think the colors look nice."



Mateo Interviews his Dad

The Excelsior, San Francisco, CA
Spring 2016

Where was your family from?

My family was from El Salvador.

Where is that?

It's in Central America.

What language did they speak?

Well they grew up and they only spoke Spanish but when they came to the USA they learned English so now they speak English and Spanish.

Can you tell me more about our family history?

Yeah, my dad's family was from the capital of El Salvador, San Salvador, and they grew up very poor in San Salvador, but my mom was from the coast, on the beach—it's called Usulutan—and that was more of a rural area. More like farmers. They grew stuff, but my dad was more in the city, in the capital.

And how did they get here?

They came by plane.

Okay.

Oh no my mom flew but my dad drove here.

Okay how—wait how long was it?

It took my dad a couple of weeks I think because they stopped all over the place.

How did your parents meet?

They met here in the USA even though they're both from El Salvador. They met around my dad's soccer friends. He played soccer for a long time.

What was it like growing up with your parents?

It was good, they were both very supportive of me and my dad worked hard to provide for us. We didn't have a whole lot, but we grew up in the Mission District in San Francisco.

Nia

The Colors of the World

Mixed media
2016

"I think that it is important for us all to see the same world through different people's perspectives. My project has meaning to me. I hope it will bring understanding to others."

Following page:
Installation sketch for *The Colors of the World*


install sketch
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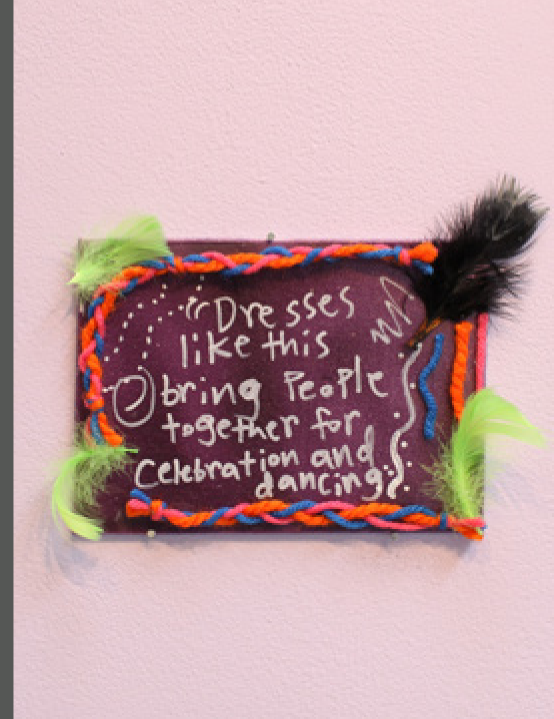
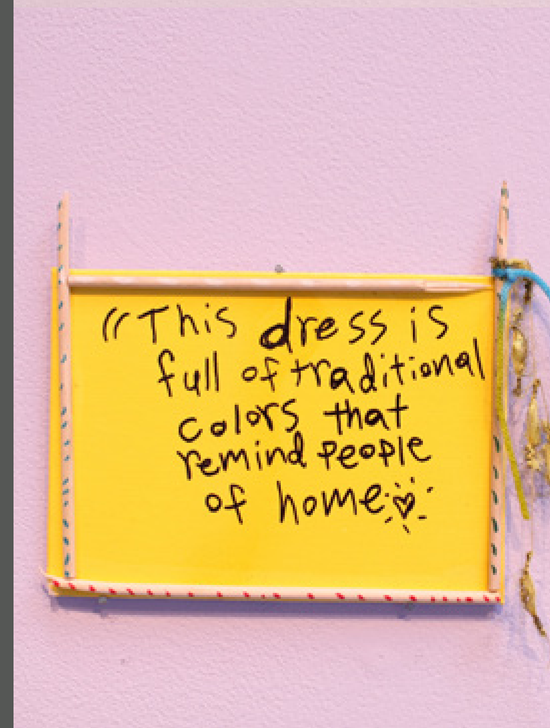

"Dresses like this bring People together for Celebration and dancing"


"This dress makes me realize how stron
I really am to have come all this way


"This dress is full of traditional colors that remind people of home


"It Makes me feel like I'm back home"

Hridam

Landscape paintings
Hridan Tamata
acrylic on canvas
2018

My project is about the landscapes of Nepal. In fact, Nepal is known for its highest peaks in the world. I chose to make these images be cause we are doing projects about immigration and Now we can relate to that topic. I am always passionate about and have a lot of love for the mountains. They reflect my country to me and I just wanted to show them to the people. I hope that people will understand what I am trying to show. The quotes underneath the paintings are from my interview with Elox.

How are you balancing missing home and investing in your life here?
How am I balancing? I'm keeping myself busy so that I cannot think about my home that much and miss it. I'm keeping myself busy doing more stuff and it'll help me to get knowledge too, and be experienced. *I'm just making myself busy.*

Landscape paintings

Acrylic on canvas
2016

"My project is about the landscapes of Nepal. Nepal is known for the highest peaks in the world. I am always passionate about and have a lot of love for the mountains. They reflect my country to me and I just wanted to show them to the people. "

Eliza interviews Hridam

These quotations were printed and hung next to Hridam's paintings.

How are you balancing missing home and investing in your life here?

How am I balancing? I'm keeping myself busy so that I cannot think about my home that much and miss it. I'm keeping myself busy doing more stuff and it'll help me to get knowledge too and be experienced. I'm just making myself busy. Probably I miss my home, but then again I think of here. I think of my future.

What makes you feel excited about the future?

One of my goals is to get a college degree from the United States. I think that's a privilege and everyone honors you. So yeah, for that I'm excited, to get that honor and privilege.

Ever since I was a child I think I've always wondered about mountains. Maybe two, three years ago I started watching videos, documentaries of mountains, how people climb and what to do, how to be ready. I still do; I still watch the videos. So yeah, I'm always fond of watching videos and going there and experiencing it. I think my ultimate goal in my future would be climbing Mt. Everest.

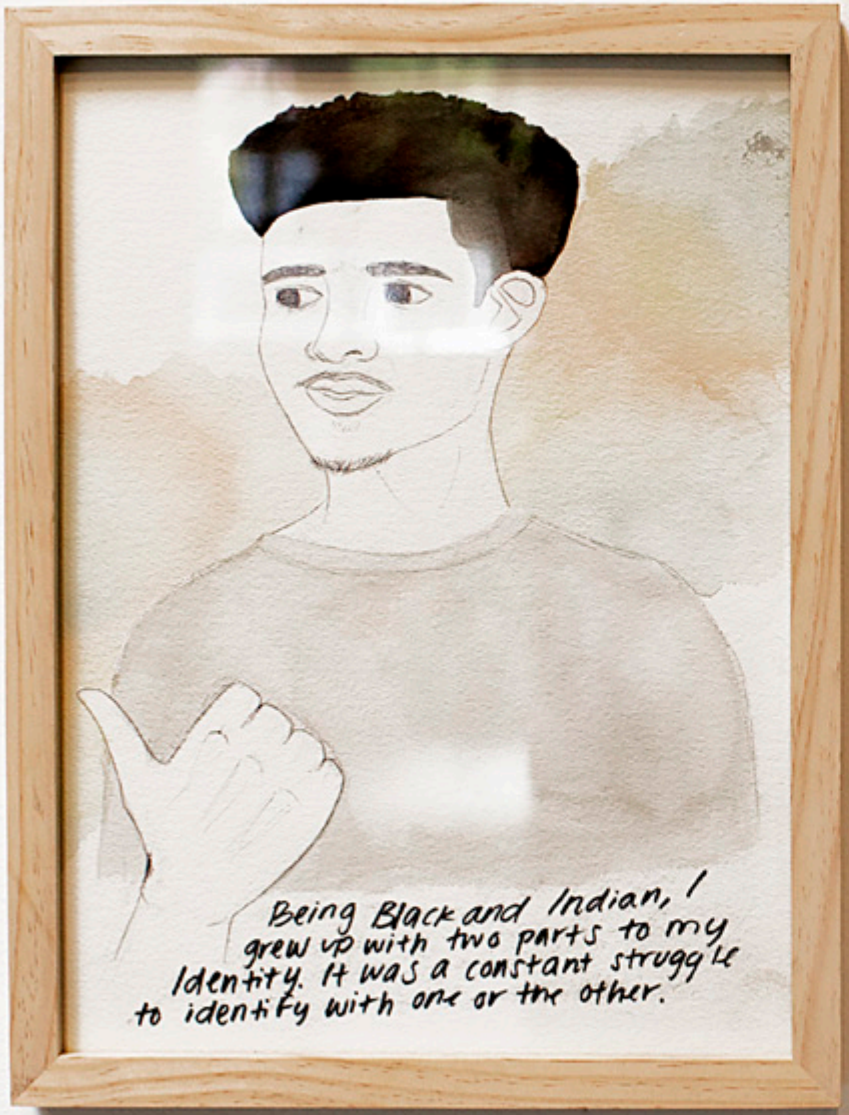
For immigrants and people here, I think it's important to know that when people go to another country they should see their future. They should not just look around here and there. I mean they should not only think of today. They should not look at their past. They should see their future and even in the struggle, they don't have to be like, "Oh, I'm struggling. I can't do nothing." That will sabotage you.

I'd say to non-immigrant people, just respect the immigrant people 'cause if you respect them, then when you go to their countries they might also respect you and just care about you and give you the directions about what to do in other countries. They'll help you out.

Vanesa


I grew up mostly around Italian culture. Being Mexican, I always tried to stay in touch with my roots as much as possible, even though sometimes I felt like I wasn't Mexican enough.


For me, cultural identity is being Mexican. I embrace my culture whenever I can. I regularly spend time with my family because family is very big in our culture.


Being Black and Indian, I grew up with two parts to my identity. It was a constant struggle to identify with one or the other.


When I tell people I'm Japanese, they seem really interested in my culture. It makes me happy.

Vanesa, Alberto, Spurgeon, and Momo

Watercolor on paper
2016

"These portraits represent what cultural identity means to people in my community. The people in these portraits are all kids of immigrant parents, including myself. I asked the question, 'What does cultural identity mean to you?' and took a part of their response and added it into their portrait. For me I grew up with an Italian and Mexican background. And I interviewed my friend Alberto. He's Mexican and he has parents who are immigrants. And my friend Spurgeon. He is black and Indian so he talked about what that was like growing up. And my friend Momo. She is Japanese.

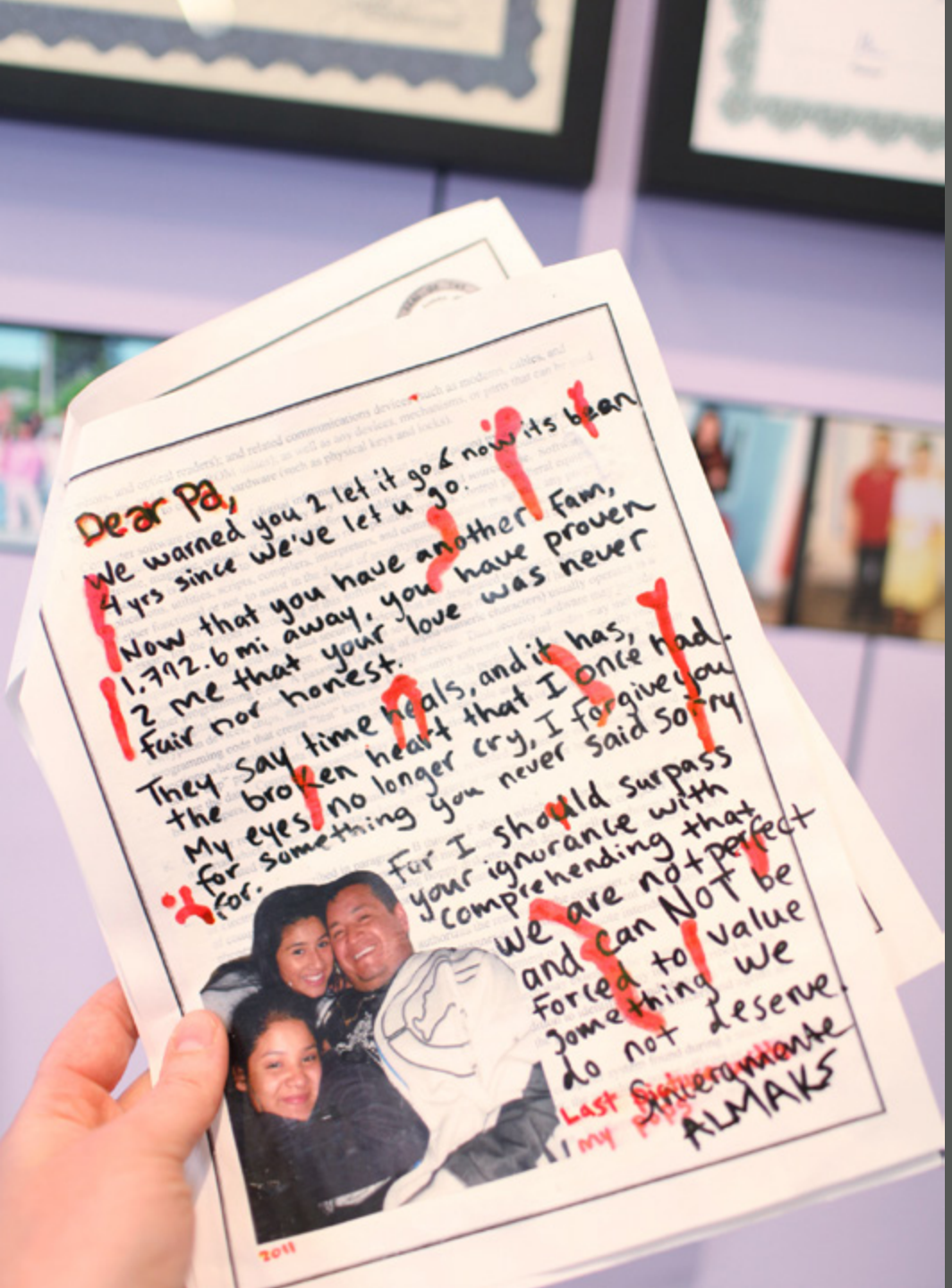
My hope for these pieces is to show what being from a different place and growing up in different environments means to people of different backgrounds."

Alma

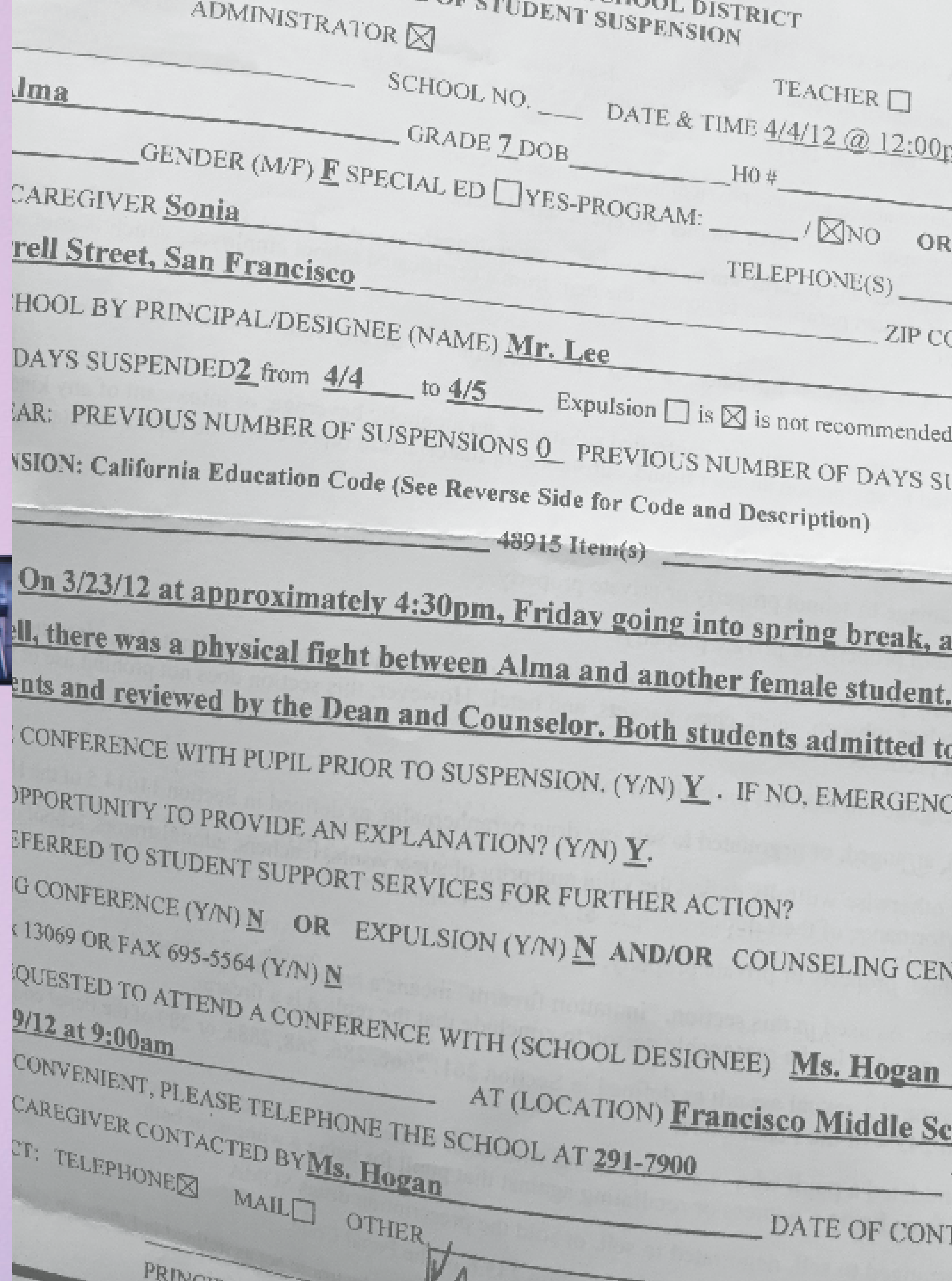

THE SHIFT

The Shift

Mixed media, photographs, paintings and documents
2016



"This piece was a necessary piece for me to visualize my whole life and to understand why some things had to happen. So I feel like this is a really good piece because I've mixed the good and the bad, and it just all makes sense."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PRINC...

Alma Interviews Her Mom

The Tenderloin, San Francisco, CA
March 14, 2016

Where were you born and what neighborhood were you raised in?

Mexico City and Nueva Atzacoalco, Gustavo A. Madero.

What were the living conditions of your neighborhood?

Well, drugs, addiction, gangs. It was middle class, but still. We always had food to eat, but sometimes we couldn't afford to buy new clothes or shoes. Every year we would only buy one of each, no more.

Okay, moving forward to when you came to America–why did you come?

Well, I came for a variety of reasons. I wanted to give my daughters a better future and I wanted to be able to help my parents. My dad retired, and my mom is handicapped. I wanted to support them. So I came here for a better future and to continue to help my parents.

Those were the only reasons? It wasn't because there was a lot of violence or anything like that?

Well, it's always been violent, and now it is even more violent. I wanted to get ahead a little more, so that my daughters could have better schooling and job opportunities.

So, when did you say to yourself, it's time to leave my hometown, the place I was born?

Well, my uncle was killed, and so was my brother and my other uncle. After that, I decided to come over to this side.

How did you get here?

Mojada. As a wetback.

What do you mean, mojada, could you give me more details about the process?

It's a very long story.

It's okay, you can tell me.

Okay, well, we came–

–Through Mexicali, right?

Right, with coyotes.

But didn't we get in an airplane?

Oh yeah–we flew. You want to know everything?

Mm-mmm.

We came from Mexico City–no, from Guadalajara to Mexicali, by plane. And after we landed they picked us up and brought us to a house, and we spent the night there and then began the crossing. We walked and walked.

While we were doing this, did my sister and I ask where we were going? Or did we say anything at all? I don't remember very well.

No, because you were both very young.

So we never asked, out of curiosity? Where did you tell us we were going? Because we always went to Acapulco, to the pools.

Well, this part I don't remember, but no, you didn't ask anything, you were so young.

It wasn't important to us?

No, you were young.

Okay, so when we started walking, what was our reaction?

Well first you walked and walked. After, you guys got tired.

Who got tired first?

Jatziri, first, she didn't want to walk anymore. Jatziri was yelling and yelling, that she didn't want to walk further because she was tired, she wanted to sleep. We walked all night and into the morning. We would rest for a short while and then continue walking. Then you were both so tired that one of the boys carried Jatziri for a while and then another coyote carried you.

Okay. And there was one time that the Border Patrol came, right?

Yes, they came lots of times. But the helicopter–they call it the mosquito.

Lots of times? How many? How many times did we have to hide from the mosquitos?

Hmm, I don't remember exactly, but probably around ten times, more or less.

And on the journey, the walking part of it, how many people were walking in your group?

Oh, well at first there were fifteen or twenty people.

And after?

Well little by little we were losing people, separating because some knew the route, others didn't need a coyote, and while we started with fifteen or twenty, more or less twenty, we ended up with eight people.

And why didn't you go with the other people?

Because I was with my two daughters and I wanted something safe.

So you went with the person–

That was bringing us.

You were paying him.

Yeah.

Okay. How long did we walk?

One whole night of walking and part of a day.

Did you eat and drink or no?

No, I only drank water and I brought saline for you and your sister, because you got very dehydrated, it was so hot.

I remember that there was one other girl with us.

Yeah. She was older. She was eight years old, but she looked like she was only five, because she was really malnourished. She was Salvadoran.

And she was really rude, right? Do you remember that? I remember that she only said bad words.

Oh, yeah.

Did you ever think about helping her?

I gave her a little bit of the saline. You only have to take a little, she felt a little better.

Did she say thanks?

No, but well, she was a kid, so I gave it to her.

She was alone?

Yes. The coyotes were helping her cross alone. Her mom was already on this side, in the US, so she came alone.

Okay, and after it all, where did you arrive?

We arrived–I don't remember where, but we arrived in an orchard. We stayed there until night fell and they gave us hamburgers. Hamburgers and soda.

And after that, did we have time to go where we were going?

No, we had hidden all day, and then a truck passed for us. We all got in and they brought us to Los Angeles.

And life began in Los Angeles. Were you ever afraid?

The whole time, but I had to be strong.

And we weren't scared?

No, you were so young, you didn't have any idea, of fear, of where we were going, nothing.

So now, changing the subject, to a bit more general, what were your expectations of America?

Well, it was like another world, like they say, everything rose colored, everything beautiful. Everything was like a dream.

And what was your dream?

My dream was to come to a different world than my own. A world where everything is beautiful, where everything is easy. Supposedly everyone who went and came back said that everything was really pretty and foreign, that everything is really cool. You just have to hold out your hand and you make money. But the reality is it's not how they say it is. They don't even tell you that on TV.

So what's the reality?

The reality is, well, there's lots of drug addicts, people in the streets, there's lots of homeless people that don't have money or a job. Or rather, people become drug addicts because the government would rather have zombies than keep them busy. All governments are the same. The only good thing about here is that if you work hard, day and night, you'll make money. But the reality is very different than how it is painted in the media and how people talk about it.

If you had been aware of the reality of the two different worlds, the world here and the world there [in Mexico] would you have come? Or would you have said, "I'll stay here with my family."

"No, I would have come. As I've already told you, it was very violent and bad things were happening. That's why I said, 'we're going.' I was already sure where my home was."

No, I would have come. As I've already told you, it was very violent and bad things were happening. That's why I said, "we're going." I was already sure where my home was.

Okay, do you believe that you have arrived at a point where you are successful in your life or are you still fighting to arrive at that point? And what does success mean to you?

Well I still haven't reached my goal of being successful. My goal is for my daughters to have a good career and a better future. When that happens, I'll consider myself successful.

And after that, you won't have anything to measure your success? (Laughter) What part of America do you think has influenced you the most and how has it influenced you differently than it would have in Mexico? Do you follow? What's the difference—because it's a big difference, right?

Oh yes.

Okay, what's the difference, first.

What's the difference? The difference is that in Mexico, if you don't have a career, you aren't anyone in life. You aren't valued, you have nothing. Also, if you're older than thirty, no one wants to give you a job, you're already old. That's a big difference, because here, no matter how old you are, if you're sixty, seventy years old, if you want to work, they'll give you work. In Mexico, you could say that there's a lot of discrimination. If you're heavier, they don't have a uniform for you and they won't hire you. If you're pretty, they'll hire you. If you're ugly, they won't hire you. When some people talk about the government, they say it's bullshit. It screws everyone over.

Do you think that if your daughters had been raised in Mexico, that they would have been different people?

One hundred percent, yes.

> "We aren't from here, and we have to be willing to work hard and show a whole world that doesn't want us, to all of the racist people, that we are not just any Mexican, that we have come here to get ahead, not to waste it."

In what ways?

They would have been drug addicts or they would already have had children, or they would have been gang members.

You don't think that that would have happened here, why? Everything that you see in Mexico you see here as well.

Yes, but the main difference is that here—well, we aren't from here, and we have to be willing to work hard and show a whole world that doesn't want us, to all of the racist people, that we are not just any Mexican, that we have come here to get ahead, not to waste it, like many.

So, are you saying that discrimination that happens here is one of the reasons that people try harder?

Yes. There's discrimination here—but here you have more rights than in Mexico.

How does it feel to be an immigrant?

Good question. It feels very very good, at first, when you come out ahead. You feel proud of doing well and proving to all the people that don't like immigrants that you came to work, to get ahead in life. The stupid things that Trump says—rapists, murderers, crazies. No. There are good people and there are bad people, but the whole world isn't bad, there are people who came here to overcome and to work.

Do you think that you have a little bit of America inside of you or no? If you get what I'm saying?

No…

No? I don't understand you? Do you follow me?

No, I'm not at all American.

You're one hundred percent—

One hundred percent Mexican.

Chilanga. [Mexican from Mexico City]

Until the day that I die, I will continue to be one hundred percent Mexican.

So you don't think any of the values here have influenced you?

No.

No? (Laughter)

I continue being myself.

¡Bye, Mommy! ¡Love you!

Alma le Entrevista a Su Mamá

Barrio De Tenderloin, San Francisco, CA
14 Marzo, 2016

¿En que país y barrio naciste?

En Mexico, Distrito Federal. Nueva Atzacoalco, Gustavo A. Madero.

¿Cuales son las condiciones que se vea en tu barrio?

Pues. Clase media, drogadicción, y pandillas. Nunca faltó para comer pero pues, a veces si había privación y no poder comprar unos zapatos, unos tenis, ropa. Casi regularmente cada año uno se compraba una ropita. Cada año, no como aquí.

Okay. Y bueno, adelantando el tiempo al año primero de que mirastes América– ¿Por qué viniste?

Bueno, las razones que vine, es para darles un futuro mejor a mis hijas, para ayudar a mis padres. Mi papá es jubilado, mi mamá es incapacitada. Y pues solamente yo soy la que les ayudo a mis papás. Y pues vine para un futuro mejor y seguirles ayudando a mis papás.

¿Ese fue el único motivo? ¿No era porque había mucha violencia o no era nada por eso?

Bueno, que la violencia siempre ha sido, pero ahora es más. Pero pues yo por superarnos un poquito más, salir adelante un poquito más para que mis hijas tuvieran una buena carrera, un buen estudio.

Entonces, ¿en qué momento tú dijiste es tiempo de irme de donde nací?

Cuando mataron a mi tío, a mi hermano y a mi otro tío. Entonces, pues, ya decidí venirme para aquí, por la delincuencia que hubo, y por tanto asesinato en mi familia.

¿Y cómo viniste para acá?

De mojada.

¿Cómo de mojada? ¿Puedes ser más detailed en el proceso?

Es muy largo de contar.

Está bien, puedes decirme.

Ay, pues, es que nos venimos–

¿Por Mexicali, no?

Si, con coyotes.

¿Pero no nos subimos a un airplane?

Oh sí. Nos subimos– ¿Todo eso te tengo que contar?

Mm-mmm.

Nos venimos de México–no, de Guadalajara a Mexicali, en avión. Y ya del avión nos recogieron y luego pues ya nos llevaron a una casa y ya después en la noche empezó nuestra travesía. A caminar, a caminar.

Y durante ese proceso, ¿yo y mi hermana te preguntábamos dónde íbamos? ¿O solo no decíamos nada? Porque no me recuerdo muy bien.

No, porque estaban ustedes chiquitas.

¿Entonces nunca nos entró la curiosidad? Que te dijimos: "¿dónde vamos?" Porque siempre hacíamos viajes a Acapulco, a las piscinas.

Pues, esa parte no recuerdo, pero no, no preguntaban porque estaban chiquitas.

¿No nos importó?

No. Estaban chiquitas.

Entonces, cuando empezaron a caminar, ¿qué fue la reacción de tus hijas?

Pues primero caminaron y caminaron. Ya después se cansaron.

¿Quién se cansó primero?

Sí. Iri no quería caminar. Jatziri estaba de chillona, de chillona. Que ella no quería caminar porque ella estaba cansada y quería dormir. Ya después caminamos toda la noche y hasta la mañana, en ratitos descansábamos y caminábamos. Ya después se cansaron y pues ya un muchacho me cargó a una y luego pues, el otro muchacho coyote cargó, te cargó a ti. Y ya caminamos y caminamos.

Okay. Y en–hubo un momento en que estaba ahí la migra, ¿verdad?

Si, muchas veces. Pero el helicóptero–como que le dicen el mosco.

Muchas veces, en total, ¿pues? Dime. ¿Cuántas veces nos escondimos?

Mmm, no recuerdo bien exactamente, pero más o menos around, como 10. Más o menos.

¿Y en tu journey, de caminata, cuántas personas estaban caminando?

Oh, eran—del primero, éramos como 15 o 20 personas.

Mm-mm. ¿Y después?

Y después poco a poquito se fueron—pues, si, separando porque unos ya sabían el camino, que otros no necesitaban coyote, y después como entre 15 o 20 que éramos, más o menos como 20, ya después el último grupo fue como de 8 personas.

¿Y por qué tú no fuiste con las otras personas?

Porque yo llevaba a mis dos hijas y yo quería algo seguro.

Uh-huh. Y entonces te pasas con la persona que—

Que nos pasaba.

Tú le estabas dando dinero.

A-ha.

Okay. ¿Cuántos días fue tu caminata?

Fue toda una noche y parte de un día.

¿Dos días, una noche?

Sí.

Okay. ¿Y comiste, bebiste o no?

No, yo solamente tomaba agua y yo le llevaba un suero a mis hijas, para que no se deshidrataran, porque hacía mucho calor.

Yo me recuerdo que había una, otra niña con nosotros.

A-ha. Era más grande. Ella ya tenía ocho años, pero se veía como de cinco, porque estaba como muy desnutrida, era como—era salvadoreña la niña.

Y era muy—o sea, era muy grosera, ¿verdad? ¿Te recuerdas? Yo me recuerdo que solo decía malas palabras.

Ah, sí.

¿En un momento, tú no pensaste de ayudarla?

No, porque por yo le di como poquito suero. Poquitas tomas y ella fue como que se alivianó.

¿Y te dijo gracias?

No, pero, pues yo, porque, pues, era una niña y yo le di a ella, de ese mismo suero.

¿Y estaba sola?

Sí. A ella la iban a pasar sola, los coyotes. Su mamá ya estaba de este lado, pero ella venía sola.

Okay, bueno, entonces pasó, pasó todo y después llegaste, ¿adonde?

Llegamos—no me recuerdo adonde, pero llegamos como a un sembradillo.

¿Qué es eso?

Una sembradillo de limones.

¿Cómo una farma?

Uh-huh. Y ahí ya fue, después que caminamos, ahí nos detuvimos todo un día, bueno hasta que se llegara la noche y ahí nos dieron hamburguesas. Hamburguesas y refresco.

Y en ese punto después de eso, ¿tenía tiempo de ir donde fuimos?

> "No, me hubiera venido. Porque ya te vuelvo a repetir, que pasaron muchas cosas malas y era mucha violencia. Por eso dije: 'no, sí vámonos.' Ya me sentía segura, donde era mi casa."

No, ya que de paso [1] todo el día estuvimos ahí escondidos, ya después pasó una camioneta por nosotros. Todos nos subimos encima de todos y ya nos llevaron a Los Ángeles.

Los Ángeles y ahí ya empezó la vida. ¿Tuviste miedo tú?

Todo el tiempo, pero tenía que ser fuerte.

¿Y nosotros no teníamos miedo?

No. Estaban chiquitas ustedes, ustedes no sabían. Pues sí, del miedo, donde íbamos ni nada.

Entonces, okay, ahora cambiando de tema, a uno más general, ¿cuál eran tus expectaciones de América?

Pues era como un mundo, como dice uno, uno lo pintaba [2] de rosa, todo era bello. Todo era como un sueño.

¿Y cuál era tu sueño?

Mi sueño era venir a un mundo diferente al mío. Un mundo de que todo es bello, todo es fácil. Como supuestamente los que venían y regresaban decían que era bien bonito el gabacho, que todo está súper cool, que ganas como estirando la mano. Pero en realidad no es como lo pintaban. En la tele ni lo decían.

¿Y cuál es la realidad?

Pues la realidad que pues también, pues hay como de todo. La única diferencia, como dicen, hay mucho drogadicto, o sea mucha gente en la calle, o sea que no tiene hogar, no tiene dinero, no tiene trabajo. O sea, se tiran a la drogadicción, pues porque el gobierno prefiere tener, como dice, zombis y mantenerlos sin ponerlos en actividad. Todos los gobiernos son iguales. Pero lo único bueno de aquí es que si tú trabajas duro, día y noche, tienes dinero. Pero en realidad no era como realmente lo pintan y lo dicen.

Si tú hubieras sabido la realidad de los dos mundos diferentes, o sea el mundo de aquí y el mundo de allá, ¿tú hubieras venido? ¿O hubieras decidido[3] , 'me voy a quedar aquí con mi familia?'

No, me hubiera venido. Porque ya te vuelvo a repetir, que pasaron muchas cosas malas y era mucha violencia. Por eso dije: "no, sí vámonos." Ya me sentía segura, donde era mi casa.

Okay. ¿Tú crees que has llegado al punto que eres exitosa en tu vida o todavía estas luchando para ir? ¿Y qué es ser exitosa para ti?

Pues todavía no he llegado a mi meta de llegar a mi éxito. Mi éxito, este, es que mis hijas tengan una carrera, tengan un futuro mejor. Y cuando eso sucede entonces yo ya acabé mi éxito.

¿Y después de eso, no se te dé más éxitos? [Risas] ¿Qué parte de América crees que te ha influenciado más en tu persona y como te ha influenciado diferente en tu persona de lo que te había influenciado México? ¿Si me entiendes? O sea, ¿qué es la diferencia–porque la diferencia es grande, verdad?

Oh yes.

Okay. ¿Cuál es la diferencia, primero? Primera pregunta.

¿Cuál es la diferencia? La diferencia es de que en México tú no tienes–pues sí no tienes, si no tienes una carrera tú no eres nadie en la vida. No tienes valores, no tienes nada. Y más, si pasas de 30 años ya nadie te quiere dar trabajo, ya estás viejo. Y la gran diferencia aquí, tengas los años que tengas, 60, 70, si tú

"Bueno aquí les inculca unos valores, que no somos de aquí, tenemos que echarle ganas y demostrarle a todo el mundo que no nos quiere, a todos los racistas, que a veces no por ser mexicano de cualquier este—cualquier city, uno viene a superarse, no a echarse a perder, como muchos."

tienes ganas de trabajar, aquí te dan trabajo. En México se podría decir que hay mucho racista. Racista en la forma de que si en un trabajo tienen hasta la bata chica, mediana y grande. Y si tú estas más gorda no te dan trabajo porque estás gorda y no hay uniforme para ti. Si eres bonita, te dan trabajo. Si eres fea, no te dan trabajo. Alguno se diga del gobierno, el gobierno es pura mierda. Entre más chinga al mexicano, más quiere verlo jodido.

Y, okay. ¿Tú crees que si tus hijas hubieran crecido en México, hubieran sido distintas personas?

Cien por ciento, sí.

¿En qué forma?

Hubieran sido ya drogadictas o ya hubieran tenido hijos, o pandilleras.

¿Y tú crees que aquí no salieron así, por qué? ¿Por qué no estaban expuestas al mundo de ahí? ¿O tú crees que–? Todo lo que según ves allá en México aquí también lo ves.

Si pero con la gran diferencia de que aquí uno les – Bueno aquí les inculca unos valores, que no somos de aquí, tenemos que echarle ganas y

demostrarle a todo el mundo que no nos quiere, a todos los racistas, que a veces no por ser mexicano de cualquier este–cualquier city, uno viene a superarse, no a echarse a perder, como muchos.

Entonces, ¿estás diciendo que la discriminación que un inmigrante pasa aquí es parte de las motivaciones porque–de que uno hace más esfuerzo?

Sí. Aquí también hay discriminación–pero uno aquí tiene como más derechos que en México. En México, no.

¿Cómo se siente ser un inmigrante?

Buena pregunta, chaparrona. Se siente muy, muy–bueno, se siente en primer lugar, tú sales adelante se siente orgullosa de salir adelante y demostrarle a la gente racista que no quiere a los inmigrantes, demostrarles que venimos a trabajar, a superarnos. No venimos a, como dice el estúpido de Trump. Violadores, asesinos, locos. No. Que hay gente, sí, no nada más de México, de todo el mundo, habemos buenas y habemos malas. Pero no todo el mundo somos malos, habrá gente que venimos a superarnos y a trabajar.

¿Tú crees que tienes un poquito de América adentro de ti o no? ¿Sí me entiendes?

No…

¿No? ¿No te entiendo? ¿No me entiendes?

No, no tengo nada de América.

Eres 100%–

Cien por ciento mexicana.

Chilanga.

Hasta el día que me muera, voy a seguir siendo 100% mexicana.

¿Entonces tú no crees que los valores de aquí, nada de eso te ha influenciado?

No.

¿No? [Risas]

Sigo siendo yo misma.

¡Bye, Mommy! ¡Love you!

Cami


ALIEN

Alienated

Mixed media installation in the restrooms
2016

"Through my installation, I wanted to destigmatize the word 'alien.' In current political culture, the word is constantly emphasized in discussions of immigration. Yet, 'alien' should be a label that connects us rather than divides, for we are *all* alien. Our minds and persons are isolated from each other—as others' true thoughts are unknown to us, we are equally as alien to them."

Eliza Gregory

Curriculum.

The lesson sketches included in this section are not examples of perfected curriculum. They are descriptions of what we tried to do, what we actually did, and the frequent gap between those things. It is important to us that we share these stories in order to further the conversation and add to the archive of community education projects undertaken by individual organizations. Except where otherwise noted, text in this section is written by Eliza.

CLAIRE LAROSE

Course Overview

This course is an inquiry into the relationship between justice and representation. How do the stories we tell ourselves promote or erode justice? When do you feel accurately represented in the world? How could you accurately represent someone else?

You will be asked to look around you in new ways; become more sophisticated in the way you read images; and eventually create a structure for an art-based inquiry into a given subject that you present to the public.

This internship examines art as research and research as art, encompassing idea-based approaches and methods-based approaches. Basically we are going to think about things and we are going to do things.

Using our expanded understanding of relationships between justice and representation, we will identify questions we are interested in representing, and then explore those questions in a way that invites an audience to witness and perhaps even participate in that exploration. We are going to "share the investigation." You will be learning to operate like an artist by analyzing and engaging with the world around you; conceiving of something you want to make or experiment with; and then executing that idea.

Context Assignment

I began the term by having students select one photograph (from a curated bunch I presented to them) and make three different contexts for that image, each of which changed how the image read. So, for example, you could take one of Fazal Sheikh's portraits of Somali refugees and make it into: 1. A picture of your cousin that you posted on your Facebook page, 2. A news photograph on the front page of the *New York Times*, 3. An advertisement for a new show on Netflix (Vanesa came up with that one).

The idea was to show that where an image *sits* and is seen by an audience dramatically alters its meaning.

This was a partial failure. Firstly, the idea of "context" was new, and this turned out to be a very difficult assignment for everybody. So it took a really long time, and people mostly were unable to create different contexts that altered how the picture read.

But, it worked in the sense that the many small failures meant that we were all really learning something, or trying to learn something, and we were able to look at a few of them at the end and break down what worked and what didn't.

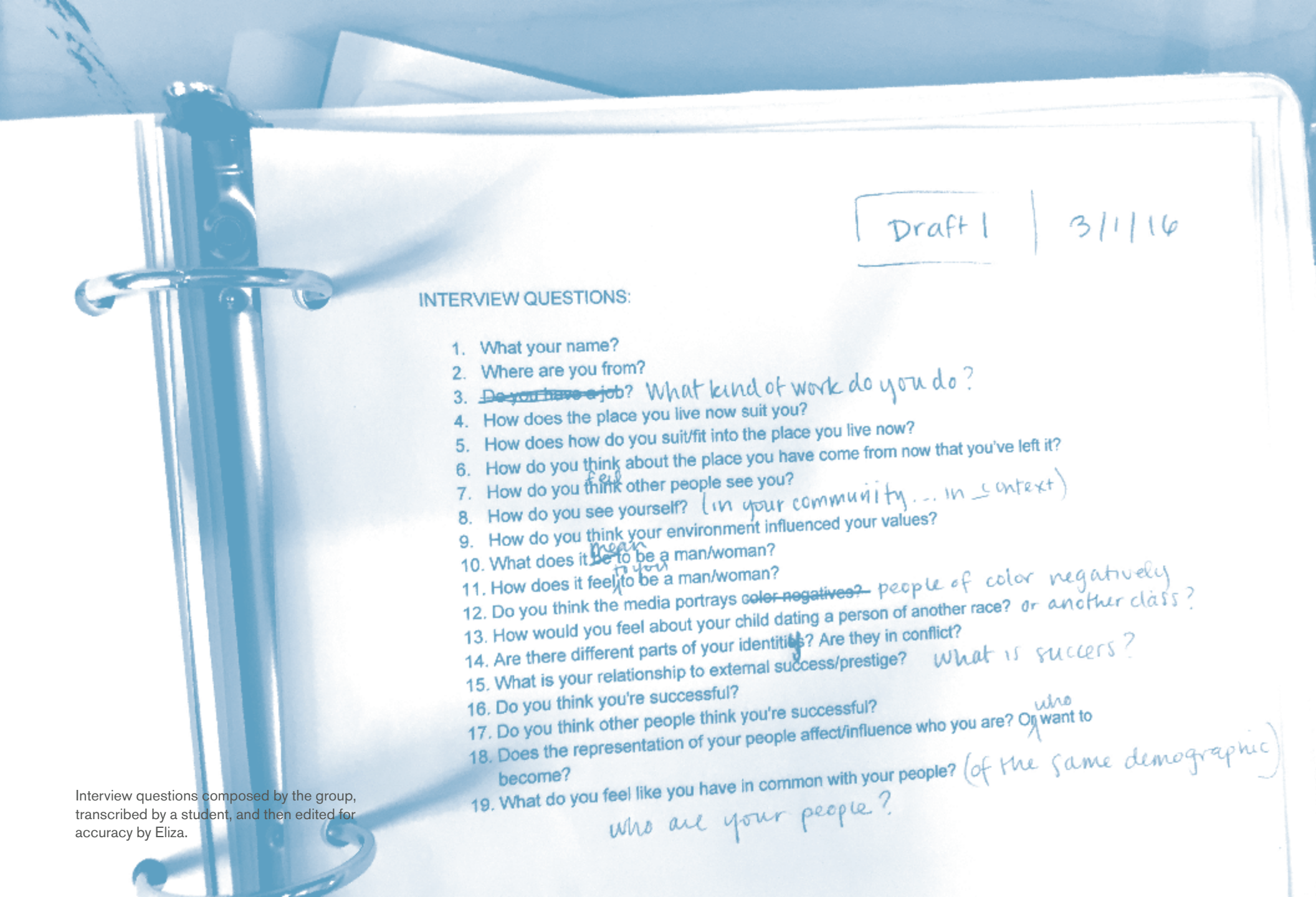
I wanted the second assignment to be altering a context itself (a magazine, a Facebook page, a newspaper, a book) so that it no longer communicated what it had before. My idea was to hand out volumes of an Encyclopedia Brittanica and have students edit them and mess around with them to intervene in their communication. But we never got to that at all because we spent so long on the first part, and I thought my students needed to stop feeling frustrated and start feeling like they could have some kind of a victory in order to stay engaged.

Student Interviews Assignment

Interviews are a core component of my practice as an artist. I use art as a way to learn about the world, and to help others learn with me. I often do that by conducting and sharing interviews in various forms. I asked the students to conduct interviews with other students and with people outside of our class.

I remember, as a high schooler, constantly trying to read and adapt to my peers' social cues. An interview flips this dynamic, because you are acknowledging to yourself that you can control a social situation, and when someone gives you permission to interview them, they essentially give you permission to socially manipulate them in order to access their information and emotions. I wanted to make sure the students saw the interviews as different from normal conversations. They are liberating, even as they are constrained.

In preparation for conducting interviews with each other, I asked the group to come up with a list of questions that we felt genuinely interested in asking each other. I look at this list now and I can tell how much I was influencing it at the beginning and then when I backed off, they started to focus more on what interested them in the present moment. We kept the group's phrasing. Part of the exercise here was to let them ask some potentially bad or badly phrased questions, so they could test out what didn't work as well as what did.



Draft 1 | 3/1/16

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. What your name?
2. Where are you from?
3. ~~Do you have a job~~? What kind of work do you do?
4. How does the place you live now suit you?
5. How does how do you suit/fit into the place you live now?
6. How do you think about the place you have come from now that you've left it?
7. How do you ~~think~~ feel other people see you?
8. How do you see yourself? (in your community... in context)
9. How do you think your environment influenced your values?
10. What does it ~~be~~ mean to be a man/woman?
11. How does it feel to be a man/woman?
12. Do you think the media portrays ~~color negatives?~~ people of color negatively
13. How would you feel about your child dating a person of another race? or another class?
14. Are there different parts of your identities? Are they in conflict?
15. What is your relationship to external success/prestige? What is success?
16. Do you think you're successful?
17. Do you think other people think you're successful?
18. Does the representation of your people affect/influence who you are? Or who want to become?
19. What do you feel like you have in common with your people? (of the same demographic)

who are your people?

Interview questions composed by the group, transcribed by a student, and then edited for accuracy by Eliza.

CURRICULUM

Student Interviews Assignment

Two students in particular conducted interviews that became a deeply compelling experience.

As Qiqi (a high school senior, who came to the US from China when she was eight years old, by plane) and Alma (a high school junior, who came to the US from Mexico when she was four years old, on foot) told each other about their experiences, the rest of the room couldn't help listening in. I was torn by the impulse to catch every word and follow up on various elements of each narrative, and the need to stay completely out of the spell they had created that was holding them apart from the rest of us, and making the whole thing possible. I (just barely!) managed to stay out of it. And now, with their permission, we are sharing those conversations here, so that we can all eavesdrop.

Qiqi Interviews Alma

Southern Exposure
Spring 2016

Why did you come to America?

I came here because my mom and my dad told me that it was gonna be better in this side of the world. I was three when they told us. No, I was four, actually. So I didn't know what was going on. And when we were in Mexico, we traveled a lot, like all over, so I just thought it was gonna be another family vacation.

So do you still remember the time that your parents told you about immigration?

They never told me about immigration; they were just like, "We're going," you know? But I remember that my dad left first, and once he was over here, he told my mom that it was okay to come to America, so we caught a plane to–I forgot–to this one airport. And when we got to the airport, we got on the plane and I went to sleep. And then we hopped off the airplane, and hopped on a bus, and we hopped off the bus in the middle of a desert.

Oh, my.

Yes. There were like 25 of us, women, men, and me, my sister, and another girl–we were the only kids that I remember. And the guy that was gonna tell us the way through the desert–we call them coyotes–so the coyote told us to follow him. And when he said, "Run," to run, and when he said, "Hide," to

"And when we got to the airport, we got on the plane and I went to sleep. And then we hopped off the airplane, and hopped on a bus, and we hopped off the bus in the middle of a desert."

hide, and to not look up. And so we just started walking, and it was really hot. And I remember that, at one point, we got to where there were two trails, and I remember the group of people started arguing because one of the group believed that we were supposed to go a different way, and then the coyote was like, "No, it's this side. I know the way. I'm the coyote here." And my mom was like, "We're paying him, so we're gonna listen to him."

So we walked with the coyote and maybe five or six other people. About 13 people went with the other guy. I don't know what happened to them–I really don't. And so when we separated from the other group, it was just us, three of the coyotes, and another girl–she was really annoying. I remember that she knew English. And she was so annoying–she was just so disrespectful, but she was still there. And so we just kept walking and walking, until night came. And I remember, when we got to the road, we heard some helicopters, and I remember I was really scared. And then my mom was like, "Everything's gonna be okay," you know, moms. [Chuckles] Right?

Mm-hmm.

And then I remember laying down in a hole of sand.

The hole was covered by sand?

No, it was just like a hole, strangely enough. I remember we were just looking up at the sky, and my mom kept saying, "Everything's gonna be okay," and she was holding my hand. She told me and my sister, "Look up. Look, it's our angel." And I remember looking up at the sky, and we saw a cloud. And that cloud was in a shape of an angel, believe it or not–it was an angel. And I just felt safe. I was just happy–I don't know. It was just a comfort. And then, out of nowhere, the helicopter left, they just went away. And I remember we waited 20 more minutes, just lying there–we were just lying there until the coyote was like, "When we get to the road, we're all gonna run as fast as you can." So we were like, "Okay." And then he was like, "You're gonna see a tree, and we're gonna wait there." So we just started running, three by three. And I remember there was a lot of cactus.

What is that?

Cactus. You don't know what cactus looks like? It looks like this.

Oh. Oh, okay.

And they have like little–fruits.

Yeah.

There were those, and there was a lot of wheat. You know what wheat is–like what makes bread?

Yes.

So I remember that my whole pants were covered with wheat, and I kept trying to walk, but there came a point where I was like, "I can't do it no more, Mom. It really hurts." So she was like, "You know what? Take your pants off." So I started walking with just underwear, and my mom was like, "It's okay. Just drink some water." People were asking for our water, but my mom was like, "No, that's for my daughters." She didn't wanna share it 'cause we didn't know if we were gonna need more water. And my sister, she was giving up. She was like, "I don't wanna walk no more," and I was like, "Sister, no, come on. Let's keep on walking." I remember the coyotes were like, "Okay, we're gonna carry you guys." And they carried us for a really long time, and they were just really nice to us. And then I remember that we got to a fence, and we literally jumped it. It wasn't that tall 'cause it was back then. So we hopped that, and we were to the other side. And that's where my memory ends. I don't remember anything after that point. I just remember meeting up with my dad, and then a new phase comes into my head, and that's when we first arrived to Daly City—that was our first house. We stayed there for about six months, and then we got enrolled in the Mission Education Center.

And it was pretty different 'cause we didn't have to wear uniforms—in Mexico, we went to a public school, but we still had to wear uniforms.

And we had to sing the independence, and it was a totally different system than here. And the difference: they didn't give us food in Mexico—in school, they don't give you food.

So how does it feel in America?

It feels—my perspective of America is everything is disguised. You live in a merit system where you have opportunities to grow, which, in Mexico, you don't. But I feel like it's still the same concept of the government treating us the same way—I've had encounters with the police where they treat us like shit 'cause I'm with my friends.

Oh, why?

There's this one time we went to a bonfire—do you know what a bonfire is?

No.

No? A bonfire is by the ocean, on the beach, and there's a fireplace.

Oh, okay.

So, one night, me and my friends—it was like ten of us—we mobbed it to Ocean Beach, and my friends back then, they wore hoodies—you know, like typical "kids from the hood" type of baggy clothes. They're black and

> "People were asking for our water, but my mom was like, 'No, that's for my daughters. She didn't wanna share it 'cause we didn't know if we were gonna need more water."

Mexican, so we're black and brown people. And we were walking in this neighborhood of white people—you know, Ocean Beach is a really nice neighborhood—and we're walking to the 38 bus stop, and we get to the 38 bus stop, and, suddenly, 10 cop cars come, and they're like, "Freeze. Put your hands up in the air." And they literally point their gun at us—

What?

And we're like, "What did we do?" And I'm over here, like, "Whoa. What is going on?" It's my first time ever encountering the police. And, at this point, I did not know any of my legal rights, you know. I didn't know anything about that.

How old were you?

I was like 12.

What? 12?

Yeah, I was young.

Oh, my God.

And—

The police is so crazy.

Yeah. No, 'cause my friends are tall and big. And the police were like, "We got reports that there were suspicious people walking around with guns." None of us had guns, but that's what the people, I guess, thought. And I feel like, ever since I had that encounter with the police, I was just like against them, somehow.

Mm-hmm.

And, over time, last year, I was really about protesting and being against the government because I found out that a lot of people get killed by police, like

police brutality. And they don't really do nothing about it. I feel like it's the same as in Mexico; it's just more extreme in Mexico because, literally, money controls Mexico and the government system. I feel like it's the same over here; it's just that people don't know it because they're doing well in their lives. They don't realize that even though you have a roof over your head, there's all these things that push you back down, that don't let you rise up, because you live in this environment where the government really doesn't pay attention to you.

I grew up in the Tenderloin, and, at a really young age, I'd seen all types of things. There's literally syringes all over the place. There's people injecting themselves in the middle of the sidewalk, not caring if you're looking at them doing it. There's trash everywhere.

So all of this made me mad towards my mom, at one point, because she had us living in that area, but that's because I was ignorant, and I didn't know that that's all we could afford. So I grew up, and I met all of these other kids, and I started to be wild. I was fighting everyone in my middle school. Every little thing triggered me to fight, and that was just an instinct. I used to fight at least two times per week–with teachers, with my classmates. It was just like I enjoyed fighting and starting arguments.

And, at one point, I had this teacher–I didn't wanna turn in an assignment because I didn't do it, and he was talking to me, and I just walked out. And he got really mad, and he was like, "Oh, you're never gonna be nobody in this world. You're just gonna get pregnant, just like all these other Mexicans." I was really mad, and I looked at him, and I was just like, "You don't know shit." And then I slammed the door in his face. And then I got called down to the office the next day, and I got kicked out of his class,

"They don't realize that even though you have a roof over your head, there's all these things that push you back down, that don't let you rise up, because you live in this environment where the government really doesn't pay attention to you."

"And he got really mad, and he was like, 'Oh, you're never gonna be nobody in this world. You're just gonna get pregnant, just like all these other Mexicans.' I was really mad, and I looked at him, and I was just like, 'You don't know shit.'"

but I was like, "Whatever." I didn't even care. So all of these things made me realize that I wasn't the only one 'cause I seen my friends go through the same thing. I started therapy when I was in seventh grade, and I'm still having therapy, but we're better off now 'cause I don't fight people at school–I go to class now–and I'm better off as a person. But back to what I was saying: I feel like there's just so many obstacles that colored people have to face, and it's easier for a person of color to just sell drugs and–keep what's going going–'cause it's the easy way, you know? It's easy money.

Okay.

Yeah, but then–you're never gonna progress, right?

Yeah. We're having a great talk.

Yeah. [Laughs] I like to talk.

So how are you different from the people in your hometown now?

Well, one, I'm not pregnant with kids.

[Chuckles] Okay.

Another is I'm not as violent–I don't wanna be violent. I feel like, when I talk to my cousins in Mexico, all they ask for is guns. Yeah, like, "Can you send me money so I can buy a gun? 'Cause everyone has one over here." And I'm just like, "What? No. You want me to help you kill people?" No. But it's crazy because I feel like, if I was in Mexico, I would be just the same, you know? And none of my cousins go to school.

Why?

"I don't know—I wonder if I would be alive if I was in Mexico. You know?"

Why? There was a phase in Mexico where the *carteles* were kidnapping the kids, so your son would go out to school and he will never come back 'cause they were recruiting young kids to work for them. So ever since that happened, none of my cousins go to school anymore. I feel like that's why they get led into joining these big cartels and forming a cycle of killing people and producing drugs that are gonna be sent over here–because there's no way they can do something better.

And school is not free in Mexico, and if it is free, then you have to buy books, but it's either you buy books or you buy food, and people don't wanna buy books–that's their money for food. So if my mom–she's the resource to my family in Mexico–wasn't here, providing money, then it would be really hard for my family to have food, I guess. And because none of my uncles has a good job. It's either they're hustling, selling clothes or–I don't know what they're doing, to get money. But I feel like everything evolves from violence in Mexico and–I don't know–I wonder if I would be alive if I was in Mexico. You know? So I feel like that's how different it is, that here I feel like I have hope in people. In Mexico, I don't think that people have really good hopes.

Mm-hmm. So I think it's almost the end of class. Yeah.

[Laughs] Okay. Yeah.

Okay. Your life is interesting. Is there anything else you want to say?

Is there anything else I wanna say? Oh, yeah, I think art is a way to distract myself, but, at the same time, use all of that background and all of what's going on right now as a way to just let it all out. 'Cause I didn't do art until this year. I would take pictures and never see them again or just leave them around, but I was really insecure about my art when I was little. And I feel like art is really helpful in a way that you can just express yourself, to help you not cry [laughs] every night, about what's going on in your head. You can just grab a pen and just start like [making scribbling motions], "Woo," you know?

And then, after that, you feel like–you're like, [making sigh of relief noise], "Ahhh."

That's how I feel about art: it's a resource to just feel free.

Alma Interviews Qiqi

Southern Exposure
Spring 2016

Do the people from your hometown still consider you as one of them? Do they see you differently?

Yes. They consider me one of them; however, some kind of differently. For example, in Chinese social media, I saw some videos that they talked about how people who immigrated to the US and went back to China are different and how they think they are better.

How do you feel about that?

Not that good.

What makes them [the people who immigrated to the US] better?

I guess, because when they talk in Chinese with English words; therefore, people in China didn't really understand that so they will think that they are different.

Yeah. In Mexico, it's similar. Do you ever feel like you don't fit with your friends when you go to China or when you are here?

I haven't been back to China.

Okay.

I will travel back to China this summer.

Okay, that's nice. When was the last time you visited China?

I have not visited China since I came to the US.

Oh, well. How do you feel about it?

I feel I miss there.

Oh my god. I will cry, I will really cry if I go to Mexico. I haven't been to Mexico since I was three. I will cry, would you cry, Qiqi?

Yeah.

Stranger with a Camera

I wanted the students to watch Elizabeth Barret's *Stranger with a Camera* (available on Vimeo and through Appalshop) because it's an insightful and beautiful exploration of justice and representation *and* because it focuses on white American poverty, which is something the contemporary media landscape rarely shows us. I thought that having the discussion about how poverty and disenfranchisement are represented might benefit from focusing on white people, because then we could talk about media representations across class within a single race (since they had already pointed to plenty of examples of glorifications of wealthy white Americans through mainstream media in our discussions), and without unwittingly furthering our own perceptions of only non-white people as poor. And since my students themselves came from a wide variety of racial and international backgrounds while I am Caucasian, it felt important to think carefully about how I was representing different groups through the examples of media, images, and art I chose to show, as well as through the power dynamics within the classroom itself.

> *I (Claire) was leading the class the day we watched* Stranger with a Camera *and the following class period when we discussed the film. My goal was to lead a review of the film's plot, discuss why events might have unfolded as they did, and launch a conversation about the powerfully fraught nature of representing other human beings. Despite the clarity of my prepared discussion topics, we never made it past a review of the plot. As it turns out no one could understand the thick Kentucky accents or keep any of the characters straight. We were continually backtracking to explain which white lady was which. Who was shot? By whom? Who's telling this story anyway? The world that the film portrayed was nowhere close to a setting they had seen before. We floundered and I had little progress to report back to Eliza.*

I'm not exactly sure what to learn from this. On the one hand, it's just a misfire–something that I thought would resonate which didn't, perhaps because of the subject, perhaps because they had nothing to connect the film to. On the other hand, it may confirm what I had guessed–that it was *so* unusual for these students to see detailed depictions of white American poverty in a documentary-style work that this may become a point of reference they carry forward in a productive way. Who knows! I'm sure I'll show this work to students again in my career, but perhaps next time I can prepare them for it more effectively.

Rich and Poor

I showed the students a variety of different works by photographers to get the creative juices flowing, to think about visual research and visual exploration of the world, and to think about the limits of two-dimensional representation of another person. One of the examples that seemed to resonate the most was Jim Goldberg's *Rich and Poor* project, where photographs of San Francisco's wealthiest and poorest citizens are written on by the subjects themselves, with thoughts on their relationships to money. The tension between what is written and what is shown in the image was a real focal point for us. This illustrates what can and can't be said with words and with pictures respectively, and how sometimes different representations of the same person can contradict each other. For me, when contradiction is present the representation of someone gets significantly more authentic. We spoke about this as beginning to represent "full personhood."

Stephen Crane

I invited Addy Spingarn, who teaches English at Stanford and writes about race in literature, to come and give a workshop during one of our two-hour class periods. Addy had us read and analyze two journalistic short stories by Stephen Crane: “The Men in the Storm” and “When a Man Falls, a Crowd Gathers” (*Stephen Crane: Prose and Poetry*, Library of America, New York, 1996). Remarkably short and meticulously wrought, what was important for the students to see was how these pieces shift perspective, so that no one character is central or prioritized. The reader’s compassion is directed at all characters equally, not as a way to vindicate or idealize them, but as a way to understand them. That difference between understanding and approval feels crucial to me when approaching representation. I think the students were a little surprised to come to their art internship one day and find it was an English class, and I’m still not entirely sure whether it worked for them, but I did reference it as we moved forward in the semester… so it worked for me! And once again, seeing how power dynamics and full personhood are at play in representation, regardless of whether the media being used is visual or, in this case, purely verbal, felt important.

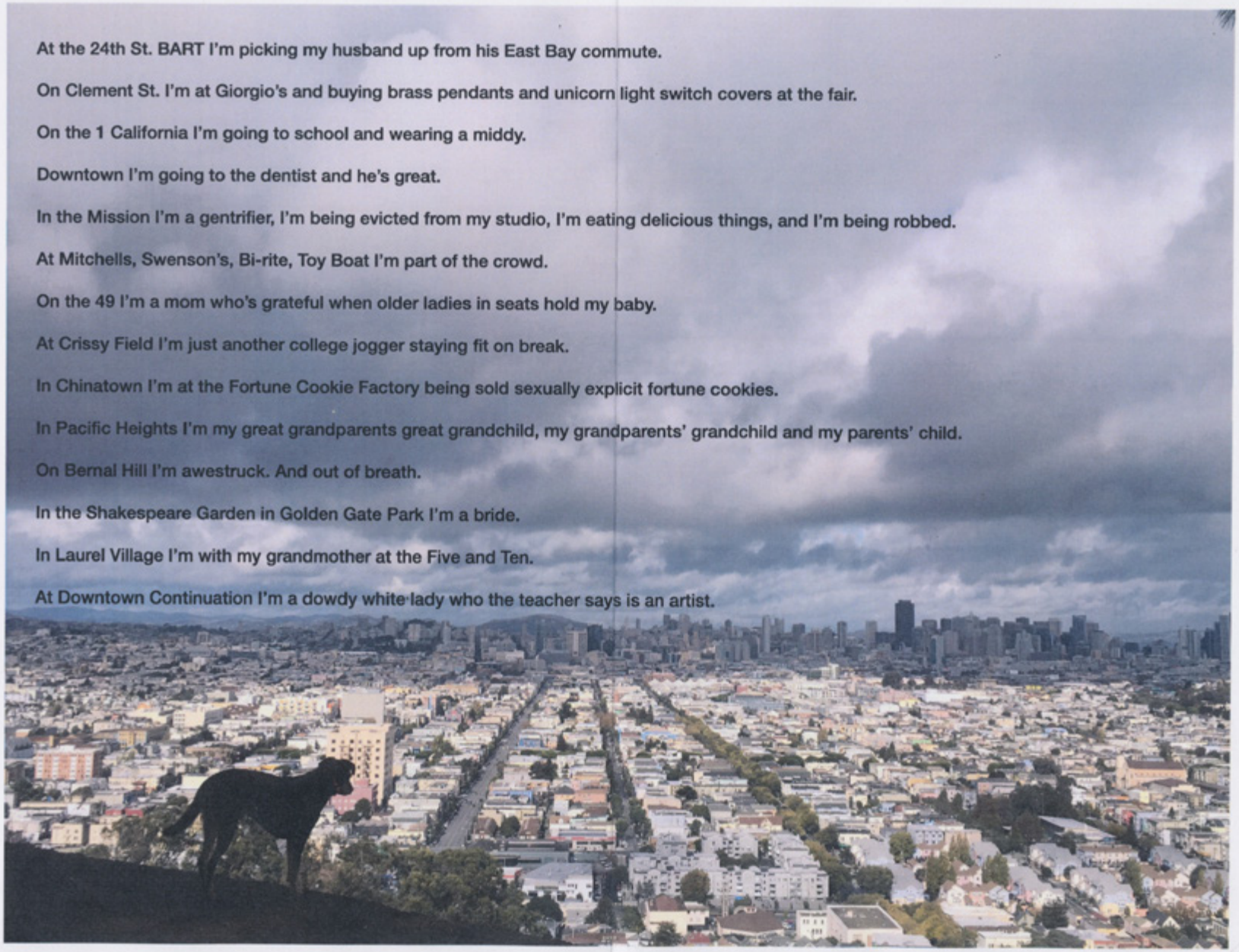
Who Am I Where?

Rebecca Solnit's book *Infinite City* was a great resource for me as I tried to illustrate the idea of research as art and art as research. The maps throughout that book make the sometimes implicit editing and shaping of information on any map explicit. They overtly visualize specific themes within a region, often as counterpoints or unexpected pairings, to create both tension and revelation. They are blatantly subjective maps, informed by rigorously researched information. I chose the "Who Am I Where?" poem and its accompanying map as a focal point for us, and we copied the format to make a zine about our own multifaceted and contradictory identities.

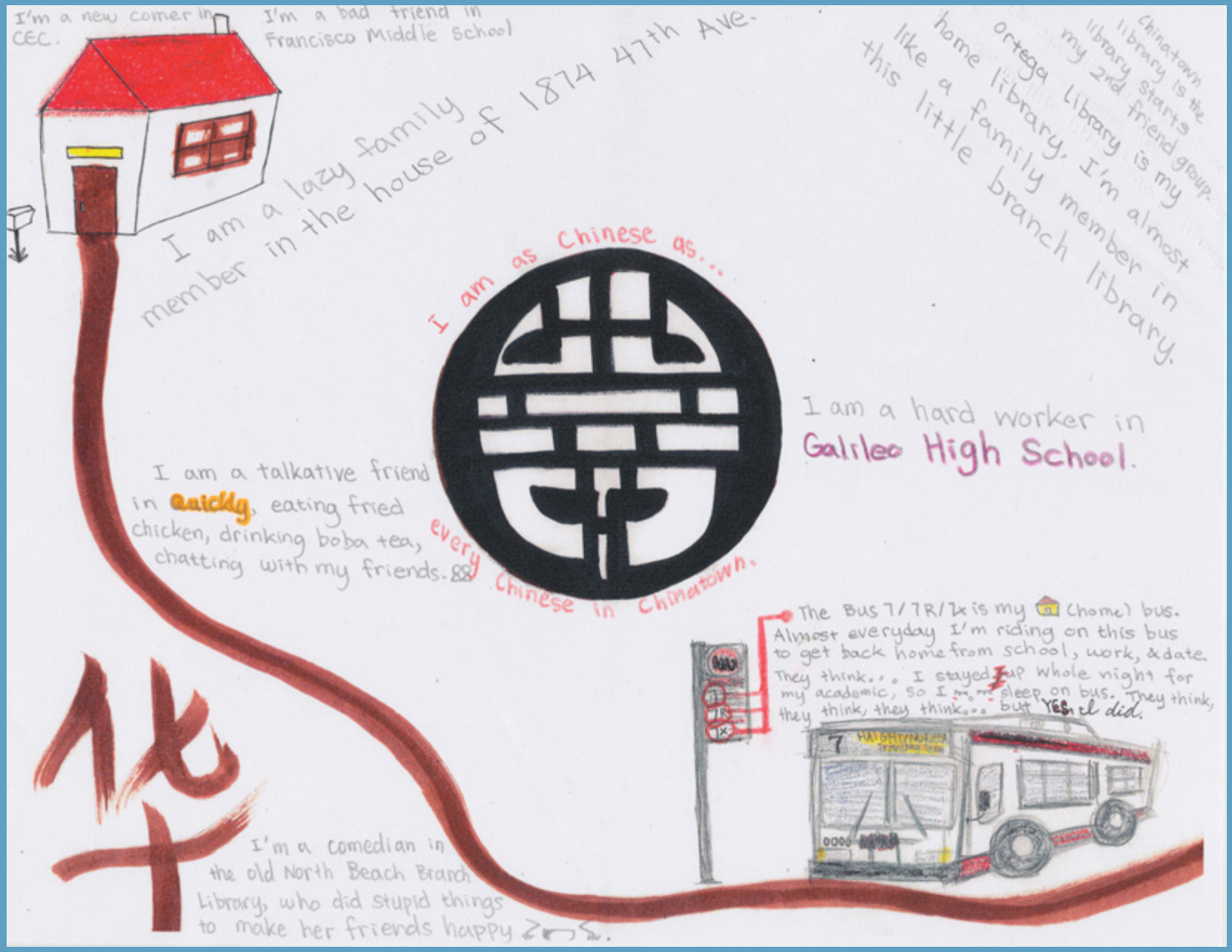
> *As I (Claire) watched the* Who Am I Where? *zine come into being, it was obvious to me that this project was a turning point. Things were starting to click. Sure, the students were struggling (because it's really hard to think about how you see yourself and how others might see you, especially when you're young and identity itself feels so malleable) but ultimately their struggle led to a breakthrough. All of the earlier projects and exercises that sometimes seemed crazy and unattainable started to make sense. It was difficult for the students to fully imagine what it felt like to be abstractly represented in an artwork. But when they forced themselves into the limelight so explicitly through their writing, it made the experience of representation real. I continue to be so impressed by this work.*

With this project, the ideas we had been working with about identity, representation and justice—i.e. how to represent someone else fully, as a real person, without idealizing them or reducing them to a stereotype—finally had a venue to be put into practice, with high stakes (because representing yourself is hard). The students threw themselves into this project with real focus and I think some relief to be making something tangible after a lot of wading around in the abstract. After making the zine we were really ready to dig into the personal projects that became the exhibition works.


who am I where



ELIZA GREGORY


I'm a new comer in CEC.
I'm a bad friend in Francisco Middle School
I am a lazy family member in the house of 1874 47th Ave.
Chinatown library is the library starts my 2nd friend group. ortega library is my home library. I'm almost like a family member in this little branch library.
I am as Chinese as...
every Chinese in Chinatown.
I am a talkative friend in quickly, eating fried chicken, drinking boba tea, chatting with my friends.
I am a hard worker in Galileo High School.
The Bus 7/7R/7x is my (home) bus. Almost everyday I'm riding on this bus to get back home from school, work, &date. They think... I stayed up whole night for my academic, so I must sleep on bus. They think, they think, they think... but YES I did.
I'm a comedian in the old North Beach Branch Library, who did stupid things to make her friends happy

QIQI

In the FILLMORE I'm just another loitering high school kid. I'm friends with everyone, and I'm friends with no one.

In the RICHMOND DISTRICT I am home, but I feel isolated.

In The MARINA I am not white enough.

In POTRERO I am always inside. The windows are open but it's still dense and stuffy.

In NORTH BEACH I am welcomed. People are friendly.

In Fisherman's WHARF there are too many tourists, and I am frustrated.

In GOLDEN GATE PARK I am free and alive.

In THE MISSION I am part of the community, but I'm still an outsider.

In THE HAIGHT I have no home.

In JAPANTOWN I am amazed by all the things I find in such a small place

SOMA I am shopping or just passing through, probably speedwalking.

In CASTRO I feel safe and happy.

In CHINATOWN I am shoving myself through old asian ladies.

In OCEAN BEACH I am a mermaid. I can smell and feel the ocean on my face.

VANESA


this zine is
a production of the Community Arts Internship Program at Southern Exposure
spring 2016
On Civic CENTer I smell pee
On the 49 I hEAR loud teenagers' conversating about unrelatable topics
In the TL's I am the pretty young lady whos native to the gROUND
In La Mission I'm a light skin Xicana who HATES cat calls
In the PORtola district I smell trees
InSIDE Futurama they cALL me GEE or Almaks
as the presenter of urbAN HXStory
INSIDE MY HEAD I AM Nothng
In the Mission I'm Latino
At home, in the Tenderloin, I'm Nepali
In the Sunset, I'm unknown
At International High School on Yakit, I'm the long-haired rock dude
On the 9 I'm playing pool on my phone
At the Pizza Man I'm a hungry teenage boy
In Pacific Heights I'm a tourist
At Ocean Beach I'm look around
At Crocker Amazon I'm a striker
On Church St. at my mom's house, I always have to do work.. (Sweep the floor, wash dishes, sweep the stairs.) At Mission High School I feel proud when I have good grades. At Southern Exposure I'm an artist, which I like. At Cotter St., my dad's house, I feel relaxed. In Castro Comic Book store, or any comic book store, I feel like I'm in a different world. In Tanforan I'm at the mall bookstore buying Batman, DC, Marvel, and Transformers. At Morning Cafe in the Mission, I like to warm white chocolate because it tastes delicious. At the movie theaters I feel excited and joyful to see movies that I like. At the SF Public Library I like to read books, I meet with the Mix Club. At the zoo I'm looking at penguins, elephants, and giraffes with my dad and baby sister or my mom and baby brother. At In N Out I order a plain hamburger french fries and a chocolate shake.
By Mateo Zelaya
In the Richmond, I am a little girl talking with her Dad.
In the Sunset I am a sleepy, studious machine.
In Noe Valley I am a friend handing out candy to pumpkins, vampires and witches.
In the Haight I am a customer.
In Hunters Point I am restoring heron habitats.
In the Tenderloin I'm a speedwalker
At SF State I'm a college student
In Clarion Alley I'm another teenager looking to take an artsy picture.
In Chinatown I'm a brown person.
In Pacific Heights I'm a diversity statistic.
On BART I am yet another hipster getting off at 24th Street
Under the trees of 24th Street I am blond and white.
At Canyon Market I'm home.
At the corner of Joy and Alabama I am an Instagram beast in a cabinet of curiosities.
At Glen Canyon Park I am a childless spectator.
In Glen Park I fall into line with the daily commute.
On Monterey Blvd. I am an observer of clouds and a cat in the sun.
I am a busy family member in the house of 1814 49th Ave
I am a hard worker in Galileo High School.
In the FILLMORE I'm just another working high school kid. I'm friends with everyone, and I'm friends with no one.
In the RICHMOND DISTRICT I am home, but I feel isolated.
In The MARINA I am not white enough.
In POTRERO I am always inside. The windows are open but it's still dense and stuffy.
In NORTH BEACH I am welcomed. People are friendly.
In Fisherman's Wharf there are too many tourists, and I am frustrated.
In GOLDEN GATE PARK I am free and alive.
In MISSION I am part of the community, but I'm still an outsider.
In JAPANTOWN I am amazed at all the things I find in such a small place
In SOMA I am shopping or just passing through, speedwalking.
In CASTRO I feel safe and happy.
In CHINATOWN I am shoving my self through old asian ladies.
In OCEAN BEACH I am a ... I can smell and feel the ocean on my face.
I have no home

CURRICULUM

Stairwell's Field Trip

Sarah Hotchkiss and Carey Lin of Stairwell's graciously agreed to take us on one of their special walks out in the world, visiting stairwells as a way to experience a place, its community, its foundational infrastructure, and its history. This was one of our final classes before our exhibition, and for me it was a way to point the students toward the next set of ideas, practices and experiences that I would want them to explore. Walking practices are a subset of social practice, and are another way of engaging with research and art in concert. Thinking about a walk as an artwork remains challenging for many people, and I think that leads to good discussions. And just seeing two artists who are collaborating, building a brand and a project together, and getting themselves out into the world to observe it and engage intentionally with it is very inspiring and exciting for me, and I wanted the students to see that.

Resources

We looked at a wide variety of artists' work in slideshows and as a wall of inspiration that I made for a few weeks. These artists ranged from Elliott Erwitt to Lisa Congdon to Zanele Muholi to Jill Barklem to Felix Gonzalez Torres to Wendy MacNaughton to Chris Van Allsburg to Grace Leary (my Southern Exposure mentee for three years). I included comic book artists and children's book artists alongside contemporary art stars and old school Magnum photographers.

+ We watched *Stranger with a Camera* by Elizabeth Barret and Appalshop: vimeo.com/channels/676200/54465749

And I had the students explore a few interview-based works that are housed on the web:

+ *Questionbridge: Black Males* by Chris Johnson and Hank Willis Thomas: questionbridge.com
+ 7 *Billion Others* by Yann Arthus-Bertrand with Sybille d'Orgeval and Baptiste Rouget-Luchaire: 7billionothers.org

I ordered a copy of *Wreck This Journal* by Keri Smith for each student to have as a sort of workbook throughout the term. I knew we would have students of different ages, abilities and who worked at different paces, and so I wanted them to have something to fill their time with if they finished something before the rest of the group, or if one of the assignments was too difficult for someone to tackle. That book demonstrates creative thinking in an extremely accessible way. And it's fun—it has a nice tone.

I also had these books on hand in the classroom as reference points:

+ *The Photographer's Playbook* by Jason Fulford and Gregory Halpern
+ *Learning by Heart: Teachings to Free the Creative Spirit* by Corita Kent and Jan Steward
+ *You Are Here: Personal Geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination* by Katharine Harmon
+ *Moksha* by Fazal Sheikh
+ *Infinite City* edited by Rebecca Solnit

Reflections

Erina Alejo

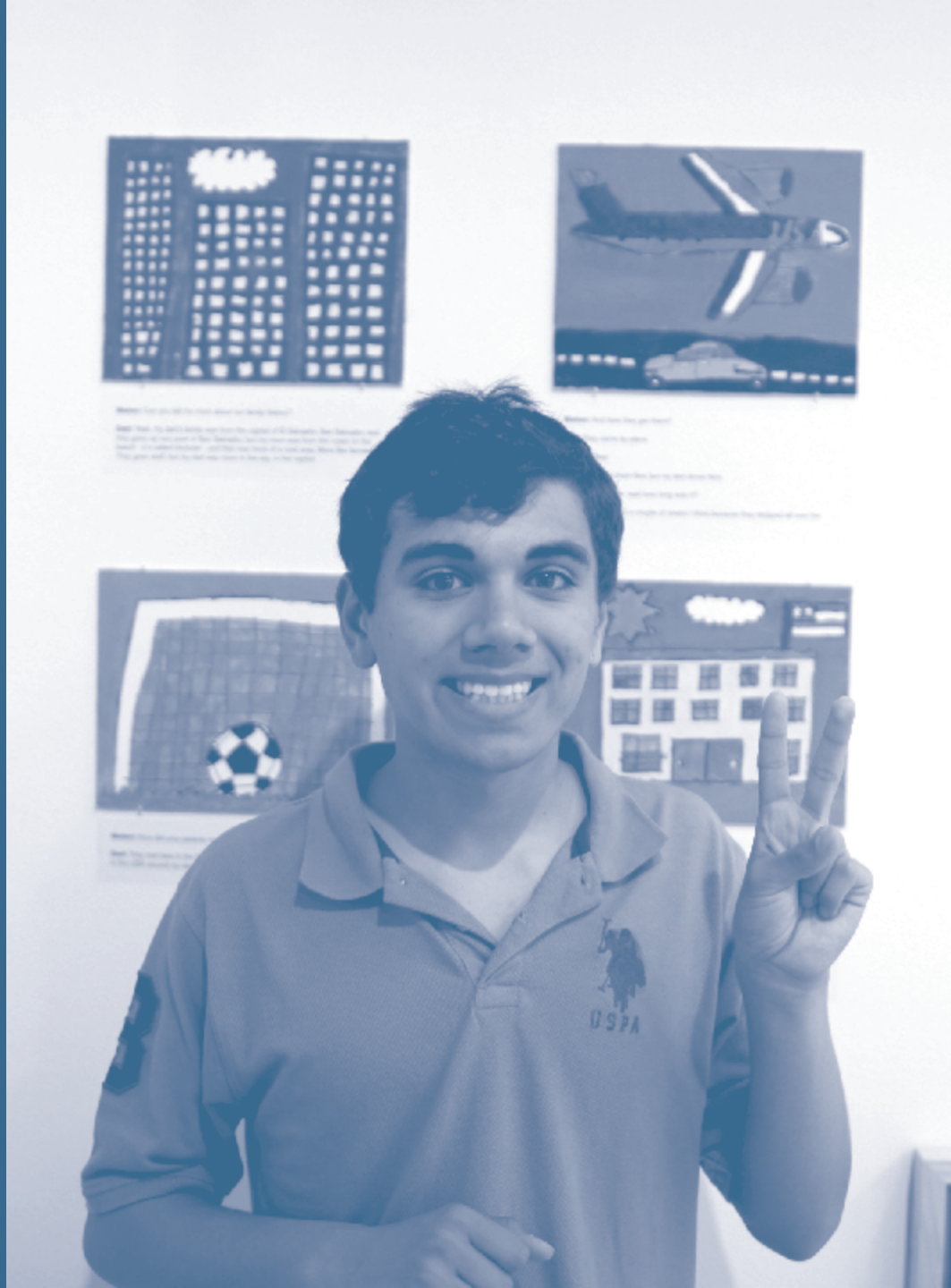
Program Intern and Teaching Assistant
Artists in Education
Southern Exposure

Interning at Southern Exposure for the inaugural Community Arts Internship Program (CAIP) bridged my interests in youth empowerment, community development and the arts. The conception of such a program reactivated my aspirations of working in the Mission District for underserved and underprivileged youth. Living and going to school in the Mission as a child taught me how to activate and seek empowerment in community cultural struggles, and helped me understand the cultural wealth our families possess. What better way to embrace our resilience if not through artistic expression?

Throughout the four months of CAIP, our cohort of seven high school students from across San Francisco developed bodies of work that acknowledged the community cultural value of their families' immigration stories. As the CAIP intern, I had the privilege of wearing different hats: helping Eliza and Claire develop and adjust the CAIP curriculum to respond to our students' strengths, working individually with students to further meet their learning needs and further their artistic talents, and sharing and telling my own family's immigration story. By the end of CAIP in May, with the Southern Exposure gallery walls brimming with paintings, videos, photographs and installations, not only did our student artists gain a myriad of soft skills that are invaluable in the professional world, they also created what may have been initial archives of their families' immigration histories.

"I feel proud of doing art and finishing it. If you like art and painting and stuff [SoEx] is a good place to be."

MATEO



"I definitely learned and took away a lot from here but the main thing was probably organization and structure in my artwork like coming up with the theme and really working from that up, just like building blocks.

I also learned that I'm capable of a lot more than I thought I was. This art gallery that I have here I'm proud of and it came out really good. I'm surprised with my results—in a good way."

NIA

"I learned about how to be creative—just do something that doesn't seem like everyone else. And I practiced my skills making videos. The most important thing is I did my first art exhibition. I'm glad that I'm a part of this program and I'm glad that people can come into this exhibition and learn about immigration and how my parents felt."

QIQI

"Being in the program just made me more aware of cultural identity and what it means to people, and also I discovered more about my own identity in doing my final project. I've never really done portraits before. I think I did okay. It was fun. I took pictures of my friends and then I drew them on paper and did watercolor and ink.

VANESA

"One thing that I learned during my time here was how to create an installation. It was a totally different way of approaching and displaying art. It was really hard for me. There was a lot of last minute troubleshooting and without the installers or anyone here, I don't think I would have been able to create this piece."

CAMI

"I learned how to accept feedback and how to say *no thank you* for feedback and *it's okay, I don't want to do that*. And how to pretty much turn something that was just thrown into the document box into art. I learned never to doubt myself and what I can create and that if I feel like nobody really is interested in my life that I should not think for other people because you never know. So just give it a try and see how it turns out."

ALMA

These student remarks come from video interviews conducted by Erina Alejo at the close of the term.


LOWELL
TENNIS

Claire LaRose

Artists in Education Program Director
Southern Exposure

Arts organizations often struggle with their good intentions. Many institutions seek to offer equitable treatment to artists, students, patrons and employees, but ultimately equality comes down to opportunity. Who can afford to offer their time? And who is getting paid? Darren Walker wrote a salient op-ed piece in the *New York Times* in the summer of 2016 saying, "While many Americans believe fervently and faithfully in expanding opportunity, America's internship complex does just the opposite." Many students work service jobs after school and on the weekends to help pay the bills, while others can afford to accept unpaid internships at prestigious organizations, setting themselves on the path to a more lucrative career. For every unpaid internship offered, the door closes for those who cannot afford this privilege, thus continuing inequity and homogeneity within organizational leadership.

This being said, many non-profits such as Southern Exposure do not have budgets that can accommodate a cadre of paid interns each semester. However, the city of San Francisco and several other organizations in the Bay Area (the Mayor's Youth Employment & Education Program, Jewish Vocational Center and California Lawyers for the Arts' *Spotlight on the Arts*) have stepped up to support initiatives that pay youth for their time, training, and work at well-respected institutions.

Southern Exposure's collaboration with *The Testimony Project* was born out of this belief that a career in the arts should not be a luxury. As the Director of the Artists in Education Program, I wanted to see a paid internship program that encouraged

young artists to imagine their future in the arts regardless of their background, race, ethnicity or socioeconomic status. Young artists and activists need to see and feel that there is a place for them within the organizations who support and lead the arts before they can feel comfortable pursuing a career in the field. I wanted these young artists to have the opportunity to work on a project from a nascent idea to an expansive public exhibition. And I wanted these young people to be led and supported by a talented and motivated artist that shared this vision. Thus the Community Arts Internship Program came into being.

The creation of a new program is just the beginning. Next comes maintenance, critique and renewal: a process that relies upon the feedback and shared experiences of other educators and administrators. There is no manual for how to run a great youth program. People learn by doing, and people learn by listening to the successes and failures of others. Educators need the time and the platform to share not just their numbers, but their experiences. So this publication is a tool to that end. It is our contribution to the shared knowledge base and maybe even a data point for a future, more comprehensive collection of arts-based job training programs. Thank you to Southern Exposure for allowing us the space to learn, and thank you to *The Testimony Project* for providing this platform to share.

Untitled, acrylic on canvas, detail
Mateo

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project is a collaboration. I am grateful to many people for working with me, and for allowing me to participate in their own incredible work.

Claire LaRose built an amazing new program for Southern Exposure, and hired me to be its first teaching artist. She was the perfect program administrator. She built a solid institutional structure–and maintained it–so that everyone associated with the program felt supported and cared for. That allowed us to get straight down to the business of learning, teaching, connecting and making art together. Through Claire's generosity, responsiveness, and insights Southern Exposure and each individual participating in CAIP became her/his/their best self. Claire you are awesome.

Southern Exposure as a whole has supported and nurtured me as an artist and a member of the San Francisco arts community for the last five years. They make me feel like I belong in that community, and they do that for so many artists, students and audience members. I love their work and am honored to be a part of it.

Both Erina Alejo and Claire supported me in the classroom with such openness, energy and patience. It was a joy to teach alongside them. The classroom benefited hugely from their presence and knowledge. And that support gave me the privilege of trying something I had never done before.

Addy Spingarn generously took a break from her teaching commitments at Stanford and conducted a workshop for us on Stephen Crane. Carey Lin and Sarah Hotchkiss of Stairwell's also donated their time to lead us on a walk around the city and demonstrate what a non-object-based, socially engaged practice can look like. These three women dramatically increased the range of experiences I could provide as a teacher, which I am so grateful for.

This book is a tribute to the students I worked with. You all demonstrated commitment, curiosity and courage in these projects, and I am so proud of what we made together.

And thank you to my students' parents. In many cases you courageously shared your experiences with your children, and you supported our work in many ways. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to get to know your amazing kids.

Finally, Taryn Cowart continues to be our rock star designer for *The Testimony Project*. She brings enormous flexibility, organization, and creativity to her work, and I feel so lucky that she took this on.

I can't imagine better colleagues.
thank you.

Southern Exposure is a vital Bay Area institution where visual artists and teens find opportunities to create and present innovative contemporary art to diverse and new audiences. SoEx strives to experiment, collaborate, and educate while serving as an extraordinary resource center for the varied communities with whom we intersect.

An active presence in the Bay Area since 1974 and in our current location at 20th Street and Alabama since 2009, SoEx continually evolves in response to the needs of artists while engaging the public in their work. We're proud to remain a Mission-based hub for the Bay Area artist community, especially as the neighborhood undergoes rapid transformation. Over the past forty-two years, we have launched the careers of countless artists, become a model and thought leader for organizations nationwide, invited local teens to turn the gallery into their studio every summer, and in the past nine years, provided seed funding to over 165 artist projects. We have grown beyond our walls and have supported artists in creating temporary interventions into public life, encouraging them to consider public space as a place for creative expression.

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Photographs by Eliza Gregory and Raheleh (Minoosh) Zomorodinia.

Artist wrangling, editing, co-teaching, snack procurement, classroom organizing, and program administration by Claire LaRose.

Design by Taryn Cowart.

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Eliza Gregory is an artist and educator. Her work illuminates diverse experiences in a given community using images, relationships, interactions, interviews, events, and other media. Her work asks questions about how to build healthy communities, the role of cultural adaptation in contemporary society, and how family relationships shape our lives. Trained as a fine art photographer, a creative writer and a social practice artist, Eliza lives and works in San Francisco.

Claire LaRose is an arts administrator, educator and artist. Since graduating with degrees in painting, art education and art history, she has had the opportunity to work with many different organizations and museums in various capacities. As an administrator she strives to construct a solid foundation for projects that are urgent, relevant and meaningful while also supporting the rich relationships that are fostered by these kinds of programs. During the spring of 2016 Claire was the Artists In Education Program Director at Southern Exposure before moving to Santa Fe, New Mexico where she now lives and works.

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