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**Latinx Education Policy and Resistance in the Trump Era**

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## **Praxis of Resilience & Resistance: “We can STOP Donald Trump” and Other Messages from Immigrant Children**

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### **Abstract**

In 2018 there have been constant anti-immigrant rhetoric, policies, and enforcement. Most recently, Trump referred to immigrant children as “future criminals” who needed to be kept in prison-like detention centers and “tender age facilities” (Min Kim, 2018). Meanwhile, the 4.5 million children of immigrants already in the US continue to face possibilities of family separation due to this enforcement-focused political system (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2015). The goal of this article is to provide insight into the lives of one of the most vulnerable and fastest growing populations in the U.S.—immigrant children. As a researcher and educator, I developed an art-centered methodological and pedagogical tool that can serve those working with immigrant children and vulnerable populations. Over a two-year period, I used artistic tools such as drawings, storyboards, Teatro Campesino’s *actos*, and various techniques from Theater of the Oppressed (Boal, 2000) to work with children of immigrants in a sixth-grade class of English Language Learners (ELL) in Los Angeles. Through educational, artistic, and anecdotal components of their work, these children created a world where they could resist and fight Trump and share that victory by utilizing the transformative imaginary of art.

**Keywords:** Immigrant Children, Art, Resistance, Trump, Activism

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## Introduction

During an exercise of Newspaper Theater, in which sixth grade students identify a news article that they think is important and use theater to recreate the issue and think of solutions, twelve-year-old Daniel volunteered to show his drawing of what he thought to be the most important news story. Daniel quickly stood up from his chair and loudly proclaimed, “My problem is Donald Trump, we really hate him!” Soon after, Jorge echoed, “Yeah, problem is Trump is being racist and not letting immigrants come in by building The Wall . . . oh and he is trying to start a WWIII with North Korea!” Some kids nodded in agreement and others laughed while pointing their hands like machine guns. As an outspoken and energetic student, Daniel often gets in trouble while in class. Daniel is undocumented. He migrated from El Salvador to reunite with his mother when he was ten years old. His friend, Jorge, is a second-generation Mexican-American whose mother is a U.S. citizen and father is a permanent resident. Although both Daniel and Jorge live different legal realities due to their documentation status, they share similar concerns regarding the current President of the United States, Donald Trump.

In this article, I center Mexican and Central American children's narratives, art, and experiences to answer the following question: What are the experiences of middle school immigrant children in the City of Watts in Los Angeles, California? Children not only have important and critical opinions about the current political moment, but also offer hope in the creation of alternative realities, endings, and ways of seeing today's challenges. I present the narratives of these children through educational, artistic, and anecdotal means to demonstrate the resistance and resilience of today's youth in the face of Trump's political agenda and Twitter/media declarations. My work suggests that educators and researchers should include artistic and expressive methods when working with children and develop new methodologies that include performative and visual epistemologies. In addition to providing candid and descriptive information, the art-making process also allows for meditation, reflection, and innately healing properties.

## Literature Review

### **Immigrant Children During Moments of Heightened Animosity Against Immigrants**

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Children of immigrants are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. child population accounting for one-fourth of the nation's 75 million children (Passel, 2011), yet they do not receive equal protection under the law. In fact, many anti-immigrant policies targeting undocumented adults at the national and local level continue to impact children in harmful ways (Dreby & Adkins, 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011). Approximately 5.3 million children have at least one undocumented parent (Yoshikawa, Suárez-Orozco, & Gonzáles, 2017). Demographers estimate that by 2040, one in three children will live in an immigrant household (Passel, 2011). Immigrant communities have felt the heavy-handed deportation enforcement implemented by the Obama administration that deported more immigrants than any other administration before (Nava, 2014; Szkupinski Quiroga, Medina, & Glick, 2014). There have been similar enforcement strategies in Trump's first year with his administration increasing immigrant detention by 43% from 2016 (Miroff, 2017).

Coupled with these high rates of deportation, children of immigrants find themselves separated from their families, adopted by family members, or waiting for adoption in foster care (Chaudry et al., 2010; Dickenson & Nixon, 2017; Nava, 2014). In Trump's first year in office, his administration has controversially separated asylum-seeking families at the border and created more child-detention facilities. In just the month of November in 2017 alone, state authorities apprehended 7,000 "family units" in addition to 4,000 unaccompanied minors or children traveling without an adult (Dickenson & Nixon, 2017). Even more alarming, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) apprehended almost 12,000 children and teens in the summer of 2018 placing them in the care of the Department of Health and Human Services under the office of Refugee Resettlement (Lind, 2018). Although a court order demanded the reunification of children and parents, this process has proven to be long and arduous as the Trump administration admitted not knowing the exact number of children they separated from their parents (Lind, 2018). It is through this "Zero Tolerance" approach to immigration policy that the current administration has used family separation and criminalization as purposeful tactics to deter future immigrants from coming to or staying in US (Dickenson & Nixon, 2017; Hennessy-Fiske, 2018). Moreover, if President Trump fulfills his promise of deporting two to three million people while in office, the number of children entering the foster care system could continue to grow exponentially (Connecticut Law Tribune, 2017; Dreby, 2012).

These cases of detention and deportations create detrimental outcomes for all immigrant children vis-à-vis the fear of familial disintegration. Even when children do not experience deportation, they fear for the security of their family (Dreby, 2012; Rodriguez Vega, 2015). Additionally, children often conflate immigration agents with local law enforcement, resulting in fear of any public official. Likewise, children tend to assume all immigrants are undocumented, even seeing themselves as undocumented despite having U.S. citizenship (Dreby, 2012; Dreby & Adkins, 2011). Consequently, the psychological and practical effects on children include fear, distrust, depression, anxiety, and financial instability (Ayers, 2013). In fact, caregivers have reported frequent crying, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, clingy behavior, and increased levels of fear and anxiety in these children (Capps et al., 2007).

### **Education, Family Support, and the Role of Perseverance**

Educational institutions have historically served as the primary point of assimilation and acculturation for young people, most notably beginning with the creation of Native American boarding schools (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2009). However, educational institutions are now disrupted by today's immigration enforcement system. For example, when immigrant children are exposed to immigration raids, teachers reported that children often missed school and were seldom able to concentrate when they attended, resulting in the slipping of grades (Chaudry et al., 2010). All these consequences of detention and deportation can affect children's ability to transition into healthy and productive adolescents. For instance, undocumented youth describe coming into adulthood like waking up to a nightmare, where the once inclusionary access becomes a denial of mainstream participation in jobs, education, and other privileges like driving (Abrego, 2006; Gonzáles, 2011).

Interestingly, even in the face of such high levels of adversity (e.g. having teachers with low academic expectations, attending poorly administered and sometimes violent schools, struggling to learn English, and having little resources), immigrant students tend to outperform their U.S.-born peers when it comes to developmental outcomes and academic achievement; as demonstrated through a study of math exam scores from immigrant students and U.S.-born 10<sup>th</sup> graders in Florida (Coll & Marks, 2012). Theories on immigrant optimism and achievement of newcomer children posit that immigrant children often rely on their social capital and resilience to succeed in this country (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2009). Nieto and

Yoshikawa (2013) concur that school-specific social capital acquired through parental involvement in school, support groups, and ethnic community support is vital to ensure that children have the educational resources to grow and be successful. This is an important point, particularly because U.S.-born children in mixed-status families have less access to benefits that the children are eligible to receive.

Conversely, undocumented children face more challenges in their schooling. Not having legal status impacts every aspect of the ecological development of young people from health, cognitive, educational, socio-emotional, engagement, labor-market, and more (Suárez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suárez-Orozco, 2011). Coupled with the risk factors of living in poverty and inadequate education, children in immigrant families come of age as they receive a series of societal messages about their cultural, ethnic, and racial group. Through societal treatment, media representations, and political sentiments, this social mirroring can influence children's identities in either detrimental or positive ways (Suárez-Orozco, 2000). When the social mirror reflects negative images, "adolescents may find it difficult to develop a flexible and adaptive sense of self" (Suárez-Orozco & Qin, 2006, p. 177). Hence, being undocumented can cause serious risks to any person's well-being, particularly during a time of high anti-immigrant sentiment. Although undocumented status presents many obstacles and challenges for young people, scholars have noted the optimism present in high school and college students in finding a loophole and making their dreams of getting a college degree possible (Abrego, 2006; Abrego & González, 2010; González, 2011; Pérez Huber, 2015; Pérez, Espinoza, Ramos, Coronado, & Cortes, 2010).

### **Understanding Immigrant Experiences through Art**

Traditional forms of qualitative inquiry such as interviews may not be the best form of capturing children's experiences, thus prompting an increasing interest in using art to communicate with children (Crivello, Camfield, & Woodhead, 2009; Driessnack, 2005). By conducting mixed-method studies that incorporate drawings into longer family interviews and ethnographic work, some scholars have used art to understand views on immigration and family formation (Bermudez & Maat, 2006; Bhattacharya, 2013; Dreby & Adkins, 2011; Katsiaficas et al., 2016; Linesch, 2012; Rousseau, Drapeau, Lacroix, Bagilishya, & Heusch, 2005; Rousseau &

Heusch, 2000; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2011), however, they have not always centered the art created by their participants.

Smokowski and Bacallao (2011) use children's drawings—which they deem “cultural maps”—to complement interview data from bicultural children in the US. The drawings and interviews express the confusion and dilemmas that children face navigating two worlds. For example, Dreby and Adkins (2011) found that children who are part of transnational families develop relationships with those abroad by maintaining an idea about a specific role the person abroad serves. Marsh (2017) posits that art activities for marginalized children are important in creating social inclusion, identity construction, and cultural maintenance of bicultural kids. Art education is crucial in schools, particularly for its positive effects on the development and education of marginalized children. What is concerning, moreover, are the massive cuts to arts funding particularly in public urban schools that serve the majority of disenfranchised young people (Shaw, 2017).

## **Methodology**

### **Positionality**

My experience working for immigrant rights in Arizona has prepared me to understand the potential impact of a Trump presidency on immigrant communities, particularly children. Through the collection and analysis of almost two hundred drawings by immigrant children in Arizona, I found that children were critical of racism and discrimination by police officers and other authority figures (Rodriguez Vega, 2018). Through this community work and personally living in Arizona as a prior-undocumented young person, I accumulated substantial experience and training to understand the complexities of navigating an undocumented existence in a particularly draconian anti-immigrant climate.

### **Context of the Study**

This study is grounded in art epistemologies to understand the immigrant experiences of children. Some scholars (Dreby & Adkins, 2011; Linesch et. al., 2012; Rousseau, et. al., 2005; Rousseau & Heusch, 2000; Smokowski & Bacallao, 2011) have seen the value of art in research and have incorporated it into their methodology. For example, arts methods aforementioned and others like Photovoice, where students explore complex issues through photography, or having children create drawings, or perform issues impacting them have been especially useful

for children who have experienced traumatic events in their lives such as illnesses, war, and abandonment (Johnson et al., 2012). This section will underscore the demographics of the school and the students from which this work took place and provide an overview of the data collected and explain the modes of analysis guided by my reflexive experience of working with immigrant populations in various border states.

This reflexive piece draws on Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved research from 2015 to 2017, where two cohorts of students participated in a weekly theater class. It is important to note the context for the first year included the presidential elections while the second year occurred during Donald Trump's first year in office. In the first year, I worked with 15 students and 31 students in year two<sup>1</sup>. Students in my class were sixth grade English Language Learners (ELL) and/or still working to pass the state's English exam. As part of my doctoral research on immigrant children and art, I chose to partner with the sixth-grade ELL class of newly arrived students, often labeled or thought of as the "difficult" class by the teacher and school administrators.

Coordinated by a Chicana artist and Professor and her Public Art Resource Center (PARC), we partnered with a large urban school district in Southern California to bring art classes to one of the elementary schools located in a high poverty neighborhood. This school has faced some challenges including community violence, changes in school administration, a steady increase in the number of foster care youth, and mothers dying prematurely due to cancer. The school is 95 percent Latino many of whom are recently arrived immigrants, and an even larger proportion are second- and third-generation youth. The public Art Resource Center program includes multidisciplinary arts classes in choral poetry, music and songwriting, digital media and mural painting, photography, dance, and theater.

### **Data Collection & Analysis**

My theater class focused on learning about the unique experiences of children of immigrants through carefully analyzing their stories, drawings, performances, alongside interviews with them, their family members, and school officials. I conducted over twelve hours of observations during class time and meetings with administrators prior to teaching and

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<sup>1</sup> All names of participants are presented as pseudonyms and the school will remain anonymous as a precautionary measure. Images used have been approved by my participants, parents, and IRB.

working with the students. Other data included pre and post evaluations, class recordings of theater exercises and final performances, art projects like self-portraits, reflective drawings, and journal entries, in addition to interviews with the children, parents, teacher, and school administrators. After each class, I recorded my experience and the student's reaction to class material or topics discussed either to audio recording or written memos that later helped me member-check the themes presented by the students (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The program culminated with a school-wide performance by all the participating art classes. These performances, class sessions, and interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed. Although a full and in-depth visual content analysis was conducted, in addition to coding the class and interview transcripts with Dedoose coding software, this piece will only focus on a portion of my findings about Trump and students' resistance to anti-immigration sentiments.

### **Curriculum Years One & Two**

To organize data collection and the class, I co-created a theater curriculum for sixth graders that was aligned with the Common Core state's standards. As part of the curriculum, we started each class talking about issues in the school and community such as gangs, littering, environment, and bullying and inevitably the topic of immigration would always come up. For students in 2016, there were many thoughts about the first presidential election to include a woman candidate. Children also had many other viewpoints and perspectives about the election, Donald Trump, narco leader el Chapo Guzman, and police violence. Throughout the class, the most pressing and persistent issues were President Trump's initial statements about Mexicans as rapists and the proposed plan to build a wall between the U.S.–Mexico border. Although many of the children were born in the United States—making them U.S. citizens—there were constant conversations about Donald Trump's unexpected presidential victory. Every week, children shared news and personal stories that involved immigration, deportation fears, the U.S.–Mexico wall, and other foreign policy concerns including relations with North Korea and Russia.

### **Procedure & Participants**

Once the curriculum was ready, I made a callout to any student interested in joining a theater class focused on important societal issues. I talked with parents over the phone and

met with them after school to answer any questions. A total of 13 students joined the first year: eight boys and five girls. All of them had immigrant parents and five of the students had migrated to the U.S. With the theater class changing its schedule to before lunch time as opposed to after school, the second year saw the entire sixth grade class of 31 students enrolled.

While there were many challenges in having a large class of 31 students, there was more representation in terms of family backgrounds including those from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras) and generation status (e.g. newly arrived to fourth generation). One of the most important reasons for including the entire class was to make sure that more girls participated, resulting in a total of 18 girls and 13 boys. Throughout both years, girls tended to be shyer and were hesitant to speak up. As the weeks progressed, shy students felt more comfortable with their voice and presence.

Once we had common concerns to discuss, I introduced Image Theater (Boal, 2000) where students made statues based on the issues that continuously came up. Each student used their body as a canvas and collectively created images that gave life to their stories, concerns, and ideas for possible solutions. Once they created the images, we activated the images through *actos*. Defined as a short, improvised scene dealing with the experience of its participants (Huerta, 1977) *actos* were popularized in the United States by El Teatro Campesino. For both years, the final performance was inspired by children's stories and concerns, like immigration issues and President Trump. We collaboratively created a story and once our storyboard was complete, children volunteered to play certain roles, came up with lines, but most of all, developed jokes and punchlines. For the final performance, a large projector displayed the drawings children created while the children performed the story below on stage. Parents especially appreciated the images projected, because without speaking English, they could understand what was happening. The next section will provide examples of the types of art children engaged in and created for themselves, the school, and their families.

### **Findings**

The children in this study had many ideas about current issues expressed through their imaginative use of art. The main concern they noted every week was Trump—what he said on the news, the policies he was quickly changing, the wars that could start, and the way immigrant

families might be impacted by his deportation-focused-zero-tolerance plan. Even in their worrisome expressions, children constantly affirmed a sense of resistance and a responsibility to change things. This illuminates the way children resist through various art forms. It highlights the tremendous capacity children have to look into the future, be critical about the past, and feel empowered in the present. The first section is on the use of self-portraits in thinking about a future of resistance; the second theme presents the use of theater to reimagine the present; and the last section uses drawings as a way to recreate the past.

### **Self-Portraits & Future Resistance**

The following two cases (Figures 1 and 2) are from students who participated in the Chicana artist and professor's painting class and my theater class. The first is Diego who at 13 years of age has decided that he wants to be a professional soccer player. Through PARC's curriculum that centers students' dreams and future aspirations, students have the opportunity to create a self-portrait that will be permanently installed in the school. Although soccer is his first love, Diego decided that if being a soccer player does not work out he will be a basketball or football player. Throughout the theme of the drawing you see the importance that sports have in Diego's identity, including the various balls, sports jerseys, Nike logo, and large stadium. However, the image strongly juxtaposes these interests by including the face of President Donald Trump hovering over the child's future aspirations. Trump's face has a harsh red cross near the eye that takes up most of his face. The political symbolism of Figure 1 poignantly highlights Diego's strong dislike of Trump and what he represents.

Diego has lots of intentions to help others and commit to a variety of causes, yet, one of his primary concerns is to stop Donald Trump, something he feels simultaneously responsible for and capable of doing. Diego specifically points out two issues with the president: one is the racism he believes Trump embodies, and the second is the possibility of sending immigrants back. Diego came to the US from El Salvador with a coyote when he was ten. During an interview with his mom, she shared that they were separated for a period of two years. She worked very hard to save money to bring him, but she could only save \$1,000 because she was being exploited where she first started working as a live-in nanny. She asked all the people she knew to lend her money to bring Diego. She collected \$10,500 to pay the coyote. When Diego made it, she was so happy to be reunited, but worked long hours for an entire year to pay back

all the money she owed. When reunited with his mother in Los Angeles, Diego was happy but had a hard time learning English and spent a lot of time alone while his mom worked. Although Diego and his mom have been together in the US for three years, she is constantly worried that she could be pulled over for a traffic violation or any other reason that can result in detention and deportation. As such, it is not surprising that Diego sees his future as a soccer player intertwined with his goal of stopping Trump.

During art class, undocumented and documented students alike expressed concerns over Trump's proposed policies. One of the documented students who resonated with this is eleven-year-old Marla. Marla was one of the girls that really developed her voice throughout the course of the class. She started off being very shy, but volunteering for theater games and icebreakers. This motivated other girls to participate and be more outspoken. One day during a theater activity, students started talking about violence in the community. Marla volunteered to play the role of a cop, something only boys had wanted to do. Later, I learned that Marla wants to be a police officer when she grows up, but not just any police officer, a *nice* police officer that stops Trump.

In Figure 2, Marla personified a police officer holding sunglasses to her face as well as a police hat. Although she is wearing a Dodger's T-shirt and jeans, she brings in more police enforcement symbolism by standing in front of a Police Department squad car. Contrasting the police car and accessories is a large thumbs-up-giving Donald Trump with a red denied sign on his face, a symbol reminiscent of Diego's artwork. The large letters next to him say, "We CAN STOP Donald Trump" with the STOP in large red letters. The image of Donald Trump takes up as much space on the portrait as Marla does, but she positions herself in the foreground appearing unbothered by his existence behind her. However, it almost seems that the police car is potentially stopping Trump as the viewer is unable to see his feet, implying that he got runover by the cop car. This image powerfully suggests that to Marla, stopping Donald Trump is part of her future identity equally important to her as becoming a police officer when she grows up. In a sense, she feels like stopping Donald Trump is her first duty. Donald Trump takes up space and importance in her personal life, so much so that she must include him in her self-portrait.

Again, we see that the only time Marla capitalizes anything is when she is making a statement about Trump, one STOP is for him and the other is to STOP him from separating families, unlike Diego's image, Marla includes this powerful message in her portrait. Although Marla does not make it clear whether she is referring to her own family being separated, the sense of urgency and influence on her identity is very apparent in the image. Interestingly, she feels the need to position the word *nice* before police officer implying there is a difference between nice and mean police officers. Although she does not talk about police violence, police brutality, or the role that police officers have in her community, her use of the word *nice* posits a criticality about police officers.

### **Theater & A Reimagined Present**

In Figure 3, which is a picture of 12-year-old Julio, he dons a yellow wig as he becomes Donald Trump for our play *Los Niños Inmigrantes*. In this play, Julio parades as Trump along the San Diego/Tijuana border to inspect where to build the border wall. There he confronts three children who are crossing to reunite with their parents in Los Angeles. As they are crossing, the coyote bringing them across immigration check points when he sees Trump at a distance. The children and the coyote observe Trump talking to Obama about the wall. The most important part of the play happens here when Trump gets irritated by the dust on the border and lets out a powerful sneeze that makes his wig fly off his head. At that point, the audience uproars with laughter and disbelief. Julio enjoys this moment as he feels that by the satire created in the play power is taken away from Trump and the present is reimagined in a mighty way.

By the second year of the art class in 2017, Trump had already been elected as president. The students created a play titled, "Trump Vs. Immigrants." In one scene, a family gathers together to watch the news and see President Trump, played by Camilo, stand on a chair in front of them facing the audience to make an important presidential announcement. Standing tall with his hands behind his back to transmit notions of authority and power Trump declares that the plan for building the wall is underway and will be finished in a month. It should be noted that media plays an instrumental role in this play. For example, family scenes are portrayed with the family gathering around the television to hear the latest news on

immigration and Trump. In his grand entrance, Trump looks confident and unbothered by the booing that comes from the audience every time he steps on stage.

Another scene demonstrates the sense of worry experienced by the family and finding out that the dad has been deported. Even the dog refuses to play fetch because he too is also depressed. The main character Dago becomes motivated to take action and organizes his classmates to march to the border wall and confront Trump. After seeing the news and a racist teacher wearing a “Make America Great Again” hat in class, the students are also ready to take action. They all make their way to the border with signs and banners to confront Trump who is in the middle of giving a speech. The play ends with two “Men in Black/CIA agents” announcing that the ballots were wrong—that Trump was not elected to be president, and neither was Hillary Clinton. To everyone’s surprise, the CIA brings back President Obama for a third term while government agents carry Trump away kicking and screaming.

Across these two years, students believed it necessary to include Trump in their plays, yet they did so in such a way that they were able to imagine alternative endings to the presidential election. Before the election, students make Trump run away from the border exposed by his wig incident. The next year, students implied their belief that Hillary Clinton was not a worthy alternative, rather, in their imaginative minds, Obama returns as the votes were miscalculated. Overall, theater provided the space, time, and ability to think creatively and reimagine the present.

### **Re-drawing the Past**

One morning during one of the extra classes allowed by the teacher, I asked students to draw what they considered to be the biggest problem they saw on the news. Damian, who is 11 years old, shared his drawing (Figure 4) and added that he was concerned about Trump. The image included Trump, North Korea, and “the wall.” Damian shared that he is afraid of the future—the uncertainty of what might happen makes him think the worst.

Damian’s drawing presents what he sees as the problem, but it also offers a solution. After writing that “[Trump] is racist and sucks at president” Damian asks that Obama be given a third chance. This “third chance” is his request for a third presidential term, because that would fix all the issues. Although children like Damian are not aware that the Obama

administration was involved in the mass deportation of immigrants, they see Barack Obama as a hopeful figure rather than a racist.

During the 2016 election, I asked students to draw what they wanted to happen. Lola, age 11, made Figure 5. Although both characters are standing with their arms on their waists in what looks like a powerful pose, there are stark differences between how the characters are portrayed. Most notably, Trump seems to be positioned slightly behind his opponent with a deep, dark frown on his face coupled with bloodshot eyes and dark circles around his eyes. Lola also seemed to have drawn redness into Trump's face, which looks bloody and beat up. Conversely, Hillary looks pleasant and is smiling. Behind them waves a great big American flag.

Both Presidential candidates are standing on wooden podiums with signs labeled "Election" and their respective names. While the image is balanced with the flag behind and the lettering below, Trump is drawn a bit smaller than Clinton. The facial expressions also drastically contrasting one another as Trump is depicted with a major frown and Hillary with a large smile. The two drawings above convey children's capacity to recreate the past. To most adults, a recount of the presidential votes would seem impossible, and even more improbable, the return of a past president for an unconstitutional third term. Nevertheless, children are not bound by political realities, rather, their capacity to recreate the past gives them the current peace of mind they deeply desire.

### **Implications & Conclusion**

The findings demonstrate how children in a large urban school district resist, reimagine, and recreate Latinx past, present, and future through creative expressions. The self-portraits, theater skits, and reflective drawings demonstrate how children are keenly aware of the lived realities immigrants face while living in the US during the Trump era. Although their families are afraid of being separated, children demonstrate resilience. Through their comical representations of power, Trump no longer seems as scary as before. This is the power of art. This work illuminates how art can help us understand the experiences and thoughts of immigrant children in a more profound way than more traditional methods of inquiry provide. Overall teachers, school administrators, and after school programmers must be prepared to deal with children's lived realities and the concerns that they bring to and from school every day. Schools need plans in place that prepare them when responding to familial deportations,

neighborhood violence, and other forms of trauma. To that extent, educators and researchers should include artistic and expressive methods when working with children and develop new methodologies that include performative and visual epistemologies. These outlets can provide candid and descriptive information produced by children, while at the same time affording meditative, reflective, and innately healing properties of the art-making process. These methods are particularly powerful for working with children who are shy, learning a new language, or have experienced trauma in their lives. As a precautionary measure, it is essential to be in contact with a school psychologist and have resources ready for families and children that might need more professional assistance.

### **Limitations**

This work provides important information about immigrant children in a large urban city. However, it is not easily replicable as careful organization and many resources are needed for this work. As such, this work is not meant to be representative of all children of immigrants as experiences and perspectives vary by place of origin, immigration status, geographical location, socio-economic status and even family cohesion. Additionally, it is important to be reflexive about my own insider/outsider status and the various power dynamics that can impact this work (Lather, 1986). For me, it was important to be clear with the school, parents, and students about my positionality as a doctoral student and researcher in addition to how they knew me as the theater teacher. I concur with Fine's (1994) proposal to, "[be] explicit about the space in which I stand politically and theoretically-even as my stances are multiple, shifting, and mobile" (p. 24). As an insider to the community and ethnic representation of the students, being able to speak Spanish with students and parents was helpful in gaining rapport. I constantly reminded myself to listen carefully to the organic themes students presented and represented. Finally, the art-making process can be a personal journey where reflection and sensitivity vary, thus yielding divergent results. This work sheds light on the lives of young people as they resist and respond to the challenges faced by immigrant families.

### **Implications**

Although the children experience the fear of family separation art allows them to cope in empowering ways. The narratives of resistance and resilience are powerful and have a profound impact on the praxis needed for this quickly changing and polarized world. Although

we know that arts programs help boost student academic performance (Shuler, 1996; Southgate & Roscigno, 2009) and interpersonal development, as well as foster critical thinking skills, the reality is that many art programs are being cut at disproportionate rates, particularly in schools where the majority of students are Black and Brown. In fact, Trump and Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, have released a budget that will cut \$27 million in arts education programs (Brown et al., 2017). With art programs and funding continuing to be cut at rapid and unpredictable rates, it is imperative that policymakers consider the importance of art programs for Latinx, immigrant, and other vulnerable children. To refuse to consider this is an overt act of neglect for these children and the future of the country.

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My name is Diego and I want to be a soccer player and stop DONALD TRUMP from sending immigrants and stop being racist. I'm 13 and when I'm a soccer player, a pro one, I wanna donate my money to hospitals and donate my hair to kids that have cancer. I wanna help others, homeless that lost their jobs and their house, people that can't leave weed, drugs. I'ma help them get a new life and a family. I'ma teach my kids to not mistreat others to help people and to not think they are more than others. To respect others even tho they don't have a job and smell nasty. Homeless are still people and we need to respect them or let them be.

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Figure 1. *Self-Portrait*. Diego, age 13. (2017).



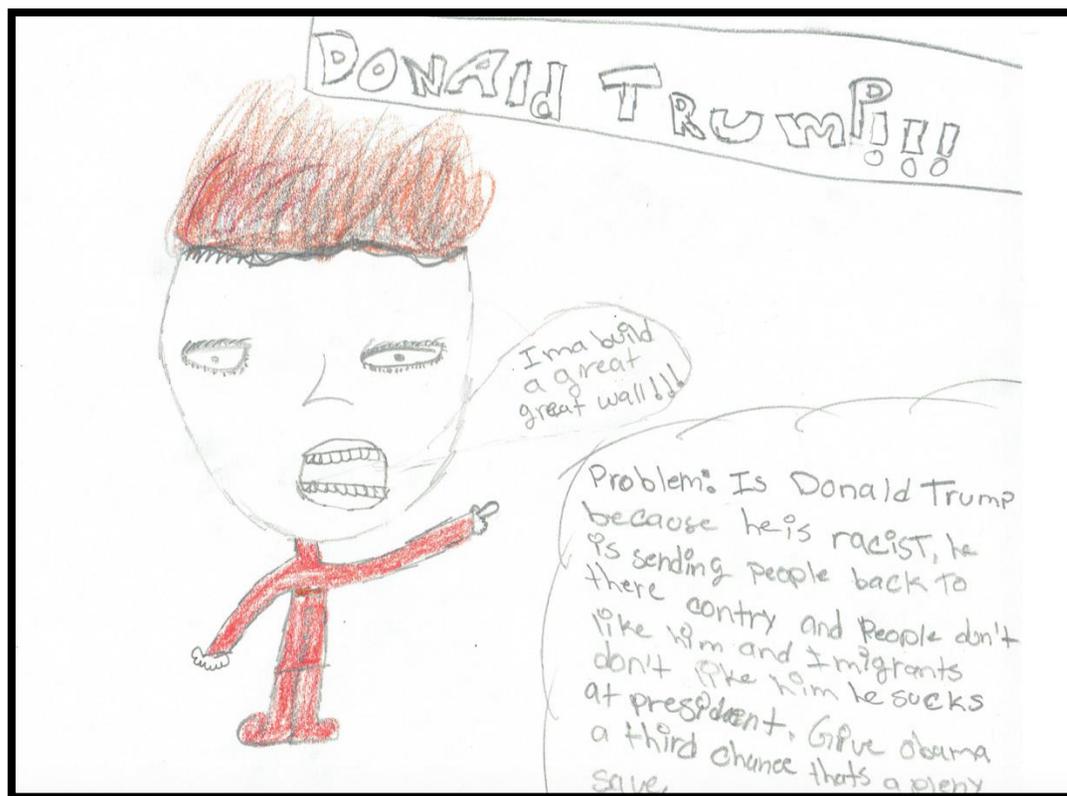
My name is Marla and I am 11 years old...My portrait is about me being a nice police officer. What I mean by that is me stopping DONALD TRUMP FROM SEPARATING FAMILY! Another reason why I want to be a police officer is because it has always been my dream job... I want to help the community.

Figure 2. Self-Portrait. Marla, age 11. (2017).



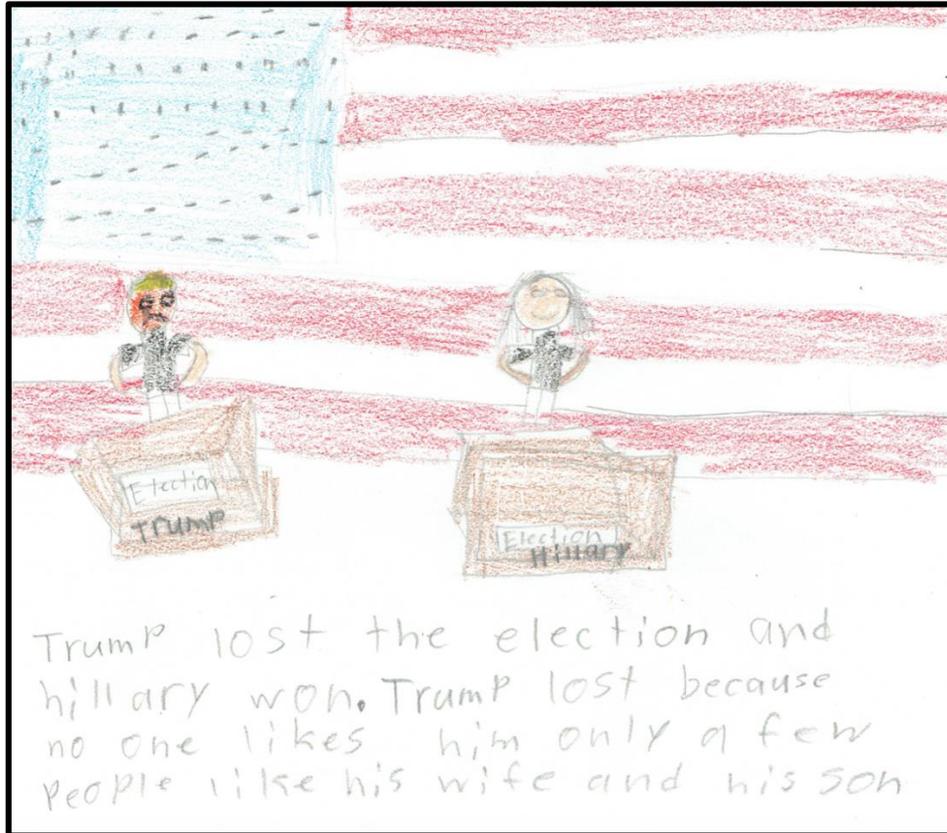
Julio dons a yellow wig as he becomes Donald Trump for our play *Los Niños Inmigrantes*. In this play, Julio parades as Trump along the San Diego/Tijuana border to inspect where to build the border wall.

Figure 3. *Trump Versus Immigrants*. Julio, age 12. (2017).



“[Trump] might...start a war—he could come here and send our families back to our country and we’re going to stay...alone with maybe—how do you call it? An orphanage and with another family.”

Figure 4. Donald Trump Drawing. Damian, age 11 (2017).



“Trump lost the election and [H]illary won. Trump lost because no one likes him, only a few people like his wife and his son.”

Figure 5. *The Election*. Lola, age 11 (2016).