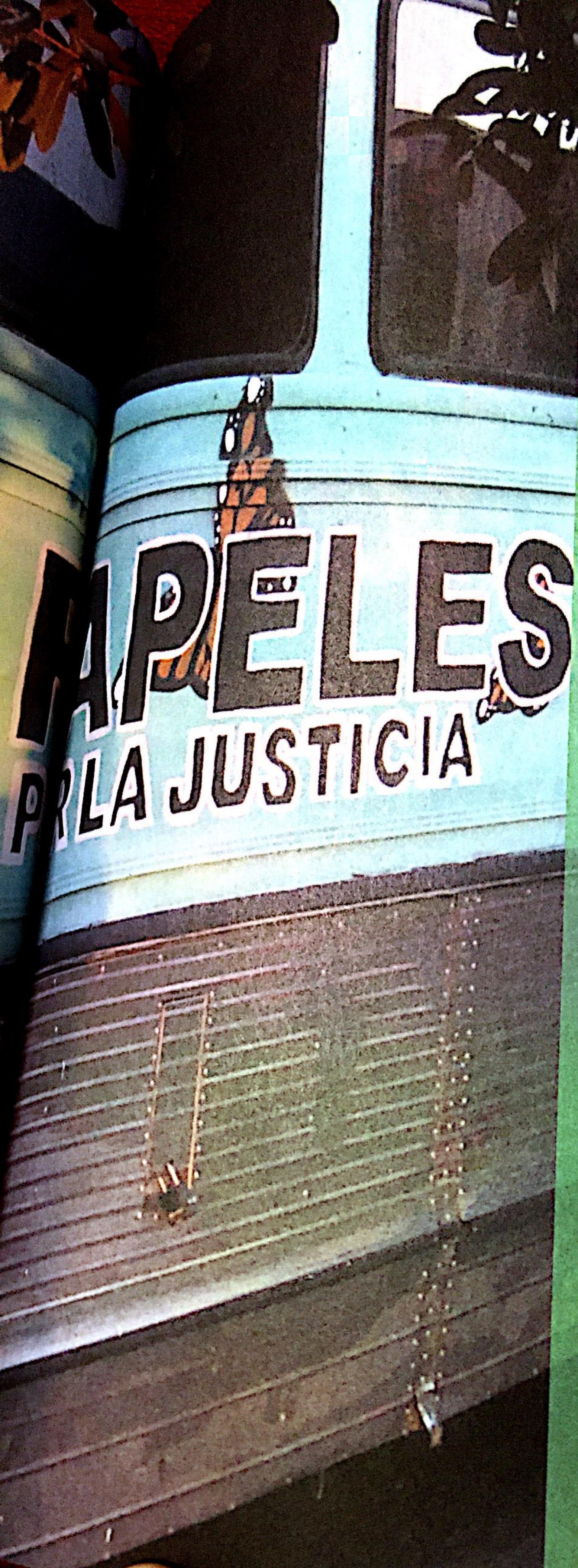

4

THE POWER OF STORIES: THE DREAMERS AND IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

■ **UNDOCUBUS. No Papers, No Fear: Ride for Justice, Phoenix, Arizona, 2012 (Photographer unknown)**
Deportation programs, controversial laws, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) harassment, silent raids, and detentions define the recent undocumented immigrant experience. On July 29, 2012, the UndocuBus, of the No Papers, No Fear campaign, embarked on a journey from Phoenix, Arizona, to Charlotte, North Carolina, site of the Democratic National Convention. The two-month bus tour confronted power and raised awareness about anti-immigration policies. The riders were "undocumented and unafraid" people from all over the country, including people going through deportation proceedings.

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■ UNTITLED. No Papers, No Fear: Ride for Justice, Charlotte, North Carolina, 2012. Banner designed by César Maxit (Photo by Kris Krug, via Creative Commons)
UndocuBus riders took over a street in Charlotte, outside the arena where the Democratic National Convention was being held, to pressure President Obama to stop deportations of all undocumented immigrants. The civil disobedience action resulted in the arrest of the protesters, some of whom faced deportation. Here, activists recognize that being present in the political system often means overcoming fear and putting their own bodies on the line. They demand dignity in the campaign spearheaded by No Papers, No Fear to confront the systemic violence they experience daily as immigrants without papers.

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A powerful illustration of the key organizing strategy of storytelling is the DREAMers, the young undocumented immigrants who have grown up in the United States and want to attend college, drive, work, and thrive in the United States. Their courageous actions are reclaiming a language of humanity that is reshaping public conscience and sparking change in our nation's policies. Through telling our stories, we learn about ourselves and a contagious "we" is created; the storytellers transform themselves and give courage to others to take action. Through stories we teach each other how to organize for change.

There is much to change in the unconscionable way immigrants are treated in this land—where all but the native peoples are immigrants—and with their stories, the DREAMers are leading the way.

Illegal—that's how more than eleven million people who live, work, and attend school in the United States have been branded.

Deported—that's the fate of more than two million people under the Obama administration, which hunted down, imprisoned, and deported as many undocumented citizens in its first five years as were deported from the United States in the entire twentieth century.

Denied—that's what happens to the three million children of undocumented immigrants in the United States when they attempt to attend college. Barred from financial aid or in-state tuition at public universities, a generation of immigrants has had its dreams deferred.

In the years since 9/11, the United States, a nation of immigrants, has targeted this generation of immigrants—especially people of color—who work and live within its borders and who enrich our culture. Unlike the European immigrants who were fortunate enough to get visas and were welcomed at Ellis Island in New York and elsewhere following World War II, the discourse about immigration today too often is dominated by demands for higher fences, longer jail terms, and harsher penalties for the people called "illegal."

The DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act has been a beacon of hope for undocumented immigrants. First proposed in 2001 as a pathway to citizenship for undocumented youth who had attended high school and lived in the United States for five years, the bill has died multiple deaths in Congress in the years since it was introduced and reintroduced. But the DREAMers fought on.

In 2010, four immigrant college students in Florida—each of whom had experienced the despair and fear of being undocumented—undertook a simple, bold, and creative act. It was an act that built upon years of organizing by other immigrants around the country and was deeply rooted in past struggles.

They took a long walk.

On January 1, 2010, Juan Rodriguez, Felipe Matos, Gaby Pacheco, and Carlos Roa, all in their early twenties, set out from their homes in Miami. They declared that they would walk fifteen hundred miles to the White House on a Trail of DREAMs. Their goal, like DREAMers around the country, was to bring undocumented youth out of the shadows, protest their plight as second-class citizens, stop the separation of families and the deportations, and rally support for the DREAM Act.

In Florida, these Trail of DREAMs walkers met fearful migrant workers on farms. In Georgia, they confronted the Ku Klux Klan and dared a racist sheriff to arrest them. In town after town, they were joined by undocumented immigrants who "came out" and marched alongside them, revealing the depth and breadth of the immigran community.

The students marched in T-shirts emblazoned with th slogan "Undocumented and Unafraid," a courageous ra lying cry of the immigrant rights movement. Everywhe they went, they told their stories, publicly declaring th undocumented status.

At the White House, surrounded by throngs of s porters, they challenged President Barack Obama to s deportations, pushed for passage of the DREAM Act,

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gave hope to all the young undocumented people who were hidden in plain sight.

In 2011, Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas publicly declared his undocumented status in a cover story for the New York Times Magazine*. He cited the Trail of DREAMs walkers: "Their courage has inspired me," he wrote in the* Times*.*[1]

In early June 2012, in the heat of the presidential campaign, undocumented activists occupied President Obama's campaign offices in a dozen cities to demand that he stop deportations and enact the DREAM Act.

The immigration conversation soon abruptly took a leap forward. On June 15, 2012, President Obama announced that authorities would no longer deport certain DREAM Act–eligible undocumented youth. It was an important victory in the larger struggle for immigrant rights. Five months later, Obama won a landslide reelection, winning 71 percent of the Latino vote.

In early 2013, the New York Times *pronounced in an editorial that the United States was experiencing an "Immigration Spring"—reminiscent of the Arab Spring pro-democracy movement that had transformed the Middle East in 2011. "It has been amazing this year to watch immigration reform, that perennial train wreck of an issue, keep rolling forward without losing steam or blowing up."*[2]

Even the fundamental language of the immigration conversation changed. In April 2013, the Associated Press announced it would no longer use the term "illegal immigrant" in news stories, following a concerted campaign led by Colorlines *publisher Rinku Sen and numerous immigrant rights groups to "drop the i-word."*

In November 2014, with Congress having failed to enact immigration reform, President Barack Obama announced that he would circumvent Congress and use executive action to protect nearly half of the estimated eleven million undocumented immigrants from deportation and offer them temporary legal status.

Years of organizing by countless individuals and organizations brought the immigrant rights struggle to this turning point. Millions of undocumented immigrants bravely protested in the streets over the past decade. Through this fight, they have declared that there is a limit, an ethos, a social contract. Basta! *Enough is enough! Undocumented students attended trainings to tell their story and move people to action. Groups such as United We Dream grew from seven chapters in 2008 to sixty chapters four years later. With their bold and risky actions, young DREAMers have harnessed the power of this movement to impel a transformation.*

This is the story of one group of DREAMers in this movement fighting to make their dreams a reality. Bravely telling their story, they declare their humanity and enroll others in the fight to win fundamental change.

"THERE IS POWER WITHIN OUR STORY"

Gaby Pacheco has an easy smile that belies a steely resolve. The self-assured young woman strides to the microphone to address an audience during the Trail of DREAMs walk.

"I've been in the United States since I was seven years old in 1993, when I emigrated from Ecuador with my family and settled in Miami, Florida. I consider myself to be an all-American girl. I was part of the ROTC program during high school, and after graduation wanted to enlist in the Air Force. Because of my undocumented status, I could not. But I went to college and now hold a bachelor's degree in special education. There are many others like me."

Pacheco is one of the lucky ones. As a top high school student, she qualified to attend a tuition-free program at Miami Dade College. But she watched as her sister and brother were forced to abandon their dreams of getting a college education because of the simple fact that they were not American citizens and could not get financial aid or in-state tuition at local colleges. Pacheco was thrilled to be in college. But every time she went home to her family, she was reminded that this dream was still beyond reach for many other undocumented immigrants.

Undocumented people often live in silence and fear. Pacheco saw unmarked white vans from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) cruising the neighborhood. She heard about how they would pull up at a house and whisk away people in the dead of night. She knew that immigrants enjoyed few of the basic rights that American citizens took for granted. Her neighbors were detained in prisons and lacked access to attorneys. Midnight raids, deportation, par-

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ents taken from children—are all daily threats for the undocumented.

Pacheco refused to be silent. "In eighth grade I made a decision that I was going to start telling people my status and my situation because I felt that I was not the only one," she recounts. "And if there were other people like me, maybe someday I'll figure it out how to fix their status. So in high school . . . friends came to tell me that they had a secret. They would say, 'I'm just like you,' or 'I don't have papers either.'"

She continues, "In the work that I've done as an activist, being able to reach that point of liberation and not have this fear of the what-ifs—what if immigration comes to get you?—allowed me at a very young age to . . . set an example to the country and other DREAMers that there is power within our story."

When Pacheco enrolled at Miami Dade College, she made a vow to everyone who had confided their immigration status in her. "I put my hand on [my first college] schedule and I made a promise that I was going to fight so that other people [would] have the same opportunity I had been given to go to college."

PUNISHMENT—AND RESISTANCE

Pounding on the door awakened the Pacheco family at 6:00 a.m. on July 26, 2006. It was the moment that every undocumented immigrant family dreads.

Swarms of heavily armed ICE agents were looking for the young woman who had dared to speak out. They found her family instead. ICE agents marched Pacheco's parents and sisters out of the house, put them into a windowless white van, and took them to the local Department of Homeland Security building.

Her sister called her from the booking center. "Gaby, they want me to tell you that we should thank you for what is happening to us," she said through sobs.

Gaby was hysterical. She remembers, "That was just one of the hardest things I had to hear."

Gaby immediately went to the Department of Homeland Security processing center. "What I negotiated was that I was not going to talk to the media anymore and that I was not going to continue to do what I was doing. And under those conditions he let me go." The agent announced, "I'm going to let your family go, but they're going to still go through the deportation and immigration process."

Midnight raids, deportation, parents taken from children—are all daily threats for the undocumented.

The ICE officer got what he was really after: silence. Or so he thought.

"That really was what spurred a different type of fight in me—to fight for my family," Pacheco says. That fight would sow the seeds of the Trail of DREAMs.

Pacheco responded to the threat the way she knew best: she organized. She was the student government president at Miami Dade College and founder of a campus group, Students Working for Equal Rights. When the Pacheco family was supposed to report to the offices of the Department of Homeland Security to receive their final deportation decision in 2008, Gaby determined they would not go alone.

With Students Working for Equal Rights, Gaby organized a march from Miami Dade College to the immigration courthouse. Hundreds of undocumented youth and their allies, all wearing black T-shirts emblazoned with the word "Undocumented," protested in front of the courthouse.

Armed ICE agents stood in front of the building in a show of force. The traditionally quiet undocumented youth were shouting: "We're not afraid! We're undocumented! We're standing together to fight for our people!"

Pacheco stood, chanted, and marveled at the sight around her. The authorities wanted her and her family to go quietly. Instead, they aroused a sleeping giant.

"It was just the most beautiful thing," she says. The protest helped buy time for her family, whose deportation was delayed when the judge didn't show up. Several other Miami Dade College students, including Juan Rodriguez and Felipe Matos, were also at that protest.

"That entire experience of being able to put myself out there and stand in front of ICE agents at the Homeland Security building with my 'Undocumented' shirt . . . really transformed me as a leader," Rodriguez recalls. Like Pacheco, Rodriguez went from being soft-spoken to outspoken, from in the shadows to out of the closet.

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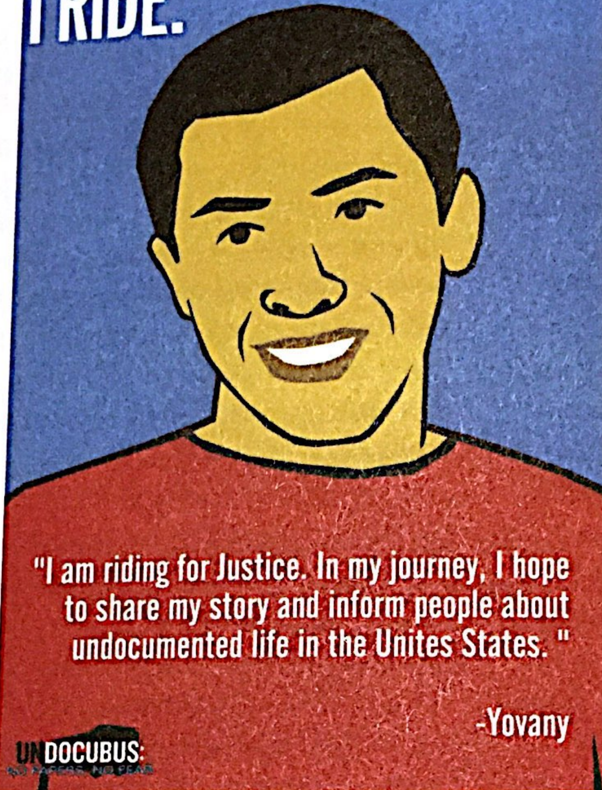

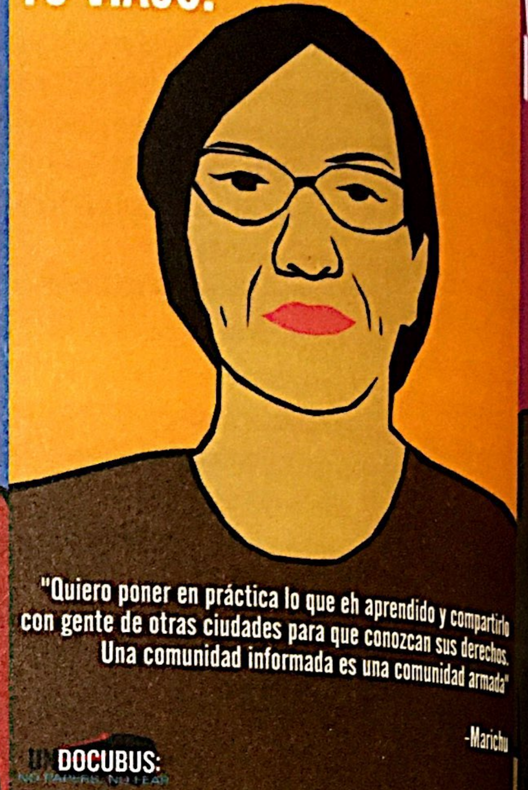

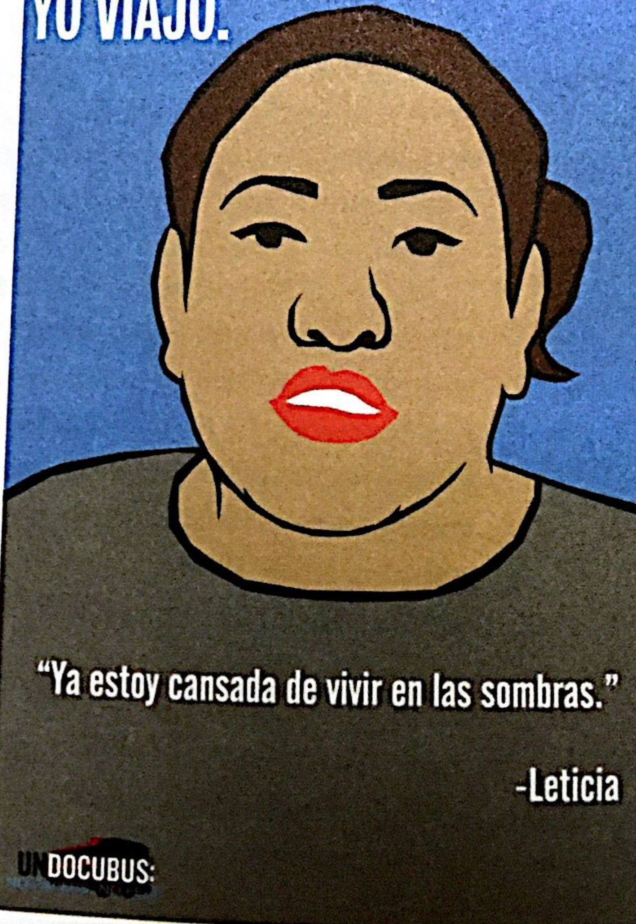

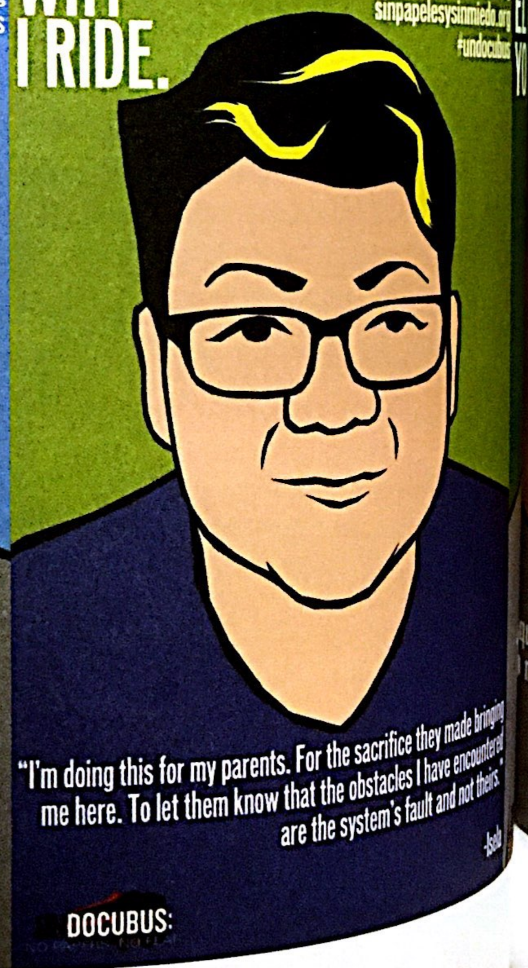

WHY I RIDE (El porqué yo viajo). Julio Salgado, Berkeley, California, 2012
There are many faces and experiences of immigration. Julio Salgado's poster series exposes the many stories behind the lives of those who risk everything to work in the United States and labor under conditions of exploitation. Julio believes undocumented immigrants should be leading and constructing the narratives of their own struggle. *Why I Ride* exposes the reasons for challenging unfair deportations and aims to build migrant political power.

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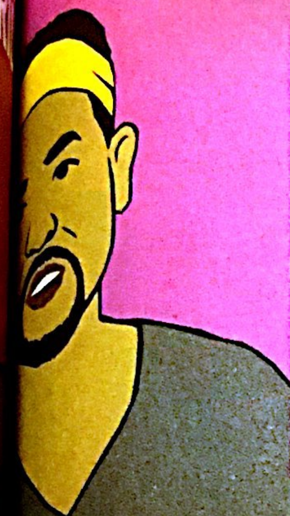

...g it for my queer and
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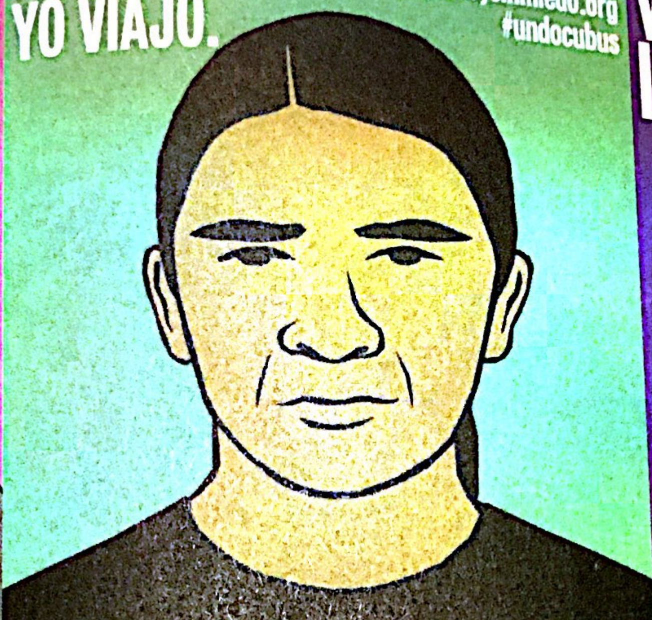
-Gerardo



"Lo hago para promover la autodeterminación de las comunidades, exponer los abusos en centros de detención de migrantes y traer justicia para nuestras familias."

-Fernando

DOCUBUS:
NO PAPERS. NO FEAR

"I refuse to keep on limiting myself by the unjust laws that refuse to s... my humanity and recognize that undocumented immigrants are... much a part of the community as everyone els...

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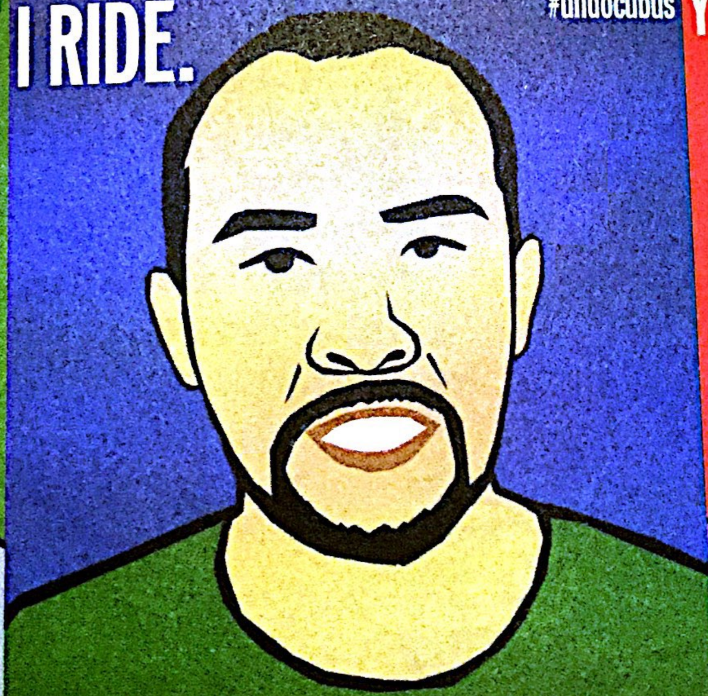

"I'm doing it because I am tired of the separation of families."

-Angel

UNDOCUBUS:

"Yo lo estoy haciendo por las famili... tienen miedo de no regresar a su...

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NO PAPERS. NO FEAR

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LEARNING THE CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF STORYTELLING

Juan Rodriguez remembers the day when his dreams were shattered.

Rodriguez was valedictorian at the start of his senior year at South Broward High School in Hollywood, Florida. He excelled in math and science and planned to become an aerospace engineer. The son of a farm worker, Rodriguez was the embodiment of the American dream—the notion that if you work hard, you get ahead.

There was just one problem: in the eyes of the government, he wasn't American, so he wasn't entitled to dream here.

Juan Rodriguez's family fled violence-torn Colombia in 1995. Colombia was the third-largest recipient of U.S. military aid in the 1990s (after Israel and Egypt). It was a front line in the U.S. drug war, which forced many Colombians to flee their country and come to the United States. Rodriguez's family would become another statistic in that war.

One day, armed gunmen showed up at the home of Rodriguez's family in Colombia. It was a warning. Within twenty-four hours, twelve members of his family boarded planes and flew to Miami, where they settled. Another U.S.-backed war had blown back to our shores: the members of the Rodriguez family were now undocumented immigrants.

During his senior year of high school, Rodriguez visited his guidance counselor. Her office was adorned with posters for colleges from around the country. People told him he was destined to attend a prestigious university. The guidance counselor welcomed him inside and posed a simple question: "What is your immigration status?"

There was just one problem: in the eyes of the government, he wasn't American, so he wasn't entitled to dream here.

Rodriguez, who prided himself on his ability to solve tough math problems, was stumped. "I had no idea what any of those documents were," he recalls. "I had never heard of them before."

Rodriguez came home and asked his father for the documents so he could show his guidance counselor and continue planning for college.

"You have to go back and tell them that you don't have any of those things," replied his father, who spent long days picking fruit in Florida.

Rodriguez returned to his guidance counselor and reported what his father told him. The counselor replied bluntly, "If you don't have these documents, then it means that you're an illegal and you're not supposed to be in the country. You're probably never going to be able to go to college because these documents are required. You should think about what you want to do when you become an adult so you can go back to your home country and pursue your education there."

Rodriguez was shattered. His grades fell, and to top it off, his father was arrested for driving without a license—a common problem, since most states will not grant a driver's license to undocumented people. The double whammy of losing his college hopes and seeing his father in jail sent the high school senior into an emotional tailspin.

"Finding out that my father wasn't going to be able to attend my graduation just completely destroyed any desire in me to want to even attend," he recounts, the emotion still evident in his voice. Rodriguez ultimately graduated fifth out of a class of five hundred.

Rodriguez learned that his guidance counselor had been wrong: his strong high school performance qualified him to attend the honors program at Miami Dade College at reduced tuition. He became president of the college's student government and led a campus immigrant rights group. But he was especially moved by his experience in 2008, when he protested at the offices of the Department of Homeland Security to stop the imminent deportation of Gaby Pacheco's family.

"That campaign really radicalized me because it was the first time that our organization ordered 'Undocumented' shirts to be able to conquer the fear that we had been living in."

Rodriguez and Pacheco became close friends after the demonstration. They talked about what it would take to change the immigration system so that they and their families were not in constant danger of being arrested and deported. They knew about the tactics

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THE GREAT MIGRATION

Why Do Immigrants Leave Home to Settle in the United States?

Gaby Pacheco's parents moved their family from Ecuador to Miami in search of a safer community and better education.

Many workers come to the United States in search of jobs. U.S.-backed wars combined with more recent corporate-friendly U.S. trade policies have fueled migration, particularly in Central and South America. The 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and 2004 Central American Free Trade Agreement have resulted in deepening poverty and widespread job loss in Central and South America.

Jose "Chencho" Alas was a former Salvadoran priest who worked for the poor in El Salvador alongside Archbishop Óscar Romero, the Catholic leader who was murdered in 1980 for siding with the poor peasants and denouncing human rights abuses by the Salvadoran government, which was aligned with the fourteen wealthiest Salvadoran families and the U.S. government. Alas said that "free trade" would do more harm to Central America than all the years of U.S. wars there. His warning has proved prophetic.

Take the case of Mexico, where the extreme rural poverty rate was 35 percent before NAFTA but soared to 55 percent in 1996–98, following NAFTA's implementation.[3] NAFTA removed many of the tariffs and import restrictions that protected small farmers in Mexico, allowing large U.S.-based multinational companies, which receive government subsidies, unfettered access to Mexican markets. (See Paulina Helm-Hernández's story in Chapter 1). One result: Mexico went from importing 30,000 tons of pork in 1995 to importing 811,000 tons of pork in 2010, causing a loss of some 120,000 Mexican jobs in that one sector alone.[4] Many of those pig farmers went from supporting themselves and their families in Mexico to being undocumented workers in pork factories in North Carolina.[5]

For immigrants fleeing poverty and starvation, there is almost no alternative. "The globalization of capital . . . has produced its corollary—the globalization of labor," journalist Juan González writes. "The wealth gap between the developed countries and the Third World has . . . fueled unprecedented mass emigration to the United States and Western Europe, as displaced peasants and impoverished workers seek a share of the torrent of profits flowing to the rich nations. . . . The result has been a dramatic ethnic and racial transformation of the working classes of Europe and the United States."[6]

From One War Zone to Another

How are immigrants received once they arrive in the United States?

Many immigrants from El Salvador, Honduras, Haiti, and Colombia fled U.S.-backed wars at home. Others fle[d] U.S.-imposed economic warfare, only to arrive at the U.S.–Mexico border, another war zone. Heavily arme[d]

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THE GREAT MIGRATION (continued)

Border Patrol agents, emboldened with new powers since 9/11, prowl the air and ground in southern Arizona, Texas, and California. The U.S. Border Patrol has more than doubled in size in a decade, from 10,000 agents in 2002 to over 21,000 today.

In addition, numerous policies were implemented in 2006 that target undocumented immigrants and their employers. Among the most notorious programs is the Secure Communities Act. This law authorized local police to enforce immigration laws—previously the domain of federal immigration and customs agents—enabling them to arrest people on the pretext of rounding up "criminal aliens." By 2014, Secure Communities had resulted in 250,000 arrests, but "the program's effect on crime has been zero," reported the *New York Times*.[7] On November 20, 2014, after much pressure, President Obama announced that he was ending the Secure Communities program.

In 2013–14, nearly seventy thousand unaccompanied children, many sent by parents who were desperate to have their kids escape violence and joblessness, crossed the southern border, only to be summarily deported once they were apprehended.

The crusade against undocumented residents peaked under President Barack Obama; deportations reached a record 1.5 million people in his first term alone, averaging more than one thousand deportations per day.[8]

The vast majority of people detained on immigration charges are not criminals, but they are subjected to treatment normally reserved for mass murderers. On any given day, some three hundred immigrants are held in solitary confinement in bathroom-sized windowless cells. The *Times* editorialized that this treatment was "wildly inappropriate" and that immigrants are held in "a ramshackle network of private and public lockups, prone to abuses and lacking legally enforceable standards for how detainees are treated."[9]

A driving force behind the immigration detention business is private companies who profit from it. In 2012, the U.S. government spent more than $1.7 billion on detaining immigrants. About half of immigrants being detained in the United States in 2009 were held in facilities owned by private companies, according to Detention Watch Network.[10] Those companies, such the Corrections Corporation of America and the GEO Group (see more about these companies and the role of the for-profit prison industry in perpetuating mass incarceration in Chapter 3), spend lavishly to keep their prisons full: from 1999 to 2009, the private prison industry spent over $20 million to lobby Congress. Prison industry lobbyists have even drafted model anti-immigrant state legislation that, with the help of the American Legislative Exchange Council, which is funded by corporations and the billionaire Koch brothers, has been introduced in Arizona and around the country.[11]

"For years, private prison firms have played a critical role in shaping public policy around immigration de-ention, pursuing the bottom line at the expense of basic civil rights and taxpayer dollars," says Emily Tucker, etention Watch Network's director of policy and advocacy.[12]

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STOP JUAN CROW. Favianna Rodríguez, Oakland, California, 2012 Arizona's anti-immigrant bill, SB 1070, signed into law in April 2010, legalized racial profiling in the state. In *Stop Juan Crow*, artist Favianna Rodriguez draws a link between the Jim Crow laws that enforced racial segregation of African Americans after the Civil War (that ended with the civil rights movement) to the racism faced by Latinos today. The international migrant rights cam paign We Will Not Compl opposes the oppressiv legislation and demanc full human rights for a people living in the stat

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used by civil rights activists in the 1960s to bring change. How could they connect their struggle with past efforts?

Marshall Ganz was among those who helped DREAMers make the connection. In the 1960s, Ganz was an organizer with Cesar Chavez, the legendary civil rights leader and co-founder of the United Farm Workers, the pioneering Latino-led labor union that has fought for rights for migrant workers and others. In recent years, Ganz has been teaching at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and advised the 2008 Obama campaign on grassroots organizing strategy. In 2009, Pacheco, Rodriguez, and Felipe Matos attended trainings run by Ganz, Joy Cushman of the New Organizing Institute, and the Center for Community Change, groups that train progressive movement organizers.

Ganz advised the activists that their story could be their most potent tool for social change: "Put telling your story as a central piece of the organizing process." He taught them the critical parts of storytelling: how to transform their personal story into a call to action, moving from "me" to "we" to "now."

"I remember particularly describing how [Chavez and the farm workers] thought up our 1966 march from Delano to Sacramento," Ganz says. The idea of a march, with roots in the farm workers' struggle, resonated with the immigrant youth.

The Center for Community Change trainings helped mobilize networks that were just forming. In December 2008, immigrant student groups from around the country—including the Student Immigrant Movement of Massachusetts, the California DREAM Network, the New York State Youth Leadership Council, and the University Leadership Initiative in Austin, Texas—joined forces to form United We Dream, a national group focused on enabling immigrant youth to pursue higher education.

In October 2009, Juan Rodriguez attended a national leadership conference in New York with DREAMers and other immigrant rights activists. "We started talking about how much hopelessness there was amongst the youth in our movement, because the DREAM Act had been introduced in 2001 and there we were eight years later without a law passed through Congress.

"Put telling your story as a central piece of the organizing process."

"Depression is a very serious issue in the immigrant youth movement," Rodriguez told the others. "In 2009, there were several cases of [undocumented] students across the country who took their lives just out of their sense of hopelessness. What can we do to keep the youth alive?

"One of the people there started talking about the Underground Railroad . . . [which] gave so much hope to people who were oppressed in the South. [Black people during slavery were] benefiting from the support of a network of allies across the country who guided them along the way to freedom."

"Where is our Underground Railroad in the immigrant rights movement?" asked one of the students.

One of the activists proposed an immigrant journey to freedom, a relay walk across America that would end in Washington, D.C., to call attention to the plight of the undocumented. "Yes, we could totally do this if we really set our minds to it—in about three years," declared another.

Rodriguez left the conference in despair. When he arrived home in Florida, he was greeted with the news that one of the undocumented youths he worked with had just attempted suicide.

"I went straight to the hospital and spent the entire night holding his hand as his stomach was being pumped. It hit me in that moment . . . [that] if change was ever going to happen we needed to just do it, and believe in our communities and believe that enough people in this country care about justice and equality to make it a success regardless of whether or not we have staff or funding or grants or marketing strategies for it."

Rodriguez returned to the home he shared with his boyfriend, Felipe Matos. "I'm putting on my shoes and I'm going to start walking," he told Matos, who tried to talk him out of it.

"Do you have any idea what you're saying? We're talking about a fifteen-hundred-mile walk to D.C. No normal human being ever does that. How do you know you'll even survive?"

"I don't care if I survive or not," shot back Rodriguez. "Our people are disappearing. How many more unt

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we've had enough? If there's any sacrifice I can make to keep from losing any more people, I'll do it."

Matos urged Rodriguez to wait and enlist others in his effort. He counseled his partner to harness his rage and despair into a political act—to make it a movement. Matos proposed that they embark on this political pilgrimage on January 1, 2010. "We can start the new decade on our own terms," Matos proposed.

The two men raised the idea with their fellow student immigration activists at Miami Dade College. Carlos Roa and Gaby Pacheco "immediately jumped up and said, 'Yes, I'll walk with you to D.C.,'" Rodriguez recounts. "They didn't even question it."

BLAZING A TRAIL OF DREAMS

For four months, Juan Rodriguez, Gaby Pacheco, Felipe Matos, and Carlos Roa walked. Sometimes they walked alone. Mostly they drew small crowds, including many undocumented immigrants who openly joined the four students, reveling in "coming out," if only briefly. They were hosted along the way by churches and supporters. They chronicled their pilgrimage through daily updates on blogs, Twitter, and other social media.

As the Trail of DREAMs participants walked day after day through conservative and sometimes hostile country, they wore their T-shirts declaring they were "undocumented and unafraid."

"It was an act of civil disobedience," says Pacheco. "That's what we saw that happened with the lunch counter sit-ins [in the 1960s]. That's what Rosa Parks did. We're not going to hide anymore. We're not going to be in the shadows. We're going to share who we really are."

In the tiny farming community of Mayo, Florida, they met farm workers who lived in daily fear of being arrested. The Trail of DREAMs walkers decided to confront this. "We learned that in [Mayo] and the neighboring community, [immigrants] are so afraid of the police that there [were] crimes happening and nobody would do anything about it," says Pacheco.

The four DREAMers responded to local needs by organizing an impromptu workers' rights workshop in the community. "We learned that there were all these workers' rights violations and people just [felt] like that was the norm until we stopped in that town to do another rights workshop," says Pacheco.

"We're not going to hide anymore. We're not going to be in the shadows. We're going to share who we really are."

They also met with the sheriff and the police chief. "What are you doing?" the four DREAMers demanded of the police officials—ignoring the fact that they could be arrested at any moment. "You're hurting your community as a whole because these people fear you so much that [they] are not reporting the crimes that are happening."

"We decided that the act of walking itself wasn't the most important thing, but rather really connecting with the community that we were walking through and trying to empower them," says Pacheco.

In Nahunta, Georgia, the Trail of DREAMs walkers encountered a rally of about fifty Ku Klux Klan members. The hooded white men were protesting the "Latino invasion" and called for undocumented immigrants to be sent "back" to Mexico—despite the fact that none of the DREAMers on the walk were Mexican.

The NAACP organized a counterdemonstration attended by the four Trail of DREAMs walkers and other allies. The Klan encounter forged an important alliance. As Juan Rodriguez reflected on the Trail of DREAMs blog, "Ultimately, the success of today was to be able to stand hand in hand with our friends from the NAACP singing liberation songs together and acknowledging our united struggle for racial justice. We ALL deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. We all deserve to be acknowledged for our humanity."

The Trail of DREAMs linked its struggle to the larger historical movement for justice. "We were following in the footsteps of leaders of the past who had set foundations for this type of work for equality," explains Rodriguez. Stopping at symbolic civil rights locations in the South, he says, they "would talk about how the work for equality is still not over, and we need our communities to stand together in order to pass better laws that don't alienate members of the community just because of their race or ethnicity or language or anything."

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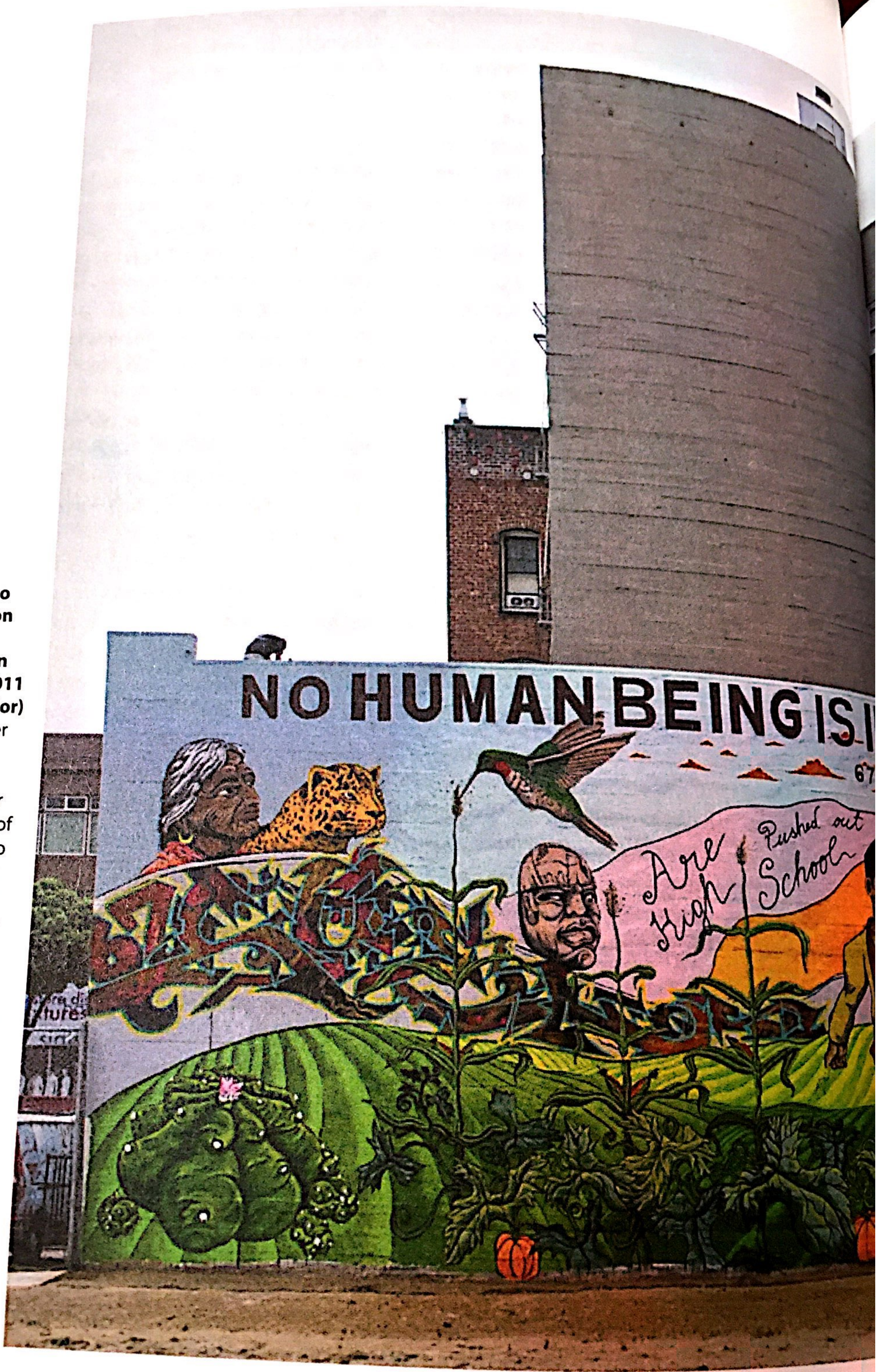

NO HUMAN BEING IS ILLEGAL Y CADA UNO TIENE UN SUEÑO. Pancho Pescador, *in collaboration with 67 Sueños and the Community Rejuvenation Project*, San Francisco, 2011 (Photo by Pancho Pescador) 67 Sueños project organizer Pablo Paredes led a group of young migrants to clean an empty lot and paint their stories under the guidance of Oakland-based artist Pancho Pescador. Declaring that "no human being is illegal," they demand an end to the labeling of immigrants without documents as "illegal." The mural and the organization raise concerns about the way the DREAM Act and related immigration policy privilege certain people (for example, students), yet exclude the majority (67 percent) of immigrants. The artists painted graves of people who died crossing the border, people suffering from the fear of deportation, and youths, who have historically been left out of the immigration debate.

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In Gwinnett County, Georgia, the Trail of DREAMs walkers, still sporting shirts emblazoned "Undocumented," made a surprise visit to Sheriff Butch Conway, who has championed a Georgia law known as 287(g) that permits local police to enforce federal immigration rules. Critics charge that the law sanctions racial profiling and fast-track deportation. Conway declined to meet with the marchers, but the provocative visit, joined by a throng of supporters, garnered widespread media coverage.

All along the way, they told their story. Pacheco reflected on the people they spoke to; in one case, "in two hours, this man went from hating us, wanting to hit us, and blaming us to saying, 'I'm sorry.'" She muses, "We were realizing the power that we had and how we were making a difference. . . . To say, 'You are my brother. You are my sister. You could be in my shoes. Let me tell you my story so that you could really understand me'—our stories are the most powerful tool that we have."

After four months and fifteen hundred miles of walking, the four walkers arrived in Alexandria, Virginia, only a few miles from the nation's capital. "There were two or three blocks full of [immigrant] mothers on both sides of the road," recalls Rodriguez. They had followed the DREAMers' journey. "All of them were crying and checking our legs, our arms, our hands, saying that we were a symbol, a representative of their own kids, of all of the things they ever dreamed of a future for their kids, and all of their hopes were invested in us.

"Of all moments, that was the most overwhelming."

"'You are my brother. You are my sister. You could be in my shoes. Let me tell you my story so that you could really understand me'—our stories are the most powerful tool that we have."

UNDOCUQUEER

A striking feature of the DREAMers has been their embrace of the language of the LGBTQ rights movement. Undocumented youth speak openly of when they "came out" about their immigration status. The choice of words was intentional, says Matos. "When we started using that language . . . that opened up that space to talk about both LGBT issues and immigrant rights issues."

But while the Trail of DREAMs walkers dared undocumented people to come out, they hid the fact that two of their group, Juan Rodriguez and Felipe Matos, were a gay couple. Rodriguez says the group reluctantly decided that "for the sake of our collective safety . . . it would be best if we minimized the risk to the group by Felipe and I not being public about our relationship and not having public displays of affection."

He says that host churches would sometimes request that he and Matos sit separately and "have no contact throughout the course of the event. It would put our entire institution in jeopardy."

The decision still pains the two men. "The Trail was really a pretty horrible experience for both Felipe and me on a personal level because it forced us both back into the closet," says Rodriguez. "Felipe and I definitely needed to have taken more of a bold stand and stand up for ourselves. . . . I just remember us feeling, 'Oh well, we're here fighting for immigrant rights. Let's not make things complicated.' But really, on a personal level, it was affecting us a lot and it hurt us a lot." Juan's acts of bravery continued; in 2012, Juan Rodriguez became Isabel Sousa-Rodriguez. Reflecting on this transition in 2015, Isabel wrote, "Every single day since then has been liberating for me."

In contrast to their initial silence on LGBTQ issues, the group was keenly attuned to the issues of women in their movement. When cameras and reporters appeared at Trail events, Pacheco was often the one to take the microphone. That was intentional.

"We had the understanding that women are never heard," says Matos. "That was our way of honoring her leadership. If you take away women from the movement, the movement will stop to exist," he continues, "because they mobilize, they're leaders, they're respected in their local communities."

NATIONAL RELUCTANCE MEETS GRASSROOTS LOVE

The young DREAMers were impatient with the mainstream immigrant rights groups and wanted to push them to take more dramatic action. The Trail of DREAMs walkers at times felt abandoned or ignored by the more established organizations, which provided little support.

Pacheco recalls that other activists dismissed their

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LEARNING FROM OTHER MOVEMENTS

The Trail of DREAMs began in 2010. Like the larger DREAM movement and all successful movements, it has roots in learning from the rich history of freedom walks and immigrant organizing.

"We knew that we were going to use similar tactics that we had seen in the civil rights and farm worker rights movements," explains Gaby Pacheco. "We have seen that it works.

"In March 1965, mostly black and a few white activists marched for five days over fifty-four miles from Selma to Montgomery, defying for a third time violent Alabama state troopers. This third march was led by Revered Martin Luther King Jr. and culminated with 25,000 people descending on the Alabama state capital to demand voting rights and justice for murdered civil rights activists. We learned that there had to be a level of sacrifice and a level of pain that had to be visible for others to realize the inhumane situations that we were going through. Just showing our deep desire by putting our bodies through this physical pain of walking 1,500 miles for four months to D.C., we were going to be able to show that we really just wanted an opportunity, wanted to change the situation that ourselves and our families are in."

On March 17, 1966, Cesar Chavez, then head of the National Farm Workers Association (later co-founder of the United Farm Workers with Dolores Huerta), led a 340-mile march of striking grape pickers from Delano to Sacramento. The march brought the farm workers to national attention and led to the United Farm Workers winning the strike and becoming a force in the movement for economic justice. The United Farm Workers themselves used similar tactics as past movements following, among others, the practices that the leader of the Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata, had used to fight for the rights of native peoples against powerful landowners.

Juan Rodriguez notes that they were also inspired by Otpor! ("resistance" in Serbian), the nonviolent youth movement that helped bring down Yugoslavian dictator Slobodan Milošević in 2000. Otpor! was famous for its creative use of public theater in street demonstrations, boycotts, and occupations. In 2009, Otpor! trainers ran a workshop in nonviolent resistance for DREAMers.

The four Florida activists also built upon the efforts of a broad immigrant rights movement that had laid the foundation for the conversation that they urgently hoped to expand. In 2006, millions of immigrants and their allies took to the streets in more than a hundred U.S. cities to demand a change in immigration policy. In Chicago, 300,000 people marched. A half million marched in Los Angeles and Dallas. On May 1, 2006, millions took part in the Great American Boycott, a one-day walkout from schools and businesses to demonstrate the importance of immigrants throughout the United States and in the economy. This general strike was a show of force by immigrants, who were opposing a wave of anti-immigrant laws that were pending in Congress. Churches, labor unions, and progressive organizations joined forces through Spanish-language radio and TV and through social networks of young Latinos using the Internet. The 2006 immigration protests were a watershed moment in the immigrant rights movement.

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effort, some "calling it a suicide mission." Fellow DREAMers doubted the four walkers. United We Dream organizer Carlos Saavedra recalls, "I was like, why are they doing this? Why would you walk? I was just thinking [of lobbying] Congress members." He concedes now, "I was in the wrong fight."

Others have echoed Saavedra. Many of the Washington, D.C.–based immigrant rights organizations thought they had a friend in the White House with Obama and were trying to play the inside power game. They now readily admit they were wrong. It was through direct action, dramatizing the human stories, that the movement got anywhere.

What gave Pacheco and her three friends the strength to go ahead with their effort in the face of opposition?

"I learned from the suffrage movement," Pacheco replies. "Women didn't have the support [and] were killed and put in jail for fighting for their rights. For us the spirit of our ancestors and the people that had fought for us in the past just gave us that push and the fire to continue."

She pauses, then adds, "We have done everything we could and our friends were getting deported, our families were getting detained. . . . We didn't have any more to lose."

For Pacheco, there was one more all-important inspiration to take the first step on her 1,500-mile journey: "At the center of all this was this love that we have for families, for ourselves, but also for this country."

NEVER BACKING DOWN

In June 2010, six weeks after the Trail of DREAMs ended with a rally outside the White House, Juan Rodriguez received a surprise invitation to a meeting inside the White House.

t the center of all this was this love that we have for amilies, for ourselves, but also r this country."

There was a catch: Rodriguez was the only Trail of DREAMs participant who was invited to this meeting with a small group of national advocates. He was told that he could meet the president because he had recently received permanent resident status. The others were undocumented and thus could not attend.

Rodriguez's instinct was to refuse to participate, but his three comrades insisted that he had to meet the president to "represent all of the people who were excluded from the meeting and the families who were separated under Obama's deportation policies and the quotas." Rodriguez, acutely sensitive to the symbolism, saw the chance to bring his protest right into the White House.

On the day of the meeting, Rodriguez and other advocates were ushered into the ornate Roosevelt Room of the White House. President Obama entered and shook each person's hand in friendly greeting. The president extended his hand to Rodriguez.

"I'm sorry, I can't shake your hand," said Rodriguez, standing stiffly. He tried expressing to the president that his presence and demonstration of disappointment represented the families who had been separated by the deportations. But before he could speak, a flash of anger crossed Obama's face. He directed everyone to sit down.

Rodriguez recalls, "It shifted the entire tone of the meeting from [being] a friendly gathering between Obama and his friends who care about immigrants to an accountability session on the president around the policies that he kept supporting, as well as the lack of leadership on . . . immigration reform."

Confrontation and direct action had gotten the DREAMers the attention of the White House. Juan Rodriguez was not going to abandon that approach now.

Obama opened the meeting and was visibly annoyed. "I'm the only one trying to help you and you're always hard on me," Rodriguez recalls him saying. "You even bring Juan Rodriguez and he doesn't shake my hand."

Obama turned to Deepak Bhargava, executive director of the Center for Community Change, and complained that Bhargava had unfairly criticized him in recent blog posts. The president said the activists should focus their criticism and pressure on Republicans.

The activists did not back down. "Mr. President, it's not just Deepak," said Gustavo Torres, head of the Latino rights group CASA of Maryland, as he recounted to the *Washington Post*. "All of us are very disappointed."[13]

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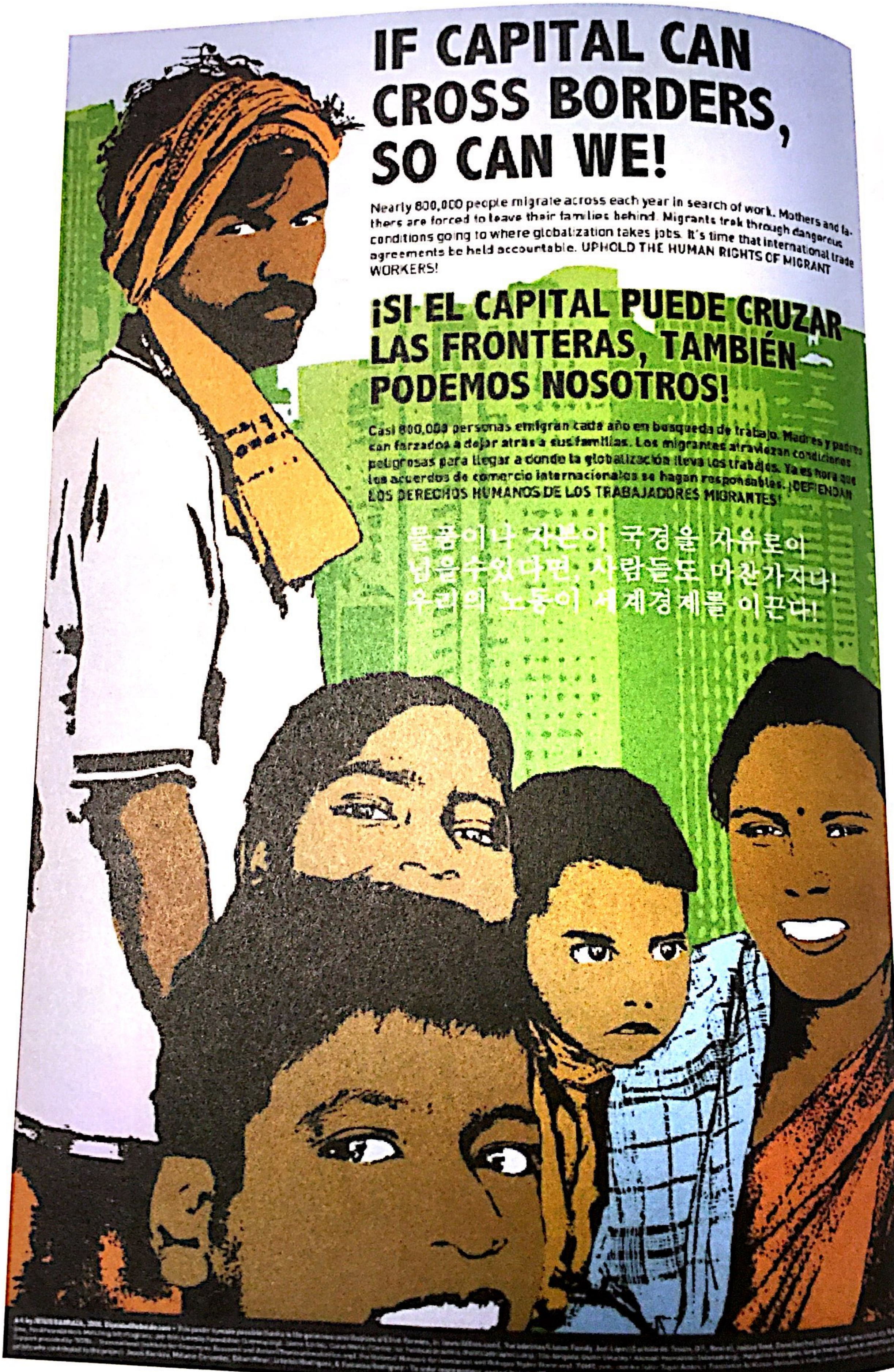
DEPORTING AND DETAINING PARENTS SHATTERS FAMILIES. Meredith Stern, Providence, Rhode Island, 2013
According to the Applied Research Center study *Shattered Families: The Perilous Intersection of Immigration Enforcement and the Child Welfare System*, in 2011 the United States deported a record 397,000 people and detained nearly that many. This is the first national investigation on threats to families when immigration enforcement and the child welfare system intersect. It finds that "in areas of high immigration enforcement, children of non-citizens are more likely to be separated from their parents and face barriers to reunification; and immigrant victims of domestic violence and other forms of gender-basec violence are at particular risk o losing their children." Meredit Stern's print is a collaboratio with *Colorlines* and is part the Migration Now Portfoli which seeks to put an end the prison detention syste and the abuse of immigran



IF CAPITAL CAN CROSS BORDERS. Jesús Barraza, Dignidad Rebelde, Berkeley, California, 2008
Jesús Barraza's print calls for a human rights approach to migration that challenges capitalists. Multinational corporations and their "capital" freely cross borders. Through international government agreements, the U.S. government imposes economic policies, trade agreements, and military interventions to enforce these policies. Migration is the result of more than a century of U.S. imperialism in Latin America. If capital can cross borders, so too should people.

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The activists itemized their grievances. "There have been record deportations unlike anything that we've ever seen before. There's more collaboration between police and immigration all over the nation than there's ever been," Rodriguez recalls them saying. They demanded that Obama take executive action to stop the deportations and enact comprehensive immigration reform.

"The only way change was accomplished in [Obama's] first term was through outside agitation, including pushing the administration pretty heavily," observes Bhargava. He contrasts the progress made by immigrant rights advocates with "how organized labor or environmentalists did in the first term. They tended to play within the rules of politics as generally run in Washington. . . . They didn't get very much for it."

The Trail of DREAMs was an expression of hope that powerful and time-tested forms of action—personal storytelling, directly confronting power, freedom marches—could move citizens and leaders to change. It was also an expression of outrage that after years of polite lobbying, conditions for undocumented citizens had markedly deteriorated.

In September 2010, the DREAM Act and repeal of the anti-gay military policy "don't ask, don't tell" failed to pass in the U.S. Senate—four votes shy of the sixty needed to break a Republican-led filibuster. More than 250 DREAMers from across the country left the Senate gallery in tears that day. They all went back to a church and recommitted to the movement. Young activists across the country vowed to pursue a new strategy: pressuring Obama to enact key provisions of the act by executive action.

Meanwhile, DREAMers elsewhere were finding success. In 2011, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law the California DREAM Act, giving up to 25,000 undocumented students in California access to private scholarships and financial aid.

The presidential election of 2012 offered a new opportunity to apply pressure. In April 2012, Gaby Pacheco received a surprising invitation. U.S. senator Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican and Tea Party favorite, wanted her help drafting a bill that would offer legal status to some undocumented children.

After meeting with Rubio, Pacheco reached out to the White House. Within hours, Pacheco and other United We Dream activists were on a call with White House aides, who did not want Republicans to score points on the immigration issue at Obama's expense.

Pacheco used her leverage. "We're not married to the Democratic or Republican parties," Pacheco told the *Washington Post*, echoing activists like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "We're going to push what's best for the community."[14]

Meanwhile, other DREAMers were ratcheting up their direct-action protests. In June 2012, undocumented students launched a campaign of sit-ins and hunger strikes at Obama campaign offices in more than a dozen cities.

The DREAMers had the president's attention. On June 15, 2012, President Obama ordered his administration to stop deporting undocumented citizens who would be eligible for the DREAM Act. In the first two years of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, as the initiative was known, 673,000 undocumented people applied, and 553,000 applications were accepted.

With the threat of deportation lifted for two years, DACA beneficiaries took swift advantage: since getting DACA status, nearly 60 percent reported getting a new job and obtaining a driver's license, and nearly half opened a bank account and increased their earnings. Many enrolled in college. The newly "DACAmented" went from living in fear to legally supporting themselves and their families.

When Gaby Pacheco learned of Obama's announcement to stop deportations and start DACA, she realized that she had helped to change the culture. "My first immediate reaction was just a huge sense of pride and accomplishment. I could finally, like, breathe."

In November 2014, President Obama conceded to a key demand of immigration rights activists when he declared that he would use executive action to extend legal status to some five million undocumented immigrants. Included in this is an expansion of the original DACA program, removing the original age limits and making about 1.5 million people eligible for the program.

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ACTIONS AND STORIES CREATE SPACE FOR THE LARGER BATTLES

DREAMers from across the country have profoundly changed the national discourse and influenced organizing tactics around immigration—catapulting an issue forward using particularly well the key strategies of telling their stories and disrupting power. Deepak Bhargava says that the DREAMers have "really reaffirmed the power of personal story and transformation. I think it has to have an impact on public conscience and dialogue and politics. It's affirmed the importance of direct action, which has been very important."

DREAMers have changed the conversation, Bhargava says. "They really focused on this kind of model that I think is part of all movements in a sense, coming out of 'undocumented, unafraid' . . . . It's the kind of individual transformation moving into the public sphere that requires an enormous act of courage. That was a big part of why they broke through."

Storytelling combined with direct action transforms people into activists. Or, as Juan Rodriguez says, it "radicalized me."

The work of the DREAMers continues. The goals of the immigrant rights movement have yet to be realized. For some, the goal is comprehensive immigration reform that offers a path to citizenship for the eleven million undocumented people in the United States. For others, the goal is more transformative: breaking down nationalism, borders, and the idea of citizenship itself. By the power of their actions and their stories, the DREAMers have created space for the larger battles—over immigration and other social and economic struggles—to be waged and won.

"The immigrant rights movement is a lever that will transform the rest of American politics and culture for generations, much like the civil rights movement was a movement that wasn't just about African Americans, it had deep ramifications for politics and culture and power," argues Bhargava. "Today the immigrant movement has that kind of potential to start a workers' movement to really change politics in the country. The possibility for a real workers'/poverty/economic justice movement—I can see the possibilities and I think the country's ready for it. That makes me hopeful."

Juan González echoes Bhargava's comments: "The beleaguered and crippled American trade union movement must be transformed into the main power center for immigrant workers . . . . Latin American immigrants can play a leading role, because many of them developed a more combative trade union spirit in their home countries, because many are accustomed to multiparty political systems back home, and because many grasp the importance of Spanish-language and other alternative media in spreading news and information to millions of 'forgotten' people. . . . The rise of a radical, democratic, and socialist alternative is indeed possible . . . and those immigrant workers will point the way."[15]

Gaby Pacheco understands this fight is not optional. "We are fighting for the ability to be full-fledged human beings in the only country we have known as home," she declares. "When we fight for the DREAM Act, we are fighting for our lives. And when you're fighting for your life, you don't stop until you win."

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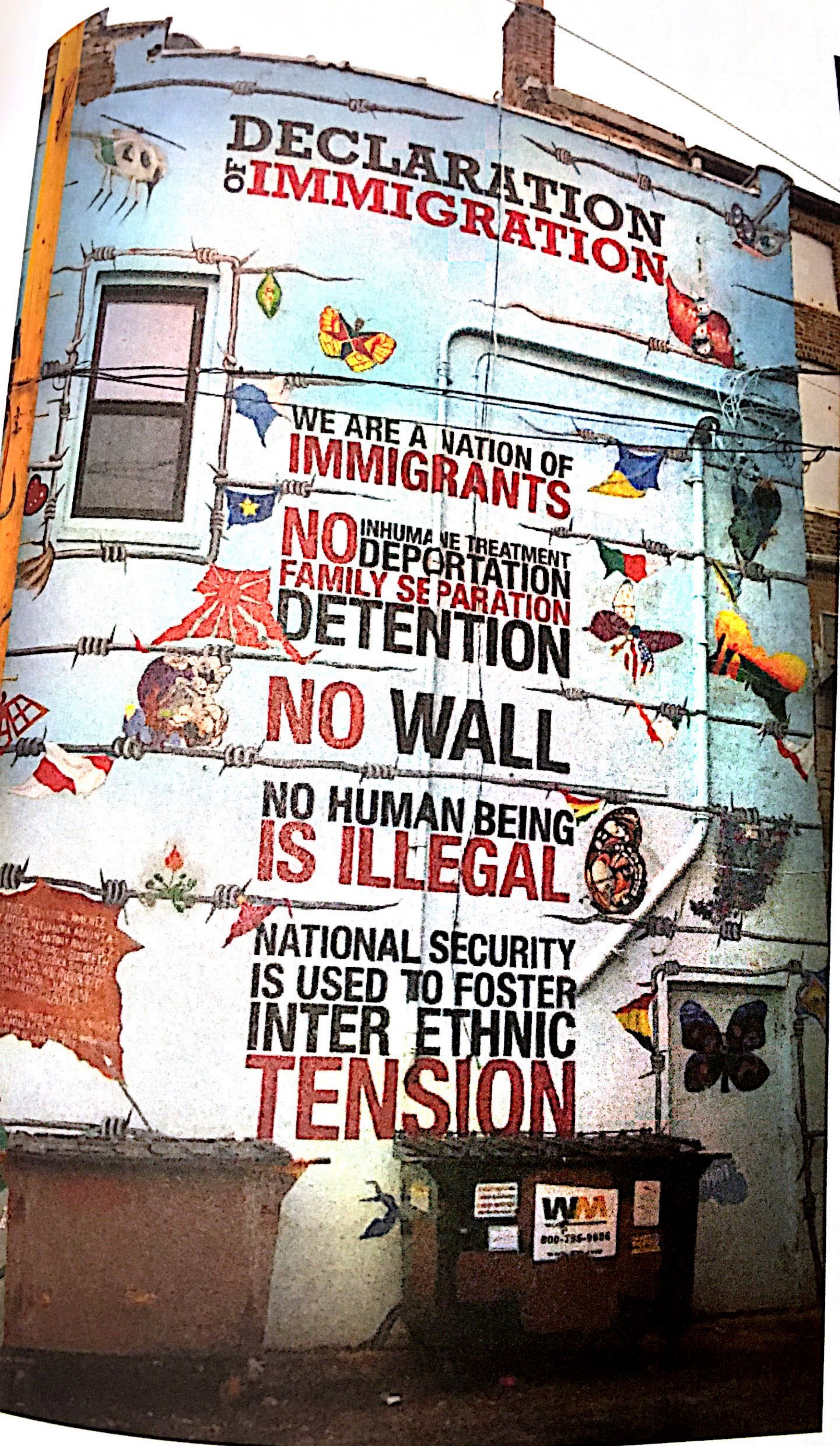

DECLARATION OF IMMIGRATION. Salvador Jiménez, in collaboration with Yollocalli Arts Reach and Radio Arte, Chicago, 2009 (Photographer unknown) Located in the city's largely Latino Pilsen neighborhood, this two-story-high, thirty-foot-wide mural is dedicated to all the activists who have advocated for immigrants' rights. It asserts that America is a nation of immigrants, that no human being is illegal, and that we should tear down all borders. Salvador Jiménez led the youth mural art crew in a special partnership with the National Museum of Mexican Art. In an act that generated much attention, the mural was vandalized with a racist slur before it was completed. After it was repaired, the mural went on to become the backdrop for many important immigration rallies in Chicago since 2010.

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ARTIST INTERVIEW

FAVIANNA **RODRIGUEZ**

Photo by ZS Grant

CULTURAL ORGANIZER, ARTIVIST, PRINT-MAKER, AND THE FOUNDER OF PRESENTE .ORG, FAVIANNA RODRIGUEZ CREATES PRINTS THAT ADDRESS ISSUES RANGING FROM WAR AND GLOBALIZATION TO WOMEN'S RIGHTS. HER CURRENT PROJECT, THE PUSSY POWER IMAGINARY, SEEKS TO REDEFINE THE PUSSY AS A SOURCE OF EMPOWERMENT, DEEPENING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN AND THEIR OWN BODIES. FAVIANNA IS ALSO THE DIRECTOR OF CULTURESTRIKE, A GRASSROOTS COLLECTIVE OF ARTISTS.

I've been an artist and an activist since 1999. What I do is I look at the role artists in culture play in transforming our lives, whether it's by presenting visionary stories of what our society can look like or challenging stereotypes or bias, or whether it's making an emotional connection to a viewer and therefore humanizing who we are as people living in the margins. I make art with that purpose.

What is the role of art/cultural work and its transformative power in twenty-first-century political movements?

Art can combat the lack of multidimensional stories and content in culture as a result of racism and sexism, whether it's women portrayed in very narrow, hypersexualized ways, or the fact that you rarely see Latinos on television or in film, and what you do see of young black men or Latinos is extremely inaccurate. That creates something called "unconscious bias." You see it with anti-immigration sentiment. When you begin to perpetuate that, it creates a culture of hate, a culture of bias, and a culture of dehumanization.

Culture is what surrounds us every single day. What you're listening to or you're engaging with in the visual landscape, what you are reading, where you go to eat—all of that is a cultural choice. You're surrounded with messages. If there is not content and messages that humanize us, then the core issue of us being portrayed in inhumane and one-dimensional ways ends up creating bad policy. Because then people don't value the lives of young black men. Or they think it's okay to warehouse immigrants because they see them as second-class people.

So the role of art is to counter this, because art can show multidimensional stories. When you show people in their complex truth, you make them human. Because we live in a culture of white supremacy, those that are seen as whole humans are white folks. You see white characters everywhere you turn. It's no wonder that whiteness is the norm. So art and culture can combat that.

The way you build that compassion is through storytelling. When you have an increasingly privatized infrastructure that's cutting our stories out, plus you have the proliferation of the right wing telling us everything from how to have

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... to ... [illegible] ...ounter narratives. Not just counter communication strat... [illegible] people's hearts. That to me is the most important role of culture—that it creates a space. We humanize the issue in order to have the ability for policy to win.

How do you measure success in your cultural and artistic work, and how does that relate to the expectations of organizations and/or movements?

The way that movements are measuring success needs rethinking: we look at short-term engagement and we look at things like voting and how many people attend a rally, or how many people read an op-ed or whether or not Senator XYZ changes his mind. Instead, the metrics that I look at in terms of culture are outcomes. For example, by me creating a pussy power piece, or a piece about a butterfly, what kinds of conversations am I creating? What kind of ways are people taking this symbolism and adopting it, reusing it, remixing it, and putting it out there?

I don't look at metrics in the quantitative way because culture is very hard to quantify. I more look at: is there a change in the way that people are thinking? Are they reapproaching the problem with a more creative set of solutions? Are they connecting more with the story? Is one cultural output creating more cultural output?

I look at the way people feel. How does this experience transform the audience member? Is there a way that the organization we're working with is also transformed? Do they realize that by working with artists, they're much more effectively reaching their audience?

DECOLONIZE! PUSSY POWER!

FAVIANNA RODRIGUEZ. Photo courtesy of the artist