

Painting Truth to Power in San Francisco

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Figure 1 67 Sueños Mural (67 Dreams) mural on wall of San Francisco Quaker Meeting.

There is a powerful witness to community and the struggle for migrant justice in the form of a massive mural in San Francisco. The 100 foot wide by 30 foot tall mural illustrates that undocumented youth all have dreams and that no human being is illegal.

The project is the culmination of a year's work with a core group of seven undocumented Oakland high school youth, brought together and mentored by the American Friends Service Committee's youth organizer Pablo Paredes. The "67 Sueños" collective produced the mural's unique vision and narrative in the course of becoming true leaders in the immigration-rights struggle.

"They have led marches, organized walkouts, met with legislators, and held community events to galvanize public attention to the largely neglected realities facing 67 percent of undocumented youth who are being left out of the immigration debate," Pablo says.

The project grew from the fact that the voices of undocumented youth were being left out by the media, legislators and even immigrant-rights leaders advocating for passage of the DREAM Act. The act would have created a path to citizenship for undocumented youth who go to college or enter the military.

But the Migrant Policy Institute estimates that 67 percent of the estimated 2.1 million undocumented youth would not be able to benefit from the act. Furthermore, media narratives present only two visions of them, either as criminals or valedictorians.

"Between these two extremes I saw every day in the Oakland public schools, where I work, human beings who weren't being talked about at all, whose future was missing

from the debate. So we organized them to tell their stories," Pablo says.

The group holds monthly encounters or "Encuentros" with undocumented youth from across the Bay Area. The focus is to build solidarity, and to record their testimonies/stories to build awareness of the issues they face, to share their stories with peers and to help heal the traumas they endure daily.

The collaborative process resulted in the mural concept, and supported by volunteers, community residents and AFSC staff. Space for the mural was donated by the San Francisco Friends Meeting. The piece was rendered by Oakland-based Community Rejuvenation Project's muralist Pancho Pescador, volunteers and local residents.

Source: <http://afsc.org/story/painting-truth-power-san-francisco>