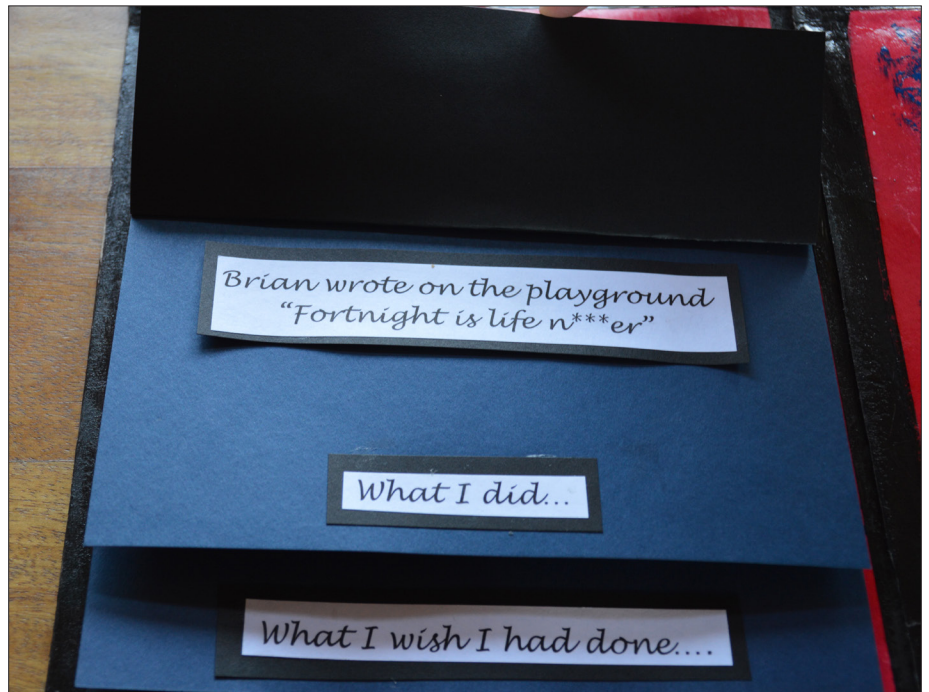
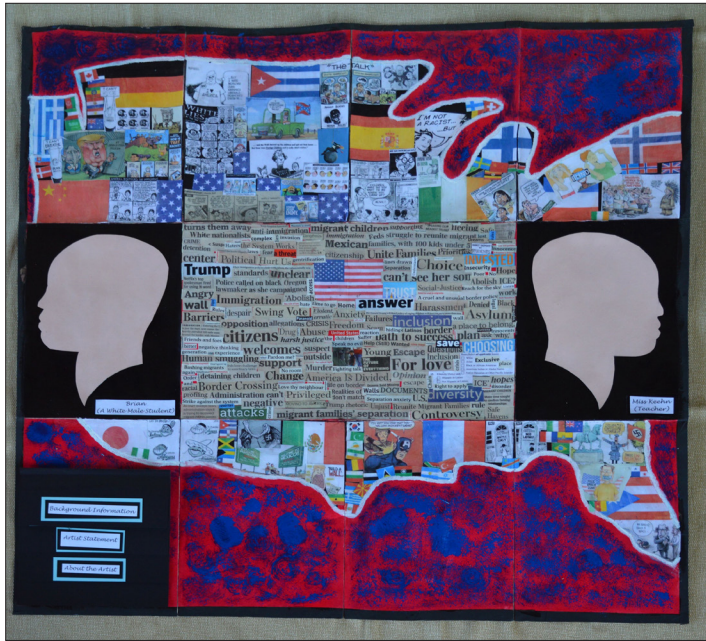


THE AMERICAN PROFILE

*Interactive Map by Holly Keehn
5th Grade*



HOLLY KEEHN ARTIST STATEMENT

I am a new teacher. When I was a student, I volunteered for a number of years at an elementary school where a majority of the students were from families that were living below the poverty line. When I received my student teaching assignment (as part of my graduate work) I felt the transition to the new school would be relatively easy because these students were from a background similar to mine. In my student teaching school roughly 88% of the students were classified as white. However, as I soon realized, the composition of the school did not result in the elimination of racial and class tensions. In fact, it was a wake-up call that I suspect is all too prevalent for young teachers.

What I have depicted in my collage reflects the complexities associated with the elements of institutional racism in a classroom. In the case of my class, while discussing a historical event, it became obvious that there were deep seeded elements of bias and they were openly expressed by a few students. In the discussions that ensued there was a contention on the part of a few students that all immigrants, including DACA students, should leave the country. This was a bit disappointing because elements of what we had just been reading had highlighted that the fabric of our country was based on the labor and industry of immigrants.

I thought it was important to try to engender a sense of empathy with fellow students but found the discussions difficult despite the fact that the majority of students clearly related to young students who, through no fault of their own, found themselves in this country as "illegal's". What I realized is that I did not maneuver sufficiently well to remain in tune with those students in my class who were, in fact, the targets of this and other more overt actions by a few.

The wall of words and the profiles that are reflected in my collage depict the chasm that some feel as they move forward in what is, for them, a very uncertain future. The reflections also mirror the missed opportunities that I had to help those students who were targets of the racially motivated slurs and symbols depicted in the collage. The outline of the US is filled with flags from many of the countries from which people emigrated to this country. It graphically portrays a melting pot of cultures that are an integral part of our country. That portrayal should lead one to the conclusion that the elements of these different cultures would find a welcoming home in this country.

The lack of inclusion is represented by the racist comics mixed within the flags. The silhouette of the black student portrays his feeling of exclusion and my/our inability to recognize that in dealing with the overt elements of racism portrayed the collateral damage is often telling.

