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Oral Presentation Abstract

We created our work as a reflection upon our participation in the Park Scholar senior service-learning trip in January 2017 to Tucson, Arizona. Our experience in Tucson focused on borders, migration, indigenous rights, and resources for refugees, all of which are central to the local community. We have created two pieces for two different audiences with the same goal: to address misconceptions about the language we used for migration. Everywhere we went, people emphasized to us that migrant, refugee, and immigrant could all have different meanings, and that terms such as “illegal” or “alien” served as a dehumanizing force.

Our first piece is an illustrated children’s book called “Aliens Don’t Exist.” This book explores the different terms people use for different people in states of immigration: refugee, migrant, immigrant, etc. It also explains in children’s parlance how some terms, specifically “alien,” can be dehumanizing and disrespectful by using repeated imagery of an outer-space cartoon alien.

After presenting the book at Whalen, we also plan to present it at Beverly J. Martin Elementary School, a designated human rights school in downtown Ithaca. It is especially appropriate because the fifth graders are currently focusing on immigration as a case study and because of Ithaca’s new status as a sanctuary city. We are applying for a grant from the Park Scholar program to print copies of this book to donate to BJM and the Tompkins County Public Library as well. Two of our members and one sophomore Park Scholar who has illustrating skills have led this project, but everyone has collaborated. We are using various craft supplies, are

doing the final layout with Adobe InDesign, and will use the Ithaca college Print Shop to print the final product.

Our second piece is a PowerPoint presentation for student journalists and professional journalists that also focuses on vocabulary and the appropriate language to use when talking about these often-heated topics. This information is intended to encourage journalist to use clear, respectful and humanizing language when discussing borders and immigration issues.

We have been approved to present this part of the presentation in April 2017 at a Society of Professional Journalists conference following Whalen. Two other senior scholars are leading this presentation, and they are using primarily Internet resources as well as Keynote and Photoshop, as well as reflecting on notes they took in Tucson and interviews conducted then.

Both of our pieces have real tangible outcomes. Their specific audiences — professional journalists and young children — allow for a diversity in communication that we believe will make our work accessible to most individuals. Our work is interwoven with larger ideas that are relevant in the Tompkins County community, the Tucson community, and the global community at large. The goal of our work is to inform people in a way that will allow them to be more informed citizens and eliminate elements of racism and xenophobia from their daily interactions.

Works Cited

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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "US Resettlement Facts." *UNHCR*. United Nations, 2017. Web. 01 Mar. 2017.