

# HOME?

Teen Refugees  
and Immigrants  
Explore Their  
Tucson



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## Teen Refugees and Immigrants Explore Their Tucson

### About the Exhibit:

Young people who have moved to a new country for political, social, or economic reasons come with a unique awareness and sensitivity to place. The refugee and immigrant youth of Catalina Magnet High School see and feel Tucson in ways which only they can, given their past lives and their future dreams.

This semester I decided to have the refugee and immigrant students in my three ESL (English as a Second Language) classes explore their unique experiences in Tucson through words and images. Josh Schachter, the guest photographer on this project, and I worked with forty-six students from Afghanistan, Ghana, Honduras, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mexico, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan to develop their writing skills, their understanding of the language of photography, and their ability to critically analyze their own and each other's images and words.

The power and synergy of writing and photography were critical to the success of this project. There is much talk about the arts in our schools, and unfortunately they are often sacrificed for what is referred to as "back to basics." This is tragic given that most language development comes through the process of finding an authentic connection and purpose for learning, of finding a way to read, write, and speak about what matters to you. For many students, taking photographs of their lives helped them to explore and determine what matters most to them. For others, photography provided a motivation to revise and develop their writing so that it more accurately reflected the reality they had captured photographically.

The process of working collaboratively on this project has been one full of learning, on many levels. Josh and I were given an opportunity to question our own positions and roles as Tucson residents and educators in working with refugee and immigrant youth. The youth challenged our assumptions and ways of seeing and interpreting Tucson and the world. We learned about the countries and cultures the students came from, as well as their dreams and aspirations. The students were very generous in welcoming us into their worlds and through this process we began to understand their challenges and triumphs as well as what work yet needs to be done to meet the needs of our wonderful multilingual and multicultural Tucson youth.

We welcome you to become involved by viewing this exhibit on a personal level. Consider your role in the community and your interactions with our youth. Connect with the stories and let empathy guide your words and actions after viewing this exhibit. Share what you find and learn with others and invite them to experience these powerful youth stories. Let this be a step in coming together as a true Tucson community, a plea that resonates through many of the images and words on display.

- Julie Kasper, Teacher, Catalina Magnet High School



## *Photo and writing by Aminata Sawyer*

War, burning of people and houses –  
all of the catastrophe that my family and I went through during ten years of war –  
Remembered.

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### *Excerpt from a poem:*

Raping of women and children  
Taking the babies from their mothers' womb  
I imagine when the rebel wanted to shoot at me  
Suddenly I was saved by a boy, Allieu,  
Who was shot in his foot  
At this time it is like you hold your own life in your hands  
Seeing your own death hunting you  
Sometimes I prayed "O God take my life"  
Let me rest instead of living in this unjust world,  
The poor know no peace in life  
Because of the rich ones...

But I'm glad  
Light has shined upon me being in the U.S.  
The mercy of God I have received  
I am praying that one day I will go back and help the needy ones

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Aminata Christiana Sawyer. I am from Liberia and I was raised in Sierra Leone. I moved to Tucson on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005. I moved here because of the war that was going on in my country for the past 10-15 years. I am here to get a very good education and be an important person in my country when I go back and help the poor people. I feel very proud of myself in working on this project.





## *Photo and writing by Bob Odu*

Just cross one street and you're on the wealthy side.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

Here in my neighborhood there is one street that divides rich from poor. It is right next to Tucson Convention Center (T.C.C.). I don't know the name of the street, but when you visit my neighborhood you will see what I mean. When you take just one turn, you will see the rich view: tall buildings, trees, and all that. On the other hand, when you look on the other side of the street, it is a very different ghetto street. All of the streets have cracks and potholes in them. There is much broken glass on the sidewalk. What I'm trying to say is that people in my neighborhood are not into school or jobs, but are criminal minded because of what they are going through. They are addicted to alcohol and drugs and are leading a negative life. They think if they drink or take drugs, it will take all the pain away, but they don't know that they are digging into a strange life. Once you get into it, it is hard to get out of it without losing something. The street that divides the good looking view from the ghetto looking view is trying to send a message to people who make the wrong decision: think before taking any step. If you want be successful in life, it is not by taking drugs or drinking, but by completing the process of education.

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### *About the artist:*



Hi, this is Bob Odu. My home country is in Africa; it is called Sudan and it is the largest country in Africa. My family and I moved from our homeland to the United States in 2003. We landed in Tucson, AZ because we have family here in Tucson, more than in any other state. We felt like we need to stay together as a family for a better life. My goal is to stay successful in my learning development so I can go back to my homeland and help these who need support to exist in this world.





## *Photo and writing by Melissa Torres*

The virgin helps every body with problems and she does miracles.  
Everybody in Mexico loves her.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

What I love the most about my Mexican culture is the Mexican food and the traditional mariachi. I love when my abuelita makes delicious tortillas and the tamales. Even though I am here in the United States, I still remember my culture because my mom cooks delicious Mexican food and we have our Mexican spirit in our hearts. My mom always tells me that even though we are not over there, we still are going to remember our culture in our hearts.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Melissa Torres, and I was raised in Sinaloa for 6 years. I was really happy because I wanted to come and know what the United States looks like. My parents told me that we were going to come to live here because they wanted a better future for my brother and I. At the same time, they needed a better job because in Sinaloa they didn't pay enough money and we needed more money to improve the house with food and things that we needed to fix. My goals when I came to live in the United States were to learn how to speak English and focus on studying in school because it's a privilege to live in the United States and to know how to speak another language. I am working hard to accomplish my goals.





## *Photos and writing by Eliseo Egurrola*

These images represent my culture:  
my dad watering the alfalfa on his farm in the town of La Mesa, Sonora  
my Mexican culture here in Tucson  
a puma in my house in Mexico, which my dad killed on his ranch

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

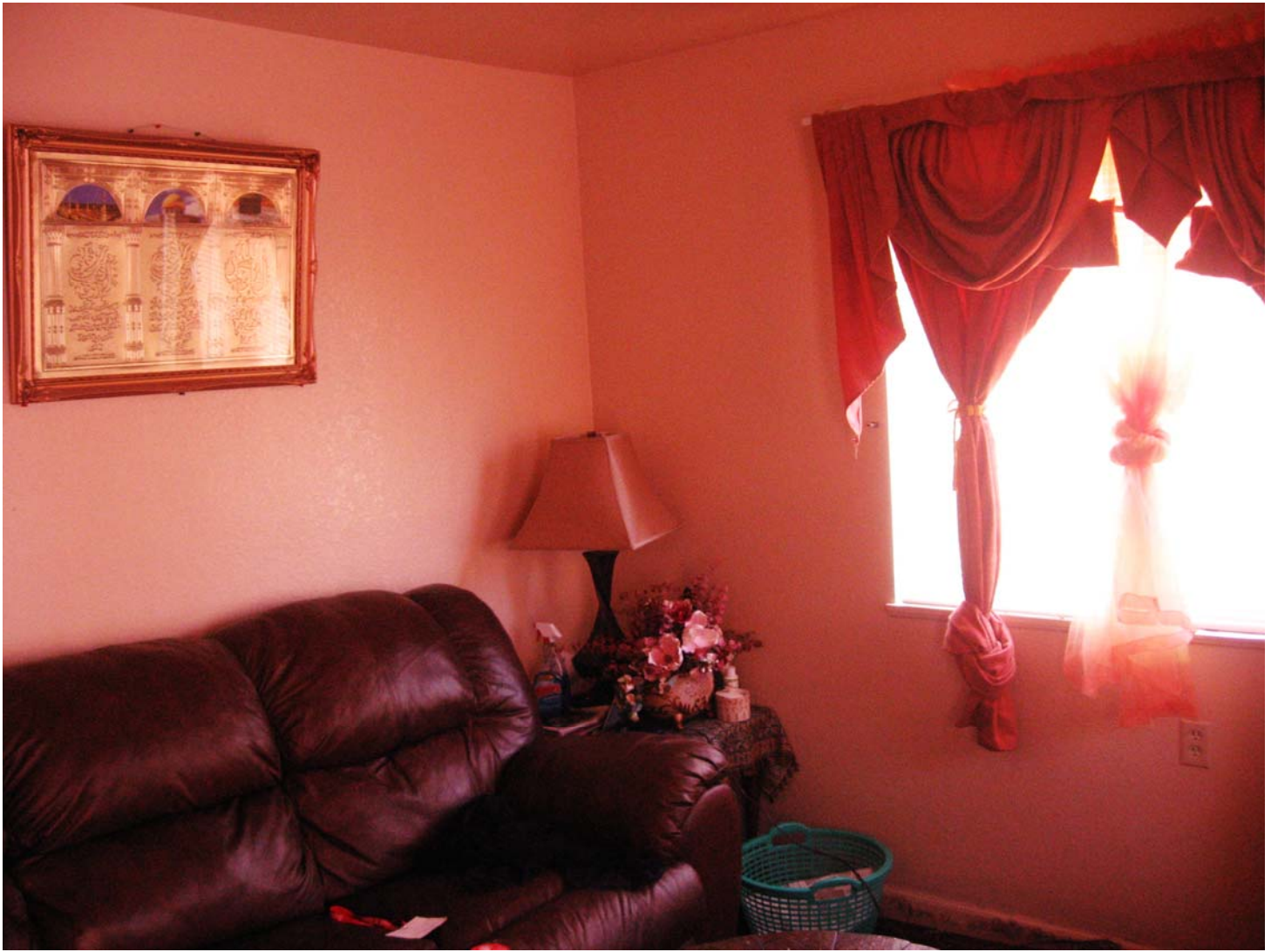
I've written this letter to you so that you can see how my neighborhood is in the United States. Here in my neighborhood there is lots of Mexican culture; of course there isn't as much as in Mexico. One thing that is happening in the United States is that Mexican culture is becoming dominant. I do think that Mexican culture is dominant in the US because in my neighborhood there are a lot of people that have Mexican culture in their houses. Also, there are many immigrants coming to the US, and there are Mexican people having kids.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Eliseo Egurrola. My home country is Mexico. I moved to Tucson when I was in third grade on August 20, 2001. We moved to Tucson because my mom wanted a better education for my sister and I. The difference between my old neighborhood and my new one is that in Mexico the streets are just dirt and everyone knew each other and here in my neighborhood of Tucson all the streets are not dirt streets. Doing this project, I felt kind of happy because I could express my feelings about my neighborhood.





## *Photo and writing by Adnan Nabi*

Fragments of my religion and my culture rest in my home.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to his uncle:*

When I first moved here I felt kind of sad and bored, because I didn't know any body. Then, after a month, I met some cool new people...

We do a lot of things in summer or when the school is off. We go swimming a lot in the summer. We play football every Sunday in the morning because it will be hot if we play in the afternoon. From Monday to Thursday, we go to the gym and do weightlifting. Also, sometimes I take some computer classes in the college with my friends.

You'll like meeting my friends and also seeing that there is a lot of Afghan culture in my house. When I come into my house, the first thing I see is the Mecca picture. It's in front of our door. The smell of lamb that my mother cooks also hits me as I enter the house. There is a picture with the Quran writing on the wall. Also, when I am talking to my Afghan friends, it does remind me a lot of my culture. These are all things that remind me of my culture.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Adnan Nabi; I am from Afghanistan. I moved with my family to Tucson four years ago. The reason that I am in Tucson is because in my home country there was war. My goal is to work with the FBI agency in the future. I feel good working on this project because I read about my other friends' neighborhoods. Also I learned a lot of things about different people's neighborhoods.



## *Photo and writing by Mighty Tolwi*

“I hear a mother saying to the father that babies need food...get a job.”

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

Hey dude, in my neighborhood it is like people don't have jobs. You can't hear the sound of the engine in the morning dude and in my hood, you will see only one car come out of its parking space. Dude, does the ocean still splash on your face in the morning to make you awake and make you go to work?

In our old hood, you could hear the sound of the engine starting and see the wife give her husband lunch. Sometimes, in my new hood, I can hear some of the neighbors talking about money and getting a job. I hear a mother saying to the father that babies need food and you need to get a job.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Mighty Tolwi and my home country is Marshall Islands. I moved to Tucson about two and half years ago, to look for education. Also, we wanted to get my family here. My old neighborhood was fun and the new one is so stressful and boring.





## *Photo and writing by Daninza Bautista*

Alvaro, the boy in my photo, represents the endless boredom I feel.

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### *Excerpt from a poem:*

The lonely neighborhood, the place  
With barren streets, with bored kids  
And the sadness inside our veins. The  
Yelling of a manager, the crying of a kid,  
Which always is afraid of losing his  
Grin.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Daninza Bautista. My home town is Nacozari, Sonora, Mexico. I moved to Tucson 5 years ago. My reasons for coming here are for a better future, to get an awesome education, and to become the person that I always wished. My goals are to learn English and have lots of new friends. I feel very proud of this project because it made me focus on other neighbors and because I learned many different things. For example, I learned how to compare two things or more using my brain and hard work.



## *Photo and writing by Joddy Borrego*

This to picture shows darkness, loneliness, segregation, and sadness.

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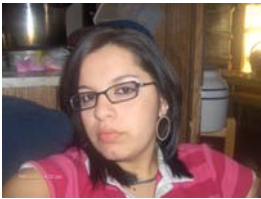
### *Excerpt from a letter to her older self:*

The people from this neighborhood are so separated; what I am saying with this is that people think that just because they are from a certain culture, they are better. But what they don't know is that if we are not together, we might not have the beautiful neighborhood that everybody wishes to be in. The little kids come out and play once in a while; there aren't a lot of teenagers in this neighborhood. People are just segregated from each other. It looks like a dark and lonely place.

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### *About the artist:*

My name is Joddy Borrego. My home country is Sinaloa, Mexico. I moved to Tucson because my goals were to have a good education, to learn many different languages, and to be with my family. The major difference between Mexico and Tucson is that in Tucson there is more security than in Mexico. The way I felt doing this project was excited. Everyday I was encouraged to wake up thinking of school and then the project popped to my mind. I made room to take pictures after getting home from school.









## *Photos and writing by Joseph Thal*

These pictures show me some of the images my father used to tell me about when I was little. He said that things like this happened to him in Sudan. The war started between the North and South and people are dying, kids don't have anything to eat, and there is no peace. The government and the people are not one. I am hoping for our country to go back like it was before the beginning of the war.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

I still remember our old apartment. I see it in my mind like I lived in a jail, a dangerous railroad, a wrong place to live. My family lived in an apartment like that because there wasn't any other place and nowhere to live in America without paying a lot of bills. Everyday, in our mind, we were concerned about what was going to happen the next day. We worried about the terrible people in the coming day or the coming week. We worried about people who were unfriendly to us with every move; my brother and sisters got into fights at school or inside our apartment.

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### *About the artist:*



I am Joseph, and I am from Sudan – a state called Aweil in Southern Sudan. During the first year we came to United States, our parents looked for a job, but they didn't find any job because they didn't understand English. Suddenly, in 2005, my mother found her best friend she had known for a long time. My mother's best friend told her that Tucson was better than Phoenix because Tucson has a lot of jobs; also people don't care about if you are speaking English. She set an example to make my mom leave Phoenix. My old neighborhood was very unfriendly to us and my new neighborhood is much nicer than my old one.



## *Photos and writing by Daniela Romero*

There is nobody to play with. Since I can't play soccer, I watch it.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend & former neighbor:*

I think I don't see any kids playing because my new neighborhood is very isolated and quiet. It's very rare to see people outside. Every time I go outside of my house nobody is there. I remember when I used to go outside on the streets and the adults were having a conversation while the kids were playing. The majority of the time, they were sharing their problems. I also miss that. I consider that an excellent quality that my old neighborhood has. Everybody knows each other. In here, I don't even know my neighbors. I recognize that sounds funny, but it's true. I have seen them, but I would like to know further details about them. Not knowing each other is a problem. It's important to know each other, because we can support and understand each other. Sometimes the people talk about other people without knowing them. I know that these things happened in our neighborhood, too. However it is not the same thing because at least they know each other.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Daniela Romero. I am from Guanajuato, Mexico. My family and I moved here three years ago. The reasons were that here we wanted to have more opportunities of having a better life. There are a lot of goals that I would like to accomplish and others that I have already started to accomplish. One of them is to learn English. I don't know it perfectly, but I am trying to learn it well. Another goal is to go to school. I am very thankful because I have this opportunity to go school and learn, while others don't have it. Working on this project made me feel free like expressing myself and what I think about my new neighborhood. This project also helped me to get ideas of what can I do to make my neighborhood better.







## *Photos and writing by Sadaf Hakeem*

These images represent my homeland:  
a scarf to cover my sister's hair showing my culture and religion,  
a Tucson street which looks like a street in Afghanistan.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to her grandma:*

I wish I could go back to Pakistan, a place where I believe dreams come true. In that place, there is a small neighborhood that looks like a heaven. I wish I could live with you again in the same neighborhood where there is peace and love for each other. We always used to feel free to ask our neighbors for anything we needed. I can't tell you how much I miss Pakistan: the sweet neighborhood, the neighborhood where my life started and I believe where it will end. Most of all, I miss you. Do you remember grandma when you and me used to go to "Sweet Dish" to eat food? Mmmm! I still remember those foods: biryani, kabab, kofta, palow, and chalow: our favorite foods menu and our favorite restaurant.

In my old neighborhood, all the girls would come to our kitchen to cook food and while cooking they would dance. The cool part was when we used to go to the roof to make fires there so we could cook food. We'd lock the door so the boys wouldn't get in to bother us. Grandma, I still remember in my old neighborhood the little kids would come to our house, saying with their low soft voices: "Can we please come to your house to listen to grannie's stories?" We couldn't say no because they looked so innocent and cute. They would all sit around the fire to listen to stories. Grandma, you would tell such wonderful stories; I still remember them. You would tell stories about princesses and how their family forced them to marry someone that they didn't want. Those stories were sad but you would also tell us funny stories and scary as well.

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### *About the artist:*



Hi! My name is Sadaf Hakeem. I am from Afghanistan; I grew up in Pakistan, and now I am living in the United States of America. It was hard living in Pakistan because it was not our home country. We moved there because of the war going on in Afghanistan. My parents had a happy life in Afghanistan. My mom used to work in an office. She had a good salary. My dad was an engineer in Afghanistan. Then the Taliban came into Afghanistan and our lives became miserable. They bombed our house, killed our dog, and killed many people. So, we ran away from Afghanistan. Eventually, we came to the USA. After five years, I am a sophomore at Catalina Magnet High School. I love my school. It's special to me because there are many cultures. I think this project is a great way of getting to know your own neighborhood.



## *Photo and writing by Elizabeth Berber*

People are waiting for the next day, to see if the neighborhood will change.

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### *Excerpt from a poem:*

It was a very nice neighborhood  
**She was a very nice person**  
Until bad people came to the neighborhood  
Until she met this boy  
I never thought it was going to be like this  
She never thought that he would be like that  
**I was scared to come to the neighborhood**  
She was scared to talk to him  
Because I was in a good neighborhood  
Because she never had a friend  
My mom convinced me  
The boy convinced her  
Ella se dejo llevar por sus palabras  
She was so innocent that she believed him  
Después que los meses pasaron  
I stayed there but I was so scared  
She got hooked on drugs  
I was scared to go out

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Elizabeth Berber. I'm from Michoacán, Mexico. I moved to Tucson because all of my family was here. The other reason that we moved to Tucson is that in Mexico some times it got hard because my dad didn't have too much money and we weren't that happy. Working on this project, made me feel good because sometimes it reminded me of my old neighborhood and that made me feel so good.





## *Photo and writing by Omar Perez*

Just like the water is gone, the fun and family times are gone too.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

Now I am living in Tucson, Arizona. I am living in a small boring neighborhood where we don't do anything interesting. I am living in an apartment that is called Riviera. I don't have many friends because they live so far and if I want to hang with someone I have to use a car because the places are so far. Here, everything is not the same. Here, there are places to hang out but it is too difficult to go because of the distance. Here everybody does the same routine everyday. Adults go to work and there is not time to be together and have fun. Here there are fiestas, but not very often.

Even though sometimes I miss my old neighborhood, I would like to make my new neighborhood look like my old neighborhood. First thing I would do is to bring all my family over, starting with my parents and every body else: cousins and uncles. Having all my family here, it wouldn't be the same boring routine. Everything would be almost like old times because the whole family would be together and that's what I like. I don't like to be alone because it is boring. Bringing all my family would be fun. It would never be boring. We would do many things here like go shopping or go to fun parks. That would be fun but not the same as the old neighborhood. I hope to see you soon to do the things we used to do and also see my parents because I haven't seen them for one year and I miss them a lot.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Omar. I am from Mexico. I came to Tucson for a better life and to try to succeed in something that I want for life, for example a good job. My old neighborhood is completely different from my new neighborhood because of the cultures and the customs. I felt a little bit excited working on this project because we have the chance to let everybody know a little bit about our life style, our customs and the way we live.



## *Photo and writing by Jesus Carrillo*

This picture represents the safety and the danger of my neighborhood.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

There are many ways people can see my neighborhood. Some people see it as a violent place to live; some people see it as safe, like the homeless. To me, it is both of them because some times it is really clean and some times is not so clean. They are two ways to see where you live: one is the interesting and fun way, and the other is the boring and violent. If you see it as a violent place to live, like my neighbor, you are going to be frustrated and hate everything you see that is going wrong in your neighborhood. However, if you are one of those people that like to fix stuff you are going to try to talk to your neighbors and see what you can do to make your neighborhood a better place. I used to have one neighbor like that. He used to get signatures to fix the street and when he got all the signatures he took them to the senator of Sonora.

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### *About the artist:*



Hi. I am Jesus Carrillo, and this is my life, the best one that you can imagine. When I got to Tucson AZ, I was really happy but worried about the language. I would say that my experience in the U.S is great. My family is really helpful when I need it. They give me a lot of support in all of my decisions.





## *Photo and writing by Alejandro Garay*

What I do in the U.S. to make a better future and reach my goals.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

I miss my friends from my old neighborhood. In this place where I live, I don't have friends. I am lonely. I just have friends in school; they are good friends, but I am still missing my old neighborhood. That's why I want to come back there. I hope some day I will be back to Mexico to enjoy time with you and all my relatives. I feel more comfortable knowing that you know something about me.

It is hard to be in a place you don't like, but sometimes you have to make an exception for your future. In my case, I am in the U.S. to have a better education and more opportunities to find a job and be successful in my future. So I hope that I am going the right way for myself, and I hope you receive this letter. Bye.

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### *About the artist:*

My name is Alejandro Garay. I am from Guaymas, Sonora. My family and I came to this country because my father has a job in this country, so his job forces us to live here in Tucson. I am living with them because I want to finish university here in Tucson. I think I will have a better preparation here than Mexico. This neighborhood is more peaceful than my neighborhood in Mexico, because in Mexico all the people used to talk a lot about each other, and here in my recent neighborhood they don't talk much. I like this project because it reminds me of the things that I did in my old neighborhood and that motivates me to finish university here very soon and go back to Mexico again.





## *Photos and writing by Lidia Galvez*

Creeping through the shadows, like a prisoner in the dark.

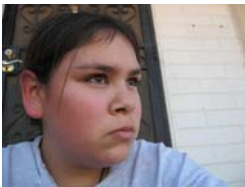
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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

My neighborhood gets creepy; it sometimes gets wild because the people in the hood get crazy and it makes it look like a mess. Sometimes it gets depressed, like me when I have a lot of problems that I can't solve by myself. It looks lonely when no person's there, like me; most of the time I'm lonely and it makes a person feel bad. It hides from view in back of the social neighborhoods, just like me when I have no one to say hi to. My neighborhood hides behind the popular hoods, the social hoods, as I hide in my room.

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### *About the artist:*



Hi my name is Lidia Galvez. I'm 16 years old and I'm bilingual. I was born here in the US, but was raised in the grassy grounds of Mexico, in a little pueblo named Imuris. I don't really remember moving here to Tucson. I was small. I only know that I did first grade here and had to walk alone to the school bus stop. Coming to Tucson was at first exciting, but then got boring and I wanted to go back to Imuris. I liked it because my hood was nice and everything, but I didn't like it because I had to go to a school where all students spoke English. At that time, I didn't know any English. With this project, I'm talking more about my feelings towards my neighborhood; I have only lived in the neighborhood for 3 years.







## *Photo and writing by Jesus Morales*

A peaceful, quiet place where I am always able to relax.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

I just want to tell you that I'm not so bored over here because we actually chose a good neighborhood. Maybe not the best houses, but a really nice neighborhood. Some of the neighbors are Mexicans, and that makes me feel very comfortable. My neighborhood is very clean thanks to the neighbors and the people that are paid to take care of it. They always cut the grass and the paint the houses. That's why people have their houses and yards clean; if they don't do it they get a note telling them what they need to do. If they don't do it they are charged some money in the rent.

I would say this neighborhood is a special neighborhood because I feel very comfortable and because some of my family lives here. At night my neighborhood is really strange. Everything is quiet and then all you hear are the coyotes fighting each other and howling. I think that is because of the river. I remember one time when I was getting out of my house at night I saw one coyote walking by the street and I thought it was a dog, but then it started to howl and that freaked me out.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Jesus Morales. I'm from Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico. I moved here to Tucson about four or five years ago. I moved here to get a better life, and of course to get some money and to have a good education. There are a lot of differences between my old and new neighborhood because of the people, the food and the way of living. I feel good doing this project because I feel like I'm really telling somebody about my neighborhood. It's a good experience for me.



## *Photo and writing by Karla Moreno*

My mom relaxing after a long day at work.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

I feel lonely most of the time because my mom is always working. She is never at home during the day. By the time she gets home, she is all tired and the only thing she wants to do is lie down and relax. She doesn't even like to go out of the house because she says that there's nothing to do outside because my neighbors are very quiet and they don't like to talk to us. Everything is so different here in Tucson. In Veracruz, I was always happy and I never felt alone because I was with all of you guys. And you guys weren't quiet. We used to talk a lot. I would love to be happy again with all of you guys and all of my family. I miss you guys so much. I thought that my neighbors and I we were going to be like a family, but we are not.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Karla Moreno. I'm from Veracruz, Mexico. I moved to the United States in 2003, four years ago. We decided to move to the United States because my parents want me to have a better life and an opportunity to speak more than one language. I felt great working on this project; it was very interesting for me. I am learning all the differences between my old and new neighborhood. By doing this project, I'm learning about every single thing around me.







## *Photo and writing by Jose Cabrera*

This cactus was destroyed by vandals but the light behind it represents hope for life.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

If you go to my neighborhood, you would see both revitalization and deterioration. There are some old houses that are being torn down to make room for the new ones. What is so cool about those houses is that they use solar heated water and they collect the rainwater in some special tanks. There is a new park were before it was all trashed. If you would have gone when the trash was there, you would have been amazed at how much trash was there.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Jose Cabrera. I am from Guadalajara, Mexico. I was born in California, next to Los Angeles. My family and I moved a year and a half after my sister was born. I felt good when I worked on this to show the people how messed up the neighborhoods are from vandalism and how they can be made better.



## *Photos and writing by Mohamed Iman*

My friend's wife and their children eating together inside their apartment.  
These kids are very clever kids because they are using  
the Fry's carts as a basketball court.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

The neighborhood I like the best is the one I live in now in the U.S. It has lights, a kitchen and indoor bathroom that are important for me. The houses in my country, Somalia, have no lights or kitchen inside. My neighbors in Somalia used firewood and charcoal to cook food. Over here in the U.S, we have our own kitchens in the house. We don't have to worry about collecting and buying firewood and charcoal. In Somalia, we used to buy the firewood and the charcoal in order to cook food for our daily survival. We even used to pay for kerosene for the lamp that we used in order to get light for the dark houses.

Another difference between my new neighborhood and my old neighborhood in Somalia was we didn't have basketball courts. In the U.S., we have basketball courts, but where I live it doesn't have one because the kids are not good. If the basketball court was there, they would break all the windows of the apartments. The manager of our apartments decided not to make a basketball court until the problem has been solved. So, the kids use the carts from Fry's as a basketball court in order to play basketball. It was so exciting when I was taking the picture they looked so great making their own basketball court.

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### *About the artist:*



First of all, my name is Mohamed and my last name is Iman. My name is a popular name in my native country. I guess I have a notable birthday too, and that is January 1<sup>st</sup> - the beginning of every New Year. I was born in 1989 in Somalia. I have nine siblings: seven boys and two girls. One of my brothers got married and the others are single. I am the second youngest of my family and I am very proud to be part of my family. We are a lovely and wonderful family







## *Photo and writing by Alejandra Ochoa*

Hanging around, nothing to do.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

In my neighborhood, everything is boring. I don't do anything except being in my room when I'm at home. In my room, I listen to music, look at magazines, watch TV, do my home-work, eat, wash my clothes, dance, sing, help my mom cleaning the house, sometimes take care of my little brother, and talk on the phone. It's boring. I mean I did all those things when I used to live near you, but I had fun. I feel like a prisoner, just in the 4 walls of my room when I'm at home. People don't go outside. I don't think there are many kids or teens on my neighborhood because I have only seen like 3 kids and 4 teens. There is a park near my neighborhood with playground, and enough space where kids can play, but people take their dogs there instead of children and it does not make the park safe for kids. Dogs can get mad and aggressive if someone tries to touch them, or just because there are a lot of dogs around. Without exaggerating, each person takes 2 or more dogs at a time.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Alejandra Ochoa. I'm 14 years old. I was born in Los Angeles, CA, but I was raised in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. The reason why I'm living here in Tucson is because my grandma was living here and we had more than 6 years that we hadn't seen her; so we just decided to come for Christmas vacations. By the time my family and I decided to stay here, we all agreed it was going to be better. We wanted to have a better future, learn more languages, and have a better education with more opportunities. I want to be someone professional. I want to be a model for some years and an international lawyer. I know I really want this. I am never going to give-up on

my dreams.



## *Photos and writing by Steven Jallayu*

My brothers and sisters watching TV when they should be outside playing.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

Neighborhoods with more people, more socialization, and more exciting activities are never boring. A place where children cannot focus or socialize safely is not a safe place for them to live. A neighborhood that is dreary makes children feel that their life is not awesome. Teenagers need to feel free and have fun together. Eventually, your neighborhood should be your territory just as you take your property to be your favorite belonging. To make a neighborhood not dreary, we people should be able to chat with each other...

Right now, I think my neighborhood is the dreariest neighborhood ever. I don't really know about other neighborhoods, but a benevolent teenager like me does not deserve to live in a bad neighborhood. Every time I get out from school, I just do my homework and sleep all day long. I don't usually go outside. All of my friends live very far from me. To my belief, teenagers need to know each other for the next generation. If they don't, the world will not be exactly the way we need it. Children don't actually need to be in isolation or seclusion. That will make them not to be able to speak in public.

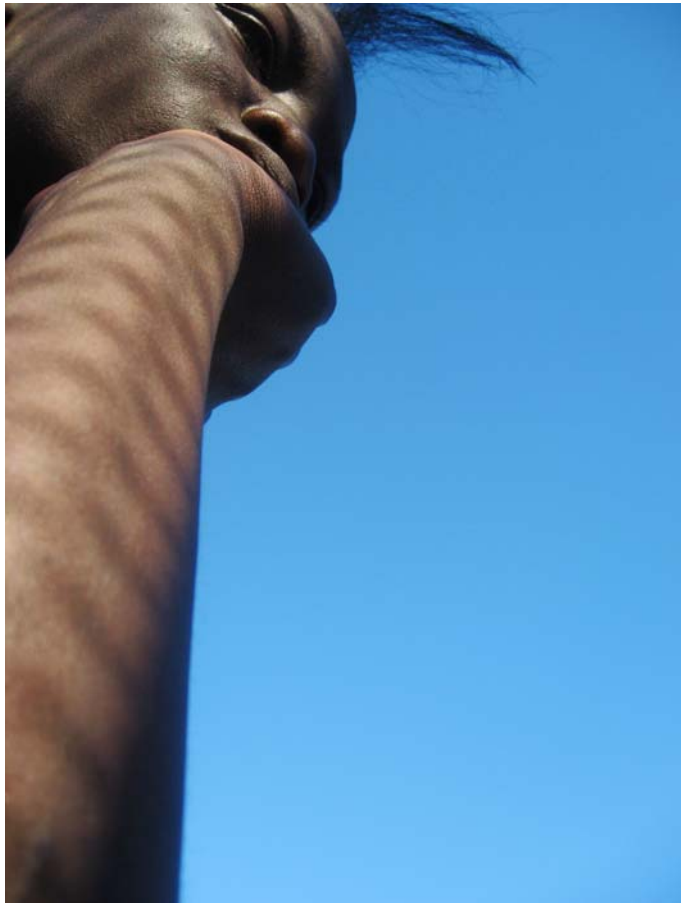
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### *About the artist:*



My name is Steven Y. Jallayu and I was born in Liberia but grew up in Ivory Coast. I consider Liberia and Ivory Coast as my lovely homeland. I am an assiduous student. I didn't have education for a very long time because of the civil war in my country. My parents really inspire my brothers, sisters and I to go to school because they think education is the key to our future.





## *Photos and writing by Aman Thal*

Crazy hair – crazy life.  
Wild for the fun of it; living a life of imagination and fun.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to her younger self:*

When you were a child, you said that everything would be fun and different. You used to think that everything would be easy to do. You thought that you wouldn't have to work as hard to get money. And if you were to see the airplane, it would be so big that you would have to climb a building to see it.

Our old neighborhood was fun, but it was the type of fun that you have to be there to believe that it was fun. I miss my neighborhood - how we used to have that small room that my dad made for us to play in, how we would get dared to build African toys. See, we didn't need any toys for the day to be fun; we only needed our imagination to have fun.

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### *About the artist:*



I am Amani. I have lived here for 5 years. My home country is Sudan. I lived there until I was between seven and ten. When my family had to come to America, they first had to go to Egypt. Then, we came here. I remember that my country had a lot of diseased kids and adults were getting sick. My dad thought that we should come here to get education that way we could go back and help our families. My goal is to practice my English and make better of my self, do something that no child in my country has done. I remember my dad had made this little room just for us kids. We had fun; my big sister used to make dolls out of sticks. We didn't really want money, just imagination. I think this project has helped me understand how I feel about my new neighborhood and life.





## *Photo and writing by Kathya Castro*

Should a teenager work this hard and sacrifice her “carefree” teenage years?

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

Everything has a special meaning to me and my neighborhood means my life. In my neighborhood, I study and work at the same time. To me, it is very hard to succeed in both places, but both are very important to me because I think these will help me in my future to know how to be an adult.

I feel bad because everything is changing. When I was in Mexico, my neighborhood was very different; neighbors were as a family and we helped each other. In this neighborhood, I don't know my neighbors. I never talk with them and I don't know their faces. In Mexico, I never missed my parents like I do now because they were always with me.

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### *About the artist:*

My name is Kathya Castro I'm from Obregon, Sonora, Mexico, and I live in Tucson Arizona. I moved here because my family thinks that here there are better jobs than in my home country, the best education, and life is easier here. For me, life is very different, because here not many people can speak Spanish; it is very difficult for me to communicate. I told my parents that I'm going to go back to Mexico when I graduate from high school. I like to say what I think and give my opinion and this project helped me to talk about my life and my feelings.





## *Photo and writing by Margarita Ochoa*

The fallen hoop, my fallen motivation...a feeling of loneliness and boredom.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to her younger self:*

In this life, there are a lot of things that change, like in my neighborhood. It is a very boring place; the only thing that you can hear are the leaves of the trees falling down. Maguie, in my neighborhood, there is nothing to do. I'm really bored and there are not enough children to play with. If there are some children playing outside, the front neighbor gets mad and she starts screaming like "la llorona de Guanajuato". Que grita mucho por sus hijos. (She shouts a lot for her children). She is telling us that she doesn't want to hear any noise outside because her partner is sleeping and because they are tired...

I really miss when I was a little girl, playing outside and nobody caring what I was doing. I remember when I played asta cansarme yo misma (until I tired myself out). In front of my house, where I was living when I was a little girl, it was a very cool place that everybody loved. The park was a very awesome place to play because it had slides, swings, and enough grass places to play soccer, run and have a picnic. Y ahora todo cambio. (And today everything changed) Hmmm... I would like to know if those times are going to be back like I used to have when I was a little girl.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Margarita Ochoa, and I was born in Los Angeles but I grew up in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. I lived there more than 7 years which was very awesome. I'm a sophomore at Catalina. I'm in a magazine club, because I like writing and reading essays and stories. The type of writing that I like to do is realistic writing because it's interesting and you feel like you are feeling the same feelings like the author.





## *Photo and writing by David Coronado*

This is my dad, someone that I'm very proud of.  
He is taking a rest after the hard work  
that makes the American dream possible.

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### *Excerpt from a poem:*

As soon as we got settled in my neighborhood  
we began looking at the life from another way,  
our life made a turn of 360 degrees,  
everything was different.  
That day my family and I started a new life  
Our life turned a little bit easier  
new opportunities came and knocked at the door.  
My neighborhood is a very quiet place,  
a perfect place to live the American dream.  
My dream in this country is to progress,  
be in a high level of life, be successful  
and be independent.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is David Coronado. I'm 17 years old and I was born in Mexico. About six years ago I moved to Tucson. The reason why I moved to Tucson is to progress, which means better jobs and better education. One of my goals in Tucson is to find a good career and make my family proud of me. I think this is a great project because I'm comparing two stages of life that I have already experienced.





## *Photo and writing by David Fonseca*

This picture projects the quiet and mystery that is my neighborhood at night.

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### *Excerpt from a story:*

“Run,” I said when I saw the shadow behind Chris. He started screaming desperately. I could see in his eyes the fear of the impotence while running. Just a few seconds passed when the whole park was covered with the darkness of the night and the birds silenced the peaceful singing of their gift. I couldn’t even see my hand right in front of my face; only the accelerated breath of my trembling and weak voice interrupted the dark environment. Then, a big noisy siren started ringing and I woke up with fever and pouring sweat. I woke up with a confused idea of where I was. What am I doing here? Why is this the third time I dreamed that? After a few minutes, I felt much better. I got ready to go to school. As soon as I saw Chris, I started telling him about the nightmare; he just laughed. I threw a weak smile pretending to be much better after the dream, but I was feeling an uncomfortable shivering sensation.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is David Fonseca. I was born in Mexico. My dad moved here to Tucson thirteen years ago to complete his Master’s degree in Mathematics. I came here for the first time in 1997, and I went back to Mexico two years later. After a few years in Mexico, I came back to Tucson in 2006 to get my college degree in computer science.

The difference that I can feel between my old and new neighborhood is that back there in Mexico I could go to the park for an ice cream or just stay out of my house chatting with my neighbors. Here, in my actual neighborhood, I just stay inside of my house or in my backyard because the environment in the neighborhood is very different. It’s very mysterious and horrifying in the nights, and in the days the neighborhood is very peaceful and calm. There’s a park, but it’s not the same; there is no ice cream place near by. There are no neighbors of my age or anybody to talk about the same interests; it’s just different.

I felt very comfortable working on this project because I could see very carefully the differences living in different countries, and how the places where you live motivate you to do different things.



## *Photo and writing by Daniel Martinez*

Why an EMPTY swimming pool?

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### *Excerpt from a letter to his younger self:*

First, I want to tell you that I'm writing to you because I want you to enjoy your neighborhood. In the year 2005, you are going to move to the United States and you are going to live in a boring neighborhood that is not going to have anything fun or interesting. For example, the neighbors never go out of their apartments, and if they go out, they never talk to each other. I know that it sounds strange, because I remember that in our neighborhood everybody talks to each other.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Daniel Martinez. My home country is Mexico; I lived in a city called Cananea, which is situated in the state of Sonora. We moved to the United States because my mom wanted my sister and I to learn English. The difference between my old hood in Cananea and the new one here in Tucson is very big, because in my old hood there were a lot of people, kids, and fun stuff. In Tucson, there are not many people or fun stuff, because there are not so many kids. This project gave me the opportunity to express my feelings about my neighborhood.





## *Photo and writing by Arthur Jallayu*

B-balling on the Doolen Middle School Court.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

Hi people of the world. Let me take you on a tour of my neighborhood. When I take you around my neighborhood, you will wish to live here. I live in a unique neighborhood. This area has a lot of fun places for your kids. In my mind, I see this area as a positive place for my kid in the future. Parents with kids and teens will like to live in this neighborhood.

First, let me take you to the Girls and Boys Clubhouse. This is the Girls and Boys Clubhouse. It is located on Grant Road. It was fabricated in 2003 on Doolen Middle School campus. It was built for kids at age 7 to 17. It's a school and an activities zone. Young adult are always hanging out there. This area reminds me of my young age in my homeland. When I was nine years ten months old, I used to go to my school every evening to play sports. Every time I pass by this building, I see kids and teens playing. Some of them are there to socialize and they watch their friends play sports. I imagine my life at age twelve. When I see the children playing sports with their friends, I wish I could be the same as they are. I wish I could do that when I was young.

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### *About the artist:*



I am Arthur W. Jallayu Jr. I was born in Liberia, and I grew up in Ivory Coast. I was five years old when I entered Ivory Coast. I lived in Ivory Coast for 13 years. All the time I spent in Ivory Coast, I considered that country as mine. When war broke up in Ivory Coast, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) came to help us get out of the war zone. They wanted us to be free and safe.

May, 2004: I entered this country when I was 17 years, 11 months old. I had no experience of being a high school student. This is my first high school and last. I am now 20, and I will be graduating this summer. I came here because I wanted to be free and secure. I wanted to have equal rights. I have goals. My goals are to be: an automotive technologist, a movie director/producer, a writer, and the father of a big family. I wish that these goals come true.







## *Photos and writing by Josephina Thal*

My little sister is thrilled that we moved to a new neighborhood.  
Remembering our culture with sparkling bangles and hoping for our dreams to come true.  
Even though we don't have a lot, we have each other.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

Do you remember the time when you and I used to sit outside and say that if one of us makes it to America our life will change because we will become rich, have a lot of money, and have our own housemaid? Do you still remember the day when we said that if we go to America, American neighborhoods would look different from African neighborhoods, because they are built of glass, and no one will be working, just going to school?

Well, now I'm living in America, the place I had always wished and dreamed to go to. I finally made it to America, and life here is very different from how you and I used to imagine it in the past. We haven't become rich; we don't have our own housemaid, and we are not living in a glass neighborhood.

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### *About the artist:*



Hi, my name is Josephina Thal. I am 17 years old and I am from Sudan. I was brought here by an affable American government and was settled in Phoenix, AZ for over two and half years. Our life started all over again when we arrived in Phoenix. The big challenge was that we couldn't find a job. So my parents decided to move to Tucson and we ended up finding great jobs and a nice school like Catalina Magnet High School. My goals for the future are to make it to college and U of A and become a doctor and have a nice living that I always have been dreaming of. The difference between the old hood and the new hood is that my old hood is a jungle for the reason that it has gang people, drunk drivers, and alcoholics, and the new one is very comfortable. I loved working on this project because I got to express myself and share my feelings with others around me.



## *Photo and writing by Amelia Jallayu*

Sitting alone – feeling the quiet and boredom of my neighborhood.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

Oh friend, how hard it is living in a quiet neighborhood like this. This is a neighborhood where you don't get to talk to your neighbors nor their kids, because they are always inside their houses. It's a quiet neighborhood; I mean really quiet. Jaltoh, this is a neighborhood that has the populations I'd never know. I don't know the color of people that live around me, because I don't see them coming or going out. I don't even know who they are or where they are from. Friend, why is it so quiet in this neighborhood? Why is it not noisy like our neighborhood? Is it because it's a different country or what?

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### *About the artist:*



I'm Amelia Jallayu. I am from Liberia, a little country located on the west coast of Africa; but I grew up in Ivory Coast. My family and I moved to Tucson on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2004. We moved here because of the war in my country. I came here and decided to go to school, because I didn't have the opportunity to go to school in my country. Now I'm here and I have the opportunity; therefore, I should go to school to become someone good in life. I'm now a 10<sup>th</sup> grader. I want to keep on my education to reach my goal. My goal is to be a nurse. My country is different from the U.S in so many ways. In my country, I had to pay money before going to school, which is why I didn't go to school there. I was pleased that we were going to work on this project. And, with a bit of luck, it came out satisfactorily.





## *Photo and writing by Rene Luque*

Reflections of boredom and isolation...

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

In my new neighborhood, I don't know any teens that play soccer on the street or play card games, maybe because it's unlawful or against the neighborhood rules. So, I have to watch TV or play video games all alone. Perhaps every teen in my neighborhood does that. Usually I talk on the phone, dial up and speak with my family and friends in Mexico. I wonder what teenagers do in their free time. What are their hobbies?

In my old neighborhood people hang out on most weekdays and go bowling, to the movies, to a girlfriend's home, to restaurants, for coffee. Here you could do the same, but it's so expensive because here the life is more costly. For example, first you have to get a car to go at those places because walking you never arrive on time; the car needs gasoline. After that, if you want to go to the movies, it costs 9 dollars without popcorn, soda, or other snacks, which are about 5 dollars each. Clearly, it's expensive.

Most likely, people in my Tucson neighborhood hang out only on the weekend. Maybe it's just the lifestyle here and I'm not assimilating well to that style. I am accustomed to another life style; I heard from people who came here before me and they say it takes a great deal of time to become accustomed to American life, about 3 years minimum.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Rene Luque. I'm 19 years old. I come from Guasave, Sinaloa, Mexico. I moved to Tucson because my parents wanted better education for me and the opportunity of learning a new language. The goals that I want to get here in Tucson are to learn good English and meet or know the American life. Since I arrived, I felt the difference between my old neighborhood and my new one. In my old neighborhood, people always hang out on the street. They always laugh for anything, play and share with each other; while in my new neighborhood all people have a routine to their lives: adults work all day without stop and sleep for the next day. Also teenagers go to school, work and sleep. This style of life is hard for people who aren't accustomed, like me.







## *Photos and writing by Raul Oseguera*

Soccer is passion; enjoy it with others.

Life is beautiful; live it without racism.

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### *Excerpt from a story:*

...The next day, my friend Mohammed and I decided to have a meeting with the boys so they can know more about each other's cultures. We were from different countries: Mexico, Somalia, Kenya, Honduras, and America, of course. We started to talk about their cultures, and about what is the difference between here and their own country.

"Ok, I want to say some words," said my friend Mohammed. "I want to tell you that this is really beautiful, to see you playing like a big family even though you are from different countries and different cultures. Soccer is the most important thing. It is incredible how soccer unites people. Now we are a big team, and I hope this continues in this place without racism; thank you." We talked about many things, really enjoying knowing about each other's cultures. "Now our slogan will be: with hope and perseverance your dreams came true," I said.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Raul Oseguera, and I am from a tropical country: Honduras. I moved to Tucson on August 3, 2004. I didn't want to move but I had to do it, for a better life. I moved because my mother married an American citizen. My first goal was to learn English, that was my big goal, and to graduate from high school. There are many different things between my old neighborhood and my new neighborhood, like the people; they don't visit their neighbors. In my country (Honduras) people visit each other and have fun, but not so much here. It was a great experience to write about my life in the United States, my goals, my family, and the differences between my new neighborhood, and my old neighborhood.



## *Photos and writing by Hawa Bealue*

A friendly little girl, she loves to play in the apartment complex  
with different things around her.

When my little brother Parker first got his bike, he couldn't ride, not to mention speeding with it like that. Kids in our apartment complex taught him and now he knows.

These two best friends enjoy playing and learning from each other;  
they always hang out together and do things together.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

I don't have a friend in my neighborhood. Most of the teenagers in my apartment complex don't really get along. We don't even talk to each other. People that are the same nationality are friends, but there is no one from my country that lives in my apartment complex. Nevertheless, kids do. Kids hang out with friends from different countries. Sometime they don't understand each other very well but they still play together. They have so many friends whether or not they are from the same country. In fact, the main reason why I like it here is because of the kids. They even made me their friend. Sometimes my other friend tells me that it's weird, but I don't care. Once they feel free and happy around me like I do as well, then I don't see any reason why that should be a problem.

---

### *About the artist:*



My name is Hawa Bealue. Liberia is my country of origin. December 12, 2005 was the day my family and I arrived in Tucson. We moved here because of war in my country. Before that, we lived as refugees in Nigeria. Back in both Nigeria and Liberia, we used to get together as one and live with what we had. Even though we didn't have enough, we managed. What we didn't have was opportunities and better education. Here in Tucson it is so different. I have everything, it might not be all that I want, but I have the chance to get the most important thing that can give me all that I seek for in this world, education. Working on this project has taught me so much that I needed to learn and never knew. Working on this project has made me socialize with people in my new neighborhood. I also got to know that non immigrants in my neighborhood are not as private as I thought they were.





## *Photo and writing by Francisco Nuñez*

A guy that decided to have fun; it doesn't matter if it's by himself.

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### *Excerpt from a letter to his younger self:*

You will like the opportunities the field represents; it doesn't matter if it's dirty or in bad shape. I know that you are going to like it because in your hood in Mexico they don't have a grass field to play soccer. You play soccer on the streets and if you fall sometimes you can't get up anymore because of the injuries. Sometimes when you are playing soccer in the field, you'll feel lonely because sometimes your brother is not going to play with you because he has to work. Still, I'm sure that you are going to like it because you'll learn a lot in this field.

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### *About the artist:*



I'm Francisco Nuñez. I am from Sonora, Mexico. I moved to Tucson in 2002, so I have been in Tucson for 5 years. We moved to Tucson for a better education and for a better future. In my old hood, everybody used to hang out together and also play soccer together in the streets with trashcans as goals. In my new hood, people don't do those things but I still play soccer. I don't play on the street anymore, but in a grass field and it is much better because I don't get as many injuries as in Mexico. The only bad thing is that I play most of the time by myself. Working on this project, I felt very good; it was really fun taking pictures and talking with all of my classmates.





## *Photo and writing by Jesus Valenzuela*

One of the places I can walk to for fun.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

Now that we live in a better neighborhood, I can go to the park because my new neighborhood has a park close to my house. There is also a store on the corner of the street. I can also go to the library that is not far from my house. I can go walking if I want to.

In my new neighborhood there is also a swimming pool where people can go have fun. My new neighborhood is ok, better than the other one where I used to live.

This neighborhood is fun and better than the other one because it has more things to do than the other one. Sometimes it does get boring, but not like the other one that was boring almost every day.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Jesus. I am from Mexico. We moved to Tucson when I was in first grade in Mexico. My family wanted to come to Tucson. We moved to Tucson because my dad was here in Tucson and we missed him. My mom said that we were going to go and stay in Tucson. My mom said that I can go to school here and I can get a job too. My Tucson neighborhood is cool, but there are no kids playing on the street and in the park like in Mexico. With this project, I feel good because I'm talking about how I feel in my new neighborhood.



## *Photo and writing by Jorge Guerrero*

This is my grand father teaching me to ride a horse when I was about 5 years old.  
Este es mi tata enseñándome a montar a caballo cuando yo tenía 5 años.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

I grew up with my grandfather. He taught me everything that you need to know to survive in the wilderness: how to make fires and look for food. When I was little, he put me on top of a horse and that's how I learned how to ride. He also taught me how to run the ranch every morning and feed the animals, how to make things from wood, build cages for birds, and other things.

I wish I could go back to this life when my grand father would wake me up early and when he would cook for us. I wish I could go back to the times in México where all my cousins and I would stay at the ranch all weekend, when we had parties and killed cows so we could make carne asada. I wish I could go back to the trouble making life that I had in México.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Jorge Guerrero. I was born in CD., Obregon, Sonora, México. We moved to Tucson 5 years ago. The reason we moved here is because it was hard to find a job in México for my parents. All the things are new in my hood: the way the houses look, the people, and the loneliness.





## *Photos and writing by Julio Padilla*

My neighborhood is getting better with each sunrise.

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### *Excerpt from a letter from his older self:*

Do you remember all the people that lived in your old neighborhood and the house that you were living in when you were child? Your old neighborhood is better now. There are a lot of different people. There are more Mexicans now. When you were living there, there were a lot of white people. The house that you lived in when you were a teenager is still there but the people that live in there now made the house bigger. They painted the house and there is a new family that has a lot of children living in your old house.

Do you remember the guy that you were always fighting with? He finished college and now he has he own company. All the people that were addicted to drugs, they don't live in the neighborhood any more. In their houses, live nice and friendly people. You know when you were a teenager that your neighborhood was all dirty with trash on the street, windows broken and all the houses were in bad condition? That was in the past. Now we have a new owner in the neighborhood and he fixed all the houses and he pays other people to come and clean the street and everything outside every 15 days.

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### *About the artist:*



I am Julio Padilla. I came from Mexico. I came to Tucson about 3 years ago and I came to Tucson because in my country there were no jobs and there were a lot of poor people. The major difference between my old and new neighborhoods is that there are a lot of people of different countries here. I feel very good about working on this project because I like to talk and write about the different things about my neighborhood here and my neighborhood in Mexico.







## *Photo and writing by Daniela Nava Alvarez*

When I saw this sign, I thought:  
“Why should people check with the office  
when they’re the ones that are going to be living in the house?”

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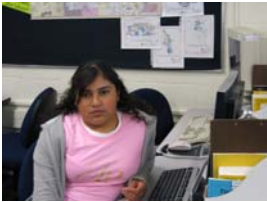
### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

My new neighborhood is BORING!! One time my friends and I were playing soccer and the manager came and he took our soccer ball. That’s the only ball we have. That’s not fair. Some kids are even scared that the manager will take their toys away from them. That’s not rare in my neighborhood and that’s sad. Also, when he takes our balls or any kind of toy, sometimes he never returns them. We have a pool that is never open more than once a week. It opens in July and closes in August in our neighborhood.

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### *About the artist:*

My name is Daniela Nava. My home country is Guanajuato, México. I moved to Tucson four years ago. My reason to move here was to have more opportunities and have a better future. In México, people don’t have as many opportunities as here, and my parents want the best for my two brothers and I. The difference between my new neighborhood and my old neighborhood is that in my new neighborhood everything is boring and in the old neighbor you could do whatever you want, like being free.





## *Photo and writing by Sethlina Impraim*

These people live in my neighborhood.  
They were very happy when I asked them to let me take a photo. They told me they feel bored in the neighborhood so they want others to know how bored they are

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### *Excerpt from a poem:*

I am tired of living in a neighborhood  
Like a cemetery  
Where there is nothing fun to do.  
The one and only basketball hoops  
That the kids can play with have fallen  
Down and there is no one to fix it  
In my neighborhood, all I can do  
For fun is to be in my room  
And watch movies or listen to music

My present neighborhood is full of sick and  
Disabled people.  
A neighborhood full of old people  
There are no teenagers.  
It makes me feel like I'm in the middle of nowhere  
It makes me feel sad.  
I keep asking myself "is this my neighborhood?"  
My neighborhood does not deserve the name "neighborhood"  
It should rather be called a cemetery.

---

### *About the artist:*



My name is Sethlina Impraim. I was born in Ghana in a place called Accra, and I grew up there. I'm in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade. I moved to Tucson on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005. I came to Tucson to further my education and learn new things. My goal is to be a successful pharmacist. The difference between my old hood and new hood is I used to have fun and had the chance to be with my family a lot in my old hood. Here, I'm all by myself. I'm stuck in my new hood like a prisoner. I felt happy doing this project because I had the chance to learn how to take pictures well and learn how to write well.





## *Photo and writing by Karina Valenzuela*

Darkness, emptiness, boredom, loneliness...

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### *Excerpt from a letter to a friend:*

I miss my old neighborhood because my mom and your mom were always together. They were always cooking Mexican food. They were always cooking tamales, carne, enchiladas, atole, and menudo. We were always eating the tortillas that our mom used to make. They had a good taste; we liked the smell of the food. We were always eating together. And I miss when we were outside with all of our friends. And outside you used to make so many jokes. You liked to make us laugh a lot; you were always happy. And you said to me you don't need to be sad. I miss my other friends. In my new neighborhood, I have a lot of friends too but they are not as cool as my old friends. The different thing is that my new friends are always with me.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Karina Valenzuela. I am from Nogales. I moved to Tucson in 2003. I moved to Tucson because my parents were working here and I wanted to come to school. My goals are that I want to finish school and have a good career. In my old neighborhood we used to talk to everyone and we were always outside. There were small trees, and there were nice parks. In my new neighborhood, there are big trees. Also, you can not talk to any one, and there are not a lot of people. When I was working on this project, it was cool taking pictures.







## *Photo and writing by Kelvin Jallayu*

Not even the plants can breathe and grow in my neighborhood.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

My uncle is a smoker and it affects his life. It causes him to be sick most of the time. He is always using all of his money to buy cigarettes while he has a family to support. He smokes in the midst of his children which makes them second-hand-smokers. They might start smoking too in the future, and there is nothing he can do about it. It also affects me because I can not stand to see my uncle suffering from smoking, and I can not stand to see him going from hospital to hospital. I am afraid I may lose him one day. When I called my mom back home, she said my uncle was not in a good condition. I am afraid that it is the smoking that is affecting him.

In my neighborhood, there are people smoking around and at the bus stops, which is distorting the neighborhood. They do not care about the effect they are causing on their neighbors. People smoking in the neighborhood affect me. It makes me feel unsafe. Whenever I am walking in my neighborhood and people are smoking, it reminds me of my uncle and all the pains he went through. I am afraid they may go through the same pain as my uncle one day. The smoke of the cigarettes affects me because it keeps entering my nose and it causes me to think that smoking is a good idea.

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### *About the artist:*



Hi, my name is Kelvin Kalue Jallayu. I was born December 19, 1989 in Liberia. My home land is located on the west coast of Africa. My country fought a civil war fourteen years ago. I left my homeland when I was 1 month old, and I haven't returned back home yet. I did not grow up in my country to learn my culture and see my native people. My family and I moved to Tucson May 26, 2004. We moved to Tucson because my parents wanted my brothers and I to have better education and accomplish our goals. My goals are to go to college

when I graduate from high school. The difference between my country and the United States is that there is a lot of support for the students in the U.S., but in my country there is not enough support for the children's education.



## *Photo and writing by Mohamed Konneh*

See all the toys on the play ground with no kids playing with them?  
The weight of the tether ball is the weight of my lonely struggle in this new neighborhood. The  
darkness of the image represents sadness.

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### *Excerpt from a poem:*

I can't believe it is still me, with the same old struggling  
For a better place to live  
Crying for help in my neighborhood  
Where nobody cares about me  
When I look at my neighborhood  
With the sadness, and the loneliness  
As an immigrant I have a hard time living in the United States  
With the loneliness, and the struggle in my Tucson hood  
When there is no one out there to count on for fun

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Mohamed Konneh. My home country is Liberia, but I grew up in Sierra Leone where I spent all my childhood life. We moved to Tucson on June 23, 2005. The reason for coming to Tucson is to have a better life and also to have good educational facilities. My goals are to become a medical scientist. In my old neighborhood, we used to have a lot of fun with friends and others we didn't even know, but in my new neighborhood we barely have fun with our neighbors or others. I felt so great working on this project because it helped me to express my ideas and feelings easily.





## *Photo and writing by Juan Aviña*

My neighborhood is safe, day and night.

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### *Excerpt from an essay:*

Some people say that my neighborhood is not a safe place because they hear a rumor that it is a gangster zone, but that is no more. They don't know because they don't live there.

Actually, my neighborhood is a nice place where you can hang out with your friends. Companies are building new houses for new people in my neighborhood. You can go and play at the park and it is safe. Only people from the hood go and play there or they go and walk there; it is a really nice place. Sometimes when I'm bored, I just go outside and walk to my friend's house. I often see little kids playing outside with no problem and mothers walking with their kids. It is a nice place to raise a family.

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### *About the artist:*



I am Juan Aviña, and I was born in Caborca, Sonora, México. I'm 18 years old. I moved to Tucson, AZ about 5 years ago because my mom wants us to get a better future, like to get a diploma from high school. With this project, I can show people how my neighborhood is. Then, they can go and visit when they want to see my beautiful neighborhood where I live now.





## *Photos and writing by Ivonne Franco*

My head hurts because there are a lot of people yelling in my house,  
the music is too loud, there is fighting outside...  
My brother and sisters are goofy, loud, crazy...and like to get the attention of everyone.  
My mom likes to yell a lot at my brother and my sisters...

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### *Excerpt from a letter to her cousin:*

My new neighborhood and my house are too noisy and dangerous. In my house, my mom talks too loud – you know it. My sister Linda (la gorda) puts her music on and it is loud and annoying. Sometimes I turn the music off, but she turns it on again. I get tired of turning it off and I leave her with the music volume up. I liked my sister when she was a baby because she couldn't do anything and she didn't like music very much. Then, there is Eduardo (el lalo). He starts to yell like a little girl, frightening and sometimes funny. He makes scary faces and puts his hands on his cheeks, but sometimes it is too annoying that for everything he starts to make that scary face. Damariz (la cevollita) turns the TV on and she turns the volume way up. I turn it off, but it is impossible to leave it off. My dad, he doesn't do anything noisy and interrupting. He is like me: going crazy.

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### *About the artist:*



My name is Ivonne Franco. I come from Nogales, Sonora, but I was born in Nogales, Arizona. I came to Tucson in order to have a better life and help my parents and all my family. That is easy for me because I'm a citizen. I was living in a nice neighborhood in Mexico, even though it is too old. I like that neighborhood because I spent all my childhood there. My new neighborhood is a place that everyday is too noisy and disruptive.

# Thank You to Our Community Partners!

Their support made this project & exhibit possible:



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