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Mapping Cuban Migration: The Art of Spatial Storytelling

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Mapping Cuban Migration: The Art of Spatial Storytelling

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Renée Crown
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Honors Capstone Project in Citizenship and Civic Engagement

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Abstract

There are millions of immigrants in the United States, each with stories and experiences to share. Sharing those stories provides benefits to the teller; it builds community bonds and creates a sense of belonging. In the case of immigration, storytelling enhances political awareness and breaks down stereotypes. La Casita, a Hispanic cultural center in Syracuse, New York, is trying to provide a platform for immigrants share their stories. The organization will partner with a group of Cuban artists to create an art installation about the Cuban immigrant experience. To enhance this experience and share more stories, I will be interviewing the artists on their migration experience and creating interactive maps of their stories to be included in the installation.

Executive Summary

There are millions of immigrants in the United States, each with their own story to tell. There are also misconceptions about those immigrants and their stories are often boiled down to one experience: entering the country. The goal of this capstone project is to tell the whole story.

 Research shows that when immigrants share their experiences it creates political awareness and it breaks down negative stereotypes, it empowers the teller and the listener, it creates cultural diversity, and strengthens bonds within communities. However, minorities, a group that immigrants largely fall into, have fewer opportunities to share their stories.

Here in Syracuse, La Casita Cultural Center is working to address both those issues. On Syracuse's west side there is a community of Cuban artists working with La Casita to share their stories. Every year La Casita creates an art installation in their space and unveils it in September during Hispanic Heritage Month. This year the project will focus on the Cuban immigrant experience and artists will share stories from Cuba and their time in the United States. This project is inspired by their work. I asked myself how I could use each artist's migration to help share their whole story and that is how I came up with the idea to use spatial storytelling— telling a story by incorporating how the teller interacts with a space. By creating interactive maps of each artist's migration, I could not just create visual representations of where he or she had lived, but I could create holistic maps that help the readers understand why immigrants move and what it is like to relocate. The hope is that these maps, coupled with the art, can tell the complete story of each artist.

To carry out this project I had to find an organization in the community working with my target population, immigrants, and one that would be interested in using maps in some way. I approached multiple organizations before coming to La Casita, but after meeting with the

director, Tere Paniagua, the idea for the story maps began to take form. We then had to secure

artists and determine if they were interested in being interviewed to create the maps. I then had to

create a mock-up of the maps so the artists could see what the final product would look like.

Finally, I had to apply for Intuitional Review Board (IRB) approval to conduct the interviews.

This work, conducted over the last year and a half, is outlined in the report as well as a

discussion the problem and lessons learned.

Acknowledgements

This final report is the culmination of two years of course correcting. I could not have reached the finish line without the help of some very important people. To my advisor, Dr. Anne Mosher, all I can say is thank you. The students of CCE are so lucky to have you. I have benefited from your constant support and willingness to advocate for your students more times than I can count and I am grateful. To my reader, Dr. Peter Wilcoxen, you deserve much more than a thank you for two years of brainstorming with me. Your patience and guidance are two of the reasons I have a completed capstone.

During winter break of my senior year, I read my dad's acknowledgements in his doctoral thesis. He advised me to be less verbose when writing my own. So, dad, you are my greatest inspiration. To my mom, who is my biggest fan, you are my best friend. Thank you for picking up the phone every time I call. I can't say for certain that my brother knows what my capstone is about, but regardless, Ian, you are my role model; I hope to be just like you one day. Of course, I have to thank Matthew– you make every day better, I wouldn't want to spend my best days (or worst days) with anyone else. Finally, seemingly most important, I would like to thank my grandparents. In 1972 you bought nine acres of land on Flathead Lake and planted a cherry orchard. For better or worse, its lessons have guided my passions and my studies.

To the many professors who have advised me, friends who have counseled me, and community members who have embraced me, this accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine. Thank you.

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Section 1: Citizenship and Civic Engagement as a Platform

The first question posed by my parents when I told them I was going to major in Geography was, "What are you going to do with that?" The Citizenship and Civic Engagement (CCE) major provided me an answer to that question. The major allows students in the social sciences, or related disciplines, to apply what they learn in the real world. As freshmen and sophomores in college, it is easy to think about societal issues such as income inequality or the environment, and decide those are what we want to tackle in our careers. The obstacle we all inevitably run into is: with problems that large and complex, it is impossible to conceptualize how to actually do something. CCE teaches students how they can make a difference.

At the heart of the program is this concept of a 'civically engaged citizen' and CCE spends a lot of time defining what that term means. To be civically engaged is to take an active role in one's democracy and what CCE has taught me is that there are countless ways to do that, but the most effective way is by getting involved in my community to enact change on the local level. The societal issues that interest us also manifest themselves on the local level. CCE provides all of its students the opportunity to do community-based work and come up with solutions to real world problems. The first opportunity every student has to starting developing their solution, is at a community placement. The placement allows students to work at an organization in Syracuse and form a connection with the people who work there while learning about the unique ways in which a larger societal problem effects this community.

Coming into CCE I knew I wanted focus on environmental issues in Syracuse and during my community placement at GreeningUSA, a sustainability organization, I started to delve into the work. However, after a semester with that organization I still felt like I had not accomplished much. This feeling coincided with my discovery of the Food Studies program at SU. I began

taking classes in Food Studies and counted them as connective coursework as I developed this idea for a class about the impact of food consumption on the environment. Eventually, my idea developed into an action plan, although a year too early. Unfortunately the implementation of that project fell apart and I had to, not for the first time, course correct. To outsiders, it may be difficult to see how I arrived at my final action plan, mapping Cuban migration, from where I started. However, my interest in food is directly tied to my interest in migrant workers and immigration and that is what led me to working with La Casita Cultural Center and the Latino community. That is what's special about this program, it allows students room to pivot, because that is the nature of community based work. Success in CCE is not measured by whether or not our action plans are implemented. Instead we are challenged to create a plan that is implementable. The point, first, is to learn how to work in the community and part of that process is realizing that plans will not always come to fruition or go how we hoped they would. Coming to terms with that truth has been both the greatest challenge of CCE and the most important lesson. Secondly, the point of these action plans is to offer a service to the community. Every CCE student is taught to approach their community partner knowing that the organization is the expert. It has been a privilege to learn from and work with this community. To achieve both of these goals students cannot be afraid of failure, and while that is easier said than done, the major is designed to help each student learn from failure.

Ultimately, what I have learned in CCE and Geography, both interdisciplinary majors, is how connected everything is. Social issues are tied to environmental issues. The societal problems CCE students aim to address are inherently complex. My completed action plan is not what I originally thought it would be nor is it perfect, but it is real. My time in the major has helped me understand that and taught me how to begin unpacking the issues I care about so I can

carve out some small piece or project that is manageable to tackle. I feel confident I can now go

out into the real world with skills that will help me do meaningful work and create meaningful

change.

Section 2:
Introduction to the Problem

Section 2.1 Problem on a National Scale

Immigration has been a controversial topic in the United States for decades, and over time the ethnic and racial groups at the center of the controversy have changed. Currently, Latino immigrants are the focus of the immigration debate in the United States. Spanish-speaking immigrants, documented or undocumented, are regularly associated with negative stereotypes. This group is perceived as poor, criminal, and a threat to American jobs (Rayna, Dobria, & Wetherell, 2013). Research has found that belief in these stereotypes is linked to the perception that immigrants have a negative impact on the country. This correlation exists for various groups, but is strongest for Latinos (Timberlake et al, 2015).

Immigration scholars have long used the Group Threat Theory (GTT) to explain why people hold negative stereotypes about immigrants. GTT states that growing numbers of immigrants "threaten the social position, prerogatives, and control over valued resources of the native born" (Quillian, page 591, 1995). However, research has found the that GTT may explain negative views of immigrants in cities where there is a high population of non-native born groups, but not in places like Ohio, which are more homogenous. Views in places like Ohio are shaped by politicians and the media. By proposing and passing policies such as California's Proposition 187, Arizona's SB 1070, and Alabama's HB 56, politicians have made immigration a polarizing political issue, and as the media covers these and other immigrant related stories it has sensationalized the issue (Timberlake et al, 2015). The American public is rarely presented with stories about Latino immigrants working hard to provide for their families in pursuit of the 'American Dream' and even more uncommon are stories about the hardships of being an immigrant in this country (Velazquez, 2013). Not only is the media not sharing positive stories

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about Latino immigrants, but those immigrants have fewer platforms to speak for themselves about their experiences and life in the United States (Dyson et al, 1994).

Anti-immigrant attitudes and policies have a negative effect on the well-being of the Latino immigrant population. Due to their stigmatization, many Latino immigrants struggle to trust community members and therefore fail to participate in their community and lack a sense of belonging. Profiling can lead to immigrants having negative views of their own ethnic identity, which can prevent them from embracing their culture, leading to furthur ostracisation (Casas and Cabrera, 2011).

Section 2.2 Problem in Syracuse

The city of Syracuse is no stranger to immigration as nearly a third of the city's population is made up of immigrants. A significant portion of those immigrants are refugees, and because of that most of the organizations and services are targeted to said population (Smith et al, 2013). InterFaith Works, Catholic Charities, and Refugee and Immigrant Self Empowerment (RISE) are all organizations in Syracuse that work with refugees, but there is also a Latino population in Syracuse. About eight percent of the population is comprised of Latinos, and that doesn't include migrant workers that work at the local dairies and apple orchards. There are fewer organizations in the city that work with the Latino population. The Workers' Center of Central New York works closely with the migrant workers population in the area. Then there is La Casita Cultural Center, the organization I collaborated with on this plan, that works with the greater Latino population in the community. With limited resources and organizations in the area, it is hard for the city to address the consequences of negative stereotypes, especially with such few platforms for immigrants to advocate for themselves. The lack of resources speaks to a larger issues: visibility. After speaking with the Cuban artists participating in this project, it is

clear they feel many people in Syracuse do not know there is a Cuban community on the west side. When people do not know a population is in their community it is challenging to promote a sense of belonging. Immigrants in the Syracuse community, especially Latino immigrants, need a platform to share their stories and experiences and La Casita Cultural Center is working on creating just that.

Section 3:
La Casita Cultural Center

Syracuse University's La Casita Cultural Center is the product of a larger movement to reclaim spaces in Latino neighborhoods that have fallen into disuse. The original 'casita' was built in Spanish Harlem in New York City. In the 1970s José Soto set out to create a structure that was similar to the style of dwellings in Puerto Rico. The purpose of the project was to provide a space for locals in the Latino community to gather and to share and continue their cultural traditions. This practice of building casitas became a movement and throughout the 1970s and 1980s more casitas were constructed with the same goal in mind.

La Casita was built in the historic Lincoln building, which had also fallen into disrepair on Syracuse's Near West Side. The refurbished building on Otisco Street now houses an art gallery, classroom, bilingual library, and performance space. The art gallery has a theme related to Latino heritage and culture and every year the space is recreated to highlight a different theme as part of the Balcón Criollo project. This project features a porch-like corner installation where photos, memorabilia and other cultural relics related to the theme are displayed.

La Casita is open to the Syracuse community but it serves the Latino population directly. Through a number of programs the center works to preserve Latino culture. Weekly reading circles help children develop language skills as they read and converse in both English and Spanish. Children can also take Afro-Caribbean dance classes such as the salsa and bachata. The center also hosts an oral history series where members of the community can come share their stories and experiences. This also acts as a forum for people to raise concerns about issues they feel the community is facing and present ideas on how to address said issues.

Section 4:
Action Plan

Section 4.1 Where it All Began

The foundation of this project lies in a cherry orchard. I have spent every summer I can remember helping to harvest my family's cherry orchard. Picking and packing 100,000 pounds of cherries is no small task, and it is one that we have always accomplished with the help of the Alvarez family. For over 20 years this family has come to our orchard and picked cherries. I have grown up and worked alongside members of the family since the time the only job I could handle was eating cherries. The Alvarez family is a one of immigrants; they came to the United States first as migrant workers and are now business owners, but they still come to our orchard every year for harvest. Spending time with this family shaped my view on immigration and immigrants. My experiences and time spent with this family, talking with them and learning from them, serve as the inspiration for this project.

In the summer of 2017 while I was busy reworking my capstone proposal, I was also harvesting cherries. On the news I saw headlines about President Trump's immigration policy and talk of building a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. I also saw an alarming amount of people in support of this idea. I asked myself why I feel so strongly about the importance of immigrants and their contribution. I realized it is because I know them. I understand why they came to the U.S. and I have seen over and over again how dependent this country is on the work that many of them provide. I knew I wanted my capstone to help other people get to know immigrants they way I know the Alvarez family.

Section 4.2 Description of Process

When I arrived in Syracuse in the fall I had an idea to create maps of individuals' migration. Everyone has a map– a visual representation of the places they've been. But each

story is more than just points on a map. Originally, I wanted to work with migrant workers in Central New York, as that is the population that inspired this project. I reached out to various organizations in Syracuse, specifically the Worker's Center, and after discussions with community members and advisers, came to the conclusion that working with such a vulnerable population would make it difficult to ask the questions and present the information needed for these interviews and project. This realization led me to La Casita Cultural Center.

I went into my first meeting with Tere Paniagua, the director of La Casita, with an open mind. I knew I wanted to make maps but I knew I should let her tell me what she needed. What I found was that strategy did not work, fore at first the parallels between my interests and the work at La Casita were not clear. However, when I told her about my mapping idea and interest in migration and how I thought combining those two concepts could portray a powerful message about immigrants, we found common ground. Tere explained the Balcón project and told me she had been considering working with a group of Cuban artists to tell the story of Cuban migration through art. Though it wasn't the group I had originally intended on working with, the project seemed like the perfect fit.

Over the course of the next few weeks, we carved out how my project could add to the work being done by the artists and defined exactly what my role would be. At the first meeting, Tere had recruited three artists and we held preliminary discussions about what to include in the installation. This meeting was right after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, the island Tere is from. The artists were asking about her family and she told them about the conditions there: the power outages, the waiting in line for gas and water. A number of artists expressed that those conditions were similar to what living in Cuba was like. Exchanges like this one were what convinced me that these stories needed to be told.

Section 4.3 Research Methods

Tere was responsible for recruiting artists to participate in the art project from her own personal pool of connections. She then allowed me access to this group of artists so I could recruit them to participate in my study. Before conducting any interviews, though, I had to go through the IRB approval process. For the application, among other things, I had to prepare interview questions. I wanted my interview to function like a conversation and I knew I wanted basic biographical information about where each artist had lived and about why they came to the United States. The challenge was to think of questions that would provide me with the answers I wanted without making the interview sound like an interrogation. I chose to focus the questions on the art and how his or her experiences influenced their work to allow them to steer the conversation. From these interviews, I then planned to compile maps and choose the quotes I thought would best illustrate each artist's experiences and help the viewer understand why the artist left one place for another. The interview questions are in Appendix A.

Section 4.4 Product

After meeting with the artists, I had to create a mock up of what the completed maps would look like. I found an article in the New York Times interviewing H2A agricultural workers in Upstate New York. I compiled photos and quotes from that piece and created a map in GIS, I then added quotes and photos to the map in Powerpoint that were relevant to each location. After I created the physical maps, I used Prezi to make the maps interactive. I chose Prezi because it is a nonlinear medium that allows the viewer of these maps to follow the path each artist took and to dig deeper into their lives, both literally and figuratively. At each location the viewer can see general information about why the artist moved there, but there is also more

specific information and anecdotes about the individual's experience. An example of the physical map can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1
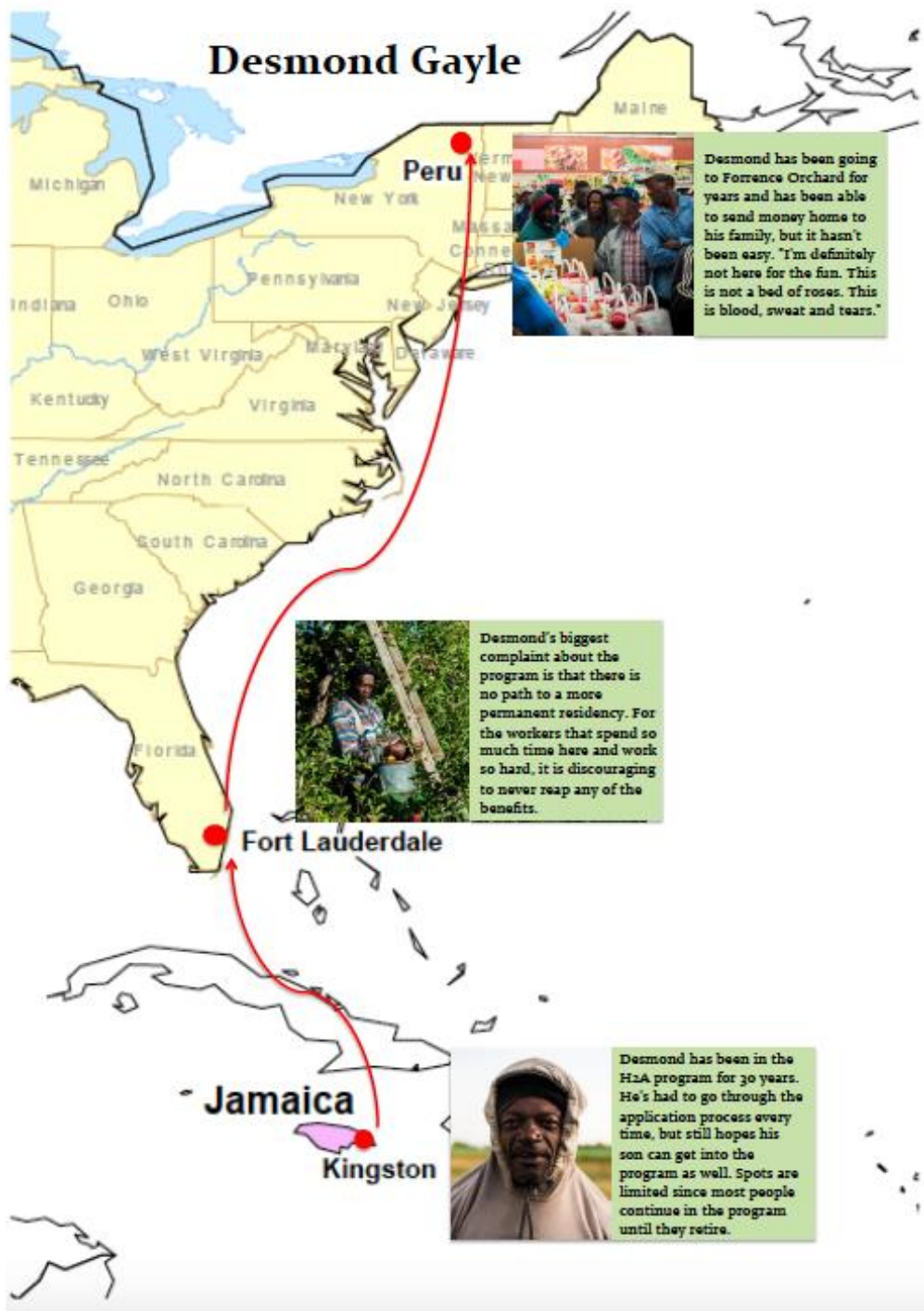
Section 5:
Validity of Social Science Research

Section 5.1 Required Research

When I began this project I had this rosey notion that if people could hear immigrants'

stories then they would realize how much everyone has in common and people would begin to

understand the immigrant experience. I had my own experience to back this notion up, but I

knew I needed to conduct scholarly research on the ways that storytelling can be used as a tool.

Storytelling is one of the tools immigrants can use to fight back against the stereotypes

perpetuated by the media and politicians. In the case of immigration, first hand stories from

immigrants create political awareness. In this sense, an individual's story can be used

strategically to combat negative stereotypes (Gomberg-Muñoz, 2016). For example, when

someone who happens to be an immigrant commits a crime that event garners media attention.

This isolated situation comes to represent an entire group and people associate negative behavior

with all immigrants. When immigrants are given a platform to share their story it provides people

with a whole new perspective and forces them to reconsider their preconceived notions (Dyson et

al, 2004). In a political climate where immigrants are often villainized and the leader of the

United States has proposed to build a wall along the U.S. and Mexico border, these narratives are

more important than ever.

The power of storytelling extends beyond the political arena, it also addresses the issue of

belonging. In communities and classrooms sharing stories promotes diversity (Asendorpf, 2017).

Each individual has experiences that give them a unique perspective and by sharing that with

others everyone benefits from these diverse backgrounds (Patel and Mitlin, 2002). Storytelling

also has the ability to preserve cultures. When people immigrate to a new country they are

separated from their culture. When they are provided avenues through which to share their

culture with people from the same background it maintains those traditions (Kay, 2000). By sharing in these ways, communities become stronger because each person feels a sense of belonging and when that happens people are more likely to contribute to and be active members of the community (Ulrich, 2015).

The scholarly research I conducted was only part of the foundation for this project. When I began meeting with artists I realized there were a whole host of real world examples about the material I had been studying right here in Syracuse.

Abisay Puentes is the lead artist on the La Casita project and when I began working with Tere, the first thing she showed me was a piece that Abisay created at Point of Contact gallery in Fayetteville. The photo, in Figure 2, is off Abisay's finished work.

Figure 2
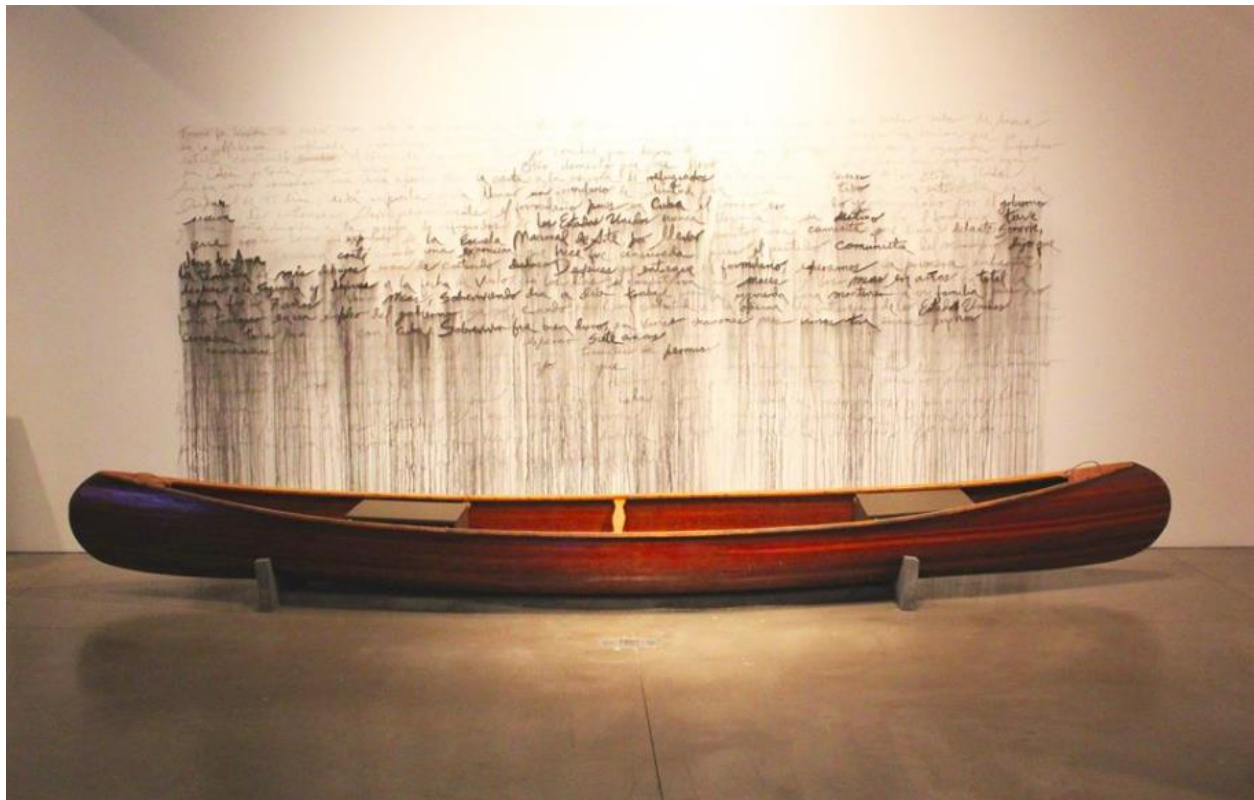
The words on the wall are his story. The first chance Abisay was given to share his art in a public space he chose to use it as a platform to tell his story. The words are not clear, but that is the point. The viewer is not supposed to look at his piece and learn everything that has happened to him. Instead, they are supposed to see that he has a story and wants to tell it. When I saw this piece it felt like validation that the population I wanted to work with not only had stories, but that they wanted to share them. Then, after meeting with the artists, it became clear that they were more than willing to talk about their experiences if asked, and furthermore they seemed surprised by my interest. This confirmed what I felt like I knew all along and what my research had shown, which was that minority groups often have fewer platforms to share their stories and because of that are not accustomed to being asked to share those experiences.

Section 5.2 Justifying the Project

Once I had the evidence and research to support my project, I needed to do some convincing. What I learned in the process is that it is difficult to explain the validity of a project like this because its benefits are less tangible. My project is not designed to raise money or provide a service, it is meant to provide visibiltiy and promote understanding, benefits which I think are foundational to any other improvements in a community. My project is meant to empower immigrants to share their story and the benefit of that is twofold. First, it empowers the teller and makes them feel like their story is worthy of being told and they are deserving of a chance to be heard. Second, the listener has a chance to learn and to understand a perspective they may not have been exposed to. This experience of sharing and listening builds bonds, which strengthen communities and create an environment where everyone feels like they belong. Those benefits are difficult to quantify and because of that it was challenging to convince professors and advisers that this project was worth doing. Ultimately, I found validation in the community.

The artists and staff at La Casita continually expressed how important visibility is for the Latino community in Syracuse and the larger national community. It was this reaction from the community that reassured me my action plan was important.

Section 5.3 Community Based Research and the IRB

When I began the IRB approval process I was faced with a 12 page document full of questions. One of those questions was whether or not my research was Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR). I immediately chose 'yes'. Nearly a month later when I received the decision from the IRB that my approval was deferred I was forced to grapple with that question. Per the IRB's definition, CBPR is research that is conducted as an equal partnership between traditionally trained "experts" and members of a community. The reviewer expressed qualms about the nature of my research design and if I had worked in an "equal partnership" to develop the design. They were also concerned with the fact that the community members, in this case the artists, were not involved in collecting data and were instead the source of my data. Taking these points into consideration, I chose to change my answer to 'no', not because I felt my research was no longer community based, but because I felt it did not fit this one specific definition.

The IRB's definition of community based work runs contrary to the lessons I have learned in CCE. As a social scientist, working with and conducting research with the community often means meeting the needs of your partner organization. This is a project that La Casita wanted completed and fully supported and it could not be completed without the help and input of the community. To me, that constitutes community based research.

This challenge I ran into speaks to a larger issue for social scientists trying to conduct research through the IRB. The IRB application process is tailored to scientific human subjects

research and to research that is looking for a trend or pattern of results. My research, which is conducted on human subjects, is meant to show varied responses because the whole point of the project is that all immigrants have highly indivdual experiences and the value lies in that individuality. I learned how difficult that concept is to fit into a purely scientific mold. At the same time, the IRB application process forced me to think about my research more deeply and to consider how any questions I asked could affect the participants. For that reason, the IRB plays a vital role in all kinds of research, including this project.

Ultimately, I did not receive IRB approval for this project after going through the lengthy process. This result brought the implementation of the action to a halt.

Section 6: Assessment of Work

This project did not turn out how I thought it would when I first started CCE. I had big plans for my action plan and I was sure that anything short of implementation was a failure. Nearly four years later I know that is not the case. While I created an action plan, the implementation of that plan is incomplete.

When I first began forming my action plan, it was on a different topic that I was entirely committed to seeing through. When it became clear I could no longer pursue that plan, I had to pivot and that left me totally lost. I struggled to articulate my societal problem and define it in a way that other people understood. When I finally found a solid project and community partner, the topic was far from where I started, and that made it hard to motivate. Finding a community partner in the second semester of my senior year was not ideal, it meant I had to develop this plan and a relationship with the organization at the same time and quickly. Due to these setbacks, I was late out of the starting gate for so much of this project. The greatest example of this was my IRB application. I mistakenly thought that because my project was not in the hard sciences and that because I was submitting it for expedited review that I did not need to start the application early. Of course, I should have started it early. It took weeks longer to receive a response than I was told to plan for, throwing off my entire timeline. When I found out that the decision about my proposal had been deferred until I made changes to the application, I knew that I could not finish implementing my action plan in the time I had left. While this was not a necessity, I felt I had failed my product and La Casita. Not having IRB approval prevented me from conducting my interviews for my own research and prevented me from providing my partner organization with materials and information they needed.

When discussing the obstacles in this project with my advisor, Dr. Anne Mosher and the chair of the Citizenship and Civic Engagement program, she helped me to put my project in perspective: "This may not have turned out as you expected, but I honestly believed that you learned more from doing this than if everything had gone according to plan from fall semester junior year to now. I certainly learned a lot, mainly about the university and the barriers that exist within in and between it and the community. What you encountered are things I've never encountered before, and that experience is going to stick with me and, hopefully, improve things for future CCE students."

I have come to terms with the result of this project because I finally realized I learned more from this perceived failure than I could have from a seamless project. Out in real communities doing real-world work, things rarely go exactly how people want them to. To be able to deal with that, people need the skills to adjust and to adapt to new circumstances. While my project is not perfect, it has taught me those valuables lessons, lessons which I know I can apply in the future. As a prepare for law school and a career as an environmental lawyer I feel confident that I have the skills to work with a community to address the problems it faces and to adapt as obstacles present themselves.

Section 7:
Lessons Learned

Section 7.1 Suggestions for Organizations

After working with La Casita for the majority of my senior year, I learned how difficult it is for them to provide all the services they do with such limited staff and funding. This is a reoccurring issue for non-profits, not just in Syracuse but everywhere. The city of Syracuse is lucky, though, because it has Syracuse University at its disposal. After talking with various members of the community that work with different non-profits, it's clear that there is a disconnect between the city and the school. All of these organizations need help and there are students all over campus looking to gain experience through volunteering and internships. Of course, this is not a one sided-solution; it is not just up to the organizations to reach out students, students also have to reach out.

A program like CCE has the potential to provide the community with a partnership that is sustainable, both for the organizations and for the students. My greatest advice to organizations in Syracuse, like La Casita or not, is to form relationships with CCE and it's students. If they can manage to do this, then they will be rewarded with passionate students that are self-starters and that are committed to making a difference.

Section 7.2 Advice to Future CCE Students

CCE is a challenging program. It forces students to be self starters and to think critically and to go out into the community and make our own way. While that is a daunting task, there are some lessons I've picked up along the way that make it easier. First and foremost, always be your own advocate because nobody can stand up for yourself and your interests better than you can. In that same vein, it is equally as important to follow your passions. Within this major, there has been discussion about whether action plans should be about accomplishing something for the

community or students attempting to do what they are passionate about. Make no mistake, these two things are not mutually exclusive. Following your passion will not lead you astray and it will ensure the work you accomplish is that much more meaningful.

This program lacks the traditional structure of most majors, and for students that feel more comfortable with structure and are overwhelmed by the freedom of the major, don't worry. There are so many people in CCE that are willing to help, so be persistent and go to office hours and schedule meetings. When going into those meetings, always remember that your opinion matters. It's easy to hear a professor's advice and convince yourself you should take it, regardless of it is leading you in the right direction or not. Don't be afraid to stand your ground when you need to and seek advice when you don't know what else to do– this program is all about balance.

When I first started taking classes for CCE, I had all these ideas about issues I cared about in my hometown or in other places I had been to, but no interest in Syracuse. This kind of attitude is a mistake. It may take time to learn about Syracuse and the community off The Hill, but it is absolutely worth it. Syracuse is not only an interesting city with so much to offer, but it is also a city that needs help and could benefit from the work CCE students do. So don't see working in Syracuse as an obstacle, see it as an opportunity. Becoming invested in the community will improve your time at SU and it will make it more rewarding.

Finally, when interacting with the community, remember that for all you have to learn you also know about your project and the societal issue you are trying to address. When trying to form relationships with the community, listen to what organizations want from you, but be straightforward about what it is you are doing and what you hope and need to get out of the experience. Action plans, and CCE in general, can be confusing and difficult to explain to people

and organizations that have never heard of the program. Giving examples of past action plans or presenting them with some basic ideas for your own, coupled with asking the organization what they need, will make everything more clear for both parties.

CCE can be the greatest part of your time at SU if you let it. Spend time with your cohort, foster relationships with your professors, and don't be afraid to embrace the community.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions:
Note- The questions are meant to spark a conversation, they will act as a guide to the interview. If interviewees chose to share stories that lead to further questions about details of those stories, more questions will follow. Interviewees will not be asked to share details about citizenship status or their point of entry into the United States

1. 1. General information questions:
   a. a. Where are you from (specific city in Cuba)?
   b. b. Where have you lived in the United States?
2. 2. Questions about locations interviewee has lived:
   . a. Why did you come to the specific location?
   a. b. Did you know people living in each location before moving there?
   b. c. What is your first memory in location X?
3. 3. Artistic Practice Questions?
   . a. When did you start creating art?
   a. b. Has your art evolved since moving to the United States?
   c. What do you want people to think/feel when they see your art?