Activate Action Project

May de Castro {Cultural Policy Fellow}

ARTS 4 LA {ACTIVATE 2019}

Council District 1 {Highland Park}
Gentrification and the erasure of murals in Highland Park.

Studio de Castro
To foster connections across race, generation and class, and to create awareness about the impact that gentrification has had in the neighborhood.
Over the last few years, there has been a community outcry regarding the erasure of murals in Highland Park by either new renters, building owners, and/or the city—unbeknownst to the community who grew up with them. This action has only added fuel to the anti-gentrification movement growing there. Though several murals have been “white washed” over the years, at the center of the current debate is the erasure of a mural called “Resist Violence With Peace.”
“Resist Violence With Peace” by John Zender was located at the current Highland Park Bowl. Photo from “Restorative Justice For The Arts.”

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Over the course of my Activate fellowship, I interviewed several stakeholders in the Highland Park community on both sides of the debate, about the mural’s history. Although no one has taken responsibility for the removal, there is a consensus that the long time residents/community, where not informed or asked about their opinion on the matter. Whether they were obligated to or not, is another issue, but in their exclusion, some residents have seen this as a direct effort to erase their own identity and culture as many of the muralist and themes were tied to the Latin/Native American heritage.
To create a mural that involves all community in the 90042.
I would recruit the youth—highschool and middle school students from Highland Park—to create the mural. I would collaborate with a local muralist and art teacher to train and educate the students about the importance of public art, conservancy and to impart the power of creativity and the arts. And more importantly, I will invite the community to take part in the process.
1) Identify key collaborators and invite the community to a townhall to discuss the mural project

2) Create a plan to propose to the councilman’s office and various organizations to secure funding and location

2) Identify and involve local organizations that may need to approve this project

3) A call for artist
To create unity and community building through the arts—where all involved will be heard.