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**TOWARDS AN ETHICAL HUMAN RIGHTS PHOTOGRAPHY:**  
EXPLORING COMMUNITY-BASED PHOTOGRAPHY WITH  
IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN GREATER NEW HAVEN

**Julia Char Gilbert**

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## CONCEPTUALIZING THE PROJECT

### INITIAL CHALLENGES & GUIDING QUESTIONS

I had envisioned doing a photography project for my senior capstone project since I joined the Human Rights Program. The capstone provides students with a unique opportunity to explore their interests outside of a traditional academic context, and as an amateur photographer, the obvious choice was to turn to my camera. I envisioned making portraits of women in New Haven and collecting oral histories to accompany the images. As I began to think more carefully about what a photography project might look like in practice, however, I became increasingly uncomfortable with the premise of such a project.

For one, the politics of Yale students doing “projects” in New Haven are tricky – such efforts are often unsustainable, limited in their impact, and, at times, extractive. I’ve also encountered problems as a photography student here: there is something deeply troubling about Yale students walking as far as the New Haven Green, taking pictures of local residents, and retreating back to their darkrooms and studios to critique the aesthetics of the images they made. While photography can be a powerful tool for fostering community and social change, it can also misrepresent, exploit, exoticize, infantilize, and dehumanize its subjects. Perpetuating these problematic dynamics felt not only ethically questionable; it struck me as at odds with the goals of the Human Rights Program.

Before the semester had even begun, then, I was left with a handful of questions: Was it possible to do an ethical photography project for my human rights capstone? What would such a project require? What implications did the challenges I’d run up against in the context of my project have for human rights photography in general? How can visual advocacy tools better respect the dignity and interests those they aim to serve? What is the importance of agency and authorship in the production of human rights narratives? What does an ethical human right photography look like?

## PROJECT METHODOLOGY

### OVERVIEW

In October 2017, I began facilitating a community-based photography project with seven immigrant women in Greater New Haven, Connecticut. The project consists of three phases: making photos, reviewing work, and sharing stories. As of December 2017, we have completed Phases 1 and 2. The project will culminate with a public photography exhibition in February 2018. The project was designed and implemented as part of the Multidisciplinary Academic Program in Human Rights at Yale University and was sponsored by the Schell Center for International Human Rights at Yale Law School.

### CONTEXT

One in eight residents of Greater New Haven is an immigrant. Of the foreign-born residents in Greater New Haven, one-fourth – or nearly 19,000 people – were born in Central or South America.<sup>1</sup> According to a 2015 report by the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, city residents are divided on the impact of immigration. Some survey respondents highlighted the social, cultural, and economic contributions of immigrants in the area, while others revealed concerns about the city's immigrant populations. “Uncontrolled, illegal immigration is a bad thing,” one respondent wrote. “This is a source of crime... and a drain on State, Municipal, and Social services.”<sup>2</sup>

Although New Haven is a sanctuary city, undocumented immigrants in Greater New Haven remain at risk of arrest and deportation. Since July 2017, three immigrants have been forced to take refuge in local churches after being issued deportation orders.<sup>3</sup>

Greater New Haven is a rich site for social activism, including community organizing around immigrant rights.

This context, in combination with my interest in immigrant rights and my past experience working with immigrant communities, led me to connect with Unidad Latina en Acción (ULA), a self-described “grassroots organization that defends the human rights of immigrants and workers in greater New Haven, Connecticut.”<sup>4</sup> ULA, in turn, connected me with women interested in participating in the project.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Buchanan and Mark Abraham, “Understanding the Impact of Immigration in Greater New Haven” (The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven, January 2015), 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Matt Ormseth, “2nd Immigrant Seeks Sanctuary From Deportation In New Haven Church,” *Hartford Courant*, August 9, 2017; Mary E. O’Leary, “Family Activists Hope to Stop Deportation of New Haven Man,” *New Haven Register*, November 7, 2017.

<sup>4</sup> “Unidad Latina en Acción – ULA,” *Facebook*, accessed December 15, 2017.

## PROJECT DESIGN & TIMELINE

### **Preparation**

In anticipation of the project, I began attending weekly community-organizing meetings and demonstrations with members of Unidad Latina en Acción (ULA). I sought the advice of my advisers for the Advanced Human Rights Colloquium; professors of law, sociology, and anthropology; and community members involved with ULA. I conducted preliminary research on human rights photography and community-based photography methodologies. Finally, I suggested the idea of an immigrant women's photography group at an ULA meeting, and invited people who were interested to put their information on a sign-up sheet. All seven women who expressed interest were able to participate in the project. There has been no attrition.

### **Phase 1: Making Photos**

Photographers received training on informed-consent procedures and attended a brief photography workshop (Appendix G). Over the course of two months, every project participant received three disposable cameras, each containing 27 exposures. Participants were free to make photographs of whatever they liked. If they needed a prompt, they were encouraged to "make photos of what's important to you." We met approximately every other week to discuss participants' experiences shooting, to work through any challenges they encountered, and to hand off cameras. Between meetings, we kept in touch via text message.

### **Phase 2: Reviewing Work**

Participants received 4-by-6-inch prints of their photographs. Participants gathered as a group to go over their photographs and share their work with their peers. Participants brought their prints home to look over further and share with family and friends. Digitized versions of every photo were also assembled in Google Drive folders and shared within the group.

### **Phase 3: Sharing Stories**

Participants selected, titled, and captioned their three favorite works. Participants created artists' statement using Google Docs.

In the coming weeks, I will print enlargements of participants' favorite works. In February, we will hold an exhibition of the photographs, which will be free and open to the public. The exhibition will take place in ULA's community center. Participants will be tasked with inviting members of their respective communities and with brainstorming a list of other people they'd like to invite, such as religious leaders or local policymakers. Exhibition attendees will be invited to donate to an organization or cause agreed upon by project participants.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS & PRIORITIES

When still in the early planning stages of the project, I was strongly discouraged from doing a photography project with immigrants, since involvement with the project might expose them to undue risk, particularly in this political moment. I believed that the normalization of xenophobia and racism in the United States called for more projects that centered immigrant voices, rather than fewer, and decided to proceed with the project. Still, the concerns surrounding the security of participants were valid, and I did my best to design and implement the project in a way that mitigated risk for those involved as much as possible.

Risk management strategies were primarily formalized in the form of informed-consent procedures, which were designed to promote the rights and security of both the photographers and the subjects they photographed.

Before they were able to participate in the project, each participant underwent informed-consent procedures. Participants first received an Informed Consent Form (Appendix B), which we discussed and then reviewed in writing. The document informs participants of the parameters and expectations of the project, emphasizes that participation is voluntary, and explains that participants are able to withdraw from the project at any time. Participants less than 18 years of age were also required to seek the written consent of a parent or guardian in order to participate in the project. After consenting to participation in the project, participants received a Photography General Release Form (Appendix C), through which participants could specify if their photographs could be used for public exhibitions, presentations, and reports related to the project, and/or be published online in conjunction with the project. The Photography General Release Form also asked participants if they wanted their first name listed as the photographer; some participants opted to list a nickname or pseudonym to protect their identities. As with the Informed Consent Form, participants under 18 were required to obtain a parent or guardian's permission before their photographs could be reproduced.

All participants were also trained on how to seek the informed consent of the subjects they photographed (Appendix D). Each photographer was instructed to seek the consent of their subjects before taking their photo. Subjects were then asked if photographs in which they appeared could be used in public exhibitions, presentations, and reports related to the project, and/or be published online in conjunction with the project. Subjects were also given an opportunity to specify if they would like a copy of the photograph, which the photographer could email to them later on. Participants were instructed to seek the consent of a parent or guardian before taking photographs of subjects less than 18 years old. Finally, participants were trained to get the consent of private property owners before shooting on their property (Appendix E).

Project participants were provided with training on their rights as photographers. In the United States, you are legally permitted to photograph on public property, with or without the consent of

those appearing in the photographs. Participants were also given bilingual handouts to distribute in the event of a confrontation (Appendix F). The handouts explain the participant's involvement in the project; outline their right to take photos on public property; and direct further concerns and questions to the project facilitator, whose phone number and email address were provided.

Beyond using formalized consent procedures, the project asked that those involved exercise their best judgment. Participants let common sense guide what and how they wanted to shoot. Likewise, most of the guidelines I set for myself as a project facilitator have boiled down to common sense: As a general rule, I do not take or reproduce the images of any group members without their explicit and precise permission (e.g. "May I take your photo?", "In what contexts can I reproduce this photo?"). I do not include any identifying information of participants unless they have specified they would like me to. I do not inquire about the immigration status of group members or their families. As with most interventions, community-based photography projects should, first and foremost, do no harm.



## LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

As a project facilitator, I ran into a variety of obstacles while implementing this project. Below, I describe several logistical challenges I encountered and recommendations for project facilitators taking on community-based photography projects in the future.

### **CHALLENGE: Using disposable cameras was inefficient and costly.**

I decided to use disposable cameras for the project for several reasons. First, I did not have the resources to purchase digital cameras and did not feel I had sufficient time to procure seven digital cameras for the purposes of the project. Second, I believed the novelty of working with a film camera would be enjoyable, and would distinguish making work for the project from the everyday experience of taking photos on one's smart phone. Third, unlike digital cameras, disposable cameras allowed participants a finite number of shots: 27 exposures per roll. The effect of this is two-fold: participants had a manageable number of photographs to choose from at the end of the project, and each photograph was created with greater care, with the photographer not wanting to "waste" a shot. Finally, with disposable cameras, participants could not view their images until they all came back from the developer. As a result, project participants viewed their photos in large batches, encouraging them to think of the photographs as a collection with unifying or complicating themes running throughout, rather than simply a series of individual shots. Furthermore, with the disposable cameras, reviewing one's photographs became a social and communal experience, since all participants collected their prints at the same time, and experienced seeing their photos for the first time alongside one another.

That said, the logistical challenges associated with working with disposable cameras were extremely cumbersome. Each disposable camera cost approximately \$9, plus an additional \$15 to develop, make prints, and digitize. The developing process took between 4 and 10 business days to complete, and required that I drive to Hamden for faster service. I also spent many hours biking around Greater New Haven, collecting cameras that people were unable to bring a meeting. Furthermore, because participants could not view their images as they went, they often made reoccurring errors that could have otherwise been prevented (e.g. not using the flash in dark spaces, placing their fingertip in front of the aperture). Some participants were frustrated that many of their images did not come out as they had intended. I also anticipate the quality of the photos will present a problem when printing enlargements for the exhibition next month, since I do not have access to a darkroom, and the digitized images I received from the developer are relatively low quality.

### **RECOMMENDATION: Consider using digital cameras.**

Project facilitators can solicit community members to donate or loan participants their digital cameras. If cameras vary in quality (e.g., dSLR vs. point-and-shoot), participants can take turns using different cameras over the course of the project.

Because most people use their smart phones as their only or primary photo-taking device, using a digital camera for the purposes of the project will likely still feel like a somewhat novel experience. To discourage participants from taking too many or too few photos, and from being careless with their shooting (e.g., taking many pictures of the same subject without intentionality), participants can be assigned a target number of photographs (e.g., 30 photographs a week).

Cheap point-and-shoot digital cameras are available online for approximately \$100 a camera. I spent an average of \$72 per participant on disposable cameras and expenses associated with developing and printing film. Depending on your project's budget, purchasing digital cameras to supplement donated and borrowed cameras may still be more cost effective than using film cameras.

For projects that decide to use disposable cameras, despite their downsides, I highly recommend establishing a centralized drop-off location for cameras, such as a box at a church or local library, to avoid needing to rendezvous with each participant each time they turn in a camera. I would also recommend spending more time going over the mechanics of the disposable cameras, and ideally, not distributing participants' second cameras until their first rolls of film came back from the developer, so people could learn from their past work and allow it to inform their next rolls.

**CHALLENGE: Participants did not use consent forms consistently.**

Several participants did not like using the consent forms because it prevented them from shooting freely. Others reported not always having the consent forms with them when they wanted to shoot. Those participants who did use the consent forms did not always ensure they were completed correctly or in full; sometimes subjects signed their names but did not indicate how their photo could be used, for example. It was also difficult to monitor if participants followed what could be considered satisfactory informed consent procedures.

**RECOMMENDATION: Build in accountability systems.**

Project facilitators can ask participants to bring consent forms to each meeting, to ensure they are being completed according to the established protocol. Participants can also be instructed to turn in consent forms with every batch of film or digital files, so that the consent forms are built into their routine, and seen as requisite for turning in their images. Additionally, while we discussed the importance of consent at our first meeting, it would have been helpful to have revisited the topic more frequently throughout the topic.

**CHALLENGE: It was difficult to find a time to meet.**

Our group included students who attended classes during the day and in the evening; people who worked 9 to 5 and people who worked night shifts; young mothers and people charged with caring for other people's children. Every week, it was difficult to identify a time that worked for the majority of participants. Participants were frequently unable to make meetings, and I regularly met with participants one-on-one outside of established meeting times to fill them in on what they had missed. In effect, I attended approximately three times the number of meetings I had initially anticipated at the beginning of the project.

**RECOMMENDATION: Establish a time early on, and stick to it.**

At the first meeting, pick a reoccurring day and time to meet, and have participants block off their calendars for that time every week. As a group, brainstorm protocol for what you should do if you miss a meeting. Additionally, when first designing the project, consider identifying a group of potential participants whose schedules already align in some way, such as students who attend the same school, members of the same church, or people who attend regular meetings, rehearsals, or practices together. It would have been easier to arrange to meet before or after some such shared event.

For projects that involve adult women, childcare should also be provided.

## THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

### MUJERES UNIDAS LABORANDO POR EL ARTE (MULA)

As the project drew to a close, participants gathered to decide on an official name for the group. They settled on Mujeres Unidas Laborando por el Arte (United Women Working through Art), or MULA.

MULA consists of seven women who are residents of Greater New Haven and immigrants from Latin America. MULA spans three generations and four countries of origin. Over the course of the project, MULA met in a church basement, an apartment, a public library, a community center, a coffee shop, and an office building. MULA members walked, biked, and carpooled to meetings.

In anticipation of their upcoming exhibition, MULA members crafted artist's statements. Each responded to the question, *¿Quiénes somos?* Who are we? Some members of MULA share their thoughts below.<sup>5</sup>

• • •

*M is for Mujeres (Women): Despite all the abuse and mistreatment that past and current generations of women have experienced, the word "woman" is still so strong, powerful, and magnificent.*

*U is for Unidas (United): We are united for a cause. It's to say, come what may, we can count on the support of each and every one of us.*

*L is for Laborando (Working): We are fighting to be seen as valid and respected by everyone.*

*A is for Arte (Art): Each woman has art within and outside her. We aim to make this a group of women in the community who raise their voices.*

– Hazel

*We are a group of women from different parts of the world. We aim to show you that despite the distance from our countries of origin, we do not forget our roots.*

*To me, the name MULA means women who are warriors, who give everything for their families, who are caring and charismatic, who work hard, and who are defenders of justice and equality in our communities. Art and photography are similar; they allow us to use our hands to reveal all that we do.*

– Anonymous

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<sup>5</sup> Some quotations are edited for clarity, and some names have been withheld out of respect for participants' privacy.

*LIKE THE MULE: She comes from far and along the road, she remembers,  
On her back she carries her heavy load and the rope.  
Memories of youth with an aching heart  
Those nights, she brayed at the moon with a painful cry.  
However, the old mule refuses to be exploited.  
Be careful, Mr. Farmer, of her brutal kick.*

*We are women who practice memory through projects and gatherings, just as our predecessors have done. Through this, we do not forget our roots, our culture.*

*We are women who not only dream; rather, we build, working, day by day, for a better life.*

*More than anything, we are women who unite and create spaces with the bonds of solidarity, with ourselves, and with others who organize and fight.*

– Enedelia

*For selected works of MULA, see Appendix A.*

## DISCUSSION

### TOWARDS AN ETHICAL HUMAN RIGHTS PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography presents a problem for human rights work.

On the one hand, photographs are a uniquely powerful tool for human rights advocacy. They evoke emotion, arouse concern, rally activists, raise money, and spread like wildfire. Photography can provoke empathy and action in a way that even the most carefully crafted writing cannot.

Too often, however, photographs that are produced and circulated with the goal of advancing human rights goals are a disservice to those they purportedly aim to lift up. Human rights photography typically showcases suffering in order to cultivate moral concern or outrage and to shock viewers into action. Consider some of the most influential human rights photographs in recent history: the Vietnamese girl running away from a napalm attack in 1973; the vulture lurking behind an emaciated Sudanese child during a famine in 1993; the body of Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi washed ashore on a Turkish beach in 2015.<sup>6</sup> These photos are effective by some measures – they move the viewer, and to some extent, damn those responsible for the atrocities pictured. However, they also cede ground in other ways.

Photographs that center suffering cast the subjects as helpless, apolitical, and “other.” Traditional human rights photography often risks naturalizing the suffering of marginalized people, while reinforcing the racial and regional divide between those who view (white people, the Global North) and those who are viewed (people of color, the Global South) – those who are voyeurs of suffering, and those who experience it firsthand. (It is difficult to imagine, for example, an image of a white American child’s dead body being printed on the front page of major international publications.) Many of us have grown desensitized to violent images, and today, with an unprecedented quantity of images



Screenshot, Google Images, search term: “refugee”

<sup>6</sup> Nick Ut, “The Terror of War,” June 8, 1972; Kevin Carter, “The Vulture and the Little Girl,” March 1993; Nilüfer Demir, “Death of Alan Kurdi,” September 7, 2015.

and information flooding the Internet, human rights advocates are under pressure to produce increasingly distressing photographs in order to catch people's attention and secure the most clicks. Even the phrase "taking photos" illuminates that photography is often an exploitative process.

Still, the tremendous potential for photography to "do good" requires us to interrogate the problems associated with human rights photography, and to develop creative solutions that circumvent the many limitations and harms of the medium. Many photographers, artists, and scholars have already begun this work. I include a few examples of unconventional photography techniques, below. Each has problems and limitations but offers a unique response to the ethical problems posed by human rights photography. (See Appendix H for example photographs from the projects described below.)

• • •

**"Alternative portraits"** || South African photographer Gideon Mendel was forced to reconcile his photography with some ethical concerns when visiting a refugee camp in Calais, France, in 2016. Mendel describes:

I discovered that many refugees were hostile towards the camera, fearing that being identified could undermine their asylum claims and lead to deportation. They were sceptical that photography would ameliorate their situation, and I came to share their reservations, feeling that photography was failing in the face of the enormity of the refugee crisis, and that excessive photographic coverage was potentially more exploitative than helpful.<sup>7</sup>

Mendel's solution was to photograph objects he found in the camps, rather than people he encountered. He collected torn clothing and damaged furniture, and photographed the items in his London studio. Mendel refers to the images as "alternative portraits," which he hopes "portray the residents' humanity" without capturing their bodies in the flesh.

*What does it mean for an object to "portray someone's humanity"? What are the implications of using objects as stand-ins for people? What are the advantages and disadvantages of making photographs that are ostensibly about people, but in which people don't appear?*

• • •

**"Assisted self-portraits"** || Australian photographer Anthony Luvera's solution to the ethical problems of photographing vulnerable populations was to cede most artistic control to participants and help them to photograph themselves. His project, *Residency*, is the product of a long-term

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<sup>7</sup> Gideon Mendel, "Dzhangal," Gideon Mendel, 2016.

collaboration with people experiencing homelessness. Over the course of several sessions, Luvera taught participants the mechanics of using large-format camera equipment. Participants then photographed themselves using a cable release.<sup>8</sup>

*What is the role of the project facilitator in producing, mediating, contextualizing, and distributing images?*

• • •

**“Photovoice”** || Photovoice is a participatory photography technique that enables people to make work about their communities. Photovoice understands photography as a tool for community engagement and knowledge production. Dr. Caroline Wang, a leading scholar on photovoice, explains:

Photovoice is a process by which people can identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders, and potential catalysts for change, in their own communities. It uses the immediacy of the visual image to furnish evidence and to promote an effective, participatory means of sharing expertise and knowledge...

Photovoice has three main goals: (1) to enable people to record and reflect their community’s strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important issues through large and small group discussion of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers.<sup>9</sup>

Wang notes that unlike many other forms of knowledge creation and self-advocacy, photography can be a powerful tool for women, children, people who do not read or write, people who do not speak the dominant language, and other politically and socioeconomically disenfranchised groups.

Wang identifies photovoice as a powerful tool for conducting participatory needs assessments. While traditional needs assessments run the risk of reflecting what researchers deem important, photovoice-based needs assessments allow community members to identify, assess, and highlight concerns that they deem relevant and pressing in their own lives.

Researchers have also used photovoice as a qualitative research technique. In 2009, for example, researchers used photovoice in a participatory research project on youth gun violence in New Haven. Study participants were given cameras and asked to photograph their communities’

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<sup>8</sup> Gemma-Rose Turnbull, “[Anthony Luvera](#),” *Photography as a Social Practice*, May 15, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Caroline Wang and Mary Ann Burris, “Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment,” *Health, Education & Behavior* 24, no. 3 (June 1997): 369-370.



strengths and weaknesses; the photographs were used to stimulate focus group discussions.<sup>10</sup> Data from focus groups were then used to guide future research projects and programming.

Scholars have also noted that photovoice may empower participants, while also serving as a research tool. Strack, Magill, and McDonagh (2004) identified their photovoice project as an opportunity for at-risk youth “to build and confirm their abilities, to comment on their experiences and insights, and to develop a social morality for becoming a positive agent within their communities and society.”<sup>11</sup>

*What is gained by shifting the camera into the hands of the disenfranchised? What are the limitations of photography generated, in part or in full, to advance research goals? What is the role of the researchers in producing, mediating, contextualizing, and distributing the images collected in these studies?*

• • •

While reviewing these projects and projects like them, I returned again and again to the themes of agency and authorship. The photography projects that sat best with me – that struck me as the most ethical, perhaps – were those that least constrained participants’ agency and in which the people making the photos had a personal connection to the communities and experiences they represented.

As a result, I was most taken with the photovoice model, in which participants were largely free to photograph what they wished, and in which photographers made work about issues that affected them personally. Still, the model as I’d seen it implemented appeared to constrain participants’ agency in unhelpful ways. When photo-making takes place within a research context, it is necessarily bounded by parameters set by researchers and is conducted with their research goals in mind. Photovoice research claims to be subversive by understanding the participants as “experts” and “knowledge-makers”; however, it still positions participants as research subjects who produce data for researchers, who are understood to be the actual experts.

My project endeavored to remove the photovoice model from a research setting and re-conceptualize it as a community-driven project that prioritized the interests, desires, and experiences of participants, rather than project facilitators. I refer to this revised model as “community-based photography.”

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<sup>10</sup> “Understanding Youth Violence in New Haven: A Photovoice Project with Youth in New Haven” (New Haven Family Alliance and Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars Yale University School of Medicine, May 28, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Strack, Cathleen Magill, and Kara McDonagh, “Engaging Youth through Photovoice,” *Health Promotion Practice* 5, no. 1 (2004): 49.

Of course, the project was still, in part, guided and informed by my interests and biases, by virtue of my involvement with the project. I set parameters based on my timeline as a student, the resources to which I had access, and the expectations – explicit and underlying – with which I walked into the project.

Still, I did my best to design a framework and foster an environment in which participants could proceed according to their interests and desires, rather than my own. For one, participants were free to shoot whatever they liked; if they wanted a jumping-off point, they were prompted only with “make photos of what’s important to you.” But the scaffolding surrounding the photos, too, was designed to respect and preserve participants’ agency. At our first meeting, each participant described their interest in participating in the project and what they hoped to accomplish by becoming involved. Participants decided when and how often to meet. They decided on the name for the group and articulated their ideas about the project in their artists’ statements. They will take the lead in conceptualizing, organizing, and publicizing the exhibition next year. They retain the prints of the photographs they took and have control over the use and reproduction of the digital files. Eventually, they will decide what the life of the photos ought to look like after the exhibition.

The project has been, by my measure, a success. It has given participants a means of reflecting on and documenting their lives; sharing stories within and beyond their communities; and connecting with one another; and it has done so while respecting the agency and interests of those involved. It’s also been an enjoyable experience – we’ve had fun.

The question remains, though: Can community-based photography be an effective tool for human rights work?

The answer varies depending on what we mean by “effective tool.” For example, if we mean to ask, “Are images without suffering good at raising money?”, the answer may be no. Photographs that do not present the viewer with an emergency or crisis are not as effective at startling people into action. However, the fundraising power of images of suffering is also complex. The week before the photo of Alan Kurdi was published, the Swedish Red Cross received \$3,850 in donations; the week after, they received \$214,300. By the second week, however, donations were down to \$45,500; and by the sixth week, donations dwindled at \$6,500.<sup>12</sup> So while the fundraising power of images of suffering is unmistakable, the longer-term efficacy of those images is less clear.

If we mean to ask, “Can community-based photography projects be implemented in all contexts where human rights violations occur?”, the answer again, is likely no. Community-based photography projects require resources (e.g. phones, cameras, Internet access); presume that

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<sup>12</sup> Diane Cole, “[Study: What Was The Impact Of The Iconic Photo Of The Syrian Boy?](#)” (NPR), accessed December 15, 2017.

participants have time to take photos; and if implemented improperly or in high-risk settings, run the risk of jeopardizing the security of those involved. For these reasons, it is difficult to imagine community-based photography projects in conflict zones or in areas where participation in the project could lead to negative repercussions for participants.

However, if we ask, “Can community-based photography craft narratives that advance human rights goals?”, the answer, I’m confident, is yes.

Narratives lay the foundation for advocacy and direct the work that ensues. Some narratives present obstacles to human rights, like stories that cast immigrants as criminals or free-riders. Other narratives catalyze positive social change, like Dolores Huerta’s “*¡sí se puede!*” Many seemingly helpful narratives also pose problems, such as arguments that glorify Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients and incidentally cast adult immigrants as less worthy of our support. Given the profound impact of narratives on human rights work, it seems clear that those narratives should be crafted, in part or in whole, by those most affected by that work.

The stories MULA tells combat problematic narratives on multiple fronts. First and foremost, their photographs and writings refute the anti-immigrant narratives that have become increasingly normalized and legitimized in this political moment. But their stories also resist the narratives popularized in more progressive circles that cast immigrants as victims, or inherently innocent, or economic assets, and which strip immigrants of their complexity and political agency. When given an opportunity to represent themselves and their communities, the women of MULA did not reproduce one-dimensional narratives of suffering or deservedness. Instead, they told stories that are complex, in which the actors have agency, context, histories, politics, and identities.

Community-based photography is not a magic bullet. It does not eliminate the need for traditional photojournalistic accounts of human rights issues, nor does it resolve all of the problems and limitations wrapped up in the medium.

Still, community-based photography challenges us to rethink the terms and possibilities of visual human rights advocacy. And if stories matter for human rights work, then who’s holding the camera must matter, too.

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## APPENDIX A: SELECTED WORKS OF MULA



### **La guerrillera || Hazel**

Esta foto da una gran impresión de mucha autoridad por parte de las mujeres. La mujer toma su papel de dura y seria en la foto porque en muchas ocasiones la mujer lo necesita hacer, para poder ser respetada en este entorno de machismo. La mirada de una mujer segura, y completamente confiada en su poder.

*This photo conveys the strong authority of women. The woman takes on a strong and serious role in the photo, as women often must do to be respected in a machismo environment. This is the gaze of a confident woman, completely sure of her power.*

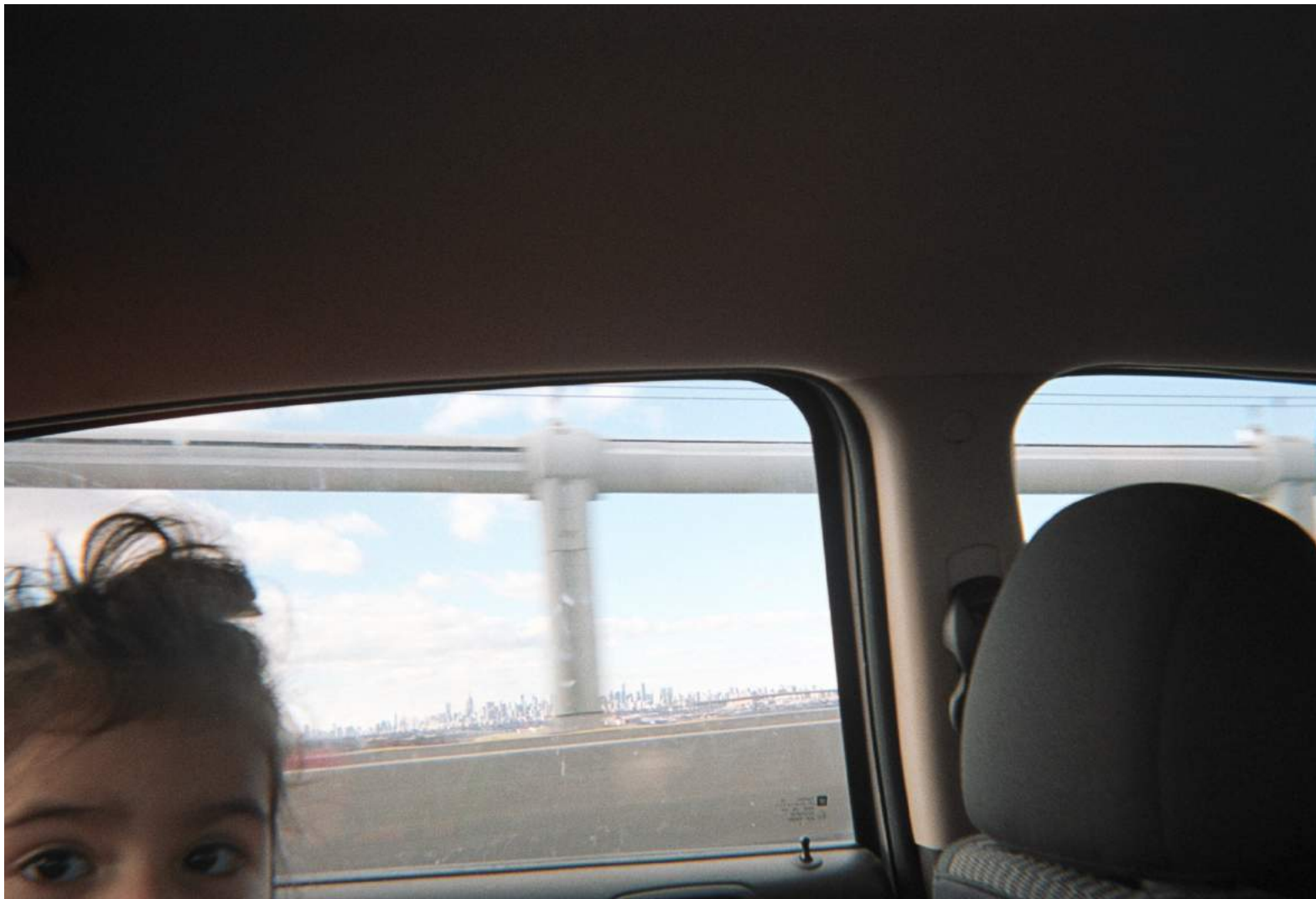




### Los cachineros || Anonymous

En esta foto podemos ver un Yonke de carros lo para mí se me hace tan parecido a un cachinero. Esto es un lugar en Ecuador de artículos menudos que se promocionan allí, conocidos también como cachivaches. Para quienes trabajan en ese lugar, donde los cachineros, este oficio se convierte en su fuente de ingresos para sobrevivir. Por eso y mucho mas me recuerda a este lugar en Nueva York porque muchos hispanos tienen sus puestos pequeños para poder demostrar que no se necesita ir por las calles para obtener dinero.

*In this photo, we see an auto parts lot. I think it looks really similar to a cachinero, a place in Ecuador where people sell little knickknacks, also known as cachivaches. For those who work at the cachineros, the job serves as the source of income they use to survive. They remind me of this place in New York for these reasons, and because many Hispanic people have their little stalls in order to show that they don't need to go to the streets to get money.*



**Una mirada que traspasa y unas palabras que no hablan** || Anonymous  
*A gaze that trespasses and words that don't speak*

En esta foto lo primero que observé fueron los ojos de mi hija. Los ojos de ella son la mirada que hace la foto muy atractiva e interesante porque en ella puedo ver seriedad y a la vez felicidad. Atrás de ella una lejanía donde se viene siendo la gran ciudad de Nueva York. Esto me hace sentir un sentimiento de nostalgia por la razón de sentirme en un país no tan mío. Pero sé que la mirada de mi hija atrapa todo eso porque sé que ella tiene la oportunidad de estar aquí y tener algo que yo en mi país natal no podría tener.

*In this photo, the first thing that I noticed were the eyes of my daughter. Her eyes are the gaze that make this photo so attractive and interesting, since I see in her seriousness and happiness at the same time. Behind her, in the background, is the big city of New York. This makes me feel nostalgic because I feel I am in a country that is not entirely mine. But I know that the gaze of my daughter captures all of this; I know that she has the opportunity to be here and have something that I couldn't have in my home country.*





**Benedicida con el trabajo || Anonymous**  
*Blessed with work*





**Todo lo bello florece**  
*Everything beautiful blossoms*

|| Vanesa

En esta foto se ven flores traspasando una cerca. Las flores ya florecieron de un color hermoso. Camino por esta cerca semanal. Para mi las flores representan a todo lo bello en el mundo, traspasando fronteras o superando barreras, porque podemos, y porque somos rico en cultura.

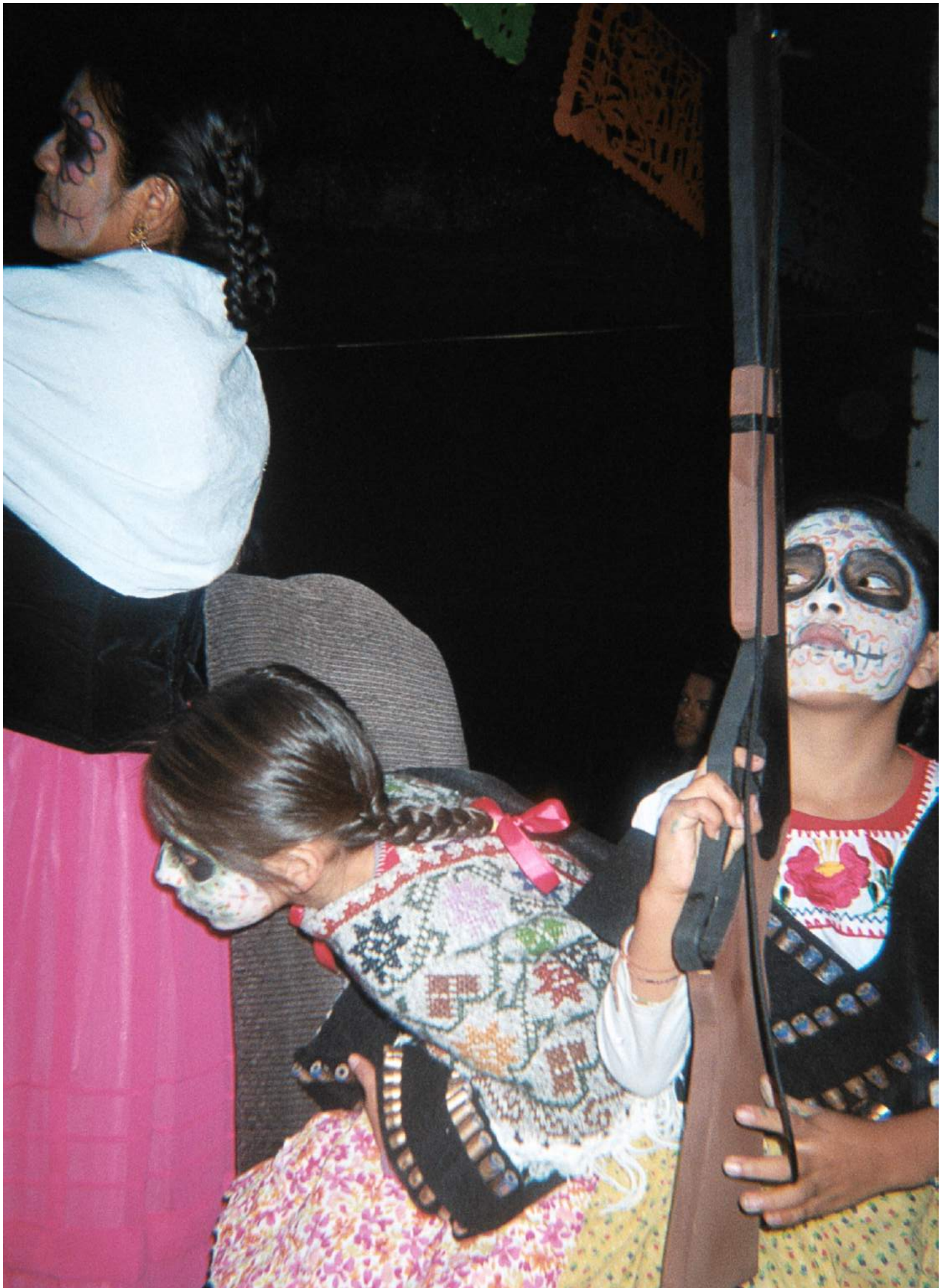
*In this photo, you can see flowers growing through a fence. The flowers have already blossomed into a beautiful color. I walk by this fence every week. For me, the flowers represent everything beautiful in the world, trespassing borders or overcoming barriers, because we can, and because we are rich in culture.*

**Dignidad y Rebeldía** || Enedelia  
*Dignity and rebellion*

Conozco dos niñas: Dignidad y Rebeldía  
Nada ni nadie las detiene; “Ni animal ni policía”  
Cuando mi corazón se desespera y me da coraje puro  
Solo me acuerdo que el futuro es suyo.  
Cuando me siento impotente  
Y las noticias me espantan,  
“Caramba, zamba la cosa”  
¡Estas niñas me levantan!

*I know two girls: Dignity and Rebellion  
Nothing and no one can detain them; "neither animal nor police"  
When my heart despairs and gives me pure courage  
I just remember that the future is theirs.  
When I feel helpless  
And the news frightens me,  
“Caramba, zamba la cosa”  
These girls lift me up!*





## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS FOR PARTICIPANTS (BILINGUAL)

*Consent forms adapted from examples in The Nova Scotia Participatory Food Costing Project (2012) and Photovoice Hamilton (2007). Translated into Spanish by Julia Char Gilbert with support from Ana Barros.*

### Form A: Informed Consent Form for Photovoice Participants

You are being invited to participate in our project, the Photovoice Project. This will involve your commitment to participate in a workshop, group dialogues, and taking photographs on your own time. The purpose of this project is to help immigrant women share their stories with the greater community. While this project may help raise awareness about the rights and wellbeing of immigrant women, no actual benefits from participating in the project can be guaranteed. The Photovoice Project is a project funded by the Schell Center for International Human Rights at Yale Law School.

Photovoice is a participatory photography project. It involves the participants of the project taking photographs that represent their individual perspectives and lived experiences. These pictures are then shared and discussed with other project participants and members of the Greater New Haven community. Descriptions or stories explaining the significance of the pictures can be attached to the photographs.

Participation in the Photovoice Project will follow the following timeline:

- Overview of the project and introductory workshop on photography
- *One week to shoot photographs on your own.*
- Group discussion about experiences participating in the project
- *Two weeks to shoot photographs on your own.*
- Look over and discuss photographs you have taken as part of the project. Select and caption your favorite photographs.
- Prepare for the exhibition.
- Participants' work will be shared in an exhibition that is open to the public.

Participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time without any repercussions. If this occurs, you are free to choose between withdrawing your photographs from the project or releasing them for use without your participation.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above stated purpose of the project, the agenda and your right to withdraw from participation.

Please sign this form if you agree to the terms of reference above and give your consent to participate in the Photovoice Project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*If you are less than 18 years old, your parent or guardian must give permission for you to participate in the Photovoice Project:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent or Guardian (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If you have any further questions, please contact [Project Facilitator] at [contact information].

### Formulario A: Consentimiento Informado para Participantes del Proyecto Fotovoz

Ud. está invitada a participar en nuestro proyecto, el Proyecto Fotovoz. El proyecto requiere que usted participe en una charla y discusiones en grupo, y que tome fotos por su cuenta afuera de nuestras reuniones. El objetivo del proyecto es de ayudar a mujeres inmigrantes a compartir sus historias con la comunidad. Mientras que el proyecto pueda concienciar la comunidad sobre los derechos y el bienestar de mujeres inmigrantes, no podemos garantizar ningunos beneficios cuantificables. El Proyecto Fotovoz es financiado por el Centro Schell para Derechos Humanos Internacionales de la Facultad de Derecho en Yale.

Fotovoz es un proyecto de fotografía participativa. Participantes tomarán fotos que representan sus perspectivas y experiencias personales. Ellas compartirán y discutirán sus fotos con otros miembros del grupo y con miembros de la comunidad de Gran New Haven. Participantes también podrán adjuntar descripciones o historias que explican la importancia de las fotografías.

Componentes del Proyecto Fotovoz:

- Introducción del proyecto y charla introductoria de fotografía.
- *Una semana para sacar fotos por su cuenta.*
- Discusión del grupo sobre sus experiencias como participantes en el proyecto.
- *Dos semanas para sacar fotos por su cuenta.*
- Revisión y discusión de las fotos que han tomado como parte del proyecto. Selección de fotos favoritas y con leyendas.
- Preparar para la exhibición.
- Exhibición: Participantes comparten las fotos como parte de una exhibición de fotografía que es abierta al público.

Participación es voluntaria, y usted puede negarse a participar o retirarse del proyecto en cualquier momento sin repercusiones. Si se retira del proyecto, usted puede retractarse de sus fotos, o permitir que el proyecto las use sin su participación.

Su firma abajo indica que usted entiende el objetivo del proyecto, los elementos del proyecto, y su derecho de retirarse de la participación.

Por favor, firme este formulario si está de acuerdo con los términos de referencia más arriba, y si da su consentimiento en participar en el Proyecto de Fotovoz.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del Participante (Con Letra de Molde)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Participante

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

*Si usted tiene menos de 18 años, su padre o guardián necesita dar permiso para participar en el Proyecto de Fotovoz:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del Padre/Guardián (Con Letra de Molde)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Padre/Guardián

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

Si tiene alguna pregunta, por favor contacte con [Name], [contact information].

## APPENDIX C: PHOTOGRAPHY GENERAL RELEASE FORM (BILINGUAL)

### *Form B: Photography General Release Form for Participants*

Are you willing to have your photographs used in **public exhibits, presentations, and reports** related to the Photovoice Project?

Yes

No

Are you willing to have your photographs published **online** as part of the Photovoice Project?

Yes

No

Do you want your **name** listed as the photographer? [First names only]

Yes

No

Please list any concerns:

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If you change your mind at any time, please contact the Photovoice facilitator, [name] at [contact information].

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Photographer (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Photographer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*If you are less than 18 years old, your parent or guardian must give permission for your photos to be used:*

Are you willing to have your child's photographs used in **public exhibits, presentations, and reports** related to the Photovoice Project? Circle:

Yes / No

Are you willing to have your child's photographs published **online** as part of the Photovoice Project? Circle:

Yes / No

Are you willing to have your child's **first name** listed as the photographer? Circle:

Yes / No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent or Guardian (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Formulario B: Consentimiento del Uso de Fotografías de Participantes**

¿Usted está dispuesta a que sus fotografías sean utilizadas en **exhibiciones públicas, presentaciones, e informes** sobre el Proyecto Fotovoz?

Sí  
 No

¿Usted está dispuesta a que sus fotografías sean utilizadas en **la internet** como parte del Proyecto Fotovoz?

Sí  
 No

¿Le gustaría que incluyamos su nombre como fotógrafa? (No incluirá su apellido)

Sí  
 No

Por favor anote cualquieras preocupaciones o preguntas:

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Si usted cambia de opinión en cualquier momento, por favor contacte la facilitadora del proyecto, [name]: [contact information].

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Nombre de la Fotógrafa (Con Letra de Molde)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Firma de la Fotógrafa

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Fecha

*Si usted tiene menos de 18 años, su padre o guardián necesita dar permiso para usar sus fotos:*

¿Usted está dispuesta a que sus fotografías sean utilizadas en **exhibiciones públicas, presentaciones, e informes** sobre el Proyecto Fotovoz?

Sí  
 No

¿Usted está dispuesta a que sus fotografías sean utilizadas en **la internet** como parte del Proyecto Fotovoz?

Sí  
 No

¿Le gustaría que incluyamos su nombre como fotógrafa? (No incluirá su apellido)

Yes  
 No

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Nombre del Padre/Guardián (Con Letra de Molde)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Firma del Padre/Guardián

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Fecha



## APPENDIX D: SUBJECT CONSENT FORM (BILINGUAL)

### *Form C: Subject Consent Form*

You are invited to have your picture taken by one of the photographers involved with the Photovoice Project. The purpose of the Photovoice Project is to help immigrant women share their stories with the Greater New Haven community. The Photovoice Project is a project funded by the Schell Center for International Human Rights at Yale Law School.

Pictures taken in Photovoice will be shown to others in order to raise awareness about the experiences of immigrant women in the Greater New Haven area. This may include gallery displays, presentations, reports, and/or websites. Professors, students, policymakers, and people from your community might see your photo. People viewing the pictures may recognize you, but your name and contact information will not be attached to the photograph. Photographs will not be used to make money.

If you have any further questions, please contact [Project Facilitator] at [contact information].

Are you willing to have your photograph taken by a participant of Photovoice?

Yes  
 No

Are you willing to have your photograph used in **public exhibits, presentations, and reports** related to the Photovoice Project?

Yes  
 No

Are you willing to have your photographs published **online** as part of the Photovoice Project?

Yes  
 No

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Subject Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Photographer (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

*If you would like a copy of the photograph taken of you, please write down your email address:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address (Optional)

*If you are less than 18 years old, your parent or guardian must give permission for your photo to be taken:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Parent or Guardian (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date

**Formulario C: Consentimiento del Sujeto de la Foto**

Usted está invitado a ser sujeto de una foto tomada por una fotógrafa del Proyecto Fotovoz. El objetivo del proyecto es de ayudar a mujeres inmigrantes a compartir sus historias con la comunidad. El Proyecto Fotovoz es financiado por el Centro Schell para Derechos Humanos Internacionales de la Facultad de Derecho en Yale.

Fotos tomadas como parte del Proyecto Fotovoz serán compartidas con otros, para concienciar la comunidad sobre las experiencias de mujeres inmigrantes en la región de Greater New Haven. Esto podrá incluir exhibiciones, presentaciones, informes, y sitios de web. Profesores, estudiantes, políticos, y miembros de su comunidad podrán ver su foto. Es posible que personas que vean su foto le reconozca, pero no adjuntamos ni su nombre ni su información de contacto a la foto. Nadie usará su foto para ganancias financieras.

Si tiene alguna pregunta, por favor contacte a [name]: [contact information].

¿Usted está comfortable con que un participante del Proyecto Fotovoz tome su foto?

Sí  
 No

¿Usted está dispuesta a que su fotografía sea utilizada en **exhibiciones públicas, presentaciones, y informes** sobre el Proyecto Fotovoz?

Sí  
 No

¿Usted está dispuesta a que sus fotografías sean publicadas en **la Internet** como parte del Proyecto Fotovoz?

Sí  
 No

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Nombre del Sujeto (Con Letra de Molde)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Firma del Sujeto

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Nombre de la Fotógrafa (Con Letra de Molde)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Fecha

*Si le gustaría una copia de su foto, por favor anote su correo electrónico:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Correo Electrónico (Opcional)

*Si usted tiene menos de 18 años, su padre o guardián necesita dar permiso para aparecer en una foto:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Nombre del Padre/Guardián (Con Letra de Molde)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Firma del Padre/Guardián

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Fecha

## APPENDIX E: PRIVATE PROPERTY RELEASE FORM (BILINGUAL)

### *Form D: Private Property Release Form*

I give permission for \_\_\_\_\_ to take photographs on my property as part of the Photovoice Project. By signing my name below, I understand that this photograph may be used at some point in the future for a public display, include gallery displays, presentations, reports, and/or websites..

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### *Formulario D: Consentimiento de Sacar Fotos en Propiedad Privada*

Le permito a \_\_\_\_\_ (nombre de fotógrafa) que tome fotografías en mi propiedad como parte del Proyecto Fotovoz. Entiendo que es posible que esta foto será utilizada en el futuro como parte de exhibiciones públicas, presentaciones, informes, y sitios de web.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del Propietario (Con Letra de Molde)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del Propietario

\_\_\_\_\_  
Fecha

## APPENDIX F: “IF YOU ARE STOPPED” HANDOUT

### **Si es parada mientras está tomando fotos:**

If you are stopped while taking photos:

The person you have stopped is a participant in the Photovoice Project, a participatory photography project sponsored by the Schell Center for International Human Rights at Yale Law School. They have the right to take photographs on public property under U.S. law. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the project facilitator, [name], at [contact information].

## APPENDIX G: “PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS” HANDOUT (BILINGUAL)

### Consejo de Fotografía

(adaptado de *Photovoice Research in Education and Beyond* por Amanda Latz)

- Mantenga la luz del sol a la espalda mientras está tomando fotos al aire libre.
- Use el flash por la noche y adentro. (Empuje el botón para que la luz roja encienda.)
- Mire por el visor para capturar la escena entera que le gustaría tomar.
- Preste atención a los bordes de sus fotos. ¿Qué quiere incluir? ¿Qué no?
- Puede usar la cámara verticalmente o horizontalmente.
- ¡Sea creativo!
- Se prohíbe sacar fotos pornográficas o que contienen actividad ilegal.
- La seguridad es lo más importante – no se ponga en situaciones peligrosas, y no entre a propiedad privada sin autorización.
- Si alguien le para y le pregunta porqué está tomando fotos, puede explicar el proyecto o darle el papel de información que empieza “Si es parada mientras está tomando fotos...”
- Asegúrese de que tiene todos los formularios necesarios cuando toma fotos: Formulario C (para sujetos) y Formulario D (para dueños/dueñas de propiedad privada).
- Tome notas para recordar cuales sujetos aparecen en cuales fotos, y para anotar sus pensamientos mientras toma las fotos.

Si tiene alguna pregunta, contacte con [name], [contact information].

### Photography Tips

(adapted from *Photovoice Research in Education and Beyond* by Amanda Latz)

- Keep sunlight to your back when taking photos outdoors.
- Use the flash when taking photos at night or indoors. (Press the button on the front of the camera and wait for the red light to appear).
- Look through the viewfinder to capture the entire scene you would like to photograph.
- Pay attention to the edges of your photos - what do you want to include? What don't you want to include?
- Feel free to use the camera horizontally or vertically.
- Be creative!
- You may not take photographs that are pornographic or contain illegal activity.
- When taking photographs, do not place yourself in dangerous situations or trespass.
- If someone stops you and ask you about why you are taking photographs, feel free to explain the project or give them the information sheet that begins “Si es parada mientras está tomando fotos...” (“If you are stopped while taking photos...”)
- Be sure to have all necessary forms on hand when you engage in photography: Form C (for subjects), Form D (for private property owners), and the “If You Are Stopped” sheet.
- Take notes in order to remember which subjects appear in which photos, and to record your thoughts while shooting.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact [name] at [contact information].

## APPENDIX H: UNCONVENTIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECTS: EXAMPLE WORKS



"Check Shirt" || Gideon Mendel (2016)



“Assisted Self-Portrait of Maggie Irvine” || Maggie Irvine / Anthony Luvera (2011)



“My middle school is a bad school. The ceiling is falling apart and it is not good.”  
Youth Photographer, Age 12 (Strack 2004)