

# Why My Family Counts in the 2020 Census

## SELECTIONS FROM THE POETRY, ESSAY, ART & AUDIO/VIDEO CONTEST



Sofia Roma Morrow

“No one should disappear  
Everyone should count  
Community in fear  
That out. . .”

— *Bobbi Brown*

“We have knees  
that bend with pleas.  
We have hands  
that clap like bands.  
We have mouths  
that bleed multiple tongues  
of fire. . .”

— *Geraldine Urgel*



Maygie Li

## ABOUT THE CONTEST

By getting the young people of San Francisco thinking about what the census is and how it would affect their families, the youth contest titled “Why My Family Counts in the 2020 Census” set the stage not merely for this census but for the next one, too. In 10 years, this contest’s youngest participant will be 22 years old, an adult, possibly responsible for filling out his own census questionnaire.

Inviting youth to participate in San Francisco’s 2020 census effort has been a journey of discovery and empowerment as teenagers and young adults responded to this civic cause in unique and sometimes deeply moving ways.

We launched the contest with an ethnic media briefing September 27, 2019, on “Why Counting Kids Matters Most” that featured Mayra Alvarez of Children’s Partnership and leading census advocates and representatives from youth-serving agencies.

With the help of these agencies, EMS coordinated 10 workshops, which generated almost 100 submissions. At one workshop, students spontaneously got up and performed a skit. At another, a high schooler produced a metallic sculpture, explaining how the leaves on the tree exemplified the idea of a demographic count. At others, students put colored pencils to paper to create stunning artwork within an hour. A young woman at an evening workshop wrote the word “trauma” as a human face bordered by police tape. “This is about trauma in my family, trauma in the city,” she explained. “I hope the census will make it visible.”

At every workshop, the theme of why my family counts inspired stories about pain, sacrifice, conflict, even death and, ultimately, celebration of family. What had started as a contest to ensure young people got counted wound up being a powerful message by young people about why parents count.

This project was made possible through the sponsorship of San Francisco’s Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) and the encouragement of Adrienne Pon, its director. We wish to pay special tribute to the teachers, youth counselors and educators who opened the door to their students for us. We thank all the participants for their artistic contributions.

With gratitude,  
Sandy Close, Executive Director  
Jaya Padmanabhan, Project Manager  
Jessica Martin, Project Coordinator  
Ethnic Media Services, San Francisco

Sponsored by:  
San Francisco Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA)  
and the #SFCOUNTS campaign

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**SF** ★ 2020  
census  
**COUNTS**

 **ETHNIC MEDIA SERVICES**

*Promoting cross cultural communications*

## CONTEST JUDGES



*“The entries reflected a beautiful diversity of our lived experiences, and a deep understanding that we are all in this together—and stronger for it.”*

### **Amy Kisch**

Amy Kisch is the founder and artistic director of Social Impact for Art+ Action, a coalition that encourages civic participation in the art, creative, community, business, technology, philanthropy, activist and government sectors. She launched the arts-driven, multilingual 2020 Census campaign COME TO YOUR CENSUS, and is the founder and CEO of AKArt Advisory agency, an independent art consultant, curator, and strategic specialist.



*“Cheers to these amazing young artists! — all winners!”*

### **Josue Rojas**

Josue Rojas is the executive director of Acción Latina — a nonprofit in San Francisco’s Mission District — as well as a journalist, arts leader and educator. Rojas’ creative practice is based on using symbol making (visual art) and documentation (journalism/video/ written) and their simultaneous presentation. Investigations of identity, immigration, culture, and community weave themselves through his projects and creative process.



*“Judging these entries reminds me of why I got into youth communications and now journalism in the first place.”*

### **Malcolm Marshall**

Malcolm Marshall is a multimedia journalist, musician, and DJ based in Richmond, Calif. Since 2011, he has published and is the executive editor of the youth-led, bilingual (English/Spanish) community news outlet Richmond Pulse, and producer of the Street Soldiers radio program on 106KMEL. Before leading Richmond Pulse, Marshall spent more than 10 years as a reporter and multimedia producer at New America Media.



*“The entries were thoughtful, knowledgeable and poignant.”*

### **Janet Tom**

Janet Tom is a librarian in the Business, Science and Technology Department at the San Francisco Public Library. She recently was honored as one of the 10 librarians in the country to receive the “I Love My Librarian” Award for her innovative “Death and Dying” series. She also has worked at City College of San Francisco and Queens Public Library in New York.

# WINNERS

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## — My Family —

Parker Burrows



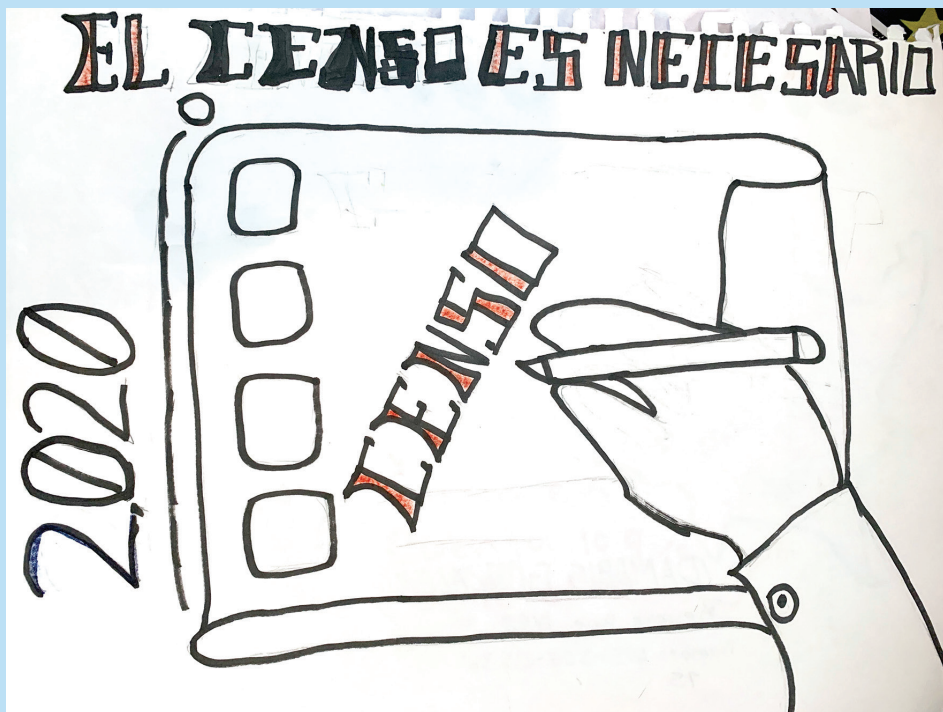
My family is split in half. One side is fully Jewish, the other is fully Filipino and I just exist in the middle. I live with my Filipino mother and my Jewish father in San Francisco, and it's been a positive experience. They are both compassionate and wonderful people that want to see me succeed and be healthy more than anything. My father is a former lawyer who quit his job when he realized it didn't make him happy. This inspires him to allow me to find opportunities that will make me happy and fulfilled in life. He has a great sense of humor, which has shaped his optimistic view of the world. My mother is a high school teacher, and is firm but fair. She is the more authoritative figure in the family, but like my father, exercises compassion and is always a person I want to talk to. The beautiful part of our household is that it is a place where all feel safe and comfortable. We exist very happily in the city, and I could not ask for better parents.

The cultural divide of our family is not quite a

barrier, but a bridge. We celebrate both Filipino and Jewish traditions, and the acceptance of both cultures inspires us to be accepting of all cultures. Spending Hanukkah with my mom or cooking adobo with my dad feels perfectly natural.



The importance of counting each family and person comes from cultural celebration. By finding out which cultures are underrepresented in their population and traditions, more can be done to represent these people and make them feel welcome. I would love to see Filipinos be more celebrated in San Francisco, and I'm sure that other people feel similarly. Representation is incredibly important, and these countings are a step towards making everyone feel like they belong in the city.



Damaris Gonzalez  
*The Census Is Necessary*

— Why My Family Counts in the 2020 Census —

Sharon Chen



San Francisco has  
Diversity of many  
Races and cultures

No one is the same  
Many different people  
Should not be left out

Every family  
Has a different amount  
Of people and love

My parents and I  
Are immigrants from China  
My brother is not

We immigrated  
Here in two thousand and six  
On April thirteenth

My younger brother  
Was born in San Francisco  
In two thousand eight

We have been  
Living in Chinatown since  
We immigrated

Not everyone lives  
In the same area of  
San Francisco

Every family  
Has different conditions  
We cannot assume

Every culture  
Has different traditions  
That they celebrate

All families have  
Different morals parents  
Teach to their children

Everyone in a  
Family is unique in  
Their own way, not same.

Statistically  
Leaving someone out would lead  
To some false data

Not accurately  
Including everyone  
Is not a census



*Everyone should be counted.  
By that it means you  
should be counted too.*

**Charis Ann DeDios**  
*Everyone Should Be Counted*

— No One Should Disappear —

Bobbi Brown



No one should disappear  
Everyone should count  
Community in fear  
That's out.

2020 Census  
Include all of mine  
Bluefaces for the city; Makes sense  
Unity I am inline

The Bay I love my city love my family  
Closer than dreads  
Sweet like candy.



India Bennett  
*Through My Eyes*



## — Why Does My Family Count in 2020 Census? —

Misha Bruno



My mom is an immigrant from Russia and my dad was born here in the United States and has traveled from New Orleans where he was born to St. Louis to California. My mom was born in Russia during the time of Communism and then eventually fled the country at 18 and went to Italy and spent six months where she defected and started the immigration process through the help of the IRC (The International Rescue Committee) and moved to New York for a few years before coming to California where she eventually met my dad.

My family is different from most American families because we are a wine making family, my dad makes wine and my mom designs the labels. My entire family is very well educated. My mom has two college degrees in art and my dad has a degree in Viticulture & Enology (winemaking). Another thing that is different about us is that my dad has to drive 52 miles to work because he works in Napa CA because there is nowhere to make wine in San Francisco. My family is also large, I have six cousins, five uncles, four aunts, two grandmas, two grandpas, and one sister.

If I had to describe my family to a total stranger I would say that they are a fun family and we do

many things together that are enjoyable. When it comes to sports we can get pretty competitive, for example when it comes to rivalries we take the San Francisco Giants and Los Angeles Dodgers rivalry to heart (we hate the Dodgers). Like all families we argue sometimes, but in the end we all make up and love each other very much.

In my family I am closest to my grandma and sister because my grandma and I have played and hung out together since I was born and we have developed a special bond over the years. My sister and I are close because it is my job when she is having a bad day to comfort her. I get to spend lots of time with her. I babysit her sometimes and will always protect her and make sure she is not hurt.

If I had to leave my family I would miss them desperately. The members I would miss the most would be my parents, sister, and grandma because I am the closest with them. My grandma is exactly that — a great mother to me. My sister is my best friend, and my parents because they give me everything and love me so much. I think my job is to be a good son and grow into the best person I can be and I'd hate to be apart from my parents because I want to show them.

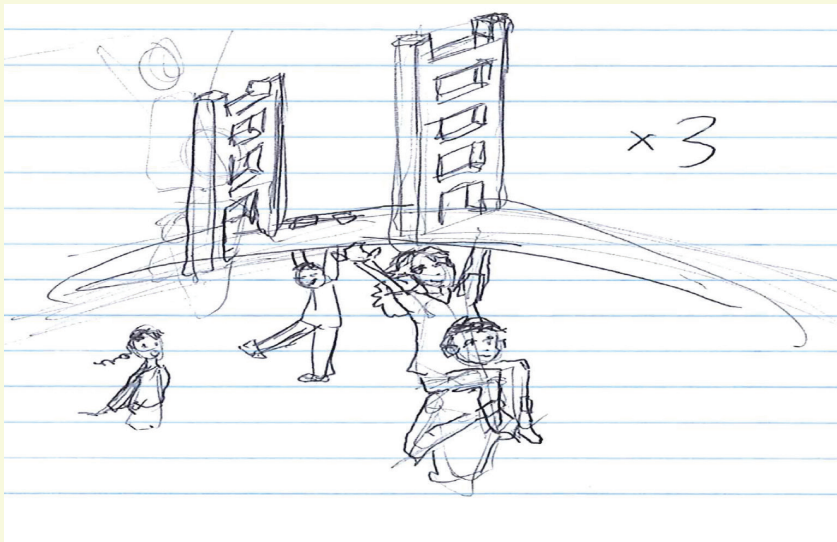
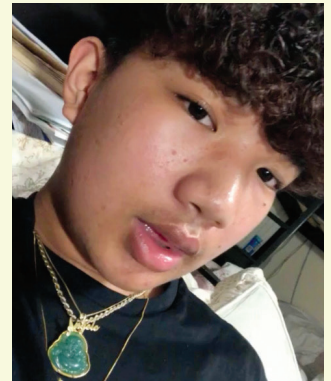
Akiyah Courtney  
*San Francisco, Census 2020*







Angelo Gerard Ubas  
*Red Painting with Birds*



**Kamiko Komori**

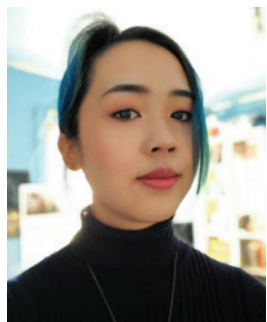
*Without my family...*

*“Father: No one to bridge the gap between Japan and America, through the common ground that is food”...*



## — Why My Family Counts in the 2020 Census —

Shirley Chan



My family consisted of me, my sister, my dad, and my mom. My parents were born in China eight years apart. They met each other through a friend and soon dated, married, and had my sister. A year after my sister's birth, they moved to

San Francisco, leaving my sister to my grandparents, and had me. A few years later after my parents established a somewhat stable home, my sister was brought to the United States.

Being from different generations and growing up in different cultures, there would often be fights between my parents and my sister and I. Especially with my lack of fluency of my native tongue, communication often goes haywire. Yet, at the end of the day we would cry and make up.

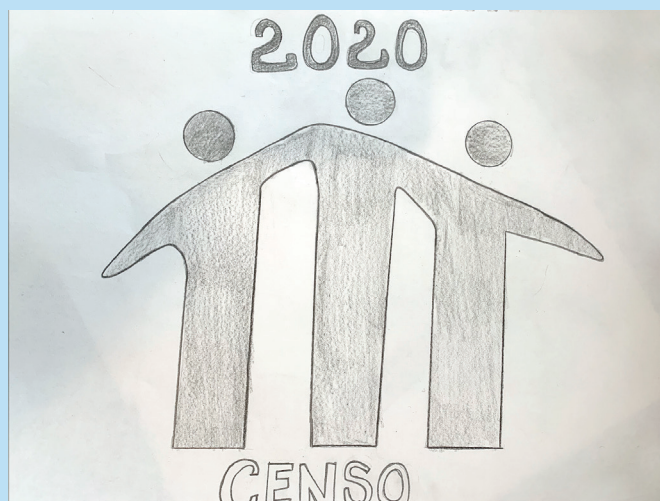
Despite all of this, we were a happy family. We didn't have a lot of money to spend to go to different places to bond but there were many happy memories that we built. I can still remember the times where we played cards together and teased the loser, and we would continue playing until it was time for my mom to cook dinner. I remember the times where we would huddle into a blanket and they would joke about how I am the only one who would be able to run for president then we

move our focus to the dramas that my mom picked up at the public library.

This soon changed when my mom was diagnosed with late-stage cancer. It changed everything. Everything we did was affected by her cancer and there were times where we were scared of our own mortality. She would remind us that her death is just waiting around the corner, bitter at life and bitter at the doctors that brushed off her symptoms as a cold a few years back. Even without her reminder, her deteriorating body was a constant sign of her illness. This went on for four years as she tried multiple treatments, anything she could get her hands on for the slim chance that she may live. This year she took the last treatment her doctor can give to her and it failed. She went into hospice care and was treated well by the staff assigned to her. Soon, she was in the state where she could not be left alone and my father had to leave his job and spend his days at home by her side. She died in October. We all thought that her strength would keep her lasting at least through the winter but reality hit us that no amount of strength and determination can save you from the grasps of death.

Like the loss of anything, her death made us come closer together. We held each other together when we all were breaking into pieces. But we continue to live on, like how she would've wanted us to, and grasp at the opportunities that life gives us.

**Oscar Herrera**  
*Census 2020*



# The Immigrant Life

Geraldine Urgel



I am a Filipino, a Filipino immigrant  
I come from the land of the eastern seas.

We have knees  
that bend with pleas.  
We have hands  
that clap like bands.  
We have mouths  
that bleed multiple tongues of fire.  
We have feet  
that tread with beat  
and eyes  
That see the skies.

We've travelled above trees,  
We've travelled across lands,  
beyond seas  
to be free.  
To be free from poverty,  
And to start a new community  
And extended family.

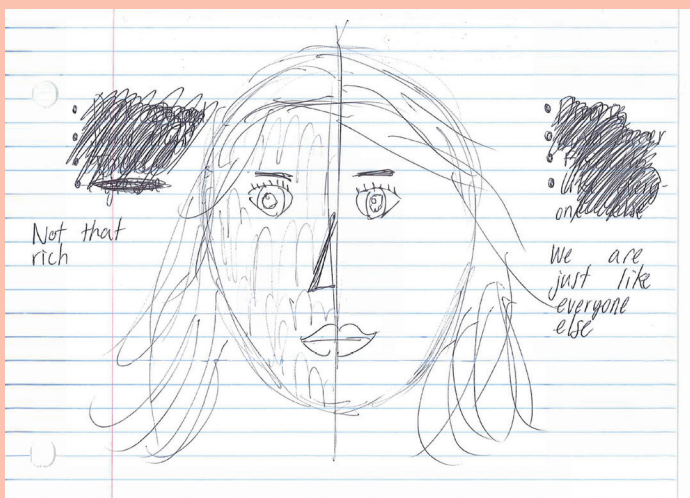
We the bottom of the pyramid,  
the tailbone of the spine,  
We are the minority,  
A variety of immigrants of this country,  
We come in solidarity  
With the majority that feed our society.

We will read and lead  
We will walk and talk  
We will break and make  
And we will take the risk  
And make mistakes

Yesterday, we fought,  
Our hearts filled with yearn  
Today, we toil  
That Tomorrow we will earn

So bid bye to your rest,  
For this is our test,  
That we need to protest,  
To earn the rest.

The ship has sailed  
To the land of the free  
But little did we know  
The price we will pay  
Are the seeds that we sow



## Estefani Dujardin

*"... We are Brazilian and a small family. We live in the Tenderloin on the edge of downtown. I think my family counts, because everyone should be included."*



Maygie Li  
*Census Face*





## — Why My Family Counts in the 2020 Census —

Winnie Chan

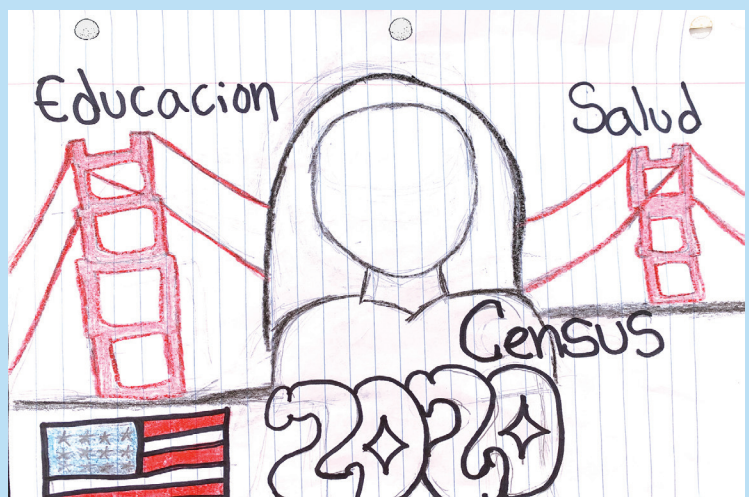
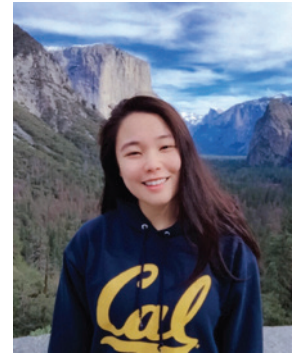


I have lived in the Portola District for 16 years — practically ever since I was born. My mother says that when she first immigrated from China to the United States, she decided to move to specifically the Portola District primarily to seek shelter and assistance from family members. However, components like convenience in public transportation, public schools, and varieties of supermarkets, also played a key component. When my mother first arrived to the U.S., she did not have the financial ability to afford an automobile so public transportation became her means to go from one place to another.

Given that the Portola District had a history of being an agricultural society, supermarkets and Farmers' Markets were quickly established. Besides from shopping in supermarkets along the San Bruno Avenue, my mother often brought me along to the Alemany Farmers' Market that operated every Saturday, rain or shine, to not disappoint their consumers. I remember when my mom first brought me on one of the Saturdays that the farmers operated on, it was filled with so much diversity and culture everywhere I turned. It seemed more like a festival rather than a market due to the foreign music that played from each shed to reflect their culture.

Growing up in the Portola District, I am fortunate enough to say that Portola has definitely broadened my mindset to one of diversity and acceptance of other people. Throughout my years living in the Portola and going to school in the neighborhood, I rarely heard racist or discriminating comments thrown towards one another, and that makes me feel proud for growing up in a surrounding where the community is so accepting regardless of ethnicity and culture.

There are many different ethnicities and cultures that are freely expressed in Portola District, whether it's through music during a Farmers' Market or the different restaurants and supermarkets along San Bruno Avenue. The Portola District also naturally caused me to feel like this was the safest place for me to be in, simply because the Portola District is the most familiar place I know and spend the most time in — it was home and this is why my family and I should be counted for the 2020 census.



Melissa Martinez  
*Census 2020*

— Counted Out —

Elijah Ladeki



COUNTED OUT As we are left out, Uncounted, sitting in the projects Self Doubting  
unsure of what's next calling friends family because we all living with less.

What problems have you addressed i can't begin to stress to you how much i regret

growing up in a place where they leave you to rest. i would look at my single mother and wonder why she would stress

i got older and came to my Census they counting us out tryna give us a mention

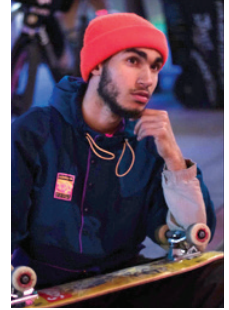
maybe this money will ease all the tension

i just want my family in a better place

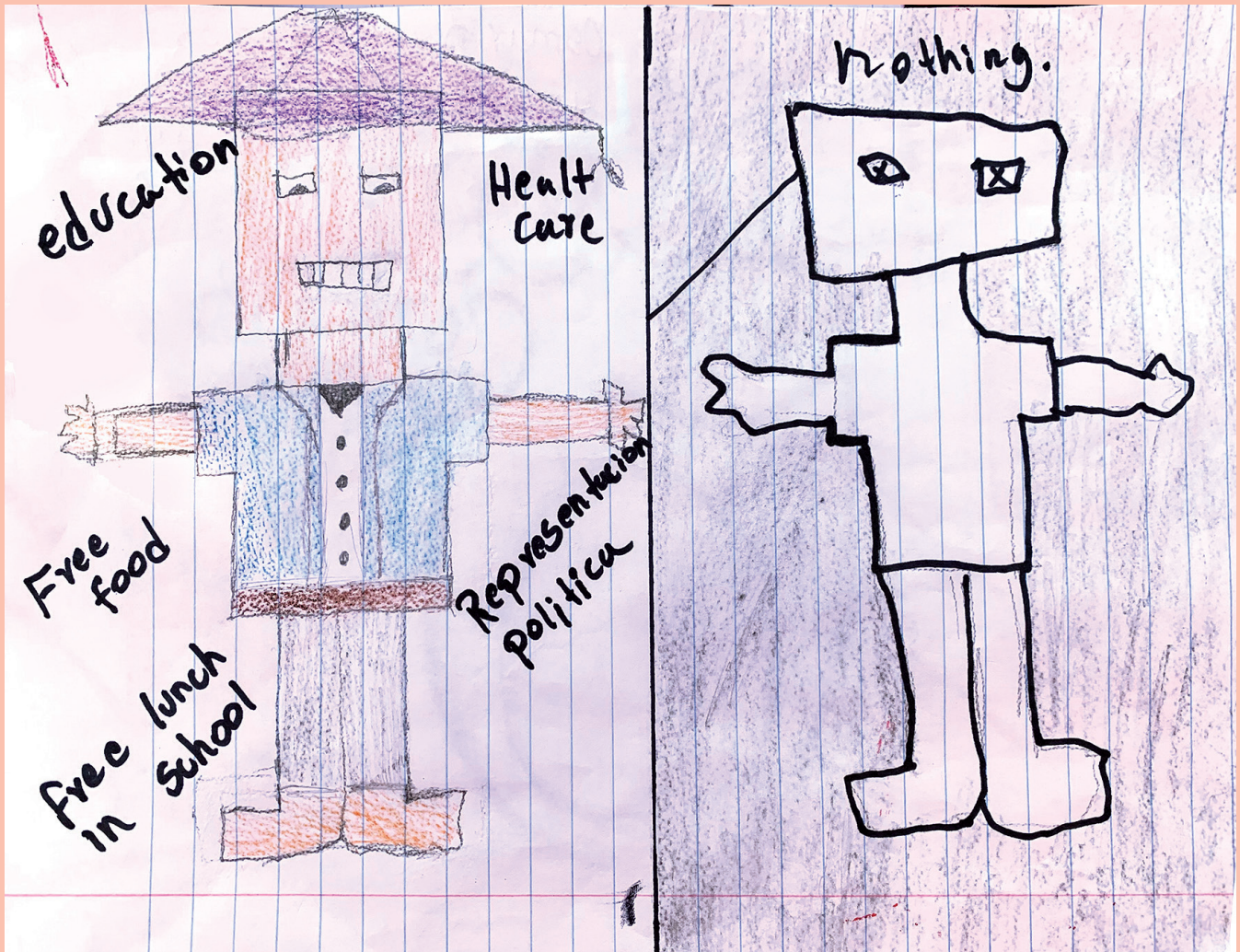
i want them to have the resources to survive the day to day

it's been way too long putting our rights on lay-away

we deserve to make a change coming close we fall away



**Brandon Perez**  
*Everyone Must Take the Census*



Osmar Domingo  
Ramos  
*Everything to Nothing*  
☆



— El Censos es un conteo —

Marc Torres



El Censos es un conteo  
para nuestro bienestar  
salud educación recursos  
para mejorar la nueva  
generación.

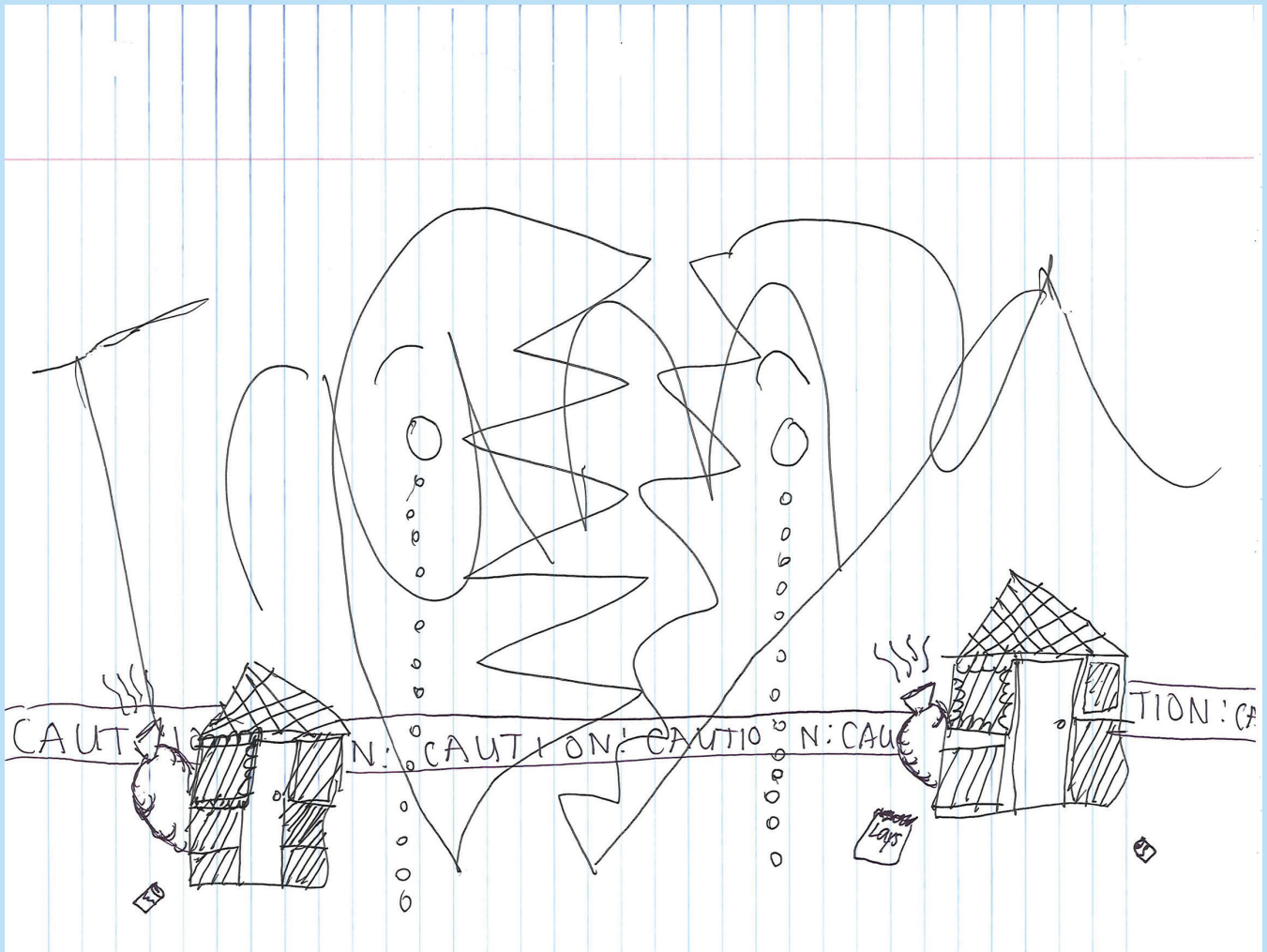
No tener que esperar  
turno o copa en algún lugar  
para estos recursos usar.

Si no te haces contar  
al gobierno no le vas a importar  
y más tendrás que trabajar para  
tus metas alcanzar. Escuses  
de recursos sufriras por  
no hacerte contar y tu familia  
lo puede lamentar. Aprovecha  
que esto no pasa cada fecha.

Sabias que cada diez años  
podemo contarnos y de esa  
manera el gobierno poder escucharlos.  
Bensate para cuando necesites  
ayuda o recurso sea seguro  
y no esperar a que muramos  
algunos.

Marc Torres





**Nashae Mims**

*Trauma*



*“This drawing was a personal touch of what my life is full of regarding trauma in my life and seeing this throughout generations repeatedly and the word trauma is written in the background while a broken heart streaming tears is in the center, The drawing also includes my traumatic experience seen in my neighborhood, living in the projects since a baby, full of gunshots, caution tape, abuse, and the environment not being clean and my neighborhood surrounded with trash. The census is very important and will help my community by including everyone so that they feel they have a purpose in life and so that families can get the support they need.”*



**Sofia Roma Morrow**

*You Deserve to Be Counted*





## — Why My Family Counts —

Bian Alawadi



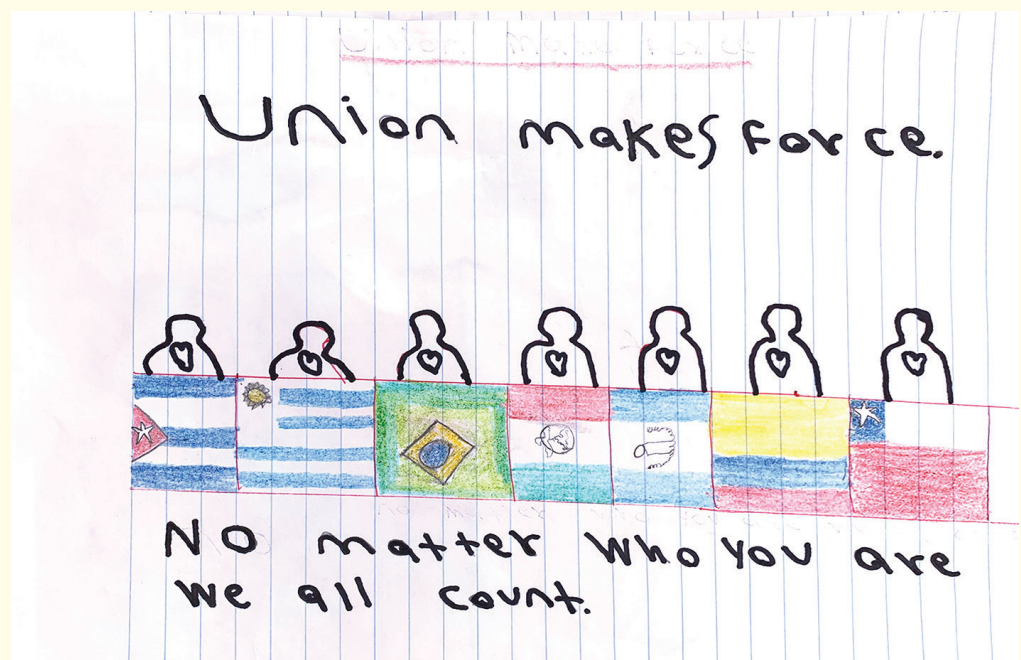
I am an Yemeni American student living with a family of 9. My hardworking father, my caring mother, my 3 older sisters, my 3 younger brothers. Growing up in America made me realize that I am different and that I will be underestimated all the time. But on the other hand, I have people whom I can relate to. What's different about my family is that we hold onto our religion/culture and believe that education is the key to success. My parents were immigrants, they thought of breaking stereotypes and raising an educated family. We live in a society where people are privileged based on their race and others are discriminated because of their background. We were taught that there will be ups and downs but it still didn't stop us from pursuing our dreams. That's what I loved about my parents. They were our motivation and support system. My parents were not rich but always made sure we had everything we needed and for that I am forever grateful.



**Cristofyr Gomez**  
*Everyone Counts  
Like Every Raindrop*

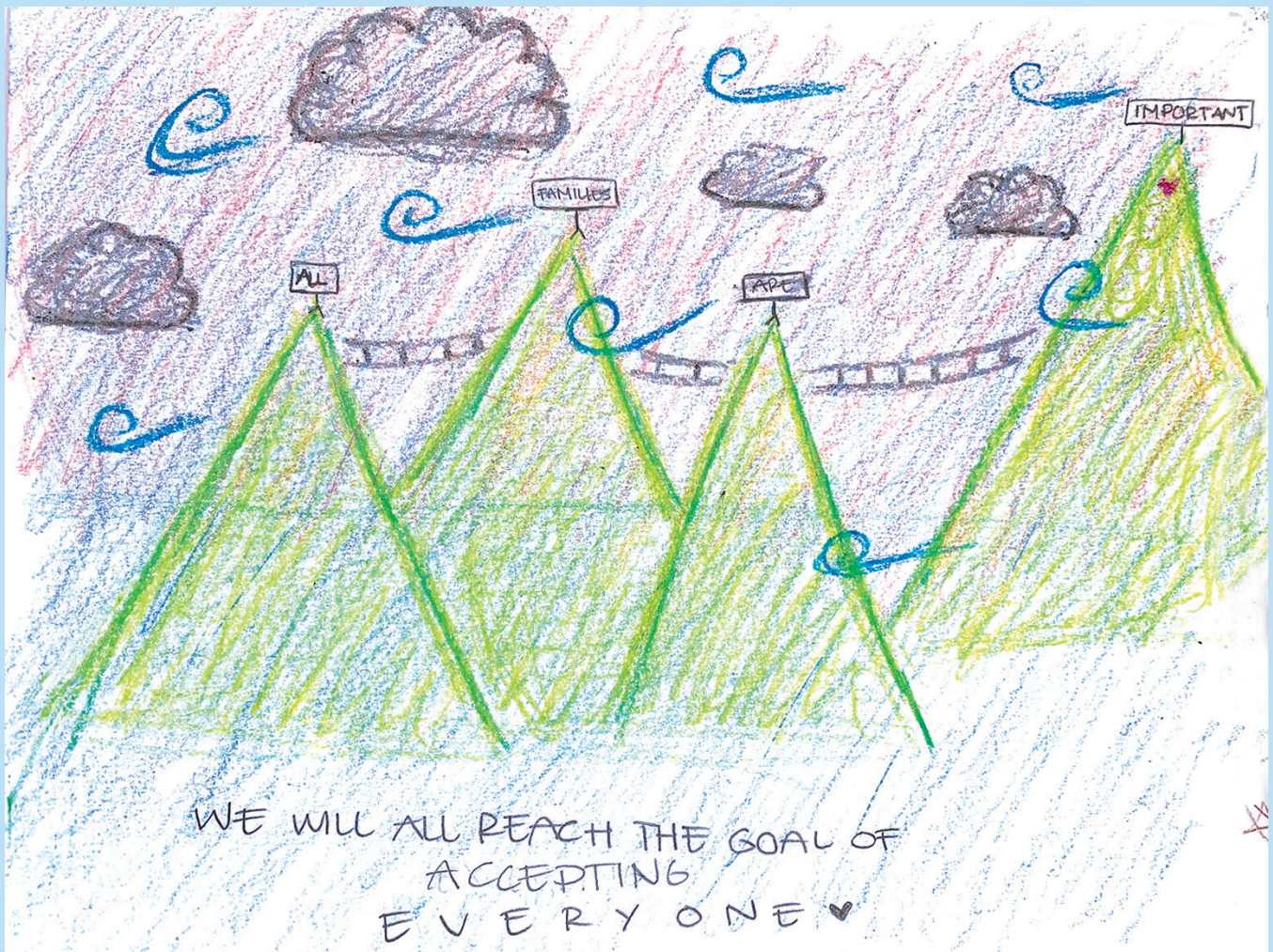
Roses are Red,  
Violets are Blue,  
Concensus, Consensus  
Come to your senses  
How come you're not joining  
THE Consensus

Christopher Velasquez  
*Concensus Consensus*



Edwin Gordilla  
*We All Count*





Paola Acevedo  
*Accepting Everyone*

## Like a Puzzle

By Ingrid Jimenez



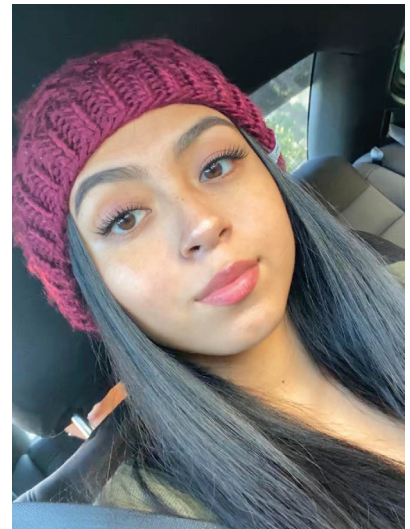
I dialed the numbers into the intercom  
Out comes a staticky voice.  
The door opens into a new beginning.

From Mexico City to San Francisco  
My family arrived to a better future  
My mom and dad taking difficult risks  
Overcoming challenges  
Like leaving family members behind,  
learning a new language and a new way of life.

The quiet old building made of young and old  
With the chipped ocean-blue paint that is an effect of time  
Sitting between two diverse neighborhoods  
My older sister and I grew up lucky enough  
To walk comfortably down the street at night.

Anything is possible as long as you are willing to put in the work for it  
My mom made sure to always remind us from day one.

My family is one of thousands of families  
Trying to make it in America.  
Like a puzzle, we are but one piece that's needed  
In order to see the bigger picture in the end.







**My uncle and I count.**

**Jesse Martin**  
*A Big Variety*

*“In my family, we’re all born and raised in San Francisco and come from different backgrounds. Some are black some are Hispanic and we all count.”*





## SPECIAL THANKS

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826 Valencia	Mission Graduates
African Advocacy Network	RDJ Enterprises
Alive and Free	Ruth Asawa School of the Arts
Asociacion Mayab	San Francisco Episcopal Community Services
The Boys and Girls Club of the Tenderloin	San Francisco Public Library
California College of the Arts	San Francisco Youth Commission
Chinatown Community Development Center	San Mateo Office of Community Affairs
Chinese for Affirmative Action	South of Market Community Action Network
Galileo Academy of Science	Southeast Asia Community Center
Good Samaritan Family Resource Center	Vietnamese Youth Development Center
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Thank you!