



I AM THE DREAM FOR MYSELF

I am the man for myself.
I am the love for myself.
I am the dream for myself.

Nasir, age 17
Kenya

Images by Refugee and Immigrant Youth

Photographs from The AjA Project's Permanent Collection

December 9, 2016 through April 9, 2017

GALLERY GUIDE

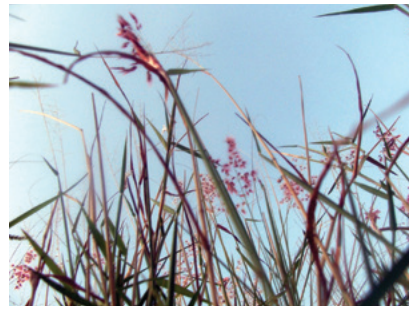
I AM THE DREAM FOR MYSELF

The young photographers featured in this exhibition resettled, with legal refugee or asylum status, in San Diego between the years of 2003 and 2013. All of them were forced to leave their home country because of violence, war, religious or ethnic persecution, or devastation caused by natural disasters. Several of the youth featured in this exhibition were born in refugee camps in Kenya or Jordan and don't have memories of their home country.

Their childhoods have been defined by personal tragedy, unsafe living conditions, a lack of basic resources (money, food, water, shelter, schooling), instability, uncertainty and unfamiliar situations. Their images and narratives provide us insight into their experiences, expressing: relief, confusion, hopefulness, concern, sadness, and a desire to raise awareness about the unique circumstances in their home countries.

The news stories and statistics we hear about war and violence around the world are often hard to comprehend and difficult to absorb. When we do begin to grasp the magnitude of a situation it's easy to feel overwhelmed and so discouraged that we are compelled to turn our attention to other current events. The work in this exhibition helps us distill the impact of war and displacement on the lives of affected individuals, specifically children, while also sharing relief and opportunities they find in the United States and celebrating the resilience of the human spirit.

This exhibition is a partnership program with The AjA Project, a San Diego based nonprofit organization with a mission to provide photography-based programming to transform the lives of youth and communities.



Famo, age 15
Kenya

When I was in Kenya, me and my friends would get together every night. When it would rain, we play hide and seek. We hide in the tall grass. The beautiful air would taste like rain.



Rene, age 13
Mexico

These crosses remember people who have died trying to cross the border. I think these are sad pieces of art work.



Ahmed, age 16
Somalia

I see myself in the picture and trying to find way to escape from prison or gang. In Somalia we had war but not gangs.



Khalil, age unknown
Iraq

When I came to the USA I was happy because I think we have money and we can do everything, but then I was sad because there was no money and we can't do everything. When I came to America I don't know many English and when I came to the school I feel nervous.



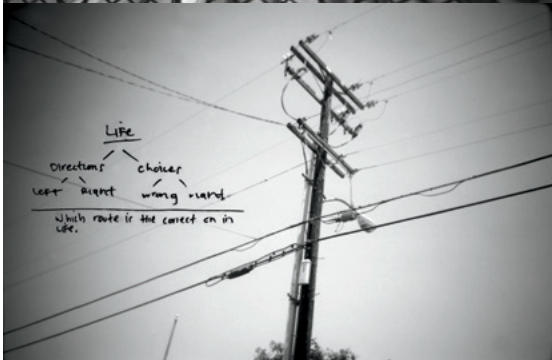
Nassra, age unknown
Somalia

I was excited to arrive in America. I was surprised by the tall buildings, all the white people. The airplane was so big I was afraid it would fall. I was also surprised by all the cars moving so fast.



Kevin, age 13
Mexico

My name is Kevin. I am from Guanajuato, Mexico. I am 13 years old. I like to take pictures, and I want to be a soccer player. I have been in the U.S. for three months. I want people to know that I like all girls. I like this picture because it is beautiful and so am I.



Nick, age 17
Sudan

In life you are determined to make decisions based on what you know. This picture represents the direction in life you must take and you know every road has a stop somewhere so you must pick the one that goes that longest without a stop sign. This representing your success in life.



Asha, age 16
Somalia

(We decorate) when it's holiday - Eid and weddings. We take the cow poop...from the Somali (side of the neighborhood) where they have the cows...We pick it up from the ground with our hands and put in cloths...We go home and take soil and put it together with the cow poop...And we have some colors-red, yellow, black and white. We draw flowers or a tree outside on the wall (of the house)...When it dries it doesn't smell...

Islamudin, age 13
Afghanistan

It's an Afghani rug in my house. In Afghanistan everyone has a rug in their house. I made my name with marbles. My name is a religious name. My name and the rug are symbols of my culture. My culture is Muslim, Afghani and American. Marbles are part of a game that I played in Afghanistan. I did not play in Russia but now I play them here in American with friends from Afghanistan, Mexico, Iraq, and the USA.



Istefan, age 12
Iraq

This is my old home. I feel sad when I see it. I sit in the sofa. I like the sofa. In the photo my religion.

Adam, age 12
Iraq

I like this photo because it you want to go out from your country you need a passport. And when we get to USA they give us a visa. And the last thing in this photos religion and we left Iraq because religion.



Maw Lay, age 16
Burma

Something that I want to change in the world is the Burmese soldiers to leave the Karen State.

No information about image of teenage boy (Ethan).



Sokna, age 17
Cambodia

That picture is about the line of the light in front of the farm that went to buy vegetables a lot of the time (in Burma). The pictures looks along and can tell I so sad because can make me miss my country.



Adam, age 12
Iraq

The different is not the same language. Different food. Different school. Different home. Different life.



Diana, age 12
Iraq

The first day of school was the worst day ever because I did not have any friends. Now I have a lot of friends and I know now to talk in English and nobody make fun.



Madina, age 17
Kenya

That night we celebrating that we are going (to America). You buy goat, you buy rice, you buy juice. My friends, my cousins, my nephews (came to our house). I played outside. That was the last time I played tag. We took a shirt and we was tying our eyes and we had to find someone. I felt happy (that I was going to America) because in Africa if I sleep I feel scared.



Aye Aye Pye, age 15
Burma

I am wearing the dress of my country Burma. We are at church because I am learning about Jesus.



Hiba, age 12
Jordan

I'm scared at church because it is not my religion. I ask her why you tell me to stay here? She says, "I want you to see my religion. It might be your religion."



Elizabeth Amoury, age 18
Sudan

Leaving your own country is like breaking some part of bond with the community. The whole day was gloomy and a smile was too expensive to sell. It was like a funeral and surely my coming to American means I am lost.

No information about bird's eye view of girl with camera.



Barwako, age 15
Somalia

I like to walk a lot with my friends and family. The reason I walk a lot is because I want to get exercise.

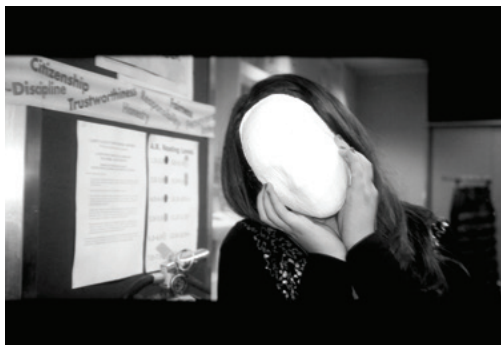
No information for Elyza (hand with flower).



Amina, age 15
Kenya

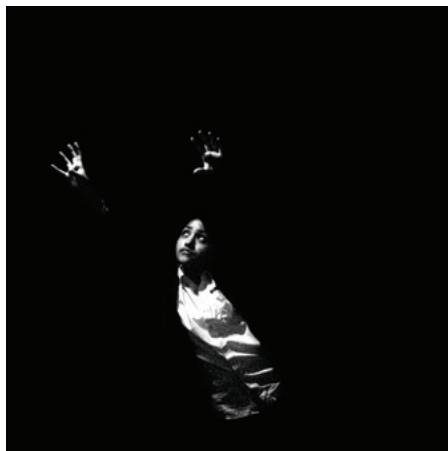
In this picture I am wearing the skirt that I wore the day I left Kenya. The picture makes me feel happy.

No information for second photo - girl with chain linked fence.



Liza, age 12
Iraq

We need help in Iraq. So can the war stop there. And that Chaldean people have to come to America so can their lives be good and healthy. I love my culture and I want people to know that they should appreciate where I am from, because people are dying there. And it is so really sad.



Monica, age 12
Mexico

This picture makes me feel sad. This picture is about a girl that she doesn't want to live any more in the world. She wants to be with her mom who is with God.



Cuc, age 18
Vietnam

The sound of your soft voice comforts me every time I face obstacles. The taste of buttery shrimp is salty and sweet like a favorable life that we're living.

Cuc Doan, age 18
Vietnam

Leaving your native country to settle. No family, no language, no friends. You had sacrificed your happiness for me. Everything you did is a lesson of wisdom to me.



Adam, age 12
Iraq

This photo is about my religion. It is very old religion. There is just a few people speak our language.

No information about image of women praying

Want to help?

There are many of opportunities to support refugees here in California.

If you would like to specifically help the work that the AjA Project is doing with refugee youth, please consider donating to their organization through their website:

www.ajaproject.org

Other organization providing support services specifically to the families of the children featured in this exhibition include:

THE INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

<https://www.rescue.org/united-states/san-diego-ca>

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

<https://www.ccdsd.org>

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES

<http://www.jfssd.org>

The work these organizations do is substantial and your financial support would be greatly appreciated. However, if you are interested in working directly with refugee families, all three of these organizations offer volunteer opportunities.

About The AjA Project

The AjA Project, founded in 2001, is an acronym for the phrase: autosuficiencia junto con apoyo, which translates in English as “*supporting self-sufficiency*.”

The AjA Project is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization headquartered in the San Diego neighborhood of City Heights. AjA's programs transform youth and communities by utilizing participatory photography methods and an assets-based model that underscores our belief that our participants possess the skills and tools to achieve success and self-sufficiency. Since our founding in 2001, The AjA Project has provided long-term, community-based programming for over 3,500 individuals, and has shared visual narratives with over two million viewers through large-scale public exhibits and programs.

Our mission is to provide photography-based programming to transform the lives of youth and communities. We believe youth and communities have the ability to change from within. The AjA Project exists to ignite change, break cycles of marginalization and to help build healthy communities. We do this through a creative platform called participatory photography that asks participants to reflect on, analyze, and document their personal and social landscapes.

The images included in this exhibition are part of The AjA Project's permanent collection of photos. Our permanent collection showcases participant photographs identified and selected through a rigorous process involving staff, students and stakeholders.



ajaproject.org

MARIPOSA COUNTY
ARTS COUNCIL
mariposaartscouncil.org

The Mariposa County Arts Council was created to promote and support all forms of the cultural arts, for all ages, throughout Mariposa County. We are grateful for the support of the County of Mariposa, the National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency), the California Arts Council (a state agency), and our wonderful members.

