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For more information, contact:
Michelle Angela Ortiz, 215-908-2832, art@michelleangela.com
Grace Kindeke, 603-305-5776, gkindeke@afsc.org
Beth Collea, 781-724-2254, bethcollea@aol.com

National Public Art Project Highlights Undocumented Immigrants in New Hampshire
Sunday, June 13th, 1 pm to 4pm
Dover Friends Meeting, 141 Central Ave, Dover, NH
(Event begins at 1 pm with car caravan starting at Strafford County courthouse,
259 County Farm Road, Dover, NH)

Large scale public art installation amplifies the stories of local undocumented immigrants impacted by detention and deportation

DOVER, NH: Award-winning visual artist, Michelle Angela Ortiz unveils Phase 3 of her "Familias Separadas" public art project this month, with a public art installation in Dover, NH that visualizes the testimonials of local community members who have experienced immigrant detention and the threat of deportation. The project also includes art installations in North Carolina and Colorado.

The Dover project is co-hosted by the American Friends Service Committee’s New Hampshire Program in partnership with Dover Friends Meeting, Mom’s Rising, Never Again Action, the Seacoast Interfaith Sanctuary Coalition and other New Hampshire networks engaged in immigrant solidarity and support.

The event will take place on Sunday June 13th, starting at 1pm with a caravan hosted by Never Again Action at the Strafford County Courthouse at 259 County Farm Road, Dover, NH.

At 2pm, the caravan will arrive at the Dover Friends Meeting for a program to honor the installation of the artwork highlighting the stories of ‘Mark’ and ‘G,’ undocumented immigrants from Africa who live in New Hampshire. As part of the artwork, dancer/choreographer Anthony Wilder will present a performance that connects to their stories. The event will be in person (following social distancing protocols) and streamed live on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. State and federal elected officials have been invited. All are welcome.

Remarks by:
● Familias Separadas local artist- Grace Kindeke
● Community Partner- Maggie Fogarty, American Friends Service Committee
● Community Participants- read testimonials from Mark and G.
● Representative from the Dover Friends Meeting
The large scale portraits will be on display for several months.

Lead artist Grace Kindeke worked on the project team “because the stories of Black immigrants are often hidden in the larger narrative of migration and the US immigration system. Doing this project has enabled us to broaden the conversation about systemic racism in our immigration policies and enforcement, and the need for humane policies that will protect Black, brown and indigenous people seeking safety in the U.S.”

The site of the Dover Friends Meeting was selected because of that faith community’s role as a sanctuary congregation since September 2017, creating a safe place for immigrants who face the threat of deportation. Beth Collea, a member of Dover Friends, explains that “Friends (Quakers) were eager to host the Famílias Separadas exhibit which brings a personal voice to the ways the detention and deportation policies have created pain, fear, and privation in the lives of our community members. We hope to kindle compassion and draw forth our collective imagination for better ways to welcome the strangers who come among us.”

Dover will be the second of the three national unveilings of the series of public artworks presented by the Familias Separadas project. Each artwork, measuring 15’ wide and 25’ high, will be installed on the exterior walls of Dover Friends Meetinghouse. The Dover portraits highlight the stories of two undocumented community members who live in the Seacoast of NH:

**G** - G is an African immigrant who was detained at the border between Mexico and the United States. He describes his journey, not knowing where he was or how to communicate. He speaks to the challenges of learning Spanish and English and the bonds forged in spite of language barriers.

**Mark** - Mark is an African immigrant who was detained for two years in the United States. He was targeted in his home country due to his participation in peaceful protests demanding positive change in his community. He speaks to the challenges of when he was incarcerated and the impact it has had on his family.

Each public artwork contains a QR code for viewers to read and hear the stories told firsthand by the community participants and learn ways to take action. The stories, photographs, and writings can be found here. “Throughout the year, community members in North Carolina, New Hampshire and Colorado have engaged in several virtual meetings that included story circles, theatre and playwriting techniques, photography and visual art sessions focused on healing from past trauma caused by our broken immigration system,” explains project creator Michelle Angela Ortiz. “We seek to highlight that unjust immigration policies do not only take place at the border, but rather, throughout the nation. We must eliminate immigrant detention centers and reimagine a system that values the human rights of undocumented immigrant communities.”

The project’s Creative Team led by Ortiz includes playwright Paul Flores and local artist Grace Kindeke. MomsRising/ MamasConPoder was the national connector to the project’s local community partners that include the American Friends Service Committee in New Hampshire. Funding for the project is provided by the Art for Justice Fund.
Michelle Angela Ortiz (recently featured in the New York Times) is a Philadelphia-based visual artist, skilled muralist, community arts educator, and filmmaker who uses her art as a vehicle to represent people and communities whose histories are often lost or co-opted. Through community arts practices, painting, documentaries, and public art installations, she creates a safe space for dialogue around some of the most profound issues communities and individuals may face. Her work tells stories using richly crafted and emotive imagery to claim and transform spaces into a visual affirmation that reveals the strength and spirit of the community. For 20 years, Ortiz has designed and created over 50 large-scale public works nationally and internationally. Since 2008, Ortiz has led art for social change public art projects in Costa Rica & Ecuador and as a Cultural Envoy through the US Embassy in Fiji, Mexico, Argentina, Spain, Venezuela, Honduras, and Cuba. In 2018, Ortiz created the “Las Madres de Berks” documentary that shares the testimonials of four mothers that were detained for two years with their children at The Berks County Residential Center in Pennsylvania. Berks is the first of three prisons that detains families, including babies, seeking asylum in the United States. Ortiz is a 2020 Art For Justice Fund Grantee, PEW Fellow, Rauschenberg Foundation Artist as Activist Fellow, and a Kennedy Center Citizen Artist National Fellow. In 2016, she received the Americans for the Arts' Public Art Year in Review Award which honors outstanding public art projects in the nation.

Grace Kindeke Grace Kindeke is an artist, dancer, activist, community organizer with the American Friends Service Committee, and a B.A. student of Africana Studies and Sociology at UMASS Boston. Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, she immigrated to the U.S. as a toddler and grew up in New Hampshire where she now lives with her husband. As a painter and a dancer, she seeks to express through movement, color and sound the threads that tie us to our history and to each other. She is a fiercely curious human being and a passionate advocate for justice and liberation, grounding her work and pursuits in a Black feminist, Afrofuturistic, and anti-oppression practice. When she is not working, studying or rehearsing with her dance company Benkadi, she can often be found on her porch reading or deep in conversation with loved ones.

MomsRising/ MamasConPoder is a transformative on-the-ground and online multicultural organization of more than a million members and over a hundred aligned organizations working to increase family economic security, to end discrimination against women and mothers, and to build a nation where both businesses and families can thrive.

American Friends Service Committee The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker-founded non-profit organization working throughout the U.S. and the world since 1917 to promote peace and justice. Our work is rooted in Quaker values and takes direction from grassroots communities with whom we work to create racial, social and economic justice and an end to violence.

Dover Friends Meeting: Gathered in 1662, Dover Friends Meeting is the second oldest congregation in Dover. The Society of Friends, or Quakers, emerged during the religious, social, economic, and political upheavals of the mid-1600s in England. The spiritual practice of Friends takes place in silent meditation with occasional sharing of messages ‘as the Spirit moves.’ The name ‘Friends’ comes from John 15:14–15, where Jesus says, “I have called you friends.” In the early days, Quakers were also known as Children of Light or Seekers After Truth.

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