Statement from the JCCSF

July 17, 2019

Our Gallery Exhibit: LA FRONTERA: Artists Respond to the U.S. - Mexico border

LA FRONTERA is the JCCSF’s current exhibition, featuring 55 pieces of artwork by 36 local and national artists, intended to foster greater understanding and empathy for the ongoing humanitarian crisis on the southern border. Since the exhibit opened in April, there have been near daily developments revealing the suffering and mistreatment of vulnerable people seeking refuge in our country. We are proud the exhibit generates conversations every day about the experience of immigration.

Many of the works present challenging experiences and original points of view that open minds and create dialogue. After the exhibit was installed, we realized that two pieces were not appropriate for our environment -- and chose to remove them: one that depicted a rifle being aimed at a young child and a second that showed a dead toddler on a beach. We regret and apologize that we recognized the impact of these works only after the complete show was put up throughout our second-floor gallery, which also serves as classroom hallways travelled by young children and their parents. Depictions of violence against children and dead children in our common areas is not acceptable, even in gallery space. Our decision has been incorrectly characterized as politically motivated regarding Israel-Palestine.

As a result, we have been in ongoing conversations with artists who want to remove their artwork. With 13 of the 35 artists asking to withdraw their work it makes the most sense to end the show and remove all the work at once. We made this decision officially last week. The closing date of the exhibition will be July 21, 2019.

LA FRONTERA has been a tremendous success in important ways and the engagement from the public has surpassed previous exhibitions. We’ve even had high school groups come from across the Bay Area to discuss the border through art.

We are committed to learn from this difficult experience. Our team is implementing clearer guidelines and processes for including more stakeholders for future exhibitions as we work to push our gallery to be the best, most thought-provoking, and community-based space it can be.

BACKGROUND: JCCSF Cultural Programming Approach

Jewish culture teaches us to respond to a broken world and how to improve it. At the JCCSF, we bring these Jewish values to life through forums, conversations, immersive experiences and the arts. We create and curate original programs in the space where Jewish values and tradition meet the cultural and intellectual diversity of San Francisco. With these efforts, we raise awareness of many societal issues and cultivate empathy for different experiences.

We have curated several recent exhibitions that highlight the rich culture and history of San Francisco’s many communities.
Recent exhibitions:

- PEOPLE, PAPER, POWER: Building Community Through *The Tenderloin Times*
- Connecting Threads: Quilts from the Social Justice Sewing Academy
- Chinatown Pretty: The Unexpected Style Icons of San Francisco’s Chinatown
- Mission Murals: Art, Politics and Community Preservation
- Vanishing Point: The 3.9 Art Collective Reflects on Black Communities in San Francisco

Recent immigration related programs:

- Santa Fe Dreamers Project: Transgender Asylum Seekers in the Bay Area
- Original commissioned theater piece: Anti Anti
- Partnership with the Immigrant Yarn Project
- DACA Renewal Clinics with the University of San Francisco Law School
- The Executive Orders on Immigration: A Community Forum

Please reach out to info@jccsf.org if you have any questions.