



**SUPPORTING
THE NEEDS OF
IMMIGRANT-ORIGIN
STUDENTS
TO FOSTER
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

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Introduction

Welcome to the Development of Immigrant Youth in Action Lab's zine. We are a collective of students, scholars, practitioners, and educators focused on bringing awareness and action around the issues immigrant youth face at UIC and surrounding communities.

We have been exploring the ways in which immigrant-origin young people engage in their families, communities, and schools, how they form multiple identities and navigate social institutions. The culmination of our project, *Supporting the Needs of Immigrant-Origin Students to Foster Civic Engagement*, was an artistic and scholarly showcase where undergraduate students disseminated the findings of the study creatively.

This zine captures the artistic and scholarly ways that members of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) collective, comprised of undergraduates, graduate students and faculty, presented their work at this showcase. In addition, this booklet contains recommendations regarding how the needs of immigrant-origin students can be supported on campus based on these scholarly findings. Both this event and zine serve as potential healing outlets for immigrant youth to share their narratives in relation to civic engagement at UIC and surrounding communities in this particularly tenuous historical moment.

This project serves as a foundational step to understanding the needs of immigrant-origin community members. University campuses are stages upon which national, state and local level policy play out. Gathering the voices of immigrant-origin students and understanding their needs can better position us as scholars and practitioners to make informed decisions regarding a responsive change at the institutional level.

Contributors

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I. Community

Defining community

In this study, participants shared similar ideas about their definition of community. The vast majority defined it as a group of people that share something in common such as their racial, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds, gender, social and peer networks, religion, or their geographic communities. According to participants, this shared experience or identity fosters a connection between multiple individuals and creates a sense of community. One student defined community as “...a network or system of people who share a common thing,” and another student defined it as “...a community is like a group of people that shares something.”

By Rachel Ongbueco

Our multiple communities

There were multiple communities that participants reported being a part of. These most commonly include UIC, their social community, and religious community. Students who are involved in UIC choose to do so through their clubs and classes. The social community includes their family, friends, and people with similar cultural backgrounds. Religious communities can be reflected in the clubs they choose to join on campus as well as through their active participation at their church, mosque, temple, or so on.

By Karen Celeste Cruz

The ways in which students civically engage

The specific ways in which participants engaged in their respective communities varied, but they frequently explained how their engagement stemmed from having a genuine and active interest in the communities they identified. For instance, students reported being aware of current events that affected their communities. They also described participating in events, such as cultural celebrations, spending time with other members of their communities, actively speaking another language, residing in a particular neighborhood, or working towards a shared goal or interest. Through these activities of engagement, students felt a sense of belonging within the specific communities that they reported being a part of.

By Clemencia Garnica Palao



By Rachel Ongbueco & Clemencia Garnica Palao

II. Family

Balancing family, school and civic engagement

Family is an integral part to most, if not all, immigrant youth. There is a pull by families on students to help with day to day life that causes a stressor that the child does not know how to handle. They feel a sense of obligation to the people that raised them, and balancing school, family, and sometimes even work never bodes well for students. They deal with an onslaught of demands, and any unanswered questions splinters the bridge between the older immigrant generation and the younger Americanized generation. Sometimes, this rift seems almost impossible to cross. We see this both in the Asian American community and the Latinx community. Parents need help with the household, and depending on financial status, need help with payments and help with raising younger siblings. In turn, this places the student in a difficult position. However, there is no lack of love in these families, but rather a lack of understanding. Families still love their children, but with the cultural clash, tensions can run high. UIC immigrant youth students still rely on their families for support, and recognize their family and people of similar cultures as their communities

By Nour Ghalyoun



By Eduardo Ruiz

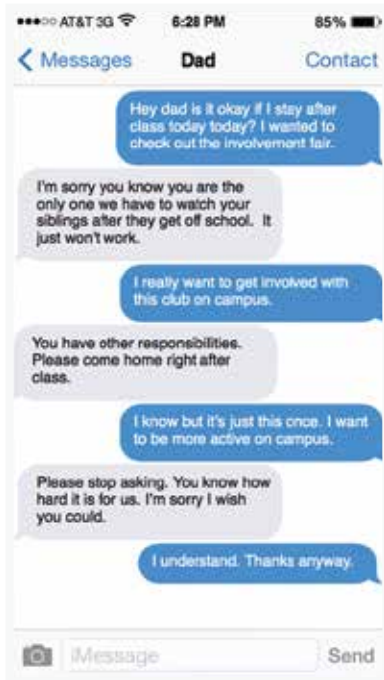
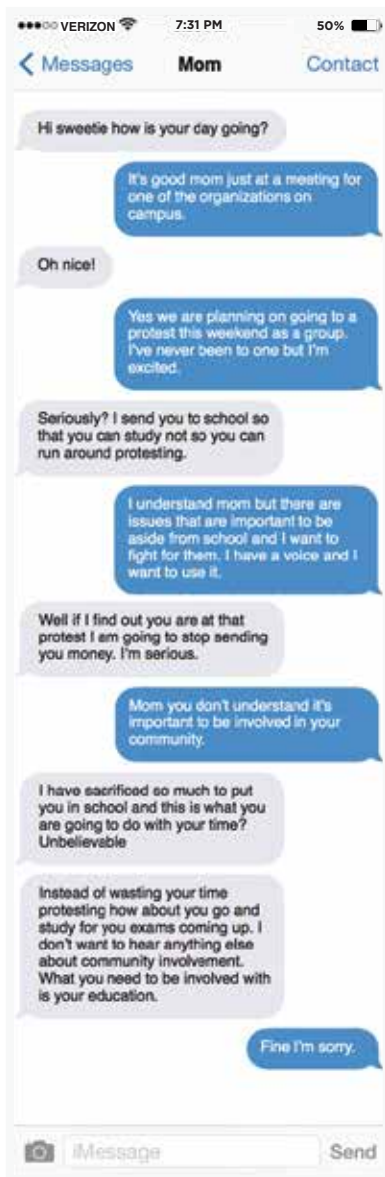
“When I first came to campus, one of the first things that my mom said to me, she’s like, ‘yeah, I miss you, but I don’t miss you the way I thought I was going to miss you because I know you’re there for a good reason.’”

--A 19 year-old Chicana freshman

III. Family Guilt

This is what one of our participant’s mother told her when she came to UIC. Our findings have shown very strong feelings of guilt from students who are particularly of Latinx and Asian origin. The guilt seems to stem from very strong bonds to their families. The participants seemed to feel a sort of moral obligation to support their families and help out in whatever way possible at home, something that they need to give up when they come to college. On top of this guilt of not being able to help out at home, many feel that them being at school trying to get an education is something that their parents don’t quite understand. Their parents feel that the only way being at school will be worth the sacrifice is if their children gain some sort of wealth in the end. This constant push and pull between trying to please themselves and live up to their parent’s expectations accompanied by the guilt of not being at home appears to cause a lot of stress and mental health issues in these students.

By Jose Muratalla



By Magda Collazo

Mental Health Awareness

A concurrent theme that I noticed throughout these accounts were concerning mental health. Most of these students expressed the shared concern that in Latinx households, mental health is either unacknowledged or overlooked. In one account, a student discusses how these issues aren't real until it happens to them. Families must be oriented on the reality of mental health issues and how it can affect their students.

By Magda Collazo

Generational Gap

Students that come from immigrant backgrounds rarely feel that they've accomplished the high standard visions their families have set for them. There is a constant battle between the student and the reality of this competitive lifestyle to fulfill the expectations that are forcefully placed upon them. Due to this miscommunication, there is a constant generational gap between students and their parents. In this gap, there are multiple situations that take place in the student's life that can impact their physical and mental abilities. There are serious illnesses such as depression and anxiety that are caused from difficult living conditions such as stress and grief. Something that is oftentimes ignored or looked over from the older generations of immigrant background.

By Eduardo Ruiz

Karen is a puzzle-
Put together piece by piece by memories of who she was and ideas of who she should be,
Like a puzzle-
She portrays different scenes,
Every part of her life leaving an imprint.

Just like the cardboard that makes up a puzzle-
She can be tattered and frayed but not broken,
She has sustained bruising, insults, pain-
Just like the cardboard that makes up a puzzle-
She can be customized to meet the needs of nearly everyone.

Karen is a puzzle. Put together piece by piece. By memories of who she was and ideas of who she should be. By bruises and scars of the experiences that have marked her. I am a victim of hatred. Racism, sexism, bullying, lies, backstabbing is everywhere.

What has kept me together amidst the dreariness of life is my community.
My community is my identity.
I am my mother, my siblings, UIC and all the clubs that lie within.
I am UIC because it's a part of me.
The people in it have changed me and formed me,
They have given a new shape to my puzzle pieces.

Karen is a puzzle-
Put together piece by piece by memories of who she was and ideas of who she should be,
Trying to find a sense of belonging is like searching for the right puzzle piece to fill a gap,
I want to find where I am needed,
Where I can make a change.

There is a disconnect between my heart and brain,
One that causes fear-
A fear that keeps me from wanting to engage within my community,
It's fear that stems from issues like immigration and gender discrimination.

I have grown in fear of losing my mother to deportation,
But now instead of that consuming me with angst,
It has filled me with a desire for equity,
A desire that has made me want to venture into fighting for those who don't have a voice.

Karen is a puzzle-
Put together piece by piece by memories of who she was and ideas of who she should be,
And Like a puzzle-
Once I finish one I start another,
Finishing a puzzle gives me a sense of accomplishment-
It fulfills me.

Because I am a puzzle,
I aim to finish what I start.
If I want to be a voice within my community,
Then I will be til the end.
Nothing, not even deportation will take my mother from me,
Because she is me and as long as I have a voice-
So will she.

By Karen Celeste Cruz

"[Resistance] depends on how you carry it out, and how those around you carry it out because for me resistance is basically protests, but [also] like really taking care of yourself. Grounding yourself. Surrounding yourself with people you love. You know, like, whenever school's really bad, I know I can go to work, and all the Mexican ladies in the kitchen well be like, "Hola, mija. ¿Cómo estas?" Or, you know, they just like shower you with compliments or I just call my mom, and I'm like, "mom, I can't do it today," you know? And, I think, that's really it--surrounding yourself with love is resistance."

-A 19 year-old Chicana freshman

IV. Resistance

New policies that the new federal administration has introduced has compelled some of the participants to engage in overt ways of resistance, such as protesting. Some of the participants expressed being first time protesters, joining the Women's March and the Day Without Immigrants March this year. However, the majority of participants felt that there are multiple ways that students at UIC engage in resistance including attending college, obtaining good grades, and working hard as a way to validate their parents' sacrifices.

My family is full of near misses
nearly missing the bus
nearly breaking the glass
quickly grab it first

we are made of climbing pairs and good games

All wearing the same faces

Dark ~~eyes~~ ^{hair} and darker eyes

~~the~~ All wear ~~the~~ a disguise

The fact that ^{America} ~~this~~ is not our only home.

Acceleration has turned to war -

dead bodies policy of war

none of us see what this massacre is for

is Syria still ~~our~~ home anymore?

And grandma is on the phone

her screams heard around the world

because you see, my family is made of

near misses

As the bullets purred down the men,

catching in their hearts and hands,

7 bullets ~~missed~~ ^{missed} my whole body in

my under arm and back.

7 bullets, one for each side

because they knew how to breathe

Killing the rest of his arsenal beside him

20 layers of PTSD, one for each bullet

and the rest from his days in prison

24 layers of PTSD, each one with a stream of blood

his brain hanging
a stream.

his senses nearly missing one more,
the one in which my grandmother is living

waiting to die with her love

waiting for that justice from above

to see what we will be made of

because I am here and ~~there~~ I am there

you can say ~~of~~ that he fair

to be ~~with~~ larger monster

under each layer,

sifter and gunpowder modest ~~for~~

~~to~~ find the streets

played and playing by the rules of equality,

a bullet for you,

a bomb for him,

a dead family member for me.

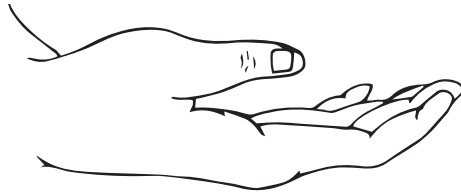
sent,

(?)
justice brings up a hint
the one might need to the
one in which
my grandmother
is living



By Jose Muratalla

IN YOUR QUEST FOR
PEACE DO NOT
FORGET TO
FIGHT



◇
THE
SPIRIT
OF
RESISTANCE
◇

“I think civically engaged is like when you want to better yourself and you want to better your community.”

--A 22 year-old Xicana, Sophomore

V. Recommendations

1. Facilitate and enhance connections between class content and public service.

There are multiple pathways to civic engagement for immigrant origin students at UIC. A common thread throughout the data was that civic engagement activities are facilitated through *relationships*.

Many students spoke of an alignment between the classes that they are taking and learning about ways to engage in their respective communities. Still others longed for this connection in their classes. These students reported not having an opportunity to engage civically within their coursework, program, or chosen major. These same students also reported not having a relationship with faculty that could lead them to opportunities to further engage civically in their communities.

Others made these connections through student organizations. Providing more awareness of clubs that have access to information and resources about public service is important to students. Further facilitating these connections between the content of classes and public service is critical for students to engage civically.

“A good crucial part of civic engagement is feeling like you belong to a community because then obviously you would want to better it, you would want to help the people in it.”

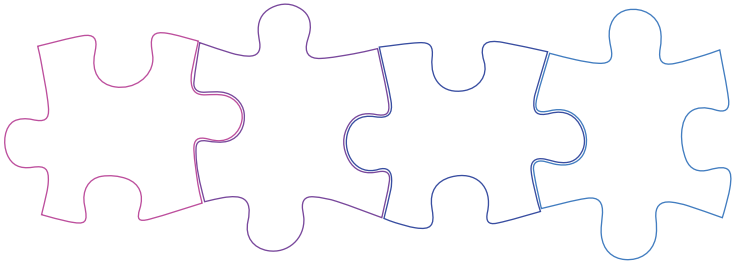
-- 22 year-old Korean-American, Senior

2. Hire more faculty, staff, and administrators of color.

Most participants identified UIC’s diverse student body as an important asset at this institution, but they felt that this diversity was not represented among the faculty, staff, and administrators. Based on their own experiences, they explained how many faculty and higher education personnel were unable to understand the multiple and competing responsibilities that they juggled as immigrant-origin students on campus. Some of those responsibilities included supporting their families either financially or by looking after their siblings, managing coursework and other academic concerns, and working a job to support their own financial obligations, living expenses, and college costs. Many students in this study recommended that UIC increase the number of faculty, staff, and administrators of color who may be more likely to understand these unique experiences and provide various forms of support. One example of this support, as identified by a participant, was for the creation of more targeted programs to support students of color within their undergraduate or graduate programs. Another student described how administrators of color can lobby for university-wide policy changes such as asking for funding to support various initiatives or scholarship programs or further encouraging student-driven campaigns such as the Illinois Student ACCESS Bill.

3. Increase opportunities for diverse student groups to more meaningfully engage with each other.

Although UIC is diverse at face value, several pointed out that many ethnic, racial, or cultural groups, among others, seem to operate independently of one another in their own “enclaves” on campus. Some suggested more collaboration across these groups such as cross-ethnic, cross-cultural, and/or cross-racial events. This way, students from diverse backgrounds can interact and engage with each other more meaningfully and actually benefit from the diversity on campus. However, students need more opportunities for such collaboration to take place. One way for this to be accomplished is by having the campus provide additional support such as by sponsoring more events with student groups.



VI. Acknowledgements

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Development of
Immigrant
Youth in
Action

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