

Maddie Thompson
CST Capstone
Advisor: Professor Whitmore

Painting Peace Walls: Canvases for Conversation and Change?

Art Project:

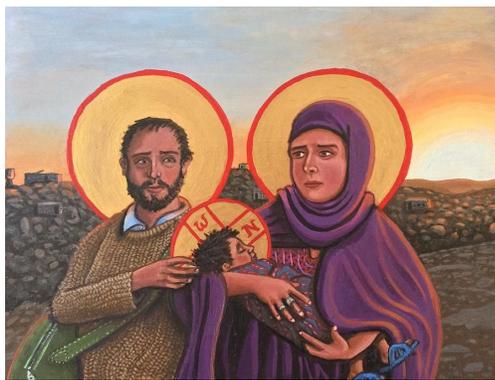
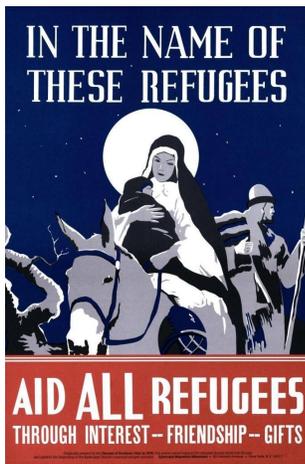
- Secondary Discipline: Professor Maria Tomasula - who has worked with CST Capstone students in the part
- 4'x5' canvas painted with pumice stone for concrete texture
- Using gold foil for icon halo

Update:

- Creating a concrete border wall with graffiti // spray paint look
- Painting picture of woman & child refugees inspired by the following images:



- Woman & mother represent Mary & Jesus





- Texturing the wall with bullet holes, barbed wire, drip & splatter paint

Process:









Background:

- As a senior studying theology and peace studies with a minor in Catholic Social Tradition, I have spent my undergraduate career learning about conflict, violence, division, reconciliation, peace, community, human dignity, justice, faith in action, and more. My particular interests in these fields overlap in the form of restorative justice – asking where community members have experienced harm, seeking to address and meet the needs of those harmed, and working to repair relationships. My courses of study has allowed me to take an interdisciplinary approach to the work of peacebuilding. More particularly, my Catholic Social Tradition capstone allows me the opportunity to synthesize my learning through a variety of media. My plan for my capstone is to explore the power walls—when painted with messages of protest, calls for peace, or challenges to re-think reality—have to begin challenging conversations and sowing the seeds of change. For my capstone project I hope to explore this idea through the creation of a “wall” built of painted canvases with messages rooted in Catholic Social Tradition that seek to reflect other walls around the world which have brought about questions of social justice, particularly those in Israel and the Palestinian territories as well as those in Northern Ireland.
- In order to complete this project, my hope is to learn about and research walls that represent borders, boundaries, or divisions in the world. While spending seven months living next to the separation wall during my time abroad in Jerusalem, I was struck by many of the messages written on the wall through art, language, poetry, symbols, humor, and more. While Jerusalem was a creatively crippling place for me personally, I was moved by the way that graffiti on the wall attracted tourists, visitors, and locals to engage in conversations and awareness-raising. The more I learned about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the more I saw parallels to the conflict in Northern Ireland. Returning to campus this past Fall gave me the opportunity to pursue a Visualizing Global Change course, which looks at the way film and photography as forms of social documentation work alongside sociology to bring about social change. This new and creative lens to learning prompted me to explore the idea of walls as points of beginning conversation by using the separation wall in Israel and the Palestinian territories as well as the peace walls in Northern Ireland as my primary examples. They challenged me to ask what is happening in my own country with the Southern border of the U.S..
- By using a creative project as the primary media for my capstone, I wish to ground my work in visual and historical research on walls that stir conversation about the issues regarding peace and justice. I hope that my capstone provides a physical and creative experience for audience members to experience an encounter of sorts as my goal is to prompt a response to walls painted with messages meant to start conversation and action. After my own encounter with the separation wall in Jerusalem, I recognize the power of direct contact with this form of art. My time spent walking along the separation wall helped me to think of advocacy, dialogue, protest, and more in new and creative ways. My physical encounter prompted me to see CST come to life.
- The rationale behind this project is to create an encounter with walls in order to better understand a way that a physical boundary or barrier, which inherently creates a form of division or exclusion, can be used to promote peacebuilding when molded creatively through messages and images which spark conversation and a desire for change. My education at Notre Dame has continually pushed me outside the classroom to explore issues of conflict and social injustices while brainstorming initiatives for peacebuilding, healing, and social change through conversations and service-learning experiences with local community partners across the country. My time abroad living and learning in Jerusalem

prompted me to ask questions about how I can engage with global issues in my current context and invite others to wrestle with similar questions. By approaching my capstone as a creative project, I allow the community I am surrounded with at Notre Dame and in South Bend to join me in looking at the questions surrounding immigration, religion, polarization, community, protest, dissent, hate, racism, othering and belonging, justice, and more that exist in our community and society. These questions have serious ramifications for our current environments but also add to conversations about places like Israel-Palestine and Northern Ireland. This project prompts me to ask how Catholic Social Tradition responds to questions about different identities existing and being valued in societies which are becoming more and more exclusive.