

**California Courts News Script: School Art in the 4th DCA,** Posted 10/5/09

When the brand new 4th District Court of Appeal building was recently constructed in Santa Ana, Justice Eileen Moore was given the task of acquiring art to beautify the public space.

Leanne Kozak: *“Did you have a budget, were you given a budget?”*

Justice Eileen C. Moore: *“Zero.”*

So she got creative and contacted the Orange County School District. The superintendent enlisted art teachers in middle and high schools, and the kids went to work. They’re interpreting historic court cases – most of them resolved in the 4th District.

Ellie Brauer, Aliso Viejo Middle School: *“So we got to learn about a lot of different court cases and how complicated they are and everything. It was very interesting.”*

Elika Nissirinia, Aliso Viejo Middle School: *“This case is basically about you can’t trust your eyes in what you’re seeing.”*

And this case involved a struggle between parents over whether to withdraw life support from a brain dead baby.

Ellie Brauer, Aliso Viejo Middle School: *“We’ve got the dad with a fist because he hurt the baby, the mom is here holding the baby and the judge is the most prominent, has the most power.”*

Jazmin Rivas, Aliso Viejo Middle School: *“And also we want to send a message. We’re going to draw here that violence can destroy families.”*

At Laguna Hills High School, they’re learning life skills, too, like how to take constructive criticism.

Lauren Buys, Laguna Hills H.S.: *“It’s hard because we’re used to doing art the way we want. So we kind of learned to listen and interpret and just do what other people wanted for a change which is hard but of course you’ve got to learn to be able to do it.”*

And they are also learning the fine art of collaboration, and teamwork.

Ellie Brauer, Aliso Viejo Middle School: *“When one person wants to do this color and the other person what to do that color, it doesn’t end so well, so you have to decide and work together otherwise you’ll have a bad result.”*

The 11th graders at La Quinta High School can definitely see value in that concept.

Fritzi Bui, La Quinta H.S.: *“Compromise; good for future uses.”*

Ruth Rosen, Project Coordinator, Orange County Dept. of Education: *“Problem solving; critical thinking; I don’t think it gets better than that.”*

Ruth Rosen is coordinating the project for the school district.

Ruth Rosen, Project Coordinator, Orange County Dept. of Education: *“The work that I get from these kids is above and beyond anything that you’ve ever seen.”*

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this project is that the high school in Juvenile Hall is part of the partnership, thanks to the Probation Department.

Colleene Preciado, Orange County Chief Probation Officer: *“That is a brand new partnership for us and it’s frankly very incredible and very exciting.”*

These kids are creating the main work of art – a 6 by 8 foot mural that will be displayed directly across from the entrance to the courtroom. It represents the 1947 Mendez case, precursor to Brown versus Board of Education. The Mendez children weren’t allowed to attend the school where the white kids went.

Justice Eileen C. Moore: *“It’s such an integral part of Orange County history, and I have this fear that people forget history, and it’s important for us to know what we did here in OC.”*

And for kids detained in juvenile hall, this project offers a new perspective.

Colleene Preciado, Orange County Chief Probation Officer: *“A lot of these kids have been graffiti artists. We try to tell them why that doesn’t make sense; why putting their art on paper and canvas where it can be shown to others, can be a good thing and not a destructive thing.”*

This teenager, whose face we won’t show you, says this experience has changed her life.

Voice of 15-year-old, Juvenile Hall: *“Honestly I think it has because this is my opportunity; my work is going to be in the courthouse, it’s going to be there for year; that’s pretty exciting. My family’s really proud of me. I told my mom yesterday and she’s like ‘Really? I’m going to tell grandma and grandpa.’ She’s really proud of me. I’m getting out in a couple of weeks and I’m planning on staying out. I’m going to be good.”*

This is a program rich in benefits, yet easy on the pocketbook.

Ruth Rosen, Project Coordinator, Orange County Dept. of Education: *“The cost on this is so minimal, it’s canvases and paint.”*

Justice Eileen C. Moore: *“Not only is the court going to have art, but more importantly the kids are learning along the way about the court system and about what happens inside and the real people that are involved in cases in the court system.”*

Ellie Brauer, Aliso Viejo Middle School: *“It’s just exciting. I don’t know, like it’s something important that I got to do, you know? A piece of us gets to go in the courthouse, yea.”*

Lauren Buys, Laguna Hills H.S: *“This is something that we’re really doing here, and we are making a difference so it’s a great thing to be able to do that.”*

Inspired by Justice Moore’s pioneering work here, the Judicial Council will soon have a formal art policy for the Branch to guide the display of public art in the courthouses.

I’m Leanne Kozak reporting in Orange County for California Courts News.