



*Sukkah Collaborative Art Experiment*  
Under One Roof | Sukkot at the JCC

# Welcoming the Stranger

SEPTEMBER 25 - OCTOBER 5, 2018

Gordon Jewish Community Center  
Nashville, TN

“Why should you not hate the stranger? – asks the Torah. Because you once stood where he stands now. You know the heart of the stranger because you were once a stranger in the land of Egypt. If you are human, so is he. If he is less than human, so are you. You must fight the hatred in your heart as I once fought the greatest ruler and the strongest empire in the ancient world on your behalf. I made you into the world’s archetypal strangers so that you would fight for the rights of strangers – for your own and those of others, wherever they are, whoever they are, whatever the color of their skin or the nature of their culture, because though they are not in your image – says God – they are nonetheless in Mine. There is only one reply strong enough to answer the question: Why should I not hate the stranger? Because the stranger is me.”

*Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, former Chief Rabbi of Great Britain*



The Jewish sages tell us that we must treat strangers with kindness and love them as ourselves. This commandment is mentioned 36 times - more than any other commandment or prohibition in the Torah. And, no other commandment - not to love G-d, not to keep the Shabbat, not to refrain from eating non-kosher foods, nor the prohibition against lying or stealing, is mentioned as many times as the commandment to treat strangers with respect.

This commandment has its roots in the stories of Abraham, who was considered the first Jew. To create a more just, caring, and compassionate world, G-d made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants. G-d promised to protect us and in exchange, G-d expected Abraham and his descendants to be a blessing, walk before G-d, and fill the world with righteousness and justice (Tzedakah u'mishpat).

The rabbis take such great pains to remind us of the importance of kindness because we have been in need of such kindness countless times in our own history. We have been outsiders. Exodus says we have to know “the soul of the stranger.” We know the soul of the stranger because we ARE the stranger.

Why do we need to repeat this concept so many times and in so many different places? Something happens along the way in our integration and comfort in a new place. We forget our personal history. We forget about the alienation of the immigrant, the dislocation of the new

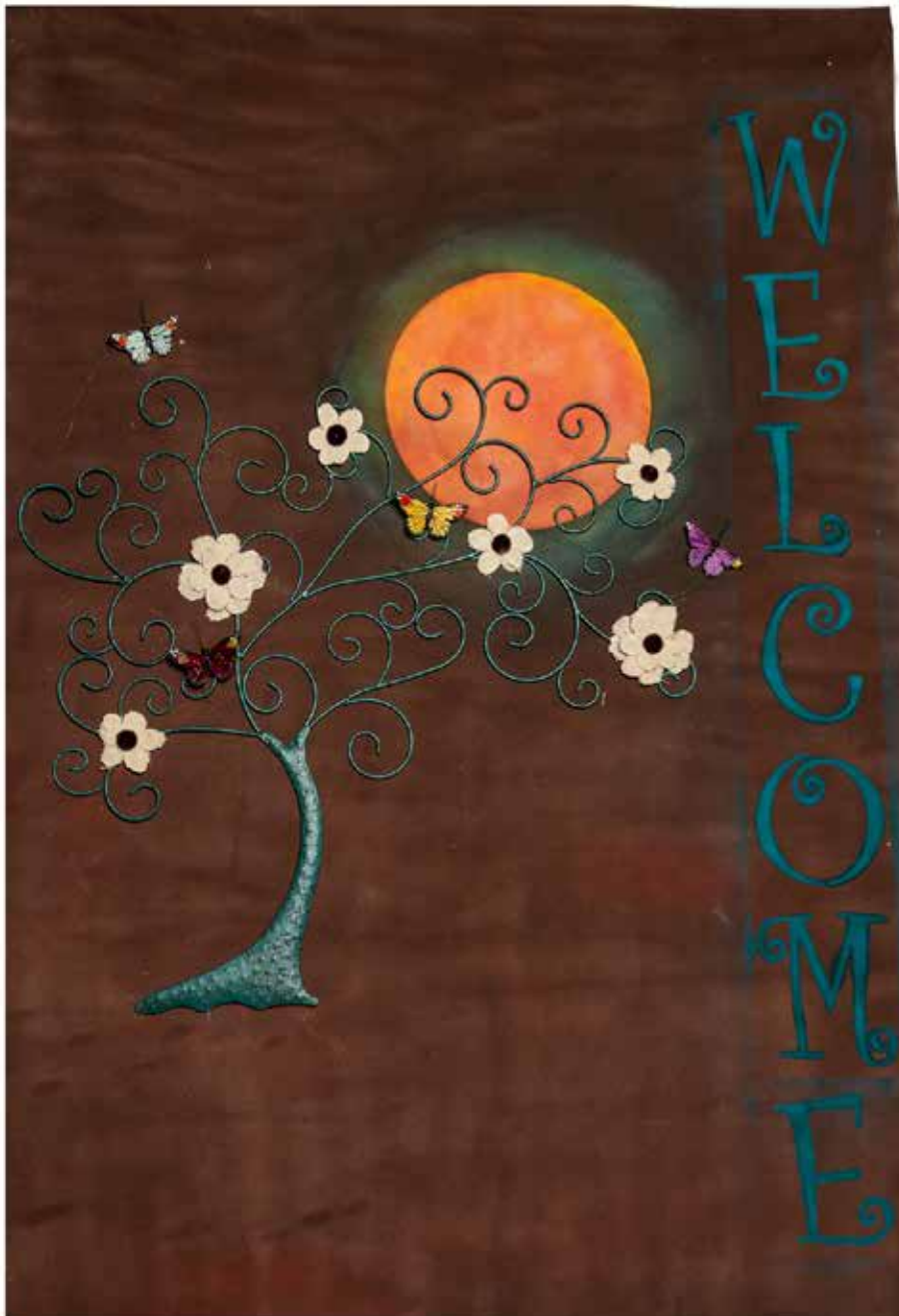
THANK YOU TO OUR PARTICIPANTS FOR THEIR BEAUTIFUL ARTWORK

- |                                    |                                   |
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| ALIVE HOSPICE                      | GLOBAL EDUCATION CENTER NASHVILLE |
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## AKIVA SCHOOL

There are so many different ways to welcome the stranger. The Torah teaches us to welcome the stranger as we were once strangers in a strange land. We are asked to be inclusive and thoughtful of those who may have an experience different than our own. At Akiva, we learn not only about the importance of welcoming in the stranger but about the commandment to perform acts of lovingkindness towards others. These acts help us better experience what it truly means to welcome someone in. Whether we invite you into our classrooms as you walk through our halls, deliver Mishloach Manot to residents of local senior living facilities, or welcome you into the Akiva Sukkah, our goal is to help everyone feel like perhaps they once WERE a stranger but are no longer. We learn that welcoming people takes humility, compassion, insight, courage and a deep sense of reaching out to the other and it starts with our youngest generation. Our leaves represent how a person feels when they are given a foundation with lovingkindness and sense that all those around them welcome them.

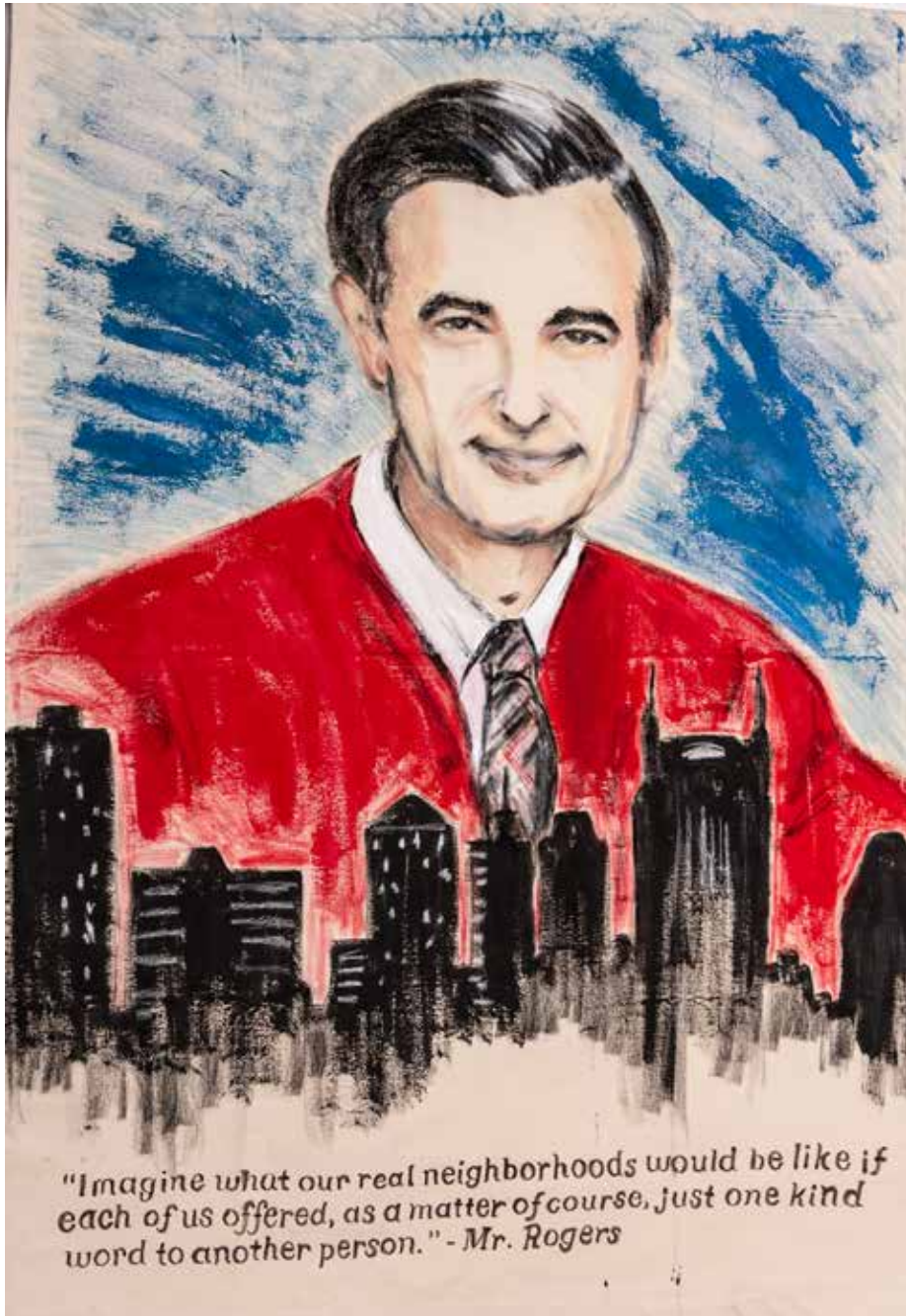


“One amongst His Teachings is this, that love and good faith must so dominate the human heart that men will regard the stranger as a familiar friend, the malefactor as one of their own, the alien even as a loved one, the enemy as a companion dear and close.”

*Baha’i Tradition (from Abdu’l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu’l-Baha)*

## ALIVE HOSPICE

What does it mean to welcome a stranger? When we do welcome them are we genuine in our actions, or simply going through the motions? The canvas was inspired by a simple “welcome” mat that you see in the entrance to many homes. A setting sun, tree of life, blossoms, and butterflies create the focal point of the canvas. The warmth of the setting sun to envelop the weary traveler and welcome them under our roof for the night. A night of fellowship, feasting, and joy for each other. May our roof offer refuge—if only for a brief period—all are welcome. The tree of life – a symbol of a fresh start to life each day as the sun sets, positive energy, and hope for a bright future. This is our hope – that by embracing one another we will ensure that the essence of humanity lives on for eternity.



## CARRIE MILLS

Mr. Rogers is an icon of kindness, inclusivity, the importance of our children in our society, and the idea of welcoming others into our neighborhoods.

Placing the image of Mr. Rogers over the Nashville skyline seemed to summarize the theme, "Welcoming the Stranger" here in our very own city of Nashville. While painting I could hear Mr. Rogers singing, "Won't you be my neighbor?"

The quote by Mr. Rogers seemed to go best with the theme of being kind to others, as in essence, we are all neighbors.

The Gordon Jewish Community Center's Early Childhood Learning Center is not only an important part of this community center and city, it has also been an important part of our family's life. For that reason, the image of Mr. Rogers who was and remains an advocate for the importance of welcoming, loving and nurturing children in our communities, resonated on another level for me while considering how to approach the theme.



## CHEEKWOOD

The pineapple, symbolizing hospitality, is more than just a logo at Cheekwood. With our gates open, we receive all visitors and encourage them to find peace among the beauty of our art and tranquility of our gardens. In this piece, the skylines of Nashville, seen at the top, and Jerusalem, visible below the pineapple, stand for the ways in which we open our arms to those from near and far. There are no strangers at Cheekwood, only welcomed guests.



“None is our enemy, none is stranger to us, we are in accord with one and all.”

*Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Tradition)*

## CHINESE ARTS ALLIANCE

America is made of immigrants; we shall continue opening our arms, welcoming strangers with good intentions! It is easy to stay in our comfort zone, let us be open-minded, appreciating and embracing the differences that enrich our society as a whole.

This art installation takes the form of a game:

The board which is divided into 5 parts or levels. Four levels have slots to place the game figures.

Levels 1, 2, 4, and 5 symbolize nations/ethnic groupings. The 3rd level is where the game figures are stored.

The 40 figures represent people from across the world. The nationalities of the figures are printed on the back.

To play this game: anyone can place a figure into a new slot (a new country) where they will be welcome strangers.

The rules of the game are simple and cruel. The game pieces can be placed (“welcomed”) anywhere except where the figure says is their home. Players figure out by viewing the landmarks on each level where not to place the figures.

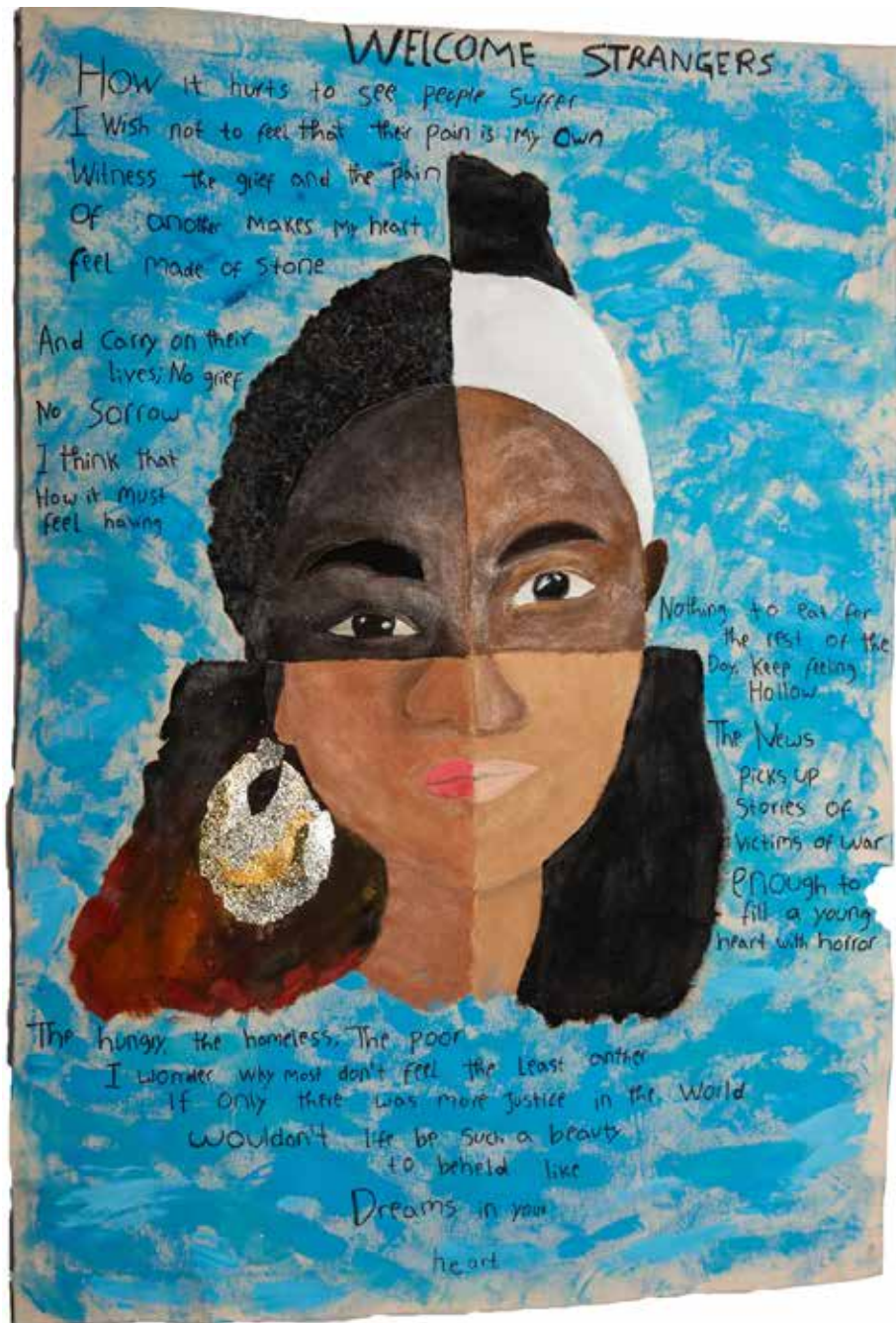
The theme of this interactive installation is to show that we may all need to be welcomed strangers.



## COMPASSIONATE NASHVILLE

We are all Children of God living under one roof. We come in every shade and color of the rainbow. Together we live in peace and harmony in a beautiful and compassionate world.

Conceived by Massood Taj and Dina Capitani, cofounders of Compassionate Nashville, this painting was a collaborative effort of a diverse group of people from different faiths and cultural backgrounds.



## CONEXIÓN AMÉRICAS

During the early part of September, our staff team came together to think about what it means for us as individuals and as an organization to “welcome the stranger”. At Conexión Américas our mission is to build a welcoming community and create opportunities where Latino families can belong, contribute and succeed. With this in mind the theme of “welcoming the stranger” resonated with our staff team who created this multimedia art piece. They saw the call to action of welcoming the stranger as an extension of the work they do working with immigrants. They visually expressed their work with motifs of hands (alluding to the need of extending themselves to others in service), hearts (reminding everyone to have an open heart and be able to see the humanity in others), pictures depicting the programs they work on and through powerful words of welcoming.



“Let a person never turn away a stranger from his house, that is the rule. Therefore a man should, by all means, acquire much food, for good people say to the stranger: ‘There is enough food for you.’”

*Hindu Tradition (from Taitiriya Upanishad 1.11.2)*

## COUNTRY MUSIC HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM

The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum® and Hatch Show Print collaborated with museum visitors to create this original piece of artwork, which represents the theme “Welcoming the Stranger.”

Over the course of two days, guests added pieces of paper with their names and hometowns onto the piece. A wide range of localities is represented within this patchwork—from Thailand to New Zealand to, undoubtedly, Nashville, Tennessee. The iconic rays of Hatch Show Print draw these names and locations together, inviting viewers’ eyes down to the silhouette of the museum and the Nashville skyline.

We welcome these diverse visitors under one roof, where strangers become community.



## FASHION IS FOR EVERY BODY

Fashion is for Every Body challenges stereotypes and changes lives through the transformative power of fashion. We use fashion to promote body-positivity and self-esteem while seeking inclusion for adults of all ages, sizes and physical abilities within the fashion industry. We accomplish our mission by facilitating partnerships between local designers, boutique owners, photographers, and non-traditional models through endowments, photo shoots, and an annual runway show. This panel is a montage of our models and mementos from our projects to date. We don't segregate; we celebrate.



## HISPANIC FAMILY FOUNDATION

Welcome. Bienvenidos.

The sun knows no strangers. He rises in the sky every day and kisses your face with his warmth and light. Flowers greet you with color and fragrance regardless of your station in life. Forever giving beauty and grace. The small turtle, slow and graceful teaches us that patience and steadfastness will get you where you need to go. Basking in the sun, taking in the beauty of nature around us, sharing this world with others; some like us, some different. We welcome others with open hearts and minds, sharing the bright colors that make our Latino culture vibrant and inviting. We share our food and laughter, music and love with all who cross our path. Welcome. Bienvenido. We care. We Love.

The children in the Hispanic Community and Hispanic Family Foundation created this piece in the style of "Huichol Art" to share fun, light, culture and colors with you.

“You must not hate your brother in your heart. You must surely reprove your fellow citizen so that you do not incur sin on account of him. You must not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the children of your people, but you must love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

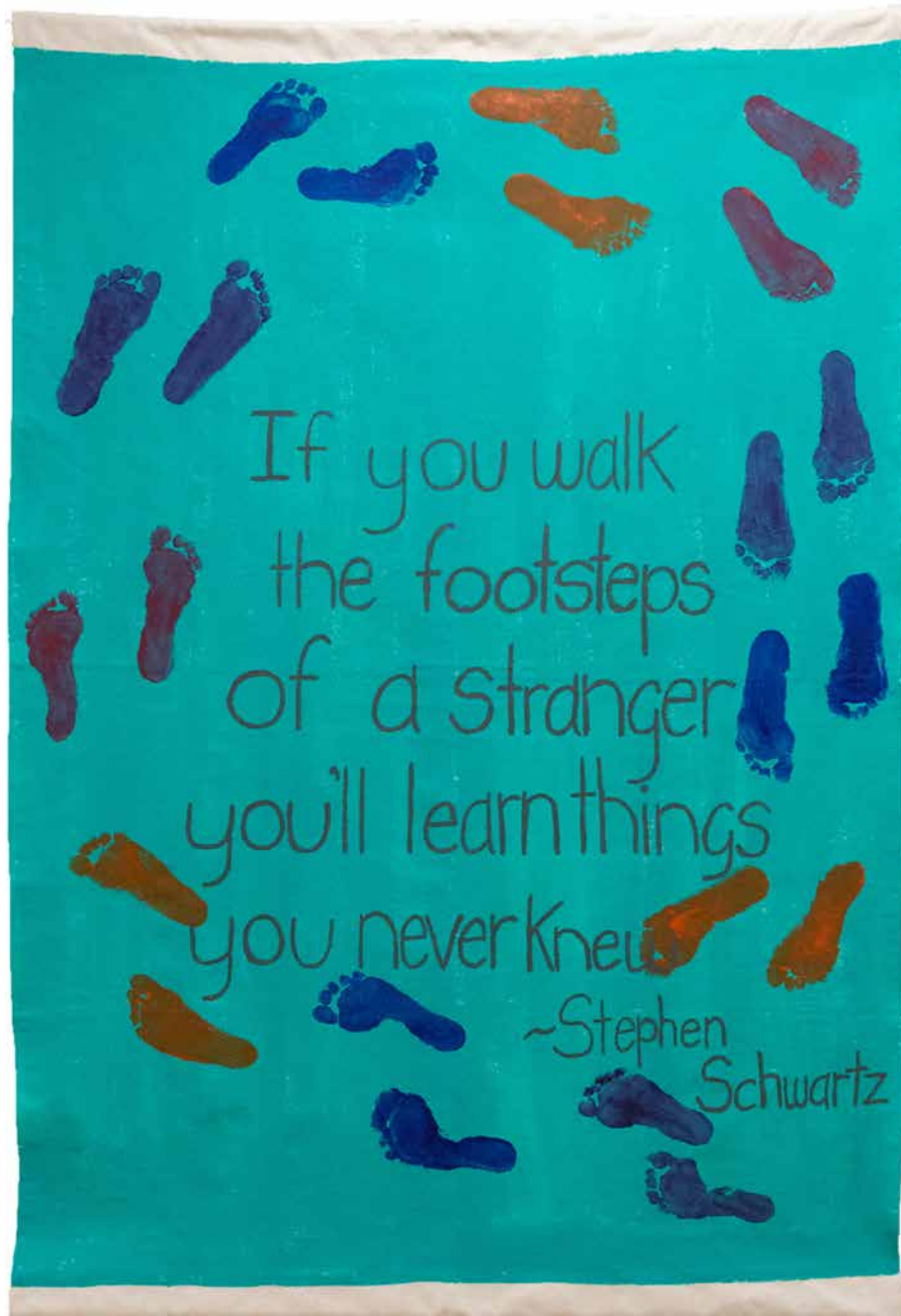
*Leviticus 19:17-18*

## ISLAMIC CENTER

This piece consists of the word Peace written in over 30 languages. The words create an abstract image that may look non-representational but it represents a meaningful depiction of peace and unity. Keeping this year's theme of 'Welcoming the Stranger' in mind I thought that the best way to welcome the stranger would be with peace.

The act of repeating words/patterns over and over again to form an image traces back to the history of Islamic art. Islamic decoration, which tends to avoid using figurative images, makes frequent use of geometric patterns which have developed over the centuries. The geometric designs in Islamic art often built on combinations of repeated squares and circles, which may be overlapped and interlaced to form intricate and complex patterns, including a wide variety of tessellations. Being a first-generation immigrant, I tend to intertwine different cultures into my art.





## MICAH CHILDREN

"If you walk the footsteps of a stranger, you'll learn things you never knew."

~Stephen Schwartz (Colors of the Wind)

Art created by the students of the PreK class



## NASHVILLE DOLPHINS

People of all races, religions, abilities, genders, ages and beliefs can live harmoniously together when everyone opens their hearts to love.



“Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the stranger or the poor, and do not plot evil in your hearts against one another.”

*Zekharia 7:10*

## OZ ARTS

This design serves to honor OZ Arts' late founder, Cano A. Ozgener while also supporting the theme of Welcoming the Stranger. A Turkish-born person of Armenian heritage, Cano embodied a welcoming and inclusive spirit throughout his distinguished life. The main background is a reproduction of Cano's Opus 304, The Girl in Yellow. This poignant composition features a single figure, conjuring thoughts of the individual's loneliness and isolation, eliciting a sense of empathy from the viewer.



## RENEWAL HOUSE

For the women and children that come to Renewal House, trauma and chaos are all too familiar. Hope and stability are strangers in their lives. With the courage to change, Renewal House families embrace the unknown – “Welcoming the Stranger,” who personifies a new life in recovery.

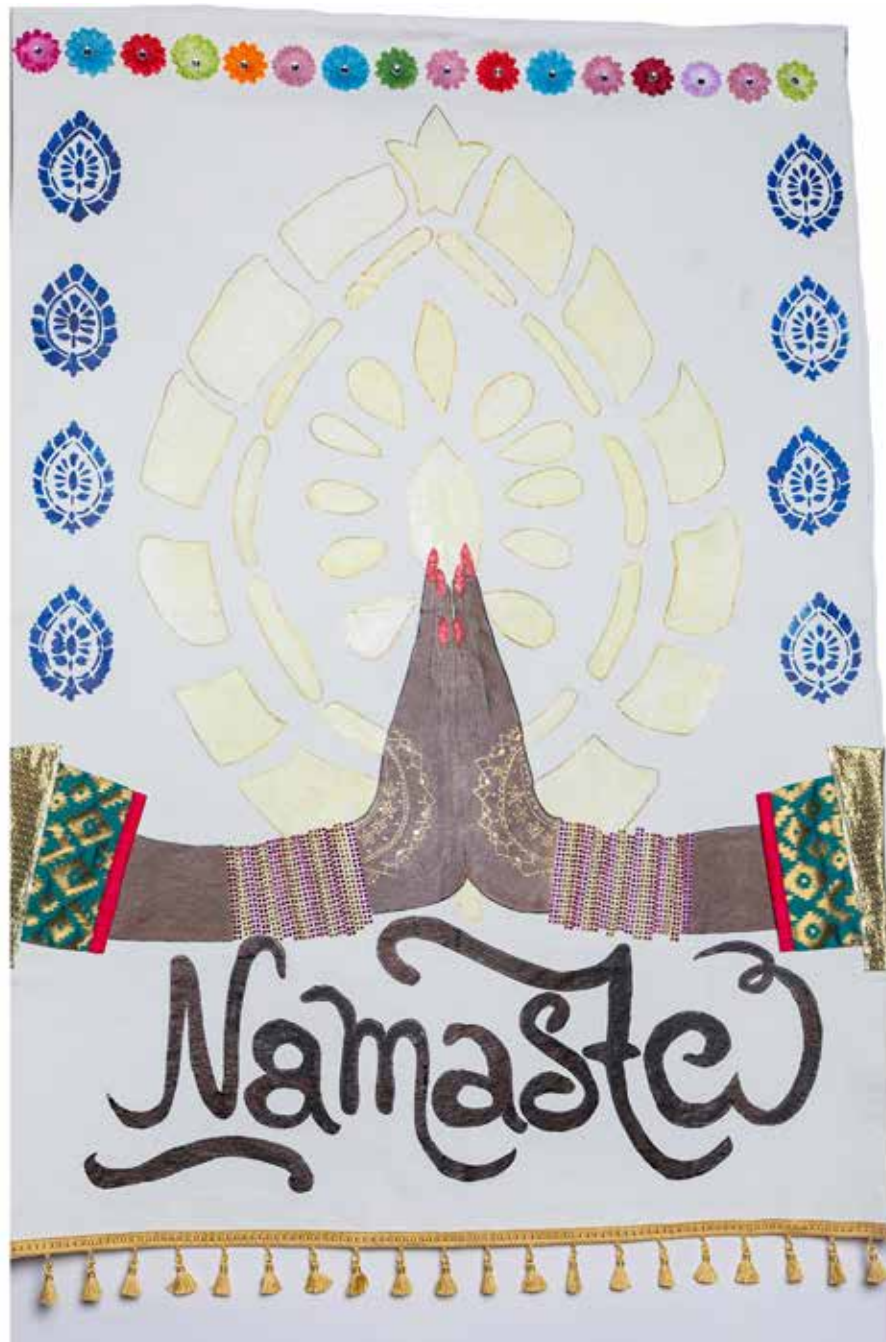
Renewal House is unique in Middle Tennessee as the only provider of long-term comprehensive treatment for both women with substance use disorders and their children. To identify its interpretation of the “Welcoming the Stranger” theme for the Sukkot celebration, Renewal House brought together a group of current clients. They envisioned an image of a young child offering the promise of a bright future. Emanating from the child’s outstretched arms in a flash of brilliant colors are words the group chose to represent the qualities of the new life they have started at Renewal House.



## SHERITH ISRAEL

The Torah mentions the idea of 'Welcoming the Stranger' no less than 36 times and reinforces this idea by reminding the Children of Israel that they were once Strangers in a Strange Land. Eventually, each of us experiences a moment in our lives when WE are the Stranger.

So...look at yourself in the mirror and think about how you would want someone to welcome you.



“Do good unto your parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the neighbor from among your own people, and the neighbor who is a stranger, and the friend by your side, the wayfarer, and your servants.”

*Surah 4:36 (Muslim Tradition)*

## SRI GANESHA TEMPLE

Namaste, a common greeting you might hear in a yoga class is actually derived from the words *namah* (salutation) and *te* (to you). Together, *namaste* translates to “salutation to you” and is meant to convey respect and honor in our Hindu tradition. Hands are held together in prayer position close to the heart to convey a divine connection between the giver and receiver. We chose *NAMASTE* as the focal point of this canvas to highlight our belief that “welcoming a stranger” is a sacred practice.

As the daughters of Indian immigrants, we remember being welcomed with garlands of flowers whenever we returned to visit family we had not seen in years. Our guest status quickly turned to family status as we immersed ourselves in a rich and vibrant culture. Flowers, colorful silk fabric, gold paint and stones were incorporated in the design to create a festive feeling you would experience at a religious celebration or wedding.

This canvas was designed and created by Madhavi Boorgu and Aruna Shah with the help of the 7th and 8th grade Bal Vihar Class (Sunday religious education class at the Sri Ganesha Temple).



## THE TEMPLE



Our project combines the blessings of being both Jewish and American. Representing the values of Judaism, we see the Torah. One image is of the Torah, wrapped in its beautiful decorative garments. On the cover of this scroll is the word TZEDAKAH – righteous giving, from the root TZEDEK, meaning “Justice.” This value, and the pursuit of justice, reminds us that when we share what we have, we are not diminished by that generosity; we are emboldened and elevated by it.

The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:33-34).

The Torah scroll that is opened to its center, displaying the pinnacle, the apex of the Torah and our values in the Holiness Code in Leviticus. There we find the call to be humanly holy, protecting those on the margins of society, the most vulnerable and the most in need of assistance. We are told 36 times in the Torah to love the stranger, to welcome the stranger, to provide and care for the stranger, to not oppress the stranger, because we were once strangers in the land of Egypt. Living up to this responsibility will help that stranger to become our neighbor.

The Jewish story is fundamentally an immigrant story – no matter how many generations we have been here – no matter how many thousands of years ago this great Exodus took place – the timeless call to welcome and care for the stranger still compels us.

This principle of equal rights for citizens and non-citizens alike permeates not only Jewish tradition, but the American legal tradition as well. As citizens fully integrated into the fabric of this country, we have a unique responsibility as inheritors of an immigrant history to ensure that the rights of non-citizens are not trampled upon today.

Our obligations as Americans to live up to this responsibility is represented by the Statue of Liberty. She is poised out in the waters, seemingly rushing out to greet those who yearn to live upon her shores. The foot of this statue is raised, seemingly in motion, reminding us that we must not be idle in our pursuit of justice, and this is underscored by the broken chains around her foot, reminding us to break those chains of oppression. No less are we reminded of Emma Lazarus’ poem, “The New Colossus” calling the Statue “Mother of Exiles... From her beacon-hand/ Glows world-wide welcome” and the call for all who yearn to breathe free.

The beauty of diversity, and the dignity of difference, is represented by the word “WELCOME” in several different languages – each one spoken by members of the Temple community: staff, congregants, teachers, preschool families, and more. The rich tapestry of our community is made that much stronger and more beautiful by the gifts and talents and contributions of newcomer and native alike.

Languages included are Russian, Serbian/Croatian, Somali, Hindi, Arabic, Korean, Italian, Spanish, French, Kurdish, German, Farsi, Hebrew and English – All Under One Roof.

“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

*Romans 13:10 (New Testament)*



## WEST END SYNAGOGUE

When we were brain storming about this project, it quickly occurred to us that Israel has been the most “Welcoming of Strangers.” Jews, whose lives have been endangered, world-wide, have been accepted and integrated into Israeli society. As a result, people throughout the world have benefited from the amazing medical, scientific and entrepreneurial breakthroughs coming from this small country.

The Nashville community has supported many projects there with donations from Federation, Hadassah, and many other organizations.

We used acrylic paint and created “paper dolls” to carry out our vision. We are excited to present our interpretations of this phenomenon - the ultimate expression of “Welcoming the Stranger.”



## YWCA

The YWCA strives to make individuals of every culture, gender, race, sexual orientation, faith, belief, and ability feel welcomed and supported 'under one roof.' We are held accountable by our mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. This project challenged us to integrate each of our ideas on this panel in order to create art that spoke to our truths.

We started with a tree of life or a family tree, often used to symbolize our connection to the earth and to each other. Through this natural setting, without the construction of lines and borders and walls, we are reminded that we all belong here. We painted our shared roof as the universal sky, under which we all live. We used 'welcoming arms' as the main branches of the tree to show us lifting or holding each other up. The inside leaves are hands of different colors, styles and sizes to incorporate the diversity of our 'family.' Hearts encircle the hands because our organization surrounds the community in love and acceptance. The roots of the tree ground us in the strength of our diversity and remind us that each of us has a history and an experience on this land. As we 'Welcome the Stranger,' we emphasize that this land is all of ours, and that 'All are Welcome.'

“If there be among you a needy person, you shall not harden your heart, but you shall surely open your hand.”

*Deuteronomy 15:7*

“To feel the intimacy of brothers is a marvelous thing in life. To feel the love of people whom we love is a fire that feeds our life. But to feel the affection that comes from those whom we do not know, from those unknown to us, who are watching over our sleep and solitude, over our dangers and our weaknesses -- that is something still greater and more beautiful because it widens out the boundaries of our being, and unites all living things.”

*From the writings of Pablo Neruda (Secular Humanism)*



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