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Our Center is honored to present a series of events through the end of 2023 collectively referred to as *Testimony*. All four events—a mural, an art exhibit, a multidisciplinary symposium, and the world premiere of an immersive vocal drama—emphasize the moral imperative all of us have to speak out when we witness injustice. They highlight the use of arts, music, and the humanities in advocating for children and families in migration through partnerships with attorneys, health care professionals (both medical and behavioral), as well as other service professionals.

Testimony kicked off in May with the installation of the first-ever outdoor mural at CU Anschutz, Juls Mendoza’s incredible *Fly to Heal*. Juls migrated to Denver as a child and embedded his own experiences in his spectacular mural, which features a child flying forward, carrying symbols of home, hope and loss. Juls’ unique artistic style, known as “surrealismo cultural,” is full of potent symbols and bright, vibrant colors. The mural was sponsored by the Colorado Area Health Education Center (CO-AHEC) and can be seen on the west wall of the Fulginiti Pavilion.

The unveiling of the *Fly to Heal* mural was immediately followed by the opening of an art exhibit titled *Art as Advocacy* in June 2023. *Art as Advocacy* highlights four artistic projects inspired by the sworn testimonies of children arriving to the United States in June 2019. The children reported being taken into custody by the U.S. government shortly after arrival and having almost all their belongings taken away. Many were separated from their families. Children, including infants, were forced to sleep on concrete floors for days on end with nothing to warm them except, occasionally, a mylar blanket. The lucky ones would secure a coveted spot on a concrete block, or one of the bunks where the children would sleep in shifts, 3 and 4 at a time. Others were sent to sleep in tents in the desert, surrounded by razor wire. The children described rancid food and water that smelled and tasted like bleach. There were no showers, soap, toothpaste, or toothbrushes. Girls expressed their shame in having to use toilets in open view of strangers. Illness was widespread and a lice infestation had broken out. There was no schooling, no books, no play. The children were seldom allowed outside.

When these sworn declarations with their brutal details were made public, legal and medical advocates and the artistic community responded with fiery indignation and determination to ensure that the children’s voices would be heard and their stories would be known. The *Art as Advocacy* exhibit includes works from:

- [*Do You Know Where the Children Are?*](#), an artistic initiative organized by conceptual artists, which led to the creation of over 120 original works of art, raising over a quarter of a million dollars for nonprofits serving immigrant children and families;
- [*Hear My Voice/Escucha Mi Voz*](#), an award-winning children’s book that interweaves the children’s testimonies in their own words with powerful images created by 17 Latinx illustrators;
- [*365 days....*](#), an art campaign undertaken by an educational technologist who swore to paint an original watercolor embedded with a child’s quote every day for an entire year; and
- [*BorderX*](#), a comics anthology featuring the works of dozens of comics artists from across the country.

[*Art as Advocacy*](#) will be on display in the gallery and lobby of the Fulginiti Pavilion through the end of 2023.

The third component of *Testimony* is a multi-disciplinary, all-day symposium on Thursday, September 21, 2023. Titled [*Advocating for Children in Migration*](#), the symposium will bring together health professionals, lawyers, artists, writers, musicians and other professionals to explore how they can use their unique skills while working together to advocate for the human rights of children in migration. The symposium includes four panels— arts and literature, law, medical and behavioral health, and muralism and performing arts—as well as a keynote address by [Lee Gelernt](#) of the ACLU. Lee was the lead attorney in *Ms. L v. ICE*, the class action lawsuit that ended family separation, as well as the lawsuits striking down both Muslim bans. The symposium will also feature a live performance of “[The Ghost of Abuelito](#)” by the award-winning [True North Duo](#) (Kristen Grainger and Dan Wetzel).

The world premiere of *Soul Echoes* will immediately follow the symposium in the Gossard Forum at 5:30 p.m. on September 21. *Soul Echoes* is an immersive vocal drama (mini-opera) composed by rising star composer and naturalized U.S. citizen [J.E. Hernandez](#), who as a young person was detained for several months after returning to the U.S. (where he lives) from Mexico. *Soul Echoes* is being choreographed by [Jesus Acosta](#), who also was detained when he arrived to the U.S. as a teenager. Jesus will also be performing in *Soul Echoes* with a youth dancer. Vocalists include Venezuelan [Luisana Rivas](#) known for her advocacy promoting Latin American music, and [Cynthia López](#), a Mexican American soprano. The [Lírios Quartet](#), currently in residence at CU Boulder, will perform the pieces written for string quartet.

Bringing this powerful collection of arts and advocacy projects to our Center was the inspiration of [Professor Warren Binford](#), who became the inaugural W.H. Lea Endowed Chair for Justice in Pediatric Law, Policy and Ethics at the University of Colorado in 2020. Professor Binford is a Professor of Pediatrics (tenured), Professor of Law (by courtesy), and a core faculty member in our Center. She serves as the Director of Law, Policy and Ethics at CU’s Kempe Center on the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect. Her own child advocacy work is featured in some of the art on display. Without her dedication, passion, fundraising and planning, we would not have the [Testimony](#) series to share with you.

We also owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to [David Weil](#), our Center’s Manager of Operations and Educational Technology who worked closely and for many long hours and late nights with

Warren on all aspects of the *Testimony* series. David designed and implemented the display of the *Art as Advocacy* exhibit, and he led the mural project from inception to completion. His tenacity and creativity have been pivotal in executing all aspects of this complex series successfully.

The *Art as Advocacy* exhibit was expertly curated by [Sara Fischer](#), who gracefully took on the overwhelming task of working with Warren and David through multiple large projects, involving dozens of artists, and making executive decisions as to the selection and arrangement of many of the outstanding pieces you see on display. Dr. Josina O'Connell and Frank Garza were crucial partners throughout the mural selection and production process, and we are grateful to the mural selection committee as well.

I would also like to thank the Chancellor's office and the CU Anschutz Office of Advancement for their financial, logistical, technical and moral support as our teams have worked hard for many months to bring this moving and inspirational set of projects to enrich our campus!

Finally, our partner on this entire series of exhibits and events is the [Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect](#). The collaboration and support of the amazing Kempe Center faculty and staff was crucial to bringing Warren to our campus, and their ongoing support for advocacy of the health and well-being of all children, families, and communities is evident through the myriad work they do, including their invaluable contributions to the [Testimony](#) series.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Wynia', with a small 'no' written to the right.

Matthew K. Wynia, MD, MPH
Director, University of Colorado Center for Bioethics and Humanities
Professor, University of Colorado School of Medicine and Colorado School of Public Health