



ON CAMPUS

by Sandra Carr

Multimedia Exhibit at Stetson University Explores Impact of 9/11 Terrorist Attacks on U.S. Immigration

This year marks the 17th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which killed nearly 3,000 people after hijacked airplanes crashed at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. After the terrorist attacks, an investigation revealed that at least two of the hijackers were staying in the United States with expired student visas.

“Anni Holm: The Immigration Project” Creates Cultural Conversations
Danish multimedia artist Anni Holm, who has a B.F.A. in photography from Columbia College Chicago, was a foreign student living in the U.S. during the 9/11 terrorist attacks and recalled federal authorities recommending that international students be fingerprinted or carry chip-implanted tracking cards after the tragedy.

The government monitoring sparked Holm’s thought-provoking imagery in “The Immigration Project,” an exhibit showcasing digital portraits of international students created from their photos and fingerprints. The exhibit is on display at Stetson University’s Homer and Dolly Hand Art Center through the middle of October.

“I worked with international students from all over the world to obtain photos and fingerprints used to create their large-scale digital portraits,” said Holm. “Each image measures 57 inches by 43 inches and contains about 4,000 actual life-size fingerprints of each depicted student. The portraits appear pixelated when viewed up close and less so farther away.”

Being Good Global Citizens

Tonya Curran, director of the Hand Art Center, expressed how the portraits foster global citizenship, one of Stetson University's core values.

"We want to be good global citizens," said Curran. "It's a time when our country has so much going on politically and internationally. There's a lot of commentary about immigration and racial issues being brought up every day in the news. In an academic environment, art can bring some things to the foreground so you can learn more about them, then be able to critically think about them and process that into how you conduct yourself and how you live your life."

Someone Targeted as "Other"

Sharmaine Jackson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Sociology at Stetson University, was living in New York on the other side of the Hudson River during the 9/11 terrorist attacks. She recalled being in shock while watching the Twin Towers come crashing down from her apartment window. She will never forget the smell of fire that ensued and remained for weeks after the calamity.

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Jackson was moved by Holm's digital portrait exhibit and felt the images prompted a dialogue about immigration. "As someone who was targeted as 'other,' Anni Holm's perspective provides much insight into the current discourse on immigration," explained Jackson. "As a sociologist, I felt that the images set up some interesting questions about perspective and observation. When you keep a safe distance, you can see the person in the portrait, but upon closer inspection, all you see is the fingerprints. Coding is also represented in Anni's choice to reproduce the photographs in black and white. The dualistic thinking is reflective of other social shifts in contemporary American life."

Students Born into World with the 9/11 Narrative

For many college students, the 9/11 terrorist attacks became secondhand knowledge that they learned about in history books.

"I wondered what it was like for young people to be born into a world with this 9/11 narrative," said Jackson. "Anyone teaching a class on difference, immigration, American history, politics, sociology, cultural studies or related fields will find that this exhibit provides an engaging array of narratives synthesizing multiple perspectives of what followed after the attacks."

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The display holds true today and illustrates the controversial conversations about immigration.

“As we see on a daily basis, immigration is a source of constant concern politically,” said Curran. “I feel that the current atmosphere in the U.S. implies that there is a negative connotation to the word immigrant when, in fact, almost all of us are descended from immigrants, notwithstanding our Native American counterparts. I hope that the exhibit will inspire some critical thought about the contributions of immigrants to our great country.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Sandra Carr is an award-winning journalist and freelance editor, writer and public relations professional in Orlando, Florida. Carr earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in radio-TV from the University of Central Florida. Her clients include Stetson University and the Orlando Sentinel.

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