

## In Dorchester, art that reaches for change

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With a mural from street artist Shepard Fairey on campus, Tufts students have been exposed to public art as a method of drawing attention to political issues and fostering social change within the community.

That concept took center stage in Dorchester on Sunday, during the USA WEEKEND Magazine-sponsored "Make a Difference Day." A group of students and local residents painted a mural outside of the Fields Corner T station to raise awareness about the importance of the 2010 Census.

U.S. Census Bureau worker Norman Eng explained the government's decision to target Fields Corner. "What we want to do today on Make a Difference Day is to beautify a pedestrian walkway that has high traffic of walkers, drivers and T riders," he told the Daily on Sunday. "The reason why we're here at Field's Corner is because [it] is one of the hardest-to-count neighborhoods in the city of Boston."

Eng said that underrepresentation in the Census often occurs in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods with linguistically and culturally isolated populations.

Seniors Angela Lam and Daniela Valenzuela got involved with the mural as part of their project this year as Tisch College Citizenship and Public Service Scholars. It is titled, "Census on Campus 2010."

"The first part of our project is doing community outreach and the second part is focused on campus, making sure that all the students, or at least the majority of them, are counted," Valenzuela said.

Lam and Valenzuela joined other Tufts students and Field's Corner-area residents for a day of fun and painting. The volunteers grabbed brushes and composed a mural of colorful hands reaching across counts," in Vietnamese, Spanish, Haitian Creole and Portuguese. The Census Bureau chose to translate the mural's message into these four languages in an effort to reach populations in the Fields Corner community for the Census.

Sophomore Nancy Wang, who volunteered in the project, said, "I just really like the idea of art for social change," Wang said. "I find it cool, and this sounded really fun."

Although the Fields Corner mural only took a day to paint, several groups were involved in organizing the event. The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA), which runs the T, granted the Census Bureau permission to use the wall space for the mural; the group Artists for Humanity created the design; and the Fields Corner Main Street organization gathered volunteers in the area to help paint.

Among the local volunteers were Bruce Dryer and his young daughter, Olivia. "It's for the community and I'm from Dorchester," Dryer said. "My daughter loves to paint, too."

According to Eng, the concept behind the Fields Corner mural is that "we want everybody to know that it is true: Everyone counts, regardless of your citizenship status, whether you rent or own. It doesn't matter. Everyone needs to be counted in the 2010 Census."

Lam stressed the importance of letting the government know where people live. "It's just really at people's advantage to fill out [the Census] because we take a lot of government services for granted," she said. "We're just going to end up paying for more if the government doesn't know that someone exists there and ... they won't be able to allocate funds or reapportion representatives in Congress."

Eng agreed. "Programs for kids like Head Start, the building of roads and bridges and all other federal grant programs are based on a formula



Jodi Bosin / Tufts Daily

Students helped create a mural at the Fields Corner T stop to encourage people to fill out the Census.

that is dependent on Census data,” he said. “We need an accurate count. We want to count everyone once and in the right place ... That’s our goal.”

Damon Butler, the artist behind the project, described the significance of the various hands in the Fields Corner mural. “The concept behind the mural is [that] when you raise your hand you want to be seen, you want to be noticed,” he said. The piece is a vibrant representation of the Census Bureau’s slogan for the 2010 Census: “It is in our hands.”

Fields Corner Main Street worker Jullianne Doherty said, “It’s all about really taking the Census in our own hands and making sure your neighbors, friends and family are counted.”

Eng is hoping that the art will raise awareness and encourage marginalized populations to take part in the 2010 Census. “[The mural] obviously affects people because all of these commuter residents come to this major T station,” Eng said. “They’ll be reminded of it daily and it’ll be in different languages, so hopefully it’ll get the message to those folks that don’t speak English.”

Doherty said that the Dorchester project for “Make a Difference Day,” which was sponsored by USA WEEKEND Magazine, achieved its goal. “Our mission is to enhance the business district, and I think this mural does just that,” Doherty said. “I think [the Fields Corner mural] really promotes a lively, involved community, and it also beautifies the streetscape.”

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