



WHITTIER UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Oct. 7, 2024 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-447-2403

Captivating Artwork by Whittier Union Alum Provides Inspiration for Titan Students, Staff

WHITTIER – At Pioneer High School (PHS), the images greet students and staff as they navigate the hallways on their way to class – portraits of Bob Marley and Emiliano Zapata, a mountainside paradise, an Aztec calendar, the penetrating eye from George Orwell’s “1984” – images that beautify the campus and provide a nurturing environment for learning.

The artwork is the product of Pioneer High Class of 2012 graduate Domingo Perez, whose meticulous craftsmanship and collages have become a daily source of inspiration and Titan pride. Perez’s sublime portraits and artistic flourishes adorn nearly a dozen classroom doors at Pioneer, part of an ongoing project that began when Perez was still a PHS student painting his friend’s backpacks for fun.

“Domingo Perez’s work is amazing,” Pioneer High principal Mary Chapman said. “His murals enhance the learning environment and help students build connections to learning. I am in awe of the detail Domingo achieves in such a small space and I am so grateful to have an alumni use his talents in a way that positively gives back to the school community.”

As a Pioneer High student, Perez excelled in many subjects, including English and math. Joining the Art Club as a junior, Perez began drawing attention for his backpack art, decorating his friend’s backpacks with depictions of the Incredible Hulk, Frankenstein’s bride, and the Shepard Fairey “OBEY” giant.

Perez’s work caught the attention of his English teacher Jae Shin-Perez, who brought him back to campus after he had graduated to paint the cover of “The Great Gatsby” on her classroom door. Several years later, Perez asked Shin-Perez if he could return and repaint the door. What resulted were stunning recreations of William Faulkner’s “As I Lay Dying” and Toni Morrison’s “Beloved,” among others.

“I had Domingo as my student for several years and I saw his phenomenal growth, as a student and artist,” Shin-Perez said. “He has integrity and commitment and is painstakingly modest. His murals have had such a positive impact on my students. When they see the books on the door they ask, ‘will we get to read these?’ And once my colleagues saw his work, they wanted Domingo to paint their doors as well.”

Perez, who is currently pursuing a math degree at Cal State Long Beach and works as a tutor for Mathnasium, said he feels a great sense of pride in his work, especially when the classroom doors are opened to face the Pioneer quad and the full beauty of the images can be seen, though he is quick to downplay any praise directed toward his art.

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"I think it's great that students are getting inspired to learn by seeing my art in their classrooms," Perez said. "There was one student who painted a door mural a year before I started painting mine and I thought that was cool. It made the class more interesting. But to me, these are just simple projects. I paint what people want."

What motivates Perez the most is the opportunity to give back to his old school, Ada S. Nelson Elementary School in Los Nietos School District. Perez's dream is to paint a mural as a gift to his old alma mater. To that end, Perez said he is saving money to buy all the supplies and paint necessary to complete the job.

Before Perez gets a chance to do that, he will continue to hone his craft at Pioneer High, with at least four more requests for door murals ahead of him, plus interest from other Whittier Union schools.

"Looking at Domingo's artwork at Pioneer High is like viewing a vivid full-color time capsule of history, with images of heroes and folklore that greatly resonate with our students," Superintendent Dr. Monica Oviedo said. "My wish is that Domingo's work can inspire more students to pursue their passions and believe that they can make a positive impact on their community."

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

WUHSD_PIONEERMURAL1: Pioneer High School Class of 2012 graduate Domingo Perez admires a classroom mural he painted, depicting Mexican history and folklore. Perez's sublime portraits and artistic flourishes adorn nearly a dozen classroom doors at Pioneer, part of an ongoing project that began when Perez was still a Pioneer student painting his friend's backpacks for fun.

WUHSD_PIONEERMURAL2: Pioneer High School Spanish teacher Marlene Mendoza-Chacon connects with Pioneer High Class of 2012 graduate Domingo Perez, whose meticulous craftsmanship and classroom doorway collages have become a daily source of inspiration and Titan pride. Perez has painted nearly a dozen doorways at Pioneer High while also pursuing a math degree at Cal State Long Beach.

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OUR MISSION

The Whittier Union High School District provides all students with an engaging, quality standards-based instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement. Whittier Union High School District works to achieve and maintain excellence in providing a comprehensive education for all students.

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