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## Standing Up, Stepping Out

Protest: a statement or action expressing disapproval of or objection to something.

Throughout the course of American history, protest has stood as an incredibly powerful catalyst for change. Whether it be the civil rights movement in the 1960s or the fight for women's rights that continues to this day, progress can be made by those who refuse to accept the systematic oppression imposed upon them. *Radical Velocity: The Power of the Body To Move Through Place*, a 21-piece exhibit in Santa Clara University's de Saisset Museum, "explores the power of the human body to not only move through space, but also impact, even transform, our sense of place" (de Saisset). In doing so, the exhibit skillfully guides the viewer on a journey towards understanding the benefits (and consequences) of making your voice heard. On display from September 27, 2018 to June 15, 2019, *Radical Velocity* tells the story of a nation struggling to overcome the inequality so deeply woven into its fabric. Santa Clara students and visitors of the university benefit from this exhibit, as it leads them to acknowledge injustice within our nation and fight to see it changed.

The exhibit includes photographs of various protests from multiple generations, ranging from women's suffrage in the early 1900s to the Occupy movement in 2011. In covering protests over the course of an entire century, *Radical Velocity* illustrates that inequality in America is not an obsolete or isolated issue. However, although the exhibit depicts several historical eras, it focuses *mainly* on the San Francisco Bay Area from a geographical sense. This is a wise decision from the de Saisset's curator due to the museum's location. As a Jesuit university, Santa Clara

employs a curriculum with core requirements that include diversity, civic engagement, and ethics. Such an environment promotes acceptance and teaches students to be mindful of oppressed peoples in our society. The unforeseen consequence of such a tolerant community is a student body that is aware of social justice issues, but potentially ignorant to the fact that they exist closer to home than one may think. Therefore, photographs of citizens from Berkeley, San Francisco, and Santa Cruz are fitting entries into *Radical Velocity*'s narrative. While as images from different parts of the country may still resonate with a Santa Clara student, there is unquestionable significance in those from the viewer's home. By helping the audience see that injustice exists in all parts of the country (as well as their own backyard), the exhibit can better convey its message that discrimination is far more than a regional problem. Rather, it is a national one, and more importantly, a human one.

“From Integration March in East Palo Alto,” a reproduction of a black and white photograph from 1963, is an excellent example of this strategy at work. Positioned amongst a flurry of other black and white photographs from protests throughout the 20th century, this image stands out in specific due its cross-cultural and cross-generational emphasis. “From Integration March in East Palo Alto” depicts a group of peaceful protesters calling for the integration of schools and neighborhoods within a school district. African-Americans and whites, adults and children alike stand together for a shared goal in this photograph, a beautiful display of unity amongst neighbors. The people hold signs that read things such as “Integrated Schools Require Integrated Neighborhoods,” “A Mixed Area doesn't have to become a New Ghetto,” and “There Are Homes Here For People Who Like People Regardless of Color.” While the messages of most protests express anger in regards to an oppressive group, person, or system, these words elicit feelings of togetherness and peace. This can especially be seen through several of the

protestors' smiling faces as they walk along a suburban street. Both adults and children hold the signs, showing that a collective effort of many different peoples is necessary in order for an integrated school system to work. All people hold responsibility, not just the school board or the students within the classroom. The inclusion of this photograph unveils the true purpose of *Radical Velocity* : to educate those in the Santa Clara community on the most effective way to take a stand. The people in "From Integration March in East Palo Alto" are not belligerent. They are not violent. They are not unruly. Instead, they are calm, poised, and determined to make sure that their voices are heard. Through solidarity with one another, they command the respect of all who encounter their march.

The public eye will always turn towards the outlier: the person, object, or innovation that is unique due to its abnormal properties and movement away from the status quo. The same can be said for a special piece within an art exhibit. In the case of *Radical Velocity* , its outlier is "Taking a Stand in Baton Rouge." Jonathan Bachman's powerful reproduction of a photograph shows Ieshia Evans, a 27-year old nurse and mother, being arrested by two heavily armed police officers in the middle of a wide street. Much different from *Radical Velocity* 's black and white pictures around the Bay Area, "Taking a Stand in Baton Rouge" is a 21st century color photo of an event outside of California. As the name suggests, the photograph was originally taken in Louisiana, where Evans was protesting the 2016 police shooting of Alton Sterling, a 37-year old black man and father of five children (de Saisset). Facing countless officers, Evans stands tall, proud, and fearless while being taken into a custody. Similar to the protestors in "From Integration March in East Palo Alto," her profile is undeniably calm, even in the midst of injustice. Although clearly displeased with the situation, she refuses to counteract aggression with violence. Evans' aura of contained ferocity demonstrates her desire for change, as well as

her recognition that there is much progress to be made. “Taking a Stand in Baton Rouge” elevates *Radical Velocity*’s narrative to new heights. Considering the current social and political climate, the photograph brings the exhibit to life and provides the viewer with a piece that they feel a part of. The inclusion of a relatively young person as an image’s protagonist leads Santa Clara students to imagine themselves in Evans’ shoes and ask the question “Am I willing to fight for what I believe in?”

Perhaps most importantly, *Radical Velocity* demands that its viewers employ a new perspective when considering the true meaning of “protest.” Each of its photographs prompt the Santa Clara community to associate protest with words like unity and friendship rather than violence and disobedience. The exhibit calls all people to take action in the name of righteousness and proves that we must step up and step out if we hope to see positive change put into motion. Utilizing the common thread of social justice, *Radical Velocity* speaks to the progressive nature of the San Francisco Bay Area while still challenging its audience to forge a path towards togetherness and tolerance on a national scale.