



No Child Left Behind, Victoria Heilweil, Rayko, Sept 16, 2016

Heilweil's statement clearly defines the motivation for her series, stirring up attention, appreciation, and better compensation for San Francisco teachers. She has effectively highlighted the dedication and commitment of these teachers through their portraits and their words. Teacher's pay being insufficient to even live in San Francisco and the ratio of required education to

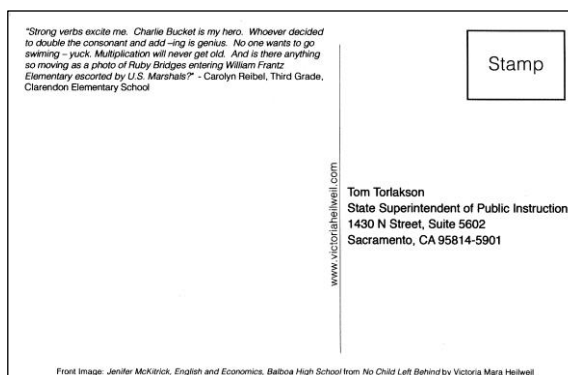
compensation as compared to other professions has been well documented in the local press.

This exhibit follows in a long tradition of photographs making ethical judgments. We have examples of a photographer's body of work or even a single image that contributed to social change. Lewis Hine and Jacob Riis galvanized public attention about slum conditions and child labor slavery around the turn of the 20th century. A single image from the Kent State shootings and the picture of a young naked Vietnamese girl attempting to flee the burning napalm clinging to her skin bolstered the growing anti-war sentiment that eventually defeated the war hawks of a powerful nation. But these are the exception rather than the rule.

Unfortunately most such exhibits effect little change. Either they are displayed in a venue that preaches to a choir or the viewers can see-and-forget as though there is nothing they can do about the injustice. Those that call for "action" often ask too much of our busy lives. As we have all experienced, contributing to a cause usually results in a deluge of snail mail, email, and phones calls to contribute more to that cause and hundreds of others, eventually overwhelming our sense of charity.

Victoria used her art to also call for action but a small one that can be accomplished in a few minutes. She has printed up post cards with her images on one side and teachers' words with pre-printed names and addresses of local and state education officials. Viewers can scribe a short message and place it in a mail slot she has provided. She will stamp and mail.

It is a small exhibit with a small call to action, but a successful exhibit. It provides an avenue for both the artist and the viewer to express themselves. It will not be landmark in the battle but it does contribute to the chorus of voices asking for change.



Victoria Heilweil Artists Statement:

This series is a very personal project for me. For the past 20 years I have been an educator and currently have a child in a San Francisco public school. I had become angry, frustrated and incredulous at how teachers are portrayed in the media, and that they are blamed and vilified for our mounting issues in education. My firsthand experience of being asked to do mindless, time consuming assessments for no extra pay as a college instructor, and shock at how little funds my daughter's class room was given for yearly supplies, motivated me to start photographing.

San Francisco is facing a substantial teacher shortage. A few months ago the Sunday Chronicle featured a cover story about how teachers are being priced out of the Bay Area, and that nearly all other districts pay more than our city. Yet, all the educators I met were sincere and incredibly committed to their students in spite of all of this. They really embody the idea of "No Child Left Behind", unwilling to let kids slip through the cracks and fighting for them to succeed. They love their jobs, and are inspiring.

My series celebrates K-12 educators, showing them with compassion and grace in order to pay respect to the selfless people that do such an important and overlooked job. *No Child Left Behind* is my love letter to teachers, my heroes.