

# RESTORE MINISTRIES, INC

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## LIFELONG IMPACTS

### *Elmi Ventura Mata: Coming home to art*



### *'I can't let go of my practice'*

Growing up in El Salvador, Elmi Leodan Ventura Mata seemed destined to work in the corn and bean fields near his small rural village. Instead, earlier this month, he

earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a double major in painting and drawing from the Cleveland Institute of Art. Now he is lighting the fuse to a promising future as a painter.

"I am the first one in my family to graduate from high school and get a college degree," says Elmi. "My parents had very little formal education. My mom, I think, finished second grade."

In April, he won the prestigious Grand Award in the annual Excellence in the Visual Arts competition presented by the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio. His work was included in an exhibition at the Ohio Arts Council's Riffe Gallery in Columbus. Several of his paintings are on display at the Art Spot in Cleveland

Heights, and next year he will be featured in a solo exhibition at the Maria Neil Art Project in Cleveland's Waterloo Arts District.

Elmi also has work in the Summer Student Show at CIA's Reinberger Gallery through August 5.

"We're incredibly proud of Elmi," says Lane Cooper, chair of CIA's painting department. "I can't say enough about his passion and his commitment to the practice of painting. There are a

*Continued on page 2*

## PARENT'S MESSAGE



I have twin siblings and my son who are all going into the fourth grade. We became aware of Restore through school meetings where Mr. Bagby was present. After the meetings he gave us a Restore brochure and encouraged my Mother and me to look

into sending our children to Restore. Once we entered the building, we were impressed with the program, the people and what Restore offered.

Restore has been an important part of our lives since we began taking our children there. We have participated in the cooking class which have opened up our appetite for different foods and culture, and has taught my brother, sister and my son important skills like chopping, mixing, and cooking for the future. Our kids also enjoy it when they have the science fair and do fun projects in the reading club. Both activities have them enjoying their classes and especial-

ly science class in school. With the help of Restore, Emily, my sister, has improved in school with her work and behavior and is now on the Principal Scholar's list.

The kids enjoy participating in the summer program. They have so much fun with the reading and math classes and they always can't wait for group games and open gym. The best part for them in the summer are the field trips. They go to museums, Turtleback Zoo, hiking in the Watchung Reservation, enjoy Wild West City and going to the

water park. Restore takes them bowling, skating and to the movies. Their month in the summer is full and exciting because of Restore. In the two years they have been members, Restore has made them more social and has opened them up to friendship and kids other than family. Restore has become a major part of our home life and an extension of our family. It's a home away from home and for this we thank them.

*Cindy Leyva*



**Our Executive Director Mr. Linwood Bagby at the finish line.**



**Our Board Member Ms. Marylou Spohr walking for Restore**

**ANNUAL BANQUET FUNDRAISER THURSDAY OCTOBER 28, 2016**

**Save the Date!**

**Reserve Now!**

**Email your RSVP to:**

**Restore1161@gmail.com**



**Anthony, Joahn and Richard receiving 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place metals.**

**“I can’t let go of my practice”**

*Continued from page 1*

lot of things that contribute to a student’s eventual success as an artist, but the number one thing is their willingness to work and to be in the studio. Whether he stays in Cleveland or moves to another metropolitan center, you’re going to be hearing about him.”

Elmi’s figurative paintings often feature the daily struggles of immigrants and minorities. His senior thesis, titled “Americanized,” featured two large, vibrant paintings focusing on working class folks. One, a collage-like street scene with adults and children called “Near Compton and Inglewood,” grew out of a visit to Los Angeles last summer.

“Compton and Inglewood are these sort of really rough areas where Latino and black populations have very little opportunity,” Elmi says. “There are so many struggles. I am interested in how many generations it takes for an immigrant to sort of say, ‘I cannot take this anymore. I need to better my life, instead of living in this chaotic world.’ It questions this whole Americanization and how we deal with that.”

One thing he definitely misses about El Salvador: sunshine and bright blue skies. To counterbalance the ominous gray of Cleveland winters, he created his own light.

“I use a lot of bright colors in my paintings,” Elmi says. “My palette is amped up to the blues and the yellows. The blues represent this ideal sky in El Salvador and the yellow is the sunshine. That’s how I kind of divide my palette because I think we need that here in Cleveland.”

Charming, enthusiastic, and quick to smile, Elmi says he can’t believe how *old* he is going to be. (He turns 23 in June.) His path to painting began in 2001 when he moved to the United States. He was raised largely by his grandmother in the Morazán region of northeast El Salvador until he was 8. His parents had left the country to find work in America, and he joined them in 2001 in Elizabeth, N.J.

“They both worked in factories in low-paying manual labor jobs with hardly any benefits,” he says. “Growing up, we heard these fairy tales about America, about

gold in the streets. But instead of gold, I found snow in the streets and cold winters. It was just horrible.”

As a young teenager, his world was rocked in 2007 when his parents split up. He found salvation in an after-school program called Restore Ministries, where mentors steered him toward a new obsession: drawing. Thanks to a scholarship, he also landed at a summer art camp called Appel Farm, where he held a paintbrush for the first time.

“I was able to look outside the box and see that the United States was much larger than Elizabeth, New Jersey, and my family. It was really surreal. Appel Farm was like a small, protective world where I could block everything out and just draw and paint.”

He started at CIA in the fall of 2012. “Being at CIA has not only given me time to build my skills, it has allowed me to have a goal in mind and see where I want to be in 10 or 20 years,” he says. “The instructors here have drilled into me that once I graduate from

CIA, I can’t let go of my practice.”

Graduate school is a likely destination one day, but his more immediate plans involve returning to El Salvador and teaching villagers about sustainable living.

As it is, he is never too far removed from thoughts of his birth country. Six recent oil paintings, part of his “Americanized” project, peer into the souls of beleaguered characters, displaced El Salvadorans, their skin etched with flecks of browns and blacks. In contrast to the vibrant colors and energy of his more complex works, these smaller paintings are stark and more personal. The main figure in “The Ways of a Man” stares straight ahead with a world-weary gaze. You can’t help but be drawn to him.

“We love his work, says John Farina, co-owner of the Maria Neil Art Project. “You can sense in some of the paintings that there’s feeling there, that something is going on. And the more time you spend with them, the more you see. I can only imagine where he’s going to go from here.”

**By Clint O’Connor**



<http://m.cia.edu/news/stories>

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

What a special place of honor and high esteem I have for each alumni who have moved on to better themselves by continuing their education outside of high school. We have a number of alumni who are still taking an extra semester or two before they walk to get their diplomas. And then there are those who had to postpone their college education because of family, finances or personal issues.

Whatever their reasons, the time spent in higher education will be worth it. The lessons learned and experiences gained will be with them even though we realize some will not finish school. It

brings me pleasure to know Restore has helped so many to be the first in their families to finish high school, enter college and hopefully graduate.

Restore is not a perfect program. Not all the strategies advocated at Restore work for every member. But through the years and in some cases the decades, we have learned what works for many of our members and their families. We have mastered tested and reliable resources and activities that we count on to make a difference in lives of the children and teens we serve.

So many we meet grow up living in desperate situations. We endeavor to create within them a surge of hope that will ignite a power within to create hope filled futures. Forging hope in chil-

dren and teenagers is one of the most important aspects you and I do.

I think you will enjoy the articles in this edition. We borrowed an article written about Elmi Ventura who just graduated with honors from the Cleveland Institute of the Arts. Elmi is a talented artist, but more importantly he is learning the value of listening to his inner voice and the voices of others. His art is a powerful statement about the marginalized and the forgotten in our society. He has a unique story that I hope you will enjoy reading and be mindful to stop and pray for him as he seeks what will be the next journey in his life.

Our new feature,

“Parent Message” highlights how we partnered with a family whose children came to us a little more than a year. A younger member’s thoughts and Restore journey is highlighted in the student profile section. Finally, Ximena shares with you how busy we all were closing down the academic year and now in the middle of the most successful summer day camp since she joined the Restore team.

So, sit down, get yourself a cup of coffee or tea and get ready for some interesting, compelling and fun reading. Thank you for your prayers, financial giving and the love you have for Restore and all our children and teens.

**Linwood Bagby,**  
*Executive Director*

## PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



**(LtoR) Joahn, Richard Ximena, Joshua and Anthony running for Restore**

It was incredible how busy we were during the month of June. The children usually don't have homework the last week of school so I decided to organize a week of Restore Olympics for them. This way they would continue to engaged with the program and also have fun. As a tradition, Restore puts together an end of the year BBQ, the last

day of our academic year program. It was a success. During the final weeks of June, we had guest and parents cheering on all our children and teens who participated in the Restore Olympics finals. We celebrated June's birthdays and of course the enjoyment of a delicious BBQ meal.

At the same time, I was planning our Summer Enrichment/Recreational Program. Registrations were sent out, the summer staff met for training, to plan and to schedule, and supplies and books were ordered. I barely had a chance to stop and enjoy the closing of the school year on June 23 with the Summer program that begun on June 27.

By the time you read this we will be in our third week. The program ends July 22. I'm very proud of how the

program has developed; we have two partner institutions joining us: Elizabeth-Port Presbyterian Center and The Institute of Music for Children. We have 55 children enrolled including 8 high school junior staff. Our adult staff team of six help rounds out the staff team. We have to use the Restore van in addition to the E-Port bus to transport all participants and staff to the field trips. Our schedule is divided in three age groups where kids alternate between Reading, Math games, Arts & Crafts, Physical Activities, Team building activities, Icebreakers, Board games, Educational bingo, and a Group projects. There are two other classes as well, our SAT preparation for high school students and Multimedia – Video class, for a small group of 10- 12 years old.



**Volunteers and participants getting the Restore's table ready**

I can't miss this opportunity to thank you all for your generous donations and support that allows Restore to continue with its mission. Thanks to our parents/guardians, our dedicated staff and a special thank you to our children and teens for their loyalty to Restore.

Have a wonderful and blessed summer and you will hear from me soon in our summer update edition.

**Ximena Carrasco**



## Student's profile: Nathalie



I am 10 years old, in the 5th grade and I am a member of the National Elementary Honor Society at my school. I have been going to Restore for six years. I found out about Restore when my mother started her first year as the Program Director.

The Restore program is very important to me. Restore gives me the chance to make new friends, socialize and helps me with homework. I like that the Staff members are very nice and join us in playing games. We get a lot of one on one care and I find it's very fun.

Restore has influenced me by showing me how to always use words to solve conflicts. For example, once someone said something insulting to me and instead of yelling or arguing, I talked to them about what they said and how it hurt my feelings. We used our words and listened to each other to solve our problems.

Every time I get the chance, I invite my five cousins to Restore. When they first walked in, their faces were filled with excitement because of how many kids there were. They were shy at first but we're all like family here so they fit right in! They still attend as often as they can.

Nathalie

**Realizing...  
Potential...  
Maximizing...  
Achievement...**

## RESTORE AT A GLANCE

**WE ARE ON THE WEB!!  
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RESTOREKIDS/**



**GENEROSITY NJ 5K  
WALK/RUN-  
RESTORE  
RAISED \$21,200**



**UPCOMING EVENTS:**  
  
\* **SUMMER PROGRAM**  
June 27 to July 22, 2016  
  
\* **End of our Multicultural  
Summer Program BBQ**  
July 22, 2016 at Warinanco Park  
in Elizabeth, NJ.  
From 10:30a.m. to 3:00p.m.  
Rain day  
Saturday July 23, 2016

