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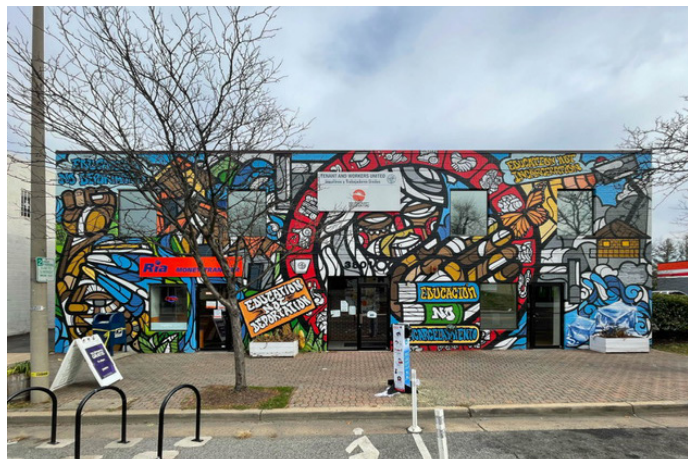
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Tenants and Workers United: An Alexandria fixture

Tenants and Workers United has been in Northern Virginia for more than thirty years. The organization aims to work with and organize women, youth, communities of color, immigrants and low-income families. It focuses on issues that affect our communities in terms of education, housing, immigration rights and healthcare accessibility to create long-term changes and solutions.

Tenants and Workers United's Alexandria United Teens had the opportunity to express issues related to their community and education through art. In 2019, AUT and local artist Federico Frum, known as "Mas Paz," held brainstorming sessions to learn about youth concerns. In these conversations, youth expressed their concerns about the school-to-prison pipeline, the punitive systems that push students out of the education system and their communities and their solutions for the needs when it comes to more mental health supports, restorative practices and



A 2019 mural by Mas Paz.

PHOTO/TENANTS AND WORKER UNITED

community building within the classrooms.

Youth were then able to see their ideas come to life by providing sketches of symbols that represented these issues. Some examples include a butterfly to represent immigration and change, ice cubes to represent Immigration and Customs Enforcement, a camera to represent surveillance and a circle with many symbols to represent a restorative circle. Youth were involved and led the process of this project

from beginning to end. It is important to AUT for youth to have the opportunity to create projects like these to express their concerns and voices.

In 2024, AUT – along with parents and community members – worked collectively on another mural inside the community room where members gather and learn together. The community worked collectively with another local artist named Electra Bolotas. This mural's purpose was to showcase the community's culture, stories

and struggles. Community and youth gathered to tell their stories and reflect about the issues they saw in their communities, as well as a draft of symbols and color schemes from dark to light. The mural includes people from our community in rallies, with messages related to housing, street vendors, showcasing phrases such as "the people united will never be defeated" in Spanish. It starts with fear, forced migration, issues related to housing, cutting and breaking thorns to our culture and the fight to organize and advocate.

The City of Alexandria commemorates Hispanic Heritage Month with a variety of events and activities held between Sept. 15 and Oct. 15. For more information on Hispanic Heritage Month in Alexandria, please visit alexandriava.gov/HispanicHeritage. To learn more about Tenants and Worker United, please visit tenantsandworkers.org.

Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.