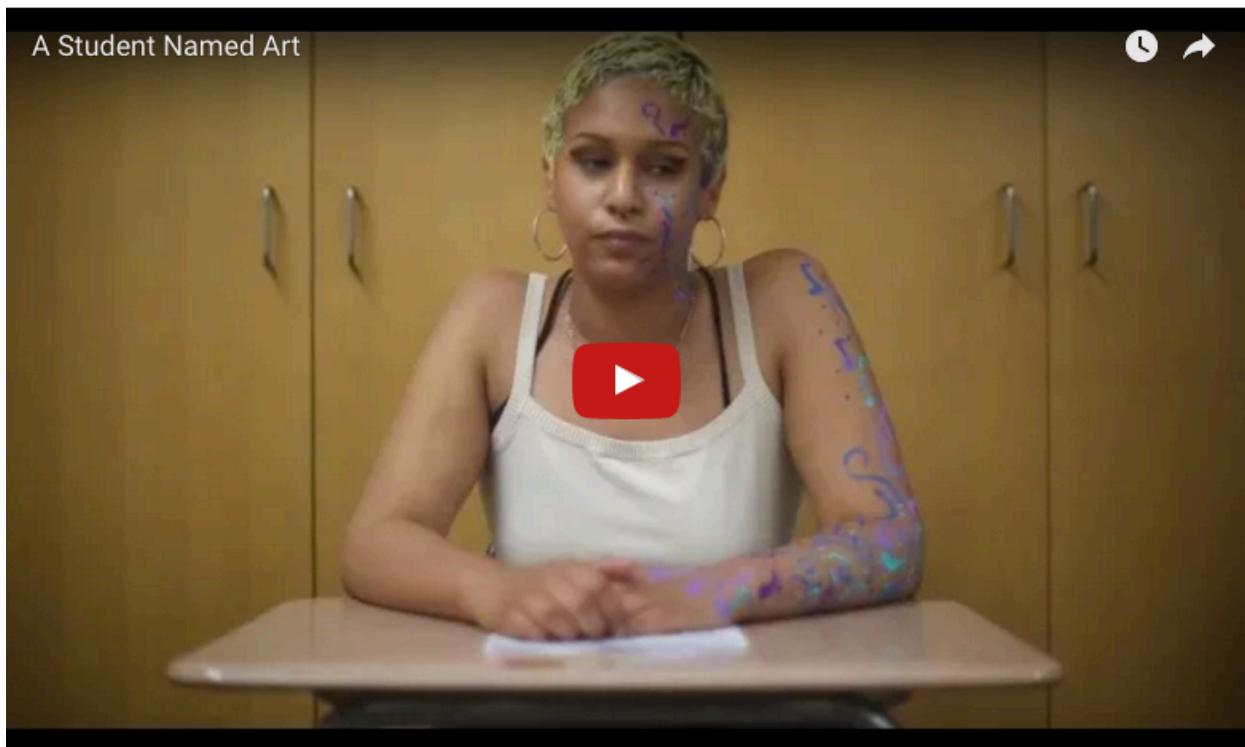


## Miriam Sachs, of Mira Costa High School, wins coveted student film award



Mira Costa High School student Miriam Sachs has been awarded first place in the Student Voices filmmaking contest for her film “A Student Named Art.” With more than 300 participating students throughout California, winning students represented the San Jose and Los Angeles Unified School Districts.

Sachs' film grew from her role in the Get Lit—Words Ignite's organization "Activate" which helps students get involved with change at their schools. Get Lit is a poetry program based in downtown Los Angeles that encourages activism. The film was made for the Students Voices Campaign, a program where students create videos that share their vision for education.

"Through the California Arts Alliance program, we were told to supplement and summarize the activism work we are doing in our schools by making a short video about the change that we wanted to see," said Sachs. "We decided that the change we were most passionate about was seeing more arts programming."

Well aware that many schools do not budget for the arts or provide space for students to create and express themselves, Sachs shows that art is vital to inspire students. In her film, a classroom full of students in white T-shirts eventually come to "life" with splotches of color, as paint is splattered across their clothing and bodies.

"Art helps kids find themselves, and even encourages them to come to school in the first place," said Sachs. "It should be a mandatory part of every school. We talked about how to show this in a film, and we came up with the idea of personifying art and showing what school would be like with and without 'her.' I really liked the idea of having the paint sort of spread to everyone in the classroom, and I wanted to challenge myself by using stop motion on a bigger scale than I had ever done before

The beautifully wrought "painting" that appears in Sachs' film took careful planning. Sachs came up with the concept first she says, thinking through the film as a visual piece.

"I knew that I wanted art to be painting everyone in the classroom until it was filled with color."

Once she had determined that visual trajectory, she sat down with friends Caitlyn Bove and Mila Cuda to write the poem that narrates the film.

"The three of us sat down and wrote a piece that went along with the visuals we had in mind," she said.

With the poem complete, Sachs began the filmmaking process.

“I directed the piece, making a story board and planning out each shot for the shoot, and I performed the voice-over. I also had a big part in producing it, sending out emails to make sure people came to the shoot,” Sachs said. “We had to spread the word to get everyone to our location.”



Mira Costa senior Miriam Sachs (in photo left) receives her first-place award at the Student Voices Summit. Chris Duffey

The production had students from all over the Los Angeles basin show up to appear in the classroom. Sachs said it was awesome to represent different areas of the city.

The Get Lit program includes a large number of students from the Southland, allowing Sachs to collaborate with students in the LA Unified School District. Many of the participants on camera also helped out on the set with painting, lighting and organizing the work flow. While the film began as a Get Lit project, for the actual filming, students brought in other friends as well. Sachs brought her cinematographer, senior Paul O’Mara, who also played the original background guitar music for “A Student Named Art.” And, he worked with her on editing the video after filming.

“It was super collaborative which was what made it so magical,” Sachs explains.

Excited to receive her first place win and present the film in San Francisco, Sachs plans to pursue a career in film after high school. She’s been taking film classes at Mira Costa for four years, and is the news director for the school’s broadcasting

program, The Mustang Morning News. She plans to attend film school at the University of Southern California, majoring in film and television production and minoring in screenwriting.

“I love being able to create an entire world on a screen, from the writing to the actual fabrication of your ideas right before your eyes. It’s the best thing ever.”

Sachs has lived in the South Bay her whole life, and feels fortunate to have access to the urban excitement of Los Angeles while still enjoying many aspects of a small town atmosphere.

“I have a lot of support here because the community is so welcoming and homey, but I am also in love with driving around downtown Los Angeles, and seeing what the big city has to offer,” she said.



Miriam Sachs and her collaborators, Omar Ahmed, Xochitl Morales and Donovan Kushner with Gordon Ip from Get Lit and Cristina Pacheco, director of programs for Arts for LA at the Student Voices Summit in 2016. Submitted.