

# EXPOSURE



## DRAWING INSPIRATION

*An artist's journey toward teaching*

Story by [Fresno State](#)

October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022

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For Bobby Brown, growing up had its challenges. Money was tight, and his family often could not afford more than what was absolutely necessary.

Instead of buying comic books, Bobby and his siblings learned to draw cartoon characters from memory. At an early age, he learned that art gave him the power to shape his own reality and bridge his desire for connection, friendship, and understanding.

“In the third grade, I met a friend. I drew one of my favorite characters as a way to tell him I wanted to be his friend.” he said

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Throughout elementary school and into middle and high school, Bobby continued to use art as a way to both understand himself and forge bonds with others, even after his teachers discouraged his constant doodling. Now, as a second-year graduate student majoring in art, Bobby has finally found a place that empowers him both as a student and an artist.

“Here, as an adult in college, I recognize that my art is always the conversation piece. I’m able to strike the conversation and apply it to my art, and I feel like that’s what kind of steered me to know what I want to do. I want to teach,” he said.

## Drawing Inspiration: An Artist’s Journey Toward Teaching



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# A NEW CALLING

During the height of the pandemic, Bobby took a job at Williams Elementary School, helping hand out lunches to students. Over time, his role evolved to a noontime assistant as he recognized the school's need for more academic and artistic support.

"I never wanted to work with children... I never thought I would. And the one thing I really loved and enjoyed was when a student called me teacher," he confessed with a smile. "It's been filling a void that I didn't think I had."

Bobby knows how impactful art education can be for students struggling to navigate their personal lives. In his role, he empowers his students to discover their full potential and uses art as a means to ignite their creativity.

"[The school] is not [in] the most upbeat neighborhood, so when I go there, I come with the expectation to be a role model, and I try to teach each student that they don't have anything holding them back," he said. "Whatever the reality is outside, they come there, and we get them more imaginative — get them more hope."



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# A FRUITFUL FUTURE

Not only is Bobby inspired by his students to be a better teacher, they've also been the source of inspiration for his art. In spring 2022, Fresno State President Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval charged a group of printmaking students, including Bobby, to create original artwork that would become momentos for his presidential investiture this fall.

With the direction from the president to create a piece that embodied the Valley's vibrant histories of people coming together and the power of Fresno State to advance our region, Bobby thought of the children at Williams Elementary. He thought of the power of art to unite us as one and the promise of a fruitful future nourished by our collective hopes and dreams.

"I got stuck on 'come together' and I thought about the children at my school and how it was for me growing up and how things just work together when you're doing artwork," he said. "It was showing kids drawing their dreams, and they're drawing with magic chalk. And I did the tree upside down so their dreams are filling [it in] and the tree is growing."



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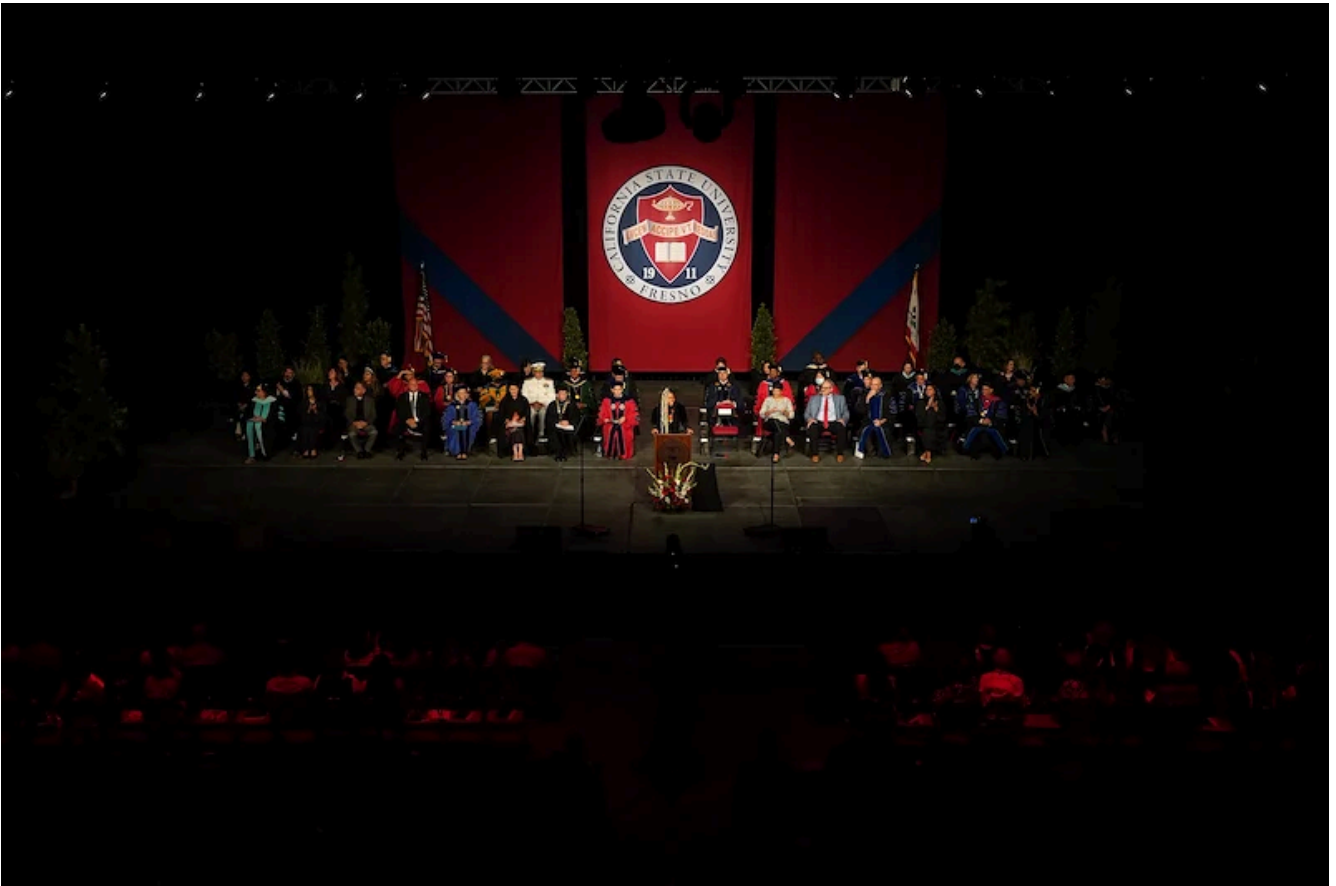


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**Did you know? An investiture is defined as the "formal ceremony of conferring the authority and symbols of high office." It is held during the new president's first year in office, or at the conclusion of the first year. On September 9, 2022, Fresno State hosted the investiture of Dr. Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, naming him the University's ninth president.**

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# ENGRAVED IN HISTORY

Through this opportunity, Bobby has learned more about both himself and his place as a Bulldog. Like all Fresno State students, his experience is one of the many unique and vital threads that form the University's tapestry.

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“I didn't think I did anything here that would engrave me into Fresno State — that makes me part of it,” he said. “But I now know that I'm part of the history of this school forever.”

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Looking past graduation next year, Bobby plans to pursue a teaching credential to continue his journey to become an art teacher. Whether his students are elementary-, high-school- or college-age, his goal is to inspire them to believe in themselves.

“Who knows? Maybe I'll push the one that's in college to potentially go off and do things better than I did. At a younger age, I could talk to kids and get them into that creative spirit where they know there's more things they can do in life,” he said with excitement in his eyes. “It's like they see that long drive to get [to college], and I love being able to guide them back in and be there for them.”

In the meantime, Bobby plans to continue working on his own original pieces and drawing endless inspiration in the unifying power of art.

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## BECOME A BULLDOG

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Footnote: *Photos by Cary Edmondson and Ally Barriga, Video by Matt Mealer, Story by Victoria Cisneros — University Brand Strategy and Marketing*

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