LINK TO CREATIVE EXHIBIT

Artist Statement:

My name is Buck Rathbun, and my creative research project is called From Home to Homeland. The medium I chose to present my research is a digital webpage. The purpose of this project was to investigate the process of political socialization in children through a creative lens. This theme really interested me because of how relevant I believe the topic to be in todays political climate. I chose a website to present my research because I think that people my age really ingest and retain information best when it is presented visually and interactively.

Critical Afterword:

The main question my research project sought to answer was how distinct parental practices at each childhood stage, from infancy to young adulthood, cumulatively shape an individual's political ideology. I hoped to reveal some insight into the political socialization process of children and learn how an adult's political identity is ultimately formed. I was really inspired by the two exhibit readings from my Annotated Bibliography, particularly *Persepolis,* a graphic novel, a first-hand account of growing up during the Iranian Revolution. I found the graphic novel format to be a very engaging way of telling a story, and I knew that I wanted a visual aspect to my creative project to present my research in the most engaging way possible. I also wanted the audience to be able to interact with it, fusing a story with data. I decided on a website for my creative exhibit to try to capture these goals. I got a lot of inspiration from Apple's product pages. These beautiful pages are beautiful and incredibly complex, but I really love how the user is designed to scroll down the page and is presented with information as they

go, like a journey. I wanted my site to prompt the user to scroll to see different pieces of my research, aided by visually appealing, interactive features along the way. The problem was that I am not a web designer and I lack the skills to make a website that looks anything like Apple's (because if I were, I'd surely have a job there!) So I took the primitive HTML skills that I had and turned to AI models like OpenAI's O4 and Anthropic's Sonnet 3.7 to help me out. I used these tools to generate the majority of the code behind the website, something I wouldn't have been able to do on my own. I was able to take an empty boilerplate website and make it my own, adding my research, interactive features, and visual customizations. The basic website consists of HTML code, CSS for the styling, and JavaScript for the interactive functionalities. I incorporated a timeline library called timeline.js from Knightlab to add an interactive timeline, a library called D3.js for dynamic data visualization, and an AOS library for the scroll-triggered fade-ins to pace the website after an early prototype felt too text-heavy.

A productive failure that I had was in one of my first iterations of the site, an ugly, newspaper-looking wall of text. This led me to break the content into distinct panes to pace the viewer and logically split up my research. I then added hover and scrolling effects to make the website feel more interactive. This project was a huge learning experience, as well as a testament to the power of AI. Ten years ago, the barrier of entry to having a website was high. You couldn't just make a website, it was a slow, expensive process that required hiring a web designer. Now with AI, someone is able to take some basic prior knowledge, and let LLMs abstract the complex coding down to simple tools that I could use to easily build a site.