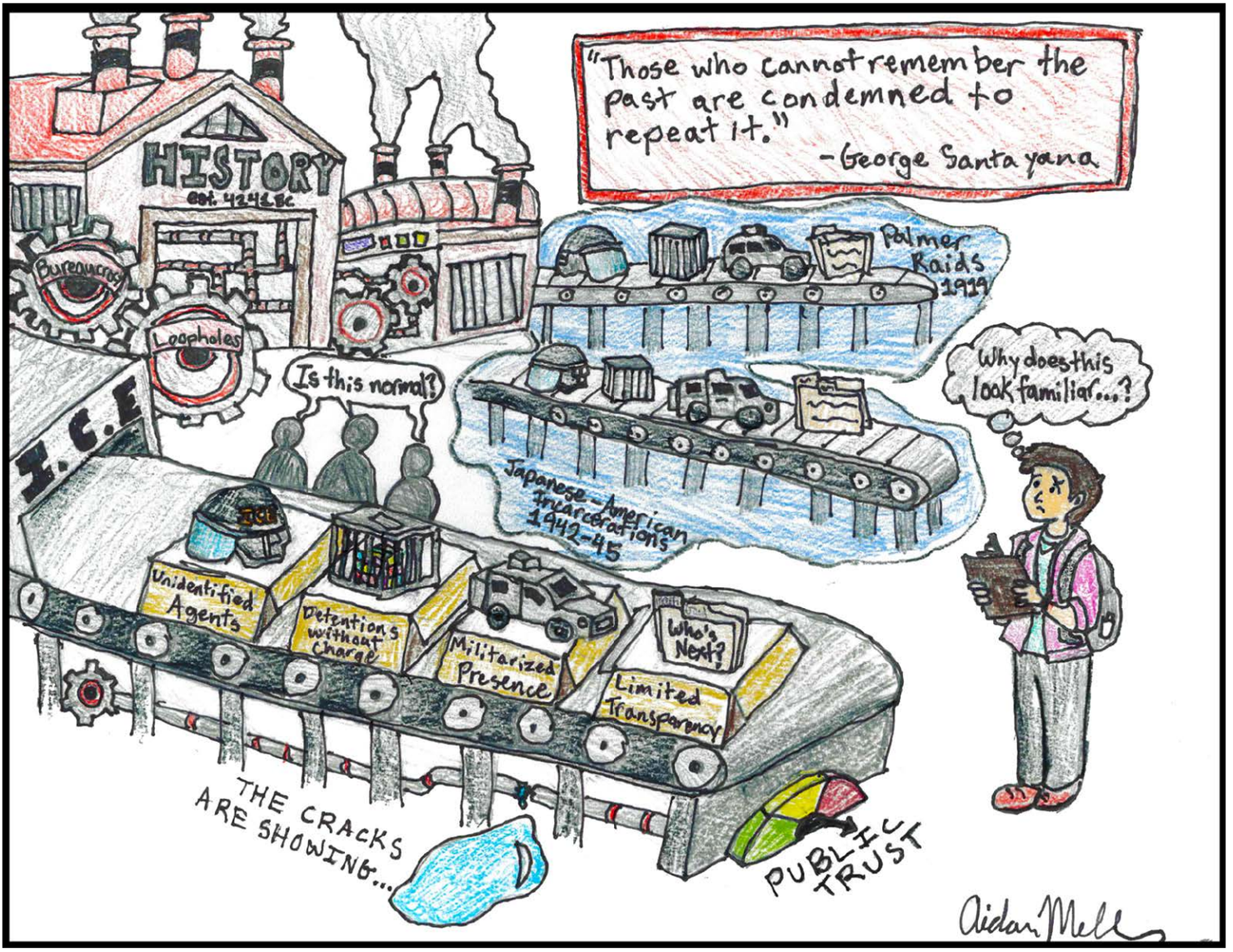

Artist's Statement:

My editorial cartoon uses the metaphor of a history factory to draw a visual parallel between current ICE operations and some of the darkest chapters of American civil liberties history: the Palmer Raids of 1919–1920 and the Japanese-American incarcerations of World War II. The central image is a conveyor belt carrying items labeled with hallmarks of the current moment moving out of a factory labeled "History," its gears turning on bureaucracy and legal loopholes. In the background, two ghostly conveyor belts carry the same symbols, each bearing the name of a past American crackdown.

This was my first editorial cartoon, and the process was entirely new to me. Created from scratch on a blank page over approximately three hours, I began with a pencil sketch, added color with colored pencils, and outlined everything with a fine-lined Sharpie. No templates, clip art, or design software were used. To ensure accuracy, I researched the Palmer Raids and Japanese-American incarcerations and looked up the Santayana quote that became the thesis of the piece: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

My goal is to ask a simple question. We know how the Palmer Raids and Japanese-American incarcerations ended. Why would this be any different?

Note of Transparency:

This editorial cartoon was originally published on The Wingspan (gretnaeastmedia.com) and shared on the Gretna East Media Instagram and Facebook pages on January 7. On January 9, district administrators directed that it be removed from all platforms, stating that the topic was "too controversial" for our high school newspaper and news website.

The decision to remove the cartoon was administrative and was not related to the student's effort, process, or adherence to our normal editorial standards. The piece was created as an original editorial cartoon and went through our standard publication procedures prior to being posted.

As the student's adviser, I believe the strength of the student's artwork and message, even though our district ultimately determined it should not remain publicly available through our school media outlets, is worthy and deserving of the State Editorial Cartooning competition. This note is provided for full transparency regarding the work's publication history.