Better Alternatives for Youth: Peace, Education and Human Rights

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Better Alternatives for Youth:
Peace, Education and Human Rights

A Masters Thesis Presented to the faculty of the
University of San Francisco
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree

Masters of Education

In

Human Rights Education

by

Abraham Salvador - Jones

San Francisco, CA

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read Better Alternatives for Youth: Peace, Education and Human Rights by Abraham Salvador - Jones, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Master of Education: Human Rights Education at the University of San Francisco.

_____
Name of the Professor, PhD

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As an African American male from Los Angeles, California I never imagined in my youth that I would attend college, let alone earn a Masters of Education. Urban youth rarely are encouraged to pursue a post-secondary education. I am grateful to my older brother Moses for pushing through institutional barriers to reach academic excellence. Following his example in academic pursuits has led me to where I am today. I am thankful to my wife and son for putting up with all the late nights of studying. Thank you to my undergraduate friends, many of who were urban youth, who defied the odds to obtain a college education. I am appreciative to my professors for challenging me. Special thank you to my thesis advisor for supporting me through this process. It was not easy feat, but at last I have triumphed!

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Chapter 1.

Statement of the Problem

Many urban youth in the United States live in what are identified as high stress neighborhoods, where trauma is a normative reality within which common life themes permeate. Colloquially, the communities in these high stress areas reclaim space by naming them as hoods, barrios and ghettos. However, depending on one's perception, these words can have a negative connotation. Even when these communities hold various forms of community cultural wealth and capital, urban narratives are often dominated by false common perceptions that associate these spaces with the violence that occurs within them. There is a need for spaces that produce counter narratives to the common perceptions of urban environments as persistent sites of violence, one that recognizes violence exists, but focuses on the vibrancy of the community and its cultural wealth, emphasizing the community's capital as a solution. It is important to focus on the untapped resources of a community when formulating solutions to address challenges within them.

Various efforts rooted in community resiliency exist in order to address issues of social inequality, poverty, economic disparity and political/civic engagement. The solution to overcoming community struggle lies in building political awareness in young people and moving them away from false consciousness. The building of political consciousness does not occur from mindful quiet sitting alone but rather is created by making space to reflect and develop critical awareness of how and what we think or do. Within the realm of false consciousness there people are unaware of the complex realities that exist beyond the surface and thus believe myths about how the world is constructed. Those myths then act to reinforce debilitating ideas about life conditions. False consciousness concludes that negative social conditions are absolute.

Moving away from deficit narratives also requires a commitment to praxis (Freire, 1970, p. 127).

Praxis can be described as a process of reflection and action. Within that process of praxis, we

can build knowledge about ourselves in relation to the world. For young folks, this can also lead

to the acknowledgement that social structures are changeable and that as social structures

change, they too change and this can lead to an improved quality of life.

Background and Need for the Study

The community I will focus on is Oakland, California. In the Demographic Profile

created by the "Oakland Fund for Children and Youth (OFCY)," a strategic plan was created for

the years 2016-2019. This plan names areas in Oakland that are high stress; identified as

neighborhoods with the highest rates of crime and poverty. According to the OFCY, the problem

identified for Oakland youth is that living in high stress neighborhoods can cause "profound

challenges to academic success, health, safety, and future transitioning into adult life" (p. 5).

These problems, as identified by the OFCY, have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing and

success of urban youth, not only in Oakland, but also across the country in similar communities

like South Central Los Angeles, Detroit and Chicago. The goal of OFCY's plan is to assist youth

in achieving social and economic equity, youth development, and community collaboration for

youth ages 0-20. While the plan is specific to Oakland, these and other communities can also

benefit from a willingness to address the challenges faced particularly by youth of color, and that

have impacted many generations of urban youth.

According to the "American Community Survey" (2013), nearly 30% of the children in

Oakland live under the federal poverty guideline. For a single-parent family this is an annual

income of less than $11,490 and for a family of four it's less than $23,550 annually. The survey

also lists 35% of Oakland youth live in households that receive some sort of public assistance,

such as CalFresh (formerly known as food stamps), temporary assistance for needy families, or CalWorks; and these stats have been gradually increasing since 2005.

Poverty is a major contributor to a poor quality of life for youth, because a lack of financial resources leads to significant stress factors within the home, immediate neighborhood and at school.

Figure 5. Youth Living in Poverty in Oakland

Source: American Community Survey Data for 2005, 2009, and 2013 (5-yr estimates)
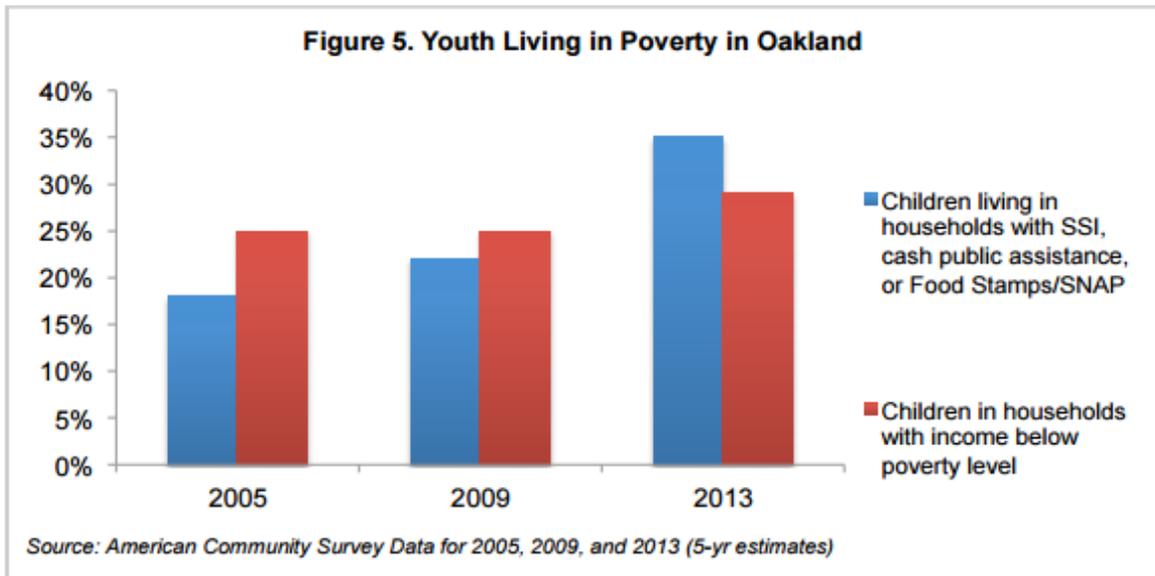
Within urban cities like Oakland, conditions reflect a need for human rights and social justice efforts. Throughout the city there are various organizations that aim to address social, economic and political justice issues. Often, those already engaged in social justice, multicultural and antiracist educational practices, find alignment with the values and vision of human rights (Katz, 2015, p. 26). Poverty can be directly linked to education. Per the' California Poverty Measure (2012) approximately 53.2% of people without a high school diploma live in poverty. Second to that, 37.1% of single parents with children live in poverty. In general, 24% of California's children live in poverty. Also, consider that without safety-net programs such as Calfresh there would be an additional 37.3%.

I propose that the solution to such challenges is a more politically focused education. By

incorporating forms of pedagogy that include the beliefs brought to the forefront in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human dignity becomes civic duty. Therefore, by engaging young folks in lesson plans that focus on discussions that empower civic engagement, our young folks will become actors in generating solutions to the challenges they face. The UDHR states: "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (UN General Assembly, 1948, NEEDS PAGE). However, this task is not always possible within the confines of standardized teaching pedagogy that rule public schooling. The obligations of mandated curriculum, high stakes testing and defunding of public schools leaves an increasingly slender gap for full embodiment of HRE (Katz, 2015, p. 21).

Additionally, the 2016 end of year crime report generated by Oakland Police Department is yet another representation of the need for transformation within urban spaces for the sake of youth and the communities they occupy. Their report serves as an indicator of the current environment youth in Oakland face and the world they will inherit if counter narratives that empower civic engagement are not adopted into educational pedagogy. Over the past 5 years, Oakland's crime rates have been on a steady decline; however, in the recent past (only 2 years ago) Forbes magazine named Oakland as the 3rd most dangerous city in the nation.

Clearly, there is a need for continued efforts to provide high impact quality programming in urban educational settings that empower young folks with the strategies to become the leaders of tomorrow. These programs need to provide young people ample opportunity to develop critical lenses that examine the injustices of our society and their community. Instead, our public education system positions students as products, manufactured for capital gain in an ever-expanding industrial and technological world. They are graded, they are tested and they are

treated accordingly with little to no accounting for individual student learning needs.

As Grace Lee Boggs (2011) affirms, our youth deserve and urgently need a different kind of education: Instead of trying to bully young people to remain in classrooms isolated in traditional educational pedagogy that prepare them to become cogs in the existing economic system and fails to account for the communities and structures awaiting them outside of the school confines, we need to recognize the unique needs of urban youth and integrate social justice modalities into classroom learning (NEEDS PAGE). The reason so many urban youth drop-out of school is because they are voting with their feet against an educational system that sorts, tracks, tests, and rejects them. Traditional education pedagogy and structures were created for the age of industrialization when students transitioned into factor as workers. Urban youth are certified like products in a factory, sorted by testing performance. Students who perform poorly on standardized tests are tracked towards poor outcomes. They are crying out for another kind of education that gives them opportunities to exercise their creative energies and be valued as whole human beings (as quoted in Katz, 2015, p. 21).

The dominant format is that of the banking method of education, where teachers treat students as depositories who should be ready to regurgitate anything that was disseminated to them through the stroke of their pencil in answering multiple-choice questions on an exam (needs citation from Pedagogy of the Oppressed). As young people undergo this systematic process, they are programmed into submission of cycles of oppression that happen in conjunction with a cycle of violence.

In this ever changing, yet consistently violent and oppressive landscape, it is becoming more essential for the student produced in the urban classroom, to be informed about the political dynamics of human interactions. Especially in their own communities where the murders of

Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant echoes throughout and inform urban youth of just how unjust the world is. Unfortunately for them, the US refuses to be held accountable to international human rights standard and the police policing them are often viewed as terrorists. As of 2014, the US has not coordinated any state or federal efforts to implement a process that promotes "respect for...rights and freedoms by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance" (UN General Assembly, 1948, NEEDS PAGE). This is an underlying reason for the lack of accessibility to curriculum that allows urban youth to examine their own circumstances and experiences in a way that exposes the denials of basic human rights they encounter in their everyday lives. In "The Right to Education and to Human Rights Education," education is described as:

> Something that is intrinsically valuable as humankind's most effective tool for personal empowerment. Education takes on the status of a human right because it is integral to and enhances human dignity through fruits of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Moreover, for instrumental reasons education has the status of multi-faceted social, economic, and cultural human rights. It is a social right because in the context of the community it promotes the full development of the human personality. It is an economic right because it facilitates economic self-sufficiency through employment or self-employment. It is a cultural right because the international community has directed education toward the building of a universal culture of human rights. In short, education is a prerequisite for individuals to function as fully human beings in modern society (Richard Pierre Claude, 2008, NEEDS PAGE).

Considering these arguments for education as a fundamental human right, education has the potential to act as a tool to increase student's consciousness about the everyday encounters they have within unjust systems and empower them to become civic actors who transform their daily lives through political action. Until we emancipate ourselves as educators from traditional education pedagogy, education will act as a mere tool for developing a complacent citizenry, which we are complacent in subscribing to.

Purpose of study

  The intention of this study is to examine alternatives to traditional education, which are frequently used by nonprofit organizations to redress complex social conditions, particularly in their direct work with young folks. The bulk of this paper highlights the Oakland based grassroots nonprofit organization BAY-Peace: Better Alternatives for Youth, which provides urban youth with paid or credit earned opportunities to engage in social justice and human rights education through arts, organizing and leadership. Through an analysis of practice, pedagogy and curriculum, I aim to examine how a social justice and human rights framework can be used in conjunction with their programs as a platform for contributing to the development of youth agency and engagement, transforming their lives. Drawing inspiration from the non-traditional education efforts of BAY-Peace, I propose a new curriculum that utilizes the arts as a framework for teaching transformative organizing in schools, empowering students to become transformative agents in their own lives and in their communities.

  Transformative organizing, first termed by Ginwright, Cammarota and Noguera in their work on community activism, explains the process by which individuals undergo critical analysis of socio-political issues and engage in deep introspection that transforms them as they work to transform the world around them. Ginwright et al. stress the importance of social analysis with youth organizing and draws connections between helping young people gain understanding between the linkages of life in their communities and larger social structures.

  To understand how transformative organizing functions in urban communities, I draw from Ginwright et al. and the Theory of Sociopolitical Development (SPD) presented by Roderick J. Watts and Omar Guessous in the book *Beyond Resistance.* Watts and Guessous cite the work of Ginwright et al., identifying three impediments to their work. One impediment of

particular significance is"that much of the conventional literature on youth development sees youth 'as objects of policy rather than as actors who posses the rights and abilities to shape policy" .

>Watts and Guessous describe sociopolitical development as a product of both liberation and development psychology. It is the evolving, critical understanding of the political, economic, cultural, and other systemic forces that shape society and one's status within it, and the associated process of growth in reluctant knowledge, analytical skills, and emotional faculties (Watts and Guessous, 2006, p. 61).

Watts and Guessous aim to remedy gaps in Ginwright et al. theory and accelerate inclusion of sociopolitical development into mainstream psychology by arguing the "...notion of collective sense of agency, commitment to action, and activism" (2006, p. 60). They explain that while sociopolitical development is rooted in developmental psychology, it explicitly acknowledges external factors as influencing individuals lived experiences.

I use the theories of Ginwright et al. and Watts and Guessous along with others to examine BAY-Peace: Better Alternatives for Youth. In its earliest phases, the organization aimed to address the heightened military recruiter presence in Oakland at the onset of the war in Iraq. Moving forward, the organization has transformed to meet the evolving needs of Oakland youth, where addressing structural violence and striving towards racial justice, has become their primary focus. They do this work by integrating a liberation philosophy into arts and political education that aims to engage urban youth participants in social justice, developing a sense of agency to participants. All participants are students of color from some of the highest stress neighborhoods of East and West Oakland.

BAY-Peace focuses on creating a transformative space that allows youth participants to analyze the political, economic, cultural and systemic forces impacting their daily lives to aid the development of knowledge and skills to become actors in shaping policy' and leading actions for the various issues that youth in the urban city are forced to endure. The issues of interest include but are not limited to: (a) economic and racial history of urban spaces; (b) resource disparities in urban schools; (c) Militarization of urban communities - heightened recruiting, police tactics, ICE, etc.; (d) Limited youth agency within the political climate; (and) understanding of trauma and cycles of violence; (f) addressing education that serves to uphold dominant narratives leaving minimal room for counter narratives and (g) healing and transformation. Typically, the students choose the primary issues of interest from cohort to cohort.

The Arts Program Manager of BAY-Peace outlined their key components as follows:

1. <u>Understanding Structural violence</u>

    ●   Identifying social structures with oppressive systems
    ●   Military
    ●   Prisons
    ●   Public schooling

2. <u>Creating economic and educational agency</u>

    ●   Paid training programs in non-traditional learning space
    ●   Offer internships for credit

3. <u>Youth empowerment through vocational development, leadership and liberation arts practices</u>

    ●   Learning through internships (LTI)
    ●   Partner with high school to host a cohort that receive academic credit
    ●   Opportunities for paid community organizing and peer education gigs
    ●   Stipend paid training program in liberation arts
    ●   Submitting requests for funding proposals to execute desired projects and programs
    ●   Grassroots Fundraising for community initiatives
    ●   Provide on-going youth-led workshops for other students
    ●   Community collaboration events

4. Arts activism

- Theater of the Oppressed
- Poetry
- Spoken word
- Guitar

The components of the BAY-Peace program model are forms of action that contribute to the furthering of individual praxis. Intentionally placing youth in situations in which they are required to consider others (tapping into their internal empathy) is key when aiming to alleviate false consciousness.

Background and Need

This section will focus on the possibilities and outcomes of re-imagining the urban space in education as only valuable and not a space of deficit. This would require an unwavering commitment to educational justice. Found in the book *Humanizing Research* authors of the article, "What are we Seeking to Sustain Through Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy? A Loving Critique Forward" (2014), authors Django Paris and H. Samy Alim discuss W.E.B Du Bois' (1903) notion of double consciousness. This is described as, "[a] sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (p. 86). The standpoint of this work is that as scholars committed to educational justice, we must live, research, write and operate with the understanding that our languages, illiteracies, histories, and cultural ways of being (as people of color) are not the one and only cure. Allow us to see the fallacy of measuring ourselves and the young people in our communities solely against the white middle class norms of knowing and being that continue to dominate notions of educational achievement.

In the OFCY Strategic Plan profile, Measure Y (2004) is also introduced. It is the Violence Prevention and Public Safety act. The act aims to create a safe Oakland by reducing

violence among youth and adults. The idea is that change, transformation, and opportunity become possible by addressing the multifaceted risk factors that lead to issues of violence, poverty, unemployment, discrimination, and substance abuse, educational malfunction, fragmented families and mental illness. Through the support of OFCY, BAY-Peace was able to sustain their programs between the years of 2012-2015.

The current educational climate in Oakland is shifting for various reasons. As mentioned before, a large portion of Oakland is identified as "high stress." The stress level is based on the observation and tracking of community issues. The indicators described, affect the holistic well being of students from the various districts within Oakland that experience high levels of violence. Oakland Unite's (2014) resources have been distributed with consideration given to a stressor analysis that has been updated periodically. The most recent 2014 Stressor Map was compiled by the Urban Strategies Council, utilizing Census, school and crime data, and includes the following (Oakland Unite, 2011):

- o Crime Factors: Juvenile and young adult arrests, and incarceration and probation rates; as well as domestic violence, shootings and homicides, other violent crimes and burglaries.

- o Economic Factors: Eligibility for food stamps serves as a proxy for poverty that correlates highly with other social service indicators and represents the needs of families with individuals from all age groups.

- o Education Factors: The rate of chronically absence students and of students who have been suspended for violence.

Given the stress factors our urban youth are facing, our administrators, teachers and schools play a complex role within the communities they operate and have the responsibility to both educate students and support them in building internal resilience factors that will equipped them with the skills and knowledge to successfully negotiate these stressors. This study examines several questions to uncover how nonprofit organizations program models incorporate human

rights and social justice frameworks to address the outside stressors that urban students experience and are typically ignored or examined within traditional education spaces. I specifically frame the conversation about BAY-Peace and extrapolate that such a program model can be integrated into educational curriculum and used in the classroom. I propose several questions to guide my inquiry in an attempt to understand the various layers of the complexity and nuances of prioritizing students above standardized curriculum. In addition, I seek to understand the various theories that explain the effectiveness of program models like BAY-Peace and why such a model's implementation is essential for supporting the whole student.

Research questions

This study examines the following questions:

- o How can transformative organizing be most effective for urban youth?

- o How are the social justice struggles of urban students connected to human rights?

- o How can transformative organizations such as BAY-Peace help advance political consciousness in young people?

In integrating a social justice and human rights framework into educational curriculum, students are empowered through the development of their consciousness around issues relevant to their lives and their communities. But this consciousness does not always evolve into praxis so it is important to examine the ways in which we can move beyond education and into action so that urban youth are enabled to become agents of social transformation as opposed to being subjected to the complacency, marginalization and structural violence that is typical for urban youth. As I'm proposing a need for the integration of human rights within urban education in order to develop empowered students with agency, it is essential for me to assess the connection between the social justice issues in which they feel the most urgency around and the human rights issues that many low-income youth of color face not only in US urban cities, but around the world. In

order for students to feel invested in a socio-political type of education, establishing a personal connection to the content is also necessary. This allows students to develop an understanding around the ways that their social and structural experiences are grounded in dynamics of power. While this type of learning might be rare in traditional educational spaces, it is the norm in the nonprofit space and for organizations likes BAY-Peace and in our current political climate, it is urgent that we began to understand the importance of the work that is done to develop the political consciousness of youth. Despite being among the most marginalized groups in the country, they will become the future leaders of varying aspects of our society. Though it may sound a bit cliché, they are the future of our society so we must do diligence in adequately preparing them to address the issues that our current society faces.

By understanding how effective transformative organizing plays a role in securing of Human Rights organizations such as Bay-Peace can then become more effective in there work. The work produced must be more than temporary. It must become sustainable and more politically oriented. By shifting the consciousness of young people we create sustainable change in which they are included. In the cycle of praxis that allows them to learn, reflect, and act. For actions to matter, inclusion is essential. With this inclusion action becomes more meaningful and change becomes more transparent and real. As students explore issues of social justice, these issues will connect themselves to issues of human rights. Human rights have within them the ability to make social justice work more political. The time has come to move away from frameworks and politics that ignore the need to pursue dignity within our institutions, communities, and neighborhoods.

Chapter II- Review of Literature

"The child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society and brought up in the spirit of ...peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity". (UNICEF, Convention on the rights of a child, as cited in Cammarota and Noguera, ed. Ginwright, 2006, p. 333).

<u>**Hood Politics**</u>

When it comes to what is best for the youth of an urban community, there are several different perspectives. The questions I pose for the reader and any individual with a true interest in improving urban spaces are, why are there so many different perspectives surrounding urban education? Secondly which one is "right," if any? Is it necessary for those who rethink urban education to come from an urban background themselves or can anyone do it? Lastly, what role can social justice and human rights platforms play in individual and collective transformation? For any individual who has grown up in a lower income urban area, the colloquial politics of reality often contradict social standards and ideas that are passed on through the dominant narrative. In some ways, there are dogmatic truths associated with survival. However, I believe the resilient nature of those who desire a better quality of life can carry so much power that they move urban communities collectively forward. It is time to eliminate the heaven-hell binary that would have social groups believe that the grass is greener on the other side

I do not personally operate with the assumption that one perspective is right. We, as members of that community, contribute to the creation narratives as we live. However, it must be noted that those who inherit urban spaces must be included in the conversation that constructs policy and institutional practices. Without adequate voice, schooling becomes something that is done to them by others. Student centered pedagogy is important because without the unique experiences that can be encountered, historicity is lost.

I have grown to recognize that schooling in its truest form must attempt to achieve

balance between the objective and subjective realities of students. Freire (1970) states that,

> Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building. It is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them to masses that can be manipulated (p. 13).

Achieving balance when trying to become humanized and find liberation from oppressive circumstance is a difficult task but liberatory sites of transformation are necessary in communities that are predominantly occupied by youth. Only as young people discover themselves to be "hosts" of the oppressor can they contribute to the creating of their liberating pedagogy (Freire, 1970, p. 48). While understanding their positions as "hosts" of the oppressor, they can similarly understand and envision themselves as agents of change and proponents of their own liberation. If young people live in the duality and recognize oppressive circumstance, transformation is possible.

When understanding and thinking about the objective reality, we must recognize that its motive is embedded in the need to navigate within and through the institution. In urban schools this becomes transparent as students move closer to a goal of achieving a passing grade, gaining credits, and achieving a diploma. These given tasks are objectively rooted and students are expected to achieve them in order to become successful. The objective is often out of the control of the student and is what gives the institution power. Objective goals constantly shift because of the apparatus of educational politics.

Now consider the subjective reality. Subjective reality in school is much more complex because it occurs both in and outside of schools. For many students in urban communities' subjective reality influences how they perceive the world around them. If the world is dangerous it is much more difficult to achieve objective tasks. It is key to understand that subjective is different for each individual and that their objective and subjective realities inform one another.

Operating with a sense of balance within the subjective and objective reality is a form of healing justice through transformative organizing. Professor Shawn Ginwright et al. (2016) discusses this in his book, *Hope and Healing in Urban Education: How Urban Activist and Teachers are Reclaiming Matters of the Heart.* Ginwright et al. found that a common theme in healing and well-being research is that it lacks social justice frameworks or actions. He noted the work of healing, as a mindful-practice is often an isolated personal action that is to be done individually. In his chapter titled, "Transforming Trauma", he states, "while important, mindfulness education is rarely concerned with issues related to poverty, violence, racism and inequality" (p. 27). He also presents the idea that school practices associated with character development, social emotional learning/behavior tend to focus on emotional regulation, grit, and conflict resolution. This however leaves room for failure when addressing the need to rethink the ways that structural realities inform the experiences of young people's' lives.

The importance of this work lies in his suggestion and understanding of the necessity to bridge the gap between organizing (objective) and healing (subjective). The healing justice framework does this by calling attention to the divergence between oppression and suffering. Oppression is named as a function of structure, which is very much institutional, but can be addressed through strategic organizing and social justice movements that fight for systematic change. This idea can be approached in school based organizing in an objective manner. Suffering however can't be quantified but describes anxiety, fear and other psychological and emotional conditions in people's lives. Ginwright et al. (2016) states, "The key distinction to be made here is that suffering is the internal consequence of oppression. Suffering is the result of the psycho-spiritual injury resulting from oppression" (p. 28). The healing justice framework is presented through four approaches: transformative organizing, restorative justice, healing circles

and contemplative practices. All the given approaches hold value but I focus on the idea of transformative organizing because within this method, social change is viewed as an ongoing process of personal reflection, communal healing, personal transformation, individual and collective growth. Through the building of healthy relationships and people, transformative leaders are created. Those leaders are then equipped with the ability to address systemic and structural inequality. This work begins with a shift in how we relate to others and how we treat the world. It is stated that the goal of transformative organizing is to begin to envision the restructuring of economic, political and judicial systems. This process requires those involved, gaining a sense of awareness around how structures of inequality influence our relationships, values, and behaviors. Healing justice becomes a strategy that can respond to the creation of and the pre-existing collective harm experienced in socially toxic communities and schools.

While reimagining urban schools and communities we must ask what prescriptions are handed to youth without choice? It is also essential to rethink the placement of power and who, if anyone dominates the narrative in the lives of young people. Within the realm of transformative organizing, the focus must become human dignity and wellbeing. Ginwright et al. (2016) defines the term;

> Transformative organizing is a term used to convey the idea that social change is the result of individual and collective transformation of how we treat ourselves in relation to one another. The broad goal of transformative organizing is to reimagine ways to restructure our economic, political, and judicial systems in ways that create justice, democracy, and equality. This process requires that we first develop an awareness of how structures influence our relationships, our values, and behaviors (p. 29).

If an understanding is gained on the ways in which youth can contribute to civic engagement that advances the needs and rights of communities, one may find they become more willing to provide space for equity and agency of youth voice.

<u>Youth Power</u>

In the book, *Youth Agency, Resistance, and Civic Activism: The public commitment to Social Justice (2006),* contributors Pedro Noguera and Chiara M. Cannella, note that even youth despite being marginalized and regardless of being poor or disadvantaged, have the potential to act upon the forces that oppress, constrain and limit their lives. Despite the odds they encounter, under the right circumstances youth contributions come from the ability to:

- Critique the situations that restrict their lives.
- Articulate that critique in verbal, written, and artistic form.
- Move beyond critique by acting to assert and affirm their interest as individuals and members of families and communities. (p. 336)

If allowed to contribute, these abilities constitute ways in which youth then redefine what is civic engagement. This change results in a youth driven set of perspectives on how to relate to and respond to youth. The activism of youth can become a form of transformative organizing.

A historically powerful and relevant example of the power of the action and understanding of youth is the seen in the historic achievements of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the 1960's. The SNCC was a movement powered by youth and organized by Ella Baker (1903-1986). Baker had experience working with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as a field secretary in 1940. Prior to leaving her role in the NAACP, Baker migrated to Atlanta in 1957. The purpose of the move was to work alongside Dr. Martin Luther King and organize with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Baker left her role with the SCLC after two years because she realized the disconnect that existed between SCLC's movement and youth who needed to be addressed. This led her to the 1960's birth of SNCC at Shaw University. Baker allowed youth to lead this movement while she supported them by listening, encouraging and critically engaging. She supported students in leading sit-ins at lunch counters as well as registering voters, all the

while facing immoral and violent acts against them. This movement would be responsible for the civic engagement of countless African American youth. An example of a notable youth leader who would become a historic figure is Stokely Carmichael. His work began in what is known as the freedom summer of 1964 prior to his graduation from Howard University. He assisted SNCC in registering hundreds of African American voters, he also inspired countless others with the slogan "Black Power" in 1966.

Noguera and Cannella (2006) noted that before this way of viewing youth activism, social scientist overlooked the importance of youth movements, calling young people "passive participants in larger events, spectators, ground troops, and victims" (p. 333), but rarely seeing them as actors with the ability to influence the course of events. In a community, it is essential for youth to be individuals, because often they are the one's who struggle the most because of policy and law. Before the age of 18 one is considered, objectively, as too young and uninformed to vote. Yet before that age we are trained by an education system that is dictated by those who don't even attend or critically engage in the participation of it. Limits are placed on communities based on what an outside source believes is "good." On a daily basis, youth face and navigate through several policies that are created to deter and dictate the means and outcomes of their behavior. Those youth who do not conform to social order and standards are punished while the dictating policy all depends on the prevailing political ideology of those in power.

The work done in the book *Youth Agency, Resistance, and Civic Activist (2006),* noted the inherent complexity in combining social justice in youth policy. It is that:

> The injustices perpetrated against youth in America are not accidental, nor are they caused by a deficiency of resources. Rather, they are the cumulative effect of ideology of blame and culture of complacency among decision makers at all levels who permit the punitive and discriminatory orientation of so many policies (p. 382).

If a policy is set up by those who follow or fit in one of the standards of the dominant ideologies in America, then it is influenced by individual perspective that is limited in spoke. What then happens to those youths who do not follow the ideologies? Are they deemed as problematic? Are they seen as casualties who must learn to assimilate or face what becomes a harsh reality contextualized by systematic violence and poverty? Something interesting that Noguera and Cannella (2016) mention is the idea that our institutions have effectively disowned youth by being disinvested with the association and responsibility around youth. They state that, "recognizing young people's humanity and affirming the rights associated with it could go a long way in developing a commitment in American society toward youth from all backgrounds. Such a commitment is essential not only for the youth who need recognition and affirmation the most, but for the future of the American Society itself" (p. 329). If the empowerment of youth leads to a better future and so many positive advancements in social life and behavior, why has this not been implemented? When it comes to other matters such as gaining global attention to a war, poverty or even making money, images that promote youth are used. Their pictures, poems, voices and even looks are used, but in order to relay someone else's message, the message of the dominant group. Youth are valued enough to be exploited but not valued enough to be able to think for themselves or contribute to narrative and if society continues to operate in a way where youth are devalued, social change may never come. They will become the future policy makers and the future educators whose jobs will be to build and shape communities that are rich with culture. If they do not know what a community should be or how to be tolerant of the culture of others, how will they ever create change? In *Roads to Dominion* (1995) Sara Diamond puts the power in the hands of institutions by stating, "Organizations are agents of social change and they are also among the most crucial resources movements have" (p. 4). In the pursuit to shape

citizens, the first question that must be asked is, what is a citizen and then what is a society? This is so a citizen can be made to properly function in each community but also in other communities where the idea of what society or community is, may shift.

Solutions to the marginalization of Youth

What serves to be most problematic when facing problems that involve social change is the creation of a tangible solution that is realistic and practical enough to be put into practice? One theory that I find constantly resurfacing to creating a solution is a teaching of Paulo Freire in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). He speaks of an idea of humanization, which requires for those who are oppressed to acknowledge the roles of the oppressor and the oppressed to overcome them. He states that, "the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity, become in turn oppressors, but rather restores of the humanity of both" (p. 26). Freire goes as far as appointing this as a task to those who are oppressed. The task is to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. This is important in a community because if one member of the oppressed community figured out what is needed for the success of a community, or even has the monetary means to change the lives of those in the community, why keep that knowledge to oneself? If kept to one's self, then it does not benefit the people and the community does not grow. This is not something that is easy, for most who are oppressed because the community in which they come from may have not always been supportive. For instance, a lot of mainstream rap artist come from poor communities, yet far as the public eye can see, they spend more money on material objects, than those things that failed them, especially education or even having a stable and safe home community. The American way takes over. They do not wish to go back and change. They only wish to enjoy the power. That is what Freire refers to as becoming an oppressor or sub-oppressor. He says:

> The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. Their ideal is to be men/ (human); but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity. This phenomenon derives from the fact that the oppressed, at a certain moment of their existential experience, adopt an attitude of adhesion to the oppressor (Freire, 1970, p. 27).

The solution will not come overnight, but there are a variety of things that can be done to create change. As members of communities and inhabitants of society we all have a responsibility to one another. We are bound by history, but our consciousness will liberate us. A deep commitment to realizing social justice for ourselves, our communities and our youth will finally relieve us from a repetitive system and realize lasting change.

Community Vision

To work toward the community vision of justice and equity that Oakland citizens have set for its schools, I believe that using Reality Pedagogy can help spark transformation. In his work, *Urban Science Education for the Hip Hop Generation,* (2010) Dr. Chris Emdin defines Reality Pedagogy as a teaching method that "Focuses on the cultural understandings of students within a particular social space" (p. 268). It is key that we understand the positioned marginalization of urban youth to produce solutions grounded in Reality Pedagogy. Those whose experiences are first hand must lead in the production and understanding of solutions to address issues that arise for youth in urban areas, specifically. Without understanding issues of displacement and Diaspora, the complete context of their marginalization will be drowned out.

In his most recent work titled, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood…and the Rest of Y'all Too* (2016), Dr. Emdin defined the term *Neoindigenous*. He uses this language to describe marginalized youth who inhabit urban spaces. It is stated that, "*Neoindigenous* carries the rich histories of indigenous groups, acknowledges powerful connections among populations that have dealt with being silenced, and signals the need to examine the ways that institutions replicate the

colonial process" (p. 9). The replication of the colonial process separates education from justice and liberation. A better understanding of how youth experience education can transform this process and utilize education as a platform to engage with injustices.

Henry A. Giroux in *Public Pedagogy and the Politics of Resistance* (2003) presents the scholar with the theory of public pedagogy and why it is important for education to become a transformative site for students. Public Pedagogy refers to a powerful ensemble of ideological and institutional forces whose aim is to produce competitive, self-interested individuals rivaling against one another for their own material and ideological gain. He believes at the root of the issue is the death of the critical intellectual. He borrows words from Pierre Bourdieu (1998) stating:

> There is no genuine democracy without genuine opposing of critical powers. The intellectual is one of those, of the first magnitude. That is why I think that the work of demolishing the critical intellectual living or dead is dangerous as the demolition of the public interest and that it is part of the same process of restoration (p. 5).

Within the process of restructuring, the classroom and educational setting must link learning to social change and allow students to gain the capacity to become critical agents. This liberatory action can be done with the use of theories of resistance.

Giroux (2003) states, theories of resistance involve more than simply registering models of oppression, they also point to the possibility of intervening productively in those educational contexts where reality is being continually transformed and power enacted in the interests of developing new democratic identities, relations, institutional forms, and modes of struggle" (p. 9). Theories of resistance when used in this way then become an organic way to reclaim agency as a democratic citizen. Giroux also states, "Theories of resistance must provide a concrete way in which to articulate knowledge to practical effects, mediated by the imperatives of social

justice, and uphold forms of education capable of expanding the meaning of critical citizenship"

(p. 9). These ideas become very useful for educators who are rethinking education and resistance

in spaces occupied by marginalized groups.

Chapter III- Results

<u>**Reclaiming the Narrative**</u>

   In Angela Zusman book, "*The Griots of Oakland*" done by the African American Oral history project in collaboration with Alameda County Health Care Services Center for Healthy Schools and Communities, Oakland Unified School District's Office of African American Male Achievement, and Story for All, East Oakland youth community members responded to the following question:

   If you could change one thing your neighborhood what would it be?

The following were varying responses gathered:

- o *Stop all the violence. Have people get along more with each other/ the littering/ the crime/ People getting more involved in the community, people getting to know each other more.*

- o *The crackhead people/ the trash/ I wouldn't change anything/ make it cleaner, make better houses/ Make it more quiet.*

- o *Everyone that lives by my neighborhood has to be safe/ for them to stop fighting/ All the shooting and the gangbanging/ It's a lot of Mexicans. I would like to teach them English so we can all communicate better.*

- o *I would change how we conduct ourselves in our neighborhoods and we interact with each other. Everybody needs to come together as a unit, just like other people, or like minorities come together. We need to come together, just period. Not just one race, not just black people, not just white people, not just Mexicans, but people all together. People period* (2013, p. 116).

   Understanding the need for projects like "*The Griots of Oakland*" is recognizing that voices from the margins can not only tell stories but also teach. The project is from the social perspective of young black males, who are often seen as one of the most marginalized groups in Oakland. The responses given, speak from a community that is recognized as diverse but has issues such as crime, adequate housing and other resources that have an impact on the lives of

youth. Exploring the potential, possibilities, power and purpose of having a meaningful platform in one's own community can become a practice of its own that can aid in liberatory practices, which support efforts that promote social justice and human rights.

A Griot is an African Tribal storyteller who perpetuates the oral tradition and history of a village or family. In this context, the youth who inhabit Oakland are given an opportunity to embody and discuss their communities, asserting their positions as creators and beholders of meaningful narratives. The reclamation of narrative becomes essential in understanding youth culture, gathering youth perspective, providing a platform that returns agency and creating solutions to community issues. Those who are truly invested in working toward dignity and justice with young folks must be prepared to incorporate student centered pedagogical practices into their work. It is a way to put a dialectic learning process into practice to liberate youth. The stories Griots carry allow the subjects to view themselves as well as others outside of the colonized or negative lens. The counter-narrative disrupts the dominant narrative where the disruption then becomes an agent of humanization and is essential in re-imagining an urban space such as Oakland.

Submerged in reality, the oppressed cannot perceive clearly, the "order" which serves the interests of the oppressors, whose image they have internalized. Chafing under the restrictions of this order, they often manifest a type of horizontal violence, striking out at their own comrades for the pettiest reasons, perpetuating the cultural violence imposed on them by the dominant narratives and ideologies. It is possible that in this behavior they are once more manifesting their duality. Because the oppressor exists within their oppressed comrades, when they attack those comrades they are indirectly attacking the oppressor as well. On the other hand, at a certain point in their existential experience, the oppressed feel an irresistible attraction towards the oppressor's

way of life, and sharing this way of life often becomes and overpowering aspiration.

Reclaiming the narrative requires intentional space. The need to be filled is finding settings that serve as sites of liberation with commitments to basic human dignity. These sites must also comprise commitments to achieve equitable practices, cultural inclusion, wellness, and transformation. "Human activity consists of action and reflection: It is praxis; it is transformation of the world. And as praxis, it requires theory to illuminate it. Human activity is theory and practice; it is reflection and action. It cannot be reduced to either verbalism or activism" (Freire p. 62, 125). In the cycle of praxis that is student centered, participants, who in traditional settings find themselves maladjusted to constructions of discourse that extract their culture and find agency, are given the opportunity participate in a dialectic process of learning as students and teachers with innate abilities to both learn and teach**.**

Why Better Alternatives for Youth? (BAY-Peace)

As stated before, we must recognize that urban youth in America live in extremely high-stress environments. Their narratives are often dominated by false perceptions that focus on the violence that occurs in their lives and the high rates of poverty that dominate their lived experiences. Rather than uplifting the aspects of their lives that reflect the cultural wealth within their communities, we pathologies and criminalize the outcomes of poverty without accounting for, and examining historical forms of oppression that disenfranchise communities of color and lead to the current state of affairs, which mediate the lives of urban young folks.

This study examines why it is necessary for students to have a social justice platform, the impact that this type of curriculum has, the challenges of implementing social justice/human rights based curriculum within non-traditional educational settings and the transformative impact that social biography has on students who develop a social justice/human rights lens. In order to

accomplish this research, I have conducted interviews with facilitators and youth organizers who use a social justice framework within their curriculum, collaborating with them to develop curriculum and undergo a structural analysis of a youth organization that aims to provide youth with better alternatives to perpetuating cycles of violence by offering vocational training, community organizing, youth-led workshops and liberation arts.

The mission of BAY-Peace is to support and empower Bay Area youth to transform militarism and other forms of violence through youth organizing and artistic resistance. They offer a holistic youth leadership program that integrates vocational development, artistic expression, socio-political education, community organizing, healing space, and other avenues that lead to personal transformation within the context of Oakland, California. The organization originally began as program called Alternatives to War Through Education in 2005. In its grassroots stages, Alternatives to War would pair youth spaces alongside war veterans to address issues of heavy military recruitment to facilitate cross learning around the negative aspects of participating in war. After two years of collaborating with schools and other organizations BAY-Peace became an official independent non-profit organization in 2007 and started to take shape; becoming an organization that offers during and after-school internships for students ages 13-21 within the organization's space.

In an interview conducted with Susan Quinlan, the co-founder of the organization, its struggles were brought to life. Quinlan now acts as Coordinator for the Downtown Oakland based nonprofit; and for the last twelve years has been a full-time volunteer. She recalled her feelings working as a teacher in Oakland and how the social and political atmosphere consumed urban youth. As a teacher, she saw far too many youth resorting to the military because they saw it as an opportunity in which the rewards outweighed the risks. Within the organization, she

implemented consensus practices and aimed to allocate most of BAY-Peace's budget towards youth stipends.

Over time, BAY-Peace grew to adapt to shifting needs of the community. Interns came with different concerns, such as violence and the lack of quality educational experiences. The desired learning outcomes of students and interns have always had a heavy influence on the organization's actions. In our interview, I asked about this shift in focus and the motivations behind its occurrence. The specific questions I posed were, "In the creation and grassroots stage, was it your intention to create a space where folks could come and intentionally participate in their own transformation and then promote that with others. When you were thinking that out, what were the challenges and successes, and what made BAY-Peace shift programming to what it is today?" I capture my interview with Susan Quinlan below:

> Over the years, it's been about 12 years since we started this work; it has really shifted a lot. We spend much less time now focusing on the military recruiting; although with the current administration, that may rise.
> So, we're kind of preparing to be ready for a lot more invitations to do truth in recruiting. They're used to be a lot of initiations. But now, the issues that are more on the forefront are other forms of militarism such as the militarization of the police and racial profiling or the school to prison pipeline or deportations and the militarization of the border. So we have changed in terms of a broadening our focus, which suits me just fine.
> For me it's about social justice, which is a very multi-faceted thing. But another way that the organization has changed is in that view of transformation because I come out of a community organizing background. So, if I would have defined transformation ten years ago of how do we transform youth, it would have been much more about gaining skills, self confidence, learning how to organize, much more of a campaign organizing and public speaking and working with a group, learning to get a long, reach consensus and move forward.
> I think what has crept into the work more and more over the past several years is that more personal aspect of transformation, that healing aspect. I don't know that I saw that as front and center of the work back when we started but I think it has become a much more conscious part of the work we do now.
> It's just recognizing, as people have looked at some of the parallels between the traumas that veterans experience in the military and the traumas of everyday life in the communities that were working with. It's some of the most

violent systems in the world. Not just for us but for the rest of the world as well. I think we have integrated healing aspects of transformation into our vision of what it takes to make ourselves more effective members of a community. (S. Quinlan, personal interview, March 17, 2017)

Understanding the positioning of the community when this organization was created helps to understand its conception to address the need for equity in Oakland for urban youth. The organization, in its original form, aimed to fill a void by educating young folks of alternative narratives that were being made available to them. As the needs of the community changed and evolved, the agenda of the organization shifted accordingly. The willingness to change and adapt to provided much needed programming to meet community needs contributes to praxis, in the sense that it shows young people that their lived experiences and needs to reflect on it are relevant to recognize. Thus, proving that poor social conditions are in no way a permanent condition. BAY-Peace's Arts Programs Manager also offers some insight to the dynamic nature of the work of the organization.

Themes, Analysis, and furthering the implications for Praxis: Student Centered Pedagogy

While I engaged in the interview with Leilani,various themes and ideas emerged. The most essential of these themes was the use of a student-centered teaching modality that brings student voice to the forefront. This was identified as a key program element of BAY-Peace. The purpose of BAY-Peace is to provide leadership opportunities for youth to facilitate in non-traditional classroom settings and uses activities geared toward liberation, transformation, social change, community organizing and performing arts to develop transformational organizers who are equipped with the tools to transform, as opposed to just adapting, to the social systems that dominate their lives. I connected this with the ideas presented in the *Critical Pedagogy Reader* (2003). In discussing the return of agency Freire states that, "the oppressed are not marginal's,

are not men and women living outside of society. They have always been inside- inside the structure, which made them beings for others. The solution is not to integrate them into the structure of oppression, but to transform the structure so that they can become beings for themselves" (p. 54). I believe this is the first step in understanding and acknowledging a student-centered form of education. Knowing that individuals do not need to be saved, but looked at as whole, as people who have power already within them. I saw this idea emerge in my discussion in a way that kept the humility within the task of empowering youth to utilize knowledge of self, community, society and history as a tool for liberation. It was one of the most meaningful parts of the exchange and it happened in the very beginning as we uncovered the purpose of the organization.

During the interview process she stated, "I also try to keep the work relevant to what they (students) are going through in that moment and what they may go through in the future. I try to connect the curriculum to the large context of their personal, cultural, and social histories." She also went on to mention how every piece of her curriculum used undergoes a process of debriefing. In this process students, can give feedback on what they did or did not like about the course activities for that day. In, *ART/VISION/VOICE, Cultural Conversations in Community* (Carlin, 2005, p. 17), it was found that respecting the community and believing that community members have something to teach the artist, faculty, and students in the institution changes the nature of the usual relationships between institution and community. In this case, I believe it also transforms the usual student teacher power dynamic. It was one thing to read about this, but to recognize it in a cycle of praxis happening in non-traditional settings helped me put its importance into perspective. I also believe it was refreshing to see a youth space in which the hierarchy of the work place doesn't persist above all else. The youth had input in everything the

organization goes through.

Pushing Boundaries in a non-traditional space

> *Love, not politics drive social change! Love is perhaps the most radical form of political change because it requires a shift in how we see ourselves, related to one another and awakens in us a miraculous power (Ginwright, 2016, http://www.shawnginwright.com).*

The BAY-Peace organization is what can be considered a non-traditional education program. Although they offer classes, trainings and workshops both inside and outside of schools, those schools do not fund them in a way that contributes to their sustainability. They write and apply for various grants that keep them afloat. Susan Quinlan, the co-founder, even donates 100% of her earnings to help the functions of the center. Their organization is located in Downtown Oakland, and they partner and extend their services into East Oakland elementary, junior highs, and high schools. On some days, their Arts Program Manager, and other members of the facilitation team utilize public transportation to get to the various sites. They participate in the community they live in and are very much a part of it. They witness violence as well as triumph in their daily struggles to do this work. BAY-Peace utilizes education as a practice of freedom to negate the forms of cultural politics that are aimed at disempowering the historically disenfranchised citizens of Oakland.

In *Untempered tongues: Teaching Performance Poetry*, Patrick Camangian (2008) states that the responsibility of acknowledging and creating resistance is presented as a challenge to the teacher. I, however began to wonder if teachers are more willing to challenge and create resistance to forms of social stratification when they are in a non-traditional setting. I believe this is because resistance and job security do not always align. Camangian (2008) brings us to the conclusion that a "teacher must develop pedagogy that foregrounds the interest and concerns of the less educated, pushing the boundaries of dominant teaching practices, in order to disrupt the

culturally reproductive consequences of school and classroom alienation" (p. 36). In this challenge, it is implied that the teacher must recognize and understand the issues within the dominant space of education, I critique this with the belief I hold that not all teachers recognize that power dynamic.

Bridging the gap between the dominant teaching practices and non-traditional education practices is essential. It is why programs like BAY-Peace exist and need to be maintained. As I reflected on the interview process, I was reminded of how I experienced education as a youth. In my K-12 education, most institutions I attended ignored certain factors that were a part of my daily reality. They did not always recognize economic barriers; community violence, how much agency or control I had in my life (which affects the amount and quality of work I could produce), posttraumatic stress that came because of the amount of violence I was subjected to and the reality/impact of the lack of parental involvement. To overcome this damage, I had to be unrealistically resilient. In the times, that I was not outstandingly resilient, I was branded a failure. To step outside of that brand, I had to learn to critically but respectfully challenge the assumptions of my teachers. In my interview, I believe this was expressed in the fact that when given the space, BAY-Peace youth express pain and anger because of the deprivation of various forms of justice. When one looks in on the city of Oakland it is easy to paint it as damaged. It is even easier to ignore the art, culture and activism born amidst the history of structural and systemic violence.

In the article "Suspending Damage: A letter to communities" (Tuck, 2009), it is stated that "so many outsiders benefit from depicting communities as damaged, and it will have to be these same communities that hold researchers accountable for the frameworks and attitudes they employ. It is too tempting to proceed as usual" (p. 412). Organizations like BAY-Peace help

youth to move out of damaging norms and into a space of growth. Without these folks, struggling for justice and collective agency would only be a violent pursuit. In the communities of color that are marginalized, socio political education can be what restores identity and combats internalized oppression. The damage is within the hidden curriculum of White supremacy. In the work "Social Blackness, Honorary Whiteness, it is stated that "a belief system that installed white purity as the pinnacle of human worth and of enlightenment civilization rendered all people of color not just other, but inferior. Historically, White made right" (Hill-Collins, 2009, p. 45). If students and youth are left to face that reality alone, indignation is surely an outcome. It is a lasting problem but it can be addressed by raising the level of consciousness and sharpening the lens and tools set in which youth act and look upon the world with.

During the interview with Leilani, the cycle of praxis (reflection and action) become ever so apparent. The youth at BAY-Peace were able to use the knowledge they are equipped with to read and write the world. The space allotted them the ability to engage in transformation. In "Finding the Poetic High", Gerald T. Reyes states, "it is through their own voices where they discover that they have at least one thing in common; that they all have something to say" (2006, p. 10). He also goes on to add, "within a community of poets everyone must understand that the ability to respond - response ability - needs to grow into responsibility - the commitment to help every poet succeed" (p. 13). Understanding this collective sense of responsibility can be applied to all aspects of life, especially community organizing efforts aimed at creating social transformation. This can also move students into post-traumatic growth and transform the dynamics and hierarchy of the normative student teacher/ student institution relationship. For some students, that space can be silencing if their beliefs or practices do not align with what is found in more traditional spaces. It is important to examine or in some cases re-examine the

space and offer alternative modes of learning to create an educational culture of equity and inclusion.

Arts for Social Transformation, Voice and physical empowerment

> *"The reason we believe art is so powerful is that it allows individuals to not only engage their minds but also their bodies to physically embody transformation and empowerment. They can feel social change. It also allows them to use their own opinion, voice and their own knowledge to critique society and community. I think this is because it puts the individuals and communities voice at the center, which allows it to become a means of resistance for damaging dominant ideologies and systems" (Leilani Salvador).*

Art functions as a mediator that transcends boundaries by connecting human body and mind and environment, and empowers participants to reclaim their voice. I originally overlooked the concept of art as political. I think this is partially because most of the spaces I have been a part of are purely academic and failed to incorporate art as a modality for teaching and learning. In the creation of a theoretical argument I hardly found room for artistic modalities, such as spoken word, testimony, acting and other forms of art. Ironically, these forms of expression are colloquial for me, so to conform to traditional educational pedagogies, I assumed I had divorced academic writing from artistic expression.

When it comes to the aspect of physical empowerment, I have concluded that it is the responsibility of the instructor to unearth the hidden curriculum that different forms of movement can entail. Without a critical lens to examine physical practices through, it can be interpreted as useless movement that has no connection to returning agency or any other social implications. However, with a more critical examination dance, or even theatrical techniques of embodiment becomes more than just movement, and theatre more than just acting. In the article, "Growth in motion," Mira- Lisa Kats puts meaning into the interpretations of movement. In Katz's study, it is specifically applied to dance, but I believe dance and theatre are two art forms

that are intersectional. After discussing the techniques in Theatre of the Oppressed with BAY-Peace during our interview, I began to see the spiritual and ritual aspects of the practice. During our interview, she shared about a time in which her student facilitators burned sage to clear out the negative energies unearthed as an expression of injustice. The connection made by Katz is expressed when she states, "Dance is many things to many people. It can be a discipline, a practice, a ritual, an exercise, a form of prayer or meditation, a kind of storytelling or seduction, or a medium for artistic expression. In addition to being a powerful means of knowing oneself and communicating with others, dance can also be a way to develop cognition and support identity formation" (2008, p. 12). The power that may possibly be taken away can then be reclaimed. Katz also states that, "our sense of self-determination or agency at any given moment is constrained by specific social, cultural, and historical contexts, yet people can develop their agentive selves using the unique repertoire of cultural resources, relationships, and artifacts available" (2008, p. 14). The Theatre of the Oppressed techniques that BAY-Peace employs, allow youth to embody realities as they already see and experience it but also embody visions for alternatives as solutions to the injustices inherent in current reality. The idea of being able to challenge the systems of oppression or dominance is what BAY-Peace aims to do. Artistic expression can utilize whatever modality the participant chooses to use as their medium but what is important is that they are given creative agency in simultaneously envisioning reality and future possibilities in a way that offers spiritual and ritual modes of healing and transformation.

Community Youth Effective Organizations: Implications for Personal Praxis

When thinking of how to use what was discovered in my own praxis, I learned from being able to discuss and somewhat observe a youth lead organization that is not ran from a top down approach. In the "Champions of Change" study, a figure was presented in which the

expectations of effective youth organizations are listed. A few of the main pillars are:

- Individuals bring diverse talents, skills, knowledge and networks vital to the life of the group

- Adults and youth alike have to be prepared to suspend disbelief, deal with intense emotions and explore vulnerabilities.

- Practice, practice, practice goes along with the need to keep asking; first of the self and than of others, "how is it going? What do you think?'

- Everyone has to be ready to pick up the slack, to play different roles and to be a responsible critic of the group's work or performance. (1999, p. 101)

No one learns or does anything just for the individual; except to pass what you know and can do unto others through teaching, mentoring, modeling and encouraging. Within this framework, I noticed a culture of love and caring being created for those involved. I believe that shift into a loving paradigm is what is needed in pursuing social justice through the arts. Educator and theorist Antiona Darder in "Pedagogy of love" (2002) discusses this idea of armed love. This type is the fighting love of those convinced of the right and duty to fight, to denounce, and to announce. This love can be lively, forceful and inspiring, while at the same time critical, challenging and insistent. It must not come in the form of false generosity. It must be in direct opposition in what Freire discusses as true generosity. This love should be rooted and committed in the willingness to become more human, because that is or should be our individual true vocation. This democratic education in a non-traditional space takes a commitment to humanity. If I were ever again to work in a community space or open my own, I would equip myself with that and move forward with a willingness to struggle.

Thoughts from the Youth

Respecting the voices of youth participants requires a commitment of engaging in dialogue. Freire presents the notion that dialogue cannot exist without humility (1970).

Cultivating transformation calls for the acknowledgement of diverse truths. A closed mind cannot participate in healing or promote a realistic notion of peace. Dialogue is one essential component in moving youth toward what Ginwright et al. (2016) calls Collective Hope. In urban spaces, collective hope is a catalyst in efforts to reform education, advance social policy and create opportunity for youth. Ginwright et al. identifies three components of collective hope. The components are shared experience, radical imagination and critical action. BAY-Peace acts as an agent of transformation by embodying the elements of collective hope. Youth experience collective hope differently; therefore, moments of personal transformation happen at different times and in different ways for everyone.

In an anonymous survey conducted at BAY-Peace youth responses spoke to the ways in which they experience collective hope. The first component, "shared experience," is described in an example given by Ginwright et al. The example states, "young people in low-income communities share common experiences with run-ins with police, teachers and exposure to violence. These shared experiences provide a collective view about school, neighborhood conditions, and how these conditions influence perceptions of what is fair and unfair" (2016, p. 22). Shared experience was unearthed by youth when responding to the given question, "What has been your most transformative moment with BAY-Peace?" One of the youth responded by stating, "My most transformative moment was going to Survivors Speak Conference, hearing other people's stories and connecting to them" (2017). Being connected to the narrative of others around issues of injustice is critical in seeing the necessity of moving into collective action.

Survivors Speak is an annual conference that took place this year on April 4th 2017 in Sacramento, California. It is a statewide action usually taking place during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. BAY-Peace organized a trip of 16 participants (3 staff, 13 youth). The

purpose of the two-day conference is to provide a platform for survivors of crime to voice their stories and develop a new safety narrative and form a healing network among other survivors. The 2017 Survivors Speak Conference theme was Healing to Action. The agenda opens with a dinner and gala in which participants stories are shared and honored. Then on the final day of the conference a March to the State Capital occurs. The march is then followed by a Rally at the California state capital that includes speeches, healing tents, and workshops. (More information can be found at www.safeandjust.org). The student who saw this conference as a moment of transformation, speaks to the need to connect with others, especially when engaged in dialogue around community issues.

The second component Ginwright et al. identifies, as a feature of Collective Hope is a shared Radical Imagination. It is stated that, "shared radical imagination is the result of a collective agreement about why injustice has occurred and a shared vision that ruptures our day-to-day life, propelling us toward seeking a more just and fulfilling way of life" (2016, p. 23). The presence of radical imagination became evident when youth answered the question, "do you believe BAY-Peace accurately represents your community?" One youth responded by stating, "yes, we very often engage in conversations on our own community so that we are always aware of things we might be experiencing. Also, it helps to be able to listen and be aware of what others might be experiencing." A second youth responded to the same question by stating, "yes, it does accurately represent my community in a creative unique way. It shows how youth can be capable of doing big things." The first response speaks to the notion that collective agreement is fostered in sharing and listening, while the second youth finds power in re-imaging and recognizing that youth have the capacity to contribute to their own lives in a more critical way.

The third and final element is Critical Action, which may be the most important of the

three. Ginwright et al. goes on to describe how critical action takes place by stating:

> Critical Action occurs when community members perceive the conditions, traumas of daily life as both wrong and subject to redress. Community members must see the conditions as unjust, nonpermanent, and changeable. It appears that critical action has a powerful impact on hope. When community members act to achieve a specific goal, they foster a sense of control over their future and sense of engagement with society. The sense of control over future events is perhaps one of the most important features of collective hope because it requires the community to share collective vision of their future. Working together for a common goal through critical action involves collective agreement and action to achieve the stated goal. The sense of control strengthens future orientation, which is central to developing hope (2016, p. 23).

Evidence of critical hope is apparent in various responses. The example I'd like to focus on is also in response to the question asking, "what is your most transformative moment with BAY-Peace?" One student responded by stating, "I think when I had to plan out and facilitate a workshop was transformation for me. (This was) because it's something I never seen myself do and it takes a lot of work and focus." Within the action of creating and facilitating their own workshop the student is participating in being partners of what can be described as becoming a partner in naming the world.

BAY-Peace offers various community workshops and events in conjunction with different organizations that happen throughout the year. A majority of the workshops are organized by young people and extend for inclusion of community members. In 2015, BAY-Peace successfully implemented more than 20 events. However, in 2016 those numbers fell due to the organization's shifting capacity when their budget was slashed in half and they had to lay off all 3 of their youth staff members. The chart below lists the workshops and events with correlating numbers of attendees. Take notice to how diverse the workshop partnerships are in the title section. They range from Voice of Formerly incarcerated youth, to youth healing clinics.

Theater of the Oppressed

BAY-Peace's use of Theater of the Oppressed techniques and other varying forms of art, are fundamentally rooted in what they call "liberation arts." Their integration of the arts is used as a way of helping students find and develop their own voices as they begin to explore the complex concepts associated structural violence like poverty, oppression, racism, patriarchy and militarism. After interviewing their primary facilitator and their co-founder, I found the three theoretical frameworks for Collective Hope, that support their reasoning for enacting liberation arts as a tool to seek social justice. Explicitly understanding these theoretical frameworks could also strengthen BAY-Peace's methods and approach in their workshops and trainings.

Not only is Augusto Boal the founder of Theater of the Oppressed, but he is also a scholar that is extremely concerned with the well being of oppressed people. In "The Aesthetics of the Oppressed," he shares the Prometheus Project, which aims to "develop all aesthetic forms of perceptions of reality in the members of the oppressed groups in which [they] are working with" (2006, p. 9). He identifies 4 main approaches to do so: the word, the image, the sound and the ethics. While BAY-Peace already incorporates these different approaches through their workshops, it was unclear that they are explicitly aware of Boal's theoretical frameworks that Theater of the Oppressed techniques are rooted in.

In *The Word* approach, Boal discusses the importance of oppressed groups not to become novel writers, but to use words as symbols, words with intentional and well thought out meanings behind them (2006, p.19). But for words to become symbols, they must be charged with the hopes, desires, needs and life experiences of the person whom it came from. In traditional education settings, the history in which students are so vigorously taught, are charged with the perspectives of American colonialism, which had catastrophic human rights violations

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for many groups of people of color. Because of that, the narrative taught in traditional education stands as a symbol for the power of white dominance over people of color. When BAY-Peace provides students a public platform in which to share their poetry and their speeches, they are given an opportunity to reclaim their own narratives of youth of color.

In *The Image* approach, he explains the importance of developing a capacity to see the creation of images for ourselves, rather than in nature or a machine, and this shows us that the world can be re-created (2006, p. 20). When I first participated in a free Theater of the Oppressed training that BAY-Peace hosted, I participated in Image Theater activities, the same ones that they teach their youth to facilitate at workshops. Our current generation is over-saturated with images in the media, few may be empowering but the majority, also reinforcing the dominant narratives. These can be detrimental to the sub-consciousness of youth, especially when media literacy is not a commonly taught subject in schools. The Image Theater activities that youth learn to facilitate with BAY-Peace help them and their peers to not only re-imagine what societal norms exists that are threats to social justice and re-envision a culture that can be created through their own and their peer's transformative actions.

In *The Sound* approach, Boal explains that rhythm is the way we connect with everyday life within ourselves and the world around us and because 80% of the music we hear on the radio has the hallucinatory aim of "deadening its listeners… we must rediscover and connect with our own internal rhythms, the rhythms of nature and social life" (2006, p. 21). Sound is consistently utilized throughout BAY-Peace workshops, from activities like sound-ball, the machine and, sound and a movement. Initially, students may feel odd but I'm learning that just hearing the sound and getting out of the mindset of "sounding good" can be challenging but it is one step towards the students becoming whole within themselves rather than conforming to what they are

being taught subconsciously.

In the last *ethics* approach, Boal asserts that it is important for participants what they are doing and who they are doing it for. As Leilani discussed in her interview, the curriculum and even the direction of the organization is largely guided by the realities and voices of the students. With the student-centered pedagogy that is utilized in BAY-Peace's trainings, the ethics of the learning becomes most apparent to the students and they are enabled to discover the who and why for themselves. This allows students to begin seeing themselves as bearers of knowledge, developing the confidence, consciousness and voice that they need to begin seeking transformation within themselves, their communities and the society at large.

It is my belief that with these 4 ethics are inherently present within the infrastructure and philosophies of the organization, whether explicitly stated or not, especially with their use of Theater of the Oppressed techniques as a form of liberation arts. BAY-Peace is an organization that challenges the normative ways of learning for many students. Their programs allow urban students to receive an educational experience that values their stories, their knowledge and there history, using it as a catalyst for praxis. This type of curriculum is what allows students to flourish in a way that encourages them to continuously be critical of themselves, their communities and society so that they can not only better understand how to navigate reality, but also how to transform it.

<u>Chapter 4</u>**: Conclusion and Recommendations**

Conclusion:

In the heart of America lives our urban youth whom grows up in high stress neighborhoods. The impacts are said to have a profound impact on our youth, including, effecting academic success, health, safety, and the transition into adulthood. I focused on Oakland as the local for this thesis. However, Oakland is certainly not the only urban city in the United States where youth experience detrimental impacts do to the impoverished nature of their lived experiences.

I have argued throughout this paper that we need to abandon traditional educational pedagogies and adopt forms of teaching and learning that are youth centric. I draw lessons from the nonprofit BAY-Peace to reveal the power of informal instruction that utilizes art, social justice and human rights to empower young folks to become the change agents in their own lives.

We explored how a human rights and social justice framework engage young folks in becoming the political actors to transform their own lives and the communities they occupy. BAY-Peace's programs integrate a socio-political education, understanding that increasing youth consciousness about the issues they face, grants them the opportunity to engage in praxis. Examining the ways in which they can move beyond simply being taught, but to become the teachers. Urban youth are enabled through informal lessons to gain the knowledge and skills to become agents of social transformation as opposed to being complacent in their marginalization.

Throughout, I attempted to highlight the process by which we can come to understand that as students discover truth for themselves and are given the resources needed to make sense of their truths, they will become empowered. BAY-Peace's practices incorporate essential

elements in restoring youth agency, helping them to become conscious citizens with a critical

lens. Their programs empower students financially, educationally, personally and collectively.

Organizations such as BAY-Peace provide essential spaces for youth, where they can transform

their own lives and therefore, their communities and our society. They enable youth to become

leaders who are no longer complacent or actors in perpetuating cycles that are the cause of issues

within their communities that result in them being identified as high stress zones.

After examining the work that BAY-Peace does, there seemed to be three primary threats

that they identify through their work in challenging structural racism and the violence it

perpetuates:

- Physical Threats - deportation, criminalization of youth, mass incarceration, violence.
- Economic Threats - gentrification and displacement, income inequality, lack of access to healthy food.
- Cultural Threats - popular culture's destructive discourse and ideologies, cultural wealth diminished by racist narratives of history, being silenced.

Although they do not explicitly use a human rights framework, each of these pose as direct

threats to human rights.

Their primary method of intervention to move towards racial justice is artistic resistance

and popular education that is rooted in practices that promote and create equity. The emphasis on

equity creates transformation, challenges dominant normative culture, provides counter-

narratives, and most importantly shows youth that racial justice is attainable. They target youth

in this work because they believe that youth have the power to shift dominant discourse and

practices around race and justice. The three primary components include elements of the

following:

1. Performance art in our learning space and in community
   - Theater of the Oppressed, interactive skits and workshops
   - Spoken word

- Dance
- Music
- Public speaking at city council or committee meetings, schools and events

2. Popular education
   - Learning experiences rooted in the knowledge that is held and exchanged in the space
   - Emphasis on collective struggles and liberation
   - Analysis of systems of power
   - Circulo - Deep listening and Healing Circles

3. Compensated Vocational and Leadership development in social justice work
   - Youth-led workshops for other students and adult allies
   - Grassroots organizing for events and with campaigns or coalitions

Each of these components place the students at the center, where the youth are the true leaders of the experience facilitated by BAY-Peace. They are given complete agency to develop and use their voices and actions in a way that makes personal transformation and communal growth an attainable reality.

Recommendations:

In our capitalist driven society, the market drives outcomes. For the impoverished, lack of financial resources positions them on the margins, unable to tap into the resources that would improve their quality of life. In high stress zones, areas with the most poverty, people experience mass unemployment, lack of access to healthy food, poorly funded schools, and high rates of violence or crime. Spaces like BAY-Peace exist to empower youth to become the leaders of their communities and pioneers for social transformation. To advance social justice and human rights beyond nonprofit program models, we need policies that support the expansion of such programs and integrate these alternative modalities into the classroom. We need the implementation of policies at the city, state and national level that recognize the need for systems to advance social justice and human rights in Oakland and in the United States. Moving forward, it is vital that Universities engage Masters of Education students in curriculum that challenges their privilege and incorporates social justice and human rights as a core principle of an equitable education for all. Well-versed teachers can become the facilitators and advocates in the classroom and change the nature of education, as we know it. Teachers can organize within the teacher's union to push for reforms to educational policy that would allow for the full integration of a social justice and human rights framework to be imbedded into the curriculum and fabric of our educational system. I suggest teachers and educators look to programs like BAY-Peace as a resource when building lesson plans to advance knowledge of social justice and that embodies the tenets of human rights education.

Institutions and government have served as a primary space for perpetrating systemic oppression by establishing practices and policies that particularly impact people of color. People are energized for change and mobilized to speak up about how systems disproportionally

negatively impact their lives. Through a variety of tactics, change can come about. Institutions and government are in a position of power that makes them responsible for acknowledging systemic injustices and revising practices and policies that systematically marginalize youth of color and perpetuate the school to prison pipeline. By placing students at the center of teaching and learning students are mobilized to act on their collective needs and campaign for reforms that will bring about changes in service of their best interests. For example, Oakland passed a measure getting all youth free bus passes. This ensures that youth can use public transportation to travel to and from school and access community spaces. Oakland Unified School District voted to preserve Oakland schools as a sanctuary space for undocumented youth. By participating in the sanctuary space Oakland Unified School District is standing up for the needs of their undocumented students and symbolically guaranteeing them access to education. We are in a critical time, where policy makers more then ever need to be constantly reminded of the peoples needs. Youth can play a powerful role when given the opportunity to exercise their voice to demand their needs are prioritized. Programming like BAY-Peace supports youth in developing an articulated ask from our government officials and educational institutions, demanding that they consider all children, not just their children, when they assert policies. The importance of assessing the needs of our youth is that they have the potential to be the leaders of tomorrow given the right supports now.

As a part of the exchange between BAY-Peace and myself, I was able to create a sample curriculum that is built on their model and takes into account other forms of educational theory and practice. I am in talks with BAY-Peace to pilot this curriculum and we will be partnering to implement its use at a future undetermined date (see Appendix A).

Appendix A: **Curriculum suggestions**

1) <u>**Theater for Social Justice**</u>
   Workshop Objective:

   Students will be able to understand what Theater of the Oppressed is and how it's useful for Social Justice.

   ○ **Introduction/Welcome**

   ■ **Discuss the Relationship Between Theater of the Oppressed and Social Justice**

   ● **Facilitation Question Prompts:**

   ○ What is Social Justice?

   ○ Why is it Important?

   ○ What is something you know about theater?

   ○ How do you think theater links to social justice?

   ● Define Improvisation

   ○ Improvisation is the act of creating without previous preparation.

   ■ Sometimes things happen unexpectedly and we have to improve "make it up" in the moment.

   ● Define Acting

   ○ Acting is the act of performing. We most often think of acting in terms of actors performing a role in a movie, television show or theater, but acting also refers to standing in and performing someone else's task.

   ■ Acting can depict real or fictional events. It can dramatize human emotion and push us outside of our comfort zones.

   ● Define Play and Imagination

   ○ Play is the act of engaging in activities that provides enjoyment. It's about having fun and often consists of movements and can include interacting with others.

   ○ Imagination is the ability of the mind to be creative and resourceful and form new ideas, images, or concepts that are not present to the senses.

   ■ Play and Imagination are useful for building community through relationships - movements are grounded communities/relationships who share common struggle

   ○ **Check-in:**

- Name and Favorite thing to do with an action?

- Repeat name, then action of favorite thing to do

- Give attention and respect to each person

- **Ice-breaker:**

  - Pass the Clap

    - Be sure to make eye contact so you can be in tune with the person passing it to you

    - Pay attention to each other

- **Energizer:**

  - Zip Zap Zop

    - Objective: Students will gain awareness skills

      - If we want to engage in creating change, we have to first increase our consciousness and second, frame what needs to be changed.

- **Theater Game:**

  - Hitchhiker

    - Identify 1 person to play the driver, 2 people to play passengers and 1 person to play a hitchhiker. The driver and two passengers are driving along and come across a hitchhiker. The driver stops to pick up the hitchhiker. The hitchhiker comes in acting out an emotion. Everyone in the car begins to mimic the hitchhiker.

    - Start with facilitators and slowly rotate out into all students

    - Facilitation Prompt:

      - Shed light on how people can feed off of each other's energy/vibes. Emphasize the importance of being mindful of the energy "we" bring into a space and the energy other come into the space with.

- **Main Activity:**

  - Playback Theater

    - Share a story about a time where you felt really empowered or defeated

    - Practicing deep listening

    - Validating and reinterpreting other's stories

- ○ **Closing:**
  - ■ It is our duty to fight for our freedom, it is our duty to win. We must love and protect and each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains.
    - ● Circle up and link arms
    - ● Repeat three times getting louder each time

- ★ <u>**Everyday Activism: Thinking, Believing and Being the Change**</u>:
  - ○ **Workshop Summary:**
    - ■ Students will examine everyday encounters of violence and oppression, and then learn to use theater as a way of examining and envisioning alternatives.
  - ○ **Introduce**
    - ■ Liberation Arts
      - ● Theater of The Oppressed -- Image theater
      - ● Popular education
      - ● Students and participants as bearers of knowledge
      - ● Facilitator allowing for sharing of knowledge and building of collective consciousness
      - ● Attention grabber: When I say _, you say _
  - ○ **Check-in: 1**
  - ○ **Ice-breaker - clump**
    - ■ **Fill-The-Space.** Follow directions every time I call out CLUMP
      - ● Shake as many hands or bump as many fists as you can while making eye contact and exchanging names -- create an image that represents *COMMUNITY* with 5 other people.
      - ● Choose one image and ask the group to explain their image
      - ● Walking backwards, try to avoid running into anybody -- create an image that represents *POWER* with 7 people.
      - ● Choose one image and ask the group to explain their image
      - ● Walk around the room as fast as you can -- create an image that represents *VIOLENCE* with 6 people

- Choose one image and ask the group to explain their image

- Walking around the room, begin to follow someone and then follow another person and then another person -- create an image that represents *CONFORMING* with 4 other people

- Choose one image and ask the group to explain their image

- Before moving forward, ask why any one of these concepts might matter when thinking about how we can become an activist in our everyday lives (Violence, Conforming, Community, and Power)

○ **Introduce the 4 I's of Oppression**

■ IDEOLOGICAL OPPRESSION

- The underlying IDEAS about groups of people or the world that justify and perpetuate oppression.

■ INSTITUTIONAL OPPRESSION

- Oppression that occurs and is carried out in public institutions such as governments, corporations or universities.

■ INTERPERSONAL OPPRESSION

- Oppression that is directly recognizable through our interaction with others.

■ INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

- When the ideas used to oppress a group are believed by that group or other similarly oppressed groups; "agreeing" with your own oppression or the oppression of others with whom you have much in common

Have students offer examples of each of these that they have seen or experienced

○ **Human Sculpture**

- Ask for a group of 5-6 volunteers and have someone volunteer as sculptor to sculpt an image that represents a oppression

- Ask the audience what they see and have them guess what type of oppression it is

■ Give the group a moment to think and then prompt the audience to clap ten times to so that the group can transform the image to create the future (What will happen if this doesn't change)

■ Return to original sculpture. Give the group a moment to think and then prompt the group to transform the image to the ideal

Ask audience, how can we get from the first image of oppression to the ideal image in real life?

■

★ **Standing up Against Stereotypes and Reclaiming Our Culture**

  ○ **Workshop Summary:**

    ■ Students will have opportunities to learn about different cultures.

  ○ **Welcome/Introductions**

    ■ Explain history of Theater of the Oppressed

      ● Why we use it and how it's going to be implemented in our workshop.

  ○ **Check-in**

    ■ What is your name and grade?

    ■ Express how you feel by creating an image. Everybody will mirror person who shares their gesture and say their name at the same time.

      * The point of this is help remember names, help people get moving and acknowledging everyone's presence in the space

  ○ **Ice-Breaker**

    ■ Sound Ball:

      ● We're going to do an icebreaker called sound ball. We'll pretend we have an energy ball. You pass it somebody as you make the sound, to catch it, they have to repeat the sounds. Then they throw a new sound to somebody else.

      * This activity group helps the group wake-up, pay attention and start making eye contact with each other so we can build connections.

  ○ **Activity**

    ■ Everyone breaks off into groups depending on their race or cultural identity (Asian/Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, Latinx, White, African/American, Mixed race).

    ■ Starting at their own poster, each group will have 2 minutes to write inside their bodies what characteristics are fundamental their racial/cultural identity.

    ■ Now take 5 minutes to visit every other poster and write what stereotypes are typically associated with each racial/cultural group. When you're finished, return to your own poster.

- ■ Each group will get 5 minutes, to create a short skit that shows how people stereotype them and how they might respond. After each performance, have the group read the stereotypes and their truths on their poster out loud.

- ○ **Reflection**

  - ■ How did it feel to read or write the stereotypes at each poster?

  - ■ What is something you learned from this activity?

  - ■ Do you have a better understanding about stereotypes and how?

  - ■ What are some things we can do to challenge or resist stereotypes?

- ○ **Closing**

  - ■ Unity Clap

  The Unity Clap derives from the United Farmworkers movement. When farmers went on strike for their unfair wages and conditions, they had to be in solidarity despite their language barriers. There were a multitude of cultural groups on the farms but to finish in solidarity, they would close with the unity clap. One person will start with a slow clap while everyone joins in and we clap faster and faster then break into cheer and celebration before the leader says "Isang Bagsak" which is a tagalog phrase for either One Down or One fall, to represent that we got through one more day together.

- ★ **Acting in the Face of Oppression**

  - ○ Workshop Summary:

    - ■ Students will begin to explore 3 different types of oppression: racism, patriarchy and capitalism.

  - ○ **Check-in:**

    - ■ Rose Bud and Thorn

  - ○ **Energizer:** Question Game

    - ■ Get in a circle ask question but can't ask the same question twice and you can't answer the question

  - ○ **Introduction to learning goals**

    - ■ Students will be able to identify at least one type of oppression: racism, patriarchy or capitalism).

      - ● Relate to Liberation Arts

  - ○ **Theater Game 1**

- ■ I am a Tree

  - ● Have students begin exploring image theater

  - ● Students create an image with three people

  - ● One at a time, each person will add onto the image something that is in relation to what is already there

- ○ **Word Clouds**

  - ● Split students into three groups

  - ● Assign each group the words Money, Race or Men

  - ● Have each group share their word clouds?

  - ● Offer definitions of each

- ○ **Theater Game 2** -

  - ■ Add on Image

    - ● 3 teams: Patriarchy, Capitalism, Racism

    - ● Each image will show the relationship between Money/power, Men/power and race/power

- ○ **Reflection**

  - ■ What is something new that you thought about or learned today?

  - ■ What was most or least surprising to you today when talking about these types of oppression?

  - ■ What are ways that we can challenge each type of oppression?

- ○ **Closing**

  - ■ It is our duty to fight for our freedom it is our duty to win. We must love and protect and each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains. And thumb circle.

    - ● Circle up and put out your right thumb and hold the thumb of the person next to you

    - ● Repeat three times getting louder each time

    - ● Mix the circle and on the count of three, let go of the person next to you

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