



EXHIBITS THAT TEACH—ARTISTS/SCHOLARS-IN-RESIDENCE YOUTH ART PROGRAMS THAT BUILD ART SKILLS AND CREATE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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The purpose of this study was to determine how Salt Lake City, Utah East High School students enrolled in “Justice-Memory-Activism Residency”-Artist-in-Residence increased their level of critical consciousness. In addition, the study explored how, as a result of student’s participation in the program, the program benefits their personal, social, and future aspirations. This program is in the curriculum offered by the Center for Documentary Expression and Art (CDEA).

Youth often have little or no connection with their communities [5] A world beyond their immediate school life, home life, or street life is unimaginable or irrelevant to many of them. They lack social awareness of contemporary protest movements. Teens feel as though they have limited opportunities to prove to society that they can make positive and meaningful contributions to their communities [5]. Although this study was limited in scope, one city/county, and small sample size, the findings are significant to educators, policymakers, youth service workers, and psychologists because they reinforce prior research findings about social justice art education benefitting youth’s personal and social development and future aspirations. Responses show students social critical consciousness increased as a result of participating in the Residency. Results indicate their widened lens to the more complex world, resulted in students becoming more willing to communicate openly with peers, being open to different perspectives, and having more compassion towards others that positively impacted their relational welfare. Students recognized their potential to take a more active role for social change in their communities by imagining the way they want the world to be. We argue that social justice art education programs provide youth a space for critical thinking and self-reflection and create new avenues for social activism through artmaking.

Key Terms/Concepts

“Justice-Memory-Activism” is a two-part, eight-week residency at East High school from January 2016-March 2016. Artist-in-Residence are chosen are skilled professional artists who are committed to working with young people to help them understand how to utilize the creation of art in the aims of social justice

Social Justice art education is the work behind the intersection of art, education, and social justice [2], and shares a commitment to create art that drives attention to mobilize action towards social justice or attempts to intervene in systems of inequality or injustice.

[2] Dewhurst, M. (2010). An inevitable question: Exploring the defining features of social justice art education. *Art Education*, 63(5).

[5] Prettyman, S. S., & Gargarella, E. (2013). The power of art to develop artists and activists. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 14(2).



Critical consciousness focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world. It includes exposure to socio-political contradictions. It also includes being aware of where one holds privilege and taking action against the oppressive forces in one's life that are illuminated by that understanding.

Methodology

There were 31 East High school students, grades 9-12, recruited by enrollment in the "Justice-Memory-Activism" 8-week Residency Program. A descriptive, mixed methods, cross-sectional study was conducted through the administration of survey student evaluation to 31 students currently enrolled in the "Justice-Memory-Activism" 8-week Residency program. In addition to the student program evaluations, this researcher used a social justice framework and critical pedagogy when collecting participant observation data, analyzing student work, facilitating group discussions, and analyzing journal prompt responses. As a result of a thematic approach in coding qualitative data and member checking, as well as monitoring through self-reflection, the pedagogical activities of connecting, questioning, and translating led to the following themes: confidence, openness, collaboration, empowerment, critical consciousness, empathy, taking active roles in community.

Quotes and images are provided as exemplars of the overarching themes in data.

"As a result of this residency I am more passionate about social justice now and am wanting to become more active in trying to make the changes that I want to see happen. I have learned to be more open minded about other people opinions on social justice topics. Everyone's opinion is not going to be the same as mine. I plan to be more active in trying to make a positive change in the community" – Residency Student, age: 16

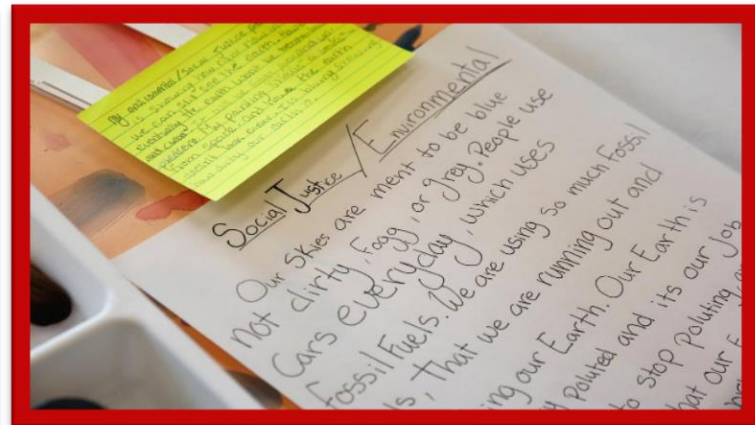


Photo Credit: Kent Miles

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