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# Artistically Serving:

## An Introduction to Arts-Based Service Learning

By Min Cho, Ph.D.

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*The concepts of service learning and, more specifically, arts-based service learning, have evolved over the last 25 years. Art teachers who have extended their classrooms into the community—whether to another school campus or the community-at-large—have already begun to integrate elements of service learning into their pedagogy. So what is service learning, what is the rationale behind combining service learning with arts education, and finally, how do you do it? To answer the first question, let us turn to a brief history of this pedagogy.*

### A Brief History of Service Learning

Although the term “service learning” was first coined in 1967 (Sigmond, 1990; SREB, 1973), it has roots in prior national service movements such as land-grant colleges and universities, settlement house education, and Progressive Initiatives (Stanton et al., 1999). Some service-learning researchers, however, would state that the notion of national service actively emerged during the New Deal Era under President Franklin D. Roosevelt through the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps. In 1961, John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps. His successor, Lyndon Johnson, expanded Kennedy’s notion of the Peace Corps by creating Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), a domestic Peace Corps designed to place volunteers in community organizations to become catalysts for community change (APCO Associates, 1999). In 1990, President George H. W. Bush created the Office of National Service in the White House and the Points of Light Foundation to foster volunteering. That same year, Congress passed and President Bush signed into law the National Community Service Act authorizing grants to schools to support service-learning (Learningindeed, 2001).

### Service-Learning: Definition

Kendall’s (1990) literature review unearthed 147 different terms and definitions relating to service learning. For our purposes, service learning is defined as the integration of community service into the academic curriculum and includes five elements: preparation, action, reflection, demonstration, and recognition. The service must meet a genuine community need (a

community may be within a school), and the activities are directly related to curricular learning goals. It is the combination of experiential, hands-on learning and the personal satisfaction students gain from helping others that makes service learning such an effective teaching and learning tool (Florida Learn & Serve, 2006).

Most of Kendall’s findings place great emphasis on the preparation and reflection stages. In preparation, students are given an outline and an overview of their project. They are informed of what they will be doing and why they are doing it. In high-quality service learning, where students are active project creators and coordinators, preparation is inherent in project design. Once the overall goal is realized, students take ownership of the project by helping to determine how they can best prepare in its execution.

In the reflective component, students utilize higher-order critical thinking skills to create understanding of the combination of formal learning with the service experience (Kraft, 1996). Reflection, then, is an internalization of students’ thoughts and actions brought forth through structured journal writing, meaningful class discussions, and creative artistic venues. Reflection is the key component that distinguishes service learning from community service. Without cognitive deliberation on the purpose of the service, the service then becomes just an action performed for the benefit of the community. However, in service learning, both the students and the community benefit from each other in a reciprocal relationship.

Since Kendall’s findings (1990), practice has shown that adding demonstration enriches both action and reflection. Demonstration provides a forum and opportunity for students to show what they have learned (and for teachers to assess that learning) through teaching others. This teaching can be in the form of lessons, presentations, performance, art, advocacy, or other methods, and the teaching also multiplies the service learning that students do. Effective projects use recognition to bring together project stakeholders and value the positive contributions students have made. Such recognitions typically include reflection and demonstration activities.

### The Rationale for Service Learning

Why do we engage in service-learning practice? For the past two decades, many educators have embraced this pedagogy as research has shown that it has positive

academic, behavioral, and affective outcomes (Follman, 1998; Weiler et al., 1998). Well-coordinated service-learning projects enable students to make a personal connection with the community, one that is facilitated by the aid of the teacher, another student, or a community member. The service, as well as the academic instruction, must provide some meaning for the student in order for the student to retain, advocate, or even disagree with the meaning. Regardless, learning is involved; learning that conveys meaning.

What about the arts? Why should we include arts education in our curriculum? It has been argued that many facets of the arts should be thought of as meritorious activities that help to preserve cultural significance and authenticity. With this ideal, the arts then ought to be considered as a public good, non-excludable, and non-rival in consumption. We are teaching, then, something that is generally desired and supported by the public for the well being of society.

The arts are also inherent in what it means to be human, as our existence is predicated upon the ability to comprehend, communicate, and create meaning. These qualities are part of what differentiates us from other species. Our attempts to establish this meaning have led us to create symbolic relationships that help us understand different constructs. The arts are fundamental in aiding the creation of this meaning, as they allow us to communicate with and understand each other through creative processes and ensuing conversations about them.

Within the context of education, both service learning and arts education contribute to youth and community development in unique ways. Service learning fosters principles, moral values, and individual standards by providing opportunities for students to make community contributions. Arts education cultivates creativity, helping students contribute to a healthy and vibrant community in which they are producers as well as consumer of the arts.

Service learning and the arts share an approach to education that promotes authentic, active, community-connected learning. Both provide opportunities to focus on competencies, such as teamwork and problem-solving skills, and both share core values:

- Students learn through relationships with peers, teachers, and a community of adults who use knowledge in realms beyond schools.
- Students learn when they are engaged, and engagement is most likely when students see a personal and social value to what they are learning.

- Students learn through active, in-depth investigation and exploration.
- Students engage in critical problem solving and critical thinking.
- Most importantly, students learn through opportunities to address and reflect on authentic problems (Jobs for the Future, 1999).

## Arts-Based Service-Learning Design

How do you create an arts-based service-learning project? To provide a prescriptive curriculum would result in a non-creative and inappropriate format, since each school, teacher, and classroom is unique and multifaceted. Each has its own needs and resources. Examples, though, are provided in Section 2 of this handbook.

Taylor and Ballengee-Morris (2004), however, provides guidance by outlining five criteria characterizing service learning.

1. *Planning: The service aspect of authentic service-learning is based upon a communally recognized need. Goals and curricula must be designed collaboratively.*
2. *Co-learning: Service-learning is reciprocal in nature. Service-learning students and the community learn with and from each other. Therefore, program- and community-specific training opportunities should be available and class or course-specific objectives must drive the experience.*
3. *Reflection: Continual, meaningful, and reflective exchange between all parties involved in the service-learning project is important for mutual respect of everyone's values, needs, and expectations.*
4. *Trust: Committed involvement that is both dependable and recognizes when to "let go" is essential to successful meaningful service-learning programs.*
5. *Hope: Service-learning experiences should be based and facilitated upon the idea that individual civic responsibility does and can make a difference in people's lives (p. 11-12).*

## Conclusion

The inclusion of service learning in the arts curriculum is on a rise. Though no national data exist as to the cumulative number of these projects in existence, the following statistics can be shared. In Florida, the percentage of arts-based service learning projects (based on the total number of Florida Learn & Serve projects awarded) rose from 2% in 2000 to 24% in 2005. A review of the National Art Education Association's

(NAEA) past 8 years of conference presentations reveals 23 sessions focused on service learning, with only 2 relating directly to K-12 art education. From 1998 to 2002, the majority of the presentations at the NAEA conference focused on pre-service teacher education, but within the past three years, the presentations concentrated on research and project descriptions. This provides good indication that the integration of service learning into arts education is slowly gaining attention by researchers and practitioners nationwide.

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## About the Author

Min Cho is the Associate Director for Florida Learn & Serve. Having been part of national service programs for over ten years, Min currently promotes service learning through research and evaluation, training and technical assistance, conference planning, and special projects. Min has created, designed, and coordinated arts-based service-learning conferences since 2002. She received her doctorate from Florida State University where she focused on evaluation of arts-based service-learning programs.

# Impacting Lives through *Art*

By Janis Klein-Young

*The students I teach are particularly challenging to the traditional educational structure. These students, who have serious truancy and behavior problems, present a considerable dilemma for our school system because their oppositional behavior defies standard educational practices. I have spent a majority of my teaching career searching for the secret of positively engaging and influencing this group of youngsters through art so they can uncover their true potential. I believe that exposure to art, with its inherent life-affirming attributes, will naturally improve the quality of their lives. Yet, by allowing the limitations of school district-mandated guidelines to dictate my curriculum, for many years, I never fully communicated the power of art. I needed to shift my teaching approach in search of relevancy for my special population. I decided to transcend the barrier of educational isolation through experiential teaching to stimulate a productive interaction between my students and the art community. I began to restructure my teaching methodology using service learning.*

## **Pupil's Perceptions**

My project revolves around a not-for-profit cultural arts facility known as ArtSouth, located in a barren downtown community in the southernmost County of Florida, Miami-Dade. ArtSouth occupies an historic Baptist Church building on a 3.5-acre site that was restored to house over 40 art studios, galleries, a sanctuary acting as a performing arts space, a bronze foundry, ceramic facility and a sculpture garden. ArtSouth's mission is to "provide permanent, affordable living, working, teaching, learning, exhibiting and sales space to emerging and established artists in a location that will benefit from their presence." This innovative artist community helps to restore the rich but disintegrated culture of its struggling multi-ethnic neighborhood.

The students enrolled in my service-learning art program are a select group of teens who have serious truancy and behavior concerns in school. For that reason, I have implemented this project to stimulate their desire to attend school and modify poor decision-making skills. My ultimate goals are to increase their attendance and raise scores so they can meet graduation requirements and evolve into productive citizens.

Each Thursday, I transport this targeted student group off-campus to work in their rented ArtSouth artist studio. During their day at ArtSouth, they take classes with various professional artists representing four different countries to learn the customary art traditions of each country. While there, these students remain totally spellbound by their classes. In fact, guests who tour the facility during our Thursday sessions are amazed to hear about the histories of these students. It is phenomenal to witness their stability and productivity when occupied with a meaningful service-learning curriculum.

At the beginning of each week, I am pursued by students asking "Are we going to ArtSouth on Thursday?" It is evident that this program gives them something to look forward to. It gives them a motive to be in school. I often hear from students, "If it weren't for this program, I would drop out of school." In fact, dropout amongst our program participants is non-existent. Some students do improve their standing suitably enough to meet criteria to return to their school of origin, but I have never had a participant drop out of school.

The art training that each student receives is concurrently translated into a service-learning art project. The students create and frame their artwork for surrounding neighborhood businesses, presentations at civic functions, and exhibitions at various galleries. The proceeds from any sold artwork goes back into the program to replenish art supplies.

In addition to community revitalization, the students have established a campus-based service-learning schedule that occupies much of their week. During school hours on Monday, they assist the art teacher at a center for severely handicapped children. On Tuesday and Wednesday, they teach pottery to senior citizens at an adult day-care center. On Thursday, while at ArtSouth, the students plan and conduct art classes for severely physically handicapped children in their studio. Students also volunteer after school to maintain the ArtSouth sculpture garden and assist with their government-subsidized aftercare art program. On each second Saturday of the month, the students act as liaisons for their school program by meeting and greeting visitors at monthly evening events at ArtSouth. During these Saturdays, art patrons fill our studio to hear students tell their life stories and view their magnificent creations.

These teenagers have made serious mistakes throughout their young lives by engaging in drug selling/abuse,





*High school students from Miami work on a Halloween mask project with young children at the Family And Children's Development Center.*

fighting, assault, theft, truancy and possession of weapons. I recall one particular student who was sent to our school on a weapons charge. Unbeknownst to others, this student was artistically gifted. Participation in our program allowed him to express his creativity, stay out of trouble, and funnel his energies into artistic creations. He eventually won the National Congressional Art Award and as a result, his artwork now hangs in the nation's Capitol. His mother broke down in tears when she walked into our art studio and witnessed the talent of a son who "gave her so much grief." We sent the teen and his mother to Washington for the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Capitol, and this student eventually returned to his school of origin, vowing to remain lawful.

Through our Senior Citizen outreach programs, we have sought to transform hostile intergenerational encounters into gentle co-existing companionship. Our weekly senior citizen ceramic program at a local Jewish Center for retired citizens evolved into an inter-religious supplementary clay activity. Even though the Jewish religion is completely foreign to my students, they collaborated on clay "matzo ball soup bowls" to celebrate a Passover Seder with our senior partners. The students had their first opportunity to experience a Seder and eat matzo ball soup in ceramic glazed bowls that were created with their senior partner. The event was so poignant that I had a difficult time maintaining my composure. To experience the widely divergent spiritual assembly of a group of juveniles bonding with frail senior citizens is truly overwhelming.

After a few months, I began to notice how service learning changed the traditional teacher/student role that had been a part of my 30 years of teaching at this school. The students and I recently toured an art gallery exhibit with Cuban artist Ruben Torres Llorca. They walked me around the gallery, interpreting the meaning of the artwork since all titles were in Spanish, a language unfamiliar to

me. The next day I had the opportunity to personally meet Llorca and described my service-learning art program to him. I told him, "As we walked around your exhibit, I noticed that our roles had turned. They felt empowered enough to lead me through the exhibit. Kids, who never felt this much confidence, had the opportunity to uncover and demonstrate an untapped ability. The powerless became the powerful." I had now become a guide and a facilitator. My students did not need to be taught, simply led and focused.

Most of these students have no experience in art, but soar with creativity when given the opportunity. The validation of my students eventually became intertwined with numerous arts-related service-learning projects with senior citizens, handicapped youth, and community revitalization projects. It was evident that linking my art curriculum to service learning would be the empowerment tool I sought throughout my teaching career. The same school system that excluded these uneducable students now considers them as innovators. Service learning through the arts has become the tool to counteract the years of negative messages and prove their brilliance and self-worth.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Janis Klein-Young has been a Visual Arts educator for 31 years in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. She has taught art at the alternative school, Miami Douglas MacArthur Senior High-South, for her entire career. In 2001, Janis was selected as the District's Visual Arts Educator of the Year and in 2002 she earned the title of Miami-Dade County Teacher of the Year. Janis has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Art Education and a Master of Science Degree in Exceptional Childhood Education. She is also a National Board-Certified Visual Arts Instructor.*

# Enhancing Life through Learning:

## An Examination of My Service Learning Practice in Art Education

Flávia M. C. Bastos, Ph.D.

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*I embrace the assumption that learning and life are connected. My years of elementary school teaching and my practice in higher education seek to expand academic study through real-life experience. Education should be a transformative process that is intrinsically connected to life. Art, in particular, offers meaningful avenues to accomplish this goal. Credited as one of the progenitors of what became service learning, John Dewey (1934) articulated a philosophy of art that focuses on connections to everyday life, and a view of education that was based on direct experience. My practice as an art educator is indebted to Dewey's ideas, especially the conviction that art teaching and learning are at their best when grounded on the everyday. My fellow Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (1987), promoted an understanding of education as a political process that can affect social change and that participants bring different experiences and knowledge to the learning encounter. My Brazilian American service-learning practice is shaped by Freire and Dewey. In this section, I will illustrate how I integrate my philosophies and practice in the service-learning course, Community-Based Environmental Art, which I teach every spring quarter at the University of Cincinnati.*

### Course Overview

The Community-Based Environmental Art course leads university art students and inner-city youth through the creation and execution of community-based works of art. We interact with the community of Over-the-Rhine, which is adjacent to the university campus. Over-the-Rhine is an underprivileged, primarily African American neighborhood that faces similar challenges to those of other inner-city communities nationwide, including unemployment, crime and drug abuse, poor relations with the police, and poor quality housing.

I teach the course using an art-based version of the increasingly popular *service-learning* pedagogy. Jacoby (1996) defined service learning as: "A form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning" (p. 5).

The course is part of the academic curriculum for the university students. Although the course has a community service component, this component is central to the course's scholarly pursuit; it is not just an "add-on" or an "on-your-own" requirement to pass the course. In addition, as the course instructor, I not only offer support, but also participate in the planning and implementation of the projects and all related activities.

Our work seeks to respond to a particular need in a particular community in urban Cincinnati: Over-the-Rhine. Our goal is to carefully consult with the community, represented by the youth participating in the course and other community members, to create artwork that reflects and gives voice to community issues and concerns. The community, working with the university, identifies the need. Thus the community is not used for academic ends. But neither are my students and I expected to simply do the community's bidding. A partnership of reciprocity is established, with an agreed-upon balance of benefits and responsibilities for both partners. Each partner is understood to have expertise.

The general goal is to teach not only ways to give aesthetic expression to ideas and feelings in general and individually, but also ways to extend beyond the expression of one's own experience to the experience of others. I hope that learning to express others' experiences can contribute to learning to express one's own experiences, perhaps more effectively than concentrated work on individual expression alone. Getting "in touch" with others can facilitate getting "in touch" with oneself. In a democratic society, development of personal responsibility goes hand in hand with development of civic responsibility. Accordingly, I expect that this course will result in *enhancement of civic responsibility* for both the university students and the youths.

### Course Activities

In the spring of 2004, the ten 12-16-year-old youth participating in this program were associated with Impact Over-the-Rhine, a community organization that offered employment opportunities for local youngsters. During the spring, their jobs involved participating in my course and all its related activities. We met most times at the Impact's building and some times at the university. As part of the course's structure, I created working partnerships between a university student and a youth. This partnership was maintained throughout the course and



weeks of the academic term, our activities involved getting to know one another, exploring the community, visiting the previously developed art projects in the community, and engaging in conversations about possible community art projects to be developed as part of the course. The group reached consensus about creating art on the side of Impact Over-the-Rhine's building.

As university participants, we offered theoretical understandings and technical skills. The community participants contributed their in-depth knowledge from having lived with a set of circumstances for an extended period of time. Thus, we created a space of collaboration in which community and university were each "serving" and "being served" while benefiting and learning from the other.

Each team of university students and community youth worked on preliminary ideas, considering their creative vision and intentions and including feedback from various community members such as parents, local residents, and business owners and employees. The finalized ideas were presented in class, and the strongest and most viable proposal was selected—a mural depicting sunflowers. The mural was based on a drawing of a large sun with a friendly face by Kevin, a ninth grader. His idea was to create a bold image on the

building wall that drew people's attention. Kevin wanted to express to the community that Impact provided a safe haven for community youth, a "sunny" spot. The proposed idea evolved into a sunflower design because, at the same time that we were planning the mural, another group associated with Impact was planting a sunflower garden on the area contiguous to the building. The sunflowers became an icon of hope not only because they grew tall, adding color to an urban environment, but also because they recycled lead-contaminated soils, such as Over-the-Rhine's. The mural depicted a row of tall sunflowers and worked in conjunction with the sunflower garden, extending its effect all year round.

The sunflower mural was embraced by all course participants as a strong idea that clearly communicated Impact's mission to the local community. More importantly, the mural voiced the youths' hopes and desire for a better life. We decided to add words on top of the sunflowers that expressed the youths' goals and values. The selected words were success, respect, achievement, loyalty, leadership, and friendship.

Executing the mural involved important technical and materials concerns and all of us participated in addressing them. Paint was donated from a local community



(top) Mural site being prepped; (left) Painting with stencils; (right) Youth working on the mural.





*The completed mural.*

business. University students contributed their own brushes and step ladders. Because many of the youth had limited experience with painting, we used stencils to render the design and assure visual uniformity. Two university students coordinated the project, Ross Schlemmer and Bryan Shoff, because of their respective expertise in graphic design and set and decorative painting. In effect, all participants collaborated in creating and executing the project.

The mural's execution was enveloping and extended much beyond the course's assigned meeting times. In several occasions outside class, including weekends, groups of university students and youth worked on the mural. When I was present, I often received positive comments from community members and witnessed their positive reactions to our work. I also witnessed the relationship between university students and youth develop. They reported doing things together outside class, going to get a bite to eat after work was completed, and participating in important events such as graduations, parties, and ceremonies.

My observations revealed that in the addition to the art being created there were other, intangible but equally important, outcomes resulting from this experience. These included creating a space for interaction that was intergenerational, and crossed the many socioeconomic and racial borders that are customary to us. Through this service-learning course, a group of primarily African-American youth and white university students investigated the experiences of Over-the-Rhine residents, and created

artwork that had local significance. Both groups engaged in experiences that resulted in the development of new understandings and skills. This new knowledge replaced each group's preconceived notions with a significant life experience. It is my hope that this kind of learning has the potential to engender new relationships between individuals that are more equitable and respectful. My experience teaching this service-learning course for five years suggests that community art, as both, process and product, can create these spaces of communication and understanding.

### **Reflection**

Reflection was an essential dimension of the process for all participants, including myself as the instructor. For university students, this occurred through structured time. Journal entries for each class were designed to *reflect* on the service activity in light of theory studied and to reflect on theory in light of the service activity. Class discussions created a forum to share individual insights. From these reflective experiences, each student gained a further understanding of course goals and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

For the youth, reflection was encapsulated in their regular art journal entries involving writing and drawings, in their artistic rendering of ideas for the art project, and their conversations with university mentors. Reflection had a two-fold purpose; it enabled us to step outside our lived experience to better understand it, and it provided a systematic way to assess and direct the process of

creating our community-based work of art.

The meaning of the artwork was clarified and shared among all participants through the reflection piece as well. For example, teams of youth and university students summarized the meaning of our mural as “We can turn lead into gold. We can turn darkness into light. These sunflowers will take the lead from the soil and leave a garden filled with gold.”

The completed mural was a tenable outcome of this service-learning course. However, our journey in getting there was also very important. I believe that, in successful art-based service-learning projects, process and product are intertwined. A strong connection between product and process is characteristic of much of contemporary art, and especially evident in works that have a political agenda. During the last decades, art educators have promoted the implementation of educational programs and initiatives committed to social issues and local communities (Taylor, 2002). It is evident to me that art-based service-learning is a meaningful pedagogy with the potential to affect change in participants’ lives. As the newspaper coverage of our mural stated, by gaining real-world professional, social, and artistic skills, and developing reciprocal positive relationships, university art students and local youth are “using art to change some of the images in that community” (“UC Artists,” 2004). I hope that the meaning of these changes resonates with many educators committed to making a difference in their students’ lives.

#### Author’s Notes

- 1) This article includes references to the syllabus for the course Community-based Environmental Art, initially developed by Dr. Robert Russell.
- 2) Two students in the course were instrumental in the realization of the project here described—Ross Schelemmer and Bryan Shoff.
- 3) Photos by Ross Shumer.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Professor Flavia Bastos teaches art education courses and supervises student teachers. She is championing a linkage agreement between University of Cincinnati and University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, an initiative sponsored by a Faculty Development Council grant. Recently, she has lectured at University of Sao Paulo, and at the Lutheran University of Rio Grande do Sul, both in her home country, Brazil. Upon the invitation of the Wexner Center for the Arts, she developed a teachers’ workshop based on the work of Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica.*

*Professor Bastos’ art education practice and research are focused on the community. As such, she collaborates with Art in the Market, a local project targeting Cincinnati’s at-risk youth, which prepares School of Art students to work with local youth in public art projects around Findlay market. She also collaborates in an action-research project involving refugee women in Louisville, Kentucky, and has developed connections with local artists through her teaching and research on community-based art.*

# Connecting Service to Learning

## A Community Arts Context in Higher Education

Sonja BasSheva Mañjon, Ph.D.

*My formal introduction to service learning as pedagogy began in 2001 at the 4th Annual Campus Compact Continuums of Service Conference in Berkeley, California. I was recruited to co-facilitate the opening and closing sessions. I was new to the Center for Art & Public Life, which had just begun operations in September 2000. In my capacity as Associate Director, I knew what we were doing was called “service learning,” but I didn’t connect the pedagogy of service learning with the practice of community engagement. My work as an artist and arts administrator had always been grounded in community service through the arts, but I never used a name to identify my practice. Completing my doctoral work in human behavior and learning, teaching in the arts and humanities with a social justice focus, and coming to the California College of the Arts (CCA) to help launch a community focused center all connected what I did in the arts as an artist and arts administrator with what I would do as an academician.*

*Service learning defined within the higher education structure is action in and with the community that is connected to in-class reflection from historical, theoretical and individual perspectives. When you combine these perspectives with the idea of art that is made with and in the community, you have the community art structure from which I operate at CCA. What became clear to me is that service learning is not volunteer service or missionary work, but at best, it provides opportunities for students to engage in community service that is based in community development and social change.*

### Brief History of the Center

CCA launched its service learning through the arts program, The Center for Art and Public Life, in September 2000. The Center’s mission is to create community partnerships, based on creative practice, that serve the California College of the Arts and the diverse populations of Oakland and San Francisco. This mission is fulfilled by working in partnerships to help meet pressing needs of the community by providing creative materials, labor, imagination, inspiration, and educational resources. The Center embodies a new model for integrating reciprocal, community-based learning or service learning, into formal education for artists, architects, and designers nationwide. Our commitment

has been to: 1) improve education at all levels—kindergarten to college; 2) engage the creative process in teacher training and curriculum development; 3) motivate and stimulate young minds to dream and create their own realities; 4) challenge CCA students and faculty to make a difference; and 5) empower and support community activism.

In the first year of operation, we developed projects in consultation with various deans and program chairs and featured members of the faculty and student body working in a variety of ways in curricular and extra-curricular activities. Using a two-year planning process, the goals of the first year were to demonstrate concrete activities in campus life and community learning experiences. We then initiated a faculty grant program that supported integration of service-learning pedagogy in the arts, workshop/syllabus consultations for class development, and short-term faculty driven projects. We introduced entry-level service-learning experiences in basic drawing and English, and intermediate-level intensive service experiences in program-based classes, particularly diversity studies studio classes, and other classes through faculty grants. The overall focus of campus life was toward integrating service learning into non-academic and cross-academic aspects of the college.

Simultaneously, we wanted to establish long-term community learning partnerships in arts education, which included expanding arts education opportunities at secondary schools, launching a literacy and art program, and implementing a summer partnership program. We also began a lecture series and a health and human services program. Projects with all of our community partners incorporated a service-learning pedagogy for both CCA students and secondary school students.

By 2003, the Center had served over 2,475 children and youth. Over 600 CCA students and 70 faculty members had worked with 63 public school teachers at 10 schools and with service providers at 30 community organizations to create an extraordinary range of projects. Beginning a three-year partnership with Harvard University Graduate School of Education—Project Zero—we focused on developing teaching models that incorporate and integrate national teaching standards and arts education. We replicated this model for other teachers during the first annual Summer Teaching Institute at CCA. The Center also launched a pre-teaching credential program that trains students interested in teaching at the secondary level while providing semester- and yearlong internships at partner sites.

Curricular offerings began to complement and enhance the extra-curricular activities of the Center, but there was



still a missing component needed to connect the various classes that were incorporating service learning with off-campus student placement in extra-curricular activities. Ideas for a new major in Community Arts began to emerge to bring more focus and visibility to the work in the community and to explore ways in which the overall direction of the Center could better incorporate issues, philosophies and content of art, diversity, and service learning

### BFA in Community Arts

During the Fall 2005 semester, CCA launched a new undergraduate major in Community Arts through the Center for Art and Public Life. The major offers interdisciplinary approaches, which utilize service learning, civic engagement, and issues in diversity through community-based arts practice and theory. The curriculum focuses on the relationship of the arts to the community, and how social, economic, and political factors influence the development and implementation of arts programs and arts institutions. The intent of this BFA program is to greatly enhance and impact the work of the Center by professionalizing the field, creating critical pedagogy for community work through an art context, and directly correlating the work of the Center to theory, history and practice. Pilot curricula for this major included Alternative Spring Break and Mentorship classes where CCA students work collaboratively or as mentors with students in grades kindergarten through 12. These classes embody elements that are so co-curricular in nature that they can be located in both seminar humanities and science classes and in community arts and diversity studies studio classes. Both models incorporate an action/reflection/action model, specific to community engagement and service learning.

### Center Programs

I have witnessed an increased level of participation by CCA students in our Students in Action programs. Through Federal Work Study funds, students are paid a nominal sum and given the option to work off-campus in community-based non-profit organizations and in urban public schools as teaching artists and program coordinators. This program has grown from 20 to 50 students over the past 3 years, resulting



in a competitive application process and monthly colloquia that students must attend. The demographics of our student body population are opposite to that in most of the communities in which they are placed. This dynamic gives CCA students the ability to unpack and examine their own stereotypes, assumptions, and cultural biases through self-reflective process.

After being introduced to service learning and civic engagement through various mentorship, diversity studies, and community arts classes, students are eligible to apply for Center Student Grants. These grants, which range from \$2,000—\$8,000, enable CCA students to develop and implement their own work in the community. An example of such a project was *Lacing the Maps of the Body* in which graduate student, Ana Fernandez, worked with low-income students in Quito, Ecuador, to explore the connections between societies, human beings, and social movements. Ana reflects on her process: “by working with children I hope to gain better understanding of how other human beings place and imagine the ‘dreaming body,’ and how community, living in nature, and growing up in an underdeveloped country shapes those notions of body. I feel this will help me to broaden that imaginary since the exchange and rapport with children has that extraordinary quality to influence my perception of the world.”



As undergraduate CCA students, Unity Lewis, Bayete Ross-Smith, and David Battaglia collaborated with high school students at one of our partner sites to explore hip-hop as a cultural and artistic movement. It also included examinations of hip-hop social norms, values and ethics, politics, and history. The course, taught as an elective class, provided a forum for feedback and critique of students’ work, guidance in the students’ hip-hop art practice, and a place where discussions on issues pertinent to hip-hop culture could occur.

Cultural and artistic exchanges are valuable for CCA students and their partner sites because everyone gains access to and participates in cultural production. This type of college-community engagement sends a





message to the community that the college is part of that community and wants to engage in socially, culturally, and artistically relevant production.

### **Only the Beginning**

At CCA, the launching of a community arts major based in a service-learning pedagogy was a major step. Based on the success of our partnerships, many of our K-12 school partners are beginning to utilize service learning and community engagement as a new concept for engaging their students both in and outside of the classroom.

As the Center for Art and Public Life continues to focus on art in the public interest, our reach and visibility into the community continue to grow along with our academic focus on campus. By offering programs in which our students engage in community development and activism through an artistic context, we not only strengthen their capacity to become involved citizens, we unleash the power of art and creativity in local, national, and international environments.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*Dr. Mañjon is director of the Center for Art and Public Life, chairs Community Art major and Diversity Studies programs, and is vice chair of a campus diversity initiative at the California College of the Arts. Dr. Mañjon is also a faculty member of the Humanities and Science, Diversity Studies and Community Arts departments, and holds the endowed Simpson Professor of Community Arts position. Through her various roles, Dr. Mañjon emphasizes policies and programs that fuse art education and service learning. Recently, she developed the country's first Bachelor of Fine Arts Program in community arts, which stresses student civic engagement and diversity issues.*

# Developing Relationships:

## A Reflection on My Experience Learning with a Community

By Karen Hutzal, Ph.D.

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*With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun*  
(Freire, 2002, p. 55).

*My own experience as an art educator has been rooted in experiential learning through developing community relationships to instigate change. John Dewey's (1938) philosophy of experiential education, proposed many decades ago, still inspires my teaching. In this way, as an educator, I embrace the teacher as facilitator model (Elam & Duckenfield, 2000), in which I utilize the resources of the community to provide unique learning experiences for my students. My teaching approach is based on a service-learning framework that seeks to make connections that promote learning, understanding, and social change. As a teacher, I do not act as the single voice of authority (Hooks, 1994), but rather as the facilitator of knowledge that is shared and transmitted through action. Creating such a community learning experience requires the development of meaningful and trusting relationships. But, as Freire (2002) warns, relationships must be built to promote reciprocal learning and not in a patronizing manner of oppression. In this chapter, I will describe my experience in developing relationships in an urban community to create public, community artwork. I will describe the community of the West End in Cincinnati, Ohio, and my experience of working with the community to create change through curriculum.*

### The Community

The West End neighborhood of Cincinnati, Ohio, is a changing community. It is located adjacent to the downtown business district, experienced a 29% population loss from 1990 to 2000, and, simultaneously, is experiencing rapid growth in the form of a large housing development intended to create a mixed-income community. The population of the neighborhood in 2000 was about 8,300, of which 30% were children, and the majority African American. I was often perceived as an outsider as a white person living in the neighborhood from 2003 to 2004. The neighborhood had the highest murder rate in the City of Cincinnati in 2003. Additionally, a low home ownership rate and abundant social services depict

a typical low-income, inner-city community.

While census data reveal significant population loss, the figures fail to represent the realities of the community. Between the years of 1990 and 2000, when the population loss occurred, two large housing complexes were torn down to make room for the new mixed-income housing development. Residents were displaced and relocated to locations all over Cincinnati—locations foreign to them—while their former neighbors were lost to other parts of the city. Neighborhood ties were broken, and the turmoil of this loss continues to pit parts of the community against one another. Many felt as though change was happening *to* them, not *with* them. I learned all of this from my experience creating public, community art with youth and adults in the community.



*Kids and a resident of the neighborhood work together on the mural.*

### Developing Relationships

Implementing service-learning projects involves developing ideas and curricula and connecting students with community resources. In making these connections, the process of developing community relationships often becomes a forgotten—although key—component to successful reciprocal learning experiences. Freire (1993) described the importance of a committed involvement, especially in working with oppressed neighborhoods, which starts with the nature of the relationships among the participants.

As I made my home in the West End neighborhood, I became increasingly empowered to contribute to the development of this community. My previous experiences

working in and with similar neighborhoods to create public, community art provided me knowledge I wished to share with and utilize in the West End. I wanted to implement a community-based service-learning art curriculum with youth in the neighborhood in order to contribute to social change and provide the youth with a learning opportunity that would empower them to create change.

My past experiences reminded me that an oppressed community such as the West End is often fearful of outsiders' intentions. I realized, however, that as an outsider I had few relationships in the neighborhood from which to build this experience. But I did have one. Toilynn O'Neal was the curator of the African American Museum, a component of the Arts Consortium, an arts center dedicated to the advancement of African American arts and artists in Cincinnati. I had already worked with

Toilynn in the past, and when I contacted her she endorsed my efforts and connected me with others in the neighborhood. This project would have looked very different without Toilynn, as her acceptance of me was paramount to my goals of working *with* and not *for* the community, a concept Freire (1993) has advocated for in his own community work.

Because of Toilynn's connections, I was quickly working with several adults and a couple of teenagers at the Arts Consortium in planning a community project for their summer youth program. Together, we developed a community-based art curriculum to consider the assets of the community and respond through public, community art. I then presented this project to the West End Community Council, an important decision-making body of the West End. During my first presentation, I described the curriculum and goal of creating public art, like a mural, and read a reflection one of the teenagers had written about the neighborhood. I asked if anyone wished to participate or if anyone could provide donations of material, in an effort to elicit *their* committed involvement. My presentation resulted in the addition of youth participants from the Lincoln Community Center and my introduction to several adults interested in participating.

I presented to the West End Community Council a second time, this time sharing ideas the kids had generated through our curriculum process. After sharing the kids' ideas, one woman approached me and told me that black kids needed black teachers. I agreed, and we both said nothing more. Another told the group that they didn't need outsiders coming in to solve their problems. The debate became heated, and I was afraid I had misjudged my relationship with this community. The community council president calmed the group, and verbally sup-

ported the project in front of the group. I left the meeting feeling defeated and upset, hoping I was not contributing toward their oppression through my work. However, we decided to persevere with our community art project.

### Acting on my Words

Throughout the summer, our group of 20-30 kids ages 10-16, and 4 adults, all representing both the Arts Consortium and the Lincoln Community Center, met twice a week. We spent time walking around the neighborhood in small groups, drawing pictures about community, and discussing the West End. We looked at the neighborhood through an asset-based lens, in which instead of focusing on the problems or needs, we recognized the good things already in the neighborhood (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).



*Shanda's drawing about community.*

We learned about one another and about community from each other. I learned about Shanda, a sixteen-year-old who lived in the West End, when she described a drawing she created about community. Shanda said about her drawing, "I just want it to be like this . . . We a long way off. People need to care more about where they live and what they do." Her desperation for community change was not unusual in our group.

I told this group of children and adults as well as the community council that we would develop public, community art in the neighborhood. These were the words I had to act on in order to solidify the relationship I was still developing with the community and in order to show my committed involvement in the neighborhood. After six weeks learning about the community and discussing the West End, we developed a plan for a mural in a neighborhood playground. This playground was significant to the community because the site had become a place where drug dealing was common and a gang was associated. According to the community, this was not a playground where children were allowed to play, despite the lack of spaces to play in the neighborhood. This was a needed space for children, but had become inhabited by drugs and violence.

Our mural in this playground was a reminder to the community that children need to play, to dream, and to imagine. This was a way to take back the playground, as





(Left) Kids paint the base coat of the mural; (right) the completed mural.

Thomas, the youth supervisor and participant from the community center indicated:

*So the seed has been planted. That mural is a seed. When kids walked by there, their parents would probably say, "We are not going to that park." That is before that mural. Now they see that mural as a token for kids to now enter . . . So that mural has taken back the idea they were kids. It has probably done scared away some of the dope dealers, too. So it is a double-edged thing here. It is a sense of taking back without even saying a word.*

Thomas' words struck me, as he revealed a deeper component to our work I had not initially realized: the significance of kids making a statement. He reminded me of the important role kids can play in creating change in their neighborhood, and assured me their efforts were respected even by the drug dealers themselves.

## Social Change

It is through relationships—through social capital—that we can learn to affect change (Putnam, 2001). The development of relationships is tedious, often difficult, and takes thoughtful consideration as well as give and take. Service-learning relationships are no different.

My experience in the West End was a reminder of the difficult and precious nature of relationships. Although I received a negative reaction at one community council meeting, I decided to follow-through on my words to create public art with kids in the neighborhood. But I took this as a lesson, and was reminded by Paula, the education director with the Arts Consortium, that "this community has been, for lack of better words, pimped so much." Perhaps others had made false promises to this community in the past; perhaps others wanted to help this community but failed to learn from the community what they wanted. Paula indicated that sticking to our words and creating a tangible product that addressed needs the community defined showed them we were committed. In developing relationships with a community, defining the

community's needs should be the responsibility of the community. Responding to those needs should be a team process that utilizes the resources of both students and community partners. In this way, a reciprocal learning experience can occur and students can learn, themselves, experience can occur and students can learn, themselves, about developing relationships.

The playground mural signified our commitment to the community, a gift to last many years beyond our involvement in the neighborhood. This contributed to social change as we affected the physical make up of the neighborhood. However, the relationships we developed were also a part of the social change that took place. For instance, I have come to understand this community's apprehension toward outsiders while, perhaps, the community learned that outsiders can sometimes be trusted.

In this chapter, I proposed a key ingredient in service-learning as the development of relationships for social change. This is often the component most easily forgotten when we develop new service-learning projects. I must remind myself to invest the time to develop relationships each time I work with a new community. And as an educator, I must remember that the time it takes to create meaningful service-learning experiences for my students is time well spent as students learn new skills—civic, social and artistic—by working with communities.

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