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ARE6933

Week 5: Responding to Globalization

Summary

This week's readings contemplate how we, as art educators, address and respond to issues of globalization through our classroom practice. Each of the authors I read this week provides different discussions and approaches to issues of globalization, and their stories are quite personal. The authors address topics of visual culture, visual literacy, and the interconnectivity between teachers and students to promote social action in light of globalization (Bode, 2009).

Patty Bode presents a compelling story of her visit with the Secoya, an indigenous community in Ecuador, in her chapter, *The Circulatory System of Oil Contamination, Visual Culture, and Amazon Indigenous Life*. Through her writing, she provides insight into the atrocities, human suffering, and challenges the Secoya endure trying to maintain their cultural identity and heritage in the wake of big oil companies, Chevron and Texaco, wreaking havoc on the environment of one of the world's most bio-diverse rainforests. The intentions of her story are not to paint a grim and painful retelling of the situation the Secoyan people endure, but to identify how as educators, providing a, "critical study of visual culture can engage student action, develop critical thought and inspire cultural production" (p. 275-276). Bode's story is powerful in that she learned of the oil contamination issues in Ecuador through a student of hers, which eventually led to her traveling to Ecuador and experiencing the lifestyle, culture, and environmental impact first hand. Throughout her chapter, Bode places an emphasis on how as teachers we have a lot to learn from our students as well. She ends her chapter, asking, "How might art teachers inspire their students—and art students inspire their teachers—to view their global world as more interconnected and ultimately more changeable?" (p. 277).

Author Wanda B. Knight retells a personal experience in which she had a life changing conversation with Benjamin B. Fernencz, a leader and pioneer in global efforts to eradicate human oppression and the chief prosecutor for the United States in the Nuremberg Trials.

Although Knight paints a heroic image of the man in which she looks up to an aspires to be more like, her chapter, *Never Again: A (K)night with Ben*, is predominantly about ways in which art teachers can be, “agents of change for social justice” (p.69). Throughout her chapter, Knight presents an argument for ways that art teachers can address issues of ethnocentrism and nationalism as perpetuators for racism and social injustice. She suggests that using visual culture propaganda, art teachers can illuminate ways in which, “cultural and racial stereotypes stem from ethnocentrism” (p.72). Knight is determined to work towards fulfilling Benjamin B. Fernencz’s promise of *Never Again*; a promise to stop and prevent genocide and crimes against humanity. Knight encourages us as art educators of ways that we can address such sensitive topics and issues with our students, through the analyzing of visual culture so that, “Never again should our actions foster racist policies of exclusion, dehumanization, and violence. And more importantly, never again should differences of race, religion, or ideology be permissible justification to massacre ‘the other’,” (p.75).

On a more scholarly level, author Ching-Chiu Lin observes the classroom practices of three master level art educators and their dissemination of visual literacy throughout their curriculum. Lin observes first hand, the disconnect that happens between art teachers and art education theorists. Lin was surprised that such accomplished teachers didn’t directly teach or acknowledge the educational focus of visual literacy, although it was evident that the lessons and learning process of visual literacy were occurring and developing amongst the students. Lin attributes this to teachers having a holistic learning approach and that these teachers, “embrace a situational, inquiry-oriented, and holistic approach rather than a predetermined visual literacy agenda with particular skill sets and guidelines that must be followed, delivered, and evaluated” (p.200). Her chapter suggests that learning in the art classroom cannot always be compartmentalized as individual skill sets and that many exceptional teachers believe in, “the embeddedness of learning in lived experience rather than segregated skill sets, their resistance to mythologizing language of top down educational reform initiatives, and a sense of trust in their own moral landscapes as a guide for curricular and instructional decisions (Delacruz, 2004),” (p.202). Lin’s chapter advocates the importance of teaching our students to be visually literate, especially in the current age of global electronic media in order to empower our students and provide them with the ability to, “encode and decode the meaning of visual images and experiences,” (p.203). How we teach and disseminate the knowledge to our students is based on

our personal teaching styles, just as long as we acknowledge the importance of visual literacy as a core to our curricular objectives.

Definition of Terms and Key Ideas

Visual Literacy: Visual literacy refers to, “student comprehension of works of art and other visual forms of expression and related cultural productions, as well as student ability to express and communicate ideas and experiences through various visual forms, including but not limited to new electronic media” (p.199).

Restitution and Reparations: “Teaching students to make restitution or reparations rather than punishment, is a humane means of guiding students towards self-discipline” (p.72). Restitution and Reparation means to provide compensation for an injustice, loss or injury by making compensation or amends in order to repair/ restore to the original state.

Circulatory System: a phrase coined by Patty Bode to serve as a metaphor that refers to the flow of, “teacher-student curiosity, research, and action entangled with visuality itself, as well as visual culture” (p.270).

Personal Response

After this week’s readings, I am definitely contemplating ways to address visual literacy and also exploring visual culture to teach about political and social issues in a way that seems unbiased and allows students to decipher meanings on their own. When reading the chapter, *Never Again: A (K)night with Ben*, by Wanda B. Knight, I was constantly thinking of how I could apply her suggestions in teaching about ethnocentrism, nationalism, race relations and stereotypes, propaganda, and human rights atrocities in my classroom. These are difficult enough topics to discuss with a class full of Americans, but how do I go about creating awareness and providing critical inquiry when I have students from all over the Western and Eastern world? How do I address these issues when my students, practically adults, have extremely diverse cultural backgrounds? I can open my students’ eyes to issues like genocide, but I have to tread carefully and do my research before engaging my students in political conversations. For example, I showed my students a video of Tibetan Monks making sand mandalas and was very careful and aware of how I discussed Tibet to my class that is predominantly Chinese. In order to

promote critical thinking and inquiry about the social issues discussed by Knight, I need to first create an environment that is based on respect, racial tolerance, and openness and willingness to learn and think beyond one's racial and cultural identity. Without the promotion and expectations of this behavior throughout the rest of the school, this is a difficult and sometimes daunting task to perform in my classroom. The conversations and inquiry promoted by Knight are important, but without the support and properly cultivated environment, these sorts of discussions have the potential to be volatile and cause harm, especially with a diverse and culturally sensitive body of students. Patty Bode has inspired me to encourage my students to develop and deeply research world issues that they feel connected to and want to be a part of creating social change. I want to teach my students how to research a topic, become informed, and speak out; whether it is verbally or through artistic expression. The articles this week really boil down to the impact of visual culture on society and the importance of visual literacy to aid in the deciphering of how and why visual images are created. As art teachers, we need to take a step back and look at the big picture. Our students are venturing into a world that is interconnected like never before in history and the effects of globalization are profound and somewhat frightening. As teachers, especially art teachers, we need to prepare our students with the necessary knowledge and resources in order to be successful and objective global citizens.

References

Bode, P. (2009). The circulatory system of oil contamination, visual culture, and Amazon indigenous life. In E. M. Delacruz, A. Arnold, M. Parsons, and A. Kuo, (Eds.), *Globalization, art, and education* (pp. 269-277). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

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