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Collective Art Activist Practice: A Pedagogy of Hope

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NYU FLASH COLLECTIVE, LIFE COST MONEY, 2017. IMAGE COURTESY OF AUTHOR.

Our graduate program Art, Education, and Community Practice at New York University (NYU) is grounded in artistic activism, a practice that envisions new ways of acting and thinking in our society in order to create social change. The art activist strategies we explore range from the representation of social issues in order to build awareness and open dialogue to the facilitation of direct-action in order to change unequal power structures in our society. Artistic activism, as a form of cultural production, is pedagogical in its intent and structure because it combines the creative power of the arts to move us emotionally with the strategic planning of activism necessary to bring about social change (Center of Artistic Activism website, para #1). Always involving some form of action, this practice calls for new ways of working collectively if it is going to be effective in shifting the balance of power in our society. To borrow Nina Montmann's (2009) words, "collaboration is a constitutive activity, in political activism and other societal movements" (p.11).

What does collaboration mean in artistic activism, and what can we learn about collective pedagogy for our increasingly diverse classrooms? In this essay, I draw on my experiences of teaching courses that incorporate collective pedagogy, a term I take from Avram Finkelstein, at a corporate university that is part of the academic industrial complex. Within such a setting, collective pedagogy is fraught with contradictions, tensions, and challenges, but also possibilities: what Paulo Friere (2014) calls a pedagogy of hope.

I recognize that coloniality has profoundly shaped and managed how I have learnt to see, know, and act in the classroom and in society. Here my exploration of collective pedagogy in relation to teaching art activism is undoubtedly framed by my assumption regarding art's capacity to be a tool for creating social change that at its core can be considered a modernist, western, colonial project. In recent years, I have begun to pay more attention to what Sylvia Wynters (1994, p. 44) calls my "inner eye" in order to interrogate the notion of art and activism that often perpetuates a western epistemology in relation to aesthetics, education, politics, justice, and social change. I hope to make visible this interrogation of art activism as I make a case for collective pedagogy as a prefigurative practice of thinking, sense-making, and revolutionary love that challenges the hyper-individual educational practices that structure our classrooms. To practice collective pedagogy is to understand classrooms as what the anthropologist Mary Louise Pratt would call "contact zones": "social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power" that are shaped by the history of settler colonialism, slavery, forced migration due to war, poverty, and, in recent years, environmental crisis, as well as voluntary migration (Pratt, 1992, p. 7). How to attend to and mobilize the acute differences that emerge within these contact zones toward a shared, creative project is the question that collective pedagogy confronts.

Learning from Art Activist Collectives

Collaboration is not a new concept in art; rather, as Maria Lind (2009) indicates, it is a primary method of working in contemporary (western) art. Its history is "long and complex and includes a number of different forms for organizing artistic work and its aesthetics ... which [extends] from [Peter Paul] Rubens and other Baroque artists' hierarchical large-scale studios" to the contemporary studios that are lucrative business models, such as that of Matthew Barney or Ai Wei-Wei (Lind, 2009, p. 53). For Surrealists, collaboration was conceived differently as a way of creating group experiments, while the Fluxus artists created games called "Fluxfest" that required multiple players. Andy Warhol's studio, called the "Factory," was another kind of collaboration, as it became a hub for celebrities in art, music, film, and the fashion world to meet and work together (Lind, 2009). Today, how we understand collaboration in contemporary art varies greatly as artists collaborate in a range of different ways -- through networks, coalitions, associations, and artist circles.

The formation of art activist collectives in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the United States (Gran Fury, Guerilla Girls, Ultra-red, Chinatown Art Brigade, MTL, to name a few) is distinct from the collaborative art practices mentioned above. These art collectives deliberately challenge the lucrative symbolic economy of art that relies on the exchange of art objects by working outside that system to build meaningful relationships between people, design different forms of participation, and deploy organizing strategies learnt from social movements to address pressing socio-political issues in our society, including challenging the colonial structure of the artworld. Collaboration is conceived very differently in these art collectives, where participants deliberately create an environment of social solidarity in which cooperation, horizontal relationships, and mutual care are cornerstones that then allow for egalitarian art making practices that are based on collective decision-making regarding content, aesthetics, and activist interventions in the public sphere or in art institutions. Avram Finkelstein, co-founder of the artist collective Gran Fury and Silence=Death, indicates that collectivity in art activist practices is a form of political organizing that is intentional and learnt, requiring a different pedagogical process (Desai, 2014). As Finkelstein states, "all political organizing is contingent on collaboration . . . we are not always encouraged to work collaboratively . . . I see it as an essential part of almost any pedagogy, not just an arts pedagogy or social justice pedagogy" (personal communication, October 20, 2018). As an intentional pedagogical process, learning solidarity then is a political project because it moves our understanding of ourselves from autonomous individuals to interconnected and interdependent human beings (Freire, 1970; Anderson, Desai, Heras, Spreen, 2023; Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015).

As a pedagogical practice, the process of building solidarity requires a commitment to inclusiveness and democracy. This calls for a relational understanding of collective work in which "individual subjects do not enter

into relationships, but rather subjects are made in and through relationships” that are typically negotiated within unequal power relations (Gaztambide-Fernández 2012, p.52).

Another aspect of learning solidarity in an art activist class is that it is multi-sensory, calling on our imagination to transform our ways of living and relating to each other as human and non-human beings. It is in this way that it prefigures new ways of living and being together. This intentional collective pedagogy not only involves sharing ideas and skills through a horizontal process in order to produce a guerrilla art intervention for public spaces, whether physical or digital, but more importantly, it draws on emotions, cultural memory, and the transcendental connections between humans and non-humans. Collective art activist practices are also concerned with a range of cultural practices (such as rituals or festivals) and forms of representation (visual, aural, performative) that challenge hegemonic ways of seeing that perpetuate the violence of oppression with regard to race, class, ability, gender, and sexuality.

Collective pedagogy in higher education, I suggest, is a prefigurative educational practice that models democratic participation and a specifically critical DEI (Adams et al, 2022; Breines, 1982; Dewey 1916/1944; Kishimoto, 2016;) that I believe is so needed today given the onslaught of neo-liberal privatization of education and the dismantling of academic freedom. My understanding of prefigurative politics is informed by Paul Raekstad and Saio Gradin (2019) who define it as “the deliberate experimental implementation of desired future social relations and practices in the here-and-now” (p.10). As a form of social activism it foregrounds the kinds of spaces, institutions, and communities we would desire that are democratic, egalitarian, and humanely grounded in a politics of hope that demonstrate other ways of being and living. These spaces exist today across the globe in worker cooperatives, social movements, and indigenous, feminist, and radical education to name a few (for some examples see Anderson, G., Desai, D, Heras, A.I., & Spreen, C.A., 2023). As a prefigurative radical educational practice, critical DEI, as I deploy the term, is grounded in an anti-oppressive and feminist perspective (Adams et al, 2022; Crenshaw, 2017; hooks,1994; Delgado, R & Stefanic, J., 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998) that calls for building community through social action in order to create more just and equitable institutions and society. Learning to work together, I contend, is an important part of teaching and learning from an anti-racist/anti-oppression position.

For me, critical DEI focuses on challenging and changing the unequal power structures that shape our identities (race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability) in multi-racial/ethnic contexts, which are always multiple and intersectional (Crenshaw 2017; Collins 2000; hooks 1994) because they are a directly connected to interdependent systems of exploitation and domination, such as capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, White supremacy, imperialism and colonialism. In education, critical DEI challenges structural racism that shapes institutions and sites of learning as well as questions

whose knowledge and experiences are legitimated by the academy and whose knowledge and experiences are silenced and rendered invisible. It calls for the voices and experiences of marginalized groups to be included in education. Moreover, “anti-racist pedagogy is an organizing effort for institutional and social change that is much broader than teaching in the classroom” (Kishimoto, 2016, p. 540). Therefore, it makes sense to focus on collective pedagogy as part of anti-racist pedagogy as it is based on sharing experiences and knowledges, and building positive relationships where one learns to work through our social differences without erasing them in order to create a more just and equitable society.

What Does Collective Pedagogy Look, Sound, and Feel Like?

The subject of collective pedagogy is, first and foremost, the collective, meaning that the efficacy of this practice is grounded more in the practice and maintenance of collective processes (related to decision-making, creation, and analysis) and less on whether an art intervention successfully produces a narrowly defined result. In my classes, I draw on the idea of affinity groups, each focused on different practices, that break with the neoliberal educational framework that positions students as individuals learning “skills” as their human capital. The practice-based affinity group model aims instead to detach “skills” from the individual and re-attach them to the collective as students and instructors all become responsible for the shared undertaking of art activist creation in and outside of the classroom. In such a model, to be clear, the teacher is also part of the collective, not someone above or outside of it.

However, despite the centrality of collective decision-making in this form of pedagogy, there remains a tension between the practice of collective pedagogy and the responsibility of the teacher to protect vulnerable students, especially within highly corporatized and punitive contexts. In what follows, I share my experience of teaching a class for several years that focuses on art activism at NYU, where my students and myself as their teacher become an art collective for the semester, where we learn collective decision-making processes for the most part in a horizontal manner and use the multi-sensory aspect of art for political organizing by working on a project together.

This class is open to students from across the different schools at NYU. Students come with varied expertise as their major may not be art making, but rather related fields such as art history, visual arts administration, performance, media studies, and experimental humanities. The class is always composed of a diverse socio-cultural demographic. The context of this praxis based class is discussed on the first day, as we listen to how each of us “stepped off the curb and joined the march,” a phrase I have borrowed from Stephen Duncombe. Throughout the courses through both theoretical readings and art activist case studies we talk about how each of our locations and positionalities,



FIGURE 1. NYU FLASH COLLECTIVE, LIFE COST MONEY, 2017; FIGURE 2. NYU FLASH COLLECTIVE, 2022 ABORTION; FIGURE 3. HIDDEN HISTORIES: BLACK STORIES IN THE LOWER EAST SIDE, 2021. (LEFT TO RIGHT)

including myself as a South Asian, middle class, cisgendered woman who is teaching art activism in a neoliberal university in a diverse metropolis, shapes our lived experiences and how we speak.

We borrow the art interventionist method developed by artist activist Avram Finkelstein called Flash Collectives (Desai and Finkelstein 2017) that is inspired by Paulo Friere's (1970) notion of praxis. We begin by identifying an urgent current issue that would be the focus of our work together for the art intervention. The class readings focus on theories of art activism as well as both historical and current art activist case studies that provide a frame to discuss what, why, how, and for whom we are designing an art intervention. The readings help us discuss two critical questions: What is the political objective of the art intervention and who is the audience? This discussion leads to thinking together about the ways we can communicate in public spaces that are increasingly privatized in NYC. We also discuss the various strategies and tactics for collective cultural production borrowed from art activist collectives/artists, advertising, and social movements. In order for the collaboration to take place under the constraint of a 15-week semester we suspend the desire for complete consensus over language, visuals, and strategies and elect to implement a decisive voting process.

A collective mapping exercise on the topic then allows us to listen deeply, create a space where each student is heard, and identify what is behind an issue in order to identify key ideas. Each of us goes up to the paper on the wall and writes down what came to mind, responding to other people's ideas, and making connections between concepts and ideas. Once we identify the big ideas we then work through a questioning process in order to narrow down our message (using text and image) and the aesthetic form the intervention will take. One of the questions we work through is how, even though we live in a visually saturated world, we can capture the attention of our audience unexpectedly, in order to implicate or engage them in the message we intend to convey through the art intervention. What images and text would surprise the audience and what aesthetic strategies—such as

humor or juxtapositions between text and image—would draw their attention? Given that we do not seek permission from authorities, our actions are guerilla art interventions. Deciding the best aesthetic form -- whether it is crack and peel posters, stickers, performances, chalk walls, or banner drops -- is based on the location and kind of audience we want to reach with the hope that learning about the issue will trigger some action on the part of the people walking by. It is for this reason that posters, stickers, and banners have a QR code for people to get more information on a social media site (website or Tumblr) that the students design. In discussions about the audience we also discuss which languages other than English should be included in the same poster or in different posters. For example, for a subway intervention on abortion we decided to create posters that mimicked service change announcements in 3 languages: English, Spanish, and Chinese.

Contemporary art collectives work in different ways. Given that my class is composed of students from across different departments and schools at NYU who bring a diverse set of skills, I draw on the Critical Art Ensemble collectives (1998) understanding of floating hierarchy and "solidarity through difference" (p.66) where we focus on the assets of the class to create affinity groups. Some students have an art/design background where they are knowledgeable about using design software such as photoshop/illustrator that is required to design posters or banners, while others have significant research experience or social media and communication experience. This means that not everyone in class was involved with each aspect of the art intervention. Respecting our differences structured our power relations horizontally, but this does not mean that we are equal at all times and the amount of work done by each member is equal. As the Critical Art Ensemble (1998) indicate: "the idea that everyone should do an equal amount of work is to measure a member's value by quantity instead of quality. Rigid equality in this case can be a perverse and destructive type of Fordism" (p.67). The constraints of a semester mean that, in each iteration of the course, I create the three affinity groups that we require (design,

research and communication, and social media), as I know the skill sets required to design and enact art interventions in a short period of time. In class, I explained the kind of work each affinity group would focus on so students could self-select which affinity group they would choose based on their interest and skill set. The affinity groups continued to meet in class throughout the semester to work on either the design, website, or public performance. We would reconvene to share what the affinity groups had done and, as a collective, make suggestions, edit texts, or endorse each affinity group's work.

For many of my students this is the first time they have considered pasting a poster in public spaces or dropping a banner, requiring us to establish some protocol for the intervention given that these acts are illegal in NYC. For posterizing, I urge them to go in groups of three, with two students as scouts. If they see police, they alert each other, drop what they were doing, and leave the site. This protocol is particularly important for students of color because we live in a racialized world where Black and Brown bodies are policed in particular ways. However, I also let students know that, if they are afraid, then they can use masking tape to secure the poster on a wall or lamp-post (in NYC one finds many taped flyers of missing dogs and cats). Sharing the protocol for posterizing or banner drops invariably leads to a discussion in our class about the uneasiness students feel about doing something illegal. We talk about protests and guerilla tactical interventions in the public sphere and what it means to use art as a tool for creating social change and how this might involve sometimes putting one's body on the line. Whatever else the students think about the readings and discussions, they have all decided to enact the intervention in public spaces.

In the case of the banner drop, I discuss the particular nature of this intervention with the class

because of my experience of not being allowed by the Chair of my department at the time to practice dropping and retracting the banner from their third floor office window in order to see how quickly I could do it. My Chair exclaimed that it was totally illegal, stating that if they could not justify it to the Deans, then I should not do it anywhere in our building. In class, we discussed my experience and how banner dropping differs from stickering in terms of illegality and its relationship to democracy, freedom of expression, and the law. While all my students were given the option of whether they wanted to drop the banner, I had to make the executive decision to not allow students of color or international students to participate. In class, I explained my reason for this decision given the current political situation and my experience as a person of color. I indicated that it might seem like a contradiction that I would participate without allowing them to do so, even if they wanted to knowing the risk of arrest. However, knowing that our university would not support this kind of art intervention, in good conscience I could not have international students deported or students of color put behind bars. As many of the students of color and international students enrolled in different iterations of the class have wanted to participate, we decided that they would document the banner drop by photographing it from a distance and listening to people's reactions to the action.

After the public interventions of stickerizing, performing, or banner dropping, we talk about how it felt to participate in these actions and how the audience reacted to the interventions. Students are asked to take a photograph of where they placed the sticker/poster and then go back a few days later to document whether the poster had been ripped off or painted over, or if people had written something on it. In the case of stickerizing and posterizing we talk about the choices we make regarding where we placed the posters in the public realm. Given our visually saturated environment, students share the



FIGURE 4. NYU FLASH COLLECTIVE, DEFINE IMMIGRANT, 2015; FIGURE 5. DEFINE IMMIGRANT PERFORMANCE, 2015

dilemmas they face as they walk around the city deciding what a good public site might be in terms of people walking by and seeing the poster. Many students expressed feeling simultaneously anxious and fearful as well as exhilarated. After one public performance, we discussed why people walking through Washington Square Park (mainly NYU students and tourists) were unwilling to answer a tongue and check immigration survey and participate in the performance until we called it an art project. This raised the question of whether calling it art was a way we defanged addressing the topic of immigration or if indeed it was useful. We were clear that the reluctance on the part of passersby meant that if we did this performance in an immigrant community we would have to change the art intervention completely, even if we called it art. In another instance, it was the design of an abortion poster that closely mimicked subway service announcements that was problematic. People running to catch the subway did not read our poster as being R for Republican and D for Democrat but just as the R or D trains (insert see figure 6). Another problem with the poster is that the goal of the intervention was to get people to vote in the primary election, which was a critical election in 2022, but that portion of the poster was small and should have been bigger. We have no idea if this poster and other art interventions in the public sphere that we have enacted actually make a difference, and that is one of tensions we have to address in art activist interventions.

But I also argue that the success of an art intervention is less about achieving one immediate result than about how my students and I collectively think through collective action, design the artwork, and consider its placement in the public sphere. As a class we have to critically examine why and how we want to get passersby on the street to address a topic and what role dialogue plays in tactical art activist interventions at both the planning and implementation stage of the pedagogical process. We would collectively evaluate the art intervention and a grade with feedback was given by each person in the collective that was shared with the class.

Each art intervention is different in the ways solidarity is learnt; however there are five key and interrelated pedagogical ideas that they share. It first requires us to engage in dialogue with the public, evoking what Grant Kester (2004) calls dialogic aesthetics, which means deliberately creating a space for human interaction and communication by an artist. Second, it requires us to challenge and reimagine visual forms of representation that maintain the status quo and, in the process, make visible what the dominant groups deliberately obscure. As a consequence, third, it involves using multisensory ways of knowing that require horizontal ways of working together and co-learning that can create emotional bonds between members of the collective in order to enact social action in the public sphere. Fourth, the process requires members of the collective to trust each other and work together through affinity groups that are based on skills and interest. Finally, given each student's social position and experiences in different locations, co-learning is shaped by unequal power dynamics and therefore is

fraught with tensions, contradictions, and confrontations that have to be worked through together.

There seems to be a moment towards the end of the semester when students get frustrated with the democratic process as disagreements have to be worked out in order that the art intervention can take place. Although we do use the voting process, a liberal individual process that contradicts horizontalism, given the time frame of a semester to make decisions, it still seems to evoke a lot of tension given the institutionalization of learning that requires grades, a limited time-frame (semester), and the difficulty to accept failure.



FIGURE 6, NYU FLASH COLLECTIVE - ABORTION POSTERS, 2022

Practicing Participatory Democracy through Collective Pedagogy

I would suggest that working collectively is one way of building community across our differences and practicing democracy. If we are committed to democracy then we need to shift our emphasis on individual teaching and learning to a collective mode where solidarity is learnt intentionally. It is through collective action and reflection of members that communities are not only created, but defined by it, as John Dewey (1916/1944) reminds us. Learning solidarity involves "learning a different set of skills, such as thinking together, listening to each other's ideas, feelings, and desires, and engaging in difficult and often emotional conversations in order to work through cultural and social differences that might be incommensurable in order to produce the action" (Anderson, Desai, Heras, Spreen, 2023, p.149). I would suggest that this construction of a communal "we" is a crucial component of practicing a critical DEI, a concrete method for mobilizing our classrooms, the academy, and perhaps larger society as well. The lesson I have learnt about teaching and learning based on a collective pedagogical approach is that it opens a space for collective thinking and revolutionary love.

Collective thinking, or thinking together in a largely horizontal manner, is an integral part of art activism. Given our different social positions that color our experiences, dispositions, and modes of learning, the

classroom becomes a space where tensions, contradictions, and confrontations surface and have to be worked through together. Since elementary school we have been taught to think as individuals in all subjects, including art. Originality in terms of thinking and making in art classes from kindergarten through college is prized and celebrated in our society and so collective thinking and decision making can be challenging and frustrating. For example, one of the students in my class got very upset as she had spent hours researching what it costs to raise a child from birth until 18 years for an image of a receipt for a banner that we were designing for reproductive justice and the class decided that this actual cost for every item on the receipt was not important. She had to make her case, which she did successfully, as the receipt was itemized for the final banner, but in doing so asked a critical question to our class regarding accuracy and if it mattered or not in relation to representation and art in general. Standing up and arguing for her position was hard but this is the nature of collective thinking and working. It requires courage to speak up at the same time one also learns to listen to other viewpoints. It is only through listening to others that we can move forward in terms of designing the art intervention.

Listening here is a practice that is learnt and becomes a “two-way process of dialogue rather than as an end in itself” (Farinati & Firth, 2017, p. 10). The process of collective learning is grounded in listening and dialogue with and between students on a particular social issue. This listening process becomes the basis for thinking about what kinds of questions need to be asked that spur us to imagine tactics or strategies that might be effective at that particular moment in time. For me, drawing from feminist consciousness raising pedagogy, listening is both a social and political process as it disrupts how power and privilege manifest in the classroom, moving us towards more equitable social relations.

Learning to listen to each other is vital to the collective process of art activism and therefore listening is a precondition for learning solidarity. Following the art collective Ultra-red, I believe that “listening is a site for the organization of politics” (Ultra-red, 2008, Para #3). As they indicate: “[c]ollective listening is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a tool among other tools available for the long haul of struggle” (2014, p. 7). In their book, *Force of Listening*, Farinati & Firth (2017) indicate that there are two ways of thinking about listening in relation to social action: “listening together with others in order to become aware of your own conditions . . . and listening as a willingness to change them through a collective effort. This willingness can be actualised in terms of political organizing, protesting, or simply getting involved in some kind of social struggle” (p. 21). Thinking and listening collectively is itself a method of social change that can create different kinds of political and organizational spaces and in this way transform the power dynamics in concrete ways. Students in my class learn not only to think and listen to each other in the process of imagining and designing an art intervention, but they also need to learn to listen to the sound of public spaces and the public who interact with their art interventions through objects

(stickers or banners) and performances. Creating spaces in the classroom for listening and dialogue becomes a process of creation, transformation, and action (Farinati & Firth, 2017; Friere, 1970). As Janna Graham from Ultra-red reminds us, listening has been well theorized by indigenous people and feminists where “questions like who is speaking and how they are speaking, at what moment are they speaking, and at what moment are you listening are key questions within organizing spaces” (Farinati & Firth, 2017, p.24).

This form of active listening as political, grounded in an understanding of how power relations inform and shape our relationships in both classroom spaces and the public sphere, is not usually part of educational practices in university classrooms and not part of normative DEI practices. Rather, as Janna Graham (2017) indicates, the “dynamics of speaking and listening” in classrooms and DEI practices tend to be “habituated through experiences of neoliberalism, a kind of condition of the voice to speak constantly, but a total dearth of conditions that enable listening to take place” (p. 113). One listens to each other’s experiences and responds and then moves onto the next experience. Listening to diverse voices is undoubtedly part of democratic processes and is a cornerstone of normative DEI practices where often the rooms might be structured with chairs in a circle formation rather than lecture style with the intention to create a more equitable and dialogue friendly environment. However, simply transforming architectural spaces does not mean that each student and teacher has equal power given our social positions, which play out consciously and unconsciously. Rather, as feminist and indigenous scholars remind us, the politics of speaking and listening is relational: we speak from particular social positions, histories, and locations in relation to others that are mediated by unequal power dynamics (Alcoff, 1991; Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015). A critical DEI that is deliberately shaped by the politics of voice and listening actively engages in relational reflection, practices deep listening, and attends to how our subject positions, as well how we speak and to whom we respond, are always grounded in power relations

Challenging the Cartesian mind/body divide, collective pedagogy draws on multi-modal ways of knowing and being that call upon all of us (teacher and students) to use all our senses, as well as emotions and desires. Classrooms are spaces where people from different social positions meet in order to learn together. In order to enact social change through art, both students and teacher have to go beyond simply learning to work together across our differences, but have to call upon love and care as part of our everyday practice -- a process of collective sense-making. Thinking and working together as I have discussed is a political skill that shapes our identity as artists, activists, and educators, enabling us to speak to, against, and through power grounded in what bell hooks (2018) and Chela Sandoval (2000) call revolutionary love. This notion of love is not understood as solely a feeling or emotion but as a verb that requires us to intentionally take action (hooks, 2018). It is as hooks (2002) tells us “a combination of care,

commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust" (p. 94). Emotions, desires, and trust become an integral part of the educational process of what Friere (1985) calls "teacher learners"; a collective practice where we are teaching each other as well as learning from each other (p.16). Yet, creating this symbiotic relationship is not easy as we try hard to dismantle the emotional strands of the teacher-student hierarchy that is so ingrained in our bodies and psyche from kindergarten to college. It is hard work and not always successful as we do fall into the traditional roles of teacher and student, which instantly disrupts collectivity. We struggle to acknowledge and talk about how our emotions play out in the classroom, which are connected to how power manifests in the affective realm. Even though in art education we speak about the power of art to express emotions, we rarely address the implications of how our hierarchical social structure creates, manipulates, and enforces appropriate affective responses in class and to the world around us. As Megan Boler (1999) has taught me, emotions are learnt and directly connected to our social location and position. In many ways, our feelings are not our own, but are instead products of a dominant ideology that we need to pay attention to in order to listen and learn from each other. Paying attention to our subject position and location is critically important to building solidarity as it is shaped relationally (Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015).

As a collective we need to trust and care about each other and in doing so we learn what is common amongst us -- our humanity. I am beginning to understand care not only as a moral framework (Nodding, 1984; Held, 2006) that guides how we interact with each other in the classroom or public sphere, but as relational and interconnected (Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015). Grounded in feminist relational theory, care is the "full range of influential relationships, personal and public, in which we exist and are constituted as human selves" (Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015, p. 17). This understanding of humans as caring beings means that "justice aspires to equality of relationships" where it "seeks equality in the basic elements required for peaceful and productive human relationships -- namely, equality of respect, dignity, and mutual care/concern for one another" (Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015, p. 17). Caring and love as "relational equality" (Llewellyn & Llewellyn, 2015, p. 18) become the framework for art activism and enacting democracy.

Concluding Thoughts

The art interventions we have done collectively have left us with more questions than answers about the role of art in tactical interventions in the public sphere in order to spark dialogue with passersby and thereby begin the process of what it means to create social change in our neoliberal society. Despite the many challenges, tensions, and contradictions of working collectively in higher education, which include the restraints of time in terms of enacting an art intervention in public spaces or within an institution in a semester, issues with enacting a guerilla tactic, resources that are available, and hyper

individualism as an educational mode of being and knowing; I do believe collective pedagogy has been a transformative relational practice that gives us a taste of what it means to work together with care and love. It has opened spaces for experiencing democracy as a way of living in classrooms that are diverse and shaped by unequal power relations (Dewey, 1916/1944; Pedagogy Group 2014). As I have tried to demonstrate, the notion of collective pedagogy is important to art activism, critical DEI, and radical education as a relational way of living, thinking, feeling, and being that is needed today, more so than ever before, given our fragile democracy.

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