

"Reading & Writing for Filth": Community Literacies for Change

Natalie Shellenberger

ABSTRACT

This proposal discusses using art pieces, literary works, music, and popular culture as a springboard for public pedagogy and community engagement in relation to social justice issues. I am inspired by Adam Banks’s use of African griot traditions and hip hop music as guides for rhetoric instruction as well as application into community spaces. His method of using common ground, or something present in the public arena, as a springboard for deeper discussion about social and political issues is integral to the work that I plan to pursue in community settings. Like Banks, I plan to pair this community program with a course that I teach in the university, or in coalition with a collective of scholars, but without the literacy and skill-intensive focus that is present in the academy.

This presentation provides the details of the first lesson plan that I will use in the community program. My project serves as an initial case-study of a lesson plan, which centers around the charcoal on paper print, “Go to Hell or Atlanta, Whichever Comes First” by Kara Walker. Within this piece, Walker depicts the ongoing violence against Black women by juxtaposing it in both historical and current contexts. In the print, the woman is being abused by both a lover and a policeman in riot gear while having a child ripped from her body and a bullet hole on the side of her breast. Walker’s artwork provides an opening to conversation topics relating to politics and society just like Moya Bailey’s misogynoir, Claudia Rankine’s racial imaginary, Robin D’Angelo’s white fragility, Angela Davis Mariame Kaba’s approaches to abolition, and Megan Eaton’s rhetorics of violence. I am also hopeful that this project could translate into public engagement with, and better comprehension of, Critical Race Theory concepts.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

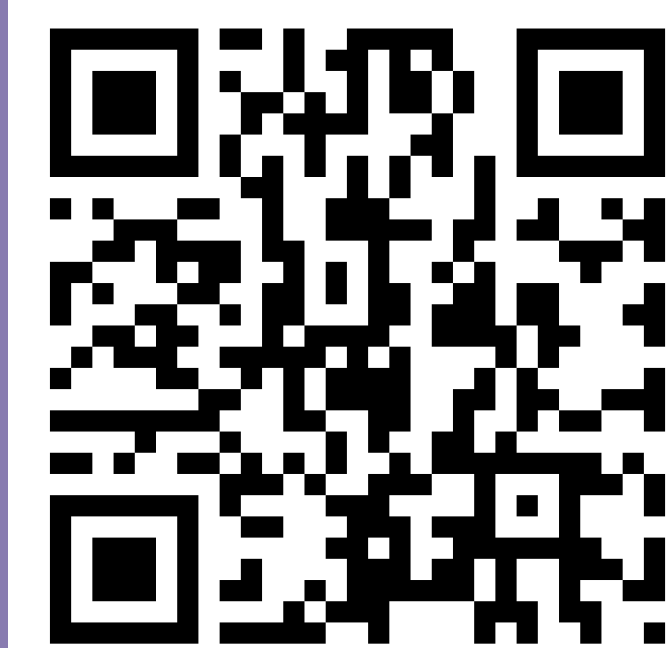
This project was initially inspired by the political and social relevance of Kara Walker's art. Her art motivated me to use popular culture items as vehicles to discuss scholarly theory but to also engage the community and build relationships, coalitions, and collectives to fight for social change.



PROJECT ARTIFACT:

Walker, Kara. Go to Hell or Atlanta, Whichever Comes First. 2015. Charcoal on paper. Victoria Miro Gallery, London. Amon Carter Museum.

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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

This project involves direct interaction with the public in the form of community thinking and writing collectives. Currently, I have two groups that I plan to ask to partner with in order to advertise and recruit members; however, I am also planning to create Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages for the community group to increase visibility and participation. This group will meet once weekly following the semester schedule of the university. I am hoping to partner with Texas Christian University to share resources with the group and build possible partnerships within the community to bring awareness to local issues that we aim to lobby for change.

PROJECT SIGNIFICANCE

Within the Fort Worth community surrounding Texas Christian University, there is not a large presence of community writing collectives. Given this time of political change in the region, it is imperative that we join forces and use whatever talents that we have as individuals to contribute to a group effort to bring awareness, support, and change. My hope is that this program can serve as a conduit for camaraderie and change.