

School can be an oppressive place or a liberatory place, it can be an enriching experience or an unwholesome one for many, particularly students who come from complex and challenging backgrounds and situations. As a working class artist and educator I believe that art education is the most promising means of asserting values which support an egalitarian, inclusive and radically compassionate society. Art and creative thinking have the power to transform, empower and unite. Learning experiences can and should bolster the individual for the long term and should inform their attitudes and values as they enter into adulthood.

Visual art in the classroom can ensure all students are encouraged towards creative expression, ownership of their own culture and artistic autonomy. Education has the power to emancipate and when the teaching recognises and embraces the complexities and challenges of working class roots that serves to foster true appreciation of working class culture, history and background. And when the working class are free - all will be free.

-Elayne Harrington

'Demands that individuals from class backgrounds deemed undesirable surrender all vestiges of their past create psychic turmoil. We were encouraged, as many students are today, to betray our class origins. Rewarded if we chose to assimilate, estranged if we chose to maintain those aspects of who we were, some were all too often seen as outsiders. Some of us rebelled by clinging to exaggerated manners and behavior clearly marked as outside the accepted bourgeois norm.'

**- from Teaching to Transgress, *Education as the Practice of Freedom*
(Confronting Class, page 182) by bell Hooks**