

Editorial: Pleasure Centers and Liberatory Practices

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In fall 2019, we (Joni & Sharbreon) put out a call for papers that aimed to “center pleasure in art activism and justice oriented art education” and “speak to the new (or newly found) spaces (physical, mental and emotional) that have been built (or imagined) for each other (especially marginalized groups) to thrive.” The impetus for the call for papers was to center joy after engaging in the three 2019 jCRAE issues that centered Whiteness and the impact of racism in art education. We hoped to shift the heaviness that came with that conversation to the moments of **pleasure, joy, strength, healing, community-building, allyship, kinship and happiness** that manifest within our art and art education activism. There was an intentional goal to support justice-oriented art education scholars’ “futuristic worldmaking.” But, who knew that the year 2020 would bring a world so dystopian that “futuristic worldmaking” would feel impossible?

Twenty-twenty has presented us with a global health pandemic, better known as COVID19, that has claimed over one million lives in less than 1 year; the public deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor, all Black human beings, at the hands of White police officers and vigilantes; ravaging wildfires that have left thousands of families homeless; recurring instances of domestic terrorism by White men, including but not limited to the thwarted plot to kidnap and murder the White female governor of Michigan, Gretchen Witmer. Unfortunately, the list of unfathomable events that we have endured in 2020 can and does go on and on.

For this reason, we are certain that this volume of jCRAE, with the mini-theme “Pleasure Centers and Liberatory Practices,” is a timely contribution to the world. When COVID shook the globe and most of the world was on lockdown, many sought out the arts for refuge. We saw DJ D-Nice take to *Instagram* to offer upwards of 250k viewers an 8 hour dj set, sharing classic music that spanned decades. We saw home videos of musicians playing instruments on their porches and balconies during quarantine, spectators stood by to listen. After Black Lives Matter advocates took to the streets to peacefully protest the ongoing killing spree of unarmed Black bodies, we witnessed

people from varying racial and ethnic backgrounds paint the words BLACK LIVES MATTER across city streets. Hopefully we've all seen contemporary Black female artist Amy Sherald's ethereal painting of Breonna Taylor that graced the cover of "Vanity Fair." In these times, we are witnessing, in real time, the ways the arts exist as a means for not only futuristic worldmaking, but present day worldmaking.

In her October 2020 feature in "Harper's Bazaar," Solange Knowles, Black female vocal and conceptual artist, writes,

Joy was the sleep I got after releasing secrets from my bones. Joy was telling the truth....Joy was discovery. Joy was having someone show me beautiful worlds of their own and trusting in the journey. Joy was letting go of control. Joy was just sitting. Joy was seeing how far I had come and waving at my shadows. Joy was accepting that the work is never done, but that every day is a choice.

Today we choose joy. Today we choose pleasure. Today we choose liberation work by honoring those who laid the foundation for us to step into this time of unapologetic self definition and resistance. This issue serves as a space for art educators to reflect and share how they have carried forth liberatory work, even when it was not (or could not) be acknowledged as such. We thank our community of peers, especially those of Black, Brown and Indigenous descent, for their vulnerability in sharing their work of undoing and releasing the bondage of White supremacy that seeks to extract, deplete and destroy—instead replacing that ideology and conditioning with ancestral memory and embodied knowledge. Art has always held a pathway to freedom, and we believe it is time to outwardly declare and theorize around that which is our right.

As you immerse yourself in this issue, we ask you to consider how art education can allow us to honor our instincts and creativity. Reflect on the balms within your artistic experiences that have offered reprieve not only for you, but those who have come before you. Most of all, take time to remember and call the names of those forebearers whose ability to cultivate joy and pleasure made it possible for us to be here today. For as brown (2019) states, "pleasure activism is the work we do to reclaim our whole, happy, and satisfiable selves from the impacts, delusions, and limitations of oppression and/or supremacy" (p. 9). Let our work within the field of art education not only be limited to our output and productivity. Instead, know that it is our collective responsibility to lean into the things that allow us to embrace our most holistically satisfied selves.

The Coalition for Racial Equity in the Arts and Education (crea+e) opens Volume 37, Issue I with an unfiltered, potent commentary that argues for the need to imagine new and alternative ways to engage in art education. crea+e shares a polyvocal and aesthetically eclectic writing that “mirrors the very nature of collective work in intellectual and social movements.” The collective of artists, activists, educators, and scholars of color unapologetically present their interventionist work as a liberatory practice that seeks to heal racial trauma and come to see Black and Brown futures outside of traditional (read White) art educational discourses. Then, **Amber Coleman and Gloria Wilson** present a fiercely energetic paper that uses the cypher (originated in hip hop) as a methodology to center the necessity of love, care, and valuation of Black women. Building upon Black feminist thought to articulate Black women’s hip-hop onto-epistemology, the authors present their lived experiences as knowledge, pronounce their roles as cultural and knowledge producers, and demand the ability to self define, which for them, incites joy. Next, **Tyson Lewis and Amelia Kraehe** write about an intimate professional experience in which Lewis receives hundreds of verbal assaults and threats of violence and bodily harm for writing critically about racism and other forms of oppression in the arts. The authors categorized and coded the “assaultive speech” to demonstrate the ways it attempts to replace joy with affects of fear, paranoia, and hate, emergent strategy for scholars, teachers, and activists interested in justice, critical pedagogy, or transformative practices.

Dana Carlisle Kletchka, Adéwálé Adénlé, Shannon Thacker Cregg, Anna Freeman, Damarius Johnson, Megan Wanttie and Logan Ward invoke a *not-museum*, which the authors refer to as a site that is socially-responsive, justice oriented, and affirming to the communities in which they exist. The authors present a manifesto that lays out a blueprint for future museums to follow as they attempt to dig themselves out of the colonial, Western patriarchal systems that they continue to perpetuate. Then, **Tanisha Jackson** engages contemporary Black multimedia artist Jaleel Cambell in an interview in which he details how he navigates through his own experiences with anxiety and rage by cultivating joy and focusing on how to create collective experiences of pleasure. In Jackson’s interview, Campbell describes his work, specifically his community-based social justice work, as a form of liberation. Next, **Katie Fuller** examines how art education can aid us in healing the many traumas and difficult knowledges that are embedded within our bodies and psyches. Using approaches such as arts-based inquiry through an affective lens, Fuller offers suggestions on how educators can mobilize students in becoming agents of change within their communities and for themselves.

In her research, **Youngaah Koh** details how she used art and art education to nurture Korean-American elementary students’

awareness and appreciation of their Korean cultural history. Koh connects the students' joy to their attainment of cultural competence, critical consciousness, and feeling of a sense of community within their home community. **James Sanders, Mindi Rhoades, Melanie Davenport, Courtnie Wolfgang, Kim Cosier** offer a detailed road map that takes readers through the standing interventionist session "Big Gay Church" (BGC), which occurred during the National Art Education Association's annual conventions. The authors suggest that their use of farce, irony, and humor during BGC not only celebrates queerness for all, but also works to critique and tackle institutional inequities that specifically impact the LGBTQIC+ community within NAEA and art education at large. Then, **David Nyaberi** takes readers on a journey to Southwest Kenya as he reflects on pottery making traditions amongst the Luo people, specifically the Mama Nyungu group. He discusses how pottery-making, as a gender-specific site of knowledge production, encourages intergenerational dialogue amongst women and fosters support for girls to safely step into a more liberated existence. Following David with a visual/video essay, **Pamela Lawton** reflects on her time in Edinburgh, Scotland where she led community-based workshops for youth of color to process the injury and harm that resulted from racial trauma. Her experience demonstrates how collective creativity within marginalized communities can produce hope, healing and restoration for all involved. Next, **Shanita Bigelow** describes her work as "a portrait of a poet and educator." This brief essay documents Bigelow's journey into the art education field as a Black woman. She shares the ways that writing, specifically poetry, has given her the ability to see her future in the arts and take up space in the field.

Harrison Orr reflects on the intersection of his personal experiences as a gay man and art educator, and his path to finding a community of support and inclusivity. He specifically reflects on how museums, when operating thoughtfully, can serve as spaces for individuals to experience belonging and uninhibitedness by using art and connection as a tool for self-reflection. **Ann Wu** presents tarot as a form of technology for justice-oriented art educators. She defines tarot as a tool for alternative worldmaking and problem-solving, while encouraging readers to release hegemonic beliefs on how we define technology and validate ways of knowing that fall outside of traditional white-centric practices. Then, **Christian Hines** describes how the hobby of cosplaying as a Black woman presents a renewed sense of agency and self-expression. She defines her metaphorical shape shifting within cosplay as a form of *Blacktivism* that allows her to embrace radical imagination and fantasy in the face of a world that attempts to suppress Black women at every turn. Closing the issue, **Albert Stabler** shares how a teaching experience about sound evolved into an examination of White educators' use of hip hop as an "uncritical indulgence of empathy." Stabler challenges

White educators who assume hip hop as a pedagogy to reconsider if they have not done the necessary work to destabilize the structural exclusion of POC's knowledge widely.

Volume 37 of *JCRAE* forefronts a discussion about how pleasure, joy and liberation can be defined and /or identified in terms of its application and manifestation within justice-oriented art education. These authors highlight the components of critical theories that support and foster aspects of pleasure (e.g. self-actualization within Black feminist theory, narrative as self-expression within Critical Race Theory). The authors share research, personal reflections, paths of exploration, and even actionable items that may be able to assist the art education field in pushing beyond resistance and scarcity as the primary themes that frame marginalized voices and narratives in art education contexts. This includes, but is not limited to, critical discussions of politics of pleasure, Womanism/Black feminisms, and Queer theory as embodied and /or seen in art education practices, research and /or discourse.

References

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