

## Collectives and Coalitions: Building Justice and Equity Movements in the Arts

*Joni Boyd Acuff, PhD  
The Ohio State University*

From the beginning of my tenure as *jCRAE*'s Senior Editor, I identified my role as one of amplifier and agitator. Specifically and more pointedly, I was committed to supporting and disseminating the work of critical race art education researchers and those invested in racial equity in the arts. Race-centric work is often relegated to special issues of mainstream art education journals or become one off chapters in books that are otherwise colorblind. Therefore, creating a platform to make visible critical race art education scholarship was crucial for me. Scholars who engage in critical race art education research must often look outside of the art education discourse for scholarly resources to support and buttress their research. This additional labor results in research inequalities associated with time and capacity that are rarely acknowledged. Thus, another goal of mine as *jCRAE*'s Senior Editor has been to build a publicly accessible, robust archive of critical race art education research. As I reflect on the last 3 years, I am proud of the resource portal that has been curated. Volume 36, my inaugural volume, offered an unprecedented three issues and over 25 research manuscripts and creative works that investigated whiteness. Volume 37 switched up the tempo, disrupting the calcified narrative of suffering and trauma assigned to critical race justice work and building one of joy and pleasure. Now, Volume 38, my last as Senior Editor, highlights creative movement builders who are invested in activating critical race theory in real time in communities across the world.

Volume 38 of *jCRAE*, aptly titled "Collectives and Coalitions: Building Justice and Equity Movements in the Arts" is a natural progression in the examination of race that the last two volumes of *jCRAE* have been attending to. Moving to more macro-level interventions for subverting racism in the arts and art education, the contributions in this issue illustrate how organizing and building capacity works to undermine and transfigure White supremacist structures. Rev. angel kyodo williams says, "To be in collective process is to allow for the fact that we are coming from different spaces, and when we do that in community, we do that in service to something greater than ourselves, something beyond what my specific needs are. We form around." Collective power is needed to propel and sustain art educational equity. Institutional and systemic change requires bodies in relationship with each other, moving towards the same goal. Deeming it important to share and archive how this vital work

is being done, I invited contributions from exemplary arts collectives, coalitions and organizations that channel their collective power to propel and sustain racial and/or cultural justice and equity in and through the arts. Their examples of programming, interventions, and overarching goals demonstrate a priority to identify and challenge the limitations that impact not only artists and art educators of color, but people of color writ large.

To begin, the **Coalition on Racial Equity in the Arts + Education (crea+e)** hones in on the power of the collective as a *requirement* for disrupting and abolishing racism in the arts and art education. crea+e, who started as a subterranean, underground network of artists, researchers, and art educators of color across the US, delves into the ways their interventionist projects have worked to disrupt whiteness in the arts and art education. Next, we hear from the **Arts Build Workers (ABW)**, a multi-racial group of artists, designers, photographers and educators based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In their manuscript, ABW share their origin story, which articulates their undergirding and sustained commitment to social justice, how their community partner relationships are initiated and nurtured, and the impact their projects have had on a local and national scale. ABW's contribution very wisely offers readers a paradigm for capacity building for social change.

Then, **Ni Santas**, a West coast arts collective of women of color, offers a visual essay that takes readers on a journey through their development and growth as a grassroots, community based arts initiative. Created out of a "need to uplift and empower," Ni Santas' central goals are to support and propel women artists of color in their meaning making; their visual essay simply, yet eloquently, constructs this very narrative. Finally, **Xiaoxiao Bao** and **Hoi Leung** introduce readers to the Chinese Cultural Center of San Francisco (CCC), a grassroots, non-profit organization that activates the arts and artmaking in an effort to share narratives and raise awareness about racial injustice in the Chinese community. Bao engages Leung, the curator at CCC, in an interview in which she details how she and others at CCC orchestrate experiences and develop programming that supports community expression and communal action against anti-Asian racism, especially that which has been experienced since the onset of COVID19. Ultimately, the movement makers that have contributed to this *jCRAE* issue model how race, racial equity and social justice should be prioritized in the arts and art education.

The remaining articles in this issue are outside of the theme "Collectives and Coalitions: Building Justice and Equity Movements in the Arts," however, they contribute equally to the discourse around race, racism and racial equity in the arts and art education. The general section of this issue begins with **Debra Hardy** offering a

meditation on her experience as a White female researcher studying the life of Margaret Burroughs, a Black art education and institution-builder from Chicago. Hardy's paper is twofold in that it focuses on both her theoretical positionality and researcher positionality. In addition, she establishes an argument for historians to begin to more consciously interrogate the relationship between researcher and subject, even when living participants are not involved in the study. **Mark Graham's** paper argues that the identification of artistic mastery as the primary goal of artmaking sustains and propels racial inequities in the arts. Graham urges art teachers to move away from "traditional" artistic conventions, materials and ideas around art and aesthetics, as they are tools of cultural subordination. Ultimately, he advocates for art teachers to instead invest in understanding the historical, cultural, and political aspects of visual culture. He encourages them to recognize their own social responsibility to disrupt racial inequities that are bred through the narrative of artistic mastery. Next, **Rachel Zollinger** and **Carissa DiCindio** contribute a manuscript that beckons readers to question and consider who has access to cultural resources and technology during the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors make connections between the isolation from resources and its impact on art museum audiences. They work to position art museum educators as bridges between museums and communities. **Ryan Shin** and **Xuhao Yang** redress the questions and inquiry methods of teaching about East Asian artists and their works in the classroom, rejecting European White master frameworks when appreciating the arts of East Asia. The co-authors suggest an alternative, holistic lens for viewing East Asian artistic expressions and teaching East Asian art, making East Asian art curriculum culturally responsive and authentic.

Next, researcher **Xuan Zhang** shares an action research project that utilizes an interactive and playable tool, uniquely coined as Contemporary Artwork Data Visualization (CADV). Zhang suggests that the tool, informed by Critical Multicultural Art Education and Dewey's "Art as Experiences," supports undergraduate students' engagement with contemporary artworks that address social justice. In her article, Zhang describes how the CADV tool fosters a learning community for students to understand various perspectives concerning social justice issues in the context of different experiences and cultures. In **Jennifer Fisher** and **Michael V. Smith's** paper, they share a model for creating meaning-making opportunities for high ability visual art students from marginalized communities. They demonstrate innovation in carving out space for extended learning opportunities for visual arts students who are historically least supported in US educational systems, which are predominately students of color and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. To close Volume 38, **Stephanie Jones** and **James F. Woglam's** creative submission models the internal dialogue as well as peer discourse

needed to cultivate a true consciousness around race and racism in the arts. Jones and Woglam take us on their meta-cognitive journey as they work through and come to terms with the never-ending, multifaceted and ever-evolving nature of critical race work.

Volume 38 concludes my responsibilities as the Senior Editor of the *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*. I am sincerely indebted to the jCRAE editorial board, past editorial assistant Sharbreon Plummer and Ryan Shin for supporting my vision for the past three years. Like this volume has emphasized, without the collective, nothing real can happen. I anticipate Cala Coats and Amanda Alexander, the upcoming Co-Senior Editors, will continue curating strong, impactful content that fits the original mission of this journal. I am so honored to have contributed to the art education field in this way, and I am proud to now sit on the other side of this editorial experience with those who served in this position before me.

Thank you for trusting me with this monumental task.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joni Acuff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J" and "A".

Joni Boyd Acuff, PhD