

Response to Young's Article

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I concur with Bernard Young's view that perspectives on multicultural art education are grounded in specific socio-political perspectives. He counsels us against extremes and guides us to a middle ground that can be sustained as a foundation from which social stratification can be challenged. Young encourages us to commit to diversifying the field of educators who research, develop curricula, and teach about art. Finally, Young challenges us to be as interested in learners as we are in art. I amend Young's challenge to include interest in the settings in which people learn. The remainder of this response will address this necessary amendment.

People learn about art across their life span. A portion of that learning will take place within schools, sometimes under the supervision of state certified art educators. However, most of what people learn about art will occur in homes, museums, community arts centers, hobby associations, places of worship, community festivals, apprenticeship programs, municipal recreation programs, fairs, and numerous other formal and informal settings. Sustaining advances in multicultural art education requires consideration of learning across this spectrum. When Young reminds us that multicultural education "exemplifies a specific social and political meaning," we must remember that concentrating on multiple educational venues associated with art and education will only effect social change.

Take for example community arts organizations and community art. The history of community arts within the United States is extensive. At minimum, this history spans the mid-nineteenth century Village Improvement Movement, City Beautiful Movement, chautauquas, Outdoor Art Movement, Community Theatre Movement, Cooperative Extension Service, Works Progress Administration, Civil Rights Movement, Comprehensive Employment Training Act, to the present day. However, despite this extensive history, relatively little is known about the way community arts organizations have and continue to function educationally. We do know that community arts organizations have been, and continue to be, among those informal and formal enclaves in which people assemble, work, and act together for a variety of aesthetic, political, cultural, economic, and educational purposes. These purposes are often directed towards debating and creating the common good. Within some organizations this includes meeting the challenges and opportunities associated with living in a multicultural society. As such, community arts education is vital to quality of life in the United States.

Research confirms that communities with a lively and engaged constituency are more likely to successfully identify and solve problems. Because community arts organizations serve as spaces for public discourse about art and other issues of mutual concern, they contribute significantly to the fostering of civil society. Civil society is recognized as one of those venues in which people learn to trust and build socio-political networks. Civil society is also recognized as the place in

which socially coordinated actions can occur efficiently. All of these characteristics are vital to furthering the goals of multiculturalism—particularly those associated with social reconstruction.

A multicultural orientation to art education requires that we think of art education across the life span as it takes place in a variety of formal and informal settings. Community arts organizations are just one venue that support this point of view. This orientation to art education suggests questions like the following.

What strategies can be used within pre-service and in-service art education preparation that promote a belief in learning across the life span in a variety of formal and informal venues?

In what way(s) can art educators working in a variety of educational settings promote the values, attitudes, beliefs, and skills associated with civic participation?

How can art educators working in cooperation with other constituencies promote national, regional, and local policy that supports the development of coalitions of arts and cultural organizations for the purpose of facilitating multicultural art education across the life span?

It is imperative that current versions and visions of art education explicitly address the role of community arts organizations. Community arts organizations should be among those venues addressed in pre-service and in-service art education preparation. Public policy emphasizing the role of art, arts organizations, and art education in civil society should be developed and implemented at local, regional, and national levels.