

Political Degradation of Human Rights and Art Education

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we argue that not educating all people about human rights adversely impacts the education of children, world poverty, police brutality, politics, and the environment. We also argue that the type of character leaders have can inform them of the importance of advancing human rights for all. As a practical and specific matter, the advancement of human rights is essential to achieve equality and justice for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other marginalized groups to promote peace, harmony, and civil rights in society. Peace and harmony should be normal in our schools and communities, but stress and conflict are commonplace, particularly with the rise of Fascism and Nazi influence by the conservative right-wing section of society who want to control educational policies. Peace and harmony lead to empathy to embrace kindness, grace, justice, and equity which directly influences social awareness for human rights. Without human rights, there is an existential threat to the normalization of society and we as art educators should be concerned and vigorously teach these concepts in our classrooms.

KEYWORDS: Civil Rights, Art Education, Leadership

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged us personally and collectively as a society. As a society, it has exposed long-simmering fault lines of unattainable human rights for many that have led to years of economic, racial, political, and social injustice and inequality that have had a tremendous historical impact on the poor that are particularly evident among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in the U.S. This impact has manifested itself in protests for Black Lives Matter after the police killing of predominantly Black people but also includes widespread racism and discrimination against marginalized groups.

The division in the federal government reflects the power that the conservative, right-wing politicians seek to control the freedoms and rights of the citizenry, especially women's health care issues, anti-Woke, an-

ti-LGBTQ+ rights, and freedom of educational access to banned books, films, and other aspects of comprehensive education. As reported on PBS (Jul 8, 2022, 6:30 PM EDT), *Florida moves to restrict what schools can teach about systemic racism*,

A new law in Florida has instituted restrictions on how schools and businesses can teach race-related concepts. The law, called the Stop Woke Act, limits instruction on critical race theory. It's the latest part of Republican Gov. Ron Desantis' extensive efforts to reshape public education and curriculum in the state.

The backlash to racial unrest like Black Lives Matter seemed to have been a White mob that invaded the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, and committed insurrection against their government. On ABC News, Brantley-Jones, (January 16, 2021, 2:57 PM) in the report, *False equivalency between Black Lives Matter and Capitol siege: Experts, advocates* stated that there is limited similarity between the incidents. As reported by ABC News, in her speech during the hearing, Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., condemned the president for "radicalizing his supporters" and "inciting them to willingly join with White supremacists, Neo-Nazis and para-military extremists in a siege of the United States Capitol building." This poses an existential threat to the long-held idea of a multicultural, multiracial, multilingual democracy in the U.S. that should be discussed in every classroom.

Ken Robinson (2011), a popular TED Talk motivational speaker and educator, said that we created the human world we now live in, and we can recreate it. In attempting to recreate the human world, we must first understand the scope of the problem, and this problem is epitomized by two recent events: the Black Lives Matter march and the predominately White mob invasion of the U.S. Capitol. The Black Lives Matter march was in essence a demand for human rights and the White mob invasion of the United States capitol was intended to maintain the status quo of the right-wing president's desire to remain in office even though he lost the election.

Without human rights, there will be no equality and justice for all, and there will always be conflicts that will escalate from time to time. There are many examples of this such as the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the history of South Africa's Apartheid state. Human dignity demands that everyone be afforded human rights, and without them, there will be no individual peace and harmony in society since peace and harmony begin with the internal experiences of the individual. Art education is a powerful tool to com-

municate this message and it can be employed to translate this into visual literacy with social media, exhibitions, poster campaigns, and 4-D images.

This paper reflects the ideas of two art educators on the current sociocultural situations in the U.S. and their classrooms. The current sociocultural situation in the U.S. and the topics in their classrooms are focused on a counternarrative of the organized and systematic effort to politically dehumanize human rights. For those who faultily believe that we are already advancing human rights for BIPOC and other marginalized groups, The NEA NEWS in *Freedom to Learn Day of Action*, noted:

Instead of cultivating belonging, critical thinking, and funding public schools, some politicians across the country are banning books, censoring curricula, and passing state laws that limit classroom lessons on race and gender. The effects are damaging. Teachers, principals, and administrators have lost their jobs; lives have been threatened, and students' freedom to learn, be themselves, and pursue their dreams have been compromised. (para 3)

The political degradation of human rights comes as no surprise given the history of the U.S. After reconstruction, the Black Codes and Jim Crow laws were instituted to continue to disenfranchise marginalized groups in society, particularly BIPOC, and at the same time, advance the legacy of slavery and White supremacy. Marginalizing BIPOC permits the rest of society to do the same or to make those who are marginalized feel inconsequential and subservient. Slavery and White supremacy surfaced in the 15th Century during Europe's Age of Discovery when countries like Britain, Spain, France, and Portugal colonized lands across North and South America and enslaved and exploited BIPOC. The dehumanization of human rights is the legacy of slavery and White supremacy, and this legacy is rebranded as White privilege that is now imbedded in the very systems of the U.S. society preventing the advancement of human rights with devastating human and environmental consequences. The following paragraphs discuss these consequences and provide some reflections on what we as art educators can do to challenge and interrogate the status quo.

Human Rights and Education

Education is supposed to be the equalizer in society, giving everyone, regardless of race or circumstances, an equal opportunity to succeed.

Instead, education advances Caucasian students and marginalizes the academic progress of BIPOC. It is well-documented that there is an ongoing achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students in the U.S. K-12 public education (Jencks & Phillips, 1998). African-American students seem to underperform academically in public schools. Is it that most African-American students cannot learn? This seems to be a misinformation message. How much stereotyping are we willing to blithely accept? According to Steele (2010), many underperforming groups are victims of “identity contingencies” (p. 4) and “stereotype threats” (p. 117). These conditions often determine students’ academic status. Some teachers and politicians blame parents while others blame teachers. Most assuredly it is a combination of many things such as poverty and a lingering traumatic history found in many sections of society at large, and we are all responsible in overt and subtle ways. All members of the community, including parents, teachers, politicians, business leaders, and the clergy need to understand this disparity. This pernicious violation of human rights, particularly in education, must be changed to advance equality and justice for all. The NEA NEWS in *Freedom to Learn Day of Action*, noted:

We cannot, and we will not, allow politicians to grasp and hold on to power by fueling fear and division and limiting our students’ access and opportunity to an honest and accurate and complete education,’ said NEA President Becky Pringle, in April, during an NEA webinar on the “power of truth,” adding that attacks on educators and their unions are driving teachers and education support staff out of the profession. ‘It is our shared responsibility to ensure that every student, every educator, and every school is excelling. (para. 3-4)

This change can start in the art education classroom with current event topics that motivate visual research and reflective images among students.

Human Rights and Unemployment

The lack of education poses another serious problem—job uncertainty and its sustainability. Job uncertainty threatens the economic future of those who are not afforded education and human rights. Trilling and Fadel (2009) discussed this uncertain future by chronicling economic changes. With the advancement of technology and the increase of self-serving corporate profits, workers are being replaced by robots to reduce costs. The reality is that automation is the future, and it will continue to affect traditional, blue-collar jobs across the private and

public sectors. Technology is not the enemy, it is a supporting tool for the progress of humanity, but education and social responsibility must be the lighthouse for future developments. Since capitalism cannot function without laborers, if we sign a contract for capitalism, labor needs certain safeguards for the entire system to function properly. We must support those who will experience poverty due to the nature of the capitalist system. Technology does not need to threaten our way of life, but through the lens of corporate greed, it can bring a great deal of uncertainty, fear, and anger to people seeking employment given the unemployment statistics. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics:

By race, Whites made up most of the labor force (77 percent). Blacks and Asians constituted an additional 13 percent and 7 percent, respectively. American Indians and Alaska Natives made up 1 percent of the labor force, while Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders accounted for less than half a percent. People who were of Two or More Races made up 2 percent of the labor force. People of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, who may be of any race, made up 18 percent of the total labor force. Almost 9 in 10 Hispanics in the labor force were White (89 percent). Another 4 percent were Black, and 1 percent were Asian. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022)

This uncertainty impacts all people. A consequence of automation and technology makes the future less predictable. What the future holds in one or two decades for our citizens' employment is uncertain. But this phenomenon at the same time can create a dynamic future, developing many possibilities to be innovative and creative in new businesses and to discover different ways to function successfully in this global community (Morgenson, 2009). This dynamic future is not promised to those who are not educated and who are not granted human rights, and this must change by insisting that human rights are taught and practiced in the education enterprise and more specifically in our classrooms.

The unpredictable nature of jobs can motivate fear and hate of BIPOC members. Since fear is a major contributor to negative reactions to otherness, interacting with others who are different is a profound opportunity to broaden understanding, which reduces self-serving sense by familiarizing ourselves with otherness. By changing our art education curricula, pedagogies, and philosophies, we can promote and sustain a clear trajectory of taking care of ourselves, others, and the community. Taking care of self, others, and the community is a way to advance our

collective futures. The Igbo and Yoruba proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child,” was made popular in the Western world through Clinton’s book, *It Takes a Village* (Clinton, 1996). What the African communities have understood for generations is that it takes the entire community to educate children. However, in our communities in the U.S., the responsibility for the growth and development of children is not so clear-cut, and perhaps this is why we are having this disparity.

The Impact on Education

Are we moving too fast for our own good? Did COVID-19 virtual learning increase stress, depression, anxiety, and agoraphobia in our students? We are all (parents, schools, and governments) responsible for the growth and well-being of our children. None can avoid abdicating their responsibility to provide a safe and caring environment for their children. As Williams (July 28, 2023) reported in *Covid Changed Student Behavior—How Are Schools Responding?*

Early data on children’s mental well-being during (and even before) the pandemic should have been a warning sign. By May 2021, for example, 71 percent of families said the pandemic was negatively affecting their children’s mental health, and social isolation topped families’ list of unhealthy aspects of the pandemic—ahead of remote learning, excessive screen time, and even fear of the virus itself. It was inevitable that kids brought these struggles—and rusty social skills—back to campus as schools reopened. (para. 10)

Communities, and their respective governments, cannot shirk their human rights responsibilities to provide resources for K-12 school students, especially in art education programs where the topics found in human rights can be taught at every level. Unfortunately, it is common to find funding reduction or elimination of art programs affecting minorities in poor schools. Educating students to be successful is a crucial investment to prepare and advance our communities for an unknown future. To this end, adequate funding for K-12 schools is a collective responsibility; one that requires community leadership and members to meet, discuss, and support equitable strategies to advance a quality education for all, but most importantly, a good education alleviates poverty. Doepke and De La Croix (21 Sept 2007), noted in *Politics and the Structure of Education funding*:

How is the quality of public education affected by the presence of private schools for the rich? Theory and evidence suggest

that the link crucially depends on the structure of the political system. A large private education sector can benefit public schools in a broad-based democracy where politicians are responsive to the needs of families using public schools, but leads to disastrous outcomes in a society that is politically dominated by the rich. (para 1)

In opposition to the current status of educational restrictions and the right-wing conservative agendas in the U.S., we must continue to shine a light on equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice as quality educational experiences for all students even in the face of contemporary Neo-Fascist and Neo-Nazi rhetoric from Trump and his followers' policies. As noted by Giroux (2022) in *Cultural Politics and the Crisis of Education and Political Agency*:

The political war on education is now a central project of the menacing thrust toward authoritarianism in the United States. What is new is that the specter of fascism consists of both a right-wing attack to control and eliminate public and higher education as democratic public spheres and the waging of a full-scale attack on those elements of education that enable young people and others to become informed and critical citizens. This is a deeply anti-democratic movement increasingly embraced by states controlled by the Republican Party. The ideological thrust of this war on education is evident in recent remarks by Larry Arnn, who, as the president of Hillsdale College noted that teaching is our trade; and it's also our weapon.

We don't need to weaponize art education but value each person and teach persistence, flexibility, cooperation, and collaboration—the very skills needed in a changing future. Despite the rough terrain in contemporary politics that directly impacts personal educational experiences, we teach real-life experiences and value each person for their abilities and potentialities as they move into the future.

Human Rights and World Poverty

It is unimaginable that so many people are living in poverty when so few families control the world's wealth. In the U.S., there has been an ongoing concern about the inequity of the U.S. tax laws as seen in an excerpt from the Center on Budget and Policy, as Marr, Jacoby, and Fenton noted in their article *The 2017 Trump Tax Law Was Skewed to the Rich, Expensive, and Failed to Deliver on Its Promises*:

The tax cuts [in 2025] will average \$61,090 for the top 1 percent — and \$252,300 for the top one-tenth of 1 percent. The law will boost the after-tax incomes of households in the top 1 percent by 2.9 percent in 2025, roughly three times the 0.9 percent gain for households in the bottom 60 percent, TPC estimates.[10] The tax cuts that year will average \$61,090 for the top 1 percent — and \$252,300 for the top one-tenth of 1 percent. The 2017 law also widens racial disparities in after-tax income. (para 11)

This is a failure to advance human rights to all so people can provide for and sustain themselves. In his book, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, Pogge (2008) reported that an estimated 830 million human beings are chronically under-nourished; 1,100 million lack access to safe drinking water; 2,600 million lack access to basic sanitation; 1,000 million lack adequate shelter; 1,600 million lack electricity; 2,000 million lack access to essential medical treatment; 774 million adults are illiterate; and there are 218 million child laborers. Furthermore, he stated that as of 2004, 2,533 million people, or 39.7 percent of us are living in severe poverty.

Bad things happen when good people say or do nothing. What are we doing personally and collectively to address the situation? These are questions we all need to ask ourselves and our students. Can art education students help by working in food kitchens or delivering meals to physically immobile people? Many college students are helping. From the Farmlink Project homepage, it is noted:

Each year in the United States, billions of pounds of food go to waste. At the same time, millions of Americans suffer from food insecurity. The Farmlink Project aims to alleviate food insecurity and reduce food waste by connecting farms with a surplus of fresh, nutritious produce to communities in need. We are a group of university students committed to alleviating the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. When our college campuses closed in March 2020 in response to COVID-19, many of us found ourselves back at home with the urge to help those struggling in this pandemic. The Farmlink Project was born in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we have plans to become a long-term and sustainable organization in the fight against food insecurity and food waste. Our team comprises more than 100 students from colleges and universities across the country. (para 1)

The alignment of K-12 schools to this project could provide much-needed financial contributions and volunteer support. We learn much more deeply to be better citizens when we are helping others. This is a valuable life lesson that can be taught in any art classroom. We can envision many art educators initiating projects from a poster campaign to supporting local gardens.

Janice Willis, a secondary English teacher in a public high school, organized and promoted a fund-raiser in her school for the Invisible Children, Inc., which is:

an organization that was founded in 2004 to increase awareness of the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Central Africa, and its leader, Joseph Kony. We know that those most impacted by violence and exploitation are the ones with the solutions to end them. That's why we partner with dedicated community leaders on innovative programs that empower local communities to protect each other from violence, heal from trauma, and demand justice from their leaders. (para 1)

It was immensely productive for these high school students and their teachers to understand how to help others suffering from poverty in a distant land and the importance of human rights for all locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

Human Rights and Police Brutality

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations reminds us that all people have the right to life; liberty and security; to not be submitted to slavery, servitude, forced labor, or bonded labor; to not be subjected to torture and/or cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment. While poverty sometimes leads to inhumane degrading treatment, the legacies of slavery seem to be the primary factor when it comes to police brutality in the U.S. Worth Rises (September 14, 2023) characterizes it this way:

Slavery is the evil that has loomed over [the US] our nation since its founding. Its racist legacy - carried through Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, Mass incarceration, and police brutality - continues to threaten the li[v]es of Black people and other people of color. The Black Codes and Jim Crow laws in the former Confederate States of America mandated racial segregation that began in the 1870s and has now manifested itself in systematic racial and cultural discrimination throughout society (Fremon, 2000).

There have always been complaints about police brutality from BIPOC communities in the U.S., and historically, these complaints were never taken seriously. Perhaps we citizens could not believe that law enforcement who are sworn to protect our communities are instead violating the civil rights of the BIPOC communities. Some recent examples of civil rights violations by the police are: Eric Garner was choked to death by New York City Police officers (ABC News, 2017); thirty-seven-year-old Alton Sterling was shot and killed by a Baton Rouge police officer (CNN, 2018); Terence Crutcher, whose hands were up and who was unarmed, was shot and killed by Tulsa police (CNN, 2017); and, twelve-year-old Tamir Rice, while playing with a toy gun in a park, was shot and killed by a Cleveland, Ohio, police officer (BBC News, 2014).

These are just a few of the many cases. Did good people say and do something to make sure that justice was served? Now that we know, what is being done? This is a perfect (albeit a bad) situation for discussions in the art classroom that can promote a broader and more sensitive understanding textually, orally, and visually of human rights and police brutality in society. These topics could provide amazing opportunities to organize exhibitions in the school, a civic center, or a public online forum to educate the citizens about their importance and imagine the skills these young artists could develop. Human rights violations, we must remember, are one of the principal causes of the Black Lives Matter movement and part of the turmoil in society.

Human Rights and the Environment

Climate change is most likely not directly threatening affluent people and if it does, they have the resources to mitigate its effect on them. Economically challenged individuals are most likely to live in areas impacted by climate change and their conditions most likely are caused by the lack of human rights. The relationship between human rights and environmental protection in international law is far from straightforward, but we have an obligation and a responsibility to leave an intact environment for future generations of all species. Despite this obligation and responsibility, we continue to burn enormous amounts of fossil fuels for short-term financial gain at the expense of preserving the environment. Kennedy and Tyson (March 1, 2024) present their view in their Pew Research Center article on *How Republicans view climate change and energy issues*:

Republican leaders have staked out different positions on climate and energy issues. Some, including former President

Donald Trump, have called climate change a “hoax” and downplayed the link between human activity and a warming planet. Others, including some congressional Republicans, have proposed policies to address climate change, such as supporting more nuclear power and the development of carbon capture technology. (para 1)

The rising temperature near the Earth’s surface, the melting of the polar ice caps, and the increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are all integrally related to climate change and habitat destruction. According to *Earth Day*:

The scientific evidence is clear and irrefutable — human activity is causing our planet to warm at an alarming rate. International bodies of scientists have warned that we have just over a decade to half our emissions to avoid the most devastating impacts of climate change on our food supply, national security, global health, extreme weather, and more. (Earth Day, 2020 & Gates, 2021)

For example, increased carbon dioxide has a disastrous effect on marine life. This is not a political affiliation, but the very survival of our species. According to the NOAA, carbon dioxide in the earth’s atmosphere is rising. Carbon dioxide is an important greenhouse gas, however, increasing carbon dioxide causes the ocean to become acidic. Increased acidity interferes with marine life’s ability to build their shells and skeletons. The amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has risen by 25% since 1958, and by about 40% since the Industrial Revolution (NOAA, 2019).

The burning of fossil fuels for corporate profit is increasing carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. Strong environmental protection rules must be re-established and regulated for the protection of all species on the planet. There are signs that young people are mobilizing politically to fight to protect the environment. According to the CAP20 website, (March 6, 2024) *The Biden Administration Has Taken More Climate Action Than Any Other in History*,

From comprehensive legislation to ambitious executive action, the Biden administration has set the United States on a new course of climate action. Not only does this mark a profound break from the policies of the Trump administration, but it also amounts to more action on climate than any other administration in history. (para 1)

As art educators, we must teach our students the awareness of global and local sustainability and encourage the development of clean, sustainable energy, and the protection of the environment. A leading question teachers could ask students is, “What image can you create to generate an increased awareness in the community about climate change?”

Human Rights and the Responsibility of Leaders

Perhaps one of the most important things we can do to ensure the advancement of human rights for all is to select the correct leaders to lead our communities, states, and country given the legacies of racism and discrimination in the U.S. Who might these leaders be? What characteristic traits should this person have to convince us that they can successfully lead this effort? To create the ideal leader, three characteristics that this person should have to be a successful leader are spirituality, humanity, and responsibility (Richards & Willis, 2023). Spirituality is not religious dogma, but the inner capacity to do good and to be kind and benevolent. Humanity is respecting the qualities and conditions of our neighbors across the street and national borders. Responsibility is taking care of self and family, ensuring equality and justice for all, and protecting the environment. This describes someone ready for the responsibility to lead a multiracial, multicultural, and multilingual community of people.

What are the specific responsibilities of this leader when it comes to human rights? What should we see to convince us that this leader is successfully doing the job? The responsibility of this leader, locally, nationally, and globally, is to set the tone for the advancement of human rights and thus, must accept the responsibility to prohibit discrimination based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, property, or birth. Furthermore, leaders must ensure that all people have the right to life, liberty, and security. To be free from gendered violence; achieve the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; find just and favorable conditions of work; to an adequate standard of living; to social security; and promote children to special protection (endslaverynow.org). While this is the responsibility of leaders in society, these human rights are not always extended to marginalized groups, and as a result, we have turmoil in society.

The Human Rights Tracker is a project by the Columbia Human Rights Law Review supported by Columbia Law School’s Human Rights Institute. This list of violations is from that website. Though long, it is an

important view of what the Trump administration did (see Figure 1). Each topic also includes a brief narrative too lengthy to include here. All of this information can be found at <https://trumphumanrightstracker.law.columbia.edu/>.

The Human Rights Tracker

- October 04, 2019 Trump proclamation bars immigrants who cannot pay for healthcare
- August 23, 2019 Justice Department argues that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act does not protect LGBTQ and transgender workers against employment discrimination
- March 31, 2019 Trump's Justice Department submits legal filing asking the Fifth Circuit to invalidate the Affordable Care Act
- March 07, 2019 U.S. government tracked and impeded journalists, attorneys, and activists working at the border
- March 07, 2019 Trump Administration asks Pentagon for space to hold 5,000 migrant children
- March 06, 2019 US intelligence officials will no longer report the number of civilians killed in US airstrikes
- February 01, 2019 Health and Human Services Office currently unable and unwilling to return migrant children to parents
- January 25, 2019 Federal workers forced to work during the government shutdown have not been paid
- January 24, 2019 Trump administration to start sending asylum seekers to wait in Mexico
- December 28, 2018 Trump moves to freeze pay for federal workers amid government shutdown
- December 28, 2018 Trump administration suggest mercury limits on coal plants no longer necessary
- November 17, 2018 Trump administration gives itself more power to deport survivors of human trafficking and domestic abuse
- November 09, 2018 Trump blocks migrants from applying for asylum
- November 07, 2018 Trump administration releases federal rules allowing employers to deny birth control coverage
- July 31, 2018 Judge rules Trump administration must stop giving migrant kids psychotropic drugs without consent
- June 29, 2018 Migrant children allegedly forced to take drugs
- June 24, 2018 Parents pressured into voluntary deportation in exchange for their kids
- June 17, 2018 Parents deported without their children
- June 16, 2018 Over 2,000 children separated from parents at the U.S.-Mexico border between May 5 and June 9
- June 11, 2018 Sessions says domestic and gang violence are not grounds for asylum

June 03, 2018 San Juan Mayor calls Trump's "Total Neglect" of Puerto Rico a violation of human rights

May 23, 2018 ACLU reports abuses and neglect of immigrant children at the border

May 22, 2018 DeVos: Schools should decide whether to report undocumented kids

May 04, 2018 Trump administration distorts data to justify draconian immigration policies

April 06, 2018 Trump administration launches a "zero tolerance" policy separating families at the border

February 09, 2018 New Report Documents Physical, Mental Health Care Deficiencies in New Jersey Detention Facilities

January 25, 2018 The EPA allows increase in toxic air pollutants

January 10, 2018 Trump administration censors climate change content on government websites

January 08, 2018 Trump ends TPS for 200K Salvadorans

January 04, 2018 Trump administration reverses protections for drilling in the Atlantic seaboard

December 01, 2017 U.S. embraces cluster munitions, a weapon banned by 102 nations

November 20, 2017 Acting Secretary of Homeland Security terminates the TPS designation for Haiti

October 28, 2017 Trump signs new counterterrorism operations rules, loosening prior Obama-era constraints

October 13, 2017 New anti-immigrant military policy prevents green-card holders from military service

October 12, 2017 United States notifies UNESCO of intention to withdraw from body

October 12, 2017 Acting HHS Secretary releases Memo directing government agencies to halt "Cost Sharing Reduction" payments to insurers

October 06, 2017 New rules exempt employers from providing birth control based on religious or moral objections

October 04, 2017 Sessions reverses DOJ policy prohibiting employment discrimination based on transgender status

September 29, 2017 U.S. votes against Human Rights Council resolution condemning use of the death penalty for consensual same sex relations

September 29, 2017 Trump significantly lowers the cap on refugees to 45,000 persons

September 24, 2017 Third travel ban indefinitely bans entry of citizens from Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Chad and North Korea

September 22, 2017 Department of Education rescinds the Obama-era policy on how colleges should investigate sexual assaults

September 18, 2017 DHS plans to collect social media information on all immigrants and naturalized citizens

September 14, 2017 U.S. Government denies detainee access to lawyer

September 05, 2017 Trump administration ends Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) Program

August 29, 2017 Trump administration halts Obama-era equal pay rule

June 16, 2017 Education Department scales back civil rights investigations

May 10, 2017 Attorney General orders tougher sentencing guidelines including re-introduction of mandatory minimums

May 03, 2017 Secretary of State de-emphasizes human rights concerns in interactions with foreign relations

March 29, 2017 Secretary of State lifts human rights conditions on arms sale to Bahrain

March 28, 2017 Trump dismantles federal climate change efforts

March 27, 2017 Trump revokes protections for women in the workplace

March 24, 2017 Department of State issues Presidential permit to TransCanada for Keystone XL pipeline

March 23, 2017 Secretary of State orders “increased scrutiny” and “mandatory checks of social media history” for some visa applicants

March 21, 2017 U.S. does not attend hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

March 13, 2017 State Department invites Anti-LGBT Hate Group to U.N. Commission on the Status of Women

March 12, 2017 Trump pulls U.S. out of U.N. global compact on migration

March 06, 2017 Trump reinstates ban of citizens of six Muslim-majority countries into the U.S. for 90 days and ban on all refugees entering the U.S. for 120 days

March 03, 2017 Secretary of State does not attend annual presentation of State Department’s human rights report

February 28, 2017 DOJ requests dismissal of discriminatory purpose claim in a challenge to Texas voter ID law

February 22, 2017 DOJ withdraws federal guidelines that made clear students could use bathrooms matching their gender identity

February 21, 2017 DHS mandates policies that expand arrest, detention, and deportation of undocumented migrants

February 16, 2017 Trump repeals rule restricting coal companies from dumping mine waste in streams

February 14, 2017 Trump cancels a regulation requiring energy and mining companies to disclose payments to foreign governments

February 10, 2017 DOJ withdraws motion to stay in transgender students’ bathroom rights case

February 03, 2017 USDA removes animal welfare reports from own website

January 27, 2017 Trump bans entry of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen nationals for 90 days

January 27, 2017 Trump bans refugee admission for 120 days and indefinitely prohibits entry of all Syrian refugees

January 25, 2017 Trump seeks to block federal funding to sanctuary cities
January 25, 2017 Trump limits privacy rights of non U.S. citizens
January 25, 2017 Trump revives discredited "Secure Communities," paves way for expanded immigration detention and deportation, and orders construction of border wall
January 23, 2017 Trump reinstates and broadens "Global Gag" rule
January 21, 2017 Trump administration advances construction of halted Dakota Access & Keystone XL Pipelines

Figure 1. *The Human Rights Tracker*
<https://trumphumanrightstracker.law.columbia.edu/>

In the face of such information, we as educators tend to promote knowledge and experience as essential, but civil rights are just the beginning in a world where many people who need help are facing poverty, an environmental crisis, homelessness, non-existent health care, and minimal social support provided by the Trump Administration as evidenced in Figure 1. But as art educators, our contribution to advancing human rights should start with our work in our classrooms concerning humanity through our art education curricula and pedagogy that must temper the harshness, ruthlessness, and abuse seen on the streets and are reported as daily news.

We must teach equality and fairness and hold our students, fellow teachers, administrators, and communities accountable. Our efforts must groom our students as future citizens and leaders alike in the concept of civil rights that advocates for taking care of self, others, the community, and the environment.

Robinson (2007) suggested that through our creativity and ingenuity, we can unite for a common purpose of justice and equity. Mahatma Gandhi noted in his march to equity, to be the change that you wish to see in the world. As we seek to recreate our classrooms, communities, and nation and be the change we wish to see, we cannot ignore the root causes of the turmoil in society. History tells us that the turmoil in society is a sign of its demise, but a significant and comprehensive art education program informs us that everyone must be better prepared for positive socio-cultural responsibilities. These sociocultural responsibilities, if grounded in the tenets of civil rights, would focus on the connections to others so that we are not manipulated by divisive fear-based rhetoric that generates federal, state, and local legislation that denies equality. Divisive fear-based rhetoric separates us in many different ways and is at the core of the lack of leadership to prepare us for

the consequences of a diverse population (Hamid, 2017), but education through the arts can provide us with the experience, knowledge, and understanding to advance human rights.

Conclusion

The political degradation of human rights is a deliberate institutionalized systematic problem intended to marginalize BIPOC and other marginalized groups in society. While individual efforts are made to improve the human condition, they will not be fully addressed until the political dehumanization of human rights is decolonized. Art education is about freedom of thought and expression, and it can challenge and interrogate the dehumanization of human rights. Human rights must be afforded to all of us to sustain a multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual democracy. The violation of human rights for one person is a violation of human rights for all of us because the violation of human rights makes us less safe and can result in conflicts that shatter peace and harmony in society. Each person is created equal and should receive equality and justice in every aspect of their lives, especially in education. This responsibility includes justice and equity for us, our families, our communities and schools, and protecting our environment. Facing the myriads of current right-wing, Fascist, and Nazi aggressions are what we label as *Educational Terrorists*. Education has become the contentious issue of our time, and we must make changes in the foundational curricula and pedagogy that lead us forward with kindness, grace, and gentility as we support civil rights for each person. We must see ourselves as an integral part of something greater than ourselves. We can develop allegiances to support civil and educational actions to advance human rights with priorities for local, regional, national, and global peace, justice, tolerance, and harmony to contribute to enhancing everyone's lives.

Human rights are linked to peace and harmony in society. The legacies of White supremacy, White nationalism, Neo-Fascism, Neo-Nazism, racism, and discrimination are not only depriving BIPOC and marginalized groups in society of equality and justice, but it is depriving us all of the promises of a truly multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual democracy that advances human rights and peace and harmony in our society. In addition, the legacies of racism and discrimination have driven some of us to irrational thinking and actions to maintain the status quo of White supremacy. White supremacy is about White people demanding the right to dominate and exploit people from other races. To this end, the ubiquity of social media and personal agenda fake news is ever-present. There is a strategy that when you say, hear,

or see something enough times (true or not), it morphs into believable facts even when there is no evidence. Regardless of political affiliation or lack thereof, we must consider the erosion of democracy by a single narrative of misinformation. We must be courageous in our questioning of our politicians and our neighbors. We must vote at every level—that’s our civil authority. We can also vote with our dollars to support those who are like-minded to reinforce the advancement of human rights for all citizens.

Martin Niemöller (1892–1984) was a prominent Lutheran pastor in Germany. He emerged as an outspoken public foe of Adolf Hitler and spent the last seven years of Nazi rule in concentration camps. His avid opposition to Hitler is reflected in his poem:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—
because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak
out—because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because
I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak
for me.

As art educators, we cannot embrace the ostrich principle of hiding our heads in the sand. We can no longer acquiesce to the lack of human rights for anyone. Let’s start with changing what and how we teach, rethinking the value we place on historical (mis)truths through multiple narratives, and teaching the creative and collaborative endeavors that enhance each student through critical and analytical abilities. Let’s rethink and resist the unusable curricula and pedagogy of the past and embrace what has value to bring forward a different classroom practice to advance human rights to secure peace and harmony in all societies locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. We must always remember that education through art can be the catalyst for recreating the human world in which we want to live.

Guiding Questions

- By understanding yourself and the philosophy of peace, harmony, and responsibility, how can you teach human rights visually?
- Can you reduce the fear of practicing human rights and teach this responsibility to your students?
- How can you influence your students’ thinking about managing human rights with peace, harmony, and responsibility in your

- classroom to enhance kindness, grace, and civility?
- Can you teach your students to investigate how human rights are embedded in an environment that is hostile, toxic, and ubiquitous in BIPOC communities?
- How can you embrace your students' human rights, needs, insecurities, and fears and develop specific student-teacher relationships focused on peace, harmony, and responsibility to emphasize the awareness of human rights?

What strategies can be developed to support courageous artmaking, particularly with students who are not mainstream and have had negative experiences with human rights violations?

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