

## Troubles and Sweets: Reflecting Critically on Historical Offerings for Contemporary Issues

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### ABSTRACT

Implementing critical reflective practice, an art education professor details the design of a preservice undergraduate-level learning module to address troubling anti-trans legislation in their state. While centering contemporary art featuring a historically significant local hero, a drag queen by the name of Sweet Evening Breeze, and resisting a didactic or progress narrative, the author reflects on power dynamics, centering joy, and the importance of partnerships in art teacher preparation.

**KEYWORDS:** Critical Reflective Practice, LGBTQIA+, Preservice Art Teacher, History, Local History, Policy

Art teacher preparation programs are tasked with continually shifting their curriculum to meet the challenges of an ever-changing political climate. Particularly in the United States, the rapid increase of anti-LGBTQIA+ laws are cause for alarm for higher education programs, preservice educators, and K12 teachers. The rushed pace and intentional rumor mill of misinformation generate crisis as an omnipresent narrative in our contemporary historical moment (Roitman, 2013). The fear, anxiety, and urgency of crisis narratives leave educators primed to react and poised to censor themselves and their curricula to protect their jobs, themselves, and their students (Lavietes, 2022; Modan, 2023). Amidst this and the process of curriculum planning for an undergraduate art teacher preparation course, a soft whisper from the specter of Sweet Evening Breeze carried messages of possibilities and of Black, queer joy embedded in local history and contemporary art.

In this paper, I will reflect on a learning module I designed inspired by a mural of James Herndon (1892-1983), a historical figure from Lexington, Kentucky known best by his drag name, Sweet Evening Breeze, “Sweets” for short. Sweets was famous to mythical proportion and rendered as historical legend for her unabashed evening strolls through downtown as a woman in her dresses, makeup, wig, and signature parasol, for his longstanding employment as a hospital orderly and his generosity as a fundraiser for his church that served

local Black communities, and for their hospitality in creating safe spaces, particularly in their home, for LGBTQIA+ folks in Lexington. Since 2021, her likeness in a three-story monochromatic purple mural raises a glass to history, joy, and pride in the work *Mother of Us All* by the artist Gaia (Figure 1).

Sweet Evening Breeze became an anchor for my course curriculum design as I questioned how to address our state’s anti-LGBTQIA+ policies and their relationship to art education. The *Mother of Us All* mural inspired and coaxed forward an abundance of creative strategies for navigating through contemporary policies and moved away from the message of constrictive crisis. Sweets lit a path for my love of research into histories of place, my curiosity to learn from marginalized histories, and my desire to create meaningful curricula in support of future art educators. Through *critical reflective practice* (Hood & Travis, 2023), I describe the design, implementation, and outcomes of centering joy, local history, and contemporary art in a university course for preservice art teachers.



**Figure 1.** Gaia, *Mother of Us All*, 2021, Mural in collaboration with PRHBTN in Lexington, KY. 161 N. Limestone St Lexington, KY. Courtesy of the artist Gaia.

### Critical Reflective Practice

Art educators Emily Hood and Sarah Travis (2023) state, “A critical reflective practice involves careful observation of the power dynamics

of the socially situated self with others in everyday interactions” (p. 28). Therefore, in utilizing critical reflective practice as a methodology, it is important to include my positionality within professional and personal social contexts. As a professor with academic freedom, I am in a position of power and privilege to determine curricular emphasis and course design. Situated within the academy, I have access to resources for research and benefit from the authority of the institution to connect with community fairly easily as partners in pedagogy and scholarship. I recognize that I can leverage such privilege and power towards learning opportunities for my students and for myself.

As a white, cis-gendered, straight woman shaped by a rural, protestant, and conservative upbringing in the US South, my practice of *becoming* (Byrne, 2021; Deleuze, 1997; Manning & Massumi, 2014) an art educator and an ally is always in negotiation with un/re-learning. While resisting didacticism and progress narratives, critical reflective practice offers a centering of praxis and an exercise to uncover pluralities of meaning from the pedagogical experience of being an instructor and a learner. Hood and Travis (2023) provide five non-linear components of engaging in critical reflective practice: intention, flashpoint, description, consciousness, and transformation. Within these components, a critically reflective practitioner notices often uncomfortable phenomenological moments of realizations (flashpoints), thoroughly documents the moments (description), and makes decisions to engage with them (intention) towards a deeper understanding of encounters with critical awareness, specifically around intersectional issues such as race, gender, class, ability, and other sociocultural identities. The phrase *stay with the trouble* from Donna Haraway (2016) similarly describes the work of critical reflection in practice. In this paper, I will attempt to stay with the trouble implementing a critical reflective practice as I unfold the details of the learning module I designed for my course.

## Troubles

Kentucky Senate Bill 150 (SB150), passed in March 2023, is an omnibus anti-trans legislation banning affirming healthcare, bathroom access, and pronoun use. As CJ Daniels (2023) reported for local news, “The bill bans gender affirming care for anyone under 18; bans schools from teaching anything about gender expression, sexual orientation or gender identity and also allows teachers to ignore a student’s preferred pronouns” (para. 5). SB150 is among an alarming number of bills in other states enacting similar legislation designed to continually repress marginalized individuals and communities. This slew of legislation is

a demarcation of our contemporary moment, which will become part of its historical framing.

History demonstrates that exclusion and marginalization are tools of oppression. Designed as a perceived threat to societal norms or ideologies, moral panics like the contemporary anti-trans movement succeed in generating crisis (Roitman, 2013) and instilling uncertainty and even fear towards the rise in authoritarian politics (Avery & Mondon, 2023). As a result, public servants like educators become caught in a culture war and moral dilemma, with choices like supporting and caring for marginalized communities or facing mob-like panic and the threat of losing your career (Carter, 2023; 2024). These historical and contemporary moments are troubling and confusing.

### *Intention*

As a professor with teacher preparation as a major part of my job responsibilities, I often grapple with how best to support my students as learners and future educators. In my teaching practice, I strive to neither ignore nor center panic-generating crises, but instead to offer tools and make space for critical analysis and *emergent strategies* (brown, 2017) towards a better experience for future art educators, their students, and as citizens of our state and country. The process of curriculum design, course preparation, and of continually becoming an art education professor and an ally to marginalized communities generate questions and troubles including: what will it mean to engage with increasingly 'illegal' subject matter in a teacher preparation course? Are my tools, both teaching and personal, adequate to address the concerns of students in their own journeys of becoming? What do I do to prepare my students?

Through an intentional engagement with critical reflective practice (Hood & Travis, 2023), I attempt to dissect some of these questions. On the first question of (il)legal knowledge in educational institutions, I rationalize that, at least at the current moment, university professors are protected by academic freedoms in ways that are not always afforded to practicing public school teachers. It is critically important to utilize academic freedom to model inquiry, research, and teaching practices. It is also vital to recognize the students in the course, who will be teachers, may not be afforded the same freedoms. Therefore, the curricular design for my course must hold space for troubling the limitations and testing the *pliability* (Lucero & Lewis, 2018) of engaging critical practices in their future classrooms. In my initial speculations on engaging with increasingly illegal subject matter, I determined that

it will likely mean that regardless of the curriculum design, we won't arrive at conclusive and maybe not even satisfying answers; and yet, we may better understand our roles and responsibilities within the context of current and future spaces for art education. The possibility decidedly makes the pursuit worthwhile.

With the second question, I have enough teaching and personal tools to know that I don't have enough tools! I began to reflect on the skills and scaffolding that may need to happen to create a well-designed curriculum and facilitate a meaningful experience with the throughline of contemporary art. As someone new to the history and city of Lexington, Kentucky and who does not have the lived experience of being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, I was unsure of how I might utilize my teaching and personal tools to specifically address SB150 and its ramifications for arts educators in my art teacher preparation course. Through the practice of staying with the trouble and continually reflecting on these questions of curricular design, I recalled something that a graduate student I worked with taught me the semester before—that a queen from Lexington's past called Sweet Evening Breeze took famous strolls around downtown where she was well known and maybe even accepted by the community. Starting with Sweets, I began to work on answering the third question, to unpack what I could do to support and prepare my students as future art teachers.

### *Flashpoint*

In 2021, artist Gaia finished his mural *Mother of Us All* in collaboration with PRHBTN, an arts organization that commissioned around forty large public murals in Lexington between 2012 and 2022. Featured across the United States and in several countries, Gaia's work aims to portray and celebrate marginalized histories and local heroes from underserved communities specific to the places the murals are located ("Sweet Evening Breeze" blows, 2021). *Mother of Us All* is a contemporary artwork portraying Sweet Evening Breeze, a historical, marginalized LGBTQIA+ figure specific to Lexington, Kentucky. The mural provided an in-road to design my course curriculum. Observing Sweets' monochromatic purple salute within the mural prompted a pedagogical flashpoint (Travis & Lewis, 2023), which in this case was a welcoming sensation sparking curiosity, wonder, and joy. Travis and Lewis (2023) articulate that flashpoints are "educational moments" that "unexpected[ly] rupture our everyday practices and plans" in "often disturbing ways" (p. 345). However, they argue that along with postcritical phenomenologies of education, art education offers

flashpoints both aware of critical-structural inequalities and offer joyful opportunity for “acts of collective embodiment in and against the conditions of our radically dystopian times” (p. 346). In other words, art education offers opportunity for creative avenues that celebrate collectivity. As an educator, I began to connect how the story of Sweets which encompasses both joy and systemic criticality could guide preservice teachers towards an exploration of past and present within art education.

## Sweet Evening Breeze

Sweet Evening Breeze was well known during her time and their popularity continues to the present. Many anecdotes of their life are documented across the internet, preserving his story for contemporary and future audiences. She is featured in the Faulkner Morgan Archive (Sweet Evening Breeze, n.d.). In addition, the documentary film *The Last Gospel of the Pagan Babies*, highlights stories of Sweets (Donohue, et. al., 2017) and a forthcoming book by Maryjean Wall will further unpack the intersectionality of identities and local histories entwined with Sweet Evening Breeze’s life (Blackford, 2022). In this paper, I will share a few stories of Sweets to establish their significance in the local history and culture. I do not know the preferred pronouns of James Herndon—Sweet Evening Breeze; different sources use different pronouns. For example, Sweets briefly appears as a character in Cormac McCarthy’s (1979) novel *Suttree* referred to as “Her. Him. It.” and “That thing” (p. 412). I choose a more respectful approach to Sweet’s pronouns and use he, she, and they interchangeably to represent Sweets throughout this paper. I imagine she would appreciate the ambiguity and slightly disarming affect it may have on readers. Perhaps uncertainty through queering the norm was a tactic Sweets utilized to navigate a difficult period of history for someone like them. As Michael Fjordson (2016) states, “In a time when being gay, black, or trans-anything was most often met with general hostility at best (especially in the south), Sweet Evening Breeze was openly, unapologetically all of the above” (para. 3).

Based in Lexington, Sweets worked most of his professional career as a hospital orderly “as a man in pants” and was very active in his church “sometimes dressed as a man” serving as a significant fundraiser for the Black community of his church (Blackford, 2022, p. 1C). She also “enjoyed playing the piano, dressing up in women’s clothes and makeup, and entertaining at his house on Prall Street” (Rapchak, n.d., para. 3). Their gender ambiguity, conspicuousness, and, notably, their generous contributions to multiple communities within the city



earned them historical and contemporary recognition. The Prall Street house still stands, and historical record notes its offering of a safe space to many, especially including LGBTQIA+ identified people. The endearing title, *Mother of Us All*, given to Sweets in a 1970 photograph by John Ashley of Sweet Evening Breeze, and after which the 2021 Gaia mural is also named, indicates the position of Sweets as the initiator of Lexington's drag scene and of someone who provided safety and care as a matriarch within queer communities. However, Jonathan Coleman, Director of the Faulkner Morgan Archive, notes that there is a general mythos of Sweets being unaffected by violence stating, "she wasn't [relatively safe]; there are plenty of stories about her being assaulted or her home being vandalized that show up in the paper. So that's a myth but she did seem to be less bothered" (quoted in Blackford, 2022, para. 9). In other words, Sweets was not without troubles like gendered and racialized violence especially common for their time but found ways to navigate and support others facing similar discrimination. The historically marginalized, local hero who was Sweet Evening Breeze is presented through a celebratory mythos of unapologetic authenticity of self and rebellious anecdotes of queering the norm and is memorialized in contemporary public art.

### *Description*

The Sweet Evening Breeze in the purple mural raised their glass to the viewer and prompted my flashpoint. To describe it, I met the rendered gaze of Sweets in the right moment so that my questions of curriculum to support art teachers and their navigation of discriminatory laws inspired a connection with local history and current practice. It was an 'aha!' moment that prompted excitement and spurred curiosity. Gaia's mural and the historic Sweets offered a flashpoint, an anchor point, and permission to bravely embrace the opportunities arts educators are afforded and to imagine better and more joyful ways of being in the face of troubles.

### **Partnerships and Process**

Being new to Lexington, my local historical and cultural knowledge is limited, but through my connection to a major university and the generosity of local artists and scholars, there are an abundance of resources available. Partnerships are critical to construct the learning module which considers how local contexts inform curriculum development and affect the experience of students in a secondary art class. Rather than didactic learning objectives and specific takeaways, the unit offers experiential learning opportunities and connections to

partners within and adjacent to art education, prompting students to ask questions and consider the impact of the module's content on their art teaching practices.

Framing the unit are articles by Nicole Marroquin (2018a, 2018b) whose work with art teacher Paulina Camacho Valencia and their high school art students in the Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods of Chicago engaged histories of student activism for educational rights and opportunities in their local community. Their work inspects troubles from the past, previously buried history to the contemporary students, in which Black and Latinx students in the late 1960s and 1970s organized uprisings towards better access to education; diversifying the teaching staff; pushing against dilapidated facilities; inadequate, culturally irrelevant curricula; and systemic racial discrimination. By centering historic student activism, Marroquin and Camacho Valencia prompted their high school students to engage with history as it models the role of young people in creating and sustaining change. Their project unpacked histories of student activism within their school and community to demonstrate the importance of youth voice and empowerment. Their students utilized artmaking to juxtapose historic and contemporary images in collages, video making, and installation. Marroquin and Camacho Valencia's model of connecting local history with contemporary art towards social justice and culturally affirming histories within art classrooms gave insight to my students as they considered their curriculum development assignment and the political contexts of anti-LGBTQIA+ policies.

Near the end of our unit of study, funded by the University of Kentucky's School of Art / Visual Studies Visiting Artist Series, Camacho Valencia provided deeper insight into the articles we read and worked directly with students in my course. She presented additional projects for high school student engagement with histories of activism, strategies for planning and instruction to support learning needs of secondary-level art students, and offered examples of several contemporary, conceptual, and performance artists encouraging students to consider a range of arts making practices in their lesson planning. The Marroquin articles and the in-person visit from Camacho Valencia offered models for scaffolded curriculum and instruction with a focus on history and social justice in high school art classes.

Local partnerships insured historical, cultural, and local specificity to guide students. Of great significance was the Faulkner Morgan Archive. Founded in 2014 with collections from two queer Kentucky artists, Henry Faulkner (1924 – 1981) and Robert Morgan (1950 –), the Faulkner



Morgan Archive is comprised of oral history interviews and artifacts covering 200 years of LGBTQIA+ history in Kentucky. The collection serves to preserve, share, and educate about queer histories in the state through intentional collecting, exhibitions, lectures, and accessibility. When researching for local, marginalized heroes, the Faulkner Morgan Archive was essential for the artist Gaia to create the *Mother of Us All* mural and is credited alongside the artist's signature. I hoped to learn more about the mural, the archive, and how they are resources for local art educators. Through an email exchange, the Executive Director of the Faulkner Morgan Archive accepted my invitation and request to share with my students the scope of the archives and the key role the visual arts play within it. They and the Assistant Executive Director of the archive spent a class period with us sharing some of the fascinating stories housed in the Faulkner Morgan Archive, including, for example, the role of some of the first documented settlers Robert Craddock (d. 1837) and Peter (Pierre) Tardiveau (d. 1817) who from their noted "life time friendship" and side-by-side burial sites (King, 1988, p. 2) were most likely a part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Further, the Executive Director generously provided access to digital images from the archives that the class used for making collages as a part of our unit of study (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Jody Stokes-Casey, *Sweet Evening Breeze*, 2023, collage of archival images from the Faulkner Morgan Archive, 4 x 6 in.

With serendipitous timing, the Faulkner Morgan Archive published their first book, *Pagan Babies* (2023), and released it in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name at Institute193, a local contemporary art gallery emphasizing works from the modern South (Figure 3). *Pagan Babies* is the facetious name given to a group of “rebellious, free-spirited, sexually adventurous” (Nance, 2023, xv) artists from the mid-1970s into the 1980s within the eccentric social sphere of the local artist Robert Morgan. The book and exhibition feature a series of photographs by John Denny Ashley of the Pagan Babies. As a part of our learning module, I organized a field trip for my class to visit the *Mother of Us All* mural by Gaia and to Institute193 where the Gallery Manager provided a tour of the *Pagan Babies* exhibition and answered students’ questions about the artwork and the reception of the work within the community—which was overwhelmingly positive.



**Figure 3.** John Denny Ashley, Robert Morgan, and the Pagan Babies, Cover of *Pagan Babies* book published by Faulkner Morgan Archives in conjunction with the *Pagan Babies* exhibition at Institut193, 2023.

Further, I reached out to The Fairness Campaign, Kentucky’s LGBTQIA+ advocacy organization founded in 1991, inviting them to be a partner in the learning module. The Fairness Campaign’s coverage, particularly through social media channels, around the anti-trans Senate Bill 150 shows how they are deeply familiar with the ramifications of the bill

and its effects within educational spaces. Generously, the Executive Director joined one of our class sessions via Zoom. He explained the implications of the bill, helped to unpack rumors about it, discussed efforts to repeal the bill, and offered suggestions on supporting all students within the classroom and school. This partnership was invaluable to not only make the bill more transparent, but also to demonstrate how the activism of The Fairness Campaign provides resistance strategies and examples of how to participate in the democratic process for emerging educators.

Each of the partnerships within this learning module highlighted the role of art and art education as connected to local history, contemporary art, and education policy. Articles and guest artists offered examples for preservice art educators to consider, contextualize, facilitate arts experiences, and design instructional strategies to address equity and diversity within their lesson and curriculum planning.

## **Implications**

As I consider the implications of the learning unit through the method of critical reflective practice, several considerations surface including the positionality and privacy of students, resisting a progress narrative, and the necessity of community. In the roles within our respective fields, the community partnerships within this learning unit and myself as the course instructor, are supported within our workplaces to engage with LGBTQIA+ histories and human rights. However, within the contexts of legislation that denies care and recognition of marginalized people and that systemically impacts spaces of learning, the preparation of educators to enter potentially antagonistic spaces and situations is tenuous. As result, any publications or presentations that feature this learning unit must consider the privacy of my students in the course, not only as a responsible conduct of research, but also for their emerging careers amongst potential threats of anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation in the classrooms they seek to enter.

Handal and Lauvas (1987) argue that personal experiences, transmitted knowledge, and core values are critical elements that influence a teacher's reflective practice and therefore inform their implementation of practical theories within their teaching. Throughout the learning module, I planned moments of reflection that ranged from private and anonymous writing to in-class discussion. The private writings were prompted at the start of the unit. Students were asked to reflect on their feelings and make themselves aware of their potential biases before engaging with LGBTQIA+ histories and contemporary issues. The

goal of these prompts was to ask students to examine their core values and to provide an opportunity to situate themselves within the role of a future educator. The rest of the learning module was designed to offer personal experiences and content knowledge through readings, artmaking, and partnership lectures.

Except for those private writings, in-class moments of reflection provided assessment information and feedback on how the learning module was being received and interpreted by students. Using components of the DEAL model for critical reflection, which stands for Describe, Examine, and Articulate Learning (Ash & Clayton, 2009), students considered the module's content, objectives, and what they were gleaning from the experience and shared their reflections through class discussions. At the end of the learning unit, I asked students to contribute comments anonymously to a shared document and reflect on the learning experiences and community partnerships. I received their permission to share their anonymous reflections in the form of publication and presentation.

### *Consciousness and Transformation*

The last two components of critical reflective practice are consciousness and transformation. For the reflective practitioner, critical consciousness emerges from intentional "observation, awareness, and attentiveness" (Hood & Travis, 2023, p. 93) of power dynamics within the classroom. Transformation is a conscious effort of the educator to alter their teaching practices through the work of reflection and awareness. Utilizing a lens of critical reflective practice, I recognize in writing about the learning module my impetus is to share only quotes that reflect transformations such as the students' awakening consciousness or a narrative of progress resulting from participating in the learning activities. Instead, I seek to stay with the trouble by celebrating learning and growth while accepting the complexities, incompleteness, and continuing questions that emerge within the reflective responses and my everyday practice as an art educator.

Students approached and ended the learning module from multiple perspectives. For example, in illustrating a struggle at the beginning of a unit, one anonymous student shared, "Going in I wanted to try and be more open minded about the art and the history we were learning about. It was nice getting to see another side of history, but also challenging, just because of my personal experiences and beliefs, to understand another side of art being portrayed as a movement that can be seen as controversial both today and back then." It's a little unclear what

the student's specific meaning is, particularly at the end of the quote. There is an apparent hesitancy and desire to distance oneself through the phrasing "another side," and yet a desire to be "open minded" and engage with the content. As the quote is anonymous and among a larger document including multiple students' reflections, there is no certain, documented conclusion about how the student's experience ended: if they were successful in their goals of open-mindedness or if they were able to converge the "sides" as they understood them. However, as instructor, I am aware of students who exhibited discomfort and made efforts to check in with them individually, sharing and reminding them of my own processes of becoming and un/re-learning. I am also aware that the students communicated outside of class through group text messages and individual friendships. Reflection and discussion often happen within those spaces where I am unable to bear witness. Still those spaces are critical to students' learning experiences as it is a part of the class community that they have cultivated together.

The necessity of community is the most significant implication emerging from this learning module. By community in this use of the term, I am referencing the relationships and learning that occurred from reflecting and learning together. The students within the class participated in community both within the classroom with me, the instructor, and outside of the classroom with one another. Our classroom community expanded and shifted with each guest presenter as representatives of varying overlapping professional and personal communities to which they belong contributed to the unit learning objectives by sharing their expertise. Through the partnerships, students had the opportunity to create connections within and outside of the classroom. Within the unit we visited the *Mother of Us All* mural, *Pagan Babies* exhibition, and with partnering community organizations, which students described as immersive, a class bonding experience, and a connection to local history. One student anonymously shared, "It was reassuring to know that there is support not only within the art ed community but with external organizations who support teachers who don't agree with [SB150]. I have a better idea of where to turn for resources or support." As the instructor of the course, I learned alongside my students about local organizations and the resources they provide which I can now take into other aspects of my learning, teaching, and research practices, possibly aligning with the transformation element of critical reflective practice.

The *Mother of Us All* mural by Gaia operated as a flashpoint of inspiration and anchor within the unit. The work of public art created a bridge between our efforts to stay with contemporary troubles

and historic marginalized communities of Lexington as represented by Sweet Evening Breeze. Between the historic and contemporary connections, overlapping and emerging communities formed around the common goals of this learning module: to ask questions, consider the impact of politics and policies within arts education spaces, and suggest solutions for preservice art educators preparing for their future teaching placements.

## Conclusion

As I critically reflect on the planning and facilitation of this learning module, I recognize that through the students' willingness to engage and the generosity and hospitality of community partners, we stayed with the trouble, but more importantly centered joy. From stories of LGBTQIA+ histories in the Faulkner Morgan Archive, the celebratory *Pagan Babies* exhibition and book, and a vibrant purple mural of Sweet Evening Breeze, the images and artworks that surrounded our study created a joyful visual culture within the learning module. The students in this course (and I as instructor) grew our communities of practice to support our work as current and future art educators.

The activism of the Fairness Campaign and the clarification around SB 150 rumors highlighted the importance of being informed educators. The readings and visiting partners offered examples of art educators facilitating historically informed and culturally responsive learning experiences that students were able to visualize and adapt into their curriculum designs. The experiential learning and collaborative partnerships throughout this module resisted a didactic approach and left outcomes to be open, emergent, and personal to each student. One anonymous student explained, "The in-class activities and discussions were extremely helpful in sparking ideas on how to design curriculum / projects / activities, to research and learn about the community's history, and to use that learned knowledge to then have students formulate their own ideas on the history. I like that through the idea of discovering hidden knowledge and secret stories it engages students in a way that gets them to want to go find out more on their own."

Preservice educators seemed to recognize the role of history and local contexts towards shaping curriculum that recognizes student choice in artmaking and opening space for personal explorations of identity as connected to history and culture. While many of our learning activities centered joy, students and I attempted to reflect critically and meaningfully utilizing the DEAL model and by situating ourselves and core values as they impact our current and future pedagogical practices.



Sometimes reflections highlighted ongoing frustrations and troubles where solutions and suggested ideas continued to be unsatisfactory. As an anonymous student shared, “In the end, I dislike the idea that someone’s everyday experience has to be secretly incorporated into education in order to speak, discuss, or make art from it.” Agreeing with the student, I continue to open space in preservice art education courses for creative problem solving and community building. With local histories as anchor points, art teachers may facilitate inquiry between the past and present in search of strategies and inspiration for navigating troubling times.

Through a critically reflective practice, I will return to questions raised through the design and implementation of this module and be open to opportunities for making space within curriculum for emergent and experiential learning. As Sweet Evening Breeze offers examples of ambiguity and authenticity by caring for others through community building, she gives us permission to not have all the answers and carry on anyway.

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