Curricularizing Social Movements: Intersecting Art, Pedagogy, and Social Change

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ABSTRACT
This paper examines the intersection of education, social movements, and art pedagogy in response to restrictive policies in states like Florida, which limit teaching on social justice and civic engagement. Drawing on the legacy of civil rights activist and educator Septima Clark, the authors propose "micro-movements" as small yet impactful curricular strategies to sustain critical thinking, civic participation, and creative citizenship. Through case studies in local schools, including projects on community-based art and historical inquiry, the paper highlights how educators can creatively navigate legislative constraints. The authors argue that by fostering place-based, student-driven curricula that references social movements, teachers can inspire incremental changes that uphold democratic values, encouraging students to engage critically with their communities and histories. These micro-movements represent a form of resistance, empowering educators and students to advocate for social awareness and transformation through pedagogy and the arts.

KEYWORDS: Social movements, Civic engagement, Art education, Micro-movements, Social movement pedagogy, Septima Clark, Curriculum transformation

In recent years, Florida's political and educational landscape has been increasingly marked by restrictions on the teaching of social justice, critical histories, and applied civics. This presents a significant challenge in teaching critical thinking and civic engagement (Pollock & Yoshikawa, 2024). On one hand, these policies, which limit discussions around race, equity, and social issues, have left many teachers struggling to navigate the tension between their responsibilities as educators and the pressures of legislated curriculum. On the other, we know young people, particularly from underserved communities, are increasingly deprived of opportunities to engage with a curriculum addressing the societal issues that affect their lives (Clay & Rubin, 2020). This political moment presents a critical opportunity to reconsider how educators can still play a transformative role in their classrooms and communities despite these constraints (Mirra & Garcia, 2023).

This paper engages an established conversation within the field of art education, which has a long history of relying on critical pedagogy to develop social justice art education (Garber, 2004; Bell & Desai, 2011; Blandy, 2011; Dewhurst, 2014; Quinn, et al., 2012). Our aim is to add to this conversation by exploring the potential of creative micro-movements to offer a vision of resistance and respite. Drawing inspiration from Septima Clark, a pivotal civil rights activist and educator whose grassroots initiatives inspired future activists, we suggest strategies that allow teachers to act as change agents in their schools and communities, while working within today's restrictive environment (Brown et al., 2023). Clark's leadership highlighted how teachers play a vital role in building and sustaining social movements. As Brown-Nagin (1999) argued, Clark's work of teacher training for citizenship education sustained change even amid the shifting legal landscapes of the civil rights movement. While legislative activism defined much of the civil rights movement, Clark's work was a crucial foundation for grassroots organizing, raising the political consciousness of community members and building coalitions for direct action.

In the sections that follow, we examine Clark's citizenship education model to position schools as sites of transformation, even under legislative constraints. This paper demonstrates how teachers can foster civic engagement by making small, yet meaningful, curricular changes. Encouraging a broad approach, framed as curricularizing social movements (Wilson, 2021), we argue that social movements offer educators a pathway to challenge the status quo and foster civic engagement in young people. We conclude with k-12 curriculum examples that asked students to explore archives, engage with their communities, and advocate for change. In this way, we suggest how teachers can initiate micro-movements that inspire critical thinking and plant the seeds for advocacy and activism.

Septima Clark's Citizenship Education

Amid a legislative landscape that forces educators to navigate the challenges of pursuing social justice pedagogy at great personal risk, we look to the legacy of educator and activist Septima Clark for guidance. Clark contributed to the civil rights movement through a decades-long career as an educator in the Jim Crow South (Charron, 2009). With a teaching career that began in 1916, she became increasingly active in the civil rights movement in South Carolina in the 1950s. Her centrality to the movement increased in the mid-1950s when she began to collaborate with the radical adult education center, the Highlander Folk

School (HFS) (Charron, 2009). Together with HFS director Myles Horton, they established a program of Citizenship Schools, which offered a teacher training program focused on adult literacy education in Black communities across the South. Management of this program shifted to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1961, where Clark continued to oversee the program until 1969 (Brown-Nagin, 1999). The program is credited with overseeing 700 instructors and registering 42,000 Black voters in the HFS era, and supporting the registration of 700,000 voters in the SCLC era (Brown-Nagin, 1999).

Clark's citizenship education model focused on a form of literacy training that was responsive to communities, and aimed to provide teachers and students with critical civic competencies. Clark's work followed from an understanding that "lasting social change had to simultaneously emerge from and radicalize everyday experience" (Charron, 2009, p. 5). This informed her commitment to education as part of a grassroots movement. Clark, Horton, and other HFS collaborators used diverse pedagogical strategies designed to meet the needs of their students; combining training for voter registration tests, student-driven dialogue, and exposure to interracial and international perspectives designed to cultivate political awareness and action (Slate, 2022). This model demonstrated an awareness of how movements are built not only through direct instruction, but through the intentional development of pedagogical relationships that support dialogic engagement and democratic processes.

Clark's legacy rests in how she situated education as intrinsic to the movement, both nationally and locally. Brown-Nagin (1999) highlighted a tension between two approaches within the civil rights movement: the legislative efforts of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), supported by direct action strategies led by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the day-to-day educational and community-focused work exemplified by Clark. Brown-Nagin (1999) concluded that legislative efforts alone were insufficient to catalyze and sustain meaningful change. This was partly due to the inconsistent interpretation and enforcement of laws:

Clark and the citizenship school teachers operated a program that by design was better able than SCLC's method to uplift individual members of local communities. To the extent that undereducated local people learned to read and became socially conscious under the tutelage of citizenship instructors, they achieved a degree of empowerment that can neither be conferred nor taken away by civil rights laws. (Brown-Nagin, 1999, p. 97)

This perspective underscores the central role of education in social movements. Not only can schooling prepare students to move into activism, seeking change elsewhere, but it can make a direct change in people's immediate lives. Clark's legacy is a reminder that the work carried out in classrooms is not only about preparing students for a movement; it is, in fact, a movement itself, raising awareness, building coalitions, and enacting change in the everyday lives of students and their communities.

Curricularizing Social Movements

Broadly speaking, Clark's work is a reminder of the value social movements offer for both teaching practice and curriculum. Social movements, in particular the civil rights movement, remain in state mandated curriculum, even in states like Florida that take a restrictive approach to teaching about Black histories (See: Florida State Department of Education, 2024). However, instruction regarding the civil rights movement typically follows a so-called master narrative (Aldridge, 2006) which canonizes the extraordinary leadership of Dr. King and his commitment to non-violent actions. The master narrative develops through the repetition of a simplified timeline, one that moves from Brown v. Board of Education, to Rosa Parks's arrest, culminating with Dr. King's "I have a dream" speech and the signing of the Civil Rights Act, does not tell an expansive story about citizen participation (Aldridge, 2006). When a movement is presented as an historical timeline, the vibrant social life of the movement itself is obscured (Wilson & Robinson, 2024). A question that is ripe for interrogation with students is: how is a social movement made?

When framed pedagogically, this question invites educators to look beyond a static timeline, towards the dynamic processes of collective action. This pedagogical gesture asks educators to curricularize social movements as a strategy for understanding the central role pedagogy has in social change (Wilson, 2021). Wilson suggested that social movements offer rich curricular content: a close reading of social movements can emphasize the collective nature of activism and can be a culturally sustaining focus for students, if choosing social movements local to school communities. Furthermore, social movements provide a pedagogical template, offering lessons about how to build coalitions and advocate for change. Wilson (2021) also suggested that curricularizing social movements is not only a way to infuse curriculum and pedagogy with the lessons of a movement, but also a framework for understanding how education plays a role in social change. By studying and teaching with social movements, educators can better understand the relationship between their curriculum choices and social change. In other words, curricularizing social movements can lead educators to follow Clark's footsteps; her work demonstrated how changemakers are formed through a dedicated curriculum.

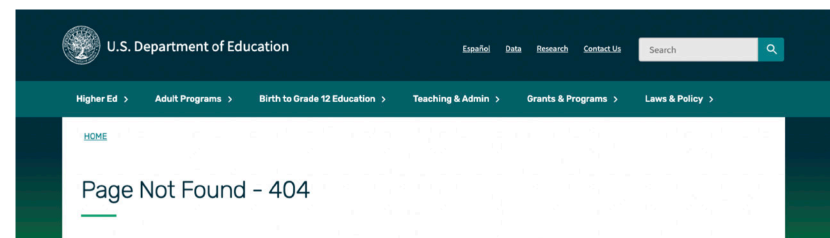
While policies are shifting rapidly and our educational system is quickly moving away from equity-oriented processes (See: Exec. order 14190, 2025), educators may find themselves caught up in a movement they wish to resist. In this space, the pedagogical relationships that Clark foregrounded in citizenship education offer a different framework. Clark's citizenship education did not ignore policy, but kept a close focus on the sphere of influence accessible to teachers: students' sense of agency. This is a powerful legacy. Clark's work within and around a hostile policy context demonstrated how teaching practice can participate in the resistance, by sustaining educators and students through political and social challenges (Brown-Nagin, 1999).

Navigating Current Educational Challenges

Policy changes in the last four years, particularly in states like Florida, have intensified. In 2021, the Parents' Bill of Rights (Florida House of Representatives, 2021) increased parental control over educational content, complicating educators' ability to address diversity and inclusion. The Parental Rights in Education Act, HB 1557 (Florida House of Representatives, 2022)—nicknamed the "Don't Say Gay" law—prohibited instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in early grades and imposed vague restrictions on older grades under the guise of age appropriateness. The Individual Freedom Act, HB 7 (Florida House of Representatives, 2022)—nicknamed the Stop WOKE Act—further restricted classroom discussions by banning content that could cause guilt or responsibility for past injustices based on race or gender, limiting critical exploration of social hierarchies and inequalities. These shifts restrict curricular choices and create a complex environment for teachers addressing historical social movements, social justice, civic engagement, and equity.

In 2023, the Florida Department of Education rejected the pilot AP African American Studies course, objecting to content on intersectionality, systemic oppression, and social movements (Kim, 2023). Civics programs were also restricted, eliminating requirements for students to engage in real-world civic problem-solving. These changes reflect a political agenda aimed at narrowing civic education to fact-based knowledge while excluding inquiry-based approaches that promote skill building (Najarro, 2022). The threat of these policy changes is often effective enough at censoring educational discourse, notwithstanding the very real repercussions these policies have in how teachers are able to create opportunities for authentic inquiry and critical discussion around the history of our country. In Florida we have seen a ban on "the use of words such as culturally responsive teaching, culturally sustaining pedagogy, social emotional learning, and critical race theory" (Quezada et. al, 2024, p. 4). The last four years in Florida highlight the ways that banning and censoring language, ideas, and viewpoints in educational spaces serve government institutions and hint at what may be coming for the rest of the country. An early indicator of this are the sweeping deletions from governmental websites. For example, the Department of Education's website, in 2024 stated, "Teachers are the backbone of our democracy—fostering curiosity and creativity, building skillful individuals, and strengthening informed citizens" (Quezada et. al, 2024, p. 4). As of this writing, May 2025, that webpage has been taken down and the text no longer exists on the U.S. Department of Education website (See: Fig. 1).

Figure 1
Missing content from the U.S. Department of Education website.



This erasure serves as a fitting metaphor for the larger political landscape surrounding education in our country. Similar to how words that once recognized teachers as central to the foundation of democracy have been removed, so too have educational opportunities for fostering critical inquiry, creativity, and civic engagement. Pollock & Yoshikawa (2024) documented the impact of this legislation on classroom environments. They found:

> In a cascade of pressure processes reaching down to educators' daily interactions with students–what we call the limitation effect–state policy played a key role in K12 system actors constraining basic opportunity that could support young people… As seen in these data, Florida policies put a cage of restriction, threat, and intimidation around the educational triad of curriculum, instruction, and student-teacher relationship. (p. 6)

It is at this moment that the work of Clark's legacy emerges as a model, depicting a space of action–a movement–available to us within these current constraints.

Creative Micro-Movements in Support of Social Awareness

Somehow, even in this constrained environment, educators continue to teach toward social awareness (Fendler & Scott Shields, 2024; Bastos, 2024; Cohen, 2021; Conklin & Andolina, 2025; Lo, 2025; Paul, 2025). Consider the example of Mary Wood, a public high school teacher in South Carolina, whose work was highlighted by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for its engagement with critical themes in literature (Bowers, 2023). Wood assigned *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) to her AP Language Arts class. Wood guided students to annotate, identify themes, and independently evaluate Coates' argument through research, critical, and analytical processes. The AP website states that the course Wood instructed "is an introductory college-level composition course. Students cultivate their understanding of writing and rhetorical arguments through reading, analyzing, and writing texts as they explore topics like rhetorical situation, claims and evidence, reasoning and organization, and style" (College Board, 2025). While this overview aligns directly with what Wood practiced in her unit, her use of Coates' book drew criticism, including public calls for her termination at school board meetings. In response, Wood found solidarity within her community, in particular with other educators speaking out in ways she described as unprecedented: "Teachers in general are afraid to speak out, but the ones who did spoke out in ways that haven't really happened before," she explained (Bowers, 2023, para. 13). Wood's choices are a prime example of how teachers can create spaces for critical engagement and civic learning. The community of support that grew behind her also painted a picture of how micro-movements spread into larger forms of action.

Wood's efforts exemplify what we conceptualize as micro movements: small, everyday choices that teachers make to meet the needs of students, despite restrictive policies. A micro-movement can refer to the choices teachers make inside their own classrooms to support student agency. Such efforts can draw on Clark's legacy to teach intentionally toward social awareness and criticality. This can entail building the skills for dialogue and empathy (Conklin & Andolina; Lo, 2025), studying the qualities of changemakers (Paul, 2025), and strengthening community attachment through place-based content (Fendler & Scott Shields, 2024). Creative micro-movements capitalize on the curricular choices teachers do have, and can be used to reclaim education as a space for inquiry, imagination and democratic participation. These actions demonstrate that even under intense scrutiny, educators can foster opportunities for students to think critically about their world.

By making deliberate curricular and pedagogical choices, teachers can help sustain education's potential to shape informed, responsive citizens who are not only capable of understanding systemic issues, but are also prepared to take meaningful action. Unlike the large-scale social movements found in history books, micro-movements operate on a more localized and subtle scale. These micro-movements may not resemble large-scale historical movements in scope, but they embody the same principles of resistance and transformation (Giroux, 2025). They speak to the enduring force of education to inspire civic responsibility and foster change, ensuring that the principles of equity and justice continue to live on through the everyday actions of those within classrooms and communities (Saltmarsh, 1996).

Building on Social Movement Pedagogy in the Art Classroom

The arts, including visual art, performance, and music, have been integral to social movements in the 20th and 21st centuries, serving not only as a means of expression but also a tool for education and mobilization (Reed, 2019). This allows art educators to draw on the rich history of artistic activism to teach civic values (Bastos & Blandy, 2024). Art education's inheritance from social movements suggests ways to transform the classroom into a space for critical inquiry and action, where students are active participants in shaping and understanding their worlds (Cosier, 2021). Seen through the lens of public pedagogy, the arts can engender a site of hope and transformation, empowering students to not only understand the societal forces that shape their lives, but also to believe in their own ability to be those forces (Hochtritt et al., 2017; Schwittay, 2023). In this way, art education provides an opportunity for experiencing a form of critical, creative citizenship, inspiring a new generation of activists who can engage with and contribute to ongoing social movements (Fendler & Scott Shields, 2024).

In this climate, artistic practice offers a powerful way to navigate limitations, using creativity to explore and reimagine historical narratives, social justice issues, and community participation. This work uses creative practice as a tool for speculation and world building (Garcia & Mirra, 2023; Fendler, & Scott Shields, 2025), working on the assumption that artistic approaches can prompt productive micro-movements that allow educators to maintain spaces of inquiry, dialogue, learning and transformation. This work involves cultivating "response-ability" (Mulcahy & Healy, 2021), where students learn not only to understand civic issues but to respond to them creatively and critically. By fostering these dispositions, arts educators can create pathways for creative citizenship, empowering students to navigate and influence the world around them in thoughtful and transformative ways. In doing so, art education becomes a site of resistance, resilience, and civic possibility in the ever-shifting landscape of the US educational system.

In the authors' own work, we have engaged with a social movement pedagogy to explore how art education curriculum can teach toward civic engagement, leaning toward a model of action civics (Levinson, 2014) blended with artistic activism (Duncombe & Lambert, 2018). This project began by using art curriculum to invite students to consider the legacy of the civil rights movement in [CITY] (Scott Shields & Fendler, 2023). Most recently, we have worked with teams of local teachers, inviting them to develop and pilot art+civic curriculum in their interdisciplinary classrooms (Fendler & Scott Shields, 2024). We conclude this paper by sharing problem solving strategies found in their units. These are examples of micro-movements that illustrate how teachers commit to supporting civic engagement in the classroom, regardless of the political and legislative circumstances.

Mining the Archive: Primary Sources in the Present Tense

Social studies standards for high school typically include the analysis of primary materials. This indicates that archival material should be accessible content for teachers; an additional benefit is that digital and physical archives contain rich first-person narratives about organizing, providing intriguing artifacts that may capture student attention. In our work, we have had success bringing students to the state archives. However, many archival documents are available online.[1] Archives contain a counternarrative to the simplified presentation of a movement, giving life to the ongoing work of multiple people. The use of archival material in the classroom pairs well with units that allow space for research, as a single image may need to be contextualized, its significance unearthed. Teaming with media specialists or social studies teachers may be a way to create space for this research in the art education context.

In providing an example, we highlight two units. The first, developed by a Language Arts teacher and Digital Art teacher in a charter high school, centers on historic protest images from [CITY]. The unit asked students to locate and research an archival image, then alter it to make it relevant, today. The teachers relied on the state archives and introduced methods for historical research and content analysis. Criteria were provided for how students should reinterpret the image through collage or digital software to reflect their own ideas and experiences. This unit provided the technical instruction required for the digital art course. However, the focus on protest images allowed the teachers to introduce the work of social organizing and emphasize the presence and impact of social movements in the community.

1 For archives about the civil rights movement, consult: SNCC Digital (https://snccdigital.org/our-voices/becoming-sncc/), CRM Archive (https://www.crmvet.org/), digital collections (https://library.mcla.edu/c.php?g=1096999&p=8000009), and so on.

Another team used material history in a different way. An art and a social studies teacher from a public middle school proposed students explore the names that show up around town: on streets, on buildings, and on the school campus. As the newest middle school in our district, the namesake of the school is living and present, and his daughter teaches at the school. Having access to their school's namesake engaged students in lively curiosity about the faces and actions behind other names that map our town. This unit's essential questions included: *What is in a name? What does it mean to leave a legacy? If I were to name a building after someone, what building would it be, and who would I honor?* These broad questions inspired 8th-grade American history students and 8th-grade art students as they worked on a project that asked them to design a future high school. While working on this unit, students crafted a mission statement for the school, imagined the student body, conceptualized how a school's values are imparted through its curriculum and, of course, named the buildings and facilities. During this work students engaged in intergenerational conversations, historical analysis, and future dreaming.

These units are a reminder that historical records create a space where students can touch history, literally and figuratively. Alerting students to the living presence of history in their everyday lives gives students a perspective about how our social moment is shaped by the actions and choices of individuals in the past. Because historical analysis is the foreground for change analysis (Institute of Arts and Civic Participation, 2025), we see the inclusion of social movements in curriculum, or a close read of how the city chooses to memorialize its past, as a micro-movement that support students' social awareness.

Connecting with Place: Taking the Classroom into the City, and Vice Versa

Connecting the classroom with the local community can serve as another powerful micro-movement. Place-based education is an approach that centers local places, histories, and community concerns in the curriculum (Smith & Sobel, 2010). This approach recognizes that education is deeply connected with the people and places that shape students' everyday lived experiences. Place-based art education uses strategies like mapping and exploring (Ericson & Häikiö, 2025; Sharma, 2017), collaborations with local entities, including libraries, historical associations, neighborhoods, or artists (Fendler & Scott Shields; Scott Shields & Fendler; Danker, et al, 2023; Hersey & Bobick, 2016,), or the critical study of local ecologies and environments (Bertling, 2023; Coats, 2022; Graham, 2007). These practices and partnerships leverage art making to connect students to the histories, stories, and concerns of their community.

To provide an example for this strategy, we share public middle school collaboration between an art teacher and a social studies teacher. Their process exemplified the integration of history, quilting, and collaboration to explore the history of [CITY]. Students connected to the history of the city through a series of field trips, individual research, and artmaking activities. During their field trips, students engaged with local landmarks from the civil rights movement to develop both historical knowledge and a deeper sense of connection to the past. These trips encouraged students to see the city as a dynamic entity–something to discover, understand, and feel a part of. Central to this unit was the integration of art and civic learning. Students engaged in artmaking techniques, such as cyanotypes and quilting, where they printed fabric and quilted images from personal and archival photography. They created quilt squares that reflected both past and present iterations of [CITY], culminating in a collaborative quilt that will serve to symbolize their connection to the city. During the unit, students were able to meet and talk with community members, including the mayor, a judge, local public artists, and quilters, which deepened students' understanding of the cultural narratives embedded in places.

This unit's blend of site-specific inquiry and artistic practice prompted students to critically engage with their surroundings and see themselves as participants in the ongoing history of the city. By extending the classroom into the city and bringing the city into the classroom, this middle school unit sought to cultivate relationship building between the students, the school, and local community. Through the teachers' micro-movement of expanding the reach of their classrooms–across disciplines and into the city–they modeled how education can become a collaborative act of reclamation, empowering students to envision themselves as members of a community and honor a shared history.

Community & Coalitions: Planting the Seeds for Advocacy

Art educators can lean on the pedagogical strategies of social movements to promote civic values and skills. Already, schools place an emphasis on service learning and volunteering; with intention, educators can orient this tendency toward actions reminiscent of organizing. There is a difference between conceptions of citizenship that are centered in personal responsibility versus forms of collective participation (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The former, typically found in school environments, emphasizes normative expectations for contributing to the community. The latter model, typically found in social movements, emphasizes a long term commitment to diagnosing issues and finding solutions. Sensitivity to this difference can help educators consider how students are invited to show up and contribute in the classroom and the school. By allowing students to go beyond rule following and have opportunities for impacting change in the school setting, teachers generate micro-movements that build a foundation for students to impact change elsewhere.

An example of a project adapting this strategy came from two public elementary teachers, the art teacher and a 4th and 5th grade science and social studies teacher, who understood that to build civic engagement among students, students first needed to feel like part of a community. They considered ways to build community in their school and, working together, proposed a way for the afterschool art club to receive support from the 5th grade social studies class. The proposal was a yearly commitment to engage 5th grade social studies students in an exploration about the school community, through oral histories and research. The art club would then use this research to design a school-led improvement project. The unit was guided by the essential questions: *What does it mean to be part of a community? What role do you play in creating a community? How can we use art to create change within the school?* Centering art club activities on the work of building, honoring, and sustaining a community, this proposal did not invite students to complete pre-defined projects. Instead, it wanted to challenge students to build a sense of community through action within that community. It is relevant to note that this project is not a typical unit, but a larger proposal that incorporates informal learning (in the art club). We observed that the teachers themselves adopted a form of social movement pedagogy, demonstrating a commitment to infuse social organizing into the ways students are allowed to interact in the school.

Our aim in sharing examples of curriculum emerging in our own collaborations, in the context of Florida public schools, was to showcase teaching strategies that remain far from the headlines. While Clark and Woods are inspirational, we suspect in-service teachers or pre-service candidates are discomforted by the militant commitment of activists, or experiences like requiring representation from the ACLU. The teachers we work with want to continue in the classroom and, to the best of their ability, continue impacting and engaging their students. Micro-movements are a way to remind us of the choices we can continue to make, and a reminder of the everyday impact teachers continue to have.

A Call to Creative Action

The production of this article began during the late stages of the 2024 presidential campaign and concluded during the early stages of the second Trump administration. As outlined at the start of this article, education was immediately targeted by the administration as a site of indoctrination (Exec. order 14190, 2025). Conversations with the teach-

ers in our own projects, however, provide important perspective-taking. It is clear that the changes in state and national legislation have informed their choices but have not necessarily altered their understanding of what it means to be an educator. In other words, many teachers have always seen themselves as participating in the movement; public awareness of the social context of education may shift, but for committed educators, the fight has been ongoing.

We honor this commitment by recognizing that not all educators have the resources, autonomy, or support to undertake such efforts on their own. Research indicates that teachers navigating politicized issues in schools require systemic support; according to a 2022 RAND report, "educators need more support to address politicized issues in their schools and classrooms, including clearer communication from leadership and support from their preparation programs and in-service professional learning" (Woo et al., 2022, p. 2). This points to the critical role that university faculty can play in supporting educators in the current educational landscape. Academic institutions can foster an infrastructure of collaboration that empowers teachers to both begin and sustain their efforts towards creative citizenship and democratic participation in the classroom (Woo et al., 2022). Clark, a teacher of teachers, understood this; the citizenship school model is a call to action for those involved in teacher education and professional development. Our (the authors') ongoing work in supporting teachers' efforts to deliver civically engaged art education is one example of how university work can participate in micro-movements that resist the current educational landscape shaping k-12 classrooms. Reflecting on the enduring legacy of Clark, we are heartened to see that she is still teaching–today, we can still be her students.

We conclude by sharing that the commitment and achievements of teachers, in particular their efficacy in the face of constraints, gives us hope. Our observation of the work of teachers in Florida over the last two years has solidified this understanding. What gets lost in the political rhetoric of teaching-as-indoctrination is an awareness of the creative, unfolding space of learning that teachers bring to life everyday in their classrooms, a space held together not by content standards, but by the strength of their pedagogical relationships. As Clark pointed out to teachers: "your creative ability is the thing that you need to pull out of these children their creative ability" (Clark & Brown, 1986, p. 107). In times of political uncertainty, when the materials we have in our classroom are under scrutiny, we honor the creative ability of teachers, whose ingenuity is continually under-estimated in policy conversations. We can lament the state of policy, while also recognizing that teachers are showing up, doing the work, and modeling a citizenship practice–a commitment to a better future–through the micro-movements they engender in their classrooms. This is a course of hope. Hope and optimism remind us that even under restrictive policies, teachers can make choices in their practices that nurture creative thinking, building on Clark's vision for schools to provide a pathway to a more just future.

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