

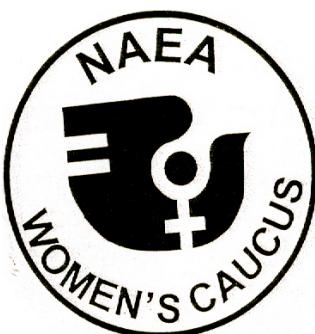
NAEA WOMEN'S CAUCUS 2011

2011 NAEA Convention Seattle

LOBBY SESSION • March 17, 2011, 6-7 pm



37 participants: Flavia Bastos, Patty Bode, Joyce Centofanti, Caryl Church, Read Diket, Julie Dorff, Heather Fountain, Kerry Freedman, Christine Gorbach, Olivia Gude, Jerome Hausman, Olga Ivashkevich, Elka Kazmierczak, Karen Keifer-Boyd, Sheri Klein, Wanda B. Knight, Michelle Kraft, Christine Liao, Jeannie Langan, Mary Elizabeth Meier, Melody Milbrandt, Kathy Miraglia, Maria Mogas, Carrie Nordlurd, Alice Pennisi, Linda Hoeptner Poling, Joanna Rees, James Sanders, Debrah Sickler-Voigt, Cathy Smilan, Deborah Smith-Shank, Amy Brook Snider, Young Imm Kang Song, Kryssi Staikidis, Patricia Stuhr, Kerri Tabarcea, Christine Woywod



In small groups, open-ended dialog responded to “A Time When ...” prompts. Each group discussed their personal experiences as possible pedagogical or political actions. The following is a transcription from spokespersons from each group who summarized the discussion in their group. The Women’s Caucus expresses our appreciation for the transcription work of Jung-Hyun Kim, who was funded by the Art Education Program at The Pennsylvania State University to transcribe the 25-minute recording of the NAEA WC Lobby Session.

Karen Keifer-Boyd: What I'd like to do is ask different groups to speak, and I'm going to just pass this around. My camera's being passed around. Please keep taking pictures. Now, stories were shared about "a time when." Also in those stories, perhaps there was something that came together as an idea, something for teaching, something to do in your community, something to do within NAEA. Please try to project your voice, and also hang onto this recorder, so it can pick up your voice, and we can also transcribe that. So we will pass this around. Pat, can we start over in this area and this group here?

Pat Stuhr: We had a number of things and issues that came up. We had a male in our midst and one of the things he talked about is being a Muslim and all of the pressures that are against him, starting with the local community in Arkansas, but also the national media and a congressman working against him. We also talked about the problem that we still have with women as leaders in the field. But there's a **feminization of art education** that continues to plague us. And that even though we may be very strident leaders in our own right as women, we have had problems getting past the lack of appreciation for art education. I don't think we came to solutions, we just had a lot of discussion.

We had a really interesting discussion about generational differences because we had different generations present in our group. And how there now appears to be much more **subversive gender inequity** than it may have been when people were very open about it in my day. We found this different generational situation to be very interesting. That we think we might have made some progress, but in fact discrimination is just manifesting itself in a kind of hidden underground way, rather than being as comfortably open as it used to be.

Jerry Hausman: I have been around art education for a long time and it occurs to me that it is wonderful that we have an increase in women at the higher education division. That I view is a very positive development. There are some people, I must confess, who have spoken about their concern that the field is becoming excessively feminine. I don't think we ought to worry about that. I think we will all be more mature if we can turn our attention to the real issues of art education—the place of art in schools, the support for art in education—and not worry about these things.

I just spent the last six years teaching in Kuwait, art to Muslim women. This is one of my first times back since June where I can have a voice in my language, and I feel confused because there's been so much happening in the six years that I've been gone. There's linguistics and there's theories that I'm like having to step back into. This is a very interesting time for me to be here right now. This is why I came.

I'm going to speak just a minute about what our group was talking about. One of the main things we talked about was decision making. It seemed that all of us had made decisions in our careers that were often detrimental to our careers, unfortunately. So I think that we came to a conclusion

that when you make a decision, sometimes it's better to think about the consequences and they're not always wonderful consequences. Making decisions can be empowering.

I just wanted to say, I was talking about decision making and I just wanted to clarify that I don't feel that my decisions were detrimental to my career. So I just wanted to put that little caveat in there. But I was talking about **the power of making a decision**, whether that decision turns out to be something. You might make another decision later on. But then taking that into our pedagogy, I'm teaching an arts-based research class right now, Studio Decision Making. Then translating that into decision making in your classroom and how that helps us as teachers and women and artists and everything else that we do.

In our group, it kept coming up over and over again how **the personal and the professional blended. And how one informed the other**. We impact our students with sharing the personal. What it means to be a nurturing, caring teacher, and how that is considered so feminized. We looked at that blend of how the personal informs our professional; and, why can't one inform the other, seemed to be very important to us.

We talked about personal experience and personal stories and how they inform what we believe in and where we think we're going with what we believe in and **how important it is to act on what you believe in**.

I really valued hearing stories about **early childhood memories about when we were first aware of feminist issues or gender**. We learned a lot from those stories. We had a great conversation.

Our group talked about what empowers us is **having relationships to talk about our issues and concerns**—that was really important to us.

We also talked about cultural differences and experiences about sometimes you feel powerless and when you feel empowered.

Read Diket: I learned a lot from talking with these two new friends about the whole **construction of identity** and how much of an interplay that you can have in it. The work that Christine is doing is on avatars—her own avatar, but also the influence of avatars as cultural or intercultural phenomena. You said that in your country, Taiwan, they could change their names twice, legally, in the course of a lifetime for no reason. And I thought, what a wonderful chance to reinvent yourself.

The major thing that we wanted to say was: **how can we teach without being a teacher?** Just by connecting us together with our students, teaching us together, with our students. And yes we talked about **empowerment for everyone is a different thing**. For one girl that I worked with in juvenile arbitration, it was not being hit by a boyfriend—just saying, "No, and I'm leaving right now." For another person, like me, it might be a different concern. It's something that for every

individual, in this particular moment, a burning question that you can resolve. And if your teaching is a feminist teaching, it's supposed to help you out with that particular moment that you're struggling with.

We also talked about **feminist pedagogical practices** and some of the flak that we received from students or from colleagues or even self-imposed flak and guilt over teaching them this way. So we talked about some of those challenges too and teaching them.

We talked about experiences that took voices away but not looking at experiences from a deficit model—looking at them from a positive and how that could change our teaching and make it a positive experience, rather than something that is negative in our lives.

Maria Mogas: I think first and foremost, this group mentioned students needing to have **someone to talk to was incredibly important**. Do we make ourselves available to students? When we talk about feminist pedagogy, (I teach in an all girls' school, so it's very easy for me to talk about feminism, stereotypes and gender roles) then the student will assume, "Well, she knows something about that, and I'm right in the middle of an issue regarding that, so maybe I can talk to her."

Maria Mogas: With the prompts that we were given, I saw them as very appropriate for boys too, not just for girls. I thought it would be a very interesting dynamic to hear how boys would answer the questions. I know I personally, as an educator and teaching girls, I forget to embrace the other side, the male side of issues. **Because feminist pedagogy, I think, includes men, so it's important to look at that as well.** I thought about all these prompts in different ways to bring them into the classroom. For example, philosophical chairs, some of these experiences that were shared amongst students could possibly be recreated in the classroom and students can take roles, even if they don't agree with them, just pretend, and take a philosophical position and present their debate and issues and get them out there and discuss them. Another thing I thought about too was reflection, having students journal on these subjects. And, if possible, after discussion, if students are given these prompts and the prompts are rotated through and groups have to come up with non-linguistic representation of the topic that would be an interesting diversified activity as well.

Olivia Gude: Listening to the women talking today, I've been reflecting on what it is that makes one feel empowered. I've often been aware of feeling afraid. Often when I've done work that seems useful and important, I've worked at it despite feelings of fear, anxiety, uncertainty, even dread. Fears are generated in us for various family and social reasons. **Despite feelings of fear, we need to be able to act, to put the fear aside and say, "Well, I'm just going to go out and do what I need to do, what needs to be done, anyway..."**

There is so much fear in the air just now. Even the most common, humane sentiments are being challenged as "ultra-leftist." We are in the midst of multiple local, national and global crises, but perhaps the most acute crisis is the climate of fear and the dread of being judged, stereotyped,

not listened to—at the same time that fear and dread about the actual future is being repressed in national discourses.

I'm in Chicago, close to Wisconsin, affected by what is happening there. Illinois is the state that the Democratic senators fled to so as not to have this terrible union-busting bill pass in the Wisconsin legislature. I've been talking to Kim Cosier, who is here at this conference, and I am so impressed with her resolve. Though the bill that restricted teachers' rights (including the right to strike) passed, Kim talks about how the struggle's not over—that there will be further political actions—recalls, organizing against anti-education, anti-teacher legislation and candidates. We have to find the means to push back against the ungrounded fears and the oversimplified dichotomies between individual autonomy and collective responsibility.

I'm thinking about Antonio Gramsci, who talked about pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will. To be realistic, you've got to say, "This is really bad, serious stuff on the table." But then I realize, for myself at least, that in my heart I feel an incredible optimism, a sense of possibility.

I think that our (the progressive people here at NAEA) most important political practice is to create the most innovative art education practice that we can imagine. That is what will save arts and culture. It's arts and culture that can save this country, can create a different national (and international) dialogue.

Recent events in Wisconsin have taught us there's no such thing as appeasing people if they are against collective bargaining and spending the wealth of the society for collective good. We have to say, "No!" to repression and "Yes!" to education and the arts. The art that we must advocate for is exactly all that messy, complex stuff that needs to be examined and better understood—imagined differently.

As always I so value this event and thank Karen for organizing for us to come together. Here, together with you all, I have that feeling of possibility and that feeling of strength that comes from knowing that no matter what happens we have each other.

Deborah Smith-Shank: I was going through a pretty rough time, and my therapist brother-in-law suggested to me that I put a note saying: "**I will not participate in your dysfunction**" everywhere in my house so that when I look at my mirror, my door, anything, I continue to work on self-reflection. And I've got to tell you, that has helped me in so many ways, so much.

Wanda Knight: I'm not quite sure what others have said because I haven't been able to hear the entire conversation; but, as we continue to discuss issues of gender, and I'm piggybacking on what Patty had to say and several others, it is important to recognize that we have multiple identities and that the intersectionality or entanglement of race, class and gender makes our identities even more complex. We are not just women, but we are women of different races and ethnicities, older women, women who have different sexual identifications, and women who

have different dis/abilities. Therefore, it's important that we look at **how gender intersects with other categories of identity, particularly when it comes to issues of empowerment for women.**

Karen Keifer-Boyd: Thank you for participating in this year's Women's Caucus Lobby Session. Well I feel so ... it's just unbelievable, such a remarkable Women's Caucus community that has come together here and we continue to do this every year—this is our third year now doing this—and the kind of sharing and the changes that have come because of this sharing. One thing I want to do is just thank you all. And, all the years prior to the lobby sessions, the Women's Caucus has helped me from way back with Rogena Degge and June King McFee, the people who have encouraged me to become part of this group. I needed that support. I hope to give that support that others have given to me. I'd like to share something that happened today at the perceptions of feminism in art education session that Joanna Rees and Read Diket and I presented at. I used Augusta Boal's Image Theatre in which we sculpted our bodies from all survey data. And we had people embodying, sculpting each other, and embodying the ideas that were in the data. There was great involvement in the interpretations and just as Augusta Boal intended with these theatre strategies, a sense of change in perceptions was felt. There was a woman that came up to me at the end and she thanked me for this process because it really changed her way of thinking about a feminist because she embodied the ideas. She took a pose that somebody had positioned her from the interpretation of the data. She really started thinking about it, a sense of celebrating herself. And all the baggage and all the stereotypes of what a feminist is sort of ran out the door with that act of embodying or sculpting the ideas in one's own body. So again, it was the Women's Caucus, as far as allowing that kind of happening, and the survey itself, and a time for us to get together. I would never have met Joanna and Read and begun working together with them. We do very different types of research, but **it's because of the Women's Caucus that brought us together.** So thank you all.

With that, perhaps we'll see you at the Binney & Smith event tonight. Make sure that you've got the Women's Caucus schedule of sessions and events, and let's see each other throughout. **Keep talking to people that you haven't met before.**