

Change Agency and Faculty Entrepreneurship: Merging Community Based Education, Research,
Social Justice, and Public Engagement within a Feminist Framework

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I want to thank the Women's Caucus for this honor, especially Mary Stokrocki, my nominator, and Pat Stuhr, who so graciously introduced me this evening. I have found many kindred spirits in the Women's Caucus and long considered my work aligned with June King McFee's feminist vision for art education. In honor of this occasion, I share five vignettes of my recent work at the University of Illinois, work that merges community oriented art education with public engagement. These vignettes include (1) my recent course: *Art, Community, and Global Civil Society*; (2) *ArtSpeak*, a high school internship program; (3) my new course *Museums in Action: Engaging the Community*; (4) my initiation of an undergraduate minor in Community-Based Art Education; and (5) my Resolution to the NAEA calling for the elimination of race-based mascots in educational institutions. I conceptualize this work as *engaged scholarship* and *engaged teaching*, and have begun to understand it as a form of social entrepreneurship.

Art, Community, & Global Civil Society. My first vignette is about a course I am currently teaching this semester. Inspired by my research fellowship with the University of Illinois Center on Democracy in a Multiracial Society, I created this course for non-art majors as an open elective public engagement oriented course. *Art, Community, & Global Civil Society* brings together my interests in contemporary art, multicultural education, social activism, globalization, and new digital media. I added service learning to the course this year. I actually prefer the term public work instead of service learning, after Harry C. Boyte. Boyte defines public work as sustained, visible, serious effort by a diverse mix of ordinary people that creates things of lasting civic or public value. His definition fits my conception of engaged scholarship and teaching.

I link my own vision of arts based public work to a growing sector in American society referred to as Cultural Creatives. Cultural Creatives are said to be those artists, writers, designers, information knowledge workers, and social activists who are contributing to cultural life in communities throughout the world. They are diverse, tolerant, tech savvy, and communal. They seek a meaningful sustainable life style. Cities and communities, it is argued, are working to attract these creatives through investments in the arts and culture, and this, in turn is energizing economic development. Howard Rheingold, Daniel Pink, and Richard Florida are among many who are currently popularizing this view. Rheingold is a media scholar and social activist, founding member of the WELL (one of the very first virtual communities), and writer of *The Whole Earth Catalogue* and recent books *The Virtual Community* and *Smart Mobs*. Pink is a independent consultant and political advisor, contributing editor to *Wired Magazine*, and author of recent books *Free Agent Nation* and *A Whole New Mind*.

I also include amongst the growing numbers of cultural creatives individuals like Rebecca Plummer Rohloff, a recent University of Illinois graduate, a practicing artist, and a visiting assistant professor at Pennsylvania State University. Rebecca is engaged in ethnographic and civic work amongst indigenous people in Guatemala. Her writings, exhibitions and website include considerations of the transformative experiences and imaginations of possibility of a 21st century artist. Finally, I include amongst contemporary cultural creatives my college students, also known as millenials, the digital generation, echo boomers, Generation Y, cyber-nomads, smart mobs, and multitudes. These new creatives are youthful, mobile, engaged, flexible, fun seeking, multi-modal, tolerant, and opportunistic. They are also a billion dollar global market. It is important to note here that scholars, theorists, and sociologists who are examining more closely the interface of economic development, demographic shifts, and the purported impact of creative cultural workers also challenge Pink's and Florida's optimistic claims about the dramatic positive economic impact of cultural creatives. Setting aside these debates for the moment, what is most striking is the fact that scholars, city leaders, and politicians (importantly, individuals not necessarily tied to the arts) in communities, universities, and governmental agencies throughout the world are now asking the question: how do investments in the arts and culture contribute to community life.

I connect these considerations to contemporary notions of civil society. Civil society is that realm of individuals, private voluntary associations, and public agencies or institutions

working toward the public good. Its advocates throughout the world are working for similar goals: honesty, fairness, transparency, participatory democracy, public health, security, sustainability, inclusiveness, social justice, citizen empowerment, and the critical examination of the nature and impact of globalization. As one can clearly see, these insights align with critical social theory, discourse which interrogates power relations and institutionalized social arrangements; problems of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class; unjust economic, political, educational, and cultural systems, and issues of equity, opportunities, access to knowledge, power, and resources. We note in my class how this is a distinctly postmodern point of view, as such inquiries are based on notions of truth, knowledge, and good as culturally bound (not transcendental), as local (not international), as socially constructed (not Divinely given), as provisional (not absolute), as biased (not objective/neutral), and as dynamic (not fixed or unchanging). We recognize that there are many competing views, that these views sometimes contradict one another, and that all of this is speculative. We observe tensions and movements both within and about this school of thought. Tensions include competing and contradictory ideas about *Individualism* with its focus on individual rights and concerns for personal knowledge and agency, assertions about individual responsibilities, beliefs in the notion of meritocracy and the purported failure of Socialism; *Multi-culturalism*, with its view of “one unified society of many distinct cultural groups”, its regard for group identity rights as well as individual rights, and its recognition of the existence of an individual’s multiple identities; and *Globalism* which takes into account notions of cultural hybridity, migrations, border crossings and border dwelling, dual citizenships, transnationalism and the erosion of state sovereignty, and the idea of One-World citizenship.

This way of thinking is informed by what Sociologist Robert Fine calls post-universalism, or cosmopolitan social theory. Unlike cultural pluralism or relativism, *Post-Universalism* or *Radical Cosmopolitanism* challenges local, religious, governmental, commercial, and cultural practices around the globe, and takes on issues such as slavery, forced marriage, violence, war, poverty, forced ritualistic bodily mutilation, torture in the name of national security, capital punishment, environmental degradation, denial of due process, and oppressive working conditions. Radical social theorists may also pursue what they argue must now be recognized as *universal* and global human rights (safe food, clean air and water, universal free education, reproductive rights, the right to choose one’s mate, a safe workplace

and fair wage, good health care services, retirement benefits, water rights, land use rights, self-governance, due process, religious freedom, the right to political dissent, etc).

We further consider how our inquiries, understandings and practices are shaped by globalization and globalism. In my introductory chapter to the forthcoming NAEA anthology, *Globalization, Art, and Education*, I differentiate globalization from globalism. *Globalization* refers to processes associated with structural changes in the production and dissemination of goods, information, and culture; the rise of transnational and supranational entities; and responses of individuals, cultural groups, and nations to such dynamics. *Globalism*, refers to a way of thinking, whereby association and allegiance with a particular ethnicity, cultural group, or nation state is complimented by, some would argue replaced with a radical cosmopolitan world view.

All readings for my course are available on websites that I have identified in advance for students, and I ask students to bring in sites they identify. Students create collages in response to readings rather than writing papers. These non-art majors love the idea that art functions this way. I show them slides of my favorite artists and collaboratives (including but not limited to Suzanne Lacy, Merle Ukeles, Betye Saar, Peggy Diggs, Tseng Kwon Chi, James Luna, RepoHistory and the Names Project, to name just a few). I also introduce them to a University of Illinois graduate, Charlene Teters, who changed a recalcitrant institution through her art and teaching. Charlene Teters is a member of the Cheyenne Nation, and graduate from the UIUC School of Art + Design. When Charlene came to the University of Illinois to get her Masters degree in the late 1980s, she was shocked and dismayed by the spectacle of our beloved Chief Illiniwek. Charlene created a series of artworks that questioned Anglo representations of Indian-ness, but she also did considerably more than that. In addition, she lobbied policy makers, did scholarly presentations, formed coalitions with like-minded individuals, and together they petitioned UI to retire the Chief. In other words, Charlene organized these efforts into focused political action, and she helped start a national movement (the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and Media). In response, others on campus organized for political action to retain the Chief. University of Illinois professors and departments also weighed in. Jay Rosenstein's documentary film, "In Whose Honor" has had a nationwide impact. I asked my own professional organization to consider the issue in my 2003 article for *Art Education* journal, "Racism American Style and Resistance to Change: Art Education's Role in the Indian Mascot Issue". In

2006 the NCAA banned Universities with “hostile and abusive American Indian nicknames” from hosting post-season games. UI appealed in 2006-07, lost their appeal, and gave up the fight, so to speak. Although in 2007 UI did retire the Chief after 20 years of divisive debate and over 350 million dollars spent studying the issue, the Chief remains a vibrant source of cultural expression and political debate in Illinois.

Students in my course conduct their own independent research on artists they select, and they create and share digital slide presentations about their chosen artists. Taking me up on my suggestion that art is now broadly defined and widely varied in contemporary life, students’ multicultural artist presentations highlight a range of provocative investigations about graffiti artists, Hip Hop artists, sidewalk artists, Post Card Secrets, Manga, and body art, to more the more familiar environmental art, installation art, art about war, feminist art, etc. Interestingly, students link their PowerPoints to Websites, blogs, YouTube clips, animations, MP3 files, and other Internet content (some of which they created) that seems to help them bring their points to life. Students determine the content, theme, issues, and artists, and all presentations come with a “research brief”, a one-page synopsis about their chosen artists and art forms accompanied by references.

Students then create digital collages about their own cultural identities and experiences. Some do family studies, looking inward and across generations and kinships, and others conduct studies of society, tackling an issue they find important. Family studies include oral histories, personal and multi-cultural identities, are accompanied by a written narrative or story about their family. Their studies of social issues include critical media studies, commentaries about social justice, war, violence, poverty, power, beauty, “cool”, consumption, environmental issues, and sustainability. Their studies of social issues take for form of digital collages, accompanied by a written research brief.

During the last third of the semester, students go out into the community to develop their arts based public engagement projects. I prearranged with several organizations only for a collaboration, with specific intended outcomes to be negotiated with student teams. Students could partner with organizations of their choosing. Two groups of students worked on teams, two students decided to work on their own. One student came up with an idea for a partnership with a community organization not prearranged by me. I remained open to all possibilities. Their ongoing work in this course include four innovative projects: (1) Community Center for the Arts

(CC4A), a young local grassroots performing arts organization—students are conducting needs assessment surveys of faculty and participants, Web design analysis, and the creation of a promotional video film, in which students gather and create digital media presentations of performances, art, and events of the organization using iMovie and YouTube; (2) Krannert Art Museum and Campus Middle School for Girls Collaboration—students are creating and will teach an “Art-to-Go” art appreciation and hands on studio lesson to a local middle school for girls. They will select and research multicultural art objects in KAM, make a digital slide presentation and flier, and plan a creative activity derived from theme in the art and relevant to the students. They will also document the event and share with their partner organizations for PR purposes (Outreach for KAM, recruitment for CMS); (3) Champaign County Historical Archive at the Urbana Free Library project—this student is doing a photo documentary of historic downtown Urbana, with multiple shots of each building, exterior and interior, and interviews and data gathering about businesses and customers. She will design a brochure to be used by the Urbana Chamber of Commerce and by the Archive, and deed the rights to images and interviews to the Archive; and (4) one student is doing work for a local free community health clinic (serving individuals refused by local doctors and hospitals). She will research and create educational materials (posters, brochures, web materials) targeting GBLT youth, develop a needs list for their Website, fill in other gaps on their Web, form connections linking this clinic to campus organizations, and develop specific future projects for the clinic. Although my initial goals were for students to engage art and arts based organizations in their community work, I have also followed their passions, trusting these students’ choices, and trusting also that the experience will be educative, relevant, and of value to both the student and the organization chosen.

ArtSpeak. My next vignette is *ArtSpeak*. Now in its third year, *ArtSpeak* is a multiculturally oriented educational outreach program, and a paid internship that I co-designed for Rantoul high school students in collaboration with Anne Sautman, Director of Education at the Krannert, and Laura Billimac, an art teacher at Rantoul High. *ArtSpeak* is a 16-week once a week after school program involving visits to the Krannert, art making and exhibition, a public performance at Speak Café, a Krannert Museum open-mic, hip hop event And having these high school interns staff the Kids at Krannert Family Festival, a twice a semester, two-hour, on-site event. This year *ArtSpeak* Interns will also go out into Rantoul elementary schools and give art lessons that they develop, and they will create a website to publicize the their' artworks,

experiences, and writings. Rantoul has no elementary art program and in 2002 it eliminated its junior high art program due to economic pressures. One of my goals is to raise concern about this in Rantoul, and to have the junior high school art program reinstated. That's a long term goal. *ArtSpeak* is jointly funded by the high school and the museum, and a pilot program for neighboring rural communities not traditionally served by the University of Illinois.

Museums in Action: Engaging the Community. My third vignette is about *Museums in Action: Engaging the Community*, a course that I created, developed, and team teach in collaboration with Anne Sautman at the Krannert Art Museum. Offered every semester, and now in its second year, this course enrolls students from all over campus. Students taking *Museums in Action* read and discuss scholarly texts about museum education, aesthetic theory, multicultural issues relating to representation, and the changing roles of art museums. Students conduct historical research on selected artworks in the Krannert, and develop educational materials called Object Guides. They then plan and conduct on site school tours, and travel to schools and organizations to provide museum enrichment and art activities relating to the museum's collections. They also plan and staff the Kids at Krannert Family Festival, offering art activities that relate to the exhibitions, and assessing their programming efforts afterwards.

Two of the coolest outcomes this course include *ARTZilla*, an evening in the museum planned and delivered by college students for college students, and our students' podcasts. Our college night event, *ArtZilla* brings anywhere from 300-700 diverse young people to the museum once a semester for an evening of art, music, culture, food, and fun. Our students plan and staff the activities, and they create and disseminate publicity—which includes Instant Messaging, chalking the sidewalks, and posting to listserves, blogs, and their FaceBook sites. Students conduct an audience study during the event, and write a reflection & evaluation afterwards. Their audience studies indicate that attendees are often individuals who have not previously come to the museum. For the podcasts, students work in teams to conduct art historical research on Krannert objects, write a script—written as a conversation between these students about the art, they practice, and then audio record their podcasts in the professional sound studio of WILL, the local PBS radio station. These pod casts are be used by the Krannert in a variety of ways—including cell phone tours and making these pod casts available of the web. Our culminating activity for *Museums in Action* is a focus group styled evaluation of the course and the museum offerings, including these students' recommendations for Krannert Art Museum's efforts to reach

out to more diverse audiences. Our students, an intriguing mixture of art and non-art majors, have much to say about these efforts and the Krannert Art Museum is listening.

A New Undergraduate Minor in Community-Based Art Education. The art education program at the University of Illinois is launching a new undergraduate minor in Community-Based Art Education this fall on the University of Illinois Urbana campus. A community arts minor is an idea I have been floating in my department since 2002, and I was pleased to see this initiative go forward last year. Without diminishing our undergraduate focus on the certification of art teachers for the K-12 sector, this minor is intended to expand our base by reaching out across campus with vision of art education as meaningful, engaged, creative work with all kinds of audiences. Target students for this minor include studio, design, and art history majors, and non-art majors from all disciplines across campus, individuals who might want to engage and lead art practices in alternative sites with diverse audiences (community centers, park districts, elder care facilities, museums, summer camps, internships with arts organizations, hospitals, youth detention centers, etc.).

The NAEA Resolution Calling for the Elimination of Race Based Mascots in Educational Institutions. In my last vignette, I wish to share my efforts to gain NAEA passage of a *Resolution Calling for the Elimination of Race Based Mascots in Educational Institutions*. In 1998, while serving as Chair of the University of Illinois Faculty Senate Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, I heard Charlene Teters talk to the Senate about the impact of Indian Mascots on her children. My university and the university where I received my doctorate degree both had an Indian Chief as their mascot. I have to be honest, I just didn't know much about the issue in 1998. After hearing Charlene talk, I researched the topic and wrote the paper (mentioned earlier) based on what I subsequently learned about the issue. The paper was intended to provoke thought and action on this issue. I also wrote a Resolution back then, adapted from countless other resolutions already passed, and I posted it to my website. I brought the resolution first to the Women's Caucus—who without hesitation voted to endorse the resolution. My paper was nominated for the Barkan award the following year, but my resolution went nowhere. I just didn't "get" the NAEA way of doing things. Last year with NAEA Higher Education Division Director Melody Milbrandt's patient guidance I've taken this resolution through the proper channels. The *Resolution*, amazingly to me, is now posted on the NAEA Website. And as many

of us have noticed, the change in leadership to Deborah Reeve has opened up NAEA processes and discussions about this professional association considerably.

As its title unambiguously conveys, this *Resolution* calls for the elimination of race-based mascots in educational institutions. I asked the NAEA Delegates Assembly to send this resolution forward for consideration by the Board of Directors on Friday, April 18, 2009. Without singling out any particular delegate or state, I will share my insights about what happened at the Delegates Assembly. I created my own website and made a two page handout specifically for the Delegates. The information on my website and the handout I created contained the Resolution, a short justification, and a list of over a hundred respected organizations, professional societies, educational entities, and Native American Tribal councils that have already passed resolutions similar to the one I proposed. During the discussion following my brief presentation at the Delegates Assembly meeting on April 18, some delegates stated that they found this resolution too strongly worded, too all inclusive of *all* Indian Mascots, and one delegate expressed her view that the Indian Mascot in use in her district was not offensive to the Native Americans there. My response to these concerns was that I trusted the NAEA Board to address these kinds of issues, that I was comfortable with modifications to the language of the resolution to make it more acceptable, and that all I was seeking at the Delegates Assembly was their vote to send the Resolution to the NAEA Board for further deliberation. The actual vote was slated for April 19, 2009. On April 19, when the motion to vote to send the Resolution to the NAEA Board came up, one member repeated his concerns about the all inclusive language of the resolution, and one delegate claimed that she called home over night and that the Indians in her district liked the Indian Mascot in use in her state, and people there did not want a national body of outsiders dictating to them what they can and cannot do. The delegate then made a “motion to table” the discussion, a parliamentary procedure that immediately truncated any further discussion of the motion, with the assertion that the membership needs longer to study the issue. The motion to table carried by a vote of 42/20. In retrospect, although I did imagine (for a few moments) this resolution going forward on the first attempt, from my experience with this issue at the University these past 20 years, I never really thought it would. Clearly there is work to be done, and I now need to think about more carefully about the Divisions/divisions within this within the NAEA.

Some Concluding Reflections:

Social Entrepreneurship, June King McFee, Feminism, and the Women's Caucus

My focus in this presentation has been primarily on defining and describing through examples (my vignettes) what I am calling *engaged teaching* and *engaged scholarship*. Both engaged teaching and engaged scholarship involve social entrepreneurship. In her paper for the forthcoming issue of *Visual Arts Research*, "University Faculty as Intellectual Entrepreneurs: Vision, Experiential Learning, and Animation", my colleague at the University of Illinois Liora Bresler asserts that that entrepreneurial qualities can enhance faculty's roles in cultivating high-impact research, teaching, and service. I would add to such a vision of our work as "intellectual entrepreneurship" my own insights that much of what we do in the multiple and diverse fields of theory and practice that now comprise art education is a form of *social entrepreneurship*, insofar as the entrepreneurial work of some faculty members is aimed at social reconstruction and social justice. Social Entrepreneurship is the transformation of existing systems and creation of new systems in ways that have lasting social value. Social entrepreneurship involves a mission to improve the lives of others (aims), the power to do so (change agency), and a willingness to take on some degree of risk and uncertainty (risk tolerance).

My aims for my students are that they will fall in love with this kind of social-justice oriented creative cultural work and make it part of their worldview and lifestyle. My goals for Rantoul are for its young people to participate in the creation and enjoyment of art, and for art to be a catalyst for the development of intercultural friendships amongst Rantoul's increasingly diverse residents. My goals for the NAEA are for it to join respected peer institutions in taking a moral stance on an issue of great relevance to its own to its mission. I note that the NAEA is one of the few remaining scholarly organizations to do so. My goals for both my own academic department and for the University of Illinois are for these entities to embrace *engaged teaching and scholarship* as a form of professional activity that they wish to rigorously promote through proactive, forward-thinking, socially conscious outreach into the community in ways that are informed by the best scholarship and best practices we have to offer. At best, I can say that my work at the University of Illinois is itself a work-in-progress, that my aims are clear, my entrepreneurial strategies are well honed, and the work is relevant to the institutions and the public I serve. I also see encouraging signs and evidence of my impact.

I return to the purpose of this occasion, and this award. You should know, by the way, that I now intend to use this award to leverage within my own university for the kinds of changes I seek. As someone with a clear vision of art education as a form of creative community practice, and someone whose own work has had lasting social and intellectual value, June King McFee (I would hope) would find resonance with my work, as she has certainly been an inspiration to me all these years. Moreover, all of the things I have been talking about here are feminist issues, and as a distinctly feminist entity, the NAEA Women's Caucus represents the very best that feminism has to offer. Many of the Women's Caucus' members have taught me much over the years through their writings, their own community practices, and their contributions to the *art education community*. We are creative cultural workers who seek to make a difference in the world, and it is a privilege to be amongst this amazing group. I also need to thank my own mentor at Florida State University, Jessie Lovano Kerr, who was a friend and former student of June's, and who taught me that with a mentor, a vision and a plan, and some good old fashioned hard work, just about anything is possible. Of course I was lucky to have my incredible parents, most of all, who loved me intensely, gave me everything, and served as role models for doing good things in the world. But before this starts to sound like an academy award speech, I'll just close by saying thanks to the Women's Caucus once again. Thank you for this honor, and for the opportunity to work with you. Having my name associated with June King McFee is indeed an honor, and I only hope that I can do justice to such a distinction.

Author Note:

Related papers and references for the scholars mentioned in this speech are available from the author at: edelacru@illinois.edu and on her website at: <http://tinyurl.com/edelacruz>