

Documenting Our Neighborhood: Paintings/ Stories from the Eastside

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To view poster: <http://www.engagementscholarship.org/upload/PosterAwards/2013/DocumentingOurNeighborhoodESCPPoster-final-35in.pdf>

Visual studies (VS) at Texas Tech University (TTU) uses outreach as a fundamental teaching tool for our social theories programming (*Bigelow, Harvey, Karp, & Miller, 2001*). We embrace contemporary antibias and autobiographical methods whereby both students and instructors critically self-examine our privileges and motives as educators/cultural workers and the impacts we can have on ourselves, our students, and our communities. We are there to make art, to make a difference and promote/create positive social change, actively rethinking how our roles and how the arts are vital to community memory and change. We invariably confront stereotypes in the forms of racisms, misogynies, homophobias, and biases regarding social class and size (*Ladson-Billings, 1994; Perr, 1988; Yeh, 2011*).

This poster documents one outreach collaboration between two VS program professors, undergraduate visual studies students, a high school art teacher, and one class of Art I students at a generational poverty and historic lower performing high school in Lubbock, Texas, during spring semester 2012. Preservice VS students worked with Art I students for 6 weeks. VS students mentored Art I students who developed/created paintings based on what they “liked” about their eastside neighborhood. Art I students were also asked to create an accompanying essay that described/explained their paintings. Many of the paintings and essays addressed stereotypes and biases the students experienced. Seven representative student paintings and essays are included in the poster. Also included are testimonies/essays written by the two professors, the art teacher, and a former student teacher that give context to the visual studies program’s focus on social justice outreach programming and the possibilities for personal and professional transformations (*Ayers, 2003; Nokes & Jasper, 2007; Walljasper, 2007*).

What happens when high school and university students get heard and teachers/professors listen? What happens when instruc-

tors write about their doubts and fears (Christensen, 2001)? When student teachers voice sexual identity concerns and find comfort in the lives and experiences of the students they teach? It is in these very social challenges that answers lie in our stories in terms of forging new communities and social commitments (Burnham & Durland, 1998; Elizabeth & Young, 2006; Ringgold, 1991). Our outreach experience raises awareness for privileged TTU students who have been sheltered from working poor and poverty living conditions. We hope that rather than be surprised or shocked only, our pre-service students take their sheltered ignorances as starting points and calls to action as we prepare them to become cultural workers for social change.

In several high school art student visual and printed narratives, you can see and read about real issues that impact these students' daily lives—art students sharing what art teacher Shannon Walton describes as “beautiful, funny, heartbreaking, and even terrifying stories.” Stories include a variety of topics: thanking a grocery store for not leaving the neighborhood, a story of Child Protective Services intervention and losing a friend, stories of role models and faith, and stories of staying sane and not losing one's mind. Instructors refer to each other as friends—friends talking about crossing race and social class lines; talking about how to challenge stereotypes, hate, and fear; and how best to position ourselves as cultural workers using art to save lives and foster creative social and positive change (Chapadjiev, 2008; Hooks, 1995; Park, 2009).

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