



Drama Education & Social Justice Education

Books

Bowles, N., & Nadon, D. (2013.) *Staging Social Justice: Collaborating to Create Activist Theatre*. Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press.

Artists, activists and scholars provide the reader with tools and inspiration to create their own theatre for social change in this collection of essays. Topics of some of the essays include: writing the 'victim'; community building; intergenerational dialogue, and organizing in LGBT communities; and adapting space and working with people of diverse abilities.

Brown, R., and Kwakye, C. (Eds). (2012). *Wish to Live: The Hip-Hop Feminism Pedagogy Reader*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

This book is a multi-genre and interdisciplinary effort to engage its readers in hip-hop feminist activism in an accessible manner. Potential avenues of performance, poetry, document analysis, playwriting, and more are explored in this work.

Craig, David S. (2010) Ed. *More Than a Play*. Toronto: Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ont. This invaluable resource for Elementary Drama teachers includes nine short Canadian plays for junior and intermediate students. Each play highlights a different equity or social justice issue and they are approached in ways that are meant to get youth thinking and asking questions.

Delpit, L., and Kilgour Dowdy, J. (Eds.) (2008). *The Skin That We Speak: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom*. New York: The New Press.

While not specifically directed toward drama educators this book should be of great interest to teachers in this discipline as it works to peel away hegemonic thought regarding language. One of the volume's co-editors, Joanne Kilgour Dowdy – a Trinidadian-born literacy scholar and performing artist – shares her experience of growing up in Trinidad with the competing forces of British English and Trinidadian. As dramatic performance is often considered a language of its own, there is much to glean from this book in terms of its instructional suggestions for acknowledging the language that children speak while working to help them find others means of expression – perhaps in the form of drama or movement.

Freebody, K., & Finneran, M. (Eds.) (2016). *Drama and Social Justice: Theory, research and practice in international contexts*. New York: Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group.

This collection promises to be key reading for anyone interested in drama education and social justice. The chapters include a range of theoretical approaches to social justice, which are then used to help frame more specific discussions of drama research and practice in the second part.

Hanley, Mary Stone et al. (2013). *Culturally Relevant Arts Education for Social Justice: A Way Out of No Way*. New York: Routledge.

Emphasizing the arts as a way to make something possible, it explores and illustrates the elements of social justice arts education as “a way out of no way” imposed by the prevailing hegemonic ideology.

Hershler, A. (1998). *Pedagogy of Performance: Imagining Meaningful Education for Street-Involved Youth*. MA thesis. OISE of the University of Toronto.

This thesis will be useful to artists and educators working with theatre at a community level, as it explores the work and ideas of people who are engaged theatre with street-involved youth. It can be accessed digitally through Collections Canada:

http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk1/tape11/PQDD_0006/MQ40647.pdf

Beyerbach, B. & Davis, R. D. (2011). *Activist Art and Social Justice Pedagogy: Engaging Students in Global Issues through the Arts*. New York: Lang Publishing

Look particularly to the chapter by Langlois called “Acting Up in and Out of Class: Student Social Justice Activism in Tertiary General Education, Fine Arts, and Performing Arts Curriculum.” It details a study wherein college students took a course called *Gender and Contemporary Visual Culture* and were required to complete various activist art projects. Many students changed their pre-course views on gender-based injustice due to their experiences of making, sharing, and reflecting on their own art.

Lee, V., & Sims, E. (Eds.). (2008). *Undoing whiteness in the classroom: Critical educultural teaching approaches for social justice activism*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing

This volume examines educultural practices and teaching strategies that deconstruct hegemony, empower students with critical consciousness, and inspire them towards social justice activism. Educulturalism—which allows us to identify how whiteness hegemony functions to obscure the power privilege, and practices of the dominant social elite, and reproduce inequalities within education—is explored through music, the visual and performing arts, narrative, and dialogue.

Piekkari, Jouni., (ed.) (2008). *Drama – A Way to Social Inclusion: Practical process descriptions for drama workers*. Turku: Centre for Extension Studies, University of Turku.

<http://www.slideshare.net/mrq/drama-a-way-to-social-inclusion?related=1>

This book is part of the larger DramaWay project. This project has many goals, but one of them is “to share practical tools and insights between the young/beginning professional or semi-professional drama workers who are interested in working with youngsters under a threat of

social exclusion.” This book includes descriptions of various participatory and interactive forms of Drama while providing many other techniques and insights.

Swartz, L., & Nyman, D. (2010). *Drama Schemes, Themes & Dreams: How to plan, structure, and assess classroom events that engage all learners*. Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers. Swartz and Nyman’s book is an excellent resource for all drama teachers, especially those interested in implementing social justice strategies into their teaching. The themes of being different, identity, bullying, communication, history, the refugee experience, war, and dreams guide each chapter. What follows are detailed lesson plan ideas and variations, sample scripts, and assessment possibilities.

Van de Water, M., McAvoy, M., and Hunt, K. (2015). “Drama for Social Justice.” *Drama and Education: Performance Methodologies for Teaching and Learning*. New York: Routledge. Chapter three of this brand new work discusses strategies for incorporating drama methods into curricula devoted to social justice issues. In addition to tactics aimed at designing workshops and lesson plans that engage with specific social issues, this chapter addresses the various ways that teachers have responded to the need to integrate issues of social justice into their units.

Articles

Gallagher, K., Service, I. (2010). Applied theatre at the heart of educational reform: an impact and sustainability analysis. *The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, 15(2): 235-253. This article reports the findings of an impact assessment study of ETFO’s Poverty and Education Project. A touring theatre production, professional development in drama, supporting curriculum documents, and resources were provided to a selection of schools serving students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The study found that applied theatre intervention had a positive effect and opened up dialogue between teachers and students.

Belliveau, G. (2005). An arts-based approach to teach social justice: Drama as a way to address bullying in schools.” *International Journal of Arts Education*, 3(2): 136-165. The author of this article led twelve pre-service teachers in an anti-bullying drama initiative with grade six elementary students. The social justice project featured two significant components centering on drama: creating and delivering a thirty-minute anti-bullying play, (with pre- and post-activities), and assisting students in developing their own anti-bullying plays.

Hanley, M. (2011). You better recognize!: The Arts as social justice for African American students. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 44(3): 420-444. This article describes The Tubman Project (TTP) as a model of culturally relevant arts education for black children and youth.

Online Resources

Linds, W. (2001). *Exploring Identity and Social Justice through Drama in Schools*. Rep. no. 58. Ed. Rhonda Rosenberg. *Teaching and Learning Research Exchange*.

http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca/main_mcdowell/projects/research_rep/58_explore_identity_through_drama.pdf

The purpose of this Saskatchewan-based project was to make available a series of workshops that involved a group of high school teachers who were learning to use dramatic forms to investigate social concerns with students, and find actions to deal with them. The drama methodology used in the project is based on *“Power Plays”* (Diamond, 1991). *Power Plays* is a form of socially critical and transformative drama that enables students to become aware of how their participation in society has an impact on it.”

Dramatizing Social Interactions

<http://www.curriculum.org/arts/dramatizing.shtml>

This is a 12 minute **video** showing how a grade eight teacher infused social justice into her classroom by introducing text that spoke to themes such as bullying and then getting her students to dramatize the situations. The students were encouraged to use strategies such as “role on the wall”, “A and B improvisation strategy” (Students are given opening lines, and then they improvise the rest of the scene). This teacher’s favourite part of her lesson is circulating the class and searching for “evidence of exploration” and “evidence of experimentation”.

Mixed Company Theatre

<http://www.mixedcompanytheatre.com/education/>

There are number of opportunities at **Mixed Company Theatre** for educators. They tour three to four presentations throughout the GTA each year. The interactive nature of Forum Theatre means that the audience is included in developing real-time strategies for dealing with social and personal issues.

AVNU: Artful Anti-Oppression: Volume #1 - Roots.

<http://avnu.ca/avnu/uploads/2015/07/01-Artful-Anti-Oppression.pdf>

There is a theatre exercise called “Power Chairs” on page 19 which is drawn from “Theater of the Oppressed” techniques created by Brazilian activist-educator Augusto Boal. The Theater of the Oppressed website is cited so that educators may delve deeper if they wish.

AVNU: Artful Anti-Oppression: Volume #2:

<http://avnu.ca/avnu/uploads/2015/07/02-Artful-Anti-Oppression.pdf>

In the section on biological sex and feminism, there is a great exercise called “Checking Cat Calls” (page 28) which is derived from Forum theatre methodology.

The Grassroots Organizing and Leadership (GOAL) Youth Capacity Building Workshop Series

http://www.artreachtoronto.ca/toolkits/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Artreach_GOALToolkit_InsideTheKaleidoscope.pdf

This series was developed in 2007 by youth-led organizations and other partners to provide access to learning opportunities that can enhance the work of young people, artists and youth-led groups. This is the tenth toolkit released in this series. See the “Role Play & Forum Theatre Activity” developed by John Caffery called *Inside the Kaleidoscope: A Toolkit & Resource Guide Created by Members of Two-Spirit, Trans, & Queer Communities*.

Cardboard Citizens

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srvnPJclmIM>

This is a company in the U.K dedicated to using theatre to motivate change in the lives of homeless people. Their work is diverse, but in all cases awe-inspiring and indicative of the power of theatre as an agent for social change. This video, which could be shown to a class to help illustrate this crucial point, also models many forms of theatre such as site specific, forum theatre, and theatre of the oppressed.

The Council of Dance and Drama Educators

<http://www.code.on.ca>

CODE is an excellent resource for drama teachers, and there are several unit and lesson plans which engage social justice issues in meaningful ways. “Finding Balance” is a great unit that is intended for Dance and Drama classes at the Intermediate level that introduces the importance of mental health. There are also many course profiles on CODE that provide opportunities for infusing social justice into the course. For example, in the theatre development course, it is suggested that during the ritual unit, the teacher encourage students to explore the use of ritual through social justice issues.

List Compiled by Alex Clay

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, but used as a starting point for learning about the connections between the arts and social justice education.