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A Truly Transformative HRE: Facing our Current Challenges

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Abstract

In this research project, we examine how human rights education can go beyond the symbolism and rhetoric of rights and, instead, be understood in a way that critically considers the continued social, economic, and political inequalities that persist. Learning about rights should be informed by the lived experiences of those whose rights have been and continue to be violated. We

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use five years of research which empirically documents the impact and learning that took place in an interdisciplinary, action-oriented high school class comprised of honors/Advanced Placement (AP), refugee/migrant and special education students. By understanding and investigating identity, belonging, and citizenship through critical historical inquiry, experiential learning in diverse classroom settings, and civic action lessons, human rights education can provide a more complex way of looking at and understanding rights and responsibilities in a global world. The research examines the limitations in teaching human rights through "declarationism" (or merely through presenting texts, facts, and figures); but it also describes the strengths and possibilities for teaching rights through engaged critical praxis which enables learners to explore their rights and injustices through social action projects in their communities. We describe a combined university and high school course "Human Rights Activism and Education" which integrated university students with refugee/migrant and American high school students. Through action research projects that were carried out over a year-long course, students engaged in investigations about the intersections of race, class, and gender with issues of power and status, and considered these in light of their own experiences as well as their potential to impact the following concerns: homelessness, food security, racial discrimination, and immigration.

Introduction

T he day after the 2016 election results were announced and Donald Trump had been named President of the United States, our undergraduate human rights education course met at its regularly scheduled time. We departed sharply from what had been assigned in the syllabus and instead gave the students the floor to share their thoughts, feelings, and fears. Students spoke poignantly about how they could not understand the results, felt at a loss regarding how to take action, and feared what the upcoming presidency would mean for rights—theirs and millions of others across the country and throughout the world. One student shared that when she expressed similar sentiments in another class, other students dismissed her fear about the loss of rights and even went as

far as to call her overly-ideological. "When did discussing rights and expressing concern for the rights of others become ideological or radical?" she asked sincerely.

This is a question that deeply concerns us as well, and one that begs answers, particularly as it has seemingly become part of the context in which human rights work, including human rights education (HRE), is undertaken. We do not endeavor to directly address the implications of the Trump Administration's decrees on human rights education within the scope of this chapter, but instead seek to answer two interdependent questions: 1) What constitutes transformative HRE? and 2) How can transformative HRE help to address the challenges of this historical moment?

In this article, we suggest that this particular moment brings forth expansive opportunities for a truly transformative HRE which helps to build a socially just society and, importantly, to protect the rights of the most vulnerable. We wish to offer an analysis of and framework for critical and transformative HRE that illuminates both the distinctiveness and promise of HRE *and* the ways in which it must be linked with other social justice projects.

We begin by highlighting some of the most recent literature that lays out current understandings of HRE and its critiques. As we have previously described elsewhere, the development of different and, at times, divergent global discourses around the potential for HRE has been substantively tied to shifts and changes in the changing nature of armed conflict in the post-Cold War era (Monaghan and Spreen, 2015). In the first section we draw upon the link between HRE and social justice and activist education, as well as different theories and strategies related to youth activism. In emphasizing action and critical perspectives, this integrated approach enables HRE to reposition the theoretical frame of mainstream HRE with change at the core. We next suggest how these strategies might be translated into a critical pedagogy and curriculum that could promote transformative orientation towards HRE. Components of this approach to HRE include readings and activities which provide students with content related to human rights and violations of rights, contextualized such that they are not abstract, but are

made immediate and real, and promote students' emotional (as well as intellectual) engagement. We suggest that critical engagement with human rights, HRE, and the reaches and limits of both, can facilitate change on multiple levels, including in students' views of themselves, their own agency, and the ways in which they demonstrate that agency, especially in the communities to which they belong and take part. When social justice and youth activist theories are considered part and parcel of HRE, these bodies of scholarship help to recontextualize HRE and help us more clearly define what we mean by "transformative HRE." In the final and concluding sections of this chapter, we briefly discuss the approaches we have taken in our HRE courses to provide examples of a set of strategies and ideas for ways to enact a critical and truly transformative approach to HRE curriculum and pedagogy.

Literature Review

Human Rights Education, Critical Consciousness, and Sociopolitical Development of Students

The project of transforming HRE is inevitably part of the wider task of social justice education and knowledge. Drawing on Nussbaum's and Sen's theories of justice to examine the potential of narratives in teaching and researching for social justice, Keet and Carrim (2006, p. 12) suggest that "[h]uman rights can be presented as powerful ethical claims that can be critically examined by learners to consider their rights and responsibilities to others, at scales from the local to the global." Freire poses the praxis of the "ethics of universal human aspiration" which he considers the "ethics of solidarity" (Freire, 1998, p. 116). In his book, *Education in Hope: Critical Pedagogies and the Ethic of Care*, Monchinski (2010) uses the arguments of Dewey, Freire, and feminist-identifying scholars to show that critical pedagogy must reflect an ethic of care which is fundamentally at odds with narrow constructions of morality or juridical understandings of ethics or laws. Both of these approaches allude to the emotional or affective dimension of HRE and indeed what we suggest is a radically transformative HRE

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that changes students' consciousness (and promotes students' acquisition of critical consciousness) and propels them to take direct action through activism and action.

That human rights education is necessary and necessarily able "to address the human rights problems with which every society struggles" (Bajaj, 2011) seems self-evident to many HRE scholars and practitioners. However, for many others, not all models and definitions of HRE are up to the task; the latter group of scholars aim to draw distinctions between emergent approaches which allow for critical engagement with HRE programming and potential analytic frameworks for what does and does not "work" (i.e. what is and is not transformative) and why.

Bajaj (2011) distinguishes three different outcomes-based models of HRE that differ in content, approach, and action. According to Bajaj, HRE for Global Citizenship emphasizes "individual rights as part of an international community [that] may or may not be perceived as a direct challenge to the state" (p. 492), while HRE for Coexistence, most often implemented in post-conflict settings, emphasizes "minority rights and pluralism as part of a larger human rights framework" (p. 492). Finally, HRE for Transformative Action seeks to alter unequal power relations between individuals, groups, society, and/or the state by making learners aware of injustices that they and others experience. Bajaj maintains that diversity in HRE approaches can be interpreted as both a testament to HRE's relevance and also to its promise as a lasting educational reform.

The transformational models of HRE identified by Bajaj implicitly posit that student empowerment and awareness (through students' recognition of what constitutes human rights abuses) are sufficient to catalyze change. However, in these models, empowerment and awareness are still gained through content knowledge (even if acquired through experience); additionally, the ways in which students might facilitate change (to human rights abuses they have experienced or communities to which they belong or work with might experience) once they acquire this content knowledge are unclear. In order to deepen our theorizing on how change happens (i.e. youth learning praxis), we turn to other bodies of literature, including critical consciousness literature, sociopolitical development literature, and

learning youth activism to provide an integrated framework for approaches to human rights education that facilitates students' acquisition of content knowledge and understanding of context, and provides them with skills to critically engage with that content and context, so they can directly apply their knowledge and skills in ways that seek to make change.

Paulo Freire (1970, 1973) developed the concept of critical consciousness to facilitate Brazilian peasants' understanding about the injustices they faced and to foster their action against those injustices. To facilitate critical consciousness, Freire emphasized non-hierarchical classroom organization that cultivated student agency through dialogic learning. Owing to this worthy objective, researchers from a multitude of disciplines, in addition to education, such as political science, psychology, and youth development, have sought to understand how education can indeed facilitate such learning, empowerment, and action. Freire (1970/2000, p. 51) articulates this approach in Pedagogy of the Oppressed:

> Reality which becomes oppressive results in the contradistinction of men as oppressors and oppressed. The latter's task . . . is to struggle for their liberation together with those who show true solidarity . . . This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it... To achieve this goal, the oppressed must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality.

Relatedly, Giroux (2006, p. 209-210) recognizes critical pedagogy as a political pedagogy aiming to connect: "understanding and critical engagement with the issue of social responsibility and what it would mean to educate students to not only critically [seek] to change the world but also be responsible enough to fight for those political and economic conditions that make its democratic possibilities viable."

Critical consciousness literature usefully makes these ideas explicit and unpacks them, as well as directly links them to change; we argue that these concepts and approaches must be central to "transformative" HRE.

From developmental psychology, Godfrey and Grayman (2014) call upon critical consciousness literature to investigate one of Freire's central

claims: that an open classroom environment can lead to critical consciousness. The authors found that open classroom climate, defined as "promot[ing] the discussion of controversial issues and respect for diverse opinions," was a significant predictor of students' educational success and political efficacy in their communities (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014, p. 1803).[1] Educational philosopher Meira Levinson (2012) also looks at classroom openness and concludes that it strongly predicts students' likelihood to participate in political debates both in and outside of school. Relatedly, developmental psychology researchers Flanagan and Christens (2011) demonstrate that "Interest in political issues tends to be generated by controversy, contestation, discussion, and the perception that it matters to take a stand" (p. 2). Watts, Diemer, and Voight (2011) also support that learning critical reflection, critical action, and political efficacy comprise the most salient predictors of critical consciousness. Yet few studies examine the potential of HRE to potentially support and promote critical consciousness.

Diemer and Li (2011) examine the influence of teachers, parents, and peers on youth critical consciousness. While the authors found that support from parents and peers "facilitates marginalized youth's perceived capacity to effect sociopolitical change, sociopolitical control, and self-reported social action participation," they did not find evidence that teachers shaped youth's critical consciousness (Diemer & Li, 2011, p. 1828). An earlier study conducted by Diemer and colleagues (2006) also found that urban adolescents' perceived support for challenging injustices from parents and peers corresponded with greater critical reflection. They suggest that their findings support previous research conducted by O'Connor (1997) and Zubrow (1993) about the salience of parent, peer, and community support in challenging injustice (as cited in Diemer et al., 2006, p. 454). These studies point to the gap we highlight in the current literature that characterizes HRE as transformative as it assumes, rather than explicitly addresses, each of these processes, particularly changes in students' consciousness.

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[1] Open classroom climate shaped students' critical action in the community setting, however it did not influence their actions within school (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014, p. 1811).

We now turn to sociopolitical development scholars (Watts & Guessous, 2006; Watts & Flanagan, 2007) also who are also beginning to bridge education and developmental psychology to build upon critical consciousness literature,[2] and who have much to offer HRE scholarship and practice. They emphasize that in order for students to engage in ongoing sociopolitical activism, learning must help students: 1) achieve critical consciousness; 2) access feelings of agency vis-à-vis the self, the collective, and the political; and 3) perceive structures of opportunity for action. This literature proves relevant to HRE because it draws attention to schools as socializing agents which shape students' social theories as they progress through adolescence.

Most recently, HRE scholar Michalinos Zemblyas has begun to link HRE with the cultivation of critical consciousness through pedagogy that is entangled with educators' and learners' emotional investments (Zembylas, 2013a, 2014, 2016a). According to Zembylas, a fundamental challenge is: How does an educator deal pedagogically with learners who resist or reject critical perspectives and who openly express racist, colonialist, or nationalist views because they perceive that their privileges are being threatened or lost? Or with learners who are so traumatized from racism, colonialism, or nationalism that they feel that nothing can be done to rectify the situation? Here too is a gap in HRE literature (and practice), but also a disjuncture in critical consciousness literature and practice.

Overall, from the literature surveyed thus far across HRE, critical consciousness, and sociopolitical development, it is clear that myriad factors shape youth's critical reflection and decisions to participate in collective action, but the processes of how the factors exert their influence remain contested.

Understanding Critical and Transformative HRE in Practice

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[2] Sociopolitical development integrates developmental psychology and liberation psychology. Liberation psychology, developed by Ignacio Martin-Baro, originated as a more fitting approach for Latin America in response to the dominance of "Western" psychology, which lacked proper inclusion of power dynamics (Martin-Baro, 1989).

Deciding just how far teachers should go in educating students for change is a decades-old debate. In *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Carter Woodson (1933, p. 145) poses—and then answers—the question about whether teachers can "revolutionize the social order": "But can we expect teachers to revolutionize the social order for the good of the community? Indeed we must expect this very thing. The education system of a country is worthless unless it accomplishes this task" (see also Apple, 2013, p. 42).

Research about how K-12 students become civically engaged traditionally overlooks forms of extra-institutional actions, or political activism (Hahn, 2010; Levinson, 2010, Torney-Purta et al., 2010). Indeed, scholars have understudied how middle and high school students initially begin to engage in forms of protest and social movements—due to a long-running focus on university students (Taft, 2010) and an emphasis on actions which take place within schools (Gordon, 2009).[3] Social movement literature, with its extensive documentation of protest mobilization, notably overlooks middle and high school students, despite widespread recognition of a resurgence of youth protests in recent years (Giroux, 2013, 2014; Harvey, 2013). The importance of this gap in the research cannot be overstated: As many Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) scholars acknowledge, supporting the agency of youth provides benefits for youth's own individual lives and also for greater society (e.g., Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Ginwright, 2008; Mirra, Morrell, Cain, Scorza, & Ford, 2013; Torre & Fine, 2006).

When engaging in critical praxis to foster social change and transformation, educators need to move beyond the classroom (Ginsburg, 1995). Nicholas Fox (2012, p. 15) reinforces the idea that classroom activities are not enough:

> As much as we talk politics with our students, read political novels, and highlight the activism of the past, the walls of the classroom present a problem for radical teachers. Our classrooms host passionate

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[3] An exception to these claims may be literature on popular education in Latin America and also the increasing scholarship resulting from the recent waves of high school student protests across South America.

discussions where students begin to tackle assumptions, dismantle ideas of privilege, even critique capitalism. But when class ends, what happens to the political fervor? Where does that revolutionary spark go? Does it spread out into the streets? Or does it end up at the bottom of backpacks, forgotten like last week's homework?

The words of bell hooks (1994, pp. 11-12) also prove illuminating for considering transformative HRE practices:

> My pedagogical practices have emerged from the mutually illuminating interplay of anticolonial, critical, and feminist pedagogies. . . . [I]t has made it possible for me to imagine and enact pedagogical practices that . . . interrogat[e] biases in curricula that reinscribe systems of domination (such as racism and sexism) while simultaneously providing new ways to teach diverse groups of students. . . . The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy. . . . I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries . . . that makes education the practice of freedom.

Similarly, Jean Anyon (2009, p. 392) advises colleagues who are engaged in social justice education not to limit their—and their students'—actions to the context of the school:

> [A]lthough critical educators do well to share with students information about systemic causes of subordination, that is not enough to get students involved in the struggle for social justice. . . . By giving students direct experience with social justice work, we can educate them to appreciate and value those forms of democratic process that are aimed specifically at creating a more equitable society—public contention toward progressive social change.

Engaging with social activism literature, Choudry (2015) seeks to problematize the concept that "education is the key to changing the world" and interrogates the connection between education and action (p. 67, 86). While Choudry focuses on learning for activists within social movements,

his suggestions extend to the more traditional K-12 classroom. He calls upon Gramsci's (1985) conception of education and praxis, claiming that education must provide space for action and also individual and collective reflection, horizontal dialogue, and critical historical learning not only about the state but also about social movements (Choudry, 2015, p. 102). Learning youth activism literature offers much to HRE, by allowing us to consider the ways in which change is facilitated in and through both formal and non-formal education, including HRE.

In sum, the different literatures surveyed make explicit the processes and outcomes that HRE literature in general, and literature related to transformative HRE in particular, assumes; these bodies of scholarship also challenge notions regarding what consensus deems constitutive of "transformative HRE." Indeed, the literatures above challenge these predominant notions and, instead, render "transformative HRE" as HRE for maintaining the status quo. However, they are neither individually nor collectively offered as an alternative to HRE. We believe that the promise of HRE is that it endeavors to uphold rights put forth in recognized treaties and conventions via the building or strengthening of "rights-respecting cultures." In this way, each of the literatures (and related practical approaches) discussed can actually be strengthened by explicitly engaging with human rights and HRE. Indeed, to summarize Nussbaum (2003), human rights are an "important part of getting a hearing for urgent moral concerns." Our task then, in what remains of this chapter, is to outline an integrated approach to transformative HRE that makes clear how to take the approach even further in order to enact a truly transformative HRE.

Employing Critical and Transformative Approaches in HRE

We turn now to a discussion of two university-based HRE courses we have taught over the last six years to provide examples of the application of these approaches to strategies for designing content and implementing a pedagogy of transformative HRE. (Further details about each of these courses are provided in Spreen & Monaghan, 2016; Spreen & Monaghan, 2015)

In designing our first course, *Teaching and Learning Global Citizenship and Human Rights,* we wanted to encourage critical thinking, intercultural understanding, and social action among course participants (which included graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Virginia and high school students at Charlottesville High School). We did this through an integrated approach to pedagogy, utilizing four components: 1) readings and in-class discussions; 2) weekly experiential class visits to a corresponding course entitled *Becoming a Global Citizen* taught at a local public high school; 3) reflective assignments and discussions that provided a foundation for undergraduate/graduate students' weekly class visits; and 4) a year-long community-based social action project. The course was designed to "leverage our classroom diversity" by creating a collaborative, transformative learning environment where a diverse group of high school, undergraduate, and graduate students were able to learn from each other's unique life experiences, academic training, and perspectives.

It is worth noting that participants in the course were incredibly diverse and included "mainstream" white and African-American students interested in "global issues," special education students, international exchange students, and English Language Learners (ELLs) who were migrant or refugees bringing with them first-hand experiences of human rights violations from a wide range of countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Bhutan, Iraq, El Salvador, Finland, Liberia, Mexico, Somalia). The high school teacher who collaborated on the design and implementation of the course explained the importance of this university/high school collaboration:

> About 10% of [our] students are born in another country. Teaching about human rights provides a wonderful opportunity for refugee and immigrant students to draw upon their experiences, cultures, and languages as a powerful resource, to teach their American born peers about human rights issues from a personal perspective. At the same time, it provides an environment for English Language Learners and native English speakers to engage in meaningful dialogue with university students on issues that are important to all of them.

In bringing together a group of students with different racial, ethnic, class, and linguistic backgrounds, as well as different legal and social statuses, this course aimed to both reveal and break down existing socially-constructed categories (e.g. refugee/migrant, legal/undocumented, exchange or ELL, elite or honors/at-level, general/special education), allowing students to recognize and ultimately challenge these categories and their social and economic salience.

This goal was reflected in a statement on transformative learning presented in our syllabus at the onset of the course: "There is no singular model or standard for what actually constitutes transformative education, but generally speaking, transformative education seeks to rupture students' worldviews, complexify all that is typically represented as simple, destabilize understandings of Truth, and 'allow students to see society from the center, as a coherent whole,' and therefore 'act in such as way so as to change that reality'" (Lukacs, 1971, p. 69).

Our second course, *Human Rights Education and Activism*, offered at New York University, utilized many of the same readings and in-class activities as the previous course. However, rather than partner with one high school program, students had weekly placements at different human rights programs for youth offered throughout New York City. For example, some students worked with the Education Video Center (EVC), an organization that works with high school students to produce documentary films that capture human rights violations in their own communities. Other students volunteered each week at 826NYC in Brooklyn, an afterschool writing program for elementary through high school students, which while not explicitly focused on human rights, allowed undergraduate and graduate students to provide one-on-one tutoring to students who often did not receive the help they needed in school, build relationships with students, and subsequently consider not only why these students did not get the help and resources they needed, but also how they could help advocate for those resources. Other students in the course designed and implemented a human

rights curriculum with two local middle school teachers which integrated #Black Lives Matter[4] and other social justice themes.

Critical and Transformative HRE Praxis

Our model in both courses conceives of HRE as "emancipatory, activist and focused on issues of globalization from below" (Carter, 2001). The readings for the university course included a wide range of academic literature on social justice, human rights, and global citizenship education pedagogies. Building on Freire's concept of the "banking model of education" (2000), we directly challenged this approach and explained that the course is not designed as a *"traditional classroom setting, with a teacher who is considered to be an 'expert.'"* In the first weeks of the course, we also discussed our expectation that the classroom was a space for democratic co-learning with the high school students; we asked all students to try and let go of the "expert-learner" model of education, and to strive to build meaningful relationships with everyone in the room. We encouraged students to keep open minds and welcome uncertainty as it was the first time the course had been offered, and we asked them to remain flexible as we explored new teaching and learning approaches throughout the semester depending on what was and was not "working." All course participants provided regular feedback, formally and informally, on the lessons, concepts, and approaches taken in the high school course that resonated or, alternately, did not resonate with them in the high school classroom. While this was an uncomfortable shift for many students who initially expected, and were used to, a more didactic and content-driven approach to learning, ultimately we found that this approach offered an exceptional level of student ownership, engagement, and unique aspects of non-traditional learning. Most significantly, we found it facilitated change.

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[4] Black Lives Matter is a North American social movement intended to "build connections between Black people and allies to fight anti-Black racism, to spark dialogue among Black people, and to facilitate the types of connections necessary to encourage social action and engagement." For more information please see: http://blacklivesmatter.com

A problematic tendency in many HRE classes has been to emphasize the role of "service" to build a sense of civic responsibility for rights violations that exist in other communities and countries (e.g. Amnesty, TeachUNICEF, Facing History). We argue that this perspective has a tendency toward reliance on existing categories and "otherizing" problems as existing elsewhere (e.g. privilege and poverty, homelessness and hunger, and other forms of discrimination). This tendency is especially marked in "global citizenship education" models within the traditions of service learning, study abroad, and social entrepreneurship. As others have noted, these models ultimately reify existing hierarchies and inequalities in higher education (e.g. Butin, 2006; Hickel, 2013; Swan, 2012). In contrast with these approaches, we suggest that transformative HRE should aim to increase opportunities to foster intercultural learning, critical thinking, and attentive civic engagement/action in context. Rather than offering opportunities for intercultural education with an individualistic, economic motivation based on competition in the marketplace, this model aims to foster intercultural competence to support vision for a more equitable and harmonious society.

Furthermore, these models have been rightly criticized for building an expectation in students that social problems exist "out there," apart from their own community or nation, rather than understanding their own social context and its relation to other communities. The examples we have called upon already, and those which we will subsequently develop, demonstrate that our approach to HRE sheds light first and foremost on rights violations in students' own communities. As previously argued, traditional models of HRE often rely on learning structures that are antithetical to authentic civic engagement. Service learning, for example, can reinforce tensions between universities and communities rather than fostering and recognizing a community of diverse equals. By valuing difference and uncertainty, however, transformative HRE prepares students to work against their preconceived notions about social problems in other communities; it encourages them to instead recognize the "increasingly interconnected and interdependent" nature of the world and their own responsibility for social problems in local and global communities (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Students' summative projects comprised one of the most powerful components of the UVA HRE course. Students worked in small groups and chose their own topics and approaches, both of which varied widely. For example, they produced short documentaries about homelessness, built community gardens and other sustainable food sources in high-poverty areas in the town, made and presented a film on "what it means to be Latina," and held a town hall meeting on the history of racism and racial integration of schools in the local community. Following the completion of the projects, students reflected on how immediate and real the issues had become to them. One student explained, "I had seen homeless people all the time around the university, on the roads exit ways around town, and had never really stopped and considered why they were there—just walked or drove right past. But I know so much more now about how and why some people become homeless and the challenges they face. I don't know exactly how to address the problem yet, but I want to try."

By emphasizing an awareness of context and multiple perspectives, transformative HRE is able to support a very different set of outcomes in students. While traditional models of education often emphasize certainty, this model emphasizes uncertainty as we previously mentioned, encouraging students to continually evaluate "data not as stable commodities but as sources of ambiguity" (Langer, 1997, p. 132). Rather than supporting the same skills in all students, it allows students to develop diverse sets of skills based on their interests and the specific context of their learning experience. In doing so, this model supports increased student engagement in learning, creativity, mastery of basic skills, and inventive solutions to new problems (Langer, 1997, pp. 26, 30). HRE in general also supports the development of students' social justice literacies, in particular critical and visionary consciousness (North, 2009), an important component of transformative HRE as well. As Langer notes, transformative education allows students to understand that "the way in which we tend to construct our world is only one construction among many," facilitating motivation and skills necessary to work toward a more equitable future in innovative ways" (p. 138).

Another brief example from our course at UVA is illustrative of many changes we observed over the years. One of the high school students' described to her classmates the experience of being harassed by police at a community park over the weekend. "I was with my friends and he demanded to see my passport," she recalled. "I have a passport—I was born in America even though I look like I could have been born in a lot of other countries, but that wasn't the point. I remembered the unit we did on stop and frisk and thought 'this is against my rights.' So while I did call my mother and have her bring my passport to me so I didn't escalate the situation, I filed a complaint against the officer at the police station the next day." Later in the semester, we learned that the officer had been suspended based upon the complaint filed against him by this student.

By encouraging learners to acknowledge infinite distinctions, our approach to critical and transformative HRE aims to break down simplistic distinctions based on existing social hierarchies. It therefore allows for a more robust appreciation of diversity that moves beyond binary oppositions and socially constructed categories and ultimately challenges existing hierarchies in higher education and society as a whole. Put differently, this model allows for the dissolution of borders rather than simply "border-crossing." In this model of HRE, students acquire attendant skills, values, and attitudes of HRE by becoming aware and engaged with the pluralism and diversity that exists in their own communities. By preparing students to attend to novelty, context, distinctions, and multiple perspectives, this curricular framework works to break down culturally constructed binaries such as self/other, good/evil, or male/female. Thus, it serves as an antithesis to the contemporary tendency to fight these binaries by ignoring difference (e.g. post-racialism or colorblindness). As students gain a deepening awareness of the infinite differences between new people or new situations, they inherently strengthen their intercultural competence and their ability to act. For example:

> One of the readings in the high school course was excerpted from the Voice of Witness book series, where the narrator, who had immigrated to the United States from the Middle East just after 9/11

describes strangers approaching her in public and demanding that she take off her head scarf. "You're in America now," the aggressors said to the narrator. During the in-class discussion that followed, one American student stated she didn't think things like that happened anymore. "It's been over ten years," she said. "I see people wearing head scarves at the high school." Then Fatima (a student who had resettled to the United States from Somalia after residing in a refugee camp in Kenya for over two years) turn from her seat in the front row and faced the class. "When I was in seventh grade, I was walking to the pencil sharpener when a boy in the class reached out and grabbed my head scarf, pulling it off. It was in front of everyone and the teacher saw it happen and didn't say or do anything, just kept going like nothing had happened. Since then, I haven't worn a headscarf to class or anywhere in town." The rest of the class was silent until one student spoke up. "That's not right...I can't believe that happened to you." Another chimed in, stating, "I have a friend here who says the same thing, that she's been made fun of for wearing her headscarf to school, so she stopped doing it." A few days later, Fatima came to the class wearing a bright yellow headscarf. When one of the instructors complimented her on it, Fatima said, "After our discussion, I just thought that I can't let people make me feel like my culture is wrong. I know I can at least wear it here and no one will judge me. And if anything happens, someone would stand up for me now."

This example demonstrates that while students deepen their critical consciousness and sociopolitical competence, they simultaneously strengthen their potential for future civic engagement and social action.

As previously argued, critical and transformative HRE can support the internationalization of university and high school education by reinforcing students' critical thinking, cultural competence, and civic engagement. This can have a markedly positive impact on students' learning. It can also influence their engagement in other courses, as well as their selection of a career path and their participation in the surrounding com-

munity and current struggles. We designed our approach to assessment to encourage student observation, reflection, and problem-solving so that it was closely linked to the learning context and environment. Examples of this type of assessment included reflective writing assignments, projects based on solving existing problems in the world, collaborative assignments that allowed for mentorship, real-world communication such as creating blogs which addressed contemporary social issues and critically evaluating news items related to the learning context, in addition to anthropological assignments such as field notes, which fostering the understanding of multiple perspectives and open-mindedness.

Building on the examples outlined above, our assessments were more closely tied to the learning context or individual interests of the student, rather than a distinct skill set. Traditional assessments which dominate most learning environments include standardized multiple-choice and true-false tests as well as essays and assignments graded on pre-planned rubrics. Whatever the form of the assessment, these can be seen as *undermining student engagement and authentic learning* if they assume a single correct answer or a single concrete set of skills to be achieved all students. In our UVA class, undergraduate and graduate students helped the high school course instructor prepare and facilitate a "fishbowl" end-of-semester assessment for the high school students. For the fishbowl assessment, students sat in a circle surrounding a chair with a bowl in the center. The bowl contained notecards with questions related to major course themes or topics. One at a time, students selected a card from the bowl and then provided an oral answer to the question. The instructor, as well as the undergraduate and graduate students, were struck by the positive ways the high school students encouraged one another. If a student was struggling, other students would chime in with reminder questions. Sometimes other students became involved in the answer as if participating in a discussion. At the end of every student's answer, the whole group applauded. This support extended beyond the end of the semester, all the way to graduation as many of the undergraduate and graduate students and sophomore and junior high school students enrolled in the course attended the seniors' graduation. "I'm the first in my family to graduate from high school," one of

the students from El Salvador said. "It meant to so much to me of course to have my family here, but also to see so many people from the class—it's hard to describe how much that means."

The importance of education for action and social change cannot be underestimated. It is imperative that we prepare students to not only understand both local and global problems, but also develop skills to address them. We must ensure that these solutions are developed thoughtfully, with careful attention given to context and the existence of multiple perspectives. As Andreotti (2006) argues in her work of critical global citizenship education, we must prepare students to develop a solution "after a careful analysis of the context of intervention, of different views, of power relations (especially the position of who is intervening) and of short and long term (positive and negative) implications of goals and strategies."

From the outset of the NYU course, we included programs such as Facing History and Ourselves, TeachUNICEF, Oxfam, Rethinking Schools, and Street Law. Applying these different models, while simultaneously placing them alongside current challenges and events students were facing in their lives and communities, enabled students to critique and think more concretely about change and opportunities for helping facilitate change. We also focused on the role of activism in achieving social change and called upon various cases of historical and contemporary movements (e.g., the Young Lords, The Movement for Black Lives) to demystify its place in education and human rights policies. The imperative for advocating for change through upholding rights became even more real and immediate with the election of President Trump. In the days, weeks, and months following the election, students mobilized on-campus protests in an effort to designate NYU as a sanctuary campus, led student walkouts, participated in citywide marches, and continued to volunteer at 826NYC in Brooklyn and EVC after the semester had ended. As one student remarked, "with the election, I realized that the students I work with at 826 are at risk—of losing health care, of being deported, or simply of having less access to social programs we all need. I also realized I could do something to try and prevent this from happening."

Another NYU student reported back to the class after attending the post-election protests. As a result of her immigration status, she had never participated in a march in the U.S. before, but our consistent discussions about the value of rights and the importance of individual participation in our communities, in addition to her work teaching rights to elementary and middle school students through our class, prompted her to join the masses after Trump won. She explained, "Over the semester I started to see the importance of taking action to fight for our rights. Just having the knowledge and volunteering isn't enough to guarantee anything. At some point I couldn't tell whether I was out there supporting the rights of the kids I'm working with or my own rights or everyone's rights, but I realized I had to do something more."

The example highlights our focus on learning praxis. While we cannot take credit for the extenuating historical situation that resulted in the election of Trump, an event which certainly moved and mobilized our students, we had spent ample time discussing rights vis-à-vis the role of action and activism throughout the semester. By explicitly learning about the processes of obtaining and maintaining rights that take place between the people and the state; studying historical and contemporary activism; and working with younger students themselves through the various organizations named earlier (e.g., 826NYC), the students gained a deeper understanding of human rights that included a comprehension of processes of social change, and they were able to analyze their role in that process. Thus, after the election, students felt ready to act and cited a deeper understanding about the importance of taking action to protect or promote human rights, which extended beyond the classroom and their community work.

Conclusion

The historian Howard Zinn reminds us of the consequences of the omissions of alternate perspectives and the limitation of focusing on content, "facts," and truths when teaching young people about the world. Ignoring important political history and removing human rights from the

current cultural, economic, and social struggles (particularly the continued struggles against oppression and structural inequality that many students face today), has been one of the shortcomings of current approaches to HRE. Teaching HRE by declaring human rights a policy act of the values citizens should hold, or by celebrating the impressive compendium of laws and rights in various international conventions and constitutions, is woefully inadequate and illusory given the increasing number of people who live in oppressive, violent, and unequal conditions throughout the world.

New models and approaches to citizenship, social justice, and human rights education which help students to analyze rights critically and understand the relevance of human rights in their own lives are required. In this way, notions of "active citizenship" and "democratic participation" borne out of the civil rights movements of the past and revived into current movements like Black Lives Matter, Hands Up, or the most recent Women's Marches – can build a coherent critical stance that would meaningfully embrace and recognize cultural or class differences, focus on continued struggle for equality, and highlight the contestation over differential access to rights and resources.

We suggest that the "gold standard" of human rights education ought not only to be informative and individually empowering, but also explicitly oriented towards social transformation and aimed at change. In this chapter we explored how critical transformative human rights is not just a matter of teaching the laws, rights, and "good values and behaviors"; in a vastly unequal world it is always difficult to arrive at a consensus regarding what issues and whose values to prioritize.

By looking at education through the broad lens of a rights-based approach, we can begin to think differently about the role of culture and tradition in education and teach to create new values and attitudes about living in a diverse and global society. We can consider ways that school-communities can use the knowledge, resources, and experiences in the rich diversity of its immigrant community to address inequality and promote non-discrimination. We can also begin to think anew about intersections between education and some of the most pressing issues and concerns facing society today: global migration, the economy, social stability and war—

particularly as public support of schooling, health care, and other public sector services has dwindled.

In a very real and immediate sense, examples from the continued global struggles led by the majority of the world's population over growing social inequities and power hierarchies provide important lessons that can inform the teaching of human rights. Youth disaffection has to do with lack of political process, governmental abuse of power, and the general lack of regard for the working poor by governments and corporations worldwide. Identifying with popular struggles as they currently spread throughout the world could be instrumental in mobilizing different forms of active citizenship and engagement for students. The current local protests in the US against President Trump, placed alongside global protests against totalitarianism, inequality, global capitalism, youth disenfranchisement, and unemployment, which started with the Arab Spring and which have spread throughout Europe and Latin America, present another opportunity for teaching transformative human rights in real time. The challenge for transformative HRE lies in meaningful ways of supporting learning that arms young people with critical consciousness, diverse perspectives, and new ways of understanding what democratic participation means—ultimately providing students with the skills and motivation to act on this knowledge.

Transformative HRE pedagogy, then, must focus on relating the context to critique and, subsequently, to social change, by providing students with various opportunities to learn about, deeply reflect on, and transform their lived experiences. In this chapter we briefly illustrated how HRE can extend further to create ways for students to support social transformation and take action to challenge inequality. Part and parcel of this model of transformative HRE are notions of reconciliation, social solidarity, social cohesion, inclusivity, and anti-discrimination, which provide the basis for the rationale, purpose, and structure of (what we argue) is a more socially just transformative HRE curriculum. Our classroom also emphasized developing critical consciousness and sociopolitical awareness, while building skills for activism.

Transformative human rights education would, by necessity, view rights as part of a continued struggle to build solidarity and a sense of be-

longing for those who comprise a given society, regardless of status, origin, language, culture, gender, or 'race.' Through understanding the context (culture and history as well as political movements and migrations in and through US society) schools can become sustainable community institutions that can promote and protect human rights through active citizenship. What is required is re-envisioning and reclaiming schools as public spaces for reflection, deliberation, debate, and social development. In the US today this seems more important than ever–especially considering the challenges brought about by the new administration, along with the continued social, economic, and political inequities that persist in the country today. A truly transformative HRE has the potential to play a significant role in building a more just, equitable, tolerant, and open society.

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