Community Voices: Integrating Local and International Partnerships through Storytelling

Nuria Alonso García and Nicholas V. Longo

Mindful of the impact that global service-learning can have in supporting academic, civic and global development, Providence College faculty and students are partnering with a local organization, CityArts, and an international organization, Waves of Hope, to empower young people to share their stories through a community lens. Using art and literacy in transnational contexts, the voices and images depict beauty and justice in communities, while also representing a more collaborative model of engagement. The project focuses on projecting service-learning as "global" by integrating local and international partnerships through storytelling. The authors argue this approach enables participants to reflect upon the value of narratives, to learn about and practice reciprocal relationships, and to enhance their linguistic and inter-cultural competence.

***Keywords*: community engagement, intercultural competence, literacy, service-learning, storytelling.**

"The voices that are too often silenced are voices that come from developing countries that have seen firsthand what discrimination and oppression looks like. I feel that if the world begins to listen more closely to these voices, powerful change can be made." -- Providence College student

"What are you teaching next semester?" is a question we are often asked as faculty members at a liberal arts institution focused on undergraduate education. One of our colleagues (from another university) will respond to this question by explaining, "I don't know, I haven't met my students yet." Given our commitment to the concept of "students as colleagues" (Zlotkowski, Longo, and Williams, 2006), this refrain has always resonated. Our attempt to build learning

partnerships in a recent global service-learning project has given us a new and deeper understanding to the wisdom of expanding "the circle of service-learning leadership" by transcending the boundaries of the classroom to both local and international communities.

This article describes ongoing partnerships that are informing our understanding of the reciprocal relationships fostered by service-learning within local and international contexts. In partnership with the Nicaraguan NGO, Waves of Hope, we led an international service-learning trip in January 2014 to the rural community of El Manzano Uno, Nicaragua. Then, we collaborated with a local organization, Providence CityArts for Youth, on a weekly partnership during the spring semester as part of a course entitled Community Literacy in Nicaragua. Framed around a possible new model of teaching and learning, which we term "collaborative engagement," and cognizant of the importance that storytelling has for campus-community partnerships, we then describe how the program fits into a curriculum for global studies with reflections on partnerships from students. While this project is (deliberately) rather limited in scale and scope, we believe it offers important lessons for conceptualizing and practicing campus-community partnerships in an interconnected world. It helps us see the value of narratives to connect us, to challenge preconceived notions of culture, and allows students to further develop linguistic and intercultural competence through reciprocal partnerships in transnational settings.

Co-Creating Learning Spaces: Toward Collaborative Engagement

Community Literacy in Nicaragua was first piloted with a group of 13 undergraduate students, including two undergraduate trip leaders, who were selected based on an application process in the fall semester that included an essay and personal interview, with the expectation of the international service trip and subsequent spring course. The course included a weeklong service-learning trip to Nicaragua and a connected service-learning partnership locally in Providence, RI.

The Community Literacy learning process might easily fit into what is sometimes termed "democratic," "liberatory," or "popular" education, along with similar concepts often used to describe empowering education. And it is perfectly consistent with Paulo Freire's (1970/2000) "problem-posing education," which asks learners to take ownership of their education and solve problems collectively. Likewise, we appreciate Myles Horton's description of the workshops at the Highlander Folk School with a simple focus: namely, on creating a safe space for people to tell stories and learn from one another. Horton (1998) explained, "What we do involves trusting people and believing in their ability to think for themselves" (p. 157).

Thus, we see our efforts as part of this long tradition of democratic educators such as Freire and Horton, and educational movements in Latin America such as the Nicaraguan Literacy

Campaign (Torres, 1995). However, this approach is also part of an emerging paradigm in educational learning, which we are terming "collaborative engagement."[1]

Collaborative engagement builds on an important conceptual shift in teaching and learning in higher education that Robert Barr and John Tagg (1995) flagged almost 20 years ago—one that moved from an instructional to a learning paradigm. Specifically, colleges and universities were moving from institutions whose primary function is *providing instruction* to those that *provide learning*. By doing so, campuses were reinventing themselves as institutions focused on more than just transferring knowledge. They were recognizing their responsibility to "create environments and experiences that allow students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves and to become members of communities of learning that make discoveries and solve problems" (p. 15).

We are entering a new stage, however, that expands the circle of where learning takes place—one that takes Barr and Tagg's original paradigm shift one step further. This new phase incorporates the experiences that educators and higher education institutions have had in testing and implementing an array of curricula and initiatives focused on learning, rather than just teaching. But they have also come to recognize the power of community-based experiences; the ability to access multiple "knowledge commons," and the value of democratic pedagogies such as service-learning, deliberative dialogue, and democratic education.

Interest in this collaborative approach to teaching and learning is not accidental; it is the result of a confluence of sociocultural factors that require more collaboration among diverse groups of people and organizations to be successful in resolving complex and nuanced public problems. Young people, who have grown up with technology and the practices and values that come with it—such as collaboration, transparency, and diversity—are also driving these changes. As a result, this next generation wants more participation in their education and in making decisions about what is occurring in their institutions, their workplaces, and their communities (Longo and Gibson, 2011). This new participatory culture is embodied in the shift toward collaborative engagement illustrated in the table below.

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[1] The concept of collaborative engagement emerged from the Next Generation Engagement Project sponsored by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE), a group in which Longo is a founding member. Longo working with Cynthia Gibson and Alonso-García then developed table 1.

Table 1. Beyond Teaching and Learning: Collaborative Engagement

Educational Paradigm	Instructional	Learning	Collaborative Engagement
Mission and Purpose	Provide instruction	Produce learning	Co-create knowledge
Teacher/Student Relationship	Teacher to Student	Teacher with Student	Teacher facilitates learning space among classroom and community; ecology of education
Teaching/Learning Structures	Independent disciplines	Interdisciplinary learning—students learn about and from various disciplinary perspectives	Transdisciplinary problem-solving—responding to issues using cross-disciplinary tools
<u>**Roles**</u> **Faculty**	 Lecture	 Design learning methods, curricula, structure, etc.	 Facilitate creative learning process *with*, rather than *for* students Co-producers
Student	Passive recipients	Active learners	Reciprocal partners; students, faculty and institutions are *part of* larger ecosystem
Community	None	Limited to site for learning	
Storytelling	One directional, single narrative	May be a part of student learning process	Multi-perspective narratives shared among students and community; central to process

While no project or course fits squarely in any paradigm—and most projects include elements of each—Community Literacy can help us put a finer point on these models through an illustrative thought experiment. Imagine a course on community literacy within the more traditional instructional paradigm. It would likely be more "content-oriented," focused on the disciplinary expertise of the instructor, with students taking on a passive role with the expectation of memorizing course material and then restating the information at assigned

times (most likely through testing). It is unlikely that experiential learning would be part of a course under the instructional paradigm.

The Community Literacy course, however, fits within some of the assumptions of the learning paradigm by inviting a student-centered approach. Students were seen as active learners, and faculty members designed appropriate and engaging activities. The learning paradigm recognizes the value of the community and as such made it possible to integrate service-learning as a site for student learning. While the Community Literacy course includes aspects of the learning paradigm, it most closely resembles what we have termed collaborative engagement. In this case, student and community voices are valued, and part of the co-production of learning and knowledge. Instructors facilitated the co-creative learning process, in which storytelling was a central aspect.

At the conclusion of the service-learning trip to Nicaragua, and as a way to honor the experiences of our collective immersion in Latin America, Community Literacy learners decided to discard the formal syllabus that the instructors had developed for the coming semester course. While the original syllabus we developed offered a sound theoretical framework and appropriate content, it could not foreshadow the experiential learning that occurred in Nicaragua. Returning from the trip, students had the desire to further reflect on the issues that emerged from the real interactions with El Manzano community and to address the complex array of questions derived from listening to community voices.

This change was not unexpected, as scheduling the international service-learning prior to the beginning of the semester was intentional. We believed that the Nicaraguan experience would provide an intensive foundational experience that would enable a more organic learning approach, foster creativity among participants, and build a strong sense of community for the course. The model implemented upon returning home enabled a genuine response to our educational philosophy, which is that when students are viewed as colleagues in the development of a community of learners, transformational learning can occur.

We then crafted a new syllabus in collaboration with students, using our shared "text," with the relationships, experiences, and stories from Nicaragua as our guide. The pre-arranged local service-learning partnership that would connect with our international service—leading weekly arts and literacy projects with young people at our local partner, CityArts for Youth—was still preserved in the remade syllabus. During our initial class meeting at the college, Community Literacy learners held a brainstorming session and one of the student leaders created a shared web-based document to co-develop the new syllabus. With an agreement that the urban landscape of Providence would now become our classroom (as rural Nicaragua had been), our learning community never met on campus.

The approach taken in this course broadens traditional learning by illustrating how collaborative relationships among student, instructors, and community partners can serve as a new method of shared leadership in course design and implementation. As a result, students, with support from instructors, envisioned a course platform that challenged the classroom

boundaries and nurtured the interests and expertise of a wider circle. Students led workshops throughout the semester that were relevant to their experiences, on themes such as community leadership, art and social change, language and education, environmental sustainability, and reflective practice.

Our weekly sessions focused on listening to the stories of civic innovation from visionaries and leaders in the city of Providence, including AS220,[2] an arts organization that provides free creative space; the Met School,[3] an experiential high school that cultivates and supports new entrepreneurship through project-based learning; and the International Charter School, a bilingual charter school that teaches in the languages of the community.[4] We also deepened our understanding of the history and politics of Nicaragua, critically examined the role of short-term immersion trips, and reflected upon the sustainability of community partnerships.

Although unique and engaging, we believe that the model also contains challenges: namely, because it required students to balance a more open-ended, somewhat unstructured course with more traditional academic expectations and other social responsibilities. The expectation to provide grades was also a challenge, as we did not develop an assessment process until the end of the semester. As a result, students conducted a self-assessment and final grades were then negotiated with the instructors—a process which in the future will be part of a more ongoing and multi-layered progression (with feedback from peers and community partners). Overall, students took tremendous responsibility for their own learning with the course concluding in Providence, as it began in Nicaragua, with a group hike and reflection on "where we go from here."

Storytelling across Borders

Collaborative engagement also has implications for more than simply teaching and learning. It is also important for overcoming what we see as the danger of the single narrative, and recognizing the multiple stories that make up communities—international and local. Even more importantly, we realize how essential storytelling has been in building a community based upon trust across borders.

Creating and sharing stories is an integral part of the human experience. Not only do stories offer us a source of inspiration, they also contain the potential for understanding the many ways in which we value and devalue ideas, trends, and actions. Stories are paradoxically unique and universal: they exist within us, they define us. Stories allow individuals to reflect on their personal trajectory, understand the complexities of life, and develop an awareness of the variety of voices involved in authentic narratives. Stories support communities in constructing

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[2] AS220: http://www.as220.org/
[3] The MET: http://www.bigpicture.org/2008/10/the-met-center-of-providence-and-newport-ri/
[4] The International Charter School: http://www.internationalcharterschool.org/

identity and celebrating heritage, as they portray values that define a communal idiosyncrasy. The impact of storytelling lies on the breadth of experiences and perspectives that stories encompass; communities come together to tell a singular story with many voices. One person's story can change the way we perceive the world, and a community's story could inspire those listening to take action (Bradley, 2014; Ganz, 2009).

As we immersed and interacted with the communities in El Manzano and Providence, telling stories served as a bridge to access cultural views and experiences that differed from our own. It also allowed us to reevaluate what was idiosyncratic, inherited and valuable to ourselves. The narratives evoked powerful emotional responses that lifted us beyond our limiting understanding of growing up in rural or inner-city communities.

The workshop we designed for young females in Nicaragua employed storytelling to explore and fortify communal narratives that challenge dominant societal customs and perceptions. The stories we listened to were told by timid voices from the margins: rural female youth being pressed to engage in early sexual activity, daughters struggling with denied paternity, young mothers raising children, and women with dreams of gaining access to formal education. The stories required us to listen for deeper understanding and compassion. The stories revealed sensitive knowledge that challenged the single narrative of privileged adolescent females in Europe and the United States, and as we listened, we bonded.

Our partnership with CityArts further deepened the impact of telling and listening to community stories, as their theme for the year's programming was actually "storytelling." On a weekly basis, our Providence College team met young artists and mentors at CityArts and implemented an art and literacy curriculum that built upon themes unveiled in Nicaragua, such as youth identity and gender dynamics, sense of belonging, and beauty and freedom of expression. It empowered urban learners to express freely their inner artist through photography, sculpture, storytelling and theatrical performance. The CityArts stories connected us with narratives of urban youth, and their perception of beauty and community in the Providence landscape.

Storytelling across borders thus served collaborative purposes, as it allowed us to resist the danger of the single narrative (Adichie, 2009) and the potentially stereotypical representations of reality that can be associated with a single view. The single narrative—like an instructional paradigm described above—fails to represent the diversity of views that represent a community, with its complex history, its place in the world, and its uncertain future. The single narrative is constructed and told by those in power with the intention to have the dominant discourse accepted as the ultimate truth of the collective whole. As Adichie (2009) explains:

> It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali. How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many

stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but also to make it the definitive story of that person.

Thus, we believe in the value of community stories that give each individual member the ability to connect, support each other and benefit from the contributions of many, while also honoring their own personal experience. This approach to storytelling embraces a multi-perspective narrative. When marginal groups engage in a collaborative process of narrating stories, storytelling has the potential to explore new self-perceptions and strengths that fall outside previous negative constructions held either by themselves or others (Epston and White, 1990). As a result, sharing stories can be empowering.

This sense of empowerment was fostered in both our international and local community partners. Stories written by youth artists from CityArts and Waves of Hope added to the fabric of human existence in Providence and El Manzano, and empowered storytellers to deconstruct the single narrative of the rural youth of Nicaragua and the inner-city youth of the United States. The Community Literacy project created a strong sense of community among a very diverse group of learners, challenged us to overcome sociocultural borders, and inspired us to develop a more sustainable collaboration.

In our commitment to create spaces for stories to be told and, mindful of how dependent on visualization our communications are nowadays, we introduced through this project a practice we called "image telling," which asks participants to tell the stories they see/can imagine based on a series of photographs. Much like the increasingly popular method known as "photovoice" (Palibroda, 2009), our process enables young people to "identify, represent and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique" (Wang and Burris 1997). We envision a storytelling pedagogical approach that allows individuals to craft a story based on the personal experiences and connections induced by the imagery presented.

This storytelling approach lets images speak to individuals and spark their imagination; it taps into their unique lives and unleashes their personal creativity to tell a story through the lens of images and concepts that prove to be universal. As Kövecses (2005) states, "universal primary experiences, produce universal primary metaphors" (p. 3), and we can find a lot of commonalities in the expression of emotion, concepts and metaphors both across languages/cultures and through time. Cultural models of emotions can be universal and can be tied to imagery to visualize a story honoring the multiple and rich perspectives of the storytellers. Aligned with David Griffin's (2008) view on photojournalism, the kinds of stories that emerge from iconic images demonstrate how people can make real connections, if they engage in storytelling that goes beyond the obvious or the superficial; and images "can be employed as a positive agent for understanding the challenges and opportunities facing our

world today." He concludes, "Sometimes, the only way to tell a story is with a sweeping picture."[5]

The Community Literacy project integrated photography to support the consciousness raising of youth in Nicaragua and the United States, who were asked to look at their reality with critical eyes and encouraged to portray their personal interpretation of the communities in which they live. The images produced denoted sensitivity toward the rural and urban landscapes around community photographers, and offered a "real" understanding of the visible and invisible aspects of community interactions. Providence College students served as mentors through this photo documentation process across borders. They were instrumental in familiarizing participants with the equipment; responsible for connecting the photography exercises with meaningful conversations about identity and justice; for leading the image telling discussion circles; and for curating the images captured by youth in the City Arts Gallery which culminated in an exhibit described further below.

Global Service-Learning at Providence College

With these theoretical foundations, this global service-learning project reflects how the Global Studies major at Providence College approaches learning. Global Studies, launched in 2005 as a program and established as department in 2013, is an interdisciplinary major focused on preparing the next generation to engage responsibly with our increasingly interconnected world (Alonso-García and Longo, 2013). This is accomplished through an interdisciplinary curriculum that constantly expects learners to bring a great sensitivity to local cultures and identities, as they develop their capacity to act as global problem-solvers and engaged citizens.

From the beginning, Global Studies has uniquely focused on understanding the intersection of local and international through experiential learning taking place in the Providence community and around the world. As a result, the practice of the pedagogy of service-learning has been integral from the establishment of the program.[6] The signature aspect of this model is preparation for, and reflection upon, global service-learning, which transcends the classroom boundaries and builds a deeper sense of global responsibility.

The global service-learning program incorporates both local and international community engagement components into the curriculum, and provides students the opportunity for in-depth study of a current controversy or theoretical issue in global studies with real-world

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[5] Griffin's TED Talk *How Photography Connects Us* recorded and available in archive: http://www.ted.com/talks/david_griffin_on_how_photography_connects/transcript?language=en

[6] The Feinstein Institute for Public Service at Providence College, with a history of strong ties in the local community and an interest in building international partnerships, has inspired and supported Global Studies service-learning initiatives in Providence and Latin America.

applications. The international service allows learners to be immersed and interact in community settings that deepen their understanding of other cultures, as well as to hone their language and communication skills. Connecting with locals in their native language demonstrates a respect for their heritage, a desire to bridge barriers and a commitment to reciprocity. The immersion experience is essential for gaining a real understanding of intercultural differences that might pose challenges if not perceived and analyzed from a sensitive and educated perspective. The international trip serves as a central "text" for the course, and a platform for critical analysis, project development, and individual and collective reflection, both while abroad and upon return to campus.

In our experience, integrating local service in an international service-learning course enhances students' understanding and appreciation of the interconnected world, which is essential for the study of globalization. Moreover, local-global engagement provides significant opportunities to participate responsibly in community problem-solving and reflective practice (Bringle, Hatcher, and Jones, 2011).

Building Partnerships through Community Literacy in Nicaragua

The Community Literacy project was born from the commitment that Global Studies has to provide learners with opportunities to experience first-hand the cultural diversity of our world. This program is also part of the commitment to challenge preconceptions based on monolingual and monocultural analysis, to critically examine the impact that global dynamics are having in local cultures, and to help students grow as civically engaged citizens.

Prior to the service-learning winter trip to Nicaragua, we developed and facilitated a series of cultural immersion workshops to prepare students to enter a new cultural landscape with sensitivity, appreciation, and respect. Most course participants were proficient in Spanish at the intermediate level, but had little or no experience in Latin America. Workshops topics included community engagement, Latin American culture and politics, and youth empowerment. Students reflected on the challenges of building and practicing reciprocal relationships across borders, and discussed how their own cultural identity would impact their perceptions of and interactions with members of a rural community in Nicaragua. They also examined issues connected to service, and how to negotiate privilege in community-based work at an international level.

Course participants also read a memoir by Nicaraguan revolutionary poet, Gioconda Belli (2002), *The Country Under My Skin*—a passionate portrayal of life in Nicaragua during the times of the revolution, captured through the complex tensions between privilege and sacrifice for her country and its people. Moreover, as requested by our community intermediaries, we used our pre-departure meetings to develop and plan a female empowerment workshop, *Building Self Esteem and Awareness thorough Photography and Storytelling*, for young women in Nicaragua led by our female college students—a process which required boundary crossing and cultural sensitivity.

Our time in Nicaragua was intense, exhilarating, and meaningful. Aside from facilitating the full-day empowerment workshop, we worked on literacy, sustainable development, and construction projects. We helped with the final stages of construction of a new high school being built by Waves of Hope in the community, and participated in the after-school programming for youth facilitating reading activities, bilingual conversational sessions, games and crafts throughout the week. But more than anything else, we used our short time together to build relationships and share stories. As described above, the unique and compelling stories we shared represented a set of values that inspired and guided our work the following semester.[7]

Student Reflections on Nicaragua

Each evening the student trip leaders were responsible for conducting a reflection session around themes emerging from our community experience. Topics went beyond highlights from the days to also include critical reflections on issues such as gender and identity, poverty and beauty, power and privilege. The reflection component of our global-service learning project was essential to question preconceptions regarding youth development and intercultural interactions; it allowed us to assess the decision-making processes and to project the implications of actions taken to future community engagement in larger societal contexts.

One student reflected on the aspects of the trip which "form the backbone of global change and social justice:"

> *Overall, Nicaragua was an experience of service-learning that increased our literacy of reflection and storytelling, community partnerships and friendships, the real meaning of sustainability...to appreciate and live out our dreams and perhaps most importantly, to think simply about all of these things as the true backbone of global change and social justice.*

A Dream, a Reality ~ Un sueño, una realidad

Providence College faculty and students worked side-by-side with members of El Manzano Uno community in the construction site of a new high school, funded by Waves of Hope and inaugurated on February 2014. The efforts included painting classrooms, laying the foundations of an outdoor library and cleaning the site, among other tasks. It also brought

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[7] The digital storytelling video created by Elizabeth Longo and Grace Twardy perhaps best capture this https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8oqE_Fxj-6M

students and members of the community together for a common projects and fostered meaningful interactions among participants from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

Another student reflected on the possibilities for forming relationships through storytelling in a short period of time:

By interacting with people in the community every day, I was able to see them as well as myself with new eyes. I found that my desire to know their story and their struggles equaled their desire to know my story and struggles. This gave me confidence in who I am and where I come from. I have begun to realize that I have the ability to form meaningful relationships with people who the day before had been complete strangers.

Smiling at the World ~ Una sonrisa al mundo

Providence College faculty and students engaged in youth literacy development as part of the after-school programming offered by Waves of Hope to El Manzano community. Adult and young learners connected through group dynamics that involved active reading, English conversation circles, painting, and dancing. This model of collaborative learning fostered trust and unleashed cultural tales and personal stories of struggle and hope.

And students recognized the way stories can lead to "breakthroughs" when working across borders and boundaries, ultimately leading to creative solutions to seemingly intractable problems:

The beauty of stories is that they equalize personal power. The media may provide more exposure for the stories of some individuals and less for others, but the poignancy and connectivity of a story is what makes it approachable, not its circulation. The manner in which a story of an unheard voice is told is the same as that of a well-known voice, but sometimes, when the message of an untold story is communicated across borders and barriers that created its silence, great

I Am Beautiful ~ Soy bella

breakthroughs can be made in public awareness. Sometimes this awareness can cause powerful and explosive waves of creative community based solutions.

As mentioned above, at the end of our final reflection session, the group decided to discard the formal syllabus that the instructors had developed for the coming semester course. However, the pre-determined local service-learning partnership that would connect with our international service—leading weekly arts and literacy projects with young people at CityArts for Youth—was still honored in the new syllabus hatched from our time in El Manzano. This effort is actually part of an ongoing partnership between CityArts and Providence College focusing on community-based arts and social change beginning in 2011.

At CityArts, participants were responsible for developing the programming of an after school program offered weekly on Fridays called Community Voices. This community engagement project enabled participants to build upon the Nicaragua experiences with youth, while continuing to explore art and literacy as a means to youth empowerment, community building and social change.

CityArts: Connecting Global with Local Voices

Every Child is an Artist...

Architects of Change ~ Arquitectos del cambio

Whether it was storytelling, photography, painting, or sculpting, every lesson plan was created to explore and share with students at CityArts valuable pieces of the Nicaragua service-learning trip; and to learn about the rich cultural backgrounds of young artists. Additionally, participants were involved in the planning and implementation of a vacation camp, "Around the World with Words and Images," offered to young artists in collaboration with professional teaching artists. The youth, ages 8 to 14, explored literary works in connection to art from Asia, Africa, and Latin America and created original art pieces—masks, murals, self portraits—utilizing a variety of media.

The Canvas of My Heart ~ El lienzo de mi corazón

The camp fostered a multidisciplinary collaboration between teaching artists and college students. While the former brought specialization in digital photography, book making, sculpture, and traditional arts, the latter brought a passion and energy in areas such as community organizing, foreign languages, and global cultures. Providence College students, guided by faculty and CityArts educational director, developed a culturally sensitive curriculum for the camp that reflected the local community heritage and exposed participants to the artistic diversity of world cultures. CityArts youth, led by Providence College students and teaching artists, were offered ample opportunities to exploit their creativity in their native languages as well as in English, and engaged in art making that was meaningful to them. As a result, young artists were able to explore the value of understanding artistic trends worldwide and localizing them within their communities.

The partnership with CityArts culminated in an art exhibition curated by Providence College students that celebrated the "community voices" from Nicaragua and Providence, along with those from Ecuador, based on photography from another winter break service trip focused on the themes of "visualizing peace and justice." The exhibit was displayed in the CityArts Gallery for several weeks with a closing reception that drew hundreds of people to "listen" to the transnational voices and stories of young people.[8] The pieces symbolize and capture the

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[8] The photos from the reception are available at this site:
http://visualizingpeaceandjustice.weebly.com/cityarts-reception1.html

stories learned throughout participants' involvement with youth across borders. One student commented on the connection between the CityArts partnership with Waves of Hope in Nicaragua:

My experience at CityArts impacted my perception of local-global dynamics in helping me to realize how children around the world share the same experiences, emotions and needs. By working on art and beauty projects with both the youth in Nicaragua and the youth at CityArts, I was able to see how all youth, regardless of their background, can benefit from being encouraged to notice and appreciate the beauty around them.

Everybody Is a Story ~ Todo el mundo es una historia

Summing Up

Jane Addams, a pioneer among the social settlement and educational reform efforts at the turn of the 20th century, once described the settlement movement as "a protest against a restricted view of education" (p. 275). This insight about the potential for a more expansive view of education seems more prescient now after our experience with this global studies course than when Addams described this shift more than 100 years ago. Using this past social movement as an inspiration, we see our partnerships with Waves of Hope and CityArts as offering a more collaborative and interconnected model for teaching and learning. With this initial pilot experience, we are also realizing the possibilities for stories to connect community partners across boundaries.

Also like the partnerships in the social settlement movement, we see this project as part of long-term relationships between Providence College and our community partners, involving much more than short-term "service" experiences. In our cases, these relationships are connected to our broader scholarly agenda around language learning, global education, and campus-community partnerships. And the reciprocal relationships are connected to our partners desire to tap into the energy and idealism of American college students, along with the resources of higher education institutions.

As such, this initial learning community continues to grow in new ways with a focus on building reciprocal, long-term global partnerships. For instance, a new version of the course was offered in spring 2015 around the theme of "youth development across borders," with new components such as the development of a "listening project" with stories and interviews of youth from the U.S. and Nicaragua, a focus on understanding what it means to "play" in global contexts, and attempts to catalyze more crossnational conversations among our partners at

Waves of Hope and City Arts. But more needs to be done in this area, most especially in better researching and capturing the too often "unheard voices" (Stoecker and Tryon, 2009) of our community partners.

And yet with this project—and the broader interdisciplinary Global Studies Department—we are building a program that deliberately links local and international engagement in all of our global service-learning courses, a practice with broader implications for partnerships in international service-learning. This past spring, another global service-learning course was offered for the first time, studying "global coffee culture" with distinctive projects in Nicaragua during spring break and community action projects with a local coffee shop in Providence. Another ongoing global service-learning course is examining "border crossing" with a service trip to Tijuana, Mexico and work with Latino immigrants in Providence, along with an examination of "border-crossing" in our daily lives.

Ultimately, these international-local connections can help us make the short-term immersion trips more deliberately approach all service-learning with a "global" framework. This will help students develop a sensitivity to local cultures, while also learning about the interconnectedness of the world. By connecting the local with the international, we expect that college students are more prepared and effective community partners; and the partnerships become more sustainable. In short, we hope a focus on the global in this work—locally and internationally—makes us better community partners at home and abroad.

We began this essay with the insight from our colleague about the importance of recognizing students as co-creators of the curriculum. However, our experiences integrating local and international partnerships through Community Literacy in Nicaragua has helped us see the importance of expanding the circle of teaching and learning beyond including students as co-creators, to also inviting community partners to likewise contribute. As a result of these experiences, the next time someone asks one of us, "What are you teaching next semester?" we will likely need to add an addendum to the response about "not yet knowing" our students. We will need to say, we have also yet to hear the stories of our community partners, a consideration that recognizes that collaborative engagement not only depends on the voices and stories of our students, but also our communities.

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