



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Higher Education Resources

CSTAE Curriculum Resource

2014

Install America (or wherever you are)

Connie Stewart

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cstae_resource_higher_education



Part of the [Art Education Commons](#)

Downloaded from

https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/cstae_resource_higher_education/2

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the CSTAE Curriculum Resource at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Higher Education Resources by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

INSTALL GREELEY (or Wherever You Are)



Install America (or wherever you are)
Connie Stewart, PhD
University of Northern Colorado

The following project was developed as a requirement in an Art Education preparation course at the University of Northern Colorado. The program is strong in traditional academic skill building as are many of the k-12 art programs in the area. Teacher candidates must take courses in drawing, painting, ceramics, sculpture etc.

The university is located in an agricultural area with a large meat packing industry. The community is diverse with close to 50% of the population of Hispanic origin. Some families have been in the area from before its annexation to the United States, some came as part of the Bracero Program in the 1940's and 50's and some are recent immigrants. In the last few years Sudanese and Burmese families have also come to the area. However, many university students remain on campus or commute from other places in Northern Colorado. A school observation or practicum experience may be the only community interaction outside of the campus confines.

I developed the "Install Greeley: An All American City" assignment to meet the following objectives:

- 1) Include "new" media forms of installation and performance in the arts education program in addition to traditional media.
- 2) Go beyond "Multiculturalism" with the assumptions of "us" and "them" to examine the role of art in mutuality and social understanding.
- 3) Demonstrate Arts Integration by having students create art connected to the history, social assumptions, environment, and current politics of their current place.

During class time students listened to the TED talk "The Danger of a Single Story" by Chimamanda Adichie, participated in exercises exploring concepts of IN and OUT groups, Home and Not Home, and shared "Single Stories" in their own lives. They also openly discussed their experiences living or going to school in the Greeley community. I provided information about contemporary artists who use a variety of art forms to reflect on "Place." Many of my chosen artists were from the Documenta 13 show where artists from around the world responded to the WW2 history of Kassel, Germany. Others were from a 2008 show at Site Santa Fe, New Mexico where international artists were challenged to make art about a local place.

To begin the project, students were assigned an area of town, North, South, East or West of the campus. Some groups chose to look at the campus community itself. The first part of the project was a group photo shoot in their assigned section of the community. During the photo shoot they were also to stop at a local store where they might not usually shop and make a small purchase. Then they generated questions about their area of town and completed research using the local history

museum, newspaper archives, personal interviews or other resources. The last part of the project was the installation. The final installations are shown in the slideshow, "Exploring Place."

Resources used in the Install America Unit

Books:

Allport, G. (1979/1954) *The Nature of Prejudice* : 25th Anniversary Edition . Perseus Publishers

This book is a classic examination of human preferential thinking, group assumptions and differences, socio-culture factors in character formation. *I used the reference to discuss "In Groups and Out Groups" as defined in Chapters 3 and 4.*

Thorpe, H. (2009). *Just Like Us, The True Story of Four Mexican Girls Coming of Age in America.* Simon and Schuster

Helen Thorpe follows four students in the Denver area in their years finishing high school and entering college. Two students have legal documentation papers and two do not. *Class discussion of this book generated sharing of personal stories of documentation and prejudice, my students' financial struggles to attend college, and new awareness of the unspoken life narratives of the students we are teaching in the local k-1 2 schools.*

Articles

Watson, J. (January ,2012)*We Turned Your World: Contemporary Art Practice in the High School Classroom and Spaces Beyond.* *Art Education* 65 no1 pp 33-39

This article demonstrated to my art education students how a similar project was implemented at the high school level.

Videos

Chimamanda, A. (2009) *The Danger of a Single story*

https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

Adichie Chimamanda tells how she was misunderstood by those who had a "single story"(one viewpoint) of Nigeria and how she misunderstood others by her own single stories. *This Ted Talk resulted in rich discussions of the single stories in our own lives and informed the objective for our artmaking. What are the "single stories" we hold about those in our communities?*

<http://improveeverywhere.com/>

“Improv Everywhere is a New York City-based prank collective that causes scenes of chaos and joy in public places.” *These short improv videos introduced my students to the concept of intervention in public spaces*

Brief facts on the history of our local place

Here are some facts about the “All American City” of Greeley, Colorado:

- Founded as a Business venture/ Utopian Community in 1870 by Nathan Meeker on land used by Ute and Arapahoe peoples. Meeker was the agricultural editor for the New York Tribune, edited by Horace Greeley. Out of 3000 applicants, Meeker selected 700 people, of which later 90 backed out.
- The Guiding principles of The new “ Union Colony” or Greeley were were faith, family, education, irrigation, [temperance](#), [agriculture](#), home. Greeley was dry (no alcohol allowed) until 1969. UNC was founded as a normal school in 1889. Meatpacking Industry began with Monfort Feedlots-Started as a small cattle farm after WWI Grew into a billion dollar cattle feeding, slaughtering and packaging plant ; sold to Conagra; then to Swift; then to JBS Swift.
- Immigrants from Mexico came to the area as part or the 1942 Bracero Program. The program was an international contract labor program created in between the United States and Mexican governments in response to U.S. World War II labor shortages. The program allowed between 4.5 and 5 million Mexican farm laborers into the United States as contract labor over a 22-year period. The Bracero Program was officially terminated in 1964.Now the population is approximately 50% white and 50% Hispanic or non white.
- In 2006 the Immigration and Customs Enforcement raided the Swift meatpacking plants. 1300 people were arrested nationwide. 262 from the Greeley plant . Most departed. Some charged with identity theft. “We have 26 families who have members out on bond. Those arrested could not leave because they have to be available for court and they were ineligible to work Some court dates dragged on months and even years.
- JBS Swift is now hiring refugees from Burma and Somalia.
- City of Greeley is now endeavoring to rebrand self as a “ Creative District” encouraging small galleries and arts events.

Unless a student had relatives who had been involved, they were not aware of the work force history of the area. This brief overview was the beginning of assigned group research on the history of this place.