

Although Americans are rightfully concerned about when the next major earthquake will affect them, it is apparent that a different big one has already hit the United States—the Trump era.

Battling the big one: LGBTQ+ inclusive art education during the Trump era

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Recently, because of our new political atmosphere, there have been many attacks on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, or LGBTQ+, individuals and communities. Even though there have been positive developments in the past few years, homophobia is still a major concern for many people in the United States. These issues often manifest themselves to a greater degree within the microcosm of public schools where LGBTQ+ students are forced to deal with hateful speech, heteronormative environments, and rampant homophobia. These struggles can have harmful effects on the social and emotional development of queer youth. Progressive and inclusive art education that provides reflective and thoughtful creative projects may aid in identity development, increase self-esteem, and encourage activism, thus helping to improve the lives of LGBTQ+ youth and educators.

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Like the tectonic movements of the Earth's crust that cause both creation of new land and destruction of property, shifts in the political power can be socially damaging yet create positive effects. During these times of great social struggle, heroes emerge that seek to create positive change in the status quo. One such hero is the ally art teacher—a diligent individual dedicated to social service able to place their discomforts aside to make all students feel safe and empowered through the creation of personal art. One group that has been deeply affected by recent social and political shifts is the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) community. The Obama administration left a legacy of progress for this underserved group; however, recent changes in power have many in the LGBTQ+ community worried about an uncertain future (Horsley, 2016). It is, therefore, imperative that art teachers fill this need for inclusive education that meets the needs of their queer students and all their students. Creating LGBTQ+-inclusive art lessons can be a challenge for many art teachers, however, through the establishment of creative safe spaces, the implementation of identity-affirming projects, the building of community-based activism, and the application of various other inclusive teaching methods, art educators can successfully develop a LGBTQ+-friendly curriculum that benefits and empowers both their queer students as well as all of their students. Gude (2002), Lampela (2007), Rhoades (2012), and Shelton (2014) influenced my research and all have greatly contributed to the academic literature on the LGBTQ+ community, heteronormativity, sexuality, and art education and their intersections. Hsieh (2016), an associate professor at Georgia State University, is a leader in the field of interdisciplinary art education as well as museum education. As an assistant professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, Wagaman (2016) has enhanced her field in social work through her expertise in serving marginalized populations including LGBTQ+ youth. Stanley (2007), a professor at the Birmingham Insti-

tute of Art, has written a body of work that deals with anthropology, art education, and museum studies. Dinkins and Englert (2015), although in separate fields at Bellarmine University, have collaborated on numerous articles dealing with sexuality, literacy, and queer youth.

The Big One

Since September 2017, Mexico has been hit with several earthquakes, including one that devastated Mexico City. Since the quakes and the massive media coverage that accompanied them, many people in the United States are again awaiting the *big one*. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Southern Californians living along the San Andreas Fault could see an earthquake relatively soon, similar to the one that hit Mexico City (Lin, 2017). Although Americans are rightfully concerned about when the next major earthquake will affect them, it is apparent that a different *big one* has already hit the United States—the Trump era.

Like earthquakes, which shift the surface of the earth and cause wide-sweeping damage, the party politics of the United States also inflict grief and distress on the citizens of this country. In the political realm, there are major quakes and minor ones. Minor shifts may affect people locally, but major shifts in political power affect people nationally and even globally. The results of the last presidential election in the United States tipped the political Richter scale. Not only will its effects be felt in our country, but also throughout the rest of the world (Elliott, 2016). Like the quakes in Mexico, the Trump era poses disastrous effects and the American people are poised to get hurt.

One group that has already been injured is the LGBTQ+ community. During the 2016 election campaign, Donald Trump promised to be an ally of the gay community. However, he has shown his true self throughout his first year. Upon entering office, President Trump rescinded federal protections for transgender students and failed to acknowledge Gay Pride Month. In July of 2017, Trump tweeted his intentions of banning trans

people from serving in the military (Epps, 2017). In October, the president was the keynote speaker at the Family Research Council's Values Voter Summit, an anti-gay hate group that demonizes the LGBTQ+ community (Sinclair, 2017). Also, Trump jokingly said that the vice president, Mike Pence, wanted to hang all homosexual Americans (Moore, 2017, para. 1). Killing large groups of people is not funny, and, in no way, is genocide ever a laughing matter. In the upcoming months, one can easily predict how the president will deal with other important LGBTQ+ issues as he continues to demonize innocent people and strip them of their inalienable rights. His harsh bullying tactics and his approval and support of hate groups may cause others to condone hate and bigotry in the United States (Sinclair, 2017). Because of this ever-present threat to the LGBTQ+ community, it is imperative that educators embrace an inclusive art education that celebrates gay artists and LGBTQ+ students.

The Problem

When a major earthquake hits, many may feel powerless, hesitant, and unsure of how to most directly help the victims (Taylor, 2017). The same is the case with teachers when dealing with complex social issues. Check and Ballard (2014) and Hsieh (2016), all scholars in the fields of art education and LGBTQ+ issues, contend that teachers may want to help queer students feel safe and supported, but they often feel ineffective, inadequate, or insecure when dealing with queer issues in class. This can be especially challenging when educators identify as LGBTQ+ themselves (Connell, 2015). Other art teachers would like to help but simply do not know the best way to do so. Art classrooms can provide safe and nurturing spaces for LGBTQ+ youth to grow (Dinkins & Englert, 2015; Hsieh, 2016; Rhoades, 2012; Shelton, 2014). As art educators, we should know how LGBTQ+ youth benefit from art programs and learn how to effectively support and teach all of our students. Successful implementation of inclusive teaching methods can help develop the much-needed safe

spaces for queer youth and give them tools so they can empower themselves to change their environments (Hsieh, 2016).

Many queer students in U.S. public schools are immersed in environments that advocate and celebrate the normality of heterosexuality (Dinkins & Englert, 2015). Not only is heteronormativity championed, there is an active effort to suppress and exclude LGBTQ+ characters, role models, and historical figures in school (Rhoades, Davenport, Wolfgang, Cosier, & Sanders, 2013). Facing constant judgment and ostracism, students can feel defeated, discouraged, and depressed (Rhoades, 2011). Because most schools do not routinely include sexually diverse issues, such as those of LGBTQ+ individuals, art educators need to learn appropriate ways to include queer issues in their curriculum.

Recent Trends and Current Issues

The LGBTQ+ community saw much progress during the past eight years of the Obama administration (Horsley, 2016). Even predating the Obama election, the topic of "homosexuality is gaining greater acceptance, as evidenced by the inclusion of gay characters in television and the movies and the proliferation of educational materials addressing gay and lesbian issues" (Lampela, 2001, p. 146). This progress is shown in many arenas beyond pop culture. Government recognition, as seen in the 2015 Supreme Court decision, allows same-sex couples the right to marry (Schwartz, 2015). The U.S. Supreme Court also recently struck down an Arkansas law that treated married same-sex couples unfairly compared to straight couples when documenting parental status on their children's birth certificates (Ampezzan, 2017). These recent legal decisions echo national surveys that indicate the highest levels of support of LGBTQ+ rights ever recorded (Shelton, 2014).

Even though there has been much improvement in attitudes towards gays and lesbians, there are still many concerns for queer people. Many LGBTQ+ youth still experience many prob-

lems at school and at home, including homophobia and bullying (Check & Ballard, 2014; Gude, 2002; McDermott, Roen, & Scourfield, 2008; Shelton, 2014; Stanley, 2007). Gay and lesbian youth are not the only ones who experience stress; their gay teachers must manage their conflicting roles and identity challenges in the classroom (Connell, 2015; Kahn & Gorski, 2016; Lineback, Allender, Gaines, McCarthy, & Butler, 2016). Through art education, young LGBTQ+ people can learn how to better deal with and resist problems in school and in their daily lives (Dinkins & Englert, 2015; Hsieh, 2016; Lampela, 2007). One way to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ youth is through the successful implementation of community-based art programs (Ciszek, 2014; Rhodes, 2011; Wagaman, 2016). The most successful educators utilize many of the same techniques commonly used in these programs to teach LGBTQ+ issues and reach their queer students in their classrooms (Gude, 2002; Lampela, 2007; Vecellio, 2012). Taking the knowledge gained through community-based art education efforts, teachers can learn how to appropriately educate LGBTQ+ youth in their classrooms.

Strategies from Community-Based Art Programs

Schools are often unsupportive environments for LGBTQ+ youth because teachers are not able to or will not discuss important issues dealing with sexuality. Some states, including Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Arizona, have passed laws that prohibit teachers from discussing gay and transgender issues in class (Brammer, 2018). Community-based programs can engage LGBTQ+ youth in cooperative efforts to react to destructive environmental influences in order to create positive changes in society. Teachers can achieve this through mentorship programs from local resource centers, community outreach programs, collaborating with district-wide Gay Straight Alliance group initiatives, and public arts projects. As socially-conscious art teachers, we must push our administrators to act fairly, demy-

stify sexuality in the classroom, obliterate enduring homophobia in our school community, and provide safe spaces for queer students to flourish.

Current Problems Experienced by LGBTQ+ Youth

Homophobia and Bullying

When a massive shift occurs, some people are negatively affected more than others. LGBTQ+ youth already experience many problems in the classroom including violence. Manifestations of this violence include bullying caused by homophobia. Stanley (2007), a professor at Birmingham Institute of Art, in a study about gay and lesbian students and art education, discovered “between 30-50% of same-sex attracted young people in secondary schools will have directly experienced homophobic bullying” (p. 5). Students in these schools continue to use homophobic language in class, such as “fag,” “homo,” and “gay,” in a derogatory way (Gude, 2002). A leader in queer theory and gender studies and assistant professor of qualitative educational research at the University of Alabama, Shelton (2014), explains that teacher bias is often part of the problem, and sometimes educators themselves use homophobic language towards gay and straight students alike. Another issue is that teachers allow other students to use hateful language without interfering.

Although many teachers do not approve of homophobic slurs, they are hesitant to address these slurs in class (Stanley, 2007). Moreover, Shelton (2014) states “53% of adult lesbians and gay men reported contemplating harming themselves as a result of being bullied at school, [and] 40% indicated that they had attempted to harm themselves or had attempted suicide on at least one occasion” (p. 5).

Unsupportive and Heteronormative Environments

Schools are often unsupportive environments for LGBTQ+ youth because teachers are not able to or will not discuss important issues dealing with sexuality. Teachers express anxieties and trepidations about confronting a fundamentalist school administration or community of culture that might inhibit them from actively defending and embracing LGBTQ+ issues (Hsieh, 2016). In many instances, educators and administrators, ignore or excuse violence towards queer students because they believe LGBTQ+ people deserve exclusion (Rhoades, Davenport, Wolfgang, Cosier, & Sanders, 2013) or blame queer victims for inciting or inviting violence upon themselves, acknowledging bullying as a requirement for teen growth, and believing it can magically vanish (Rhoades, 2011).

Another major problem for LGBTQ+ youth is that schools are governed by heteronormativity. Dinkins and Englert (2015) explain that, in a heteronormative environment, "students are positioned as straight, and heterosexual identities are empowered while LGBTQ+ students and non-heterosexual gender behaviors are marginalized" (p. 394). Most schools have this heteronormative bias; however, there is a definite demand for a well-balanced curriculum that portrays and represents more than the heteronormative standards (Lampela, 2007). These types of environments contribute to the vulnerability of gay and lesbian students and limit learning by affecting how knowledge is shaped, managed, and employed.

Benefits of Art Education for LGBTQ+ Youth

Safe Spaces

When large continents shift, they cause stress fractures in the crust where pressure can be released, thus inciting further geological changes elsewhere. In response to the extensive—and possibly damaging—changes in Washington, DC,

educators should make positive changes in the classroom with regards to LGBTQ+ youth. Just as stress fractures occur to alleviate tension in the crust, the many problems facing LGBTQ+ youth, can be alleviated through inclusive art education (Dinkins & Englert, 2015; Gude, 2002; Hsieh, 2016; Rhoades, 2012; Shelton, 2014). One way to provide this relief is through the establishment of safe spaces. Because the school environment is an essential part of the holistic growth of students, schools need to create safe and encouraging environments for LGBTQ+ students (Dinkins & Englert, 2015). A recent study on preservice art teachers' attitudes toward addressing LGBTQ issues has shown that there is a positive association between supportive teachers and the positive school experiences of LGBTQ+ students (Hsieh, 2016). Hsieh explains that developing new approaches to creating a climate of safety and protection can lower the harassment of queer youth in schools and should be an essential and mandatory part of all preservice teacher preparation. Educators must recognize harassment and oppression and create safe spaces for their students to learn and grow (Rhoades, 2012). When art teachers establish zero-tolerance policies for homophobic language or when they place queer-friendly posters and stickers on their walls they are working to build safe spaces. According to a study by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN, cited in Shelton, 2014), "one of the greatest factors for LGBT students who reported feeling safe and supported was access to teachers who would advocate for and protect them from discrimination" (p. 118). Teachers must be a source of protection and safety for their LGBTQ+ students who may not find comfort in any other location.

Identity Affirmation

When a rock is under enough pressure, it will fracture or break. When LGBTQ+ youth experience enough pressure, they can also breakdown and fall into self-destructive behaviors (McDermott, Roen, & Scourfield, 2008). Art educators

can help prevent this by helping LGBTQ+ youth develop a strong sense of self through identity affirming art projects (Gude, 2002). Through lessons that include LGBTQ+ issues and introduce students to queer artists, lesbian and gay students can obtain a positive sense of self in connection to their sexual orientation (Lampela, 2007; McDermott, Roen, & Scourfield, 2008). Stanley (2007) explains that LGBTQ+ students have much to offer through art creation and adds that the way most queer people form their sexual identities through their personal experience provides a strong foundation for creative reflection. Gude (2002) describes how these self identifying projects can help our students become stimulating and complex global citizens—accepting themselves and each other, happily celebrating diversity and opportunity.

Identity affirming projects, such as the ones that I implement in my own classroom, have helped students overcome harsh stereotypes and build resiliency while improving their overall self-worth. During the past two years, I have applied these principles to one lesson in particular—creating a self-affirming identity portrait. Using a supplied worksheet, students reflect upon the negative stereotypes, gossip, internalized self-hate that they have personally experienced. They also consider the positive aspects about themselves—their skills, personality traits, and positive outward appearance affirmations. Students then create an abstract background utilizing the negative text and draw a self-portrait on top of that background that displays the positive words. After a student self-assessment of the project and presentation of their artwork, I discovered that this lesson empowered many of my students to overcome negativity and self-doubt by reaffirming their self confidence.

Community-Based Art Education Activism

Stress fractures can also be relieved through community-based programs that engage LGBTQ+ youth in cooperative efforts to react to destructive environmental influences in order to

create positive changes in society. By joining and contributing to LGBTQ+ youth organizations, young people can experience empowerment through social encouragement, connection to the gay community, and engagement in activist efforts (Wagaman, 2016). Ciszek (2014) explains that “a...queer community creates a unified movement, establishing common bonds with fellow members, developing a sense of we-ness through shared experiences and oppression, and instilling a loyalty to a larger movement” (p. 334). When young LGBTQ+ people collaborate on creative projects, they demonstrate the potential of combining art with activism, or “artivism” (Rhoades, 2011). They use these liberating identity strengthening exercises and interventionist strategies to construct the possibilities and images of LGBTQ+ equality. Rhoades (2012) explains that “[social criticism] has recognized the need to engage marginalized youth, support their critical awareness, and activate their agency as autonomous individuals with the capacity to act, alone or collectively” (p. 318). Rather than remaining oppressed victims, artivism has encouraged and driven youth to transform into community-based artists, activists, and agents for positive change. Wagaman (2016) further emphasizes that through these community programs, LGBTQ+ youth are questioning, resisting, and changing their environments.

Not all artivism needs to be on a large community-wide scale; the school community is a great place to start. Developing artivism and social responsibility in the art classroom is simple and can be very rewarding. To engage my students in this beneficial practice, I brainstorm important social issues with my classroom during a lesson each year. From this list of social issues, each student develops an awareness poster that metaphorically sheds light on or offers solutions to the topic. First, each student chooses a social issue that is important to them, such as alcoholism, poverty, pollution, animal rights, or homelessness. In groups of three or four, students help each other brainstorm symbolic and metaphor-

ical representations of their chosen topic. From that brainstorming session, students use ideas to formulate imagery and begin drawing their posters. To further promote unbridled creativity, I allow the students the freedom to utilize any media they want for the assignment. I find that when there are less restrictions on how a finished project is supposed to appear the results are more original and creative. The results were very diverse and better than I expected. I discovered that through this project, the students had a very firm grasp of metaphor and symbolism. For example, one of my students chose big game hunting as their topic and created a poster that memorialized Cecil the Lion (see Figure 1). Another one of my students, who presented her artwork to the class, depicted a little girl as a punching bag while fists representing homophobic and sexist language attacked her (see Figure 2). The artwork was then entered into the area Texas Art Education Association's Junior VASE contest in which students had to explain the meaning of their artwork and answer questions from a panel of judges. Students were questioned on how they incorporated artistic elements and principles, how they included aspects of themselves, and how the symbolism conveyed meaning in their artwork. Judges then tabulated a score from one to four on how students answered their questions and how they executed their artwork. Not only did each student become an advocate for their social issue, each of the thirty-two students who entered the contest scored the highest possible value of four and received a medal for their work. These visually-striking and thought-provoking posters were then displayed in the library so other students and teachers could view them. The school's reaction was electric. Students and teachers began talking about the works of art and the underlying issues. While the administration and most teachers loved the artwork, the parents' reaction, however, was split. While some parents thought the exercise was too bold for children, most were excited about how the lesson demonstrated the students' sense of agency. People



Figure 1. Cecil the Lion was a great example of young activism. The artwork depicts a lifelike portrait of Cecil the Lion and memorializes his death through the use of somber colors and exquisite facial details that reveal his character.

voiced their concerns on social media, where the conversation about these issues continued. In response to the poster project and by listening to the students' concerns, the school's administration helped develop its first Gay-Straight Alliance—a great step in the right direction.

Building Connections

According to Fryer (2009), a seismologist at the Hawaii Institute of Geophysics & Planetology, when tectonic plates collide and unexpectedly move along fault lines, rocks break from a build-up of pressure and large amounts of energy are released through seismic waves in the form of earthquakes. When large groups of students use their energy to act through activism, it can also cause great shifts in our community. Communi-



Figure 2. A student created *Words Hurt* to emphasize the effect of bullying.

ty-based activism involves building intergenerational relationships between participants that foster awareness and a shared critical consciousness around important community matters (Rhoades, 2012). Connecting to the greater LGBTQ+ community and working together for a common goal has been associated with increased self esteem and positive social identity development for gay and lesbian youth (Rhoades, 2012; Wagaman, 2016). Building relationships is not merely limited to face-to-face interactions, but also includes digital connections through social media and other Internet-based methodologies. Teachers should follow LGBTQ+ artists and activists on social platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and use those connections to build working relationships with them. Through utilizing software such as Skype and Adobe Connect, teachers and students can easily network with queer artists. According to Rhoades (2011), these

digital media resources provide “virtual spaces for community-based, arts-based efforts for change. Student-artists recognize combining ‘art, activism, and community’ can produce ‘a political act,’ and digital media can facilitate it” (p. 49).

Teaching Methods

Inclusion of LGBTQ+ Issues and People

Like the major earthquakes that are televised all over the world, LGBTQ+ issues are no longer a hidden matter; they are now a very visible part of the American culture. Lampela (2007) states that “we owe it to our students to address lesbian and gay issues in school [in] professional and educated ways thereby providing them with a complete education” (p. 34). One way that art teachers can be part of the conversation is to present students with knowledge that focuses on the work and lives of LGBTQ+ artists and reflects the real world in which our students live. For example, teachers can introduce students to prominent contemporary queer artists, such as Mickalene Thomas, Harriet Horton, and Chitra Ganesh—all of whose work deals with sexuality, masculinity, and feminism. According to Stanley (2007), “lesbian, gay, bisexual, & transgender people bring great benefits to all in our efforts to explore and develop an increasingly inclusive art and design agenda” (p. 2).

LGBTQ+ Role Models

Just as we focus on those helping others to bring a sense of hope during major natural disasters, art teachers should include queer role models in lessons to give hope to and provide relief to LGBTQ+ youth. One way to include LGBTQ+ individuals in the curriculum is to look at their contributions and achievements in relation to the formation and development of American culture (Vecellio, 2012). Queer youth must encounter more role models in school who are also important members of the gay community. According to Lampela (2007), “Lesbian and gay adolescents need to know that there [are] others like them

who [are] lesbian or gay and artists and [have] great success" (p. 35). For example, art educators can mention how Kehinde Wiley was commissioned by President Obama to create his official White House portrait (Fox, 2017). They can also discuss how David Hockney is widely regarded as the most significant British artist of the twentieth century for his reinvention of portraiture (Gurewitsch, 2006). Teachers should also give students examples of gay and lesbian artists who actively motivated and inspired each other through personal and intimate relationships, such as the ones between Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg or Jack Shear and Ellsworth Kelly (Gude, 2002, p. 6). In an equity-focused art classroom, students encounter positive portrayals of lesbians and gays to offset the hetero-biased curricula in other classes and to combat all of the other homophobic and sexist comments that they are exposed to at school (Lampela, 2007). Check and Ballard (2014) demonstrate first-person narrative truth-telling in their classes by being sincere about their own lives, and explain that honesty is essential for respectful learning and social justice. Students can use their personal stories to create narrative comic strips or to utilize narrative metaphor in surrealist works. Dinkins and Englert (2015) explain that the inclusion of

"lesbian and gay characters...can challenge myths about sexuality, establish clear definitions of gay and lesbian as distinct from the pejorative comments students hear in the hallways and playgrounds, and foster understandings of multiple perspectives as students 'try on' different attitudes" (p. 393).

Best Practices and Visual Culture

Another way to provide relief from stress fractures is to examine visual culture in the classroom. Art educators should initiate conversations about contemporary representations of sexuality, gender, race, and class and sociocultural inequities, through the analysis of visual culture (Gude, 2002; Rhoades, 2011). Visual media literacy

demonstrates a topic that is full of comparative images of LGBTQ+ illustrations and influences. Analyzing cartoons and comics, for example, can be used to address sexual identity in the art classroom (Stanley, 2007). Teachers can also discuss how the non-binary sexual orientations of comic book heroes, such as Batwoman, Batgirl, Northstar, and the Green Lantern, affect contemporary attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community. Hsieh (2016) suggests teaching art teachers to explore LGBTQ+ issues through visual culture during their preservice courses so that they will be prepared when designing their own lessons.

Although most teachers have no problem relating projects to their cisgendered students, or students whose gender identity corresponds to their gender at birth, many educators do not know how to address or teach trans students. George (2014), a high school teacher and creator of the LGBT+ inclusion project, Rainbow Teaching, explains that most high school teachers do not believe that they have any trans students. One of the most important steps in creating safe learning environments for their trans students is for teachers to recognize and challenge transphobia when they see it happening. Chauvinism and sexism are a big problem in young male students. This kind of behavior can inhibit the success of trans students in a classroom environment. Art teachers also should provide examples of trans artists, such as Yishay Garbasz, Greer Lankdon, and Cooper Lee Bombardier. Hearing about successful trans artists in art lessons is important for cisgender students to develop positive attitudes towards the trans community as well as to provide role models for trans students. It is also essential for teachers to recognize their students' chosen names. When educators honor a student's chosen name, it shows that teachers fully accept their trans students' identities.

Gude (2002) offers some helpful suggestions to teachers who wish to make positive changes in their classrooms regarding LGBTQ+ issues. She recommends warning students about making

overgeneralizations and prejudiced statements based on the study of a few members of a population, as well as challenging conceptions of what it is to be normal. Displaying LGBTQ+ culture celebrating posters and gay and lesbian books also sends a positive message of support and approval to students. According to Gude (2002), teachers should also “include discussions of sexual imagery in the art curriculum so that students develop a comfort level with discussing such material” and “deconstruct gender stereotypes in traditional art during art history lessons” (p. 7). For example, teachers should discuss the reasoning behind the exaggerated genitalia depicted in some traditional Yoruba sculptures and ask questions about the unrefined characteristics of the child in Mary Cassatt’s *Little Girl in the Blue Armchair* (1878). Teachers should be prepared, however, to encounter people who are prejudiced against diverse sexual identities because of their beliefs. When teachers and administrators help students to realize that these belief patterns are not innate and inherent, but are the consequence of a lifetime of training, the students may reexamine many of their own preconceived ideas and prejudices.

Building Relationships With LGBTQ+ Students

To better prepare for earthquakes, we need to learn more about them so we can predict when they will happen. Like learning from quakes, teachers need to better understand the needs of our LGBTQ+ students. To do that, art teachers need to build stronger relationships with them. Check and Ballard (2014) offer much insight into building stronger relationships with queer students. Art teachers understand the worth and significance of encouraging students to share meaningful aspects of their lives. When teachers do this, it gives them opportunities to relate to their students’ lives and their art processes. For example, because of the high level of personal honesty and trust established in my art class, students feel free to candidly share their own experiences. Sometimes, art class provides one of the only outlets where students can share with-

out fear of judgment. When we help our students grow by allowing them to open up, we grow as well. Check and Ballard (2014) explain that it is, therefore, invaluable and “incumbent upon us as art teachers to not only face our own fears and silences, but also to put those fears to words and openly discuss them with our peers and students” (p. 10).

Conclusion

Although there have been many setbacks, there have been some positive developments towards an equal representation of LGBTQ+ issues in the classroom. For example, as part of the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful Education Act in California teachers must include instruction related to LGBTQ+ persons in social science classes (Vecellio, 2012). Although this may seem vague and easily misinterpreted, it is a step in the right direction. As socially conscious art teachers, we must push our administrators to act fairly, demystify sexuality in the classroom, obliterate enduring homophobia in our school community, and provide safe spaces for queer students to flourish. With the helpful suggestions of these scholars, we can bring social justice and equality to LGBTQ+ students, improve their overall developmental experience in school and in the community, and fight the tyranny of this presidential administration.

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