Our participants were divided between the ones that saw in this rupture an opportunity to examine the structural foundations that lead the way to systemic inequality and be able to change them, and those who thought that the momentum would be assimilated by capitalist culture in a way that would leave those very foundations intact.

New Ways of Making in the Face of Uncertainty.
Approaching Difficult Conversations through Media Arts

Veronica Soria-Martinez
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

Iga Puchalska
Rockford Public Schools #205

Abstract: In this paper, the authors reflect on a learning experience in which we devised practices grounded in Culturally Responsive Teaching, Equity, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and Digital Media Arts and how this experience would help students and members of the community (including us as educators) to develop critical knowledge and interconnectedness in the face of uncertainty. We drew on previous research and critical discussions on SEL to create an educational practice that promotes equity and confronts oppression by encouraging students to develop inquiry questions about race and to listen to different perspectives as they form their own answers. In doing this work, we describe those connections and analyze the interviews our students held with community members to explore how these conversations put our students in a role of ownership in their learning path and expanded the idea of community building.

Correspondence regarding this article may be sent to the author: _verosoma@gmail.com_

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Introduction

During the summer of 2020, as schools and districts prepared to face the school year after the general lockdown, the authors conducted a free program in Rockford where they participated as organizers and instructors. This program was called New Ways and later evolved into an apprenticeship. Both were a partnership between the Rockford Area Arts Council, the United Way of Rock River Valley, and New Genres Art Space, a non-profit dedicated to bringing digital media and experimental arts as a form of expression, education, and social change to traditionally underserved communities.

The program resulted in a collaborative community stop-motion animation publicly presented at the end of that summer and a series of interviews with community members that the students planned, directed, and recorded. The interviews, at the request of our students, who were primarily BIPOC, drew on the pressing issues at the time regarding the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. This paper presents this proposed and enacted curriculum, focusing on Equity and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and the use of digital media tools, discussing how using the interview format as a media arts tool activated SEL and restorative justice processes. By reflecting on these interviews, we intend to determine how SEL helped us define our teaching practices and how they, in combination with the use of media arts, deepened our students' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision-making.

Art Education and SEL as Means for Approaching Equity

It has been researched how the arts teach ways of thinking for tomorrow's workplace by promoting learning dispositions and habits of mind (Sheridan et al., 2023, pp. 1-6). Specifically, because of what the arts teach, "As schools cut time for the arts, they may be losing their ability to produce not just the artistic creators of the future, but innovative leaders who improve the world they inherit" (Winner & Hetland, 2007, in Sheridan et al., 2023, p. 7). Thus, neglecting art education in low-income schools to compensate for learning lost in the pandemic could mean leaving those student groups even more vulnerable by cutting them off from innovative learning that could translate into securing better employment prospects and leveling the field with those age peers in more affluent settings.

Besides enhancing learning dispositions, artistic outcomes lend themselves to exploring SEL competencies because of the issues the arts usually deal with. This relationship has been examined in service-learning art, with students serving as role models to younger students (Hutzel & Rusell, 2010) and studied to make policy provisions (Edgar & Morrison, 2021). This research shows that arts education enhances SEL, improving students' mental health and well-being, increasing engagement, and establishing the foundations for applying cognition (Eddy et al., 2021). Meanwhile, Bowen and Kisida found in 2019 that free arts programs correlate with decreased disciplinary infractions and increased student engagement, college aspirations, and arts-facilitated empathy (Bowen & Kisida, 2019).

However, it has been previously pointed out how promoting SEL from an ahistorical perspective without addressing the implicit biases of students' everyday lives may contribute to stagnation and hegemonic miseducation (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022). Considering this, our learning experience aimed to deepen our understanding of that socio-historical moment by having our students reflect on it, articulating questions about race and equity through dialogues with the community. The goal would be to create an audiovisual production that would raise their own awareness and that of other community members about issues like racism, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

The Context for the Learning Experience

New Genres Art Space was founded in 2019 by Iga Puchalska and Jason Judd, and after establishing in their hometown of Rockford IL, they engaged Verónica Soria-Martínez and Steve Nofsinger as instructors, and later in 2021, as members of their board. During the Fall of 2019 and Winter of 2020, New Genres Art Space offered some after-school programs in partnership with the local library, specializing in digital animation and sound art. After the March 2020 lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw schools nationwide closing their doors for months, everything went into hiatus. As a result, New Genres Art Space's activity and educational programs were temporarily halted.

However, a new partnership was formed with the United Way and the Rockford Area Arts Council to offer these programs during the summer in the United Way's Strong Neighborhood Initiative houses. These are strategically placed in low-income neighborhoods to offer free services to neighbors, such as informational events, town hall meetings, and block parties. Organizers and mentors thoroughly plan activities to engage youth throughout the year. There, youth can come after school to borrow books and media, finish their homework by themselves or with the help of tutors, do sports, collaborate in the community garden, or socialize with other young people. This partnership would meet a need in our community because more affluent schools and districts across the state developed and implemented media arts curricula that we felt were missing from our schools at the time[1], revealing potentially missed opportunities for our students. We found that at this moment, in which the media were (and continue to be) so pervasive, it became crucial to educate our students as critical consumers and producers of media.

Verónica Soria-Martínez, Iga Puchalska and Steve Nofsinger started at the Strong Neighborhood house

at the end of June 2020. Iga was teaching digital video production; Verónica, sound editing and podcasting; and Steve, 3D printing. Each of these workshops would take about two weeks, and the three instructors always took turns having a lead instructor and a supporting instructor present. During these weeks, we had the chance to meet our students (six, ages 9-16, five of them BIPOC, of whom two identified as female and four as male) and learn about how they were taking in the pressing issues unfolding that summer, namely the COVID-19 lockdown and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

Back in the summer of 2020, businesses and public buildings were starting to open with precautions. The murder of George Floyd during an encounter with police in May of 2020 was the tipping point to a history of injustices perpetrated against Black people in the United States (among others, segregation, fatal encounters with the police, and the uneven casualties of brown and Black people to COVID), and a subsequent series of protests nationwide took place during weeks. The BLM movement became the center of attention of news outlets and social media platforms. Subsequently, the BLM movement was scrutinized and critiqued due to the unrest during the protests and how they were perceived in the media. Our students were living first-hand the effects of those two issues, permeating our interactions, so we all felt the need to address them in our workshops.

As the workshops developed, we were able to offer these students the opportunity to expand on their learning by participating in an apprenticeship sponsored by the Rockford Area Arts Council that took place in the morning for four weeks (overlapping with the afternoon workshops) and which was led by Verónica and Iga. Five students signed up. Before we started the apprenticeship, the students practiced interviewing and recording

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[1] Soria-Martinez worked as an art teacher for the district at the time, whereas Puchalska would start working for the district at the end of that summer.

themselves. We also had two preparatory walks and interviews with two key people in the community, Tony Turner (leader and mentor at the Strong Neighborhood house) and Xen Moore (artist and activist), who separately led us on two neighborhood walks and narrated for us what had been going on in recent years, highlighting how the neighborhoods had changed and what factors contributed to those changes. Tony also arranged for us to interview Anqunette Parham and Tiana McCall. These experiences were impactful because these four people are prominent in the city and knowledgeable of the issues affecting people of color in the Rockford community.

Theoretical Foundations for the Learning Experience

In this section, we will describe how we first connected SEL competencies in their relation to artmaking, specifically in community-oriented art projects, secondly, how we built structures and routines consistent with culturally responsive teaching, and, lastly, how we adopted the structures of restorative circles to work with each other. Additionally, we argue that by carrying out the interviews, we extended the circles to the larger community, furthering the conversations.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) establishes five core competencies: Self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness (CASEL, 2020). By designing the interviews, our students would reflect on their self-awareness by integrating their personal and social identities, identifying their personal, cultural, and linguistic assets, and their emotions in response to both the inequities and the unrest that unfolded at that moment. When conducting the interviews, students would enhance their social awareness by taking others' perspectives and identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones. More importantly, they would "understand the influence of organizations/systems on behavior," which is one of the capacities highlighted by CASEL (2020) because the interviews would help them approach these issues from different people's perspectives (n.p.). Furthermore, in carrying out the interviews, students would have to practice managing their emotions and exhibit self-discipline, which relates to self-management, communicate effectively, develop positive relationships, and stand up for the rights of others, which are connected to relationship skills.

In establishing a framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching, Hammond (2014) emphasizes building awareness of the students' culture, learning partnerships, and intellective capacity. Regarding cultural awareness, teachers should get to know their students' deep culture (comprising the collective unconscious, beliefs, and norms, as opposed to surface culture, which would focus on aspects like food or holidays) and understand implicit bias and structural racialization. Additionally, teachers should consider how the brain works and how trauma interferes with learning. As for building learning partnerships, Hammond highlights the importance of checking in with students about how they are feeling, offering emotional encouragement, following up and checking progress, and emphasizing learner independence (Hammond, 2014, p. 105). We focused on centering and valuing students' cultures and identities as students decided to work on their reflection of their race and how it is perceived in the community they live in and contrast it with their interviews. Students would have a chance to explore how races tend to be seen as encompassing categories, even as several people of the same race may have very different cultures and identities.

Restorative circles are one of the restorative practices identified by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), which has its roots in restorative justice (Costello et al., 2010, p. 6). They borrow practices from indigenous traditions, mainly Native American (Karp, 2019, p. 34). They

"intentionally seek to attend(s) to the whole person and to provide space for emotional, social, and moral development along the mental and the physical" (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015, p. 6). They are crucial in developing positive discipline (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015, pp. 6-9) and social discipline (Costello et al., 2010, p. 8). Similarly, they promote belonging, trauma-sensitive learning environments, and mindfulness practices (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015, pp. 6-9). We used the structure of community circles to build strong positive relationships between students and between students and teachers. Karp (2019, p. 36) describes four rounds to organize a circle: connection (building trust), concern (exploring the issue), collaboration (brainstorming next steps), and closing (assessment and appreciation). We would incorporate these steps in creating our workshop routines, as explained below in the section about the preparation of the learning experience.

Additionally, in establishing the basis for restorative justice processes, Boyes-Watson and Pranis (2015) recognize seven core assumptions to start community circles, which we adopted as our guiding principles in our conversations with students and community members:

> 1 The true self in everyone is good, wise, and powerful.

> 2 The world is profoundly interconnected.

> 3 All human beings have a deep desire to be in a good relationship.

> 4 All human beings have gifts, and everyone is needed for what they bring.

> 5 Everything we need to make positive change is already here.

> 6 Human beings are holistic.

> 7 We need practices to "build habits of living from the core self". (pp. 9-16)

In the field of art education, Olivia Gude has synthesized the core postmodern principles that contemporary art may instill into students' work. Concretely, the principle of *gazing* encourages students to "spontaneously question who controls imagery and how this imagery affects our understandings of reality – an important activity of visual culture art education" (Gude, 2004, p. 10). In this case, the interviews would allow students to investigate our notions of "others." Similarly, Gude determines that art classes should provide students with "opportunities for meaningful self-expression in which they become *representin'*, self-creating beings. These opportunities should allow students to see examples of contemporary artists using artmaking to explore the potentials and problems in their own cultural and political settings" (Gude, 2004, pp. 11-12). This learning experience would allow students to do this exploration firsthand.

Lastly, Julia Marshall (2019) established inquiry trails as a method to facilitate learning that encourages students to design their own questions and devise a way to look for answers using strategies from contemporary art. In creative-based inquiry learning, instructors guide students through big questions and provide students with research materials. In contrast, students learn about cross-cutting concepts and develop an investigation through artmaking using creative strategies. In our experience, our learners would create the documentary based on the interviews and the community stop-motion animation.

Co-designing the Learning Experience

We decided to involve our students in co-designing the learning experience because, based on our understanding of culturally responsive teaching, we wanted to grant our students a higher degree of autonomy and ownership. We informed them that, while we would facilitate learning regarding the technical aspects (video production, sound editing, and 3D printing), we urged them to do their production about whatever was essential for them. As young people (most of them 14-16 years old),

they were trying to wrap their heads around the events that took place that summer. As Black youth, they felt othered by the narratives dominating the media and trying to find their place in issues that had situated them on the first line at a very young age without being asked. We agreed to create a documentary with interviews conducted in the Rockford community and a collaborative animation inviting everybody to participate. Next, we encouraged them to design the interviews and carry out the conversations.

We were mindful that Iga (of Polish origin) and Verónica (of Spanish origin) are White and perceived differently from our students. However, because we both are immigrants, we could empathize with the sense of otherness (Kristeva, 1991) and were trying to understand these issues in our new home country. As educators, we respect their need to understand themselves and drive their inquiry. This entailed allowing students to develop their own interview questions, although we would help them refine the questions in case, they were too broad or yes/no questions. We would do so by questioning the students to look for exactly what they meant until they worded their questions precisely.

Set of student-designed questions:

- Please tell us something about you (name, profession, origin),
- How has the recent BLM movement affected you and your family?
- What are some of the preliminary actions that you think we as a country should take on to resolve this issue?
- How have these riots and protests changed your perspective on our country?
- Liberty and justice for all... what do they mean to you?
- Do you believe that our nation can resolve these issues in a peaceful manner? If so, how?

Student-designed follow-up questions:

- Have you seen (or experienced) racism in your life?
- Have you felt afraid for your own safety?
- Have you participated in the protests?
- What would you tell a young person experiencing this today or to the next generation decades from now living in this country?

Preparation for the Learning Experience

The apprenticeship had an ideal location because the bike path by the river is where innumerable people of all backgrounds and income levels choose to work out, socialize, and recreate. The Arts Council lent us a space (the small building that serves as the Sea Scouts headquarters) next to it. We set a tarp to create shade in the morning sun and placed signs that the students made to attract people and inform them of what we were doing. We set the animation station inside the building and an improvised interview space, with chairs for our guests and two cameras, under the tarp. Besides the two cameras, we counted with lapel microphones and digital sound recorders for the interviews; for the community animation, we had an animation table stand prepared for iPad.

The instructors established a flexible structure for the day. Every day we started with a circle, where we would talk about how we felt that day, review the day before, and set goals for the starting day. By the end of the day, we closed with another circle, where we shared what we had learned and detected things we could fix for the following day. This wrapped three hours of work. The students would stand on the bike path and invite passersby, asking them if they would like to sit and converse with them about current affairs and the BLM movement. After being invited to the interview, whether they accepted or declined, the participants were invited inside our pop-up animation studio, where the students instructed them with quick notions about stop-motion animation. Participants would draw in the sand as our students took pictures for the stop-motion animation. As they drew, participants

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answered one question: "What does Black Lives Matter mean to you?" Their answers would be to be intertwined with the animation.

Responses of participants: Living in the anxious now

Once at the bike path, we had about 28 people participate in the interviews. While some people were wary of talking about it while on camera and refused to sit with us or be recorded, several people took the opportunity to voice their concerns or show their allyship. Of the 28, about 16 were African American, ten were White, one was Latinx, and one was of Asian origin. As for ages, all the interviewees (besides our group) were over 18, and we had about four people over 50 and about five people who seemed to be in their 20s, with most of the participants ranging between 30-49 years old, approximately (we did not ask their age). All the interviewees lived in Rockford. However, their birthplaces were diverse, with one participant being born in the Virgin Islands, another in Germany, another in Mexico, and two in Africa. Some participants were from other states and had moved to Rockford (about three people from Delaware, upstate New York) or were from neighboring towns and had relocated. Most were born and raised in Rockford. We were lucky to access the mayor, who agreed to sit with us. We also endured how some passersby would refuse to participate or yell at us. Simultaneously, we witnessed a neighboring artistic project being cut short because of fear of how the public would react to a symbol of support for BLM.

In their search to find out how racism and anti-racist protests were clashing and impacting our community, our students found that our participants were trying to make sense of what was perceived then as a liminal state. In part, because some expected that the pandemic would be less of a concern and the restrictions would soon lift (it would still take another year for that to happen), and partly because some expected that the protests would

bring some resolution that would alleviate systemic inequity and structural injustice. At any rate, all perceived this moment as a transition into another stage. In between these coordinates, participants would express a continuum from hopefulness to skepticism, from enthusiasm to realism, implying that it would require a long journey, not an easy solution, to get out of that in-between state successfully. Two years later, much of what was a sensation of discontinuity now feels like a missed opportunity. The sections below include multiple participant quotes that speak to the points of this continuum from hopefulness to skepticism, and the coordinates in between.

Uncertainty

The participants' responses showed much uncertainty about how the rupture caused by the COVID-19 pandemic would resolve and what the future would look like for the BLM movement after the summer's momentum. However, they were not uncertain regarding their positions toward the protests and the injustice. Our participants were divided between the ones that saw in this rupture an opportunity to examine the structural foundations that lead the way to systemic inequality and be able to change them and those who thought that the momentum would be assimilated by capitalist culture in a way that would leave those very foundations intact. One interviewee expresses that "Luckily things are changing... seemingly...you go to Walmart and see things that say Black lives matter, but it is the companies doing that, the government is not doing any changes", alluding to how minorities cultures are targeted as just another flavor to buy, but race inequalities existing in the labor market are not changed. In this sense, two other participants expressed that the BLM movement had not changed their beliefs or the work that they were already doing with Black communities because they were doing it before the movement started. They knew they would keep doing it for the long term. One stated,

"The BLM movement and how it has affected my family is quite interesting as my family is already involved in things pertaining to African American people." In that respect, the protests had not altered what she was already doing. The other explained, "It has not changed my beliefs but reaffirmed that we have to make our voices heard.

Hopefulness

Other participants expressed hopefulness that the BLM movement "is bringing attention to things that need to be highlighted." Alternatively, as one of our participants said:

> I think BLM is finally making a difference because everybody is keeping it up; you have to keep the pressure on because otherwise, they are going to do something like take down a statue and not change how they do things.

One interviewee, a young White woman, expressed:

> I am just hoping that other White people can start to see and open up their eyes, and their hearts, and their minds to why this is happening, why people are making their voices heard, and why there needs to be a change in this country, or else it is just going to keep going, and it is just going to continuously be heartbreaking.

However, interviewees were less hopeful regarding changing aspects of how racism shows itself: "That is the majority of the type of racism that's out there right now; with cancel culture, people are scared to say how they really feel, so they kind of hide their racism nowadays." Furthermore, when it concerned the question of liberty and justice for all concerning hopefulness, a participant said,

> Liberty and justice for all, you hear it, is in our pledge of allegiance, (which) we are trained to say as young students. However, it is something that we have not seen, so if you say, 'liberty and justice for all' for a Black person, it comes with a caveat; maybe you have 'liberty and justice for

all,' and so you ... have to face different obstacles, that a person that are not minorities would not have to face.

This quote underscores the participant's perception of a double standard in our societal values, highlighting the disproportionate effort racialized minorities must exert to attain rights granted more readily to those perceived as White. It also reflects the participant's pessimism about the likelihood of significant change in the foreseeable future.

Participation

The level of participation in the protests was also mixed. Some older people told us: "I have not been able to participate very much because I do not walk very fast." Others could not personally attend for other reasons, such as citizenship status: "I cannot go to the protests because if one of the peaceful protesters got arrested, and it was me, I could get scrutinized, and it could hurt my legality to be here." However, that did not prevent participants from supporting the movement in other ways: "I try to do my part, I have been donating to various, like The Bail Project, I keep going to protests when I can, educating myself on defunding police." One of our participants, who marched during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, said: "I am so proud of those young people who are fighting for justice right now." This same person further explained how a girl, who must have been about 18 years old, said: "They messed with the wrong generation because we are not going to stop until we are just (a fair society)." This sums up the sense of urgency that was distilled from our participants.

Possible resolutions

As for the solutions participants proposed about how we can reconfigure our current conditions and move us beyond that transitional moment at the global and community levels, they all highlighted listening as a crucial aspect to reach an understanding and

possibly start a healing process. An interviewee suggested that "there are a lot of things you can do to help... just to be understanding of the other side and know it". Another interviewee recognized that,

> From a city-wide perspective, it has been a very difficult time, but also a tremendous opportunity for union if we all work together and we all work for positive change together...the first thing we need to do is to listen and engage.

A participant proposed:

> What I am hoping I can do is be there for the Black community as a White person in the best way, what is needed from me as a White person, as an ally, and to understand what I can do to benefit.

Along the same lines, one of our interviewees exposed that,

> For the country as a whole, something they can do is listen to the people that are out there in the streets; a lot of this stuff has happened time and time again... Black people have faced police brutality, so just listen and try and come up with creative and meaningful solutions, do not just try to throw something, this is going to be a long time, so the solution has to be something that is a long journey. It will not be an easy fix, so you have to be committed to whatever the solution is for the long run.

At the personal level, a participant responded that if he could advise his former 15-year-old self, it would be that knowledge is critical: "Use your knowledge to gain access and information, be aware of everything, people you interact with, your surroundings, environment, and stay on top of everything as far as political, social, and everything that is just going around." Another participant stated that she wished everyone self-efficacy and grace:

> Some of the perils of White racism in our society have really caused a lot of people who look like us to believe certain things that are not true

about themselves; there are certain pathologies that have been passed on for generations as a result of living in a racist culture that hates you and hates everything about you; it hates you mentally, it hates you physically, it hates your spiritual aspects and all of your strengths, so one thing that I would impart is definitely self-efficacy for people to really know who they are and believe in who they are and what they can do... and grace (because) we can be very critical of ourselves and it is important for people not only extend grace to other people but also to themselves and I think an extension of treating other people well is treating yourself well.

This strongly connects with the idea of self-efficacy as part of the "knowledge (and love) of self" that is proposed as humanization or an alternative to SEL that is grounded on a critical analysis of intersecting oppressions (Camangian & Cariaga, 2022, p. 2).

Our social present veils an abjection, an aberrant idea hidden in everyday language, which is that "matter," in this context, merely means not to be killed. One of our participants points at it when she says:

> My current thoughts on BLM, as a phrase, (are that) BLM is not enough because mattering is the bare minimum, that is the minimum threshold, Black Lives are critically important, Black Lives are amazing, Black Lives are priceless, Black Lives are worth all of the energy that we have to put forward to save them, so I think that the movement BLM to just demand basic human rights and equal treatment under the law, equal protection under the law, is critical. But again, as a phrase, I think it is just the bare minimum because we are critically important, but our fight even now is just to matter, so the phrase is heartbreaking to me because at this point, after hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years in this country, we still should not be fighting just to matter,

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because we are integral, we built this country!
So, we do more than matter.

Another participant synthesized it when it came to the question of liberty and justice: "Liberty and justice for all is the removal of all those systemic forms of oppression that keep people down." This also reinforced the idea that SEL alone is not enough. However, we can make crucial transformations by implementing equitable practices as educators, in the content, but especially in the form we teach by critically questioning the processes we use to facilitate learning.

Conclusion: How we experienced this moment through art education

This workshop helped us navigate this transitional moment through artmaking and SEL. Our thoughts about teaching evolved through this experience, as we decided to infuse it with SEL strategies, culturally responsive teaching, restorative practices, and contemporary art strategies. These decisions manifested in how we conducted it, grounding it in restorative circles and interviews with the community. We started a listening process that could open to the larger community, which comprised the practice videos students took of each other, the walks with activists and organizers, and the interviews with regional experts, and continued during the apprenticeship at the bike path.

When participants answered the interview questions and when they responded to "What does Black Lives Matter mean to you?" as they drew in the sand, we understand that, in a way, they were enacting a kind of community circle rounds, with each member answering the same question and passing it on to the next. People were very honest about their beliefs. As our participants demanded, it became clear that in this in-between moment, having these difficult conversations and, most importantly, listening were the most critical next steps. Boyes-Watson and Pranis explain that the circle invites participants to drop their usual masks and protections that create distance from others (Boyes-Watson & Pranis, 2015). This project allowed people to drop their masks, hoping to be listened to. The structures we put in place as we developed the learning experience with our students and the nature of the interviews contributed to it.

Anybody who wished to sit with us could do so, and many did, from different lifestyles and backgrounds. We listened to their shared longing for unity. Furthermore, we listened to them, asking for more people to listen. As the responses of our interviewees suggested, if there is ever an opportunity to heal as a society, it will have to start by listening to each other, and this workshop taught us how to start in that direction as educators.

Students went through an iterative circle of exploring their identities and confronting others with curiosity. They then used this learning to reflect on the larger community and decide how to act. We went through these circles with them. As a result, we saw some of the students' initial statements become more nuanced by the end of the apprenticeship. In this project, we developed conversations, reflections, and visual work, allowing students to develop the knowledge, skills, and vision to transform the world and allow others to gain some understanding by showing their work. Finally, the project gave way to their self-expression, raised self- and social awareness, and contributed to their responsible decision-making.

The animation portion of the apprenticeship opened at an exhibition organized by the Rockford Area Arts Council at the Nicholas Conservatory and Gardens in August 2020. Local media interviewed the students that came to the opening. Our interviews with the public have not been shown yet, but we are currently reviewing the existing footage to create a short documentary that would synthesize the participants' answers. We hope that with future scheduled showings in the community, people living in this city will develop the ability to put themselves in the place of others and explore interconnectedness.

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