

ART EDUCATION THROUGH AFRICAN MEXICAN COMMUNITIES by Soledad Zamora

Art education is currently playing a meaningful role in the worldwide learning and teaching field. Private schools, cultural institutes, and learning centers come up with new programs to create and develop different skills in their students. However, the ones that are in urgent need of new art education programs are cultural centers, public and rural schools, which are frequently forgotten about upgrading art education programs. It is very necessary for students and teachers to have access to new art education programs, workshops, webinars, and lectures in order to improve their teaching-learning practice. It is also a great way to acquire new knowledge and expand student's skills.

Whenever teachers are proficient on art education programs, as a second stage, students' talents expand meaningfully. Creativity, self-awareness, communicative skills, empathy to others, adaptability, and social awareness are some of the talents that art education promote through teaching properly either in rural, public places, or cultural centers. It also countenances learning fearlessly through an empathic and respectful perspective on a multidisciplinary field promoting social awareness from other areas, addressing cultural problems, and embracing social issues with critical thinking.

Students that get involved with art education and develop multidisciplinary projects on Math, Science, and Technology within school programs; acquire a more mature sense of empathy, cooperation to others, creative enough to come up with creative ways of solving problems in their surroundings.

As a clear example of this, Luis Morales, an outstanding Oaxacan artist, develops a permanent art education project in El Paso del Jiote, Santa María Huazolotitlán, Pinotepa Nacional, Oaxaca. This project has been developed in a community with 716 inhabitants, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Geography 2010 for its acronym in Spanish INEGI. This town is located between the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca, as it is called La Costa Chica. La Costa Chica belongs to the Mixtec group named "La Tercera Raíz" (the third root), because of its African descendants, Afro-Mexicans. Most of the population activities are fishing, raising livestock, and working on agriculture to obtain mango, banana, and corn.

In this village, there are 22 African Mexican children (18 children and 4 teenagers), who have participated in this art education project for a year and a half. These children live in very poor conditions, lack of health services, family care, education and job opportunities. At the beginning stage of this program, these children presented a very violent and intolerant behavior, as well as, lack of empathy, culture, and identity.

The problem with these young human beings is that most of them live with their relatives, or grandparents since their parents abandoned them in order to immigrate to the US and work illegally to be able to send some money and support their families due to the lack of job opportunities here. Consequently, these children are left behind and forgotten miles away without any attention or care from their parents or relatives, these issues are the last priorities in this place.

Despite of their tough life styles, this group of talented artists, have presented a great sense of artistic skills, creativity, social awareness of their environment, empathy to others, and the most important part, their perception about identity has changed through the practice of performing art and education in their daily lives. After a year and a half, these children have achieved some great goals such as accepting their roots and culture, being interested in further opportunities to study, understanding others' needs in their surrounding areas, and so on.

In order to show some of these results, there is a video titled El Paso del Jiote. Proyecto Murales y Talleres edited by Daniel Sroor Pierantozzi and produced by México Arte y Tiempo ARTAC, which shows their work and the importance of art education in unprivileged communities. This project shows a strong belief to support art education performing in public and rural places to enhance children with values, cultural identity, creativity, social awareness and lower rates of violence and social conflicts in their surroundings.

REFERENCES

El Paso del Jiote. Proyecto Murales y Talleres. Daniel Sroor Pierantozzi. México Arte y Tiempo ARTAC. <http://vimeo.com/58084571>

<http://mlktaskforcemi.org/pathways/afro-mexicans-in-guerrero-the-costa-chica-region/>

http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/cp_fullreport.pdf

Adler, Judith E. 2003. Artists in Offices: An Ethnography of an Academic Art Science

Quinn, Therese; Hochtritt, Lisa; Ploof, John. 2001. Art and Social Justice Education: Culture

Davis, Hoffman Jessica. 2007. Why Our Schools Need the Arts Paperback.

Cahan, Susan; Kocur, Zoya. 1994. Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education.