Exploring arts-based pedagogies to promote learning and solidarity among people working for justice in farming, health, education, and climate

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Abstract

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This participatory design research (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016) seeks to better understand how climate justice educators and facilitators might support transformative and social learning among adults working for justice in farming, health, education, activism, and/or art. Through case study and interaction analysis of a social change-making project, we explore how making and viewing art together as a group can provide rich opportunities for participants to exchange ideas about their stances, orientations, and perspectives on justice work that have relevance for learning, collaboration, and solidarity across roles, movements, and personal or socio-cultural contexts. Finally, the findings provide an example of a community climate educator working with adult learners by applying arts-based pedagogies to promote more social, egalitarian, and reciprocal learning environments for participants to encounter and explore a range of community knowledges across the climate justice landscape of practices.

Project Rationale

Adult Learning toward Climate Justice

When it comes to climate change and climate justice, adults hold a great deal of societal agency, decision-making power, and responsibility compared to young people. It stands to reason then, that significant effort should be made to explore theories and pedagogies that support teaching, learning, and knowledge-exchange among adults. The theory of transformational learning suggests that adult learning should be organized around processes of reflection, dialogue, critique, discernment, and imagination, with the goal of achieving the *actualization* of freedom and liberation for individuals and society (Dirkx, 1998, 2018). However, there is often a mismatch between a formal, hierarchical style of education (where knowledge flows in one direction from educator to learner), and the more informal, social styles of learning that often occur more naturally in some communities of practice (where knowledge is co-created, shared, and tested among groups of peers and experts through processes that support transformational learning). For instance, in a study about education structure and style preferences, farmers ranked social learning highest, followed by independent learning, and finally institutional learning (Laforge & McLachlan, 2018).

This project explores an example of a design-based research project where a facilitator and participant-observer (me, the author) enacted theories related to *landscapes of practice* in the design of a learning experience and learning community (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015). A landscape of practice is composed of a complex social web of communities of practice, which provides a useful framework to gain actionable understanding about a body of knowledge (in this case, ways to think and act for climate justice) as well as the culture and politics associated with communities. In a landscape of practices,

differences between communities and sub-groups offer powerful sites for learning through boundary encounters, boundary crossing, and boundary partnership (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015). Within this research, a climate justice landscape of practice seeks to recognize and value relationships between people working at the intersection of climate change and a wide range of justice issues related to health, wealth, labor, housing, hunger, education, immigration, sovereignty, and safety. This also aligns with the priorities identified by fourth generation cultural-historical activity theory, which includes a recognition of the need for multi-level and cross-sectoral solutions to confront critical societal challenges (Engeström & Sannino, 2021).

A community of practice is composed of individuals and groups who do something together and learn through *joint enterprises*, *mutual engagement*, and *shared repertoires* (Wenger, 1998). Within a community of practice, knowledge is represented by one's ability to participate in the community (e.g., how well an individual can succeed as a farmer) and learning is represented as a gradual process of gaining expertise (e.g., a novice farmer gradually becoming more experienced, capable, and respected within the community). Communities of practice can be supported through guidance and resources, connections to broader strategy, a focus on the cutting edge, the supported participation of the "right" people, and the creation of links to other communities. Wenger-Trayner (2015) suggests exploring these questions to generate new insight at boundaries:

- *What kind of boundary activity, joint project, visit, mutual storytelling or learning partnership can serve as a productive encounter for negotiating and exploring a boundary?*
- *How can boundaries be used systematically to trigger a reflection process about the practices on either side?*
- *What kind of boundary objects and activities can support this boundary-oriented pedagogy and create points of focus for engaging multiple perspectives?*
- *Who can act as brokers to articulate regimes of competence across boundaries?*

This project is an enacted experience and use of arts-based learning pedagogies at two separate gatherings to mediate negotiation, exploration, and knowledge co-generation between people who work for justice in farming, health, education, and activism. The gatherings will center two artforms – theater and linocut printmaking – which have long-standing histories of being used to support the public in reflection, dialogue, and action around social and political issues. Theater has been proven as an effective method to engage the public in debate and decision-making around complex socio-scientific issues of healthcare policy (Nisker et al., 2006), and as medicine to collectively process experiences of struggle, grief, and trauma (Doerries, 2017). Linocut printmaking has been extensively practiced by Mexican artists, activists, and political movements to facilitate public engagement and critical consciousness through social and political commentary (McDonald, 2016).

The researcher's conjecture is that viewing theater, making linocut prints, and engaging in group reflection about those activities will be a generative way to facilitate encounters and exploration of our stances, orientations, and perspectives as individuals and as a collective. Although this work sees the great value of educators to promote and enact climate justice, the design intentionally de-centered the norms, practices, priorities, and prevailing language of the climate education community of practice, and instead sought to flatten hierarchies by convening a group of people working across landscapes of practices to talk about their lives and perspectives on their own terms. Eliciting the collective wisdom – stories, lessons, values, perspectives, and practices – can provide helpful insight to surface where climate educators (and all of us) might prioritize our time, attention, and efforts to support people on the issues that matter in their movements and communities. These represent points of potential for allyship and solidarity (Bell, 2024, Ishimaru & Bang, 2022).

Arts-based Pedagogies for Collective Action and Social Transformation

In addition to posing an existential threat, climate change also presents an opportunity to mobilize collective action to reimagine the values, priorities, relationships, and structures that organize our societies (Stuart, 2020). To persist in acting for climate justice is to learn how to move forward, to trust in yourself and others, and to keep the faith as you encounter barriers, divides, dead ends, and endless loops. On that journey, many of us seek clarity and direction to help us navigate the darkness and uncertainty. Art can offer us a light and a compass to begin making decisions about our next steps.

Art serves as both a complement and a foil to science because of its ability to tap into our full range of cognitive, emotional, physical, cultural, spiritual, and intuitive ways of expressing and knowing (Mejias et al., 2021). At their root, many of the most pressing societal questions are ethical and existential questions (Lehtonen, 2019). They are questions of morality (right and wrong) and mortality (life and death). Rationality is certainly important when answering those questions, but art engages other sense- and decision-making capacities that evolved to communicate and mediate perceptions of peoples' internal and external worlds. Art's power can serve people in challenging times, bring richness to life, and move individuals and groups to action (McDougal et al., 2012). Science is an important tool for making sense and making decisions, but science alone is not enough.

In this project we will use art to elicit discussion and articulation of stances, orientations, and perspectives of people working for justice in health, farming, education, and activist communities of practice. Enacting change within a community of practice poses many challenges. In healthcare, for instance, researchers are applying concepts of organizational change, complexity science, and systems science to understand the relationships between components and how to resolve gridlocks (Lukas et al., 2007, Braithwaite, 2018, Jones et al., 2017). Art offers an additional means to support how we might explore, understand, frame, communicate, and think/act collaboratively on that work.

A Climate Justice Landscape of Practices

And though science conclusively calls upon people, especially those most able and responsible (Atwoli et al., 2022), to take action to respond to, prepare for, and prevent further harm to people, places, and lifeways around the globe, many individuals and communities seek greater clarity on how to act collectively (Allen & Crowley, 2017). We know we've got to start somewhere, but there is a difference between starting somewhere meaningful and starting simply anywhere. People are left wondering what can I (or ideally, we) do; how should we do it; and if we do it, will it even matter? The scope, scale, pace, and dynamism make climate change a "wicked problem" that requires new (and maybe old?) ways of thinking, learning, and being (Raami, 2019). This project explores creative methods to support people in answering those questions by using art to leverage the collective wisdom of individuals who work for justice within different communities across a climate justice landscape of practice.

Solutions to climate change are entangled with other pursuits of justice and liberation because climate change is driven by unjust far-reaching relationships and oppressive systems of resource extraction, energy consumption, capitalism, colonialism, and militarism (Whyte, 2017). The impacts of climate change are creating new inequities relating to health, well-being, security, sovereignty and survival, while simultaneously exacerbating existing inequities around class, nationality, race, and gender (Ghosh, 2023). For this reason, climate justice education requires a critical lens and an interdisciplinary set of theories, practices, knowledge, and frameworks. Understanding how to work across these boundaries (i.e. sociocultural differences within and between communities of practice) is critical to coordinate efforts and mobilize collective action for climate justice across a landscape of practice (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011).

Those who grapple with climate change also wrestle with the existential idea that all justice work will become more difficult and complex as the planet warms, which can trigger paralysis and fatalism by undermining our sense of autonomy and agency (Taylor, 2023). Livability across ever-growing parts of the planet is threatened unless we quickly scale up implementation of broad-based solutions in the here and now. This requires trust, understanding, coordination, and collaboration among people, communities, and nations.

Because of these entanglements with issues of social and environmental justice, the climate justice movement might be described as a "movement of movements." This project draws inspiration from Audre Lorde's essay *There is No Hierarchy of Oppressions* (Lorde, 1983) to disrupt hierarchical thinking within and across justice movements, and to conceptualize climate justice work through a lens of relationality and intersectionality. It seeks to blur boundaries by placing importance on relationality and intersectionality to understand the perspectives and experiences of others as a necessary means of understanding oneself and enacting one's values related to justice, liberation, and solidarity.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to understand and document how arts-based pedagogies can support learning and convene a collective "us" among people working for justice. The research centers around these questions about a climate justice landscape of practices:

1. How can arts-based pedagogies act as a bridge for reflection, discourse, and exchange about the pursuit of justice and liberation?
2. How can arts-based pedagogies facilitate a sense of community and solidarity?
3. How can arts-based pedagogies support "us" to understand, frame, and pursue collective action?

The exploratory design questions focus attention on potential connections between transformative and social learning theory, cultural-historical activity theory, and theories of learning in landscapes of practice.

Identity and Positionality Statement

When I am working for justice, I show up as a queer person who grew up in a small rural town (Warren, PA, USA) in the Allegheny National Forest on the ancestral lands of the Seneca Nation and Iroquois Confederacy. I now consider Pittsburgh, PA, home after moving there for college and living there for 16 years. My brother, sister-in-law, and their two young children also live in Pittsburgh. Until moving to Seattle for graduate school in 2022, I had always lived within 15 minutes of the Allegheny River which flows through both communities. Growing up and living in Western Pennsylvania has shaped my worldview and understanding of lessons like '*Silence = Death'* from queer AIDS activists and '*Be Like Water'* from Asian protest movements.

I have worked as an out-of-school (and preferably out-of-doors) educator to design programs to support learning, identity, belonging, and boundary-crossing among teenagers working on trail crews in urban parks (Hecht & Nelson, 2021, 2022), and among farmers, fisherman, foresters, and others in rural communities (McGill et al., 2024, Steiner et al., 2023). I am an organizer and a facilitator: I try to help make it easier for people to be with one another (brown, 2019), to learn from one another and the land, and to take collective action. My family is multicultural and has deeply shaped how I view sameness, difference, and solidarity within communities, and how I make good on my relational obligations with friends, neighbors, and other living beings.

My mother, who is White, was born in northwestern Pennsylvania following World War II to a returning U.S Army Signal Corps captain and a British journalist. My mom worked as a newspaper

photojournalist and editor; in public relations; and as a counselor and legal advocate with a domestic violence/sexual assault program and shelter. A vegetarian most of her life, she taught martial arts and women's self-defense; owned rental properties; and was a volunteer leader in scouting, and in church and public-school educational programming. She raised my sister, brother, and me after she and my father divorced when I was 11 years old.

My father, who is Asian, was born in Japan and during infancy was raised by nuns in a Roman Catholic orphanage in Tokyo. He was adopted at age five by an American couple: a white U.S. Air Force sergeant married to a registered nurse who was Puerto Rican. They were stationed at a nearby military base, later moved to Hawaii, then California, and finally moved to my hometown in Pennsylvania when my dad was 12. My hometown, then and now, is predominantly White and conservative in politics and culture; it is a challenging environment for anyone who is "different." My dad worked as a restaurant cook, then held positions in manufacturing companies and law enforcement. He owns and operates a small business in my hometown, a Shotokan karate dojo he opened while married to my mom.

My maternal grandfather was one of eight children in a Depression-era working class family headed by his mother in rural Jefferson County, PA. A good student, he believed in the value of higher education, graduated from Ohio University, and became an electrical engineer. After the war, he managed a multi-county rural electric cooperative in northwestern Pennsylvania, developing and expanding electric service to farmers and others in rural areas. My maternal grandmother, raised in Doncaster, Yorkshire, began a journalism career at the Doncaster Chronicle, was a war-time reporter at the Manchester Guardian and the London Times, and met my grandfather while on a reporting assignment. When the war ended, my grandmother emigrated to the U.S. to join my grandfather and became a naturalized U.S. citizen. She continued her journalism career throughout her life and was also elected as a county district magistrate.

My paternal grandfather was born in western Pennsylvania and attended Clarion University in Pennsylvania and Santa Rosa College in California. He served as a U.S. Army corporal during WWII and as a U.S. Air Force sergeant during the Korean War. Later, he worked in a variety of capacities, including as a psychiatric hospital technician, in elder care, and with the Postal Service. My paternal grandmother, a native of Puerto Rico, met and married him after she moved to the mainland U.S., learned English, and began a career as a registered nurse. She had trained in stenography and teaching, then graduated from the Bayamon District School of Nursing and worked as a surgical and psychiatric nurse in numerous settings and communities. She spoke several languages and was a world traveler and avid volunteer.

I was raised in the Episcopal Church. One of my uncles, who is African American and married to one of my mother's sisters, is a bishop in that church. Themes of justice, inclusion, and peacemaking are central to his preaching. He has long been an advocate who works for racial equity in the church, the ordination of women, the blessing of LGBTQ+ marriages, and the ordination of LGBTQ+ people. He and my aunt, a reading and art teacher, helped to shape my spiritual values as godparents. My mother's other sister (a speech pathologist), her husband (a civil engineer), my cousins, my mentors and friends are also influential in my sense of care and responsibility toward people and the planet.

Research Methods and Educational Design

The research project convened two gatherings where adult participants viewed, made, and discussed artworks to articulate their stances, orientations, and perspectives on working for social, environmental, climate, and other types of justice (Chao & Celermajer, 2023). From these pieces of insight, I generated critical mini-ethnographic case studies (Fusch et al., 2017, Pane & Rocco, 2009) to highlight and contextualize lessons and practices that climate justice educators might center as they design learning environments and experiences. This included practices, values, tensions, commitments, and responsibilities that participants may prioritize or hold when doing justice work.

I was a participant-observer during the gatherings, engaging with the artworks, making my own contributions, facilitating discussions within the focus group, and documenting group activities and conversations. In this way, I acted as both a participating member within the culture of the group, as well as a research instrument to gather information and tell the story of what happened to people outside of the group (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). In this multifaceted role, I was able to use my knowledge of the participants, the artworks, the subject matter, and the research questions to encourage honest group engagement in the shared pursuit of answering the research questions while maintaining my stance and responsibility as a researcher.

The first gathering centered on the Broadway musical Hadestown, which uses two interwoven Greek tragedies – the tale of Eurydice and Orpheus, and the tale of Persephone and Hades – to explore themes of doubt, trust, and togetherness with the backdrop of labor, resource extraction, economic depression, and scarcity due to climate change (Amorín Triana, 2022). Following the show, the participants gathered in the theater for a facilitated focus group discussion where they shared their reactions to the performance over a wholesome, home-cooked meal (Richardson, 2011).

The second gathering centered around an artist-led workshop where participants expressed their own liberatory values, practices, and worldviews through linocut printmaking. The participants carved and stamped artworks that represented their visions of liberation, and expressed aspects of identity and how they think about and work for justice.

My goal was to encourage deeper reflection about lessons and learning that matters for climate justice (Jurow et al., 2016). In this pursuit, I prioritized the expertise, perspectives, and worldviews of people who have traditionally been viewed as recipients of climate education (Friere, 2020), rather than as carriers of essential knowledgeability and experience. I hope that the case study provides a testimony and textured account of program elements that are designed to facilitate generative boundary

encounters within or between landscapes of practices (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2014). Finally, I hope my work demonstrates how art-based pedagogies can be a powerful tool to convene a collective "us" by supporting discourse, facilitating knowledge-exchange, and seeding solidarity and ideas across identities and communities.

Description of Participants

I drew upon friends, colleagues, and organizing communities I have found since moving to Seattle, WA (USA), as the "unit of transformation" (Block, 2018) in this study. They represent a range of intersecting sociocultural identities (e.g. race, gender, age, sexuality, nationality). As people who work for justice in farming, health, education, activism, and art, they demonstrate examples in relation to the knowledges, norms, values, goals, cultures, and politics of their professional identities (Handley et al., 2006). The participants provided their insight, perspective, and expertise both as individuals and as members of their communities of practice, as they interpreted and created art related to their own experiences, identities, sense of the world, and practices.

The trust and respect that I have built with the participants grants us the opportunity to practice honesty, reciprocity, transparency, consent, reflexivity, and responsibility with one another. As someone new to Seattle, I lacked the relationships and knowledge of history and culture of place to do justice-focused community research effectively without being extractive toward new or short-term partners. As a graduate student in a 2-year program, I was concerned that I wouldn't have the time to develop or maintain a trusting and reciprocal collaboration with a community-based organization. Consequently, I chose to engage the people with whom I have developed strong and lasting relationships through community service, activism, artmaking, protest, conversation, learning, play, and friendship. This afforded me insights that enrich my interpretation and analysis. Throughout the process, I made efforts

to ensure that participants knew I wanted their honest opinions (not just what they thought I wanted to hear) and that they understood that I valued transparency and consent in all aspects of the project.

Finally, I was guided by an interview with bell hooks where Camille Billops said, “I always tell people that if you aren’t on a piece of paper, you don’t exist. […] I always tell people the most revolutionary thing you can do is do a book about your life. Don’t let anybody call it a vanity press. You just do this, this magnificent thing, and you put it on the best paper you can find. Put all your friends in it, everybody you loved, and do a lot of them so one day they will find you and know you were all here together.” (hooks, 1996)

Research Settings and Context

The research took place in two community art spaces in Seattle, WA (USA): a historic theater operated by a non-profit organization, and a public community college art classroom. Seattle is a port city between the Olympic and Cascade Mountain ranges on the Puget Sound, with a population close to 750,000 people and a metropolitan area population of just over 4 million people. The city is located on the lands of the Lushootseed-speaking Peoples: the Duwamish, Muckleshoot, Suquamish, Snoqualmie, Tulalip, and Puyallup. Seattle is located at the mouth of the Duwamish River, which flows from the Cascade Mountains just north of Tahoma (Mt. Rainier), through Kent, Tukwila, Seattle, and into Elliott Bay. There are numerous swimmable lakes in the city, including Lake Union and Lake Washington. According to the US Census Bureau, in 2023 the racial composition of the city was 63.6% White, 6.7% Black or African American, 0.6% American Indian or Alaska Native, 16.8% Asian, 0.2% Native Hawaiian, 7.5% Latino, and 9.4% people of two or more races. The city also supports a large LGBTQ+ community, and diverse immigrant and refugee communities.

Following colonization by Europeans and European-Americans, timber and mining were major industries that supported economic development in the region. In more recent decades, aerospace and

weapons manufacturing (e.g., Boeing, Alaska Airlines), telecommunications (e.g., T-Mobile), coffee (e.g., Starbucks, Seattle's Best), commercial sales (e.g., Nordstrom, Costco), and computer software and technology (e.g., Microsoft, Amazon, Zillow) have become major industries. As the largest city in Washington State and the Pacific Northwest region, Seattle is also a hub for medicine, education, arts, and culture. Seattle is seen as a city that demonstrates national leadership in environmental design, policy, sustainability, renewable energy, recreation, transportation, conservation, and land care. Olympic, Mount Rainier, and North Cascades National Parks are all within a two-hour drive of the city. More broadly, agriculture, fishing, and industry also play a major role in Washington State's economy.

This is a participatory design research study (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016). Given that, the design of the learning environments is a vital part of the study. I describe each of the two designed events in the following sections to highlight how the learning environments were conceptualized and facilitated. These details provide contextual details for the analysis that follows.

Gathering 1: Musical Theater

Exploring Climate Justice and Collective Action through Greek Mythology in Hadestown

The first gathering occurred in early November 2023 at the historic Paramount Theater in downtown Seattle, following a viewing of the Broadway musical Hadestown. The theater's performance space is ornately styled with French Beaux Arts architectural details including plaster moldings, ironwork, gold-leaf detailing, crystal chandeliers, murals, velvet curtains, and a large balcony. The theater, built in 1928, can seat over 2,800 people and is operated by the non-profit Seattle Theater Group (STG).

The musical is sung-through, and notably features live jazz musicians who perform onstage, in full view of the audience. The set and costume design for the production has visual and architectural references to New Orleans jazz bars, Appalachian mining towns, and Greek mythology. Hadestown

weaves together two Greek tragedies to make commentary about ways that class, gender, power, trust, togetherness, and responsibility shape how people relate to one another (and nature more broadly), and how poor and working-class people organize for justice. The myth of Eurydice and Orpheus represents the struggle and duality between pragmatism (seeing the world as it is) and idealism (seeing the world as it could be). The myth of Persephone and Hades represents the struggle and duality of Nature as an abundant resource for the collective or a scarce resource for the individual (Schrader, 2022).

Following the performance, the group of 18 participants in the study gathered for a community dinner and discussion in classroom space on the second floor of the theater. The classroom had large windows overlooking the street in front of the theater and a long table surrounded by chairs. The dinner consisted of vegan and vegetarian food from local bakeries and restaurants, alongside homemade curry sweet potato kale soup and cabbage salad prepared by me and my mom. Upon entering, participants helped to put food out, set the table, and hang talk-back boards (Howard, 2018) where they responded to reflective prompts with sticky notes and markers. [See tables 1 & 2.]

At each chair, there was a name tag, blank paper, markers, and pencils for notetaking, and a consent form that outlined the research questions. There were also fresh flowers on the table, and origami paper cranes (a symbol of peace in Japanese culture) that my mother and I folded to honor people killed in the armed conflict in Palestine and Israel. I had been regularly attending protests with two of the participants. The paper cranes acknowledged the awkwardness and cognitive dissonance of attending a theatrical performance and dinner discussion focusing on justice and liberation in the wake of ongoing violence, death, and war. The soundtrack to the musical was playing on a portable speaker when participants entered. A slideshow presentation, displayed on a large television, featured questions, lyrics/quotes, and images, which prompted responses from participants throughout the gathering.

In general, the space was designed to support a sense of community and care through food, music, conversation, and creative expression. The informal and collaborative nature of room setup and the meal – food from local businesses Columbia City Bakery and Delite Bakery in Beacon Hill – was intended to soften the fancy and formal theater environment by creating a familiar, welcoming, and down-to-earth environment. A love for, and knowledge of, the participants were key in the design. I picked bakeries that my friends took me to when I first moved to Seattle, and I chose snacks that reminded me of specific participants. While shopping, I was thinking about the farmers and tried to buy produce that they'd be happy eating. I wanted the food to feel as eclectic as the group.

While I recognize that this level of familiarity is an unrealistic design consideration (and maybe undesirable because of bias concerns) in most education, research, and organizing contexts, I wonder how engagement and belonging are supported when designers include elements that embody knowledge of, connection with, and love for participants (Nasir et al., 2019).

Participants were invited to gather their ideas, offer contributions, and engage with one another's perspectives in a talking circle (Brown & Di Lallo, 2020), or offer private reflections on blank scratch paper. This allowed people to contribute at their own pace and in ways that felt comfortable to them. Audio and video recordings of the discussion were captured using three cameras on small tabletop tripods. Before the gathering, an email was sent offering interpreting services and soliciting requests for other accessibility accommodations, though no specific requests besides dietary restrictions were made.

The tickets and meal were free to the participants and were covered by a combination of grant funding from the North American Association of Environmental Educators and a discounted rate offered through a partnership with the Community Programs Department of Seattle Theater Group. It wasn't until quite late in the process that I heard I had received the grant, and up to that point, I had been

operating on keeping expenses within what I felt I could reasonably spend to share a piece of theater that I found impactful with people I love and respect. I kept telling myself that if I truly believed this project could make a meaningful impact on the lives or practices of people who do justice work, then one way to show that I believed it was to ask myself if I was willing to spend my own money.

The discussion about our reflections on Hadestown took place in three phases, which were adapted from ORID questioning methods (Stanfield, 2000) and visual thinking strategies (Reilly et al., 2005). The prompts were designed to surface the values, practices, experiences, and commitments that are important to participants and their community(s) of practice.

The first phase was intended to facilitate collective sense-making about the play by asking people to reflect upon their initial reactions to the story and artwork. The following prompts were used:

1. *Which words, songs, or scenes from the show stand out in your memory or caused an emotional reaction? Why?*
2. *What was communicated by the visuals? How did the set and costumes evoke or reference the real world?*
3. *Which of the characters are you most or least like?*
4. *What was going through your mind during the final scene?*

The questions positioned the musical as the boundary object/experience of focus upon which people could share reflections, encounter one another's ideas, and make meaning. Participants were invited to direct their attention to artistic devices of musical theater as they were applied in Hadestown (e.g., references to coal extraction in Appalachia and oil extraction in the Mississippi delta through costumes, music, dramaturgy, and set design). The questions were also designed to create opportunities and leave space for the engagement of participants' life histories, identities, and their full array of cognitive, emotional, physical, spiritual and social ways of knowing.

The second phase was intended to facilitate collective meaning-making about the message of the musical by grounding it in lyrics that highlighted specific moments, situations, and character

dynamics within the play. I selected lyrics from songs in the musical that I felt represented important moments, themes, and opportunities for discussions about alignment, divergence, and solidarity, and then posed discussion questions. For example, I selected this set of lyrics and questions to encourage discussions about the tension between healthy optimism and healthy cynicism:

[Eurydice] *Lover, while you sing your song*
Winter is a-comin' on
See, I'm stacking firewood
See, I'm putting by some food

Orpheus, all the pretty songs you sing
Ain't gonna shelter us
From the wind, the wind, the wind

Hadestown – Chant

1. *What's going on in the scene?*
2. *What does this say about a character's outlook on the world?*
3. *What important lessons, advice, or warnings might this provide for the real world?*

This set of questions invited participants to think through the situation the characters found themselves in, consider what they might do if they were in that position, and then draw connections to real people and real-world issues. This is an important engagement method of theater, which relies on the collective efforts of writers, directors, dramaturgs, and performers to provide an experience where audience members are invested in the world and the fate of the characters (Mitchell, 2020).

In the third and final phase of the discussion, I asked participants to make meaning of the play by encouraging participants to draw connections with their own lives, values, and practices, and to offer advice or "tough love" to people working in climate justice. These were the questions:

1. *How might people in climate & social justice movements apply the lessons and warnings from Hadestown?*
2. *What do you think people in climate and social justice movements need to hear, feel, do, or know?*

3. *If someone asks you about this experience in a few weeks, what do you think will be the most memorable or meaningful thing?*

This set of questions invited participants to apply the group's collective thinking to constructively reflect upon and critique the norms and practices of the climate education community of practice. This created a space with a group-worthy joint project for different communities of practice to engage with and make contributions. By offering our own community of practice as a messy example, the design demonstrated trust, respect, vulnerability, and reciprocity that invited people to participate and share their expertise around doing justice work. These sorts of experiences can facilitate learning and the development of individual and group identities, as people invest their time, talents, energy, and knowledge toward a collective effort.

Gathering 2: Linocut Printmaking

Carving Stamps to Share Lessons about Working for Justice and Liberation

At the second gathering, each participant designed, carved, and inked a linocut print to convey a concept or lesson related to how they work for justice and liberation. The gathering was facilitated by a teaching artist to whom a participant in the first gathering introduced me after I asked for suggestions of local artists who make art related to justice work. The artist and the participant are from the same region of Mexico, and the artist's work focuses on themes of Indigeneity, social and environmental justice, the relationships between humans and land, and decolonizing education.

This is how the teaching artist introduced themself:

"My name is Eileen. I use they or she pronouns. When I think about justice, I think of this dicho that my mom shared with me that says that everything I have, or become, or am is for my community. I think about that a lot - about showing up. Especially because I'm Ñätho, which is how [participant] and I know each other. We're from the same Indigenous nation. I think about just showing up. Not coming in with what I think I know. Or what I think people need. I'm like: "Show up. Tell me what you

need. Tell me how I can use what I have or whatever to navigate this." And when I think about liberation, I think about water. Being in water. Being near water. I just went to Mexico; I was there for about a month and a half in December and when I came back I realized what life here is like. Like I forgot how to speak English. My tongue was sticking when I was trying to speak English. And I hate the way that my brain has to work so hard to switch back to work mode, when I have to think about budgets and all this bullshit I have to do at work. I miss the feeling of freedom that I felt. And all this stuff doesn't matter when I'm with my family. They don't give a fuck who I am when I'm at work or anything. They're like can you take out the trash or whatever. You know? Make the bed. Or sleep on the floor because your aunt needs the bed. That's all the stuff I think about when I think about liberation."

The workshop was held at a local community college, where the artist is a dean. Food was served from a local, family-owned Lebanese restaurant. The teaching-artist and I were both fans of Karol G, so reggaeton and other styles of Latin music were playing as people carved their pieces.

To make a linocut block print, a person first sketches an image onto a piece of tracing paper using pencil. The paper is then placed on the linoleum and rubbed so that the graphite is transferred onto the soft linoleum as an inverted or mirrored image. That image is turned into a relief by carefully carving out either the positive or negative space of the image using a chisel with sharp tips in a range of sizes and shapes. To provide inspiration, the teaching-artist shared examples of their prints which often feature words, phrases, symbols, patterns, and images of people, plants, animals, and fungi. The paper that the image is inked onto can also be treated with watercolor paints to feature color and texture. This art medium aligns well with the research interests because linocut and printmaking have historic significance as a tool for public engagement, awareness raising, and protest both in Mexico and worldwide (McDonald, 2016).

To print the image, a thin layer of ink is rolled out onto a tray using a rubber roller. This ensures that there are no bubbles in the ink, and that the paint is applied to the block in a smooth, even layer. The block is then set onto the ink and laid ink-side up in a press. The paper is carefully laid on top of the

stamp, being careful not to smudge the design. The press applies direct and even pressure to make sure the image transfers cleanly.

The teaching artist advised that, in their experience, selecting a concept and thinking about how to represent it is often a time-intensive and anxiety-inducing part of the process, especially if people are new to linocut or creative expression. The following was the prompt that was emailed to participants a week before the workshop:

> *Between now and the gathering, think of a justice issue that matters to you that can be the focus of your linocut print. Is there an important value, belief, concept, or lesson that shapes how you show up for that issue? Are there specific people, places, or experiences that inspired you or taught you how to lead by example? Are there specific words, phrases, objects, or symbols that might represent an important concept? What stories, guidance, advice, or tough love might this offer to folks doing climate justice work?*

The prompt was designed to surface participants' experiences, histories, social relationships, and embodiments to encourage people to share how they enact their values, and not just name the values themselves. The primary focus of the second gathering was to make artworks that articulated and externalized an outlook on justice work to make their individual and community knowledge visible to others. The tables were arranged in a U-shape, which unfortunately limited discussion to the people sitting on either side of the participants when people were seated and working on their artwork. Discussion with people sitting at other tables mostly happened when getting food and when they were using the press to ink their prints.

The participants also had a chance to encounter and draw inspiration from one another's perspectives during introductions when they responded to these prompts:

1) *When I'm thinking about or working for justice, I'm showing up as a [_____].*
2) *When I think of moments of liberation, it sounds / smells / looks / tastes / feels like [_____].*

The prompts were designed to create space for participants to draw connections between their values, experiences, relationships, identities, practices, and broader lives. The questions leverage somatic pedagogies to encourage a focus on justice as an embodied practice that enacts a set of theoretical and political stances.

When taken as a whole, the series of gatherings used three design strategies to facilitate collective participation, thought, and action through art-based pedagogies. The first design strategy was the use of art (i.e., viewing Hadestown and making linocut prints) as both a boundary object and boundary activity within which the group could participate as a collective "us". The second design strategy was the use of a range of discursive practices and prompts (i.e., talking circles, ORID questioning, visual thinking strategies, justice-minded facilitation) to facilitate engagement in collective sense- and meaning-making, and the negotiation of sameness or difference (boundary encounters and exchanges). The third design strategy was the use of a shared pursuit (i.e., providing loving critique to the climate education community of practice) which required full participation for the sum to be greater than the parts.

Analytical Methods

To explore my research questions, I engaged in the following analytical procedures. First, I did a content analysis of the artifacts that participants generated during the first learning experience, and of a key conversation from that event to document key aspects of participants' thinking about justice work and the climate crisis. Second, I used visual methods (Rose, 2016, Wagner, 2020) to analyze the linocut artwork created in the second learning experience and to draw conclusions about the expertise and commitments of participants related to their justice work. This was done by combining photographs of the visual images produced by participants with their written or verbal explanations of the pieces (Huss, 2012, Kearney & Hyle, 2004). Mini-ethnographies were created by combining that information with

transcriptions of their introductions during the second gathering. Third, I developed a detailed case study (Stake, 2008) of one participant's activities, contributions, and learning across the two learning environments—and then I used data from other participants to develop a broader account of the group's knowledge and commitments around justice work.

Analysis & Findings

Gathering 1: Talk back boards

Talk-back boards – large posters hung on the wall with prompts that invited participants to share their thoughts on sticky notes – were utilized as boundary objects (Leigh Star, 2010) to provide participants who did not yet know each other with a chance to exchange ideas, to engage the folks standing next to them in conversation, to provide a publicly visible artifact for discussion and collective sense making, and/or to give anyone feeling shy a job to do to keep themselves busy until facilitation began. The prompts were designed to seed topics of conversation and encourage participants to begin making connections between the story and real people, relationships, and situations.

The participants' responses serve as artifacts of the collective interpretation of major themes, messages, and character dynamics within the play. The responses granted insight about who is in the room and their cognitive or emotional state as they entered discussion, and revealed clues about different perspectives, stances, orientations, and frames of reference. The data was processed by photographing the posters and responses, and then cataloging them in tables.

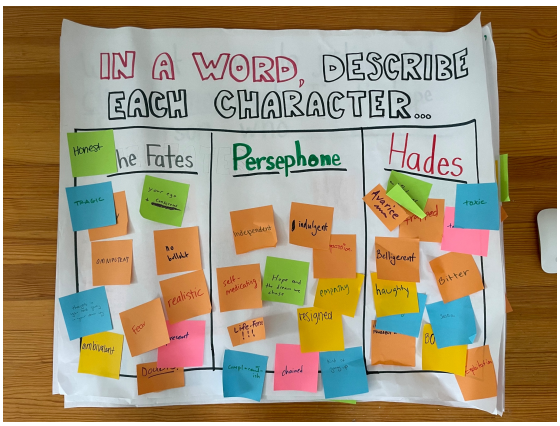


Table 1 outlines talk-back board responses about the participants' perceptions of the characters, their personalities and qualities, and their actions in the story asking them to, in a word, describe each character:

Table 1: In a word, describe each character.
Fates: Honest, tragic, your ego & consciousness, sassy, omnipotent, no bullshit, realistic, thoughts in your head getting in your own way, fear, present, doubts!, ambivalent
Persephone: Independent, indulgent, compassion, hope and the dream we chase, self-medicating, life-force!!!, empathy, resigned, complacent-ish, chained, kind of giving up
Hades: The 1% upper class, avarice, toxic, trapped, terrified, belligerent, bitter, haughty, angry, selfish, insecure lonely probably a Leo, bozo, exploitation
Hermes: The narrator, passive, maternal, mc, objective, storyteller, storyteller, bystander, omniscient, storyteller person who knows history, Virgo
Eurydice: Bereft, worn, cynical, realist, action-oriented, cornered, strong willed, practical, human, reality/realistic, heartbreak, the possibility
Orpheus: The "poor", guitar, artist, unsure, insecure, naive (but well meaning), optimistic, simp, idealistic, ineffectual, theorizing, lonely, hopeful, oblivious
The Chorus: Middle/working class, unsung, change, automatons, Twitter

While some participants described the characters and their decisions using terms that could

suggest that they were either "good" or "bad," one participant offered insight during discussions that maybe the characters, like real people, could not be classified on a simple binary of hero or villain:

> *"I didn't see any of them as their own separate character, I saw them more as emotions and things that just happen in society, so I felt like each of the characters interplayed on each other and maybe represented things that all human experience represents. I saw this battle of optimism, and hope, and fear, and running back to comforts or complacency. […] I don't see any characters as all good or all bad, but just grappling with humanness. And pieces of them that were beautiful, but also pieces of them that just wanted to survive or just wanted to be comfortable."*

Throughout the play, actors intentionally "broke the fourth wall" to prompt audience members to put themselves in the characters' position. In the song *Gone, I'm Gone*, The Fates turned to the audience and challenged viewers through song to:

> *"Go ahead and lay the blame. Talk of virtue. Talk of sin. Wouldn't you have done the same, in her shoes? In her skin? You can have your principles, when you've got a bellyful. But hunger has a way with you. There's no telling what you're gonna do when the chips are down."*

This exchange with audience members is a specific theatrical strategy and meaning-making device that Hadestown used to facilitate reflection about the self, the other, and the real-world implications of fictional situations. Experiencing realizations about where they aligned or differed from the characters offered participants opportunities to gain insight, clarity, and self-reflection about their inner selves, the outer world, and the relationship between the two. Similarly, the talk-back boards offered opportunities for participants to encounter, reflect upon, exchange, and expand upon their own ideas by comparing or contrasting their interpretations of the characters with others' views. That is, the learning environment was designed to scaffold, concretize, and publicly share these interpretations. In both cases, it presents situations for people to engage in transformational learning through critical self- and other-reflection, and consideration of if, when, why, and how, they might act (or already be acting)

in solidarity with other individuals across different communities in the climate justice landscape of practices.

Table 2 outlines talk-back board responses about the participants' interpretations of underlying messages and themes present in Hadestown by prompting them to identify the moral of the story:

Table 2: The moral of the story Hadestown is _____.
- I think it had many layers that seem to speak to access to resources, effects of capitalism and the division of classes - We must persist forward! - We can't rely on one leader. We need to work together and have lots of leaders. Also, keep trying! - The journey toward justice and liberation is ugly, tragic and may span multiple lifetimes, and all the while it is necessary and made sustainable through community, art, individual and collective transformation and acceptance of the road ahead. - We've got to keep reassuring the people leading the way that we got their backs; "make noise, fight back, your people will follow and show up." - Communism: the power of the masses can defeat the powerful few. - Authoritarianism is powerful not because of force, but beliefs. - Sisyphys + Derrick Bell's *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* -> "even if I know nothing will change, I do this to fuck w/ them" - Love / joy is a powerful tool against exploitation & capitalism. - You need community for liberation - We're on the road to Hell! - You need love and trust to overcome obstacles together - Same shit, different day. We just keep going.

The participants identified and framed a multifaceted range of lessons, motivations, strategies, and commitments within the story that might give insight on how the group thinks about and enacts justice, liberation, and solidarity, especially as it relates to capitalism, classism, authoritarianism, and the exploitation of workers and the land.

The first lesson is that community, collective thinking and action, and togetherness are sources of power. The participants specifically named love, trust, and joy as essential ingredients for individual

and collective transformation. While much of climate justice education relies on convening people around understanding the ways that we might learn to confront injustice, the fuel that will get us through the hard times may be the relationships that bind us together. Those relationships may be more resilient and adaptable if they are rooted as deeply in knowledge about liberation as they are in knowledge about oppression (brown, 2019). As one participant explained the difficult tension while discussing lyrics from the play:

> *"And it's also the last line that sticks out to me. '[Orpheus] can make you see the world how it could be, in spite of the way that it is.' I think that it takes both components to be able to dream about something different or a different outcome. But we also have to be ready to look at how did we get here, and the parts that we all played in it, and be able to talk about the ugly and uncomfortable parts, and the parts that might show us things about ourselves, and our society, and our nation that we don't like and are embedded in the history and things. And so I think that sometimes we often want to stay in the dream part of it. We want to talk about how things are going to get better. To talk about where we're going. But we don't want to talk about what got us to this point and looking at those pieces is what's going to help us untangle and deconstruct those parts that are still perpetuating the ugly parts that we want to change."*

Are educators able to ground learning in/about/through liberation with as much vivid detail and texture as they engage participants in learning in/about/through oppression or suffering? How might we create spaces where people can experience moments of liberatory togetherness – while simultaneously addressing power, privilege, and positionality – to foster the love, trust, and joy that is essential for collective action and solidarity? These are not theoretical questions, but instead real, relational design challenges for educators, organizers, and anyone working across the climate justice landscape of practices.

The participants also gleaned interesting advice from the story about diffuse and decentralized leadership within movements and communities. In their responses, they shared that leadership should not fall on single individuals but instead should be dispersed. Everyone in the collective holds a responsibility to "*reassure people that are leading the way that we got their backs*" so that they can

trust that "*people will follow and show up.*" Within the story, Hades poses a challenge that places sole responsibility for the fate of the workers of Hadestown, including Eurydice, on one individual. This creates a situation where Orpheus' fatal flaws create a single point of failure for an entire movement. A participant grapples with that idea during discussion:

> *"It kind of reminds me of the concept of who's really going to save us from this capitalist society where the world is ending. [...] And it's not going to be Orpheus because he's in this idealistic thing, and he clearly couldn't save both of them with this heteronormative thing, because he looked back because he didn't trust her. Like are they really in love? I don't think so. They don't love or trust each other. It's built on this idea. So, I think the musical is trying to key into the idea that true love and trust is probably what we need to escape, or build something different, and we can't be stuck in this cycle. But the characters in it are stuck and we kind of are, too. So how do we get unstuck? It's not really going to give us the answers, but everyone is stuck, everyone's unhappy, and no one truly loves and trusts one another."*

When doubt creeps in, as it always does, Orpheus' weakened trust in himself and his relationships, imposter syndrome, obsessiveness, performance anxiety, and the weight of responsibility all combine to demonstrate how concentrating leadership power in one or two charismatic figures can result in weak and vulnerable systems. Stepping into distributed leadership roles despite doubt and uncertainty is another important way people must show up for collective action (Bang & Vossoughi, 2016).

Many design fields treat failure as an opportunity, and many educators teach that valuable lessons are often hidden within failure. But even when you know that, experiencing failure that ends in tragedy can still be painful especially when the stakes are life and death. In the opening number of the musical, the messenger Hermes reminds us that the story is a tragedy. It's an old song that we keep singing again, and again, and again. And yet, despite the repeated warnings throughout the musical, we still hold hope that everything will turn out "right." The fact that it doesn't, offers a valuable wakeup call that breaks with typical tropes and storytelling culture that many U.S. Americans aren't used to, where

the cultural norm is that the "hero" wins. One participant expressed this idea in their written notes by saying:

> *"The final scene - I was so glad that it ended in a tragedy. There needs to be more stories that make us sit with uncomfortable realities. Side note: I did feel uncomfortable, myself, to have white tears around me in that moment. Someone mentioned that the conclusion of the story seemed to be that true love and trust is going to save us. I agree, and I don't believe that true love and trust is going to save us. Are violences & atrocities in our world because we don't love each other enough? That's absurd. Do mothers in Gaza not love their children enough? I was actually thinking about Fanon, Wretched of the Earth & Grace Lee Boggs. It'll probably take dreaming, maybe violence."*

This could be particularly important for audiences of people who are comfortable and complacent because of who they are, where they live, and how much money they have (Amorín Triana, 2022). It's often said that the role of art is to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable. Nina Simone said that it's an artist's duty to "reflect the times," especially "when everything is so desperate, when every day is a matter of survival" (Black Journal, 1969). A person's degree of power, positionality, and comfort shapes their relationship with issues of social justice and climate justice, and therefore may present differences in mental models and strategies for social change (Mittman, 2019).

A final lesson drawn from the story is about the need for persistence in the face of long timescales and patchy success. One participant shared these thoughts:

> *"For me personally that was kind of when I first thought about the moral of the story because I think throughout I was just like 'oh it's a love story, right?' But then in the end Hermes is saying how there's value in retelling stories even if they end in a sad way. To me that means the moral is to persist. Even if things are sad, and histories and cycles repeat over and over again, you still need to tell the story to educate and move forward, to persist, so that you know that there's always hope that there's a different outcome. I think that's the moral of the story. And so it's important to not lose that hope and I think that's important for activists."*

Another participant implicated this by mentioning Sisyphyus, another Greek myth where a human is cursed to an eternity of pushing a stone up a hill knowing that it will inevitably roll back down

to the bottom, alongside a quote from Derek Bell (1992) that says “even if I know nothing will change, I do this to fuck w/ them”. In Sisyphus’ case, diligence and determination which might normally be viewed as admirable is instead maddening. Are folks working for climate justice cursed and doomed like Sisyphus? Or just giving a middle finger on our way out? Nietzche explores similar themes when he speaks about confronting tragedies, monsters, oneself, and “the abyss” (Himmelfarb, 1992). A challenge of life is learning how one can look into the abyss, and still come out on the other side willing to do something. How can we, as climate justice educators, find the balance between helping people to see the world as it is, in all of its beauty and horror, but also as it could be?

Gathering 1: Focus group discussion

The design of the engagement focused on providing opportunities for discourse where participants might encounter and navigate boundaries between individual and community knowledges, the research questions (e.g. how art supports exploration of what lessons matter in climate justice education), and the stories and underlying meanings of artworks. Excerpts of lyrics from Hadestown were used as boundary objects to spur reflection, articulation of ideas, and collective meaning-making through discussion in a focus-group style engagement. The conversation was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to draw out major themes and phenomena.

Table 3 provides a transcribed example of a segment of the discussion:

	Table 3: Hadestown focus group discussion
	For this set of lyrics, consider the following: - What's going on in the scene? - What does this say about a character's outlook on the world? - What important lessons, advice, or warnings might this provide for the real world? _____ *[Eurydice]* *Lover, while you sing your song* *Winter is a-comin' on* *See, I'm stacking firewood* *See, I'm putting by some food* *Orpheus, all the pretty songs you sing* *Ain't gonna shelter us* *From the wind, the wind, the wind* *Hadestown - Chant*
JC	I really appreciate the conversation and am taking in a lot of information, but I do think one of the major themes for me is realism versus optimism. That's a huge part of it. And while I think both parts are so, so important – you need someone to dream big and we don't want people to cut down the trees, but I do think it's important for survival [inaudible]. That's what I think this says. You can sing this beautiful song and dream of this beautiful future, but things are coming. You need to prepare. So that's an important point.
KGo	It just makes me rebelieve that liberation won't happen unless you free the people most impacted. Yeah, that's the bottom line. 'Most impacted' can be subjective, but if you're not listening to Eurydice…
MF	I think one thing I noticed is the placement of the responsibility. So, in this scene Eurydice is admonishing Orpheus for not helping her to prepare for the cold, but this is in the context of where the reason why the cold is coming on is Hades taking Persephone in early. And so, it's similar to Hades' solution for how to deal with Orpheus in the end. So, in the end when Orpheus narrowly looks back, who do we blame for the failure? It's Orpheus. And he blames himself as well. And so even though it could've been very easy for Hades to let him go very easily, he sets them this arduous task so when they fail the burden of responsibility is put on them.
Taiji	[Facilitator] What would you say to Eurydice if she was saying this? If you're her friend or if this is how she's talking about her boyfriend? What would you say to her?
OS	Break up.

Amy	It just goes to show how if you're struggling with basic needs, how out of touch it is to dream about things beyond your basic needs. Like she is struggling. She's trying to be practical. She's trying to survive. I don't blame her at all for feeling this way. And when you're so trapped in that, it can feel like other people don't care or are so out of touch. I mean if she was my friend I would try to support her basic needs.
Lily	I think… I'm also trying to learn past this... I feel like I have this misconception that dreaming doesn't mean you dream for survival. But I think that somehow should be incorporated into dreaming, otherwise you're having these big dreams and there's no people to live through that dream. So, I feel like Orpheus… I do also really admire how he's theorizing and dreaming, but there are ways to make that more fleshed out.
Laurel	This is making me think of my mom. She's very… like, I have my two hands and that's my power so I do what I can. And she doesn't do the whole thinking, theorizing thing. Like she thinks, but it's not her priority. Even when she grew up, I asked her 'did you have hobbies when you were growing up?' And she said 'no we had to go get food, and we had to cook all day long because we didn't have a blender or all these things. And so, her life was so focused on making it to the next day, and she also found that really fulfilling. But I was thinking about how he sings a song, but really it does nothing in the end. And it's about the actions that you're taking. The work you're actually doing. And I don't know, I feel like he's kind of stuck in a past that even Eurydice is like "I can't really remember when the seasons were right". And he's there. And it's like, we're not there anymore. So, dwelling on "I want everything to go back, I want everything to go back" is great, but this is where we are now and how are you dealing with that. Like taking care of people because you might not be able to go back, so we have to do the best we can while we're here.
Jam	And it also makes me question privilege in that way. Like Orpheus seems very privileged to not really care about food and to not hear her crying for help. And also, his privilege of feeling untouchable. Because in the myth, he's the son of Apollo or something, so him thinking that he can just do this thing no one else can do – like going to other entrance to Hadestown – and thinking he can convince Hades to let somebody go.
Indra	And I remember this whole song was talking about the wind and the wind can be interpreted as climate change and this idea of thinking about… it reminds me a lot of greenwashing privilege and how you can write songs and make it look so beautiful to be environmentally conscious or something. And all these organizations can have all these initiatives for climate change, but at the end of the day you're not paying attention to the climate refugees that are stacking firewood, or trying to grow food, or trying to survive. You're not really paying attention to the people that are going through it, you're just looking at this beautiful… ohhh, compostable plates… but who's actually dying and suffering? And whose lives are changing and will never be the same? Which, back to what you were saying, he's remembering – Orpheus is in this world where he's untouchable because he lives in the penthouse and doesn't have to see or witness any of it firsthand. And I also feel like during all of the… when he was down in Hadestown there's all these laborers around him, I don't think he was really paying attention to them. He was so focused on Eurydice that he wasn't, and I don't know if I'm misremembering, but it seemed like he wasn't actually invested in their fight. He was just like "I wanna get my girl and go. I don't really care about these other people." You know?

LT	Yeah, the word I would use is delusional. He's big delu-lu. And I feel like there is a lot of privilege in being delusional as an artist, like you really do believe that your art is going to change the world. Like you have this perspective like 'if I do this, this is going to become this' and I feel like I talk to a lot of artists who are very committed to their art and getting it to where it needs to be, you do have to be completely delusional to think that you're going to change the rest of the world so that's the perspective I have. Delusional every step of the way.
Indra	Absolutely and sometimes I'll go in TikTok holes and see all these white musicians doing [inaudible] and I'm like… okay. yeah. wow. shut the fuck up. Or I'll just move on. I've never really been to a play before in an actual theater, and seeing all the people who are here tonight, and they're all mostly elderly or older white people, and that is who art is really for, right? And that's Orpheus' song. You can sit and write all day long because you don't have to think about feeding your family, you're up in your penthouse.
Laurel	She gets called his muse too, and I feel like that's such a type of person who is like "why do you never have money? because you're writing this song all the time? And you're going to meet a girl who actually has nothing, and you're like oh my gosh I'm going to take you in and I'm going to write this song and she just suffers because she doesn't have this fall back and get to go back and do it again. And I think Hermes says something to the effect of "you'll find another one" "you're always like this" "you always do this" and there's always going to be another girl who will inspire you to flop again.
ER	Harsh, but true.

The gathering demonstrated how facilitation of a group viewing and discussing a piece of political theater (Snyder-Young, 2011) provided a time, space, and boundary activity to learn through exchanging perspectives, translating between real and fictional examples, refining and expanding upon ideas, and undertaking joint activity toward solving a problem (i.e. identifying what learning matters toward climate justice education). The resulting conversation demonstrates the collective knowledge and wisdom of a group of people who work for justice across a climate justice landscape of practices as they attempt to identify the balance point between healthy optimism and healthy skepticism.

Participants surfaced strategies and struggles related to undertaking collective action on a wide range of social and environmental justice issues. They surfaced issues of power and privilege and talked about strategies to navigate them. They drew upon their social relations and referenced lessons they learned from their parents and friends. They referenced their professional identities and self-concepts,

and the different roles they fill within the community. They articulated their individual hopes, fears, frustrations, and dreams.

The shared experience of engaging with arts-based pedagogies and boundary objects, the caring and welcoming environment, the diversity of knowledges within the group, the curation of lyrics and prompts to react to, the norms for discussion, the multimodal engagements, the respect for choice and consent, and the existing relationships built on trust, love, friendship, respect, and solidarity, all contributed to the learning environments' conduciveness for social and transformative learning. The design sought to create a balanced space that embodied a vision of a liberated world where everyone had a critical perspective to offer to a group-worthy pursuit and felt both empowered and responsible to contribute.

Gathering 2: Creating Linocut Prints and Artist Statements

At the first gathering, the participants collectively viewed and interpreted a single piece of artwork (*Hadestown*) produced by an outsider to the group. At the second gathering, each participant responded to a prompt about justice, liberation, and collective action and produced a piece of art (a linocut print). When viewed together, the collection of linocuts demonstrates different ways that people within the group think and work for climate justice across a landscape of practices. These two approaches in first and second gatherings represent distinct, yet complementary, ways of facilitating boundary blurring between the individual (the self) and the collective (an "us" made up of others).

In order to draw out broader lessons and themes, I developed mini-ethnographies by combining images of the art pieces produced by participants with survey responses and transcriptions of conversations to generate profiles of participants upon which insight about individual participants' stances, orientations, and perspectives could be interpreted. The content and semiology within images, along with critical discourse analysis of written and spoken words, can provide testimony about learning

and meaning-making that happens through both the process and the products of art-making as part of a collective (Rose, 2016).

The mini-ethnographies are meant to be reminiscent of an art exhibition, and include 1) the participant's name or pseudonym and a set of self-descriptors related to identity, self-concept, and positionality, 2) a quote from the post-survey where the participant describes how their linocut print represents a lesson about working for justice and liberation that could be useful for climate justice educators, and 3) the introduction they gave at the beginning of the second gathering to explain who they show up as when they work for justice and to share a perspective on liberation.

After each mini-ethnography, I share a short reflection to illustrate how I interpreted the lesson from each participant, where I see relevance for climate justice educators, and opportunities for solidarity with others working across the climate justice landscape of practices.

Taiji [queer, facilitator, outdoor educator, climate activist, graduate student, Aries, Dragon]

Artist Statement: The center of my print features the *I Ching* (Book of Changes), a divination text, holistic philosophy, and reflective tool of East Asian cosmology that is depicted as eight trigrams – lines representing fire, water, wind, thunder, river, mountain, earth, and heaven – around a black & white taiji symbol (my namesake). The symbols represent a reconciliatory relationship between two forces – yin and yang – to achieve peace, harmony, and balance within and between concepts like unity & opposition, dark & bright, small & large, soft & hard, internal & external, collective & individual, contraction & expansion, pain & joy, good & bad, death & life, apart & together. My name was a blessing from my mother, who recognized a need for a peaceful worldview that values and respects the power of oneness and difference. I try to embody that in my style and approach to organizing, facilitating, teaching, learning, and being.

The words "either - both - neither - one -" describe how my queer identity(s) transcend boundaries and binary thinking. The queerness of my race, gender, culture, and sexuality allows me to find common ground and move between worlds, while also never quite fitting in any box. Queer people can help us recognize illusions.

About the Artist: When I think about liberation, I picture a memory from May of 2022 where hundreds of people were howling, whistling, and ringing bells as they biked through the Armstrong Tunnel in Pittsburgh as part of a Critical Mass group takeover ride. A friend and fellow Sunrise Movement organizer was in town to knock doors for a candidate running for the US House on a platform of racial, economic, gender, and climate justice. She turned to me and said, "This is what a Green New Deal will feel like." People felt safe and, at least at that moment, had what they needed. It showed me the potential of a community that was present, connected, diverse, joyful, abundant, and alive.

Climate justice educators might benefit from being prepared to talk, teach, connect, and collaborate across differences. This artwork offers advice about approaching divisions and how people identify and relate with one another. Boundaries where climate justice educators might focus on peace, reconciliation, and solidarity include those of wealth, race, gender, (dis)ability, education, immigration status, geography, politics, nationality, and religion. The use of queer and East Asian cultural lenses for seeing and being may support non-queer and non-Asian people to view a familiar problem in a new way and reveal new insights.

Amy [queer, Chinese, female, spouse, pediatrician, learner]

Artist Statement: My piece is the text "palliative care is queer" with the word "QUEER" in bold letters and a black background. I am exploring the ideas of (pediatric) palliative care within medicine as a field that challenges the expectations of a child's life. Through immense suffering there are moments that can bring meaning through choosing a life based on your goals. This idea parallels the struggles and strength within the queer community. What is hidden within this piece is the landscape of medicine that is very white, Western, and heteronormative. This piece challenges those notions.

About the Artist: "I identify as a Chinese-American queer woman and the spouse to Eth. When I think of moments of liberation, it feels very similar to what other people have said. That feeling of being free and helping others be free by simply being yourself, but also listening to others. I'm also a pediatrician and going into palliative care. And to a lot of people that can feel very devastating when kids go through serious illness or loss, but those moments can also be places to find meaning in your work and in your life. And that reverberates as well in how I do things. And one small piece about how I'm working for justice is queering those spaces as well. It is very abnormal and queer in a way to have a child who is going through something that isn't just normal development, that isn't growing and thriving. If they're going through something serious, or dying, or they have died. So those are moments that are something that is so beyond what a person has thought or imagined for their life, or their child, or their family. And so being able to blend that feeling of choosing the life you want is a very queer concept."

Climate justice educators might benefit from recognizing that conversations about climate change often touch on issues that are about life or death. For many people, this is full of unfamiliar territory, unfair situations, uncertain outcomes, and uncomfortable realizations. While death is as "normal" as life, for many people, talking about it is not. Grappling with climate justice means confronting harm, suffering, death, and injustices in the past, present, and future. People working in palliative care have expertise and skills to share about how to support people to process and move forward.

Using a lens of queerness can also help us to understand the dissonance between our realities, other people's realities, and the lives that we had envisioned. Knowledge within the queer community might also offer lessons about maintaining pride, joy, and strength in the face of illness, injustice, and death. [Thank you, Amy!]

Eth [transfemme, nonbinary, Asian American, bike advocate, supporter]

Artist Statement: Text says fresh food for all; art is a raised garden bed with hearts for plants and plants surrounding. Idea was to celebrate a garden bed we recently built together at Rainier Beach Urban Farm. The text came after and really could have been anything, but I was thinking about how there is very little fresh food in Palestine and came up with those words. I guess that isn't too clear. I like the graphic design and how the angle of the letters mirrors the angle of the box.

About the Artist: "When I am thinking about or working for justice, I'm just showing up as a support. As someone who is not necessarily the leader or the person who leads, but I'm there as someone who is making sure that everyone is getting what they need. Being seen and heard. And is just feeling well in whatever the situation that we're in is. And so when I think about moments of liberation that sort of approach kind of plays into the ways that I go about it. So the biggest moments that I've enjoyed is when I've got all the people around me that I care about are nearby, and we're outside just enjoying the sun, and laying down on the ground, and playing with this little toy here called a jianzi. And also moments of skill share – these people have introduced this into my life [gestures toward Indra and Jam]--just like the idea that we all have multiple wonderful skills that we know a lot about and can share. And just sort of broadening and learning together."

Climate justice educators might benefit from investing time and energy contributing to the efforts of other people and projects in the community to gain more knowledge and a deeper relationship with locally relevant issues. It's easy for educators to view themselves as leaders with responsibilities to design environments, experiences, events, or programs to teach and activate others around climate justice, but there is a lot to be gained by showing up as a supporter and recognizing that the flow of information and skill sharing can move in either direction.

Educators can also apply their knowledge of how to structure information, communicate ideas, scaffold learning, and facilitate group collaboration in contexts that might not traditionally be considered education spaces. The skills are transferable and useful toward political organizing, public engagement, tutoring & mentoring, service projects, and volunteer coordination. [Thank you, Eth!]

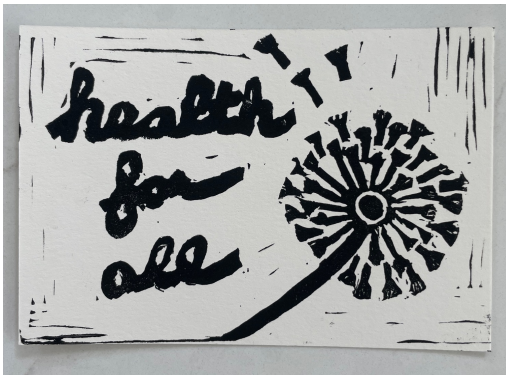
Jessi [no identifiers provided]

ARTIST STATEMENT: My artwork was a few flowers surrounding the text "protect queer youth," which I chose because of its meaning both to me professionally and personally. I had chosen to do flowers because I was also waffling back and forth on what text to put on the page, and had originally considered "let queer youth bloom" which I still wanted to depict somehow in the art. I'm not sure that my art really depicted the full meaning behind it, since there is a lot to unpack behind the health and safety of queer youth. In general, queer youth experience many adverse health events secondary to oppression because of their queer identities. They are more likely to attempt suicide, experience homelessness, they are bullied at school and have fewer safe spaces than cisgender straight youth, and currently don't always have access to life-saving gender affirming care (even in states that allow it, if a youth doesn't have a caregiver willing to take them, they can't receive the healthcare they need). Plus, one can make the argument that improving these things for queer youth improves them for all youth.

About the Artist: "When I'm thinking about or working for justice, I'm showing up as a bi white woman. Also, as a critical care pediatrician who maybe has a different perspective than a lot of critical care doctors in medicine because I firmly believe that community health, and prevention of things that would require the needs for my services, is also a part of my job. There's a lot we can prevent in medicine, but a lot of pediatric care is preventable. Like gun violence and car crashes. So that's what I bring to these types of spaces. And very similar to Eileen, when thinking about liberation, I've been thinking about being underwater. Being in the ocean and swimming with the sea creatures."

Climate justice educators might benefit from thinking more expansively about what they consider to be part of their job. Jessi raises the point that while many doctors see their responsibilities start and end at the doors of the hospital, a community-minded health perspective compels her to use her knowledge and voice to contribute to efforts that prevent children from needing to seek her care. For her, this includes advocating for policies that reduce gun violence and protect LGBTQ+ youth. Like the education system, an already stressed healthcare system will face even greater challenges with climate change. Rates of gun violence increase during heat waves. Homeless youth experience changes in extreme weather first and worst. Wildfire smoke exacerbates risk to children with asthma and other cardiovascular issues. Climate justice educators should see themselves as part of a community health landscape of practices, and act in solidarity with health professionals on issues that matter to them. [Thank you, Jessi!]

Randy [public health professional, white, cis male, 39, Seattle resident, Pittsburgh native, soon-to-be dad]



Artist Statement: Health equity and the idea that everyone has the right to live a healthy life (physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually) regardless of their identity or where they were born is a passion of mine and a major motivator in my personal and professional life. I wanted to express that in my artwork. I chose the dandelion because it is a symbol of life, fertility, and dissemination, which gets at some of the themes of justice work, including distribution of wealth and resources for underserved and marginalized communities to thrive. As someone who is just getting started in climate justice work professionally, I also wanted to choose a symbol of the power of nature, life, and resilience.

About the Artist: "When I'm thinking about or working for justice, I come from a public health perspective. I'm an epidemiologist working in the climate change space, and so I think I tend to gravitate to thinking more at a population level or group level. And thinking about what some of the upstream causes of disparities that we're seeing in health outcomes; and so I think I also come from more of an active listening and analytic perspective which is where my personality is. And so, I like to be there and listen and dive deep into different topics and issues and be there as a source of support. And thinking of moments of liberation for me, one of my favorite hobbies is running so I go back to that. Especially on a nice crisp morning or day just kind of running any direction, and exploring, and taking that part of my day to be outside and enjoy nature and maybe not having a certain destination or direction in mind and just seeing what that adventure might lead to that day. I think that openness and flexibility and freedom to just go out and explore and enjoy the world is kind of what comes to mind."

Climate justice educators might benefit from broadening their focus to encourage resolution of the upstream causes of the disproportionate impacts of climate change on poor and working-class communities, communities of color, and other marginalized groups. Public health professionals draw on transdisciplinary knowledge to understand relationships between health, environment, economics, historic and contemporary land use, and how population demographics interact, which in turn informs how local, state, and federal policies and programs are developed and enforced.

Educators might take Randy's lead in both what and how they teach by bridging and blurring the boundaries between disciplines, and looking at issues like health, housing, and hunger more holistically. Educators also have knowledge to offer the public health community of practice. Educators can contribute to designing and facilitating sessions to gather public input on policies, training volunteers to ground truth data and act as watchdogs and designing public awareness and engagement campaigns to support learning. [Thank you, Randy!]

Virb [38, white, woman, birder, artist]

ARTIST STATEMENT
My piece shows a Pileated Woodpecker and some shelf fungi on a snag (dead tree). I was thinking about snags as examples of community / community-building -- birds, fungi, insects, plants, etc. work collaboratively to create habitat out of dead trees when given the time and space to do so.

ABOUT THE ARTIST: "When I'm thinking about or working for justice, I guess I'm showing up as a queer white person. When I think of moments of liberation, I guess I'd say it feels like yesterday or the day before when we had a really warm sunny day. I feel like one of the things that's fun about the northwest - I'm not from here, but I've been out in the northwest for 10 years almost – when there's a nice day, and we haven't had nice weather in a while, everyone is like "ooo!" Get out of the house. Wander around. Everybody seems a little happier and a little more open to connecting to other people, and not as rushed or concerned about what else is going on. Just like "We've got to take advantage of this time we have." And no one is making you feel bad about leaving work early to get some sun. That feels like a nice idea."

Climate justice educators might benefit from a reminder to look to nature for inspiration, wisdom, and solutions to pressing issues in our communities. Using birds as an example, the answers might be literal or metaphorical. Structuring land management practices of timberlands to support communities of sentinel species, keystone species, or indicator species may improve the long-term health and productivity of forests, whereas designing land management practices around resource extraction maximizes short term gains at the expense of current and future generations (both humans and other beings). Whether or not bird species are present, and thriving, might be a better measure of successful management for climate resilience than economic productivity.

Migratory birds are also powerful metaphorical reminders that even though we may be geographically distant, we share connections with places and communities that transcend lines on the map and our well-being is tied to one another. While borders are on one hand very real and important, nature also reminds us that they are human social constructs and how we treat borders (and people at borders) is entirely within our control. [Thank you, Virb!]

Laurel [black, queer, artist, magician, tree, celestial being]

ARTIST STATEMENT: "My artwork was just the word 'eat' and some squiggles. I love squiggles because I think squiggles are everywhere outside, all the time. Especially here in the Pacific Northwest. A very squiggly place. Very squiggly nature everywhere. And I just love squiggles. I feel very grounded by squiggles. And then 'eat' because I believe that we were put here on earth to eat the earth, and to eat the world, and to taste everything. And experience everything. And I feel a connection to ingestion in almost a radical afro cannibalist aesthetic. [laughs] It's how I think of it. Just because I think that cannibalism - to really incorporate the external - is pretty moving and radical to me."

ABOUT THE ARTIST: "When I'm thinking about or working for justice, I'm showing up as, I guess, a sensory machine. I don't know. I just feel things and experience things, I guess. Yeah, I'm just here to experience and vibe. When I think of moments of liberation, I just think of babies and how they eat the world. And there's no sense of 'I can't eat that'. And just exploring and being able to not be afraid. Like 'yeah, I'm going to put this rock in my mouth' and like either I can eat it or not. I just miss… I don't know, drinking soap. Like I don't miss the soap, but I miss being curious and just choosing to eat things."

Climate justice educators might benefit from a reminder to respect childlike wonder. As adults, we often view young people as adults-in-training, rather than as full and complex people. This creates a hierarchical power dynamic that is sometimes necessary, but also limiting for adults and children alike. Children, adolescents, adults, and elders all have a role in shaping society. The fearlessness of young people can teach adults to see things in a new light, challenge old ways of doing things that no longer serve us, remind us to slow down and honor our past selves, and clarify our responsibility to previous and future generations. It takes a village to raise our children, but educators play a particularly important role in shaping how values, lessons, and ways of being get carried into the future. [Thank you, Laurel!]

Lily [Taiwanese, researcher, non-binary, prioritizes decolonial and racial justice work in Taiwan]

ARTIST STATEMENT: I wanted to create something that I would actually use beyond this event, so I decided to carve something for Ljavek, the community that I'm working with. Ljavek means near the water in Paiwan and many of the Ljavek community members used to work as laborers in the city, processing the timber that Kaohsiung City imported into Kaohsiung Port. The art piece includes several landmarks of Kaohsiung City, the 85 Skyscraper, the ferris wheel from Dream Mall, and also, a log floating in the port. And as you can see in the art piece, I realized much later that I forgot an "a" in "Ljavek", but I'm taking this as a practice round! I plan on showing this to Ljavek residents, get their input, and carve something else we can then use for posters and tote bags to spread the word about Ljavek's presence in the city.

ABOUT THE ARTIST: "When I'm thinking about or working for justice, I think about showing up as a story listener. So, I work with indigenous communities. I don't identify as Indigenous, but I'm learning a lot about how a lot of knowledge, intergenerational knowledge in indigenous communities, can be passed down through storytelling which is also very similar to my culture as a Han person. And so, when I'm working with communities, I'm thinking about how I'm not writing the stories, I've played around with the idea of supporting the stories, but really for me it's about listening to the stories and it seems to be more about documentation. So, it's been important for me to learn how to listen well, especially from people who are from completely different lived experiences, you know, identities. How do I listen carefully and not only with my head, but with my full self in order to understand their stories.

And when I think about moments of liberation… I just think about a very specific moment when I'm hanging out with a person who is a grandmother, and she was sharing photos with me. Like, old photos. It's noon, 12pm, and I usually have a very routine lunch at 12pm, so I told her "Okay, I can see some photos but then I have to go eat." And she was like "Yeah! Yeah! I'll show you just a couple!" And she goes back. I was expecting her to bring out a photo album, but she rolls out this huge plastic container with books upon books of photo albums. And she just starts going through almost all of them with me and I'm like, "Woof. Okay, we're in it for the long haul." And I think for me a lot of this work can be very heavy, but those are the moments that I cling onto. These relationships are still possible. There's joy still. There's humor still. Regardless of whatever is happening externally, that still is something that is very nourishing for me."

Climate justice educators might benefit from taking time to listen and learn from the wisdom and perspectives of elders, and from Indigenous communities who have lived in good relation with land since time immemorial. It takes both time and humility, but it's time well spent. Storytelling has been a primary tool for passing on the knowledge and traditions that have made our lives possible, for good and bad. If we ignore the importance of stories and our role as people who pass stories on to the next generation, we may not know what we've lost or even remember to remember. [Thank you, Lily!]

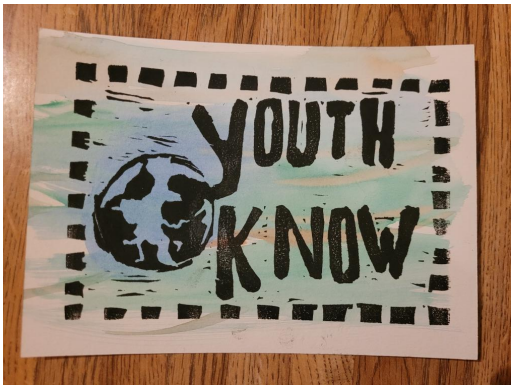
Jam [no identifiers provided]

ARTIST STATEMENT: This is a concept I've been grappling with for the past year or two--growing through conflict. I first started thinking about it after listening to this amazing podcast, "finding our way," hosted by Prentis Hemphill. in particular, this episode with Kazu Haga called "navigating conflict." In it, he talks about how, during moments of conflict, we have the golden opportunity to reflect and make a change in ourselves. During conflict, we are granted the ability to see the things that we need to work on. and although it might be challenging, it is our duty to be better humans to one another by confronting these shortcomings. In my print, it's showing a jasmine flower in its different stages of growth. And in all of those stages, there is a beauty and a sense of absoluteness in what it is, that it is all a part of the cycle and existence of the flower. To begin as a bud, grow, and bloom all the while being fragrant. We cannot just appreciate the beauty of the flower once it's bloomed, we must also appreciate the journey of how it got there. Taking care of itself not on its own, but by absorbing and sharing the nutrients from those around it, in order to bloom and thrive. In this practice of growing through conflict, I often notice myself getting hard or sharp or closed off during conflict, and then I have to take myself out of the situation and ask myself, why am I feeling this way right now? What need do I have that I am not getting? Is this about me or is it not about me?

ABOUT THE ARTIST: "When I'm showing up for justice, I always think about how much space I'm taking up; how I exist in the space; and what I can provide or bring to the space or to the people. When I think of moments of liberation, it looks like the window is up. It looks like a sunny day, and the breeze is flowing in, and you just hear laughter, and it smells like home-cooked meals. And you hear the wind. And you hear the trees. That feels like a moment of liberation."

Climate justice educators might benefit from a balanced embrace of conflict by recognizing that agreement is an important grounding force, but conflict is natural and where growth is granted the most opportunity. Not all conflict is good. Entering negotiations looking for disagreement can rush us past the essential trust building that is required. A colleague once taught me the lesson that no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. When educators (and others) create environments where conflict can occur in healthy and respectful ways, it lays fertile ground for change. Ignoring conflict may prevent sudden flares, but ignoring it altogether will not resolve major issues. Conflict should be respected for both its generative and destructive power. [Thank you, Jam!]

Kelsie [no identifiers provided]



ARTIST STATEMENT: Youth Know. This phrase has become a sort of personal mantra that I try to remember and stay committed to in spaces where I am making curricular, teaching, or educational consultancy decisions about issues of environmental or climate injustice and racial justice. To me this simple phrase is a reminder that youth already deeply know that the world has already been turned upside down by the polycrises seeded by environmental and climate injustices. It is also a reminder that there is possibility in the oppressive and violent systems of capitalism, settler colonialism, racism, extractive land relations, and other violent systems of modernity being turned on its head. The inversion of the world is both its ending and its making.

I tried to portray this both through the upside-down world and also through the border---which although is patterned and seemingly symmetrical, is only partially intact to represent both the constraints and boundaries we feel, but also to make explicit the openings for change.

ABOUT THE ARTIST: "When I'm thinking about or working for justice, I come as a science teacher. Don't hate me. Also, I'm a mom. I also help run a youth and community lab down in Mexico. So those are three big things that I carry coming in here, as well as friends and neighbors. When I think of moments of liberation, the youth and community lab that I work in we study plastic pollution and other forms of marine pollution in this fishing community that I've been a part of for 14 years. And we typically go out, and we collect data, and talk about it, and kind of have this 'oh f*ck… crap' moment where we're sad. And then we swim. And oftentimes it's the best part of the day and, you know, you're floating and joking and there's so much lightness. And it's not like we've forgotten all of the data that we've just collected and seen, but there's… just being together is great."

Climate justice educators might benefit by maintaining a deep faith in youth (and themselves). As mentioned earlier, thinking, and acting on climate change can make people feel overwhelmed, isolated, and hopeless. For both youth and adults to stay grounded, it's important to trust what you know and how you know it, where you stand and why you stand there. Skepticism is an important survival tool that is essential for learning and change – it's a close cousin of curiosity – but the majority of youth (and adults) know that climate change is real and demands our immediate attention. I know it, too. You probably also know it. Does it serve us to center the people who don't yet know it, and may never know it? We know enough and must have confidence to keep moving forward. [Thanks, Kelsie!]

Case Study of Learning Across the Two Gatherings:

This case study explores how the two gatherings may have supported different communities within a landscape of practices to exchange ideas, learn from one another, and recognize opportunities to stand in solidarity with others. It focuses on one participant, Indra – a queer Asian farmer/land tender and traditional Chinese medicine bodyworker – and combines her contributions during the first and second gathering to paint a broad picture of learning and connections between the two experiences.

Society depends on the people who grow the food and tend the land. In this critical role, farmers and farm workers hold valuable insight, stories, experiences, and worldviews regarding the intersections of farming practices, cultural practices, and climate justice (Pugh et al., 2019). People working in other roles and sectors concerned with labor, immigration, education, health, and human-land relations might draw lessons from farm workers' community knowledge about these issues in order to pursue collective action.

This case study focuses on one farmer, Indra, who shares their individual perspectives drawing upon values related to justice, liberation, and solidarity that they embody as a member of the farming community of practice.

Who are They When it Comes to Working for Justice and Liberation?

This is how Indra introduced themself at the second gathering when prompted about who they are when they show up for justice; and what moments of liberation look, sound, smell, taste, or feel like:

> *"When I'm thinking about or working for justice, the first thing I thought of is that I'm showing up as a learner. I always take notes, and I want to embody people I look up to.*

I'm also showing up as a queer farmer, and as someone who spends a lot of time with plants and feeling like I can be at home with them.

When I think of moments of liberation, I feel like I'm sitting in a garden full of foods that I'm familiar with, and recognize, and feel like these plants can exist here with me and everyone else who knows and loves them, too. I used to live in big queer housing co-ops in Brooklyn and remember mornings when we'd wake up - there were like 14 people - and all our friends would just be sleeping on the ground. And everyone was asleep on the ground on a Saturday morning. And everybody is feeling safe under one roof together. And maybe they didn't feel safe where they come from, or where their homes are, but they're safe together. And I feel liberation there."

Art Can Direct Our Attention to Those Whose Lives are Changing or Threatened.

During the group discussion of Hadestown [Gathering 1], Indra suggested that when times are hard, we should direct our attention to the people whose lives are most changed or whose safety is most threatened. They identified climate refugees (Belizzi et al., 2023) and farmers/farmworkers (Kingsolver, 2007), as two groups on whom we might focus. Indra referenced dynamics between characters in the play to raise real-world concepts of power and privilege when identifying worthwhile solutions to injustices around food, survival, and climate change:

"And I remember this whole song was talking about the wind and the wind can be interpreted as climate change and this idea of thinking about… it reminds me a lot of greenwashing privilege, and how you can write songs and make it look so beautiful to be environmentally conscious or something. And all these organizations can have all

these initiatives for climate change, but at the end of the day you're not paying attention to the climate refugees that are stacking firewood, or trying to grow food, or trying to survive. You're not really paying attention to the people that are going through it, you're just looking at this beautiful… ohhh, compostable plates… but who's actually dying and suffering? And whose lives are changing and will never be the same?"

If you pay attention to people who find ways to make it work on the margins, you're likely to learn valuable lessons about climate justice. To grow and sell food, farmers rely on a breadth and depth of understanding about social, ecological, and economic systems to calculate risk and make decisions about when to plant, what to plant, and when to harvest (van Zonneveld, 2020). Climate change is making an already demanding profession even more challenging. Farmers and farmworkers – over 60% of whom, in the US, are immigrants – must now grapple with extreme heat, erratic weather and growing seasons, flooding, drought, wildfire smoke, pests, pesticides, and diseases that threaten the health of workers, livestock, and crops (Pagán-Santana et al., 2023, Schattman et al., 2016). Yet the work of growing the food and tending the land must go on. To adapt and cope, farm workers employ their full array of cultural and generational wisdom, ingenuity, flexibility, social capital, and determination as farming conditions become less predictable and move outside of historic trends. The rest of us should be paying closer attention because our next meal depends on their success.

As an audience member at the musical, Indra also specifically identified class, race, and age as important boundaries of identity that shaped interpersonal dynamics both onstage and in the real world. In thinking about the relationship between those boundaries and the role of art and artists in real-world social change movements, Indra said:

"I've never really been to a play before in an actual theater, and seeing all the people who are here tonight; they're all mostly elderly or older white people. And that is who art is really for, right? And that's Orpheus' song. You can sit and write all day long because you don't have to think about feeding your family. You're up in your penthouse."

Again, power and privilege are at play. Indra's insight mirrors themes and character dynamics presented in the performance, where art could be viewed as a frivolous luxury on one hand, or a powerful tool to inspire collective action on the other. Orpheus is Greek mythology's archetypal penniless poet; however several participants also drew attention to the gender dynamics in his relationship with Eurydice, suggesting that women may not be able to afford to rely on art to bring about change and that her pragmatic priorities were likely the result of lessons learned the hard way. Eurydice appreciated that Orpheus saw the world as it could be, but she saw it as it was. Class, race, age, and gender all play an intersecting role in a person's ability to exercise choice and agency in how (or if) they pursue collective action and solidarity (hooks, 2000, 2012).

In addition to these ethical dimensions of who can afford to pursue art as a tool for social change, Indra also identified questions about the source, directionality, and authenticity of ideas that are conveyed through the art. Asking "for whom," "by whom," and "with whom" are important practices when thinking about the effectiveness of art as a tool to pursue justice, liberation, and solidarity (Harding, 1991, Philip et al, 2018):

"I feel like my question, when you were saying that, was how can Orpheus make a song that was collectivizing people when he isn't experiencing it? I feel like the art that really makes a difference in the movement comes from within the movement."

Power and privilege combine to produce positionality (Holmes, 2020). Can "we" really understand one another's struggles and stand in solidarity across our differences and power relations? The question is about an obligation to honor and respect our uniqueness and differences, while also recognizing communal obligations to the people and other living beings with whom we are in relation (Liboiron, 2021). Indra was able to hold a tension between healthy skepticism and healthy optimism when thinking about broader audiences engaging with Hadestown:

> *"I hope the art that reaches privileged audiences does inspire change, though I also feel the residual 'stuckness' of cyclical, harmful patterns in our society. I feel hopeful for art that breaks cycles, for actions and movements that feel truly revolutionary, in big and small ways. Even when changing the culture gradually over time. Art is important and even more so when marginalized people are given the time, resources, and opportunity to make/enjoy art."*

Class dynamics, wealth, and scarcity are primary themes of the play (Amorín Triana, 2022). In Hadestown, a city made rich by industry and extraction, some people find jobs building a wall meant to protect the "haves" from the "have nots." Fears of outsiders who "want what they have got," as well as a fear of what fates might await them on the other side of the wall, traps Gods, humans, and all of nature in a Sisyphean loop. Social change movements, both real and imagined, rely on solidarities and coalitions that show what is possible when we stand together (Shield et al., 2020). Art has the power to show us the way.

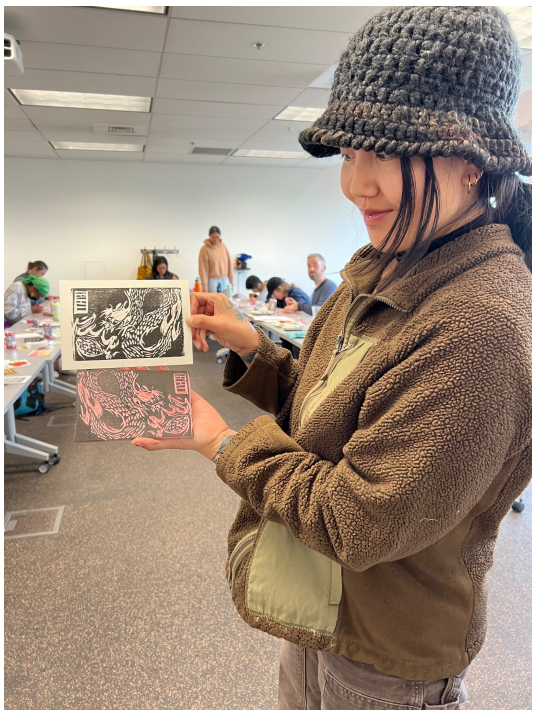
Looking Across the Participants: to Whom Do We Pay Attention, and How?

Indra's guidance about centering those who are most marginalized relates to lessons shared in the linocuts made by people who work in health (Amy, Jessi, and Randy). All three of these participants focused their artworks on ways to understand, to pay attention, and to provide care to individuals and communities whose health and wellbeing are under threat. Each of them challenges norms within their communities of practice that frame the scope, scale, and reach of problems or solutions to include people and issues that might otherwise be seen as unrelated, disconnected, and therefore disregarded.

The folks who work for justice in education (Laurel, Lily, and Kelsie) remind us to look across generational boundaries to pay attention to the wisdom of youth and elders, and to look across cultural boundaries related to race, Indigeneity, and nationality. This challenges norms within their community of practice around which knowledges matter within the landscape of practice, whose perspectives might contribute to solving problems, who gets to talk, and who gets to listen. The differences of power and positionality that Indra identified can also exist along the boundaries mentioned by Laurel, Lily, and Kelsie.

Collectively, the group sees value in thinking more broadly about community, in order to give respect, priority, and caring attention to relationships that might otherwise get little to no attention. When working toward justice and liberation within their community of practice, they see both a need and a benefit to recognizing the connections between themselves and the people facing disproportionate risk and harm from social and environmental justice issues. In their minds, fulfilling their role should include a broader and also more nuanced consideration of inclusion within the landscape of practice. Their lived examples provide lessons and lenses to inform how the collective "us" might do that.

Embrace the Good Fire That Some Seeds Need to Grow



At the linocut printmaking workshop [Gathering 2], a teaching artist, Eileen Jimenez, shared examples of their work, presented about their process, and led the participants in carving linocut prints that highlighted ideas, concepts, practices, and values related to justice and liberation. When articulating the focus of their linocut print, Indra drew upon their knowledge of human-land relations and land care practices as a context and lens through which they enact and embody social justice and climate justice (Liu & Russel, 2022). Indra's art conveyed aspects of their worldview as a queer Asian farmer/land tender who grows food and preserves heritage seedstock:

> *"I'm interested in land, food, healing, and queer/critical ecology, and I'm passionate about embodied QTBIPOC experiences in the natural world. I'm interested in Indigenous and diasporic seed sovereignty, the forever question of growing ancestral foods as settlers on Indigenous lands, and how we can find healing in that with honor*

and respect to the lands. I'm interested in making nature and growing food education more accessible to marginalized folks."

Interestingly, despite reporting limited exposure to printmaking when they were a student in middle school, Indra intuitively engaged with a long history of people, places, stories, and purposes as they became a participant in the printmaking community of practice. The teaching artist is from Mexico, where printmaking has historically and contemporarily been used to alert and collectivize people within struggles related to farming, class, sovereignty, and social/political change (McDonald, 2016). Printmaking has also been used across the world, including throughout Asia, to depict, explore, and preserve aspects of cultural heritage and identity (Chowdhury, 2023). Finally, printmaking has been used by queer and trans people to create our beauty, share our knowledge, build our community, tell our stories, communicate our perspectives, and make ourselves and our surroundings physically into the world (Black, 2021). [I use "our" here because queerness is a place where I find a collective "us" with Indra.]

To communicate their reaction and response to the prompt, Indra's print visually articulates a lesson that while fire might be known as a destructive force by some, many know it as a necessary force for growth, healing, health, and liberation:

"I made my linocut print based on two concepts-- the Year of the Dragon that we recently entered into in 2024; and the concept of pyrophytic seeds/plants, or seeds that can only grow in response to fire, like the lodgepole pine, whose seeds are only released when forest fires melt the resin encapsulating the seed, releasing them into the soil where they will germinate. I based my artwork around the concept that 'some seeds need good fire to grow,' also alluding to the Indigenous principle of good fire, or

controlled burns, a practice that native peoples have used for time immemorial to maintain forest health. My artwork depicts a dragon (representing this year) blowing its fiery breath onto a pinecone, to release its seeds and germinate hopefully a new era of liberation."

What is good? What makes it so? Who gets to say? These are practical questions of positionality explored earlier in this paper, as well as existential questions about our individual and collective ways of knowing, how we relate to other people, and how we relate to the rest of the natural world (McDaid Berry et al., 2023). Peoples' relationships with fire, and "good fire" in Indra's case, demonstrates different ways of seeing and being in the world. It focuses our attention on ways that power and privilege shape perspectives at social, cultural, and political boundaries when confronting injustice:

"The seed represents humanity, in a sense, and the Year of the Dragon is lighting a fire in our fight for liberation, as we rise to the occasion of calling for the liberation of all peoples, stirred by the ongoing genocide in Gaza. The genocide has awakened so many to the reality of our corrupt power structures and brought forth the resonating call of 'we are not free until all of us are free' -- inspiring all of us to imagine burning down these structures of evil to activate new seeds, seeding a better world for us all to be free. I like my piece for the way the dragon flows, its face both intimidating and all-knowing -- the dragon is not one entity, but the dragon is us all."

The concept of "(re)birth through fire" is a powerful image that transcends boundaries of time and culture, and that carries relevance across landscapes of practice. The lesson it offers expresses a unified relationship between opposing forces like creation and destruction, life and death. When

prompted to interpret their linocut print, Indra shared ways that ongoing events — specifically the genocide in Gaza — have shaped and clarified their perspectives, values, and practices as someone who sees relationships and oneness within social and environmental justice issues in their work. Indra drew upon their own interests, identities, and experiences to articulate a viewpoint and a message. Centering fire as a literal and metaphorical force for change, they created an image that issued a call for collective thinking and action and depicted painful tensions and liberatory potentials for learning at boundaries (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015).

Looking Across Participants: Embracing Change and Good Fire

Indra's linocut print draws upon the wisdom of nature, land care practitioners, and Indigenous communities to illustrate how the relationship between fire and seeds demonstrates the literal and metaphorical potential for change, renewal, and growth through struggle. This connects with Jam's lesson—grow through conflict—about how we might strive to view change, like conflict, as an opportunity. This is easier said than done, though. Luckily, Amy's explanation of the ways that "palliative care is queer" provides some guidance to put this into practice by suggesting that an open-minded, nonjudgmental, and understanding community can be a powerful tool for people who are experiencing pain, uncertainty, loss, and difference. Kelsie provides a mantra — "Youth Know" — that can act as an antidote to doubt. It reminds us that young people are a source of new ways to envision a liberated world and future by confronting the injustices of climate change, capitalism, settler colonialism, racism, extraction, and violence.

Art Can Support Listening, Learning, Sharing, and Solidarity

This case study highlighted two gatherings where art was used to elicit reflection and discussion among a diverse group of people who work for justice across a landscape of practices and a range of

identities, perspectives, and communities (Jurow et al., 2016). In both cases, the learning environments were designed to provide a shared artistic experience through which participants could react, draw inspiration, and make meaning. Artworks and prompts promoted dialogue and the exchange of ideas around a collective endeavor -- identifying *lessons that matter* when it comes to climate justice education. Indra shared these thoughts when prompted to reflect on their experience at the second gathering:

> *I think hearing from Eileen Jimenez as she introduced her art and body of work was especially inspiring-- knowing that she finds solace and grounding in creating these beautiful prints, sharing the skill with her students and us, and using her art to spread messages of liberation, freedom, and justice wherever you see it. She inspired us all to think about how art can make the fight for liberation beautiful, creative, and exciting.*
>
> *I think this workshop made me realize that making art can be for the self and for the collective. Making the prints felt very therapeutic-- to think of a concept, design a piece around it, and physically, somewhat painstakingly carve that art onto a linoleum panel, it felt very intentional and reflective. Even the process of thinking about what I wanted to make, helped me tap into a part of my brain that I hardly ever access anymore-- the creative desire within me to make a piece of work that says or represents something.*
>
> *The elements of the gathering that felt collective were all of us celebrating each other's work, "ooh-ing" and "ahh-ing" at how the prints were coming out, and all of us trading prints with each other-- Jam & I have copies of everyone's prints hung up on*

our fridge now, and it fills us with joy and reminders of our collective every time we look at them.

It's really, really hard to have hard conversations with people doing this work. It can be easier to shut people out who don't agree with us, and I'm still having trouble opening my heart to folks that do not stand for liberation the same way we do. I feel grateful to be surrounded by people whose hearts and values echo mine, and I'd love to have more conversations about growing through conflict, and that metaphorical good fire, burning down what no longer serves us, releasing the seeds of what will grow new understandings, new ways of viewing the world, ways that will better serve the collective us... I think this gathering, and others like it, remind me of the power of a group of people working together to hear and see each other, inspiring me to really tap in and listen.

In this case study, social learning facilitated knowledge co-creation through reflection, articulation, and interaction with others' stories and ideas that could be incorporated (or not) into their own practices (Laforge & McLachlan, 2018). The linocut prints, talk-back boards, and (transcribed) discussions that participants produced carry stances and meanings, and serve as artifacts of the ephemeral environments that convened a collective "us" (Peppler et al., 2023).

Indra's testimony provides insight about what makes art engagements — both interpretation and creation — a powerful strategy to support learning at boundaries, "to really tap in and listen." Art can engage beauty, creativity, excitement, and joy to make justice and liberation feel good (brown, 2019). Art can be therapeutic and help us deal with trauma and process grief (Doerries, 2017). Art can allow us to think and problem-solve in new ways by encouraging us to explore, make meaning, and

critique (Mejias et al., 2021). Art can help us to clarify and communicate how we view the world, both as it is and as it could be (Mitchell, 2020). Finally, art can connect us as participants in a broader collective community of people working to build a more just and liberated world (Serafini, 2022).

Looking Across Participants: How to Listen and Learn for Solidarity

In her final reflections, Indra shares ways that art can help people overcome challenges at boundaries within the climate justice landscape of practices. [Thanks, Indra!] The linocuts from Eth, Lily, Virb, and Taiji provide guidance that complements this idea. Eth offers advice to find or create community by supporting people as they are, through skill-sharing and being present with one another. This means making sure their physical needs are met, and that they feel both seen and heard. Lily explains that this sort of listening takes time. It requires the listener to check their own perspectives, assumptions, interpretations, and goals. As a birder, Virb adds that our collective place in nature is a good starting place to reconnect communities and find common ground. Finally, Taiji offers the reminder that sometimes our binary differences are built on illusions, that we exist both as individuals and as part of the collective, and that there is power in knowing when to view yourself as one, both, either, or neither of those things. All of these are lessons and strategies that can help us think and act for justice and liberation in solidarity with one another.

Conclusion

This research paper illustrates an experiment in using arts-based pedagogies to support social and transformational learning among a group of people who work for justice in farming, health, education, and activism. Together, they represent many roles and communities across a climate justice landscape of practices. It demonstrates how making and viewing art as a collective can support people to articulate and exchange aspects of their knowledge, values, and perspectives by engaging in

reflection on the self, the other, and the collective. The experiment provides climate justice educators with examples to inspire new ways to design programs, activities, and experiences to support community and solidarity at boundaries.

Artworks, artforms, and partners were selected to have the "right fit" to leave space for people's diverse interests, experiences, perspectives, and entry points. Hadestown was chosen because it provided many opportunities to identify connections between real and fictional justice issues, and the role of collective action in how we will or won't reach liberation. Linocut drew upon a deep-rooted set of histories and practices in movements for social change through creative expression. Partnerships with arts professionals at a community-based art organization and community college provided critical insight and experience to support the author in understanding nuances within the artist and arts-education community of practice and were their own meta-level sites of learning at boundaries.

The physical and social design of the learning environment considered how to support people, both as individuals and as a collective, by prioritizing philosophies of respect, care, responsibility, and trust. Prompts were deliberately open ended so that everyone could contribute but focused and held together by common themes and threads. The diversity of participants' expertise and perspectives provided energizing opportunities to encounter sameness and difference. There was a recognition that everyone brought critical knowledge that would be beneficial to the group in our collective effort to identify lessons that we might center in climate justice education.

Finally, food, music, a relaxed pace, and an informal vibe all helped to make the room feel like a safe and comfortable place to engage. The fact that the participants all knew me and represented different parts of my life in Seattle helped to built trust and added a sense of "realness" to the effort. The participants knew I cared about the question and invited them to participate because I needed their help to answer it. Engaging with the words and artworks of the participants will hopefully inspire

readers of this paper to try their own version of this experiment by bringing their own community together to see what is possible when we work together.

Implications

When designing social and transformational learning experiences, I am inspired by civil rights organizers, like James Baldwin, who drew connections between education and liberation:

> *The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it — at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change.* (Baldwin, 2008).

In his *Talk to Teachers*, Baldwin outlines a contrast between how Americans talk about the ideals of the nation as compared to their observable actions toward Black Americans. This dissonance causes Black children to suffer a sort of schizophrenia as they grow and make sense of what they are told about themselves versus what they know to be true. A duty of educators, in Baldwin's view, is to support students by modeling the knowledge, fortitude, and drive to uproot the sorts of lies and injustices that systems of oppression are built and reliant upon. He notes that society will rarely support, reward, or grant permission for truly disruptive teaching and learning. Nonetheless, if we are to maintain our humanity as individuals and realize our values and righteousness as a nation, we should feel compelled to honor those responsibilities as teachers.

With this logic, Baldwin might argue that climate educators have an obligation to move beyond designing apolitical or anodyne lessons limited to the mechanical processes of greenhouse gas emissions. They must also take up work that tangibly addresses societal failures and inconsistencies. In his view, meaningful education should pursue the aims of a just and democratic society, which requires a focus on social and environmental justice in the lives of poor and marginalized people. The liberation

of Black Americans, and all beings across the globe, is entangled with how society chooses to respond to climate change. To remain impartial or silent on issues of injustice is to stand in the way of liberation. Climate educators must make choices about if and how they teach for societal transformation.

In the design of this project, I also drew inspiration from the activist educators in the Mississippi Freedom Schools to envision what teaching and learning about liberation could look like in theory and in practice. Discussion, for instance, was an important Freedom School methodology that disrupted authoritarian educational practices, crossed boundaries, and drew directly from the lives and communities of participants to achieve transformative change (Chilcoat & Ligon, 2001). Freedom was not simply a theoretical idea or value to guide their work, but rather a pragmatic demand that could be actualized in the here and now through civic participation skills. Freedom School educators, many of whom were volunteers with little teaching experience, recognized that racial injustices demanded their immediate attention and involvement. From this obligation, they mustered the creativity, courage, and determination to act despite significant barriers, uncertainty, and risk. Given the urgency of climate justice issues and our failure to act on timelines that matter, climate educators might take lessons from their bravery, conviction, and faith. The Freedom Schools offered "an education that public schools would not supply" (Perlstein, 1990) by facilitating learning that served as a tool for Black peoples' liberation. Climate justice demands the same of all of us.

The gatherings represent so much of what I'm curious about, what I believe in, what I could never do alone, and what I want the world to be. I didn't want the experiment to be *about liberation,* which leaves it up to chance whether it will happen, but rather I wanted it to *be liberatory*. I wanted to provide an example to show that we can design spaces for a collective "us" across a landscape of practices. I wanted it to demonstrate how viewing, making, and discussing art together can change how we see, understand, and work for justice with one another. This focus on actualization of justice and

liberation guided me throughout the process of dreaming, designing, implementing, and reflecting upon the gatherings. In doing so, I drew upon the perspectives, practices, values, and generosity of people working across different communities of practice to (reciprocally, I hope) enrich my thinking and doing. From this experience, I offer these implications:

- I hope that people working in many roles and disciplines across the climate justice landscape of practice feel seen, affirmed, and valued in their perspectives.
- I hope that this piece of research provides people who straddle, blur, bridge, or transcend boundaries with an experimental example of how to do work that meets the moment and represents the world as it could be.
- I hope that practitioners reading this paper become more curious about the power to think like a researcher, and that researchers reading this paper become more curious about the power of thinking like a practitioner.
- I hope that this research inspires climate justice educators, and others, to leverage their creativity, relations, spirit, and sense of purpose to organize their community(s).
- I hope the family, friends, mentors, and peers who supported and shaped me and my way of seeing and being in the world are proud.
- Finally, I hope that the people who read this paper feel moved to work collectively for justice, solidarity, and the dignity and wellbeing of others.

Gather your community and do your part to contribute. Together, we can do it!

Onward, in solidarity.

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