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## *Intersectionality and Solidarity in Curriculum-Making Theatre Encounters with Marginalized Youth Researcher-Artists*

*Rachel Rhoades*

*Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. University of Toronto*

### **Abstract:**

In this article, drawn from my doctoral study, I argue that applied theatre encounters can serve as methods of Deweyian social inquiry and as curriculum-making events that illuminate how youths perceive their roles in social resistance and that offer them an opportunity to serve as artists, researchers, activists and public pedagogues. I situate the study in the field of curriculum studies by placing the research project itself in relation to a William Doll's 4Rs model of curriculum principles: *Richness, Recursion, Relations* and *Rigor*. I posit that the research-based applied theatre practice of ethnodrama can potentially serve as an educational space wherein marginalized youths can integrate qualitative research and experiential knowledge as facilitators of a more just society. The 12 racialized, socioeconomically under-resourced youth participants in Toronto focused on intersectionality and solidarity in their ethnodrama action project. I explore the pedagogical, political and artistic choices these youths made in the process of both devising and presenting their original theatrical piece.

**Keywords:** drama research; urban youth; solidarity; applied theatre; public pedagogy

In this article, I illustrate the intimate relationship that exists between my doctoral research study, *Confronting Racism and Neoliberalism through Collaborative Ethnodrama Action Research: Youth Artists for Justice*, and the field of curriculum studies by placing the research project itself in relation to a model of curriculum principles, “the 4 R’s: *Richness, Recursion, Relations and Rigor*” designed by William Doll (2009, p. 267). Since 1972, Doll has advocated for a resurgence of a Deweyian model of education, which stands in contrast to Tyler’s (1950) influential rationale of behavioural objectives and measurable outcomes predetermined by teachers and administrators. John Dewey (1916/1966) promoted a democratic pedagogy of inquiry wherein teachers derive curriculum goals based on the ever-accumulating experiential knowledge of the students, with an overarching aim to connect student learning to the issues of society at large. In my doctoral study, I take up Dewey’s (1927/1954) call for “social inquiry” as an educational pedagogy and as a research methodology, and I further frame the project by drawing on relevant curriculum studies scholarship.

I conclude by proposing that applied theatre encounters serve as methods of social inquiry and as curriculum-making events. Prentki and Preston (2009) define applied theatre as theatre created for, with and/or by communities, with the purpose of improving social conditions through emancipatory and active engagement. These goals in the world of drama parallel those of Dewey in his advocacy for social inquiry in curriculum. In the case of my research, applied theatre encounters as curriculum-making events occur twice in the project. This encounter first takes place between practitioner-researcher and youth participants in the process of devising, or collectively creating, a research-based performance piece. Prendergast and Saxton define devising as “a dramatic process . . . with a product in mind . . . [that] is very demanding work, asking participants to wear many hats as actors, directors, designers and playwrights” (2013, p. 139). The second encounter as curriculum-making occurs between the audience and the youth, who serve as popular educators through the act of performance.

### **Research Context**

My doctoral research examines how a group of racialized, socioeconomically under-resourced youths in Toronto perceive themselves in relation to social resistance and political participation in the context of enduring neoliberalism and racism. As I will describe below, these two forces have come to impede nearly every aspect of their present and future lives. These omnipresent ideologies have material impacts in contemporary society with unique historical roots and a common destructive effect on many socioeconomically under-resourced, racialized (and often creatively resilient and resistant) youths. I am a teaching artist, youth worker and researcher who has spent the last 12 years involved in creating and implementing performing arts programs with marginalized youth in Boston and Toronto. Through my research, I am committed to work in collaboration with youth and communities to counteract structural inequities and their manifestations through projects grounded in social, environmental and economic justice.

In Canada, racism, compounded by (neo)colonialism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia, has taken many forms over time. Examples include its participation in slavery (and present-day mass ignorance of that fact), to its imprisonment of Tamil asylum-seekers in 2010 by way of Bill C-49, to the ongoing government's paltry allocation of resources for healthcare and other basic needs within First Nations communities, and to violent stereotypes associating Somali-Canadian immigrant youth with global terrorist groups (Austin, 2010; Berns-McGown, 2013; Blackstock, 2011; Thobani, 2007; Wallace, 2013). Neoliberalism is not only an ideology, but also a calculated enterprise, begun in the 1960s and currently driven by capitalist multi-national actors with increasing influence over the systems and structures by which global societies operate (Harvey, 2006). Socioeconomically under-resourced, racialized youth in Toronto are disproportionately impacted by neoliberal policies that produce austerity measures that reduce funding for public services and lead to the privatisation of others and deregulation of markets, which exacerbate a rise in youth unemployment and precarious work (Anyon, 2005; Butler & Athanasiou, 2013; Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Gallagher, 2007; Hall, 2011; Saltman & Gabbard, 2003).

The combined effects of racism and neoliberalism manifest in many of these youths' lives through such conditions as dwindling government resources and support, poverty, hyper-surveillance, and the threat of criminal punishment (Gallagher & Lortie, 2005; Parekh et al, 2011; Sattler, 2012; Zoric, 2014). As verified by many of the youths in the study, socioeconomically under-resourced, racialized youth in Toronto are known to be profiled and harassed by police on a daily basis (Eizadirad, 2016). Toronto-based youth studies scholar Jennifer Fisher described the 2008-2017 School Resource Officer (SRO) program that placed police officers in select schools as structures that "turned pedagogical spaces into hostile zones of conflict" (2011, p. 402). Critical pedagogy scholar Henry Giroux (2013) offers the provocative metaphor of a "War on Youth" to describe how neoliberalism serves as a destructive force that targets mainly poor, racialized young people, trapping them in a "youth-control-criminal-complex" that reaches into school and communities and drains funding for vital service programs (Giroux, cited in Pollard, 2014, pp. 180-181). The neoliberal emphasis on individualism and meritocracy within educational rhetoric also increases a sense of social isolation and fear of precarious futures for these youths (Orfield & Kornhaber, 2001).

This drama-based action research project involved a youth-adult partnership wherein I served as the lead teaching artist-researcher who respects, draws from, and contributes to, the consciousness of youth as a means to create new artistic, pedagogical and research methods that may call upon new imaginaries for the world. Inspiration for this research comes in part from scholar-theatre practitioner Jonathan Neelands' (2007) call for the reinvigoration of applied theatre as a place where marginalized peoples experience democratic participation both through the nature of theatre-making in ensemble and by publicly challenging power inequalities.

### **Youth Artists for Justice**

The drama-based action research project took place at a downtown Toronto not-for-profit performing arts centre over the course of 15 weeks. The 12 youths in the study range from age 15 to

20. At the time of the research project, they all attended the Toronto public school system. The demographics of the youth participants reflect the composition of Toronto, which identifies itself as “one of the most ethnically diverse cities world-wide” (Toronto District School Board [TDSB], 2013). 36% of secondary school-age TDSB students were born outside of Canada and 67% of all students are from immigrant families (TDSB, 2013).

In the first week of the Youth Artists for Justice program, I introduced the youth participants to social movement theories and concepts from Black feminist studies, as well as provided examples of movements that integrate(d) the arts and youth leadership, such as the work of Black Lives Matter Toronto, the work of Indigenous youth musicians Earth Guardians, and the community initiatives developed through drama at the Prerna girls' school in Lucknow, India. Youth participants chose a research topic based on the question, “What do you wish you had more influence over in society?” The youths in Toronto decided to focus their collaborative action research ethnodrama project on intersectionality and solidarity.

The youths divided into three groups and determined the topics of their scenes based on personal experience and on their desires to educate themselves more deeply on issues outside of their knowledge base. Based on interviews with community members and self-initiated research into the topic of choice, each group developed two scenes that, with two additional group poems and an individual spoken word piece, encompassed their final 50-minute performance. In sum, the collaborative action research project was composed of a qualitative investigation of a topic, a collectively devised drama, a research-informed theatre performance, and engagement with an audience of educators and family, all anchored in a desire to serve as popular educator-activists through drama. I designed this research with the hope that, through participation, youths may have the opportunity to enact the roles they envision as political participants and agents of resistance.

### **Visualizing Doll's Four Rs in the Youth Artists for Justice Study**

I will relate each of Doll's curriculum principles to the multiple components of my doctoral study: the youths' primary role (researcher; artist; educator) in a given stage of research (conceptual framing; data collection and analysis; presenting research), and the corresponding applied theatre practice (improvisation and play; creative devising; performance and audience engagement).

#### **Richness: Intersectionality as Conceptual Framework**

*Richness* is the first of Doll's four curriculum principles inspired by Dewey's pedagogy. Doll defines richness as “curriculum's depth, [its] layers of meaning, [its] multiple possibilities or interpretations” (Doll, 1993, cited in Flinders & Thornton, 2009, p. 268). On a theoretical level, Doll's emphasis on multiplicity is also emulated in the work of Black feminist scholars, which demands that activists, educators, researchers and academics value the specific and multiple positionalities that people bring to the everyday, to educational endeavors, and to larger movements of resistance (Crenshaw, 1993). Doll's phrasing of the richness principle also calls to mind education scholar Maxine Green's conviction that “curriculum [is] an undertaking involving continuous interpretation

and a constant search for meanings" (1995, p. 96). Taken in my educational research context, richness relates to the conceptual framing within Black feminist scholarship and the data collection stage with its simultaneous activity of traditional qualitative interviews and dramatic play.

As an educator rooted in critical pedagogy, I see my role as sharing counter-hegemonic knowledges and histories that many youths may not otherwise access in traditional educational settings. I also believe deeply in the ability of youth to understand, engage with, and develop vital new ideas through studying social theory. In the case of this study, I chose to expose them to a variety of anti-authoritarian, pre-figurative, political and anti-racist concepts derived by scholars based on interviews and direct experience in social movements (Dixon, 2014). In the initial conversations about choosing the topics for the ethnodrama project, the youths returned to the slides they had seen on Black feminist theory, attracted to those scholar-activists' attention to experiential wisdom, emotional dynamism, and strength within struggle. The central concept that they decided upon as the grounding for their ethnodrama was *intersectionality*, a construct officially introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1993) in her work on critical legal studies, in which she called for urgent attention to the violences experienced specifically by Black women. Grounding our ethnodramatic practice in Black feminist thought helped the youths and me to analyze the experiences of—and relationships between—oppression, resistance and agency, particularly as the youth participants negotiated their multiple identities.

In addition, over the course of the program, they collectively recognized the need for *solidarity* across groups in order to achieve overarching liberation, which was a strategy and principle initially introduced to them in a slide about Audre Lorde. She also advocated for building networks of solidarity in her statement, "our future survival is predicated upon our ability to . . . devise ways to use each others' difference to enrich our visions and our joint struggles" (Lorde, 1984/2007, p. 122). In one scene in the play, a non-Indigenous grassroots environmental justice activist confronts the chief executive office (CEO) of a corporation extracting resources on Indigenous land. The activist #TreeHugger confronts him, saying, "First of all, Scallop Oil ignores the Indigenous treaties and claims the land as their own, threatening to shoot rubber bullets and water cannons at anyone who tries to get in their way." The activist demands that the CEO take responsibility not only for the ecological devastation but also for his contribution to the ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples by creating toxic conditions on their lands.

The data collection process in this research began once the youths chose to root their ethnodrama on the realities and complexities of intersectionality and solidarity, rather than on one particular social issue. The youths identified and interviewed community members with personal experiences dealing with various manifestations of oppression. In parallel to this data collection, youths engaged in a recursive process of improvisation, dialogue and writing, with their incoming interview data in mind. We turn now to recursion, a principle embodied by the cyclical process of reflection on, and analysis of, the data, and by artistic devising.

## Recursion: Praxis through Improvisation and Devising

In Doll's 4 R's piece, *recursion* is defined as the "human capacity of having thoughts loop back on themselves . . . the way we make meaning," which is a process he claims "lies at the heart of a transformative curriculum" (1993, p. 269). Doll (1993) relates recursion to "the Dewey model" in its commitment to cyclical learning based in part on Dewey's stated goal that education "make one experience freely available in other experiences" (1916/1966, p. 39). Paulo Freire's (1970/2000) concept of *praxis* reflects this curriculum principle of recursion, whereby a body of learners construct, question and enact knowledge in an ongoing cycle of dialogue, action and reflection "in order to transform [the world]" (p. 51). The envisioning of alternative social realities developed through the generative process of praxis may also be expanded upon in the critical process of artistic production, which Albert Camus describes as a "perpetually renewed wrenching apart" in his revolutionary essay, *Create Dangerously* (1960/1995, p. 264).

In this stage, the youths took up the primary role of artists in the process of devising, or collectively creating, an applied theatre piece that would serve to educate their audience on intersectionality and solidarity. The devising process can provide a space to "wrench apart" the data and to experiment with and enact alternatives. Wizard Barry,<sup>1</sup> an 18-year-old female youth participant who had moved from Russia to Toronto a few years ago, remarked on the endlessly recursive nature of the playwriting process in a post-show discussion with the audience on May 24, 2017:

Everyone was so talented. . . . And to show how hard it was, some of the groups' script, they kept it changing every time. Even today, it was the first time I was hearing some stuff. You guys are so good.

The youths were committed to depicting the most nuanced portrayal of current conditions and the complex process of building towards a more just society. They engaged frequently in their own discussions and writing sessions outside of the collective program hours. The youths devised a performance piece by using data from their various interviews, their personal experiences in marginalized groups and as agents of resistance, and other forms of research (e.g., alternative news media and periodical searches). The playful experimentation with ideas from the data transitioned into a process whereby each of three groups created two scenes that were presented as a cycle, with the first set of three scenes ending on a climactic note, and the second scene beginning from that same apex of conflict.

The youths devised their characters and scenes through a recursive process of improvisation where the youths portrayed roles from their emerging scenes in various combinations, allowing each interaction to illuminate new layers and complexities that they would then develop in the writing process. The improvisational play offered moments of emotional nuance, dramatic intensity and sociological discovery that they then wove into the text of their scenes. The drama exercises, based

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<sup>1</sup> All of the names of the youths in this research are pseudonyms, chosen by themselves.

on research data and experiential knowledge, served as a platform to uncover how structures of power and forms of resistance manifest in the world, thus offering the youths opportunities to devise a performance that showed a multiplicity of relational and systemic dynamics.

The recursive process of research, improvisation, dialogue, writing, improvisation, dialogue, writing, and eventually rehearsing and performing, emulated the Deweyian (1934/2005) pedagogy of artistic experiential learning and engagement in social inquiry. In drama educator and scholar Cecily O'Neill's words, students engaged in interactive drama activities may "[become] more knowing participant[s] in the social dialogue which constitutes all discourse" (1989, p. 528). For example, in one improvisation, a youth playing an Indigenous professor from one scene group meets another youth playing the above-mentioned oil corporation CEO from another scene group. The youths in the audience noted how the gendered nature of the CEO's denigrating attitude towards the professor's attempted engagement with him stood out most prominently. They reflected on how the element of power and domination in one aspect of life, such as in one's career and over the land, could potentially manifest in one's personal relationships as well. The scene group, which once focused mainly on climate justice, ended up in the final performance as a piece also about spousal abuse and the CEO's wife's struggle to escape from the relationship.

The development of the final powerful group poem, *Don't Look at Me, Dear Creature*, also resulted from a recursive approach. The author, 17-year-old Alex, a first generation immigrant from a Bangladeshi family, had never attempted writing poetry prior to the Youth Artists for Justice program. I offered poetry as one of many forms they could utilize while reflecting on the dialogue and improvisation we had engaged in over the earlier two hours of the session. A few days later, I received an ecstatic email from Alex, which included what became the final group poem. He communicated to me that he had not been able to stop thinking about our discussions and drama exercises, that he had to write something to reflect all of his whirling thoughts. In the poem, he integrated the issues that other youths had shared that affected them deeply, such as—

"What do I know about belonging?  
 You see the 'towel' that wraps my head  
 You view me as someone dangerous"  
  
 "You hear the strange language coming out of my mouth  
 You tell me to go back to my country"  
  
 "You tell me I am not pretty enough  
 But if I look too pretty you tell me I 'ask for it'"



Figure 1. A photo of participants of Youth Artists for Justice program, used with permission by photographer (the author) and participants.

Alex ended the piece in a tone of solidarity with voices coming together, shouting down the "Dear Creature", the one empowered by privilege to show scorn for marginalized peoples. His imaginative ideas had, in Doll's words, "looped back on themselves" (1993, p. 269) through the Freirian praxis of dialogue, action and reflection, intentionally woven into the pedagogy of discussion, improvisation and creative personal reflection.

### **Relations: Performance as a Call for Solidarity**

Performance in this study was a site for *relations*, for a public relational pedagogy that invited others into the imaginative sphere of critical and dialogic re-envisioning of the world as we experience it with all our differences and our common hopes. In this research, curriculum occurred in the performance encounter between youth artist-educators and their audience, which in this case was made up primarily of educators and family members. In preparing for the audience encounter, the youths engaged with questions such as these: "What social relations do we want to produce with the audience, and what social relations do we want to promote for the future, through our cultural production?" and "What aesthetic, dramatic and pedagogical choices can we make that will help us to embody those relations?" I frame the youths as public pedagogues who served as educator-artist-activists in revealing to their audience their impressions, demands and hopes for the future relations that may help facilitate a more equitable world. Their performance illustrated a process by which people can potentially transform their relational perceptions and move forward in acting upon those to engage in solidarity.

In writing about public pedagogy, Gaztambide-Fernández and Arraíz Matute (2014) posit a definition that "takes its focus as the question of how to intentionally enter into relations premised on the ethical imperative of the encounter" (p. 52). The "ethical imperative of the encounter" is twofold in this case: first, there is the immediate relevance and importance of the issue at the heart of the ethnodrama; and, second, there is a general need for youth cultural production as resistance

to gain attention, respect and value. Dante, an 18-year-old, Jewish, intersectional feminist female, answered this question in her appeals to the adults in the audience to shift their attitudes towards the youths' intellectual and political contributions in a post-show discussion on June 4, 2017:

I think a great thing about this piece is it's a bunch of youth expressing their ideas for the future and what they have to say and although, the youth of our time aren't particularly listened to, or our opinions aren't particularly valued, I think what this piece is trying to show is that we have valuable things to say and very valuable things to contribute to the general discourse, and I just hope that's an idea that the audience takes with them.

Dante's comments echo the messaging of many recent global youth-led struggles for justice, which embody the ethical imperative of "finding or creating spaces where the new meets the old, offering spaces of *encuentro*—encounter and meeting" (Sitrin & Azzellini, 2014, p. 15). The youths, in dialogue with each other throughout the devising process, and in the presentational theatre space, allowed for both peer-to-peer and youth-to-adult, cross-cultural understandings.

Another imperative was to model, through the performance and post-show talkback, how to expand understanding of the experiences of others with different backgrounds, and then to move from recognition to action. Ideally, the intentional mediation of audience involvement in, and reactions to, public performances may nurture what applied theatre scholar Helen Nicholson calls, "joyful theatrical encounters [that] can enable people to re-imagine their emotional, political and embodied experiences" (2014, p. 338). The youths provided examples of transformations in both perspective and societal roles in their scenes, and shared their own personal growth over the course of the program with the audience after the performance. Mike, a 20-year-old who moved from the Caribbean to Toronto in his adolescence, described the social necessity and personal experience of gaining perspective, and the potential for applied theatre to catalyze this process. In response to an audience member's question on June 4, 2017, on how to impact audiences beyond the theatre, Mike explained:

A lot of people aren't sure of each other's perspective on how the world is viewed, whether you're a man or a woman, black, white, old, young, whatever it is. . . . You're living in your moment at any point in your life, and it's very difficult sometimes to get out of your own head and get out of your own world and explore someone else's shoes. . . . So, it's that perspective that gets people to say, "Oh, so this is what you are going through, so that's why you're always afraid." For example, my character, Mike—that's why you're always afraid of police officers. . . . It's because, this is what happened in my past. This is what affected how I view the world. And it's something everyone lives with, whether they want to accept it, or acknowledge it, or not.

Performance in this study is both pedagogical and political, as it encourages making oppressions visible and promoting that progressive change be rooted in honouring marginalized community members as experts and leaders. One scene in particular emulated this principle. The scene involves a Muslim public school principal, a Black Lives Matter community organizer, and an Indigenous rights activist and professor, who came together to decide on the structure and

programming of a community centre based on a grant from the government in honour of "Adanac's" 150th anniversary.<sup>2</sup> Upon exchanging their political perspectives rooted in their identity-based experiences, the three demand from the local government representative that a space accessible to all be created, and that the principal "uses the arts as a foundation and implements programs that touch on all the things that need change." When the public official pushes back that the funders wanted to focus on one issue, the Indigenous professor retorts, "We fought against all the hardships, and we're still sitting here, fighting for our people." The Black community organizer adds, "We all have different needs, and each of them matter." The scene ends with one, two, and then all four characters chanting, "All of us or none of us!"

The youths executed a multidimensional approach to setting the agenda and tone of interaction between all present in a performance space that reflected drama education researcher Kathleen Gallagher's belief that "the distinctive educative force of theatre . . . —its dialectics—invites us to take up points of intersection *and* confrontation" (2003, p. 11). All of the scenes invited the audience to relate while also demanding that they take seriously the issues represented and consider their own roles as complicit and potentially revolutionary. The final piece of the performance, the group poem, ended by repeating the mantra of the community centre scene, "All of us or none of us!" The youths raised their fists to the air, voices full of rage, hope and energy. The chant is one of solidarity, emphasizing how the youths pledge to stand together, and calling on the audience to join in the struggle. In a post-program interview on June 8, 2017, Mariana, a 16-year-old first generation immigrant from a Bangladeshi family, reflected on her experiences of solidarity that developed along with the relationships with others throughout the devising and performance process:

I feel like we were receiving it and also giving it as well. Receiving it from the audience that were watching our performance and realizing the problems that we are depicting in the performance and seeing that it's actually a real thing. And we were giving it to the other group members who were representing their piece as well because they had different issues than us.

Performance and pedagogy are dynamic modalities for relational exchange and they go hand in hand in this research that aimed to bring youth cultural production and political desires to the forefront as a starting point to guide dialogue on creating a more just future.

### **Rigor: Depicting Resistance, Demanding Intervention**

Doll describes the curriculum principle of *rigor* as the "conscious attempt to ferret out assumptions . . . as well as negotiating passages between these assumptions . . . [that] allows for a range of possibilities from which actualizations appear" (2009, p. 273). Performance studies and critical qualitative research scholar Norman Denzin coined the term "critical performance pedagogy" (2009, p. 257) as an insistence that dramatists need to consider ways to invite and provoke audiences to "view performance as intervention, interruption and resistance" (p. 257). The development and presentation of the scenes allowed space to challenge sociopolitical ideologies and to envision forms

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<sup>2</sup> Canada celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary the same year that the performance occurred.

of resistance that demand change. In my research project, the curriculum-making experiences of preparing for and encountering the audience necessitated that the youths “turn spectacle sites into democratic public spheres” that play with and rouse audiences to reflection and, ideally, to action (Denzin, 2009, p. 266).

The critical curriculum encounter between myself as the researcher-practitioner and youth participants included the need to confront our own societal assumptions through the personal articulation of political commitments based on the life experiences of those in the ensemble. As the lead facilitator, I interwove a curriculum introducing critical scholarly concepts into these dialogues so as to offer theoretical validation and form prior to engaging in qualitative research and devising. We decided to privilege the concept of intersectionality as we came to understand and respect the various struggles within the group, and in recognition of the need to illustrate the oppressions and forms of resistance related to those dealing with multiple marginalizations in their identities. We then attempted to embody this intersectional framework in the content of the cultural production and in the form of pedagogical engagement with the audience.

One particular set of scenes dealt with uncovering assumptions and the attempts of youth to implement strategies of resistance in the face of sexist bigotry. The students, particularly the two young women of colour, were righteous and confident in their delivery, with ultimately dissatisfying results from the white middle-class female teacher. Part of the pedagogical intention of the unresolved scene was to force the audience to dwell in discomfort and to rigorously question how they might cope with similar instances of ingrained prejudice in their own lives so as to come up with more effective results than those experienced by the students. The youths attempted, in Doll's words, “negotiating passages between these assumptions” (2009, p. 273), to limited effect. They combined tactics of angry confrontation and empathetic listening in their desire to transform their teacher's patriarchal and paternalistic ideology. Her resulting nonchalance in the final moments as she falls back into her prejudicial habits showed a momentary failure to transform, but also highlighted the need for solidarity from others whom the teacher may better relate to, given her positionality.

In the scene, the teacher, Mrs. Mope, (played by Dante) tries to silence Rose, a recent South Asian immigrant who is experiencing intense pressure and who holds a fiery drive as the first and only person in her family to attend high school. Rose was played by Mariana, a 16-year-old Bengali-Canadian Muslim female. The character of Lily was played by a 16-year-old refugee from Eritrea who moved to Toronto a year prior. Lily is a confident Black Toronto native who tells the audience in her monologue, “Now I see the way Mrs. Mope is treating Rose and it's really pissing me off. I have to stand up for her this time.” Mrs. Mope attempts to shame the two girls for merely participating enthusiastically in the class discussion, calling them “insubordinate.” Mrs. Mope continues trying to degrade them, but the two young women students of colour resist, using their anger to articulate their arguments. The two young women exemplified what Guatemalan musician, poet, and activist against gender-based violence, Sandra Moran articulates, that “our anger is for something, toward something . . . [and] from there we express indignation in solidarity with others as human beings” (cited in Jeffries, 2007, pp. 43-44). The scene showed the validity and strength of their anger and

solidarity while also suggesting that the audience members should consider their own positionalities and the assets they may bring to such situations in helping to facilitate change. The youths devised their performance much in the same way that an educator develops a robust curriculum, integrating all four of Doll's principles, while emphasizing the need for rigorous ongoing learning, reflection and action.

## Conclusion

My research project explored the potential personal impact, pedagogical efficacy and political implications of encountering research-based applied theatre as curriculum. Teaching artists may facilitate youth participation on their own dramatic terms as social actors to collectively implement a pedagogy of resistance that demands attention and may catalyze action from their audience. Unfortunately, we were limited in our capacity to share the performance in community settings and schools, once the youths expressed their desire to do so, due to logistical difficulties in convening the group at the program's end. Also, while I had hoped to engage them in more deliberating and envisioning of ideal futures and more radical theories of/strategies for change, time constraints did not allow for this final stage. Among my most significant learning was the impact between youths across borders on their affective and critical thinking in terms of political realities in their own and others' contexts. I had hoped as well to have more frequent and prolonged collaboration and communication between the youths in Toronto and in Boston, which was the second site for the project. I hope to engage in future studies where I may facilitate relationships between participants across transnational sites that allow them an ongoing exchange of ideas on artistic, political and educative strategies for effecting local and large-scale changes.

This study aimed to nurture youth agency through research-based theatre as an educational and political strategy that privileged counter-hegemonic knowledges, sought to identify and disrupt power dynamics, and mobilized collective agency and efficacy. Above all, this research indicates youth performance as a potential site for a public relational pedagogy of resistance that invites others in the community and within the field of education into the imaginative sphere of critical and dialogic re-envisioning of the world.

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