

Trelani Michelle

Artivism: Connecting Personal Struggle to Social Change

Description: Teaching Artists and fearless youth writers will collaboratively explore the role of introspection as it relates to self-preservation and social change.

Goal: Using mentor texts and personal histories, Block by Block writers will begin drafting a poem that embodies/represents past or present identity-related struggles.

Success Metric: Each student will produce a rough poem of at least 20 lines.

Healing Circle (15 minutes) 4:15 - 4:30 PM

Form a sitting circle and begin discussing the current culture of go-mode and get-out-yo-feelings and how its effects are reflected as a person and as a people. Trelani shares her example of being diagnosed with adjustment disorder as a result of always going but never pausing to process (even if it didn't seem like a big deal for anyone else around you); and how PTSD ain't just for military folk. Opens the floor for anyone else to share.

Now form a standing circle and choose one of the 20 objects (two, if absolutely necessary) that have been placed in the middle of the circle that best represents how you feel.

Get a volunteer to guide us through a 2-3 minute simple stretching exercise. Take 3 deep breaths to close the circle. Now let's write!

Freewriting (15 minutes) 4:30- 4:45 PM

Two options:

1. Write a piece that expresses the connection between how you feel and the object(s) you chose.
2. Switch objects with a partner for a challenge and create similarities between yourself and an object that's seemingly completely different (e.g. Keith give example of his hair and candle)

Students who chose the same object are strongly encouraged to work together.

Reading & Discussion: The Name They Gave Me/Broken English (4:45 - 5:30 PM)

Split the room into two groups with one teaching artist per group. Each group reads "The Name They Gave Me" and begin their own discussions/note-taking for 15 minutes.

Mix up the groups but still forming two groups again (so that different people get to collab). Each group reads "Broken English" and begin their discussions/note-taking for 10 minutes.

Groups come together to collectively discuss the pieces for 20 minutes, using the following prompts:

- How do the pieces differ in form?
- How does prose differ from poetry and why might one choose prose over poetry?
- What purpose does the roman numerals serve in Tasbeeh's piece?
- What did both pieces have in common?
- Have you ever nicknamed yourself for someone else's convenience?
- Unpack this line: "This is a school full of Ashtons and Penelopes, Patricks and Sophias. Beautiful names that belong to beautiful faces. The kind of names that promise a lifetime of social triumph."
- Jamilla stated that the languages she speaks are for home, school, and friends. How would you have labeled each of those "languages" before reading this poem? (e.g. ebonics, street talk, proper English, etc.)
- Jamilla asks who controls articulation. Who do YOU think?
- Do respectability politics help/hurt those who feel subjected to it?
- How might these pieces be related to self-preservation?
- How were these personal identity struggles used to promote social change?
- After reading these pieces, will you think/ behave differently? How so?

10-minute break (TAs check in with students individually)

Personal Writing: I Am, So We Are (30 minutes) 5:40 - 6:10 PM

So far we've discussed introspection as a tool for sorting through our personal feelings. We also discussed texts that explored personal feelings that were also types of identity struggles, along with how those identity struggles promoted social change.

Now we're going to draft our own pieces around personal feelings and/or identity-related struggles. Think along the lines of respectability politics, feeling out of place, wishing to be changed in some kind of way, etc.

Twist! If you typically write poetry, try prose. If you're more accustomed to writing prose/essay pieces, go for poetry. Might help to start off with the prose then revise.

Author Circle: Share Out (10-12 minutes) 6:10 - 6:22PM

Everyone sits in a circle and 4-6 (more/less, time permitting) fearless authors grace the circle with favorite lines or a piece they wrote during the day.