

## Session Title:

- How can deconstructing identity – both how you identify and how others identify you – be used to promote understanding and peace?

## Convener:

- Melanie Schikore Andina and Michael Nwoke

Participants: Keith McCormick, Kim Kon, Alex, Millicent Wisham, Estler King, Margaret Burke, Jamie Klaus, Erica Mott, Jayne Mo

## Why are you here?

- Arlene – concerned about gross/vague signifiers of identity – race. Talked about an artist named Adrian – she is African American but looks “white”. Also, interested in a multiple sense of identity coming out.
- Margaret – people don’t fit in “categories”. What about an African American who is white with red hair?
- Melanie – life experience of immigrant populations, and most recently Mexican migrant workers; what happens when your ‘insides’ don’t match your ‘outsides’ because a different cultural identity resonates more than the one you are born into
- Jamie – “Changing Worlds” Educational organization has exhibit of immigrant refugee stories. Kids don’t seem to identify with these stories.
- Michael has a two year old – when his son comes to the Chicago Cultural Center, he hugs all little ones – no matter what race. He connects on a “pure, innocent level”. Then he grows up... we have all these invisible walls separating us from our “true selves”.
- \_\_\_\_\_: Creating a safe space, loving each other.
- Erica, As an adult we always have a “lack of disclosure of self” – in our places of education, how does the institution’s identity fit in? We don’t usually have that experience of connecting day to day with our “community groups”
- Mallicent – “The more confidence you have, the better identity you have.” Identity is also shaped by our experiences with others.
- Esther: Student SAIC – artwork is about connection, but there is tension with in our community. We worry about who is going to take the jobs.

- Keith McCormick – has done research on creating projects with communities – focused on how early children develop bias – sometimes as young as six months old. But bias is also defined as a way to organize thoughts, your world. Strong sense of self-identity helps you be open to others. It is an intergenerational issue.

When you are in a foreign country, everything seems different from what you know, but after time you begin to see subtleties and similarities.

Yuri Pnoffenbrenner

- Created a physical model of identity
- All human cultures do have some beginnings and endings– birth, death
- Cultural Relativism – what about the boundaries of this idea?
- Example: Female circumcision. It's ok in certain countries, but not seen as culturally acceptable in countries like America.

Reintroduce the question: How is this connected to peace?

Michael works with kids who deal with gang violence and who are frustrated with the question “who are you?”. Identity and behavior are closely related, but we tend to focus on behavior, for example telling people “don't smoke”. What would happen if we focused on identity?

What if self identity and behavior are not connected but in face are disconnected?

Jayne: “seeing a different kind of blackness” works with kids in Englewood – mobile recording studio.

We label other people based on society and environment and are influenced by outside forces. How do we make a strong self identity to battle this?

Paulo Freire –

- The oppressed develop an internalization of the oppressor.
- The oppressor carries a belief that the self is damaged.
- The transformation from being an object of history to being a subject of history.
- Critical questioning – consciousness of awareness groups
  
- Trader and Student interchangeable.

Augusto Baol – Theater of the Oppressed

3<sup>rd</sup> grade ready test – educational system labeling.

Cultural Tourism – Learning about other cultures – but that culture still remains the other missing place. How are the participants connecting to it personally.

Balancing Act – preservice cultures (elder culture) but also one children's changing culture.

- For example: Puerto Rican island cultures , and Puerto Rican Chicago Cultures.

It is a sign of progress that we are having this conversation – if we were more secure, we would be able to grow cultures.

This gives kids a chance to see themselves differently than their parents – they are able to see themselves as individuals.

Why? – the seed that you plant

This is can be influenced by wanting acceptance

Reconnection : Teaching Anti Bias Education By: Louise Derman Sparks

Melanie – subscribe to the hip-hop notion of identity: I am that which I touch and that which touches me; identity is fluid and reflective of life experiences, not skin color. I'm not "white"

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