



Empowering Social Justice Using the Arts & Media

Purpose: This activity explores how the arts (e.g. music, dance, spoken word) and multimedia have been successful in empowering communities to make effective social change. Students will be invited to create an arts presentation sharing their creative ideas of how to get involved in a social justice issue.

Duration: 30 minutes

Materials

- CD Player
- Computer and LCD projector
- Arts Supplies (i.e. wide variety of paper in colour/texture/size, markers, pastel, paint, glue/tape, scissors, magazines for cut-outs if possible, etc.)
- Instruments (shakers, moroccas, small drums, bells, harmonica, etc)

Instructions

1. Ask students if they can think of how the arts (i.e. dance, drama, poetry, murals, etc) have been used to promote awareness and action about social issues in the past.

Some examples from the arts:

- K'Naan song, "Wavin' Flag" promoted awareness about helping Haiti
- Various artists working together to promote awareness and fundraise for famine relief in Ethiopia. ("We are the World" by U.S. artists, "Do They Know it's Christmas Time", by British artists and "Tears are Not Enough" by Canadian artists)
- Sarah McLaughlin "World on Fire" (poverty overseas)
- Phil Collins "Just Another Day in Paradise" (homelessness in America)
- Joni Mitchell "Big Yellow Taxi" (don't destroy nature)
- Michael Jackson "Black or White" (anti-racism)
- Janet Jackson "Rhythm Nation" (multiculturalism)
- Black-Eyed Peas "Where is the Love?" (change your values)

If you wish, you can show a music video of any of the above. Some are accessible on YouTube.

Examples of Dance:

Step dance (e.g. Stomp) evolved from traditional African gumboot: rhythms and movement created by oppressed workers in the South African mines

Capoeira – a form of martial arts masked as dance moves, developed by African slaves in the South American plantations to practice fighting under the eyes of the plantation owners

Breakdance – developed on the streets of the South Bronx by prominent DJs, primarily DJ Kool Herc. He encouraged gangs to use breakdance to replace violence in showing their superiority over each other.

2. Show how visual arts have been used at the Board-wide level using the Webinar video highlighting TCDSB students participating in the D&P “Water Pirates” campaign to demand a Bottled-Water Free Policy:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAvy5Vq6LzY&feature=player_embedded#at=289

Note: This webinar video is the “Director’s Voice” and the bottled-water section starts at 2:00 minutes and ends at 4:35 minutes). You will see the use of spoken word, symbolic tears, and near the end, a visual pan of a pirate ship created out of water bottles.

3. Introduce the “**Why Ban Bottled Water**” arts challenge group activity. Explain to students they will break up into groups based on the arts format they’re most interested in. Possible groups that can be formed are: dance, drama, music, spoken word, poetry, visual arts (e.g. mural, sculpture, etc.), fashion, communication arts (e.g. short film, Powerpoint, etc.) Each group can discuss specific ideas on how to promote the water issue using the art form they’ve chosen. Give students 15-30 minutes to prepare their arts idea and then each group can present to the the class