LISTENING ACROSS GENERATIONS

fractured narratives youth collaboration
Listening, like most creative acts, demands patience, openness, care and attention to one’s surroundings. In Muncie, “Who listens to whom?” feels like an active and, throughout history, a contested question. The young people I met there, whose voices have not always been a part of public conversation, were clear about where their voices are valued today and that they have something to say.

ERIC GOTTESMAN
In the spring of 2015, Ball State University’s David Owsley Museum of Art hosted the exhibition *Fractured Narratives: A Strategy to Engage* in partnership with the Cornell Fine Arts Museum at Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. The exhibition featured paintings, photographs, video, and sculpture by 14 international contemporary artists engaged with today’s issues, including censorship, isolation, race, and sustainability. *Fractured Narratives*, the museum’s first major exhibition since its 2013 expansion, was also the first global art show displayed in our newly fashioned, world art museum.

The follow-up exhibition, *Listening Across Generations: Fractured Narratives Youth Collaboration*, sprang from the desire to extend the spring exhibition’s impact through the summer and, especially, to reach out to audiences in the city of Muncie. Thanks to a generous grant from the John R. Emens Distinguished Professorship Fund, the museum’s spring programming included a campus visit by international contemporary artist Eric Gottesman. For 15 years, Gottesman and a children’s collective in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, have been engaged in a photographic collaboration that explores many of the same issues raised by *Listening Across Generations: Fractured Narratives Youth Collaboration*. They have recently published that project in the award-winning book *Sudden Flowers*. In Muncie, Gottesman taught young people the methods he used with other international projects. With the support of Ball State professor Ruby Cain, her graduate student class, and Muncie youth groups, young people in our city creatively captured images of the places where they are heard. The photographic art that they created eventually became the exhibit featured in this book.

Thus, *Listening Across Generations* follows the deceptively simple formula of making the global local through art. It also provided an opportunity for Ball State University faculty, staff, and students to engage directly with our community. In addition, it showcases the museum as a location for cultural exchange between people of different ages, socioeconomic classes, and education levels. This is what art can do.

Robert G. La France, Ph.D.
Director
Immersive Learning for Graduate Students

I met Tania Said, Director of Education at The Ball State University David Owsley Museum of Art in 2014. She attended a workshop titled “Pedagogy of White Exposure and Racial Identity Development” on December 2, 2014. This was one segment of the It Is Well With My Soul (IIWWMS) Racial Identity Development Series. IIWWMS is a community program in the Ball State Department of Educational Studies. The program focuses on racial healing through family and cultural historical research, presentation, and publication.

After the workshop, Tania shared with me that she was interested in applying ideas of white privilege and “mainstream thinking” to looking at art, including considering other lenses for interpreting the exhibition planned for the next semester, Fractured Narratives: A Strategy to Engage, which the Museum had commissioned for Spring 2015.

We brainstormed a collaborative project with my EDAC 698: Adult and Community Education course, Cultural Identities and Community Engagement. This course was co-constructed from IIWWMS community curriculum and is in collaboration with the community program. Cultural Identities and Community Engagement is an interactive course to foster student discussion, discover family histories, and promote community involvement. It provides a structured and critical review, reflection, and analysis of individual, collective, and organizational cultural identities, race as a social construction, historical inequalities, the history and impact of structural racism, the implications for race relations, and strategies for promoting inclusion and civic engagement through family and history research, presentations, oral storytelling, and/or the development of traveling exhibits. The course and the exhibit with Tania’s intent for community outreach could not have been a more perfect match. I was ecstatic to have this amazing opportunity. Although I am not an artist, I love the arts and was willing to do almost anything to share this amazing exhibit with the community-at-large.
The graduate students worked with directors, staff, volunteers, and youth from Muncie’s Boys and Girls Club, Friends of the Conley Inc., Motivate our Minds, and the Roy C. Buley Center to complete this project. The project envisioned was to showcase the voices of youth in the community through their photographic expression. Participatory photography as a tool for engagement, advocacy, skill building, and social innovation helped the youth construct their answers to the questions: “What does it mean to be a good listener?” and “Where are you heard, and who hears you?”

Together with the graduate students, the young photographers in the community explored these questions and talked about what it means to be heard in the city where they lived. They also talked about where they are not heard. They marked the places on a massive city map of Muncie, provided for the project, and gave explanations. They marked where they are heard, where they are not heard, and where they listen and why. Eric Gottesman then worked with them to develop art that told a story. The workshop, also, included a tour of the Fractured Narratives exhibit, guided by Eric Gottesman, with interactive discussion, questions, and answers.

Gottesman spent many years in Addis Abba, Ethiopia, working with youth who expressed their voices through photography and video. In May, 2015, I had the opportunity to travel to Ethiopia for a work project. It was a phenomenal experience to immerse in a culture that was so different and yet, so similar to my African American culture. There were similar customs, beliefs, and values. I experienced peace, love, and contentment. The experience was greatly enhanced by the exposure to the Fractured Narratives exhibit, Eric Gottesman’s experiences that he shared, and the EDAC 698 immersive learning project.

Immersive learning is the integration of targeted learning objectives in non-academic and real world settings that result in meaning making and new knowledge beyond what the classroom setting could provide. The majority of graduate students have not engaged in immersive learning experiences. Ball State provides the majority of resources for immersive learning projects for undergraduate students.
who live on campus. Graduate students in our degree programs are working adults that may live 100 miles or more from campus. This provides an extra layer of complexity when the students do not live in the community where the project takes place.

Immersive learning in an academic setting requires unlearning the culture of individualism and navigating toward the culture of collectivism. I tell the students you are not doing a project for the community. You are doing a project with the community. The community leaders must provide or endorse the direction of the project and the development and implementation. Tania Said and the youth centers’ staff were the community leaders for this project. The dissonance the students experienced in having to depend on others at times felt overwhelming to them. They were not the priority in the youth centers daily existence. They were just one more obligation to manage with under-resourced and understaffed agencies. They learned that if their calls were not readily returned, it did not mean disinterest. They were just one of numerous messages in the queue. They had to learn strategies to have their messages gain more attention by sharing more information, being flexible, and adaptable. The students gained a sincere appreciation for the staff and volunteers of the youth centers.

The students also gained a deepened understanding of the voices of the youth in the Muncie community. They enjoyed talking with them and having them share their thoughts and how they wanted to express them in photography. There were many things that I perceived at the beginning of the project that did not go as planned. Yet, the end result was far more impactful than I had imagined.

A photographic exhibit of the youth’s work, their Listening Map, and a Maker Space for patrons to engage was on display at the David Owsley Museum of Art, May 16 through September 4, 2015. An opening reception had many people in attendance, including Muncie Mayor Dennis Tyler and members of his cabinet. A collaboration with community organization, R.A.C.E. (Reconciliation Achieved through Community Engagement) Muncie, David Owsley Museum of Art, It Is Well With My Soul, and Ball State University Department of Educational Studies led to “Listening Across Generations:
Youth Panel Discussion” as the event for one of the R.A.C.E. Muncie monthly meetings. Teenagers comprised the panel and were moderated by one of their teen peers. Questions from teens and the audience at large were answered. Tania Said and I told the community members how the collaboration came to pass and the outcomes which exceeded both of our highest expectations. The meeting concluded with a viewing of the Listening Across Generations: Fractured Narratives Youth Collaboration exhibition. The immersive learning project and the R.A.C.E. Muncie meeting introduced adults and youth to the Museum and this type of artistic environment for the first time. The youth were the rock stars. The adults did listen and many expressed transformative learning experiences in hearing that youth really want to communicate with adults: to listen and to be heard.

Adults learned that youth wanted their voice to be valued and affirmed and not dismissed as youthful nonsense. The exhibit took many by surprise. Some of the adults could not turn away. They were mesmerized with the hearts and souls of local youth expressed in this exhibit. In addition to this success, a proposal was submitted and accepted for a presentation of the project and its outcomes at the 34th Annual Research-to-Practice (R2P) Conference in Adult and Higher Education in Oklahoma City to an international audience of adult, business, and community educators, researchers, students, and practitioners in November, 2015.

This collaboration was a pivotal point in my career and life. I am overjoyed with the outcome. I hope that when you view the photographs and read the words of my students’ reflections, you will feel the same.

Ruby Cain, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Adult & Community Education
Director, M.A. Degree Programs and Certificates in Adult & Community Education Program
Department of Educational Studies
Director, It Is Well With My Soul
Listen Here

Every good conversation starts with good listening.

Education and exhibitions have collaboration in common. When I met Ruby Cain from Ball State University’s Adult and Community Education program, I knew I had found the perfect simpatico collaborator, or as I laughingly like to say a fellow dreamer and schemer. Working with Ball State professor Cain and her graduate students made possible the summer 2015 community exhibition Listening Across Generations: Fractured Narratives Youth Collaboration.

For the spring 2015 semester, the David Owsley Museum of Art presented the special exhibition Fractured Narratives: A Strategy to Engage, organized by the Cornell Museum of Fine Arts at Rollins College. Every work of art, from the videos to photographs, and the installations, sculpture, and prints prompted conversation and inquiry. Particularly important works of art for the community engagement project were Amar Kanwar’s Listening Bench, Rivané Neuenschwander’s Zé Carioca and Friends (The Saci), and Eric Gottesman’s The Oromaye Project, a photo story about Baluu Girma.

How does the museum listen to the community? The summer exhibitions at the David Owsley Museum of Art are often geared to community audiences, and here was the opportunity Professor Cain and I had. We wanted to invite young community members to become involved, but how should we? What was the authentic opportunity for them? How do we make the museum more community focused and participatory? Fortunately, Fractured Narratives artist Eric Gottesman had valuable experience and provided the inspiration for involving the youth. In a previous project, he worked with children in Beirut to map and recreate their memories using photography. Called participatory photography, we knew that its emphasis on engagement, advocacy, skill building, and social innovation would be a way for Muncie youth and DOMA to connect with each other. In the spring, Mr. Gottesman met many of the participating students to discuss his work. He listened to and guided their ideas, and learned about Muncie in the process. Using a map together, the students
learned to document through photography the people who listen to them and the places where they feel heard.

Professor Ruby Cain and her EDAC 698 adult and community education graduate students in the class Cultural Identities and Community Engagement coordinated the participants for the project. The resulting exhibition includes the map of where youth are heard, photographs, and a place for audience members to add drawings of their answers to the questions we asked. The photo collections on public view are from the youth of the Boys and Girls Club, Friends of the Conley Inc., Motivate Our Minds, and Roy C. Buley Center. They were made possible by professor Cain’s students, who carefully cultivated relationships with local youth learning as they progressed and asking every participant: Where are you heard? What does it mean to be a good listener? Who hears you? Together they developed the content of the exhibition.

Having so many partners and collaborators is exhilarating (and also sometimes daunting). What I learned from this exhibition is the value of trusting relationships, asking questions, and cultivating my listening skills. While I was the organizer and museum’s representative for this exhibition, I had less control over the content than is typical for most museum exhibitions, yet I could not have imagined the exciting result we see today. Museum education and community outreach hinge on authentic relationships and genuine content. Every adult and community education student and youth participant was an honest believer in our goal and invested talent into the yeoman’s task of navigating a multi-partner project. Professor Cain was the perfect champion too. I am grateful to each of them and thank every participant for seeing new possibilities.

Tania Said, Director of Education
David Owsley Museum of Art
Community engagement in an academic setting requires unlearning the culture of individualism and navigating toward the culture of collectivism.

PROFESSOR RUBY CAIN
PART 1:
meet the partners
The Boys and Girls Club of Muncie participated in an immersive learning project with graduate student Joe Morris from the Cultural Identities and Community Engagement course. The Club strives to build character and leadership, healthy lifestyles, and the academic success of the youth in Muncie.

Micah Maxwell, Executive Director of Boys and Girls Club, introduced us to Ramon Parrott (age 18), a junior at Muncie Central High School.

The project allowed Ramon to explore his family history and to identify numerous places in and around Muncie where he feels heard and where he listens to people. His photographs are pictures of those places and people.

Ramon enthusiastically approached the project and supplied a variety of pictures. He was particularly interested in marking this time in his life through photography so that other youth might feel connected to their place in the community. Ramon is an outstanding scholar, mentor, and athlete. When he is not in school, he is with his family, on the basketball court or working with the youth at the Boys and Girls Club.
Ball State University adult and community education student **Whitney Troxell** worked with the Buley Center, a not-for-profit education and recreation site within the Whitely community neighborhood of Muncie, Indiana. The Buley Center’s motto is the acronym ENGAGE: education, nourishment, growth, ambition, guidance, and excellence.

**Qiana O’Neal**, the executive director at the Buley Center, and **Deborah Boykin**, Buley Center program assistant, facilitated the immersive learning project for EDAC 698 Cultural Identities & Community Engagement and connected students to participate.

The participating Buley Center students are **Adrian Jeter** (age 10), **Liam Robertson** (age 9), **Tyler Robertson** (age 11), and **Paige Ullman** (age 11). They interviewed a relative and then took pictures around Muncie, Indiana, where they felt their voices were heard, and also some places where they felt as though their voices were not heard.

Overall, the students enjoyed working with their family and community while building an expressive body of work.
Friends of the Conley, Inc.
1304 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
Muncie, IN 47303

Friends of the Conley, Inc. worked with Jan Miller, a student in Ball State’s Adult and Community Education program on this project. Friends of the Conley is a non-profit organization that provides tutoring and homework help with the aid of Ball State multi-education students, summer recreation, and spring and fall soccer programs.

Conley is entirely staffed by volunteers, including Marlene Mitchell, who helped with this project. Marlene serves on the Board and volunteers over 20 hours per month for Conley. She has worked with Ball State’s football program for 18 years. After retirement, she plans to dedicate more of her time volunteering with youth and her congregation.

Kieya Byrd is our student photographer. She is in the 8th grade at Northside Middle School and has a strong interest in her family history. As Kieya explored areas in Muncie where her voice is heard, she also discovered a love of art. After visiting the David Owsley Museum of Art, she is making plans to learn and experience more in the art world.

Jan, Marlene, and Kieya have grown and learned together.
Motivate our Minds participated in an immersive learning project with graduate student Kyndra Haggard from the Cultural Identities and Community Engagement course. MOM’s focus is “Educating children and families to grow and flourish.”

The executive director of Motivate Our Minds Monique Armstrong and classroom instructor Carolyn Reeves assisted with the implementation of the project. The students that participated are Khalie Hawkins (age 8), Jaliyah Moore (age 15), and a girl (age 12) who needed to remain anonymous.

The project allowed the students to take pictures of where they feel heard and where they listen.

The girls really enjoyed taking pictures. Once they had the camera they felt empowered. Some thoughts from the students were, “This is cool, and everyone gets to see where I feel heard!” The students liked the idea of running around with a camera and thinking of the different places they listen, and bouncing ideas off each other. This was a wonderful developmental project for the girls.
I have become so much more conscientious of others and how they walk through life. Dr. Cain and Monique from MOMs are two very strong women that have opened my eyes more than I can explain, and I am very grateful.

STUDENT IN EDAC 698
PART 2: mapping Muncie
A central preliminary activity of *Listening Across Generations: Fractured Narratives Youth Collaboration* was mapping the community with artist Eric Gottesman. Marking the Muncie map with different colored dots, they noted where they are heard (blue), kind of heard (yellow), and not heard (red). Reflecting on interactions with adults throughout the community and seeing their homes, schools, religious centers, and more represented on the map with the “listening rating system” was clear. The resulting conversation was powerful for everyone to hear, and for exhibition visitors to see.
“Working with the youth has made me think more about the challenges that young children face.”

STUDENT IN EDAC 698
“... this learning experience was also one of the most important to me because it truly pushed me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to talk with organizations out in the community. I enjoyed being able to help facilitate learning with students from the other organizations and be a part of a great learning experience for both them and me.”

STUDENT IN EDAC 698
“Somehow, with just a little more than a dozen photos and a five minute video, Eric Gottesman did it. I’d like to grow as a learner and educator to reach this professional level of community engagement.”

STUDENT IN EDAC 698
“Oromaye” is still read widely in Ethiopia today. This project explores the legacy of Baalu Girma and his fiction in light of contemporary Ethiopian culture, politics and literature. This multi-disciplinary project will yield photographs, videos, theater workshops, literary translations and a film.”

ERIC GOTTESMAN
A lesson I grasped from Eric Gottesman, was that it is necessary to immerse oneself in a project... in order to really communicate a learning concept and experience that everyone can understand universally. Eric went to Ethiopia to document and retell through photography and video, the story of Baalu Girma.
PART 3:
Ball State student experiences
“It was an amazing experience to see the student I worked with grow and shine during the project. We often think it is only the ‘big things’ that make a difference, but the simple act of listening is powerful. Children are to be both seen and heard.

“I plan to continue my work in the field of international development, but to use my education to expand my scope of work.”

JANICE MILLER
MASTERS IN EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

“There is more to the community of Muncie than meets the eye; and this exhibit proves just that. Listening Across Generations is a unique youth collaboration that I hope gives our future professionals more buy-in into their wonderful community.

“My goal is to help others. This program has given me the opportunity to participate in immersive learning projects each semester and has increased my interest in working with the community and/or a non-profit.”

KYNDRA HAGGARD
MASTERS OF ARTS IN ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION
“I worked with Ramon Parrott, an eighteen-year-old junior from Muncie Central High School. He is a star scholar and athlete. Ramon is clearly devoted to his family and to the youth he mentors at the Boys and Girls Club of Muncie.

“Because of my work with Dr. Cain, Tania Said at the Owsley Museum or Art, my classmates, and community agency experts, I feel that I can now integrate Listening Across Generations concepts into my own learning experience and practice and bring them to life.”

JOE MORRIS
MASTERS OF ARTS IN ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

“I thought that the whole experience was one of such great positivity and that I am so honored to be able to be a part of something so big and so life changing. It gave such great opportunities to so many deserving youth. I am very proud of the work that everyone contributed ...

“I hope to one day be an Academic Advisor for Ball State University and overall be able to make a difference in the lives of many around me.”

WHITNEY TROXELL
MASTERS OF ARTS IN ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION
This is what the community is all about, and it wouldn’t have been possible without the collaboration of the city, university, and most especially the youth organizations.

MAYOR DENNIS TYLER
PART 4:
exhibiting and listening
RECEPTION

Top left:
Opening Reception

Top right:
Muncie Mayor Dennis Tyler

Right:
EDAC 698 students Jan Miller, Joe Morris, Whitney Troxell, and Kyndra Haggard, and Prof. Ruby Cain (speaking)
Left: Maker’s Space participants
Bottom left: Brendon Henderson, Tania Said, Joe Morris, and Professor Ruby Cain
Bottom right: Prof. Ruby Cain, Sasha Roberts, and Jason Donati, Buley Center board member and R.A.C.E. Muncie Co-Founder
EXHIBITION AND MAKER’S SPACE

LISTENING ACROSS GENERATIONS

38
R.A.C.E. (RECONCILIATION ACHIEVED THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT) JULY PROGRAM

Panelists:
Kelby Stallings, Raegan Gordon, Laurenz Sims-Jones, Emily Tague, and Destiny Roberts (moderator)
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to all the young photographers and participants: Kiya Byrd (age 13), Khalie Hawkins (age 8), Adrian Jeter (age 10), Jaliyah Moore (age 15), Ramon Parrot (age 18), Liam Robertson (age 9), Tyler Robertson (age 11), and Paige Ullman (age 11), and a girl who had to remain anonymous (age 12).

And Deborah Boykin and Qiana O’Neal of the Roy C. Buley Center; Monique Armstrong and Carolyn Reeves of Motivate Our Minds; Micah Maxwell and Karli Davis of the Boys and Girls Club; and Myrna Robertson and Marlene Mitchell of the Friends of the Vivian Conley, Inc., who helped all the young photographers on their journey.

We would also like to thank the Cornell Museum of Fine Arts for the inspiring and foundational exhibition Fractured Narratives: A Strategy to Engage, co-curated by Amy Galpin, curator, and independent curator Abigail Ross Goodman, that led to Listening Across Generations: Fractured Narratives Youth Collaboration. We also very much appreciate director Ena Heller, PhD, for agreeing to lend the exhibition to the David Owsley Museum of Art, and the artists in the exhibition, especially Eric Gottesman, for working with Muncie youth during his visit.

For the all important youth programming, we want to recognize Jason Donati and Yvonne Thompson of R.A.C.E. (Reconciliation Achieved through Community Engagement) for ensuring our community had the benefit of hearing important youth voices.

Support for the presentation and programming related to Fractured Narratives: A Strategy to Engage at the David Owsley Museum of Art was provided by the John R. Emens Distinguished Professorship Fund; the Sursa Art Exhibitions and Visiting Performers Program Fund; ARTS ALIVE!, Ball State University College of Fine Arts; and the Class of 1935 Museum Endowment Fund, with funding for this book by the Teachers College Immersive Learning Mini-Grant.
To make the community exhibition happen, the David Owsley Museum of Art would like to express its deep gratitude to the professor and students of the Cultural Identities and Community Engagement class in the Ball State University Department of Educational Studies: Professor Ruby Cain, and Kyndra Haggard, Jan Miller, Joe Morris, and Whitney Troxell. Additionally, It Is Well with My Soul Steering Committee members Monique Armstrong, Dr. Terry Whitt Bailey, Brendon Henderson, and Yvonne Thompson. The entire staff of the David Owsley Museum of Art was also instrumental in making the exhibition and programs possible. Thank you to Regan Kelly, program assistant, and Emily Dykstra, Summer 2015 intern, for assistance in creating this book, and Alyson Walbridge, spring 2015 intern, for her help with the exhibition’s programming.

To everyone, we express our most heartfelt thanks. ❤️
For additional copies, contact (765) 285-5242 or artmuseum@bsu.edu, or download a copy at www.bsu.edu/artmuseum (Museum Bookstore).