

What does the 2010 NAEA National Convention theme “Art Education and Social Justice” mean, and why was it selected?



“Education is always political. The teacher has to ask, what kinds of politics am I doing in the classroom. That is, in whose favor am I being a teacher.”

—Paulo Freire (1970)

Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Social Justice can be and has been used to mean many different things. Within the realm of education, the term social justice alludes to the notion of education as a political act, and when coupled with the term art education hints at models of resistance—teaching as a form of activism.

Art Education and Social Justice questions:

- dominance
- ignorance of our collective history and struggles
- traditional means of knowledge production
- essentialism
- American democracy
- passivity
- class
- gender
- race
- sexuality
- difference as being divisive
- truths
- assumptions
- ignorance
- accomplishments

while embracing:

- equity
- equality
- collective responsibility
- experience
- class
- gender
- race
- sexuality
- difference
- not knowing
- more possibilities
- democracy
- activism
- history
- public space
- self awareness
- social literacy
- imagination
- cultural relevance



The theme of the 2010 Convention, **Art Education and Social Justice**, is appropriate to our time. The historic election of President Barack Obama and Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor reflects our ever shifting demographic. Our nation is truly questioning itself in order to discover and redefine who we are as a nation, what we believe in, and what needs to change.

The White House held a briefing on **Art, Community, Social Justice, National Recovery** on Tuesday, May 12th, 2009 that was attended by various representatives of the current administration and more than 60 artists and creative organizers. All gathered were there to not only pledge their support for the arts and community organizing but also to begin a real dialogue on issues of social justice and our nation's economic and emotional recovery. Joseph Reinstein, Deputy Social Secretary, said, “The administration believes the arts play a critical role beyond art education in saying what a democracy is” (2009, p. 5).

It is never a comfortable task to question oneself; there is fear at what we will find. But the arts are used to questioning, probing, and searching. As Maxine Greene writes, “[T]he arts will help disrupt the walls that obscure . . . spheres of freedom” (1988, p. 133). This year's Convention seeks to do just that.

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