Beyond White Walls:

Anti-Racist Education in Art Museums

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines how an art museum can become more inclusive of different cultural communities and why it is important that they do so. It suggests that public art institutions have a social responsibility towards citizens, including non-dominant communities and that they can play an active role in ending oppression of marginalized groups. Through the lens of critical multiculturalism, intersectionality and social justice theory, this case study closely examines the program and the role of art educators at the *New New Yorkers* at the Queens Museum in New York. By analyzing this multilingual arts program, designed for immigrants by immigrants and the various cultural communities surrounding the museum, my goal for this study is to assess the practices that propose creative alternatives through community engagement within (and beyond) the museum's spaces, and apply this knowledge to my future experiences as a museum educator.

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CHAPTER ONE

Personal motivation and where I *really* come from

I first moved to Canada at age fifteen, when my mother, a public worker at a Brazilian state university decided to go back to school. After raising two kids on her own, Margaret chose to come to Montreal to complete a master's degree (followed by a PhD) in theatre. She had engaged in multiple types of professional learning throughout my childhood, but this was the first time she was able to set aside such a significant amount of time for studying formally. She was excited, and I, as the youngest and having no choice but to follow her, was terrified.

Despite my protests and threats, we embarked on one of the most transformative experiences of our lives. Margaret had studied French on and off, and I had taken English lessons for some years, but as soon as we arrived in Montreal, we realized we could barely understand when people answered our questions. I will never forget seeing snow for the first time – at minus 28 degrees Celsius. Coming from a city just below the Equator, all I knew was heat and air conditioning, and I had to learn how to dress for the weather (which took many years) and get used to checking the weather channel daily. Through a former colleague, we were introduced to other Brazilians students, who assisted us in navigating the city and its long winter. A good friend helped us find an apartment, get a telephone line, and assemble our first pieces of IKEA furniture. We were part of a small community that met regularly and made us feel welcome, and supported.

As an international student, I did not have to abide by Bill 101,[1] but we decided that I would attend a French school. I joined a *Welcoming class*, or *Classe d'accueil,* French immersion for immigrant children. My group of friends was composed of a Russian, a Romania, a Tibetan, and a Pakistani girl and there was a genuine care and curiosity amongst us. At that time, I had a very limited understanding of race, which I only started to grasp after I moved back to Canada as an immigrant in my 20s. As I was growing up, racism meant when my mother would get into yet another argument over a joke at a party (which by the end she was so upset that I didn't have the courage to ask her about it), or when someone would say something openly racist.

My family was mixed. My mother's father was a Jewish man who fled to Brazil before World War II and her mother traced her blue eyes to the Netherlands. My father left his home country, Cabo Verde, to study, and eventually ended up in the Amazon region, where he met my mother and where I was born. We did not have much contact after he left Brazil in the early 90s and I have mostly learned about his culture as an adult. The notion of race was puzzling to me – I remember my grandmother telling me "don't say that!" whenever I mentioned that I was Black. And yet, my mother encouraged me to be proud of my African heritage, which seemed distant to me, both physically and emotionally, and I was privileged, if that is the word, to have been brought in a progressive, artistic and intellectual community of queer people and people of color. This led me to live most of my life thinking racism was something that belonged to ignorant or evil people.

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[1] A Quebec law that makes it mandatory for immigrant children to be educated in French.

During the first six years that I lived in Montreal as an international student, I grew accustomed to being called *exotic*, as some kind of bird or plant, to pretend not to notice the sexual undertones in comments about Brazilian women and have people constantly ask me details about my origins – my then-temporary status allowed me to easily disengage from these uncomfortable situations. After immigrating, however, I became aware of the weight of systemic racism and how shaped my everyday reality in this country. Working in the cultural sector made me more conscious of the deep racism existing in our institutions.

Why an art museum

After completing a BFA at Concordia, I found myself working as a program coordinator at *Maison des Jeunes Côte-des-Neiges*, a youth centre located in one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Canada. For about three years, I organized photography, cooking and gardening activities as well as cultural outings. Most of the youth had never been to an art museum before and, although it did not sound as exciting to them as going to a water park, I hoped something would eventually pique their interest and allow us to discuss important issues that affected them.

As a community worker, organizing a trip to art museums was never easy, especially given our limited budget. Frustrated, I started to think about what the institutions were doing in order to get us through their doors. What were museums doing to create inclusive programming for teenage immigrants? Around the same time, I started working more and more in various art institutions, and recognized that inclusion did not rely solely on how I facilitated a visit or workshop. I decided that my research would focus on structures instead of visitors: who was

being hired by these spaces, who made decisions about programming and how did these factors manifest in terms of attendance numbers?

In her 2012 book, *On being included: racism and diversity in institutional life*, Sarah Ahmed speaks of the politics of "stranger making" and questions how some bodies become understood as the rightful occupants of certain spaces (p. 2). As a museum educator, I was interested in working with a population that had similar experiences to mine - that of racism, oppression, displacement - and to explore ways in which art could help us to build stronger communities and talk about the issues that affected us.

Made by Immigrants

(A sticker on the file cabinet of the *New New Yorkers* office at the Queens Museum in New York.)

As I started to research about institutional racism in museums, I came across an article written by scholar and museum educator Gretchen Jennings about empathy and inclusion that led me to *The Empathetic Museum Maturity model* (2016). This model described an empathetic museum as a visitor-centered institution committed to inclusion and to its community and offered guidelines for institutional transformation in museums in an accessible language. It was crucial in helping me refine and identify the focus of my research. Then, I started looking for an art museum that embodied some of the values and behaviors that constituted an inclusive and empathetic institution – diverse programming, staff and outreach initiatives. In Montreal, *Articule* and *DHC/ART* seemed to fit some of these criteria, but because of their relatively small

sizes and particular governing models (the former, an artist-run centre and the latter, a private foundation), I decided that they were not ideal studies.

In February 2017, I read an article titled *How a Museum in Queens Became a Neighborhood Ally* published on Facebook by a group called *Museum and Race*. In this article, author Kavitha Rajagopalan painted a compelling portrait of the Queens borough and the multiple initiatives undertaken by the Queens Museum staff to better serve and connect with immigrant communities. The *New New Yorkers Program* immediately caught my attention: in partnership with the Queens Library, it offered a variety of free art classes to adult immigrant communities in a variety of languages: Spanish, Korean, Portuguese and Mandarin among others. In no time, I found the contact of the program manager, Guido Garaycochea, who, in a couple of days, sent me additional information about the program, answered my initial questions and invited me to visit the facilities.

The Queens Museum, its community and the political context of this research

The Queens Museum offers visual arts for people in the New York metropolitan area, with a particular focus on the residents of Queens, through art exhibitions, public programs and educational experiences that promote the appreciation and enjoyment of art, support the creative efforts of artists, and enhance the quality of life (Queens Museum, n.d.). It is located next to one of the most diverse and predominantly immigrant neighborhoods in New York City: Corona, Queens. According to the 2013-2017 census, 47.5% of the Queens borough population was born outside of the United States and 56% speak a language other than English at home (U.S Census Bureau, 2018). In order to better serve their diverse audiences, the Museum created multiple engagement initiatives to respond to the needs of their communities. As stated on their website:

The Museum has long understood the urgent need to work with our neighbors to engage critically in issues of neighborhood development in our schools, parks, streets, and in precious recreational spaces. Over the past decade, the Museum has been working to ensure that community residents are involved in the envisioning, production, programming, and maintenance of public spaces and amenities. Through a series of creative engagement initiatives and with the support of our full-time community organizers, we actively leverage our resources to help build the leadership capacity of Corona residents to participate actively in civic institutions (Queens Museum, n.d.).

When I started this study, president Donald Trump recently had been elected after making immigration one of the core issues of his campaign. Words such as "invasion", "criminals", "predators", and "aliens" etc., were just some of the terms he employed in his xenophobic and dehumanizing speeches (Fritze, 2019). Leading to his inauguration, over 100 artists, curators and cultural workers signed a letter for the J20 Art Strike, calling for the closure of all cultural institutions on January 20 when the president would take office (Greenberger, 2017). The Queens Museum was one of the few art museums in New York that closed its galleries, and instead, devoted the afternoon to poster-making for future protests and marches. The then-Queen's museum director Laura Raicovich issued a statement of values at the e-flux journal, where she wrote that the museum:

• advocates for art as a tool for positive social change, critical thinking, discussion and debate, discovery and imagination, and to make visible multiple histories and realities

• supports and initiate projects and programs that are inspired by actively listening to the needs and aspirations of the communities we serve and consider to be our valued partners

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• works to engender respect for a diversity of cultures, broaden access to ideas and art, and connect the public to opportunities for civic agency; and

• uses our resources—human, financial, environmental, and beyond—to create greater equity, inclusiveness, and sustainability, both within our institution and in the broader society (Raicovich, 2018).

I began this study with two assumptions: that art museums have a social responsibility towards citizens, which includes non-dominant and diverse cultural communities, and that they can play an active role in ending oppression of marginalized groups. In her book *Radical Transformational Leadership: Strategic Action for Change Agents*, Monica Sharma (2017) speaks of three tenets that anchor equitable and sustainable transformation: dignity, equity and compassion. I believe that Raicovich's statement of solidarity with the communities of Queens is a good example of what compassionate leadership can look like.

Sarah Ahmed (2012) posits that "to account for racism is to offer a different account of the world" (p. 3). And yet, it is a daunting task. As institutions of power (Sandell, 2007), art museums have the responsibility to disrupt the narratives that contribute to the oppressive systems that discriminate non-dominant cultural communities and make them voiceless. Thus, the white space of a gallery – pun intended – is not as neutral as our institutions would like us to think, but rather is a reflection of the systems that continue to marginalize historically oppressed groups. Through the lens of critical multiculturalism and intersectionality, I am interested in how art museums can contribute to promote social justice. My goal for this study was to examine the practices in the *New New Yorkers* program at the Queens Museum that propose creative alternatives through

community engagement within (and beyond) its spaces, and apply this knowledge to my future experiences as a museum educator.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To create a foundation for the thesis, I will highlight some of the major research that has been conducted around multiculturalism, critical multiculturalism, and the social role of museums. The literature I discuss touches on key, overlapping issues related to my research such as citizenship, social justice, intersectionality and critical race theory. I will start with the historical views of multiculturalism, and then discuss the criticism and limitations that lead to the emergence of critical multiculturalism and the social role of museums. I rely on authors who address questions of systemic power and inequality.

I applied a snowball approach to this literature review, which means that I started with two main texts, *Critical Multiculturalism in Art Museums,* a book edited by Joni Acuff and Laura Evans, and the *Empathetic Museum Maturity Model,* which I discussed earlier. These texts framed my initial research and I also examined their bibliographies and followed their leads. Then, I continued with an iterative process: as I conducted the interviews and coded them for key themes, new terms arose. When each term emerged, I researched using the *Full Text* database at the Concordia Library, and the literature grew. Therefore, in the coming chapters, I will also introduce new authors who more specifically address questions brought up by the participants such as pedagogy, community, safety and identity. I have privileged the voices of authors of color as well as the ones recommended by the initial literature.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism emerged in the 1960s during the Civil Rights movement as migration policies were loosened to allow non-Europeans to retain their particular culture as they adapted to a new country (Modood, 2007). Tariq Modood, founding Director of the Bristol University

Research Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship, refers to multiculturalism as the "political accommodation of minorities by immigration to western countries from outside the prosperous West" (p. 5). Multicultural education arose as an educational reform movement that aimed to provide equal opportunities to all students, regardless of their race and put forward that individuals are more fulfilled when they are able to participate in a variety of ethnic cultures (Banks, 1999). For James A. Banks, founding director of the Center for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington, one of the major goals of multicultural education is to reduce the pain and discrimination that ethnic and racial groups face at the hands of individuals and institutions because of their physical or cultural characteristics. He argues that often students are forced to reject part of their identities in order assimilate mainstream values and to succeed in schools, which eventually leads them to become alienated from both their ethnic culture *and* from mainstream society.

Sonia Nieto (2004), a prominent author and critic in the field of multiculturalism, asserts that multicultural education needs to be approached as transformative process that not only exposes differences, but also power and privilege. According to her, "[it] means challenging racism and other biases as well as the inequitable structures, policies, and practices of schools and, ultimately of society itself" (p. xxvii). She considers that multicultural education should be seen as *basic* education and the need for such literacy today is as pressing as the need for reading and writing. Nieto posits that one of the difficulties with implementing effective multicultural education is the idea of a "canon" in contemporary education where all important knowledge is already presented. This view, she says, puts forward that knowledge "is inevitably European, male and upper class in origin and conception" (Nieto, 2004, p. 351). She urges us to

acknowledge the contribution of people of diverse backgrounds to the making of history instead of adoption the dominant narrative as the only one:

> We are not talking here simply of the contributions approach to history, literature, and the arts. Such an approach can easily become patronizing by simply adding bits and pieces to the perceived canon. Rather, missing from most curricula is a consideration of how generally excluded groups have made history and affected the arts, literature, geography, science, and philosophy *on their own terms* [my emphasis]" (p. 352).

Critical Multiculturalism

Depti Desai (2010), a widely published and leading proponent of critical multiculturalism in art education, states that dominant immigration narratives "rarely examine the exclusions, deportations, exploitation, protests, and labor of immigrants who have toiled in harsh conditions to provide cheap goods and commodities to American consumers" (p. 426). She argues that only by addressing issues of racialization of immigration and their connection to economic and labor issues, can we address the core of democracy. She states that:

> In the name of neutrality and objectivity, dominant discourse in many fields, including education and art education presents analysis as fact. This regards historical and social context, which in turn has been detrimental to people of color as their experiences are not voiced and therefore dismissed (p. 427).

Authors of *Citizenship and migration: Globalization and the politics of belonging,* Stephen Castles and Alastair Davidson (2000), call our attention to the need for new approaches to citizenship that consider collective identities, since even the formal membership in nation-

states does not guarantee access to rights associated with it. They state that "there are increasing numbers of *citizens who do not belong*" (p. viii). Similarly, Banks (2015) holds that "successful citizenship" happens when social, cultural, economic and political systems facilitate the structural inclusion of diverse groups within dominant institutions. This process is also in the interest of nation-states because "successful citizens develop strong attachments, allegiances, and identities with the nation-state or polity." He states that critical multicultural education can:

> help victims of failed citizenship by enabling them to attain a sense of structural inclusion into their society and nation, political efficacy, and higher levels of political engagement and participation. Students from marginalized groups should be able to maintain essential aspects of their ethnic and cultural identities when they become successful citizens and are structurally included into the mainstream civic culture (p. 153).

Few museum studies on multilingualism have been conducted, and the ones that exist focus mostly on how museums provide resources in multiple languages through audio guides and labels, or how visitors access these resources (Garibay & Yalowitz, 2015). Critical theorists and linguists Donaldo Macedo and Lilla Bartolomé (2014) remind us the importance of language in the formation of our subjectivities. They suggest educators develop a radical pedagogy that allows students to use their own realities as the point of departure for learning – and that includes their primary languages. For Macedo and Bartolomé, it is crucial to incorporate minority languages as the primary languages of instruction for linguistic minority students, for it is through their own languages that they "will be able to reconstruct their histories and their cultures" (p. 33). They propose that:

> the attempt to institute proper and effective methods of educating English language

learners cannot be reduced simply to issues of language but rests on a full understanding of the ideological elements that generate and sustain linguistic, cultural and racial discrimination, which represent, in our view, vestiges of a colonial legacy in our democracy (p. 26).

Critical multicultural scholar Stephen May (1999) presents three essential principles that critical multicultural educators need to adopt in order to develop a non-essentialist notion of cultural difference. The first principle is to expose and deconstruct the notion of civism as neutral. According to May, there is no such a thing as universal set of cultural values and practices, but rather "the public sphere of the nation-state represents and is reflective of the particular cultural and linguistic habitus of the dominant (ethnic) group" (p. 30). Much like the assertion of Nieto quoted above, the second principle is to situate cultural differences in a context of power relations, since recognizing cultural differences is not the same as *revealing* the processes that lead to the preference of certain cultural values and practices over others. This calls our attention to the way in which "alternative cultural knowledges come to be subjugated" (p. 32). Finally, the third key principle is to maintain a reflexive critique of specific cultural practices that allow for criticism and fluidity. May goes on to express that "the recognition of our cultural and historical situatedness should not be the limits of ethnicity and culture, nor act to undermine the legitimacy of other, equally valid forms of identity" (p. 33).

Associate professor of Arts Administration, Education and Policy at Ohio State University and co-editor of the book *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today,* Joni Boyd Acuff (2015) maintains that critical multiculturalism can empower educators by disrupting master narratives. She notes that often art educators reject multicultural education because they are

afraid of othering some of their students. However, she encourages them to take risks and invest in learning from their personal failures. She advises art educators to invest in learning how to connect the realities of their classrooms to society, which will inevitably lead to talking about racism, sexism and other forms of oppression. Acuff (2013) warns us that by omitting the cultural narratives of non-dominant communities from historical accounts, art educators contribute to their subordination. She continues:

Art educators need to more widely acknowledge and vocalize the diverse culture that is anchored in people's daily lives, practices and education. Recognition and communication of this dynamism need to be more evident in art education historical narratives. No group of people should have to relinquish or abandon their cultural, ethnic, or linguistic position or history in order to engage in art education and its history (p. 224).

As Acuff notes, critical multiculturalism allows us to question dominant discourses and reconsider the stories we tell. Art educators should embrace the challenges of learning, which sometimes means doing it in public.

The Social Role of Museums

Museums are powerful institutions that are implicated in the cultural politics of knowledge through their representations of the official versions of the past (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). According to Stephen Weil (2002), emeritus senior scholar at the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Museum Studies, museums can contribute to the personal improvement of its visitors and can "[help] form an educated, informed, sensitive and aware citizenry, the individual museum can make an enormous contribution toward the most important task that any

of us face – the task of building a just, stable, abundant, harmonious and humane society" (p. 95).

For Richard Sandell (2007), professor of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, museums are important agents that can engender a sense of place and belonging. As institutions of power, museums have a social responsibility and need to acknowledge "their role in constructing and disseminating dominant social narratives" (p. 100). He argues that museums can disrupt the narratives that contribute to the oppressive systems that continue to discriminate marginalized communities and make them voiceless.

Sandell lists three levels at which museums can contribute to the combating of social inequality and disadvantage: individual, community and the wider society. On an individual level, this impact can range from "the personal, psychological and emotional (such as enhanced self-esteem or sense of place) to the pragmatic (such as the acquisition of skills to enhance employment opportunities)" (p. 97). On a community level, outcomes might include "enhanced community self-determination, and increased participation in decision-making processes and democratic structures" (p. 99). On a societal level, Sandell remarks that museums are called to act, since they are "undeniably implicated in the dynamics of (in)equality and the power relations between different groups." (p. 100). Sandell's latest work *Museum Activism* focuses on social activism, which I will discuss in the following chapter.

Sheila Watson (2007), Deputy Head of the School of Museum Studies at Leicester University and editor of the book *Museum and Their Communities*, holds that museums influence cultural identities and reinforce the values of individuals, communities and nations. She asserted that the relationship of museums to their communities is not an equal one, because

museums decide whose stories they tell and how. Watson claims that "understanding the nature of that authority goes some way towards helping us understand the relationships museums have with their publics" (p. 9).

For museum scholars Carmel Borg and Peter Mayo (2018), museums can be sites of cultural resistance, contestation and reconstruction. They argue that museums are not neutral, and that any attempt to subvert hegemonic practices in our institutions requires a profound understanding of the State:

> The ascendency of knowledge as a critical factor in economic growth underlines the politically loaded and ethically challenging issue of what and whose knowledge is being recognized, valorized and officially affirmed and who is making the arbitrary decisions regarding the selection of cultures and knowledges (p. 112).

As the notion of community has gained importance in museums, it has significantly impacted museum professionals and the nature of their activities (Crooke, 2007). Scholar Marianna Pegno (2019) asserts that museum programs should be responsive and dynamic, reflecting the needs of community partners. According to her, museums can propel their social functions through the creation of programs that address the needs of non-dominant groups by creating dialogues and connections to their lived experiences. As a strategy, she recommends building sustained engagement with partners through multiple points of contact (as opposed to a single visit). "This type of program involves a long-term commitment to participants in order to build a trusting and safe environment" (p. 16). Borg and Mayo (2018) assert that community engagement may challenge dominant narratives by promoting collaboration between institutions and communities in the production and the sharing of knowledge. They write:

The central pedagogical principle in genuine community-institution partnerships

committed to decolonizing knowledge is that the initial act of epistemological curiosity,

leading to co-discovery and co-production of knowledge, arises from themes generated

by the community whose members are the intended beneficiaries of the reflection process

and consequent action (p. 113).

Community partnerships require openness, financial and human resources. These

relationships may take years of trial and error and a continuous commitment to understanding the

needs of communities. Museums workers must be willing to listen and adapt.

The *Maturity Model* is an assessment tool developed by *The Empathetic Museum*, a

collective of museum professionals who advocate for more diversity in museum practices.

Museums that are grounded on the notion of empathy [2] become more relevant to the people and

communities they serve. Museum consultant and author Gretchen Jennings (2016) discusses how

museums can develop institutional empathy through a series of policies and procedures. She

writes that:

The idea of empathy is part of an extended metaphor that is fairly familiar – comparing

an institution to a human person or body, e.g. speaking of the director as the head, or

speaking of the "educational arm" of an organization; or saying the collection is the

"heart" or "soul" of a museum (2016, para 3).

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[2] The authors opted to use the definition from the Merriam Webster dictionary. *Empathy: the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.* Their choice to present the concept of empathy "in its most common, generally accepted way" is a conscious decision of using more accessible language (Gretchen Jennings, personal communications, 2018).

The rubric lists five categories that should be considered and prioritized by intuitions: civic vision, institutional body language, community resonance, timely and sustainability and performance measures. Presented as a very accessible chart, this document allows institutions to evaluate their level of maturity in empathetic practice, ranging from *Regressive* to *Proactive* (Jennings et. al., 2016). The works by Jennings and her colleagues at the Empathetic Museum were crucial in helping me frame this study. I break down the chart's components below.

Civic vision refers to the role museums play in civil society and their ability to promote social justice in their communities. In the book *Cities, Museums and Soft Power,* Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg (2015) maintain that museums are anchor institutions that can:

> enhance the soft power [3] of cities when they are signifiers of pride and distinctiveness; when they are anchors providing stability, memory, employment and a forum for exchanging ideas; and when they are nodes in an international cultural network promoting lasting relationships among and between cultural workers (p. 20).

Similar to human body language, *Institutional Body Language* manifests the non-verbal messages conveyed by museums. How are the mandates of art institutions being expressed and interpreted? If people of color are absent at various levels of the institution – from governing bodies and staff to their choices in programming and community outreach policies – visitors get the message that the museum is not really a place for them. It is not enough for museums to have a program or an exhibition addressing cultural diversity; they need, first, to reassess their recruiting strategies (Jennings, Mann, Cullen, et.al., 2016, p. 1).

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[3] The authors define soft power as the ability to use intangible resources such as ideas, knowledge, values and culture to influence behavior.

Community Resonance refers to how connected a museum is to its community and how it empathizes with its needs. A mature and empathetic museum "acknowledges complicity in legacy of exclusion, racism, oppression, cultural appropriation and privilege" (Jennings et. al., 2016, p. 1) and seeks ways to reverse it in its affected communities. The authors note that the best way to achieve this is by having staff, board members, and other collaborators who reflect the racial diversity of their communities.

Timely and Sustainability suggest the ability of an institution to anticipate the needs of its communities and its continuous efforts to maintain long-lasting relationships with them. For instance, a museum that employs immigrants or partners with organizations that serve these communities, is able to be better informed about the issues that impact them and can react quickly to those issues. A museum might decide to host a talk as response to a new racist bill, or create an event that address other pressing issues. An empathetic museum understands that relationships with communities might take years to build, and that they require commitment and openness from museum workers.

Performance Measures refer to strategic planning. How will the museum assess its achievements? Who will be held accountable and what resources will be dedicated to institutional transformation and what training will be required? Art institutions often write reports to funding agencies, so the idea of measuring results is not new. However, in this case, museums should measure the actions taken to become an equitable organization and aim for a transparent process.

The *Maturity Model* is an excellent tool for assessing a museum's commitment to equity. Its simple chart and accessible language can also be used by museum workers to reflect on the

values of their institutions and help them advocate for change. However, as I advanced with my research, I found this model did not perfectly fit my questions regarding an education program or the role of museum educators, which I will discuss in more detail in the coming chapters.

Intersectionality and anti-racism in museums

Intersectionality reveals how overlapping social identities, such as race, gender, class, age, and ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, religion, mental disability among other forms of identity, intersect to shape the experience of each individual (Crenshaw, 1991). It proposes a helpful framework when thinking about migrant experiences, since it takes into account the numerous levels of privilege or oppression that individuals faces and how they affect their lives. Nicole Roberts (2014), whose research draws from queer theory, women of color feminist theory and museology, recommends that museum professionals reflect critically on the existing power dynamics in place and recognize "the structures we use in our museums that both organize our institutions and regulate social identities, such as race, class and gender" (p. 26). She states that a critically-reflective approach to museology can be used to re-imagine numerous levels of professional museum work, from the organizational structure of museums to the educational training of museum workers.

Marit Dewhurst, Director of Art Education and Associate Professor of Art and Museum Education at City College of New York, and Keonna Hendrick, School Programs Manager, cultural strategist, educator and author, they state that museum educators have the responsibility to question how White supremacy manifests in their interactions with works of art, visitors and colleagues in order to dismantle racism (Dewhurst & Hendrick, 2018). The authors observe that, "through the overt use of racist language or in subconscious assumptions about the preferences,

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interests, and expectations of specific racial identity groups, museum education is a site of significant racism" (p. 452). Dewhurst & Hendrick rely on Critical Race Theory (CRT) to identify and deconstruct racial biases:

> [Through] CRT's focus on naming, critiquing, and honoring the stories that have long been silenced by White supremacist thinking, we have found that museum educators engaged in critical introspection on their pedagogical and daily practices may be integral to the process of transforming spaces of oppression into sites of critical consciousness where racist practices are replaced by inclusive ideologies and experiences. (p. 454).

The authors assert us that it is essential that art museum educators engage critically when talking about the intersections between power and race with *all* visitors, since we are all affected by racial inequality. Failing to address these questions with White visitors (or only doing so when discussing works by artists of color), for instance, reinforces the idea of Whiteness as a neutral, and "not accessible for discussion, analysis, or interrogation" (p. 459).

Dewhurst & Hendrick note museum educators can create empowering learning experiences for all visitors through inquiry questions that reveal how racial identities are shaped by power, history, and context. Furthermore, the authors urge museum educators to engage in conversations with visitors of color about their needs and interests: "these conversations should provide opportunities to talk with, not to, audiences about how the museum can support learning" (p. 461).

Finally, they advise museum educators to seek out research and professional development opportunities dedicated to racial justice education in order to develop their skills and confidence

when addressing race. Scholar and museum educator Emily Grace Keenlyside (2019) maintains that critical workplace learning initiatives should be embraced by both educators and institutions. She writes that such training should be "intentional and self-reflexive and informed by a multiplicity of critical perspectives from within and beyond the art and museum worlds" (p. 13).

If we really want to address equity in museums, we also need to consider their colonial past (Clover, 2015). Lehrer, Milton and Patterson (2011) examine how we can address "difficult knowledge" in museums without further repelling visitors. They trace back to educational theorist Deborah Britzman, who distinguishes it from "lovely knowledge", the kind that reinforces what we already know. Difficult knowledge, on the other hand, is the kind knowledge that "does not fit" that forces us to confront what we know and disrupts master narratives by pointing to more nuanced aspects of history: "acknowledging that as North Americans we continue to benefit from the colonial projects that created our nations is one kind of difficult knowledge" (p. 8).

Natasha Reid (2014), executive director of the Visual Arts Centre in Montreal, calls our attention to the fact that museum educators are presented as the primary link between museums and their publics and are often responsible for embodying their institutions' multicultural efforts. However, she notes that the voices of educators, and more so for museum educators of color, tend to be placed in the margins of institutions. Drawing from Critical Race Theory, Reid maintains that museums can benefit from analyzing their educators' stories about culture, power privilege and difference within the institutions. Doing so, she argues, "can help awaken these institutions to their discriminatory tendencies and possibilities to engage in more critical, complex and transformative practices" (p. 32).

Look at Art. Get Paid. (LAAGP) is a socially engaged art project that recognizes the labor of communities of color and working class communities who do not visit art museums and pays them for their input as guest critics of the institution (Look at Art, Get Paid, n.d.). Initiated as a pilot project at the Rhode Island Art Museum in 2016 by artists Maia Chao and Josephine Devanbu, LAAGP centers the voices of marginalized communities, recognizes the value of their experiences and the work of "investing in a space that hasn't shown an investment in [them]" (Look at Art, Get Paid. FAQ, n.d.). Guest critics participated in a 30-minute phone interview, and were welcomed in the museum, where they had two hours to explore, followed by a one-hour open conversation with the artists. At the end of their visit, guest critics were paid for their time and their feedback was presented to the museum staff later. In an interview with Laura Raicovich (2019), Chao and Devanbu stated:

> [The] people whose vision is most needed to help re-imagine and reconfigure art museums can't be expected to donate their time or to assimilate in order to get a seat at the table. Paying people in cash to visit a museum names the elephant in the room: wealth, specifically the wealth accumulated by beneficiaries of the transatlantic slave trade, and the way this wealth continues to shape whose cultural production gets prioritized (Raicovich, 2019).

LAAGP questions the assumption that art museums are neutral spaces. Many of the guest critics expressed that the museum seemed to be designed with a specific profile in mind (White and affluent audiences), and that they did not feel welcomed or represented (Raicovich, 2019). By paying the guest critics for their time, LAAGP underlines the emotional labor of non-dominant communities in participating in spaces and conversations that erase their histories

and contributions. The project also addresses other priorities in art institutions concerning wealth and power: education, for instance, is often presented as one of the core missions of museums, but represents only a small fraction of their budgets (Raicovich, 2019).

In order for institutions to become truly inclusive, museums need to start by looking at the multiple identities of their staff. Kelly and Smith (2014) note in their report that simply having diversity on staff does not ensure that those individuals feel included; institutions need to focus instead on the "multiplicity of people's experience and identity" (p. 12). Similarly, art museums do not become culturally diverse by presenting an artist of color in their galleries, or hiring a person of color to fill their diversity quota; true inclusion needs to happen at all levels of organizations, from rethinking hiring strategies to the selection of community partners. As authors Wendy Ng, Syrus Marcus Ware and Alyssa Greenberg (2017) put it:

> Hiring a diverse staff can still result in tokenizing power dynamics, such as expecting a staff member to speak or act on behalf of their marginalized identity or maintaining White privileged staff members as the leaders and decision-makers (p. 149).

Ng, Ware and Greenberg suggest that museums diversify their current pools of museum workers by looking at program of studies and work experiences other than those traditionally associated with museums, and offer paid internships for students from marginalized communities. They incite museums to state their commitment to equity and inclusion through plain language and encourage the application of those who self-identify as Black, Indigenous, people of color, and people living with disabilities. In order to ensure the hiring and retention of diverse and marginalized identities, Ng, Ware and Greenberg recommend:

Training in anti-oppression, social justice frameworks and inclusive collecting,

displaying and pedagogical practices should be required of all museum personnel, and

made a mandatory part of orientation for new volunteers, staff, and board members.

Performance evaluations at all levels should include active listening and self-reflection

activities that support personal and professional growth as an ally. The creation of a

cross-departmental, cross-hierarchy committee with the budget and authority to address

justice, equity, and inclusion issues should be one measure of institutional accountability

(p. 150).

In regards to systemic inclusion, author Chris Taylor (2017) argues that museums can

become socially responsible institutions by focusing internally and "by shifting organizational

cultures, recognizing and changing exclusionary patterns of behavior, and increasing

intercultural competency of staff" (p. 160). For Taylor, an inclusive work culture is one where

people feel comfortable coming to work as they are, and where the workplace embraces and

accepts the multiple identities that make up an individual.

To conclude, the literature I discussed provided the foundation to my thesis project. The

authors I selected write about multiculturalism, critical multiculturalism and the social role of

museums, as well as pose questions about citizenship, social justice, critical approaches to

language, intersectionality, and anti-racist museum education. All their texts underscore the need

to examine issues of power related to race, language and culture. New voices will be introduced

in the following chapters to support my findings.

The following chapter describes the method and methodology that I employed to conduct

this case study.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Case study methodology produces in-depth knowledge, descriptions and analysis of a case by using multiple sources of data, such as interviews, observations, documents and artifacts (Yin, 2014). I chose to study the *New New Yorkers* program at the Queens Museum because its unique structure allowed me to better understand the steps involved in the creating inclusive program geared towards adult immigrants in art institutions. According to Yin:

> A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. In other words, you would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study (p. 16).

Yin (1994) divides case studies in three research strategies: explanatory, exploratory or descriptive. In order to differentiate these categories, the most important thing is to refer to the research question: "why" and "how" questions tend to be explanatory, while "what" questions are usually exploratory. The most appropriate approach for this study was to look at these strategies in a pluralistic way, since each can be used for all three purposes and produces a variety of evidence.

Research question and sub-questions

How does the Queens Museum respond to the increasing need to address racism, inclusion and diversity, both within its structure and visitors?

How the *New New Yorkers* program help immigrants and people of color develop a sense of belonging in the museum and in their (own/new) communities?

What is the role of art educators within this institution? Do they contribute to facilitate change or not?

The case, the population and procedures

The *New New Yorkers* is a collaboration between the Queens Museum and Queens Library that provides educational arts-oriented classes to immigrant adult communities in Queens, New York. The program focuses on arts, technology and English language acquisition and the classes are free and taught in Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin, Korean, Turkish and Bengali and others (Queens Museum, n.d.). The classes provide "valuable life skills through the arts" (Queens Museum, n.d.) as well as cross-cultural-experiences; visual arts literacy; technological literacy; English language literacy and opportunities for self-direction and initiative. In 2017-2018, the program offered 14 unique courses, ranging from six to eight-week multi-workshop courses, one-day workshops, field trips and public events in partnership with other organizations. The program also offered a four-month mentorship program for participants who wished to further develop their art practice. Through an open call, participants and other Queens residents could receive intensive individualized support from mentors, resulting in a final

exhibition in the Queens Museum's *Unisphere Gallery*. Furthermore, many participants of the *New New Yorkers* go on to become teaching artists, demonstrating the success of the program.

To obtain in-depth knowledge about the cases, Yin recommends researchers use multiple forms of data collection: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. I have listed below the methods I used in this study:

Participant observation

As a participant observer, the researcher can undertake multiple roles in the case study. This technique that has been widely popular in anthropological studies and can easily be used in organizations. Yin posits that this is a great opportunity to gain access to events or groups that would be inaccessible in other circumstances. I participated in the Advanced Sculpture Workshop (Taller de Escultura Avanzada) with the Brazilian artist Liene Bosquê. The classes were in Spanish and geared towards the Latino community. Given my knowledge of the language and my Latin-American origins, I believe that my presence was less disruptive to the group and allowed me to have a better understanding of the dynamics of the programs they offer. It enabled me to interact with other staff members of the museum and to participate in activities offered by different departments. I became familiar with the architecture and finding my way around and to the museum.

The course started on September 17, 2017 with 20 participants of all ages (most of them were over 30), and 18 of them completed the course on November 12. Bosquê is a Brazilian artist based in Queens and her work investigates sensory experiences within architectural, urban and personal spaces, emphasizing their context, memory and history. She received an MFA from

the Art Institute School of Chicago in 2011, a BFA from the Sao Paulo State University, and a

BA in Architecture and Urbanism from Mackenzie University in Brazil. She has exhibited in

museums and galleries in Brazil, Portugal, Turkey, Korea and the United States.[4]

In the workshop, we learned several casting techniques and used materials such as plaster

and *papier maché* to create sculptures using everyday objects such as water bottles, paper cups,

vegetables, nuts, etc. After each class, Bosquê posted notes and photos on the class blog,

reminding us of the steps to follow. Some of the photos illustrate the process, some show

participants working and others are visual reminders of a brand of clay, for instance, in case

anyone was interested in continuing the process at home.

The classes took place on Sundays from 1-4pm at the *New New Yorkers* studio, located

on the second floor of the museum. As with many art museums, the studios are not visible to

most visitors – you need to know where you are going in order to find them. I attended four out

of the eight classes, because I was working in Montreal and the travel funding I received from

the university was not enough to cover my stay in New York. I also visited the museum at

different times of the year, both before and after the sculpture workshop. During summer and

fall, the museum offers many public activities, and more than once I encountered people

participating in events and exhibitions in the *Community Partnership Gallery*, which I would

cross to get to the studio. Throughout the course, we visited two exhibitions at the Queens

Museum, Patty Chang's *Wandering Lake* and *Never Built New York*, where Bosquê called our

attention to various casting techniques and how Chang's sculptures had inspired the workshop.

On week four, there was a field trip to the Noguchi Museum and the Socrates Sculpture Park,

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[4] Retrieved from the artist's website: http://www.lienebosque.com/

both located in Astoria, Queens. Bosquê led the visits, asking questions about the works and pointing to the particularities of each sculpture. By being on site, I was able to witness the care and dedication the educators put in their work for each class.

Since 2008, the program has been funded by the Altman Foundation. With a strong interest in the arts and a particular focus on matters of access and inclusion, the foundation promotes arts and culture for New Yorkers, with an emphasis on underserved communities (Altman Foundation, n.d.). As we can see on foundation's website, the *New New Yorkers* has applied for and received funding annually, with a couple of exceptions.[5] In my experience coordinating art programs, such funding models put a lot of pressure on the staff, who depend on grant writing and reports to secure their jobs. The grant amount allocated to the program is also displayed on the foundation website, ranging from $85 000 to $125 000 per year. [6]

Documentation and archival records

The advantages of working with documentation and archival records are that they are stable and have a broad coverage (Yin, 2014). I spent a considerable amount of time looking at the online documentation from past educational and community projects from the program to get better acquainted with the work that was done in the past and with what communities. The program's website is a dynamic and important resource for students and educators alike. Dating back to 2012, the website serves as an archive of all courses. Earlier posts consist of the date, name of instructors, a brief overview of the class, solely in the language it was taught in as well

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[5] In 2010, the foundation funded the program for 16 months and in 2012, for three years.
[6] The discrepancy between each year could represent the annual salary of one or more part-time educators.

as pictures[7]. But, as the years, passed, the website evolved and the posts became an integral part of the course. Today, each post is bilingual and has detailed descriptions of techniques and materials used, often serving as class notes. The posts are both instructive and personal, with encouraging messages and reminders to students. Since most of the workshop is recorded on the blog, it also means that if participants miss a class, they will be able to follow up on their own. In this study, I looked at the documentation of two courses in Spanish: *Advanced Sculpture in Spanish* (2017) and *Financial Playground and Art* (2019).

Interviews

According to Yin, interviews are of the most important sources of information for a case study. Open-ended questions allow the researcher to question and gather more fluid opinions and insights that might lead to further the research. I conducted semi-structured interviews with four Latin-American teaching artists: two in Spanish and two in English and I included the original transcripts in Spanish, followed by their translations. The interviews were recorded and lasted an average of 25 minutes. All the quotes I use from educators in this study come from these interviews. I decided to focus only on the educators because I wanted to maintain a respectful distance from the participants and not make them feel like they were being studied. I chose these four particular interviewees because they were the ones I interacted with the most during the workshop. I also met other educators, but preferred to restrain the interviews to those of Latin-American origins. I asked the following questions:

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[7] For example, in 2012, a post from the Silk screening class had no more than 5 lines, as opposed to more recent posts that are often composed by multiple paragraphs as seen in: http://www.newnewyorkers.org/?p=4187

- What is your involvement with the Museum and its communities? Were you familiar with the *New New Yorkers* before you started to teach here?

- Have you taught that subject elsewhere in another language? If so, what were the differences in teaching this version of the course?

- Aside from technique, are there any particular concerns that you address in your class/workshop?

- Do participants continue to take part in other classes in the program?

- How does the program measure success?

Finally, I have included a non-exhaustive list of what I observed:

- Pedagogical documents and staff training: Who receives training, by whom, what does it consist of?

- Involvement with the community: How are the community partners selected? Are they selected in terms of geographical location or because of philosophical affinities? How long do the programs last and how are they assessed?

- Programming: exhibitions, community events, public programs and activities (families, kids, etc.).

Data coding

Yin advises that theory development should be the first step of the study's design, followed by the selection of case(s) and the protocol for data collection. After I transcribed the interviews with the four art educators, I identified four initial themes: dignity, inclusion, community and accessibility. This led me to reviewing the literature I had initially selected and to conduct a second

round of coding of the interviews. **Pedagogy, community, safety and identity** (as artists and immigrants) were the main themes addressed by the participants in relation to their work and experience in the museum.

Photographs

I chose to include some photographs in two chapters in order to give a better sense of what I experienced at the museum. All images are courtesy of Mariella Suarez, who photographed each of the workshops. I chose not to document the classes because I did not want to disturb the participants by making them feel observed.

Limitations

The study was limited to one art program at the museum, and examined how it recruited participants, chose the teaching artists, decided on the topics to be discussed and how it reflected critical multicultural education. Given the scope of the study, I chose to examine one program in depth.

I will describe the data I collected using this methodology in chapters 3 and 4. In chapter 3, I will address the role of the museum in helping immigrants build community and contextualize the significance of their work. In chapter 4, I will discuss issues and pedagogy and the role of art educators.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ROLE OF THE ART MUSEUM, IMMIGRANT IDENTITY
AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

In this chapter, I will discuss the role of the museum in supporting their communities. I have included photos in order to give the reader a visual sense of what I experienced. Before going further, however, I would like to briefly remind the reader of the political climate in which I conducted this study.

President Trump and his anti-immigration agenda

President Donald Trump had been elected, and within his first days in office, he emphasized that immigration was at the core of his administration, by framing immigrants, regardless of their status, as a threat to American economic and national security (Fritze, 2019). The level of attention Trump has given to immigration is unprecedented. According to the Migration Policy Institute (2018), from his inauguration in January 2017 to July 2018, President Trump signed nine executive orders related to immigration, including: building a wall along the entire southern border; hiring 15 000 additional interior and border enforcement officers, cutting legal immigration, deporting millions of unauthorized immigrants, banning refugee admission from seven Muslin-majority countries[8]; eliminating sanctuary cities (cities that refuse to actively collaborate with immigration enforcement officers to detain unauthorized immigrants) and announced a travel ban on visitors, immigrants and refugees from many Muslim-majority countries. In May 2018, the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security

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[8] The original order was issued on January 2017 and barred people from seven countries from entering the US for a period of 90 days for Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and Libya. BBC News, June 26, 2018.

implemented a "zero tolerance" policy at the border, criminally prosecuting those who crossed it without authorization. This policy led to the detention and separation of families with children from their searching asylum. Thousands of children were, and still are, detained in immigrant facilities, while their parents were locked up far away. A government's status report declared that 2 654 children were initially detained, but many believe that the actual number could be thousands more than what was declared (Jordan, 2019). According to the American Civil Liberties Union (n.d.), these detained children[9] were sent to 121 detention centres in 17 states throughout the country with an average of 154 days of detention. The lack of an appropriate tracking system has made it difficult to reunite all families. Meanwhile, the Trump administration also terminated the Temporary Protected Status for hundreds of thousands of migrants, many who had been living in the United States for decades and announced the end of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which offered protection from removal and work authorization to nearly 700 000 individuals who had been brought to the United States as children.

The Migration Policy Institute published a report pointing to the impact that such dehumanizing rhetoric about immigration and policy changes have had:

> As immigrant communities try to stay "under the radar," there have been reports of a dip in crime reporting, including on domestic violence; fewer applications for public benefits to which immigrants of their U.S.-born children are entitled; and rising no-shows at health care appointments. While such behavioral changes are hard to document systematically, these accounts suggest a significant change in the way that the estimated

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[9] For a closer look at the origins, age and gender of the children, see American Civil Liberties Union : https://www.aclu.org/issues/immigrants-rights/immigrants-rights-and-detention/family-separation

11 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States live their lives. (Pierce, Bolter &

Steele, 2018 p. 14)

Thus, the feelings of anxiety, isolation, fear and vulnerability are palpable within the

immigrant communities in the United States. According to the Census, 55.8% of people in

Queens speak a language other than English spoken at home – 28.1% Latinos or Hispanic. Here,

the museum plays an even more important role. The Queens Museum responds to the needs and

concerns of their communities in implicit and explicit ways. As I mentioned earlier, the museum

suspended its activities on Inauguration Day and, instead, offered its spaces for poster-making

for future protests. Sadly, this gesture of solidarity might have contributed to the departure of

former politically outspoken executive director Laura Raicovich. During her three-year tenure,

Raicovich was continually vocal about her support for immigrants, but her resignation[10] in early

2018 sheds light onto the complicated power dynamic between museum professionals, board

members and funding agencies (Raicovich, 2018).

Why museums?

Museums are powerful institutions that influence our cultural identity and reinforce the

values of individuals, communities and nations (Watson, 2007). As agents in the creation of

cultural identity, museums have a social responsibility and play a significant role in the

construction and dissemination of dominant narratives (Sandell, 2007). As an art educator, I

believe we have the responsibility to address the realities of multiple audiences, which includes,

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[10] For more details on the political clash of Raicovich and the museum's board which lead to her resignation, Brian Boucher gives an excellent summary at: https://news.artnet.com/art-world/queens-museum-director-raicovich-departs-political-leanings-1208804

of course, those of non-dominant groups. Inclusion should be at the forefront of what we do, whether it is in the classroom or in the gallery. In this section, I will discuss why art museums are in a privileged position to do so, using the *New New Yorkers* program as an example of radical and inclusive programming.

Figure 1: Artist Liene Bosquê demonstrates a casting technique to workshop participants at the *New New Yorkers* studio. Photo: Mariella Suarez, 2017

In their 2019 book *Museum Activism*, Janes and Sandell argue that we are living at a crucial time in the evolution of museum thinking and practice. The authors point to the rise of what they call "museum activism" in the past decade and define it as a practice "shaped out of

ethically-informed values, that is intended to bring about political, social and environmental change" (p. 1). Janes and Sandell direct our attention to the increasing recognition that museums are not neutral, and that contemporary issues need to become the central feature of museum practice.

Also in 2019, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) proposed a new definition of museums. ICOM is a major international organization that counts 40 000 members in 140 countries, providing museums and museum professionals with "a shared ethical framework for museums, a forum for professional discussions, and a platform for questioning and celebrating heritage and collections in museums and cultural institutions" (Sandhal, 2018, p. 3). The alternative definition is as follows:

> Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing (ICOM, 2019, para 3).

This new proposition recognizes the paradigm shifts and underlines the what ICOM

believes to be the core mandate of museums for the 21st century.[11] The organization states that while the definition should describe the essence of what a museum is, it is also meant as an ideal that institutions can look up to.

Democratic institutions

Clover (2015) asserts that through their programming, museums may "trouble identity, decolonize, mock, revisualize, tell alternative stories, reorient authoritative practice, interrogate intolerance and privilege and stimulate critical literacies" (p. 301). I spoke to Daniel, the *New New Yorkers* program manager, about the importance of having immigrants teaching the courses and he stated:

> I don't think you can understand the trauma of being an immigrant, the trauma of having roots elsewhere, if you have not lived it – that is why this program is run by immigrants, for immigrants. It gives the program a special character, because we are the same and we went through and go through the same good and bad things, every single day (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

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[11] For more details, see the Report and recommendation document in https://icom.museum/en/activities/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/

Figure 2: Participants during the *Advanced Sculpture Workshop in Spanish* at the *New New Yorkers* studio. Photo: Mariella Suarez, 2017

Daniel's words underline the need for empathy, compassion and critical multiculturalism in the museum. According to Acuff (2013), critical multicultural education helps destabilize master narratives, as it allows for non-dominant groups to place their cultural frames of reference in the foreground. She argues that "curriculum, courses and institutional programs can function as counter-narratives" (p. 221). If museums are to embody their role as democratic institutions, they need to address issues related to the racialization of immigration and its connection to economic and labor issues (Desai, 2010).

Elizabeth Crooke remarks that the notion of community has gained relevance in museums and questions of access, participation and representation have become regular concerns for professionals in the area (Crooke, 2007). More and more, museums are being asked how they are

serving their communities, representing them and assessing their needs. Crooke maintains that questions around community have become central to the current evaluation of museums, where the quantity of visits is no longer the only indicator of success, but also the nature of the experience and the impact museums have on their locality (Crooke, 2007). "Museums and community must be considered in relation to issues of identity, representation and the role museums have in constructing a sense of place, belonging and self" (p. 15). She posits that museums impact the way we see ourselves and how we participate in culture. Thus, when museums actively commit to making space for marginalized communities, through exhibitions or programming, museums are reinforcing people's sense of self, saying that these communities are heard and that their voices matter. Crooke says that since museums contribute to cultural life, they can provide the connections between community concerns.

What do we mean by immigrants?

Authors Jill Stein, Cecilia Garibay and Kathryn Wilson (2008) note that immigration is not a homogenous experience. People have different relationships to an "immigrant' identity depending on when and why they moved, where they live, how they have acculturated to the host culture, their English language skills and connections to their home countries, among other factors. Such distinction is important because it highlights the fact that cultural identity is not static, while emphasizing the intersectional nature of our experiences with museums:

> Museums have historically been built around Western paradigms and perspectives, and
> have typically engaged upper and middle classes more than working class communities;
> thus, issues of race and class may play a stronger role in the accessibility and relevance of
> museums to individuals than does their country of birth (p. 182).

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The authors list some of the common-held experiences regarding immigrants, which I believe are important to underline in order to consider programs that might respond to their needs:

> Immigrants often straddle two or more worlds— bi-cultural and/or bilingual—and can flow relatively easily between them; all immigrants experience some degree of cultural displacement; immigrants may be more likely to feel a sense of difference, potentially adhering to values, beliefs, social structures, and other attitudes not necessarily aligned with the dominant culture. Immigrant families may experience tension between retaining cultural heritage and values, often held more strongly by immigrants' family members, and pressure or desire to incorporate into the dominant culture (p. 182).

Stein, Garibay and Wilson claim that it is essential for museum professionals to understand these nuances and complexities of specific groups in open dialogue with communities since "values, perspectives, and needs may differ greatly from group to group, as well as within a particular cultural group, and many other factors are relevant aside from racial or ethnic background" (p. 183).

Figure 3: Participants during the *Advanced Sculpture Workshop in Spanish* at the *New New Yorkers* studio. Photo: Mariella Suarez, 2017

Marianna Pegno (2019), curator of Community Engagement at Tucson Museum of Art, asserts that program development focusing on community-based collaboration and sustained engagement may transform museums into responsive institutions and sites of activated engagement. When engaging with new communities and new community partners, she recommends long-term, sustained engagement (as opposed to single-visit programs), with multiple points of contact, both inside and outside the museum.

New New Yorkers' first and main partner is the Queens Public Library (QPL), one of the largest public library systems in the United States and "dedicated to serving the most ethnically and culturally diverse area in the country" (Queens Public Library, n.d., QPL overview, para. 1). QPL consists of 65 locations, including branch libraries, a Central Library, seven adult learning centres, a technology center, two universal pre-kindergartens, and two teen centres. Immigrant Movement International (IMI Corona) is another partner organization that is firmly anchored in the community and offers data about new comers, classified by languages. Other partnerships include the artist in residence program Flux Factory, also based in Queens, where the program may reach other communities and as artists. Traci Quinn and Marianna Pegno (2014) hold that non-hierarchical museum education practices support the museum's commitment to the community – museum workers need to be open and flexible to hearing what their partners need and responding in a timely and relevant manner.

Melanie A. Adams (2017), Director of the Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum, advises museum workers to get to know their communities, as well as to when and how to ask questions that will move them towards equitable organizations. According to the *New New Yorker* program manager, Daniel, they try to assess needs and partnerships on a case-by-case basis. He said:

> Depending on the language, the program may have different needs to serve in those
> communities. That is why we try to listen. What do they need and what could we offer at
> that moment? There is a survey that we give at the end of the class, but also just by
> talking to the people and asking what they need (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

Daniel stressed that it is important for museum workers to be attuned to the needs of participants. While surveys are important and may provide insightful information, to fully understand what our audiences need, we need to listen. And that might be the most enriching and most difficult part of the work, because to truly listen we must be self-reflective and take into consideration our biases and positions (of authority, privilege, power, or lack of it) which can be very uncomfortable. To truly listen also means to have a shared language, to have empathy and be able to discern between what is being said and not said. For museum educators, to be able to fully listen to participants' needs also means having the resources to do so – the time and the energy. Listening is the very first step. Then what? In her book *Radical Transformational Leadership*, Monica Sharma (2017) argues that dignity, equity and compassion anchor equitable and sustainable transformation. Empathy helps us listen, but it is compassion that pushes us to act.

The *New New Yorkers* tries to respond to the needs of their participants through the content of the courses, but also with regard to their duration. Between 2017 and 2018, the program served over 450 participants through single and multi-day courses as well as field trips. The surveys assess whether participants enjoyed the course, if their expectations were met and what other topics interest them. Daniel mentioned that one-time workshops allow them to engage with participants who might not be able to commit to multi-week courses. He says that "most will only come once, but some of them might be interested in taking other classes and become part of the program network, and recommend the classes to some other people" (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

Educators and museum workers play an important part in creating a space where non-dominant audiences may feel welcome, but institutions need to have a real commitment to inclusion and equity for this to happen. That means allocating resources to the creation of programs, reviewing their hiring practices and having realistic expectations regarding time and results. In my experience both as an educator and as a member of a board of directors of an artist-run centre in Montreal, putting the burden of "inclusion" on one worker, or expecting for this person to speak for many diverse communities, leads to isolation, emotional and physical exhaustion.

Given their colonial history, it is not surprising museums are still predominately white institutions (Clover, 2015). It is important to consider how institutional racism[12] shapes our everyday interactions if we are committed to building equitable change. Ahmed (2012) invites us to think of it more as a way of doing rather than a form of inaction:

> We might wish to examine how institutions become white through the positing of some bodies rather than others as the subjects of the institution (for whom and by whom the institution is shaped). Racism would not be evident in what we fail to do but in what we have already done, whereby this ''we'' is an effect of the doing (p. 45).

Natasha Reid (2014) reminds us of the lack of museum workers of color. She calls our attention to the "color-blindness" regarding museum hiring practices and advises that "the positions associated with decision making privileges, such as directors of education, curators,

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[12] Solid Ground (2020) defines it as the systematic distribution of resources, power and opportunity in our society to the benefit of people who are White and the exclusion of people of color.

museum directors, and grant writers, are the positions that need to become far more culturally diverse" (p. 24). She continues:

> It is certainly not necessary to identify as a museum professional of color to generate change in relation to multicultural concerns in museums, but diversity in museum staff brings diversified interests and the potential for more active attempts to promote multicultural efforts (p. 23)

Ahmed (2012) suggests that recruitment reflects how an institution sees itself and what it is working towards.

> When we begin to think about the institutionalization of whiteness, we are asking how whiteness becomes the ideal of an organization […]. Some bodies more than others are recruited, those that can inherit and reproduce the character of the organization, by reflecting its image back to itself, by having a ''good likeness.'' (p. 40).

Jennings' (2013) notion of "institutional body language" addresses how museums' commitment to diverse audiences is reflected through their non-verbal communication. It includes the make up of their staff and board members, the content of their collections, exhibitions, programs and advertisement, among others.

> In the context of diversity and inclusion, museums' body language often conveys the message that the museum is for the White, the wealthy, and the powerful. Such museums may have written diversity policies and goals, but the image presented to the public by the institution in its many manifestations speaks more loudly than written goals or mission statements. People of color and other marginalized communities get the

message—this place is not really for or about us—and stay away (Jennings et.al., 2016,

p. 2).

I believe that creating and maintaining a program that is fully devoted to immigrants, and run by immigrants is a sign of understanding and commitment to the needs of the museum's community.

Figure 4: Participants during the *Advanced Sculpture Workshop in Spanish* at the *New New Yorkers* studio. Photo: Mariella Suarez, 2017

Rebuilding networks

In my interviews with the teachers, they said that (re)building community and finding a sense of belonging were important reasons why people participated in the *New New Yorkers* program. According to Daniel, some people come to the program because they need to relax and make friends. He says:

Classes are more than just learning something. In classes you socialize, and you have parties; you rebuild your network and create the 'second families' that you have as an immigrant in this country. Taking classes is the best way to do that (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

As a participant observer, I felt an instant sense of community in class. During those hours, I would forget that I was in Queens - I could have been my hometown, Belém, or at Boca, in Buenos Aires. It was warm and familiar. Perhaps it was my ease with the Spanish language, or the fact that some of the participants seemed to know each other for a long time. I would often laugh uncontrollably at some of the women's racy jokes. I was far from being a model student, often late with assignments, as I was too caught up chatting with other participants. We talked about food, our hometowns, linguistic expression- they were curious about both Brazil and Canada.

Safety and identity as an artist and as an immigrant

Safety was another theme that emerged often from the interviews. The notion of 'safe space' originated in the 1970s women's and LGBT movement and referred to a physical space where people could meet and share their experiences without the risk of discrimination, threat or

hatred (Flensner & Von der Lippe, 2019). It refers to safety from physical violence as well as to a place where one can experience their identity without feeling threatened or experiencing micro-aggressions. One of the ways the program offered safety to its participants was by encouraging them to express themselves freely, in their native language, without concerns about their proficiency in English. It also offers a place where they are the majority and do not feel culturally inadequate.

Emilia is both a student and a teaching artist. She first arrived at the Queens Museum through *Cool Culture,* a non-profit organization that gives free family passes to underserved families so they can visit to various city museums. After living abroad, she was looking for a sense of community. She found out about the program and signed up for a class. She took a workshop about memories in Queens and really enjoyed it. For her, the program allowed her to come in as she is:

> I like being in a room with people like me, who look like me. I have to code-switch[13] a lot my job – it's a White world there. And then I come here, my people are immigrants, people who really get me and I don't have to code-switch, tone it down and not be so animated (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

For people of color, and, especially for those whose first languages are non-dominant, being able to occupy a space where you are the norm, where you do not have to adjust and to self-regulate can be extremely empowering. As Ahmed (2012) writes it:

> It can be surprising and energizing not to feel so singular. When you inhabit a sea of

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[13] Refers to both linguistic and behavioral change with regard to Whiteness and dominant language (e.g Standard English)

brownness as a person of color, you might realize the effort of your previous inhabitance, the effort of not noticing what is around you. It is like how you can feel the ''weight'' of tiredness most acutely as the tiredness leaves you. To become conscious of how things leave you is to become conscious of those things. We might become even more aware of whiteness as wearing when we leave the spaces of whiteness (p. 36).

Figure 5: Some of the artworks produced by participants during the *Advanced Sculpture Workshop*. Photo: Mariella Suarez, 2017

Another way in which the program offered safety to its participants was by allowing them to share as much, or as little, personal information as they wished. When registering for a class, students are not expected to present ID cards or to provide an address. The program has a database of emails that they use to announce activities and workshops with those who are interested, but there is no pressure to disclose anything with which they are not comfortable. That is because the museum acknowledges that (potential) participants might be undocumented and asking them to provide IDs would only further marginalize them. I believe this to be a strong commitment to the needs and a deep understanding of the reality of the diverse communities of Queens. I soon realized with my first visit to the museum that I simply had to mention that I was going to the *New New Yorkers'* workshop and the person at the entrance would give me a sticker. But it did take me a few visits before I stopped reaching for a card or letter from my purse. No awkward pause, no questions asked – a sticker and I was free to go to class or wander around the museum, as I often did. I believe that this is one of the most important steps to creating a feeling of belonging in an art museum. As an educator, I remind participants that they can come back and that they're welcome, even if this message is the only thing they take away from a visit.

Marta has a BFA from Peru and was completing an MA in art therapy when she discovered the program. She started as a student, then volunteered and got more involved over time. She now works as a teaching artist and as an assistant to other teaching artists. As an artist, she was looking for a place where she could continue to make art, but as a student who also had to work, there was little time for it. When she discovered that there were free classes at the museum, she signed up. She says:

Era un lugar en donde se podía conocer a otros artistas, personas a las que les gusta el arte y creamos un hermoso grupo, una comunidad latina de amantes del arte que promueven eventos artísticos. Y los adultos traen a sus hijos, por lo que se convierte en una actividad familiar. Les digo a los participantes que no es solo para ellos, sino para toda su familia, que deben tener en cuenta que todos somos inmigrantes y estamos al mismo nivel.

It was a place where I could meet other artists, people who like art and we created a beautiful group, a Latino community of art lovers who promote art events. And adults bring their children, so it becomes a family activity. I tell the participants that it's not only for them, but for their entire families, that they should keep in mind that we're all immigrants and all at the same level (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

It is interesting to see how the teaching artists try to recreate the sense of belonging they felt as students. It reflects the rationale of the program, which aims to hire their educators from people who have already participated in the program. I believe this reinforces the sense of belonging among the staff as well.

For Emilia, it was important to be part of a vibrant artist community and the museum offered her the opportunity to stay active. She says:

As an artist I think it's important to practice your craft and be among other artists. And we're fun! Some people don't get it, but when you're creative, you think outside of the box a lot, sometimes you're not so conventional. And there are so many events here – I come to those too (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

Indeed, there were many events happening inside and outside the museum while I was there. During the summer, there were outdoor film screenings on Thursdays, and on Sundays, there were bands playing and free art workshops offered to people of all ages. In 2017, artist Nick Kozak participated in the Studio in the Park residency program, which provides an artist with a mobile studio on the lawn of the museum. He created *Citizens of the Earth*, a performative work made in collaboration with New York City public school students. One day before going to class, I stopped by and a couple of teenagers asked me a series of interesting questions, took my picture and printed a passport that was valid for as long as I wanted. In class, participants often brought snacks that they shared with others. Food, as community workers know, often brings people together and creates a joyful atmosphere. At the last day of class, students and teaching artists made a potluck with typical foods from their countries and seemed very happy to be there. Each student received a diploma after presenting their works to the class and celebrated the end of the workshop with pictures, food and juice. As I noticed from the blog documentation of previous courses, all classes in the program end with food and celebration.

As a teaching artist at the Queens Museum, Marta believes that the program is important because it allows for people to connect with art:

Si este tipo de programa no existiera, tal vez [los participantes] no tendrían acceso al arte en general, a menos que fueran a un museo. Muchas son personas de bajos ingresos y tienen la necesidad de hacer arte, les gusta y están muy felices cuando toman estos talleres.

If this kind of program didn't exist, maybe [the participants] wouldn't have access to art in general, unless they went to a museum. Many are low-income people and they have a

need to make art, they like it and are very happy when they're taking these workshops (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

The educators encourage students to pursue their practice once the courses are finished, offering economical alternatives to materials. Students can refer to the blog for practical tips and a list of options of brands that they can use and how they would be able to create their own workshops at home if they wish to do so. Marta says:

Estamos trabajando con personas de bajos recursos y, por lo tanto, si quieren comenzar su propio negocio de serigrafía les damos alternativas: en lugar de usar este material, que es costoso, podemos obtener los mismos resultados con este, que es más asequible - la creatividad latina, digamos.

We're working with low-income people and so if they want to start their own silk-screening business, we give them alternatives: instead of using this material, which is expensive, we can have the same results using this one, that is more affordable - the Latino creativity, let's say (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

Finally, museums influence our cultural identities and values on multiple levels (Watson, 2007). Museums tell stories through their exhibition and education programming, and have the choice of questioning or reinforcing the dominant narratives of who belongs in their spaces and whose voices matter. The *New New Yorkers* program is a unique example of radical and inclusive programming, where participants are invited to come *as they are*, with their beliefs, attitudes and languages, without having to self-regulate. In this chapter, I looked at how program

educators create a safe and welcoming environment for immigrants despite the current hostile

political climate, by showing up and building community.

The next chapter focuses on pedagogy, language and anti-racist education in the museum.

CHAPTER FOUR

PEDAGOGY, LANGUAGE AND FREEDOM

In this chapter, I will discuss the significance of language in the construction of identity, and the role of the museum in identifying and dismantling racism. I will also discuss how notions of emancipatory pedagogy relate to the work of museums educators, and more specifically, the work done at the *New New Yorkers* program. I will look at what is taught, how it is taught and by whom.

Adams (2017) suggests that museum workers can challenge racial norms and create positive community change by considering the following statements with the creation of each new program:

> [A museum can] create experiences that dismantle racism instead of putting it on display; encourage diverse narratives that benefit people of color without having to appeal to the interest of Whites; move away from narratives as told through the eyes of the oppressor; allow artists of color to question the dominant narrative and remain in the conversation (p. 294).

The program addresses these four points in many ways. It helps to create experiences that dismantle racism instead of putting it on display by inviting teaching artists from marginalized communities to share their knowledge and artistic practices with participants. It is a program created by immigrants, for immigrants. Their experiences are not mediated by an oppressive lens and they have autonomy to choose which narratives they will share and what will be part of the curriculum. The teaching artists reflect a vast diversity of backgrounds and practices and none of

them is believed to represent "the voice" of an entire culture, which is often expected from artists of color in a White setting (the "token" artist, cultural worker, educator). Art educators and participants co-create knowledge through continuous dialogue.

Figure 6: Participant presents his artworks at the last day of *Advanced Sculpture Workshop in Spanish*. Photo: Mariella Suarez, 2017.

The importance of language

"Like desire, language disrupts, refuses to be contained within boundaries. It speaks itself against our will, in words and thoughts that intrude, even violate the most private spaces of mind

and body" (hooks, 1994, p. 167). As illustrated by intellectual, feminist theorist, cultural critic, artist, and writer bell hooks' words, language is an intimate and potent tool that shapes us; it can also be a place of power, struggle and violence. Gai Harrison (2006), lecturer at the School of Social Work and Human Services, University of Queensland, remarks that language is a social practice that cannot be separated from people's lives; it has an impact on our social world, while it is also shaped by the social world. She states that beyond its role in communication, language plays an active role in the processes of socialization, identity formation, cultural affiliation, social relations and knowledge production.

Macedo and Bartolomé (2014) remind us of the role of primary languages in the construction of cultural identities. They assert that language is the only means through which one comes to consciousness, either denying or asserting the life histories and experiences of those who speak it. The authors also underscore the need to approach education from an awareness of race, class and gender, where both teachers and students unlearn racism and consider issues of colonization and decolonization. They state that educators need to be equipped with critical tools in order to understand how language can reflect "ideologically construct[ed] realities that veil the raw racism that devalue, disconfirm, and poison other cultural identities." (p. 26).

During the interview with the educators, I asked them what role language played for them when they first started attending the program as students. Emilia's testimonial below sheds light on the intersection of racism, colonialism and non-dominant language communities:

Technically, I am not an immigrant because I was born in New York. But, I grew up in Puerto Rico, so when I moved back, I heard comments like 'your accent is heavy, this is America', even though it is a territory of the USA. So, in my heart, I'm an immigrant

because, culturally and linguistically, Puerto Rico is not the US. (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

She continues:

I like coming here because I feel a sense of community with other immigrants, Latinos and non-Latinos, which is very important in a big city with millions of people like New York, where a lot of people feel disenfranchised and disconnected. People get me, I get them and we're in it together. I think that's very important and especially with the political climate now, with the attacks on immigrants, foreigners, and the xenophobia and racism (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

As we can notice in Emilia's words, language plays an important role in identity construction. Emilia says that because of her accent in English, she feels singled out as not belonging. Macedo and Bartolomé (2014) assert that the for the majority of immigrants and other subordinated groups in the United States, coming to voice "represents a process through which they come to know what it means to be at the periphery of the intimate and yet fragile relationship between the colonizer and the colonized" (p. 25). They go on to say that in this process the colonized realizes that voice is not given by the colonizer, but that is a human and democratic right.

Eminent Tunisian author Albert Memmi (1965) calls this process a "linguistic drama" (p. 107). He argues that possessing two languages is not only a matter of having two tools, but that it also means participating in "two physical and cultural realms" (p. 107). It is an inner conflict,

resulting from the process of suppressing one's first language, which also means suppressing one's most intimate part of identity. Memmi writes:

> The colonized's mother tongue, that which is sustained by [their] feeling, emotions, and dreams, that in which [their] tenderness and wonder are expressed, that which holds the greatest emotional impact, is precisely the one which is the least valued. (p. 107)

Although the process of language acquisition is beyond the scope of this study, I would like to underline that the experience of acquiring a new language is fundamentally different when it is a dominant speaker acquiring a second language or a minority speaker who is learning the dominant language (Macedo and Bartolomé, 2014). As Macedo and Bartolomé note, this process "usually provides the minority speaker with the experience of subordination in speaking both his and her language which is devalued by the dominant values and the dominant language that he or she has learned, often under coercive conditions" (p. 25).

Such distinction is crucial in understanding the importance that a program like the *New New Yorkers* has for minority speakers, empowering participants and offering a space where they do not have to reject parts of their identities in order to fit in. Here, their languages become normalized, even if momentarily. It also means that the program is able to counter the isolation that can happen when immigrating and not mastering the dominant language, which was the case for Marta. She said:

> *Cuando llegué por primera vez [a EE. UU.] mi inglés era elemental y no me sentía muy cómodo tomando clases en inglés. Pero aquí había clases de arte, en español, cerca de*

mi casa y eran gratis. Realmente disfruté el hecho de que fuera tan conveniente. Pensaba que todo cuesta dinero, pero aquí no.

When I first arrived [in the United States], my English was elementary and I didn't feel very comfortable taking classes in English. But here, there were art classes, in Spanish, close to my house and they were free. I really enjoyed the fact that it was so convenient. I thought that everything cost money, but not here (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

Since the classes were offered in Spanish, Marta was able to continue making art, learn new skills, develop her network and eventually work as a teaching artist in the program. Authors of *Forging Multilingual Spaces*, Christine Hélot and Anne-Marie de Mejía (2008) posit that languages should be seen as a learning resource for minority speakers as well as for monolingual majorities. They argue that language is linguistic and cultural resources for learning another language, including the school and work language, contributing to mutual understanding and opening. In that case, a multilingual program allows for a museum to expand its audience by affirming its commitment to other (linguistic) communities, while enriching its cultural offerings.

Figure 7: Field Trip to the Socrates Sculpture Park. Photo: Mariella Suarez, 2017

In *Teaching Community*, hooks (2003) writes:

When educational settings become places that have as their central goal the teaching of bourgeois manners, vernacular speech and languages other than standard English are not valued. Indeed, they are blatantly devalued. While acknowledging the value of standard English the democratic educator also values diversity in language. Students who speak standard English, but for whom English is a second language, are strengthened in their bi-lingual self-esteem when their primary language is validated in the classroom. This valuation can occur as teachers incorporate teaching practices that honor diversity, resisting the conventional tendency to maintain dominator values in [education] (p. 45).

The critical museum and democratic educators

For Freire (2012), dialogue is the essence of education as a practice of freedom, and at its heart, the *word*. The two dimensions of the word, reflection and action, are revealed in the act of *naming* the world - by naming, we transform the world. In the *New New Yorkers*, naming the world is done in the participant's first language, laying the ground for a horizontal process.

Freire expresses that dialogue requires humility, openness and critical thinking: "thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them – thinking which perceives reality as a process, as transformation rather than a static entity" (p. 92). True dialogue also requites faith: "the power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in their vocation to be more fully human" (p. 91). Lastly, dialogue calls for love and trust in a horizontal relationship. In her book *All About Love*, bell hooks (2001) defines love as "the will to nurture one's own or another's spiritual growth, revealed through acts of care, respect, knowing and assuming responsibility" (p. 129). I asked Daniel, the program manager, to tell me about how he saw the work they did in the museum. He said:

> I think art can be seen as an action. In a way, I see the work that we do here as an act of art. We do that by helping our immigrant community to develop different skills, and to develop the critical thinking that they need to understand the new reality that they're facing, the trauma of being an immigrant, even more so in the times that we're living (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

According to Peter Mayo (2013), museums are important and productive sites for practicing critical pedagogy, allowing for ideology critique, as well as for "struggling collectively and lobbying for the conversion of such sites of public pedagogy into democratic, inclusive public spaces, which appeal to one's sense of criticality" (p. 147). He argues that part of the challenge for museums today lie in renegotiating questions around hegemony. He calls for museums to embody their roles as democratic public spaces, where meanings can be "exchanged, appropriated and negotiated" (p. 149) and where visitors could become investigators, alongside of museum educators.

Equity analyst Nicole Robert (2014) describes how a museum defines success impacts who and what is included in museum work. Often, educators will record the number of participants in visits and workshops and these numbers will be presented at the end of the year, or at the end of an exhibition, to the rest of the staff as well to funders and other governing bodies, as part of a report. While numbers can be a useful tool for justifying the existence of a program, or even for advocating for more resources, what they fail to indicate is the "quality" of an activity. All museum workers have their own ideas of what a successful program looks like; for some it might be engaging in meaningful conversations, for others, the retention of participants, and so on. With that in mind, I asked Daniel how they envisioned success. He answered:

> When you think that you have touched the life of people for better, that they're happier, better people, that they're more secure, and able to participate in the conversations. One of the things that I see here is that most of participants who come here for the first time don't feel they have the right to have a voice in the global conversation. But, by

empowering them, letting they know that there's a community that supports them, that the museum is a safe place and the *New New Yorkers* is a nest where we protect each other, that we're here from them, they become more aware of their rights, and they feel secure enough to speak, and to speak out (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

According to hooks (1994), democratic educators understand that learning is not confined to institutions, but rather, that it happens as part of real life experience. She argues that diversity in speech and presence should be seen as a resource that enhances learning experiences, while challenging existing structures of domination, such as race, gender, class and religious hierarchies. She says that "progressive education becomes all the more important since it may be the only location where individuals can experience support for acquiring a critical consciousness, for any commitment to end domination" (p. 45). *New New Yorkers* educators acknowledge their role as democratic educators, inviting non-dominant communities to co-produce knowledge and culture. Museum educators play an active role in empowering these communities by teaching a series of personal and professional skills by bringing people together with dignity, increasing their employability and self-esteem.

Figure 8: Student receiving her diploma, with program manager Guido Garaycochea and teaching artist Liene Bosquê. Photo: Mariella Suarez, 2017

Banks (2016) advises educators to consider how they can enable marginalized groups to experience cultural recognition, civic equality, self-determination and structural inclusion in order to attain what he calls "transformative citizenship education" (p. 35). He asserts that to create democratic classrooms, educators need to help students develop the knowledge, values, and skills needed to participate effectively within their cultural, national, regional, and world communities.

Since both Marta and Emilia started off as students in the program before becoming teaching artists, their personal experiences inform how they see their present roles. It also demonstrates that the program values the perspectives that participants bring. I believe the *New*

New Yorkers displays a strong institutional body language (Jennings et.al., 2016), since the

program is aware of the impact of its hiring practices on its audience. By hiring former students,

the program not only reinforces its commitment to building a community of (non-dominant)

artists, but also contributes to their professional development.

Figure 9: Participants celebrating the end of the workshop. Photo: Mariella Suarez, 2017

Chris Taylor (2017) asserts that an inclusive work culture is one where people feel

comfortable coming to work as they are and where the workplace embraces and accepts the

numerous identities that make up the individual. He remarks that museums are better equipped to

position themselves as socially responsible institutions when they focus internally to create

systemic inclusion. He says that "increased levels of inclusion in the workplace lead to a move

away from traditional museum practices towards transformational practices that are inclusive of

an ever changing audience" (p. 160). Thus, the demographics of museum audiences may be seen

as a direct reflection of the institution's core values. I believe that a socially responsible institution is one that is committed to ending racism and oppression at all levels of its structure, from the makeup of its staff, to the content of its programs, and to how they address diverse audiences.

I asked Marta what were the important things she wished participants took away from a course, other than technical skills. She said:

Para mí es importante que recuerden que este es un lugar al que pueden regresar, donde siempre son bienvenidos. Los tratamos con mucho respeto, les preguntamos acerca de sus culturas y sobre ellos como personas, lo cual es muy enriquecedor tanto para nosotros como educadores como para ellos; refuerza su autoestima.

It's important for me that they remember that this is a place they can come back to, where they're always welcome. We treat them with lots of respect, we ask them about their cultures, and about themselves, as people, which is very enriching for us as educators and for them as well – it reinforces their self-esteem.

Marta continues to reflect on her role as an educator:

Queremos que sepan que son importantes para nosotros y que apoyarlos como artistas y como individuos hace que nuestro trabajo sea mucho más enriquecedor. Cada persona, cada pieza de este taller es importante y siempre lo subrayamos en cada clase. En este sentido, todos aprendemos, siempre. En cada clase que aprenden los estudiantes, nosotros [los educadores] aprendemos y es muy alentador continuar haciendo el trabajo que hacemos.

We want them to understand that they're important for us and that supporting them as artists and as individuals makes our work much more enriching. Each person, each piece of this workshop is important and we always underline it in every class; in this sense, we all learn, always. In every class the students learn, we [the educators] learn and it's very encouraging to continue doing the work we do (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

Her words echo the notion that engaged pedagogy does not simply seek to empower students, but it also empowers educators (hooks, 1994). This horizontal process of sharing the production of knowledge calls for both courage and vulnerability from all involved which, in turn, creates a rich and intimate learning environment. Engaged pedagogy recognizes and responds to the unique being of students and "bring[s] a spirit of study to learning that takes place both in and beyond classroom settings, learning must be understood as an experience that enriches life in its entirety" (hooks, 1994, p. 42). Marta's openness to her students reflects what Freire (2012) calls the "point of encounter," where both students and educators come together to learn and grow.

hooks (1994) tells us that in order to create the conditions where learning can fully flourish, it is important to teach in a way that "that respects and cares for the soul of students" (p. 13). For hooks, education as a practice of freedom is easiest for those who believe that their work is to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of their students.

Since so much of the work that is done by the *New New Yorkers* program stood out to me as political – their support of immigrants, empowering immigrant communities, committing to

participants' safety and well-being — I expected the class content to openly address questions around oppression and racism. It was interesting for me to realize that although this is implicit in the work they do in and outside of the museum, the educators do not directly address political issues in the context of the classes. I asked Daniel about it during the interview and he said: "I believe this is a safe space. If the participants talk about politics or not, I don't know. We try not to, but it's in everyday conversations in this country right now" (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

And yet, hooks (1994) states that commitment to engaged pedagogy is a form of political activism: "the choice to work against the grain, to challenge the status quo often has negative consequences. And that is part of what makes that choice one that is not politically neutral" (p. 203). However, I would like to point out that boards of cultural institutions are often reluctant to be seen as "too political," and often museum workers and art administrators may react in fear of retaliation (Raicovich, 2018). A program that so openly works to empower its immigrant communities becomes even more significant; it becomes a site of hope, dignity, resistance and solidarity.

In addition to love, I believe that the notion of hope is extremely inspiring when thinking about the work of art museum educators. Whether they are making or discussing art with participants, the potential to question, to imagine or to disturb are numerous. And, in order to make relevant programming, we need to be in tune with the reality of participants — with what impacts them at the moment — and still commit to our long-term vision for the program. In our interview, Daniel said:

We cannot be blind of what is happening in this country right now, so we have to

empower our communities and give them the dignity that the government is trying to

deny. Being able to read more, to read different kinds of news, and different kinds of

reading, they not only empower themselves, but become more aware of their own

humanity that is being denied by the government (personal communication, July 21,

2018).

Mapping needs

Aside from art techniques, art educators design their classes to a wide variety of

professional and language skills that help immigrants enter the job market, better navigate the

city, manage money and so on. The team is attentive to the needs of communities and tries to

respond to them. According to Daniel, earning money is a recurrent need that comes up in

surveys, which is why they always include classes like *Photoshop* and video editing to the list.

He says that "[it] is a way that they can create a kind of job, which is very independent and they

don't need a lot of paperwork in order to do it" (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

In her *English for Speakers of Other Languages* (ESOL) class, Emilia addresses practical

skills that may help participants increase their autonomy, better their chances of employability,

and expand their social network. I asked her if the class she taught in the *New New Yorkers*

differed from classes she taught elsewhere. She answered that she designed it specifically for the

program, with a focus on art and identity. Her double role as a student and teaching affords her a

privileged insight on the needs of participants and on the challenges of learning English. When

preparing the course, she targeted specific things she believed they would need, such as

pronunciation. Emilia was the one who proposed the class to the program manager, which

shows, I believe, a great deal of openness and responsiveness in the structure of the program. She says:

> In one of the first lessons, I said: "tell me about yourself, use three strong adjectives to
> describe yourself as a worker, this, you're going to be able to use in job interviews." And
> also how to have a little bit of small talk about yourself if you go to a party, so I taught
> some small talk. And I told them*: "*when you don't know people, stay away from talking
> about politics and religion, because there are many religions here. It's not a homogeny
> like in Latin America where most people are Catholic. And the whole thing of where do
> you come from, where do you live, how many children do you have?" (personal
> communication, July 21, 2018).

As we can read above, Emilia displays a deep understanding of the challenges that immigrants face when moving to a new country: learning a new language, finding a job, (re)building a community and navigating another culture. I would argue that, in many ways, Emilia's role is that of a teacher and a mentor. Social cues are distinct across cultures and it might be helpful for newcomers to have an empathetic person, who has had to consciously learn them, explain what some of these cues are. In my case, for example, it might take me days after a trip to my hometown in Brazil to remind myself that the notion of personal space is not the same in North America and that I should not touch people while I talk.

Emilia continues to reflect on her role as an educator:

> With this political climate, we really have to work harder, stay focused, and be more
> united. Now, when I teach English, I do it with more passion, with more purpose, because

it's really about empowering people, so they can get ahead in this country and they can defy stereotypes (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

Other challenges that immigrants face could be less evident at first sight, but may have a strong impact on the quality of life of people, such as mobility. Simone, a teaching artist working at the intersection of labor, immigration and art, says that she tries to empower participants by giving them tools that can help them with their everyday life:

A veces sucede que estoy con un grupo de niños o adultos y ellos han vivido [en Queens] durante 8 años y nunca han estado en Manhattan. No saben cómo usar la Metrocard, quiero normalizar esas cosas y facilitarlas. La movilidad es muy importante, así que también enseño cosas simples como usar Google Maps.

It sometimes happens that I am with a group of kids or adults, and they've been living [in Queens] for 8 years and have never been to Manhattan. They don't know how to use the *Metrocard* – I want to normalize those things and make them easy. Mobility is very important, so I also teach simple things such as how to use *Google Maps* (personal communication, July 22, 2018).

As I noticed on the program's website, most six to eight-week courses include a field trip, often another museum. During the *Advance Sculpture* workshop, there was a visit to the Noguchi Museum and to the Socrates Sculpture Park, both located in Astoria, Queens. Instead of coming to the Queens Museum as they regularly did, students met at the Noguchi Museum. In the previous week, the class was briefed about where to meet and were given the teaching assistant's contact information. For the majority of the students, it was their first time visiting the museum.

Yosso (2017) shows that community cultural wealth is a series of "knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed as utilized by Communities of Color to survive, and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression" (p. 121). She presents a model of cultural wealth that is centered on the experiences of marginalized groups, shifting its focus from notions of White, middle class culture. It includes: aspirational capital; linguistic capital; familial capital; social capital and resistant capital. In the remaining of this chapter, I will discuss how I apply this model to the *New New Yorkers* program.

Marta maintains that the classes affect more than just the participants, they also impact their relationships with their families and their communities:

[Los niños] ven los esfuerzos que sus madres hacen por ellos. El último taller que tuvimos fue Inglés y las mujeres lo tomaron para mejorar sus habilidades en inglés con el fin de ayudar a sus hijos con la tarea y también para obtener mejores empleos porque son las jefas de familia. Entonces es una cadena de consecuencias positivas. [Los niños] ven que sus madres están haciendo esfuerzos, vienen a clases, y aprecian mejor su educación y aprecian más los esfuerzos de sus madres.

[The kids] see the efforts their mothers make for them. The last workshop we had was *English* and the women took it to improve their English skills in order to help their kids with their homework and also to get better jobs, because they're the heads of the family. So, it is a chain of positive consequences. [The kids] see that their mothers are making efforts, coming to classes, and they appreciate their education better, and appreciate more their mothers' efforts (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

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Yosso defines *aspirational capital* as the "ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real or perceived barriers" (p. 122). Marta's quote above shows that participants in the program aspire to help their families have more opportunities in the future. Here, the aspirations are education and financial mobility for them and/or their children, and barriers are both linguistic (learning English) and social (being able to better participate in the schooling of their children by helping them with homework and, by extension, their overall educational successes).

Linguistic capital refers to the "intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style" (p. 123). Students of color have multiple language and communication skills that come into play. Yosso remarks that bilingual children often translate between their parents and other adults, gaining various social tools, including cross-cultural awareness, civic responsibility and social maturity. For mothers who participate in art workshops in their first languages along with their children, the *New New Yorkers* becomes a space where they learn side by side, and where children can experience their language in the context of a prestigious institution, where it is valued and where they can connect to others in the same situation.

Familial capital refers to "cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition" (p. 123). It broadens the notion of family, providing a wider view of kinship. Familial capital is cultivated through extended families, including immediate family and others, such as uncles, cousins as well as friends who may be considered part of it. As hooks (2000) writes: "communities sustain life – not nuclear families […] and certainly not the rugged individualist. There's no better place to learn the art of

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loving than in community" (p. 129). The structure of the *New New Yorkers* allows parents (mostly mothers) to bring their children to class, and by asking participants to share stories and experiences from their countries of origins, educators create a space that honors this knowledge.

Social capital refers to networks of people and community resources that provide both instrumental and emotional support (Yosso, 2017). The program educators contribute to social capital by strengthening community ties. While at the Queens Museum, I noticed that many educators and participants knew each other a first-name basis. The friendly and non-hierarchical atmosphere in the classroom offers an open and supportive environment as we can read in the words of Marta:

> *Muchas veces tenemos estudiantes que dicen que pensaban que ya no podían aprender, pero llegaron aquí y se dieron cuenta de lo opuesto; que tienen más habilidades, que tienen más que desarrollar, y se van a la Universidad o estudian inglés primero y luego se van a la Universidad. Les ayuda darse cuenta que pueden crecer y desarrollarse. El aprendizaje no para con lo que hicieron en clase, les motiva a seguir aprendiendo más, así que tenemos muchos estudiantes que vienen y toman otras clases de otra cosa. Es un punto de partida el darse cuenta de que pueden hacer mucho más y continuar con su proceso de aprendizaje.*

> Many times, we have students who say they thought they could no longer learn, but they came here and realized the opposite; that they have more abilities, that they have more to develop, and they go to college or study English first, and then they go to college. It's helpful for them to realize that they are able to move ahead and develop. The learning doesn't stop at what they did in a class – it motivates them to keep learning more, so we

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have many students that come and take another class, of something else. It's a starting

point to realize that they can do so much more and continue their learning processes

(personal communication, July 21, 2018).

Navigational capital refers to the skills and abilities of moving through social

institutions, including institutions "not created with Communities of Color [14] in mind" (Yosso,

2017, p. 124). This form of cultural capital, she explains, empowers people of color to navigate

hostile environments. The *New New Yorker* educators also contribute to this cultural wealth by

assisting participants to navigate the museum (predominantly White institutions), and other

institutions such as the Queens Library.

Resistant capital relates to the knowledges and skills acquired through behaviors that

challenge social inequality. Yosso explains that this type of cultural wealth comes from parents,

community members and a historical legacy of resistance to subordination regarding race, gender

and social class. She argues that when combined with critical consciousness, it takes a

transformative stance, including "knowledge of the structures of racism and motivation to

transform such oppressive structures" (p. 125).

Marta's words below refer to multiple forms of Community cultural capital. In our

interview she said:

A veces tenemos trabajadores, como limpiadores, que vienen a tomar clases aquí y

cuando hacemos arte traen una perspectiva específica de su profesión y este aporte es

muy importante para nosotros. No queremos que se pierdan estas habilidades, por lo que

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[14] Yosso capitalizes the term *Color* in her writing.

su autoestima se refuerza cuando sienten que su conocimiento es valorado y [a su vez] su

conocimiento profesional también se enriquece de alguna manera en estos talleres.

Entonces sienten que valió la pena venir aquí o ir a la universidad.

Sometimes we have workers, like cleaners, that come to take classes here and when we

make art, they bring a perspective that is specific to their profession, and this input is very

important for us. We don't want these skills to be lost, and so their self-esteem is

reinforced when they feel that their knowledge is valued and [in turn] their professional

knowledge is also enriched in a way by these workshops. So they feel that was worth to

come here or go to college (personal communication, July 21, 2018).

Participants come to the program with diverse forms of cultural capital. As Marta

expressed, the teaching artists try to identify and highlight these diverse types of knowledge in a

way distinct from White middle and upper class standards. By recognizing these types of wealth,

educators are able to empower participants by bringing their experiences to the forefront. Yosso

advises that this model is a call for a commitment to social and racial justice, reminding us that

"[t]he forms of capital comprising community cultural wealth are engendered from within the

context of a legacy of racism and are thus tied to a larger social justice project" (p. 126).

Associated with Adams' (2017) four tenets of anti-racist museum work, the program

dismantles racism by: hiring artists of color and supporting emerging artists through a

mentorship program; it encourages diverse narratives that benefit the participants through their

programming and a deep understanding of the needs of their communities; it moves away from

oppressive narratives by serving the needs of their communities in their mother tongues.

Finally, the *New New Yorkers* is a program created by and for immigrants that respond to multiple needs of participants: to build community, to make art and to learn new professional and life skills. Given their personal experiences, the teaching artists are well positioned to create a safe space where participants can address their personal experiences of migration, trauma and exclusion.

In the following chapter, I will return to the original questions asked in the beginning of the study and list the most important points I learned as an educator through this process.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED

The aim of this study was to learn how an art museum can become more inclusive of non-dominant cultural communities in order to better serve the needs of adult immigrants and other non-dominant groups. My research focused on questions around critical pedagogy, community building and the role of non-dominant languages in the museum. I asked the following questions at the beginning of the study:

- How does the Queens Museum respond to the increasing need to address racism, inclusion and diversity, both within its structure and visitors?

The Queens Museum responds to the need of addressing racism, inclusion and diversity within its structure through the creation and continuation of programs like the *New New Yorkers*, which has existed for the past ten years. The museum has a strong presence within Queens, New York and has partnered with numerous community-led organizations for many years. The program hires artists of color, from non-dominant linguistic communities and is entirely run by immigrants. First-time visitors can find out about activities in local organizations through fliers in the language in which the workshop will be taught, and, during the summer, by the multiple activities that happen outdoors.

- How the *New New Yorkers* program help immigrants and people of color develop a sense of belonging in the museum and in their (own/new) communities?

The educators understand the implications of immigration because of their own personal experiences. They are aware of the intersections of race, class and gender and are able to display

an enormous amount of empathy towards the participants. They help participants develop a sense of belonging in the museum by creating a safe environment and making them feel welcome and supported. The program provides many occasions for socialization and for participants to recreate networks through art. The *New New Yorkers* also hires former students to act as teaching artists and has a mentoring program, which allows participants to further develop their practices and become active members of an artistic community. Furthermore, by teaching personal and professional skills aside from art, the program contributes to their overall wellbeing.

- What is the role of art educators within this institution? Do they contribute to facilitate change or not?

From my interviews and participant observation, I found that the program's educators play a crucial role in its success. They are open, dedicated and passionate about the work they do. Many participants I chatted with during the *Advanced Sculpture Workshop in Spanish* had already participated in many other workshops and felt at ease in the studio. Educators knew everyone's first name and were always friendly and respectful. Participants often laughed, were in good spirits, happy and comfortable there. The class content was relevant and was delivered in their first language, which in itself made the class accessible to (some) people who otherwise would not be able to participate. It is important to underline the significance of such work in a time of political unrest in the United States (and in the world), where racism, xenophobia and anti-immigrant rhetoric are on the rise. Thus, the educators contribute to create a sense of safety, community and empowerment for immigrants and people of color in the museum.

However, despite the fact that museums take pride in promoting innovative educational programs, educators are among the most vulnerable in this ecosystem. Often hired as part-time or

freelancers, most art educators have no job security are obliged to work in multiple institutions to make a living, unless they count on personal wealth. They are also among the first to be fired or have reduced hours whenever there are budget cuts in museums. Furthermore, since so much of this study focused on questions of power, I would like to point that even though there has been some activism in art museums in the recent years, educators are still rather powerless in relation to the structures. Unfortunately, museum education programs are fragile and so are the positions of educators.

I began this study with two assumptions: 1) as powerful institutions implicated in the construction of cultural identities (Watson, 2007), art museums have a social responsibility towards citizens, including non-dominant and diverse cultural communities and 2) that they can play an active role in combating social inequality. I also started this research with the premise that empathy was a core value that needed to be embraced by museum and museum educators at large in order to build equitable institutions. The work of Jennings (2013) and Jennings et.al. (2016), were fundamental in helping me choose the *New New Yorker* for this case study. However, I found that when mapping the data on to their rubric, it did not fit to the program. Instead, I found the work of Yosso a better fit in this case.

I will list below five important findings that impact me and that I hope will inform my practice as a museum worker:

Community wealth capital – Yosso's model of cultural wealth allows us to identify the valuable life experiences that marginalized groups bring into the museum. Identifying the aspirational, linguistic, familial, social and resistant capitals is the first step to creating engaged and horizontal programs. In doing so, we can reach a "point of encounter" Freire (2012) where

both educators and participants learn. Associated with Adams' (2017) four tenets for equitable programs, we are able to equip ourselves with the necessary tools to decolonize our practices (unlearn racism) and work towards social justice. As hooks states:

> All of us in the academy and in culture as a whole are called to renew our minds if we are to transform educational institutions – and society – so that the way we live, teach and work can reflect our joy in cultural diversity, our passion for justice, and our love of freedom (hooks, 1994, p. 33).

Safety – As a space created for and by immigrants, the program offers participants a sense of safety, where they can express themselves without feeling judged about how they do it. One of the educators mentioned that is was a relief for her not to have to "code-switch" while at the museum. For people of color, not having to regulate their behavior according to White middle class norms can be liberating. Furthermore, the staff is consciously mindful of not asking for personal information that participants would prefer not to share, like address, ids, etc., in case someone happens to be undocumented. I believe that such care for the physical and emotional safety of participants is crucial for creating inclusive spaces that allow for all to participate, regardless of race, class, or legal statuses. These actions are powerful in themselves, but even more meaningful given the current political climate.

The importance of language – Language is central to the construction of cultural identity. Macedo and Bartolomé warn us that:

> [the] reason that even committed educators have failed to understand the linguistic drama that helps shape the cultural identities of most linguistic minority students is they naively

treat language as if it were disarticulated from those cultural signposts which are integral

for identity formation (p. 32).

As the educators mentioned during the interviews, language plays a major role in creating

a sense of safety and community in the program. It is worth remembering that there is a

fundamental difference in the process of acquiring a second language for minority and dominant

speakers, which is related to questions around power. Macedo and Bartolomé maintain that

educators develop radical pedagogical structures that provide students with the opportunity to

use their own realities as starting points – I believe that the program is an excellent example of

such structure.

Hiring practices – As Reid (2014) demonstrates, diverse staff brings diverse

perspectives. No amount of goodwill or wishful thinking will transform an all-white museum

into a democratic institution. Museums have been ranked as the most trusted institutions in the

United States (Janes & Sandell, 2019), so the stories they tell are extremely important. And these

stories are told in many other ways than through programming; they are also told through hiring

practices (whose voices can be heard, and whose faces can be seen). They are also told by what

community organizations museums choose to partner with and by where they decide to put their

resources. Indeed, equity work requires a lot of resources and it is up to institutions and their

leadership to direct these changes. The burden of institutional transformation should not be

carried by individual workers. People of color need to be compensated for the often-invisible

labor they are called to do in these situations, and White people need a space where they can

continuously reflect about race and privilege.

Museums need to rethink their hiring strategies if they are to participate in the pressing conversations of our times. Many museum workers are coming together to demand change: the hashtag #museumsarenotneutral will show us thousands of posts relating to the work of museum activists. ICOM's new definition of museums also calls into question the future of our institutions.

Finally, I expected long interviews where people spoke critically about politics in regard to their context, but the interviews were short and to the point. I also thought that such topics would be addressed openly in classes, but I found it not on what the educators say, but rather on how they enact their beliefs, in the ways they address participants, in the curriculum they write, and how they build community. I was surprised that empathy was not the key to building community in this setting; it was love.

Love in action – A working definition of love enables us to see it in places we would not always expect it, as in a museum, for instance. I believe that what *New New Yorkers* educators do is the labor of love, by deeply caring, respecting, knowing and being present. They play a role in empowering immigrant communities by teaching art, along with personal and professional skills that bring people together and increase their self-esteem. hooks (1994) holds that education as a practice of freedom happens when we, educators, commit to participating in the intellectual and spiritual growth of those we serve. Such learning can only happen when there is care and respect and when we commit to our own growth, by continuously and actively learning – together, in public. She writes:

Engaged pedagogy does not simply seek to empower students. Any classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be a place where teachers grow and are

empowered by the process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be

vulnerable (hooks, 1994, p. 21).

I was deeply touched by the testimonials of the four teaching artists I interviewed for this

study. As a participant observer, I was able to witness how, through their work in the museum,

they come together and fight, even in the worst climate, by building community and empowering

the communities they serve. They made me aware of the importance of love, humility and

solidarity in our work and I hope I can put these lessons in action as an educator.

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CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant: Tanha Gomes

Department: Department of Art Education

Agency: N/A

Title of Project: Beyond White Walls: Inclusion and cultural diversity
in art museums

Certification Number: 30009657

Valid From: July 09, 2018   To: July 05, 2019

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

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Dr. James Pfaus, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee