Social Justice through Musical Expression

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Introduction

My students have seen violence and inequality already in their young lives. Whether they have experienced it first had or have read about it in the newspapers or have seen it on television. Some personally knew the young woman murdered at Howard High School because of bullying. In this unit, I want to address social justice that is relevant to my 5th grade students. I will first define social justice and then discuss social, political and economic justices that impact the lives of my students. After discussing human rights, equality and violence, I will suggest actions that can make a difference in coping with every day social problems. Through empathy, fairness and compassion, my students will learn how to deal with social, political and economic rights but focusing mainly on violence. What can the students do when violence occurs? How can they overcome and remain resilient? What strategies can they use to stay positive? Students will then put their thoughts into words by writing and performing a hip-hop composition. In seminar, I learned various artistic expressions such as poetry, dance, puppetry, pantomime, improvisation, music, photography, photo voice, theatre and choreopoem to show social justice. In my unit, my students will use music as well as several artistic expressions to show social justice. Bernice Johnson Reagon best summed up my unit,

"It doesn't matter to me if you write song lyrics, poetry, or prose – if you are concerned about what's happening in your world, and especially if you take issue with it, songs, poetry, and short stories are very important ways to express what you are feeling. And don't forget visual arts and dance. The most important thing I learned as a young person is that the song forms I knew; I liked, were the best ones for me to use to express myself."

When I saw this seminar, "Social Justice through Artistic Expression", was being offered by Dr. Overby, I immediately thought of the seminar in 2013 entitled "Civil Rights" with Dr. Eric Rise. My unit was "Music and the Civil Rights Movement." In that unit, I teach the history of Civil Rights and the music that was so important to this movement. The objectives for "Music of the Civil Rights Movement" unit are that the learners will summarize important ideas, leaders and events for the Civil Rights Movement. Students describe the functions of freedom songs and the conditions under which these songs were sung and performed. They explain how music can motivate and move its listeners to take action after the violent protests. My goal is to expand my civil rights unit with "Social Justice through Musical Expression". In this unit, I will help my

students discover ways to cope with feelings and deal with violence through music.

I am currently the music instructor at Eisenberg Elementary in New Castle, Delaware. Eisenberg Elementary provides academic studies for kindergarten through fifth grade. The school reflects a culturally diverse student body of approximately 550 students. Strong academic emphasis focuses on physical, social and emotional development to create a community of learners. Programs offered are STAR and Accelerated Reader which enable students to succeed by addressing their reading needs. 24 Club strengthens Math skills as well as learning to work together. The Positive Behavior Support Program allows students to focus on appropriate encouraging actions in an educational environment. Teachers use research-based methods of instruction (Learning Focus and Responsive Classroom) which are aligned with the Delaware State Standards. In the Arts, students may participate in band in grades 4 and 5. Chorus is offered for grades 3, 4 grade and 5. In second, third, fourth and fifth general music class, recorders, world drumming and guitars are presented as units of study. Second graders participate in a Second Grade guitar club which performs in our spring concert and shares music with the guitar students at William Penn High School. Fifth grade students perform a musical yearly. My role as a music educator is not only to develop musical skills but also relate music to other academic areas such as English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies and Science. This unit, Social Problems Through Musical Expression, will relate music and social issues for fifth graders. In this seminar, I am seeking to learn ways to empower my 5th graders into how to communicate and express mood using social issues. Their moods will use songs and instruments.

Rationale/Objective

The Delaware Arts Standards for fifth graders recommend that students demonstrate how interests, knowledge and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating performing and responding to music (Cn10.0.5a). Right now, I think violence should be focused on because that greatly impacts my students. The recent killing at Howard High School had an impact on the students at Eisenberg because the young woman attended an elementary school in my school district. Some of my students knew her. This unit would discuss the issues of youth violence. My students need to express themselves and find their voice to bring people together using music.

Fifth grade students will explain how violence is conveyed through interpretive decisions and expressive qualities through dynamics, tempo, timbre, articulation and style in music. They will explain how their music connects to and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes or contexts. Students will understand how the musical qualities of dynamics, tempo, timbre and articulation can be used by performers to express a violent intent. When creating and responding music, students will demonstrate how interest and knowledge of violence relates to personal experiences. Finally, students

will exhibit an understanding of violent relationships through music, arts, other disciplines, varied contexts and daily life.

In this unit, "Social Problems through Musical Expression", my goal is to introduce students to the social problem of violence and then explore this in music. They could discuss and perform using hip hop, improvisation and pantomime. After researching various social justices, I will be better able to direct my students with various strategies to understand themselves and their community. The objectives for "Social Problems through Musical Expression" are that the learners will first discuss violence in the news and in their lives. They will compose music using various artistic expressions. Using dynamics, tempo, timbre, and articulation students will create a musical composition. They will explain how their music cites evidence of violence. Finally, students will evaluate the musical work applying established criteria and appropriateness to violent context as decided by students.

Background Information

Social Justice

The definition of social justice "is the fair and just relation between the individual and society. This is measured by the explicit and tacit terms for the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity and social privileges." The idea of social justice is the way people live their lives and handle their duties as a part society. It can also be thought of as protecting our basic human rights of speaking, working where we want and receiving equal pay.

Social justice began with the writings of Plato where he stated, "Justice is not mere strength, but it is harmonious strength." ³ My students will be able to relate this quote to harmony in music or the combination of notes to produce a melody or rhythm that have a pleasing sound. Aristotle believed that people were like possessions and evaluated on their importance. Socrates created a more current concept of social justice. He thought that people should follow the rules of society. St. Thomas Aquinas linked social justice with honoring God. In the 1840's, the Catholic Church first used the term social justice. During the 19th and 20th century, social justice played an important role in American politics and economics. One decision of the Supreme Court was to strike down legislation passed by the state and Federal governments for social and economic development, like the 8-hour day. After the First World War, International Labor Organization stated that "peace can be established only if it is based on social justice."

Scholars of the Twentieth century discussed the uses of social justice. Hunter Lewis saw healthcare and life as the basis of social justice. Saint Benedict XVI believed pollutants in our society affected relationships and peace in our society. Thomas Pogge saw social justice as it pertains to human rights. In 2006, the United Nations identified in

a document entitled *Social Justice in an Open World:* The Role of the United Nations that social justice was seen "as a substitute for the protection of human rights."⁵

Religions across the world also discuss social justice in their teachings. Hinduism focuses on the social justice of the cast system which still remains today even though India is a democratic society. In Islam, the Quran teaches charity as aid to the poor. All Muslims must give alms or *zakat* to the poor by paying taxes. Muslims also focus on the safety of women, children, elderly, disabled and animals. Judaism says that charity will repair any social issues. In Christianity, John Wesley, a Methodist leader, preached of social issues to include jail reform and rights for slaves. Finally, Catholics stress the rights for human life and the poor.⁶

In this unit, I want my students to understand the background of social justice and why it is so important for them to see how it affects others. They can see humans rights, equality and violence in their everyday lives. Students will "note examples of people taking action together for empowerment, equity, liberation and sustained social change." They will take this fairness and develop music that will help them express their feelings.

Human Rights and Equality

Human rights can be defined as "Rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status." As human beings, we are all permitted to the rights of justice, dignity, equality, respect and independence which should never be taken for granted or away from individuals. These rights are protected by law. They are inalienable and needed by all people from birth to death regardless of where they are from, what they believe in or how they choose to live your life. These rights should never be taken away but may be limited by the government. When discussing human rights, I believe that equality has to be discussed as it is part of basic human rights. The United States Declaration of Independence includes equality as a basic right.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are Created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

-United States Declaration of Independence, 1776.

Human rights help all of us, especially for those that face suppression. They serve us in our daily life by allowing a life where we are free to express our opinions. Also, our rights are protected if we are wrongly punished by the government. In the 1960's there were several rallies for human rights. In 1961, nonviolent protests called "Freedom rides" began. Despite a Supreme Court ruling to desegregate long-distance bus rides, Southern states ignored the law. On the first Freedom ride, thirteen students, seven black and six white, rode a bus together from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans, Louisiana. The bus

was attacked and the students were beaten. On the second Freedom Ride, Dr. Martin Luther King. Jr. came to New Orleans to support the riders. He held a meeting at Ralph Abernathy's church. A group of whites threw rocks and tear gas at the church. Cars were set on fire. Despite the violence, Freedom rides continued. Ross Barnett, a Segregationist and Governor of Mississippi from 1960-1964, approved the arrest of Freedom riders in 1961 and then imprisoned them in the Mississippi State Penitentiary. The offenses of the Freedom riders were minor, yet they were brutalized and demeaned. ¹⁰ One of the largest rallies for human rights was the March on Washington in 1963. One of the speakers, Dr. Martin Luther Kings, Jr., spoke of freedom and equality for all. On the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, King said, "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal' "¹¹

Today, when my students learn about human rights and equality, they discuss the life and speeches of Dr. King and Rosa Parks. They also examine current marches in Baltimore, Maryland for Freddy Grey. Dr. King said, "We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protests to degenerate into physical violence. Again and Again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force." My students ask questions about why a young girl died at a local high school. They see the increase in violence in their daily lives.

Violence

All children have the right to be free from violence. It harms them mentally, socially and physically. Violence in America has increased over the years. It is often the outcome of peaceful protests and gatherings. Dr. King said in his I Have a Dream Speech, "We must not allow our creative protests to degenerate into physical violence. Again and Again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force." ¹³ I want my students to be self-aware of how violence impacts not only themselves but others.

A group of high school students in Chicago trained to become members of a group called Peace Warriors. They will become leaders in non-violence among their peers. While training one of the members received a message that a friend had been shot and was in the hospital. One of their teachers, Tiffany Childress, explained that this type of violence was not normal in her early years of growing up. A half a century ago, this was not the norm. The students could not believe that this was not always the normal everyday way of life. The violence in their communities has become so normalized that they literally could not believe that this does not happen everywhere, that this is not how it has always been. Ms. Childress became interested in Kingian Nonviolence, a teaching curriculum developed out of the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and two other colleagues, Bernard Lafayette, Jr. and David Jehnsen. This program gives a structure to understand conflict and violence and turn that into peace. The communities of Dr. King

believed that nonviolence is not a passive, but a proactive force that can defeat violence and injustice. It is not about teaching people to turn the other cheek, but about teaching people how to confront the forces of violence and injustice in their lives and create a real, lasting peace. It is an antidote to violence." Examples from this program are for the students to role play different violent scenarios and then ask the students to brain storm some nonviolent responses. The students can then see various ways to handle violent situations and make better choices.

Children are more afraid than ever about violence in their life. "In 2014, more than two thirds of children (ages 17 and younger) were exposed to violence within this past year, either directly (as victims) or indirectly (as witnesses)."¹⁷ They are more liable to see or experience violence than adults. This violence can have a lasting physical, mental, or emotional effect. This can lead to depression, behavior and anxiety issues. Academically, children can have attention deficits, anger problems or detach from every day activities. 18 Children see violence in their schools. Often it's the fights in the hallway, bathroom or cafeteria and sometimes walking home, from school, being bullied or having property stolen. On May 10, 2016, Amy Joyner Francis, a sixteen year old, was beaten in the girls' bathroom at Howard High School in Wilmington De. She later died. The assault was planned the previous day. Three teens were charged, one for the physical assault and the other two for involvement with scheming and placing a video on social media. Children see violence in their neighborhoods and homes. They also watch it on TV and in movies. Parents can control the amount of violence that is watched. TV Channels can be blocked. How many parents actually do that? Violence toward children is preventable when all people say it is not acceptable. 19

How to Cope with Violence

We can cope with violence in our society if we first understand it and the impact on our neighborhoods. Then try to create a safe environment for everyone especially our children. Protect and watch our children when they play outside or on the playground and as they walk to and from school. Adults and parents music set limits and secure a living environment. Exposure to social media should be monitored. Talk with children. Let them talk about concerns and worries. Provide a positive outlook and not scare them. It is important to keep ourselves educated and current with events in our neighborhoods and around the world. Find the crime-free zones in your city. School districts provide zero tolerance for drugs and weapons. Schools often provide safe after-school and pre-school programs. Schools also guard against violent crimes by requiring background checks on all teachers and staff members. Within the last 2 years, schools are now requiring a criminal check on parents who want to chaperone on student field trips. 20

In seminar, I learned about social and emotional learnings that can be applied to how to deal with violence in my students' lives. First, my students need to be self- aware of their attitudes and know how they feel. Today do they feel, sad, happy, angry or

peaceful? Then, once they identify their emotions, they can regulate or self-manage by asking "How will my sadness affect my friends?" "If I am happy, can I better relate to my friends?" They are self-motivating and taking verbal and physical control. This reflection allows students to have social awareness and show empathy to others. Developing relationship skills requires students to work collaborately. They can role-play violent situations providing a less stressful situation. Once responsible decisions are made, students can discuss and evaluate the consequences. The social and emotional learning (SEL) teaches students to use understandings, feelings and abilities necessary to understand and handle violent emotions. Students set optimistic goals, feel empathy for others, make relationships and are responsible for their decisions.²¹ This is a teaching framework that teaches interactions in classrooms, home and community centers for students and their families.

Music and other Artistic Expression

I want to engage my students in dealing with their feelings about social justice and violence in their lives and trying to keep a positive attitude. There are many forms in music that they could pursue. Spirituals offer an excellent outlet for those seeking equality. In the 19th century, blues was formed from spirituals, work songs and chants. It is a call and response pattern. Later in the 1970's hip hop was developed using rap and break dancing. My students would most relate to hip hop. "Hip hop is inherently political, the language is political. It uses language as a weapon- not a weapon to violate or not a weapon to offend, but a weapon that pushes the envelope that provokes people, makes people think." Hip hop was used in the civil rights movement to promote peace and freedom. I want my students to use the style of hip hop to discuss violence and the positive solutions that they find through their lyrics and accompaniments. Their words can empathize what it feels like for the other person. It is awareness of what that person is going through, not sympathy. We imagine what it feels like by putting ourselves into that person's circumstance. Their thoughts and music will also show caring, respect, perseverance, trust, understanding and trust.

An artistic expression that I learned in seminar that I will use with my students is improvisation. These techniques require collaboration, listening and cooperation among the students. Students will agree on a scene describing a violent act. The written scene must have a beginning, middle and an end. In a group of 5, 1 will direct, 3 will improvise and 1 will evaluate. They must choose an appropriate type of music or a song go with their scene. No speaking will be used only music to portray the story. After the performance, the audience will discuss what the performance meant and how the violent act was resolved.

The artistic expression of puppetry would really interest my fifth grade students.

They could make puppets to perform their story about violence and its use of empathy. They could choose solid, stick, sock or paper puppet. They will have markers, glue, yarn, colored paper and glitter to decorate their puppets. When performing, students must speak clearly and use the voice of their puppet whether it's high or low, loud or soft. Motions should be very succinct, clear and deliberate. A written narration must be included describing each puppet. An evaluation will be completed by the audience.

In conclusion, fifth grade students will explain how violence is conveyed through the artistic expression of music. First they will discuss violence in their lives. How do they

and other family members deal with violence? How can society show empathy and compassion to those who have suffered a violent act? Then the students will compose compositions which connect to and are influenced by violent events currently happening in their homes and neighborhoods. When creating and responding music, students will express interest and knowledge of violence and how it relates to personal experiences. Students will use dynamics, tempo, timbre and articulation strategies in music to convey a specific violent act and convey caring and concern as an outcome. Finally, students will exhibit an understanding of violent relationships through music, improvisation and pantomime. They will share and evaluate their performances. Finally, Leonard Bernstein, a famous twentieth century musician and composer said: "This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before."

Music Strategies

Students need to use 4 specific musical strategies in **Social Justice through Musical Expression.** Call/Response, improvisation, long-phrased melody and active listening are musical skills that will assist the students in better understanding how to cope with violence. Of course other approaches such as collaborative learning, working in small groups and think/pair/share will be used. Fifth graders use these strategies in other classes. I want to incorporate those strategies as well as add musical methods when learning and analyzing the songs.

Call/ Response

In music, call /response is a technique where one musician sings or plays a phrase and a second player answers with an exact or improvisational response to the phrase either sung or played on an instrument. Call/Response depicts an AB form using a solo/chorus, solo/solo or chorus/chorus. For example, students sit in a circle and one calls, "Don't Laugh at Me". All respond "Don't Call Me Names" from the song, "Don't Laugh at Me." Students can also individually take turns singing the call and response. Another example of call/response would be for me to sing "Whisper to me." The class then sings "softly, softly." An exact echo call/response would be for me to chant "We are the

Eagles, the mighty, mighty Eagles" and the class then would echo, "We are the Eagles, the mighty, mighty Eagles." One of the great elements of call and response is that it can be a powerful unifying tool. Those who respond learn to listen carefully to the leader, and in many cases, they gain a sense of belonging by completing or repeating the call. Sometimes, people use it as a way to get collective ideas across to others.

Improvisation

In many cases, particularly in spirituals when call and response involves a choir or ensemble, the director or caller often improvises once he's established the main melody. Changes usually get more intense and complex as the music progresses to the climax of the composition. The answer remains fairly unchanged, providing a framework to fit the harmonic, rhythmic and phrasing structure of the piece. The leader often sings with what he's feeling in the moment. However, he has to use a basic knowledge of how the song goes or musical order to make everything line up and sound good. Students create chants and percussion accompaniments. They improvise simple melodies. Often students create movements to emphasize the meaning of the words. Improvisation strengthens and nurtures a child's creativity.

Slow, long-phrased melody

Long phrased melody is more common than call/response, improvisation or syncopation. Instead of short fragmented lines, long complete sentences were sung. Students who do not like to sing will probably not like this strategy. Choral singing best demonstrates long-phrased melody. Melodic contour can be analyzed for duration, upward and downward motion, repetition, imitation, sequence, steps and leaps and modulation. Examples of long phrases are in the song, "Kids Against Violence". Some phrases include "We're kids against violence and love is our plan" and "We're kids against violence, push hatred away." An effective method to feel long phrases is to have students move their arms in long arcs to the musical expressions.

Active Listening

Active listening means listening to music with focus and intensity, without diverting attention to any other activity. Active listening can be any form of listening activity where the students are engaged in the music one hundred percent of the time. Being engaged in the music means that, while they are listening to music, the students are committed and fully present. By listening, they are immersed in, captivated by, and preoccupied with the music. In other words, they are interacting with the music.

Classroom Activities

This unit is divided into three lessons discussing violence in the students' lives.

Lesson One – Violence

How do performers interpret violence through the arts?

This introductory lesson gives students the opportunity to learn about the social justices of human rights, equality and violence. Focus will be on violence and how it affects their daily lives.

Anticipatory Set: KWL chart for violence. Students fill in the K "Think I Know" and W "Think I'll Learn."

<u>Directed Instruction:</u> Introduce defintions for equal rights and equality. Instruction will center on freedom from violence in the students' lives.

<u>Activity:</u> Pair students to complete a Frayer model (definition, traits, examples and solutions) for violence. Students listen to "Self Control" while completing this activity. Then ask the group to share their answers and make revisions.

<u>Assessment:</u> Acrostic Summary: In groups, students complete an acrostic for the word VIOLENCE using each letter to tell something the students think about ending violence in their lives..

Lesson Two – Coping with Violence

How do individuals create music to show how to cope with violence?

This lesson focuses on how music can be used to deal with violence. The facts are taught so that the students can understand empathy when violence occurs.

<u>Anticipatory Set</u>: Students activate "What's Already in my Head?" They fill in a thought bubble with words or pictures to show violence. Students show a positive resolution with another picture.

<u>Directed Instruction:</u> Students listen to facts about violence. They discuss in pairs how music could impact how people react to these events.

<u>Activity:</u> Students in small groups of eight discuss the lyrics of "Kids Against Violence". How do the words relate to violence in their lives?

<u>Assessment</u>: Learning Log: Students responds to the prompt on post-it notes the answer to "Something new I learned today is....."

Lesson Three: Artistic Expressions and Violence

How can other artistic expressions be used to create, perform and respond to violence?

This lesson focuses on creating music and improvising a scenario about violence.

Anticipatory Set: Have students read the lyrics and listen to "Don't Laugh At Me".

<u>Directed Instruction:</u> Students sing the song of "Don't Laugh At Me." Words are grouped in small sections and the meanings are discussed. How can these feelings help in showing empathy toward a violent act.

<u>Activity:</u> Students will agree on a scene describing a violent act. The written scene must have a beginning, middle and an end. In a group of 5, 1 will direct, 3 will improvise and 1 will evaluate. They must choose an appropriate type of music or a song go with their scene. They may also choose to write a Call and Response song and improvise on

instruments. No speaking will be used only music to portray the story through pantomime. Students may use classroom, cafeteria, hallway, sidewalk or home settings. Students then replay the scene with positive. Audience discusses the various strategies used in each act.

Assessment: Have student Think, Pair and then Share their ideas on "I would like to learn more about..."

<u>Final Assessment:</u> Students will be able to perform their scenes at a school assembly. After the performances, the audience will discuss what the performance meant and how the resolution of the violent act showed caring and kindness. Students will then discuss why the lyrics and music in these songs show awareness, management decision making and relationship skills in relation to violence. Also, the class will give ideas for the L "I Learned" on the KWL chart. They then review the KWL chart.

Please check my website for $\bf Social\ Justice\ through\ Musical\ Expression\ for\ updates.$ http://cmhann.weebly.com

Appendix A

Delaware Music Standards

In my unit, Social Justice through Musical Expression, students will synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences about violence to make music. MU: Cn10.0.5a Students will connect and demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to violence and artistic expression when creating, performing, and responding to music. MU: Cr2.1.5a Students will create selected and developed musical ideas for improvisations, arrangements, or compositions to express intent, and explain connection to purpose and context. MU: Cr3.2.5a After creating violence scenario, students will present the final version of created music for others that demonstrate craftsmanship, and explain connection to expressive intent. MU: Pr4.1.5a Students will perform and demonstrate and explain how the selection of music to perform is influenced by personal interest in violence, knowledge, context, as well as their personal and others' technical skill. MU: Pr4.3.5a Students will perform and demonstrate and explain how intent is conveyed through interpretive decisions and expressive qualities (such as dynamics, tempo, timbre, and articulation/style). MU: Re7.1.5a Students will respond, demonstrate and explain, citing evidence, how selected music connects to, and is influenced by specific interests, experiences, purposes or contracts. They will discuss how the music helps convey empathy in a violent situation.

Delaware Theatre Standards

In this unit, **Social Justice through Musical Expression**, students will generate, organize, develop, refine, analyze and interpret ideas about violence using theatre arts. TH: Cr1.1.5 Students will create and identify physical qualities that might reveal a character's inner traits about violence in the imagined world of a drama/theatre work. TH: Cr2-3. Students will create and compare ideas with peers about violence and make selections using improvisation, tableau, puppetry or pantomime that will enhance and deepen group drama/theatre work. TH: Cr3.1.5 Students will create, revise and improve an improvised or scripted drama/theatre work through repetition and self-review. TH: Pr4.1.5 Students will perform and use physical choices to create meaning in a drama/theatre work such as pantomime. TH: Pr5.1.5 Students will perform and demonstrate the use of technical elements in a drama/theatre work. TH: Pr6.1.5 Students will perform and present drama/theatre work informally to a school audience of peers.

TH: Re7.1.5 Students will respond by explaining personal reactions to artistic choices made in a drama/theatre work through participation and observation.

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 "Hip Hop: Today's Civil Rights Movement?" https://www.npr.org/templates/story.
 "Violence and Music Quotes", http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keyword/violence.html.