

Peace Building Project

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Introduction

Throughout history, music has been used as a way to stand up for social justice, solve conflicts, and bring humans together. Throughout the book *Music and Conflict Transformation: Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics* edited by Olivier Urbain, there are many examples of music being used for peacebuilding and to stand up for social justice and conflicts. Chapter four, chapter six, and chapter seven discuss concepts that would be important to highlight in the community that I teach in to start a peacebuilding composition project.

Chapter four, written by Joan Galtung, discusses the way that music is unifying to humans as individuals and as groups. It's a very important concept to think about when beginning to look at a composition project for middle school-aged students. When it comes to peace in music, Galtung argues that unity does not always mean peace and that something like structural identity, non-violence, and empathy are important steps in the peacebuilding process (58). An example of when music uplifted me and united me with my fellow musicians was when I sang *In Remembrance* by Jeffery Ames in a choir with over 150 other high school students in 2013. Shortly after the Sandy Hook school shooting, Dr. Sandra Snow, our conductor, used this piece of music to have an honest conversation with us about standing up for what we believe and how shootings impact our own communities. After the lengthy conversation, we had the opportunity to sing the entirety of the song altogether. Singing that time through after having had such a heavy conversation was incredibly healing and educational because all of us were more attuned to the meaning of the lyrics and with each other. I will certainly share this story with students to begin their project.

The music of the Civil Rights Movement is highlighted in chapter 6 by Baruch Whitehead and he discusses the devastating history of African Americans in the United States beginning from the slave trade through the civil rights movement. Music and spirituals were incredibly important for slaves because music allowed them to come together and many songs were created to have lyrics that represent what life was like as a slave called “work” songs (Whitehead 2015, 81). At the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement, one song called “We Shall Overcome” was adopted from a slave work song into a song used for protests, and in different situations, lyrics could be changed to portray whatever message the sit-in, protest, or march wanted to get across (Whitehead 2015, 84). Music was used during this movement as a way to protest and preach the ideals of the people who wanted equal rights and to spread a message of strength during a period of uncertainty. As a music teacher to middle schoolers, it’s my job to teach students to stand up for what they think is right and educate them on issues that are currently happening in the US through music. This is primarily what I am planning on building the peacebuilding project around.

You don’t need lyrics in music in order to make a political stance or share an idea. In Chapter seven, author Karen Abi-Ezzi highlights Gilad Atzoman and his band the Orient House Ensemble and their activism through jazz music. Atzoman uses his music as a way to share his opinion and distaste for the Israeli occupation in Palestine and the oppression of the Palestinian people. “Specific musical forms, tunes, and melodies are recognizable as belonging to a particular culture or tradition. By taking well-known Israeli tunes and reworking them often, overlaying them with aerobic instrumental sounds, Atzmon is making a clear political statement” (Abi-Ezzi 2015, 97).

Using many of the key ideas above, my idea for a peacebuilding project for middle school general music students to complete is centered around the idea of social justice through music. Students will work together both as a class and individually to decide what justice movements mean the most to them and how we can educate both each other and our community through music on these topics. Students will have the opportunity for discussion in restorative circles and through the sharing of their music. The reason I am choosing to do something social justice related is because middle schoolers are right at the age where they are aware of many of the issues happening in our world and community and what better time to teach them about how we can work together to stand up for what is right or what we believe in.

All of these ideas in the chapters I mentioned help to develop this peacebuilding project because students will be making music together in a positive manner and standing up for values that they believe in.

Project Description

The purpose of this peacebuilding and activity workshop is to have students learn about different social justice issues, collaborate with their peers, create and perform music to build relationships within their community. This is a 4-lesson project designed for a middle school general music class. The goal is for students to learn about music's effect on activism throughout history and create their own songs dedicated to a social justice movement they feel is important to them as individuals or as a community. This four-lesson sequence will encompass peacebuilding activities that create community and relationships within the general music class with a restorative justice lens and end with a community performance of the student's compositions as well as a whole class musical activity performance.

Lesson	Activity	Description
Lesson 1, 40 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restorative Circle • Discussion on how music unifies us • Music-making! The human orchestra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning this sequence of lessons in a whole class community restorative circle. Students sit in a circle facing each other. There is a centerpiece and talking piece so only one student at a time may speak. The two questions asked are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. What is your relationship to music? • 2. Is there music that you connect to personally? • Open discussion outside of circle time where students discuss freely how music unifies us. Students share examples of when music unified them with their peers or other musicians. • Play the human orchestra game as a way to warm-up and feel comfortable with each other, post restorative circle, and unifying discussion.
Lesson 2, 40 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We Shall Overcome • Discussion of social justice and work time • Independent research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief history lesson on the music of the Civil Rights Movement and moments in history where music has acted as activism for social injustice. The lesson features videos, pictures, and music. • Time to explore the ACLU website and issues independently to choose an independent issue that interests the individual student. The issue that they feel is important to them that they would like to focus on it the one that they will base their future composition off of. • Research of music artists that are also activists for the same issue. This helps students to connect to their favorite artist and see them

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole class composition 	<p>as more than just a musician. It's important for students to see people who have a platform use it for good.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead by the teacher, students pick a song of their choice and issue that as a class, concerns them. Using the song, students brainstorm different words and lyrics to fit the melody. The final product will be a song that the entire class will perform for the school or community.
Lesson 3, 40 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intro to student compositions and work time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have the entire class period to work either independently or in small groups on a project based off social justice issues they want to share with their community about. They will have a few options to structure their projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Option 1: Take a song they are already familiar with and rewrite the lyrics ○ Option 2: Write their own melody and lyrics using instruments they are familiar with (guitar, ukulele, drums, etc.) ○ Option 3: Electronic composition using Soundtrap and sounds from various videos or websites.
Lesson 4, 40 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composition work time • Performance • Closing restorative circle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time to finish compositions • Students perform compositions for classmates or community members. Students will also teach their whole class song to the audience to create a more peacebuilding experience for concert attendees and give students a leadership role. • Students sit in a circle facing each other. There is a centerpiece and talking piece so only one student

		<p>at a time may speak. This circle is reflective. The three questions that students are asked to share out about are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1. What is the social justice issue that you are passionate about? • 2. In your opinion, how can music act as activism? • What is one thing you learned about your social justice issue while completing the composition and research?
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Composition expectations to share with students to help guide their thinking and brainstorming:

- The composition should be at least 30 seconds in length
- The composition should reflect the social justice issue that you are passionate about
- The three options for composing are:
 - Option 1: Take a song they are already familiar with and rewrite the lyrics to reflect the social justice issue you are passionate about.
 - Option 2: Write their own melody and lyrics using instruments they are familiar with (guitar, ukulele, drums, etc.). This is like Option 1 exception you are writing your own melody. You are only required to create 1 verse and 1 chorus.
 - Option 3: Electronic composition using Soundtrap and sounds from various videos or websites. It may include sound bites from speeches or songs that reflect the social justice issue.

Links to video/audio examples

- Link to “In Remembrance” Video for the discussion on how music unifies us in lesson 1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aX6j45JBi9I>
- Link to “We Shall Overcome” for lesson 2’s discussion on the music of the Civil Rights Movement. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QhnPVP23rzo>
- Link to the ACLU website for students to explore. <https://www.aclu.org/>

In order to replicate the workshop, it would be beneficial for students or participants to already have background knowledge in some instruments (ukulele, guitar, drums) or in Sountrap (similar to Garageband), in order to give them the most options for a music outlet and creativity.

The Safeguards for success:

1. Safety: Participants feel safe using the restorative circles and the positive creative environment. In the circle, students will begin to discuss the role that music has on their lives and how it relates to issues they care about. This in turn creates a safe space for students to express their opinions without being knocked down.
2. Equality: Participants have the freedom to create a composition of any issue and choose between multiple different means to do so. This provides a level of student choice and voice.
3. Inclusion: All students are encouraged to participate in restorative circles to reflect their own musical opinions. The circles use a talking piece that is passed around, so each student had a choice to speak or not. Students also have the option to work independently or in a group if they feel more comfortable that way.
4. Creativity: Participants have a creative outlet through the human orchestra activity and through the compositions. They have creative freedom to choose whatever social justice issue they are passionate about and inspires them to create a piece of music around it.

5. Quality: Students have ample time to create their individual or small group compositions.

There will be examples shows and context of social justice issues taught through the musical history lesson which provides context for a more quality musical experience.

This project is peacebuilding because students are working as groups and as individuals to create a narrative on social justice through music. Using restorative circles, students will have conversations about how music influences their lives and how important it can be for activism, as well as building relationships with each other as classmates and peers. The final product of this peacebuilding exercise is the sharing of the compositions to both classmates and the school community which helps to create a well-rounded experience for the students and allows them to be proud of the time and effort they put into their projects.

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