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Expressing Art

Art can be found all over the world from an art museum like LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) to mother nature herself, with rainbows and the sunset at a beach. Art has become more of a vague word where it covers not only paintings and drawing but as well as music, theatre, and even movies. Art has shifted from pleasure, to addressing social issues of human rights being violated. Art does have an impact on social issues, which could be addressed through books, movies/theatre, and music, in order to share worldwide problems, like the violation of human rights or other pertinent social issues.

Books are one of the strongest ways of stating a social problem in a community or in a society. Books cover a vast majority of genres from nonfiction to fictional stories and even have a story based on a real life event, or even portray a nonfictional story of an event that could happen or has already happened, but with a little twist on the story to capture the attention of a targeted audience. In the article “Is Art a Waste of Time”, by Rhys Southan, he states, “Like Hilton, most of them seemed doubtful that art had much power to alter the world for the better” (Southan 436). I would like to challenge the opinion from Southan’s reading for the reason that even though there is an issue happening around the world, or even in the neighborhood we live, some people do not report or tell people about their sufferings, and writing these experience in books is one of the best way to project the problem that a majority of the people keep quiet. One book that addresses a social problem of sexual assault is *Telling* by Marilyn Reynolds where she shares about a teenage girl, named Cassie, who was working as a babysitter for someone she knew pretty well in her neighborhood. However, after a while of working for that family, the

father of the of the two children starts to sexually assault her and throughout the story Cassie did not know what to do about the event that happen to her. In the eyes of the audience the people would have said, “why not go report it to an adult, or your parents?” Which is true, but a majority of the people who are very unfortunate to get caught in these events do not report it, and nowadays sexual assault is one of the most unreported crimes in the country. A statistic report has shown that, “Only 344 out of every 1,000 sexual assaults are reported to police. That means about 2 out of 3 go unreported.” (RAINN) A book is able to recreate this event in order to spread the view of the author in the situation.

Sexual assault could be very difficult to talk about, even to the ones around you, and the ones you trust. Sexual assault is an issue in the communities because the sexual offenders get away with abusing the victim, and the victim is basically left vulnerable and scared of a tragic event that happens to them. *Telling* challenges the quote from Southan because it is a book that shares a story of the victims point of view of a sexual assault event and the reason why the book is effective is because it shares the experience that many people keep to themselves. *Telling* is able to share a story of sexual assault without a person actually getting hurt and share to the society that staying quiet will not help the victim of a sexual assault but speaking up will make a difference. Books are a form of art, and not all books point out a tragic event that is happening in the world, but books do help people to see or wonder if these social issues are actually happening around the world and could potentially help the people in need.

Movies are another form of art that could display other social issues, such as the issue of immigration; one film that does this is, “Under the Same Moon”. This movie addresses of a current issue because it looks into the lives of the immigrants and how they migrate from their own country to the U.S, leaving everything behind in order to live a better life, in order to

achieve the “American Dream.” Many people suffer from not having papers and picking any job that is being offered to them. Immigrants work almost all day for minimum wage in order to sustain the family they have. The movie “Under the Same Moon” is about a Mexican mother who left from her home country, Mexico, to come to the U.S to achieve the “American Dream,” but in order to achieve this she had to leave, her home, her friends, and the most important person to her at the moment, her son. Many people who cross the border risk their lives on crossing over the border in order live a life they want to live. Once crossing the border it does not mean you “made it” to the other side because there are more obstacles that they have to face. These obstacles consist of learning a new language, getting a job, buying a house, facing a culture barrier, and even worst for the people who bring a family because they have to raise and help their child to get an education. Many people do not make it alive after crossing and other people get injured along the way. One of the places that is populated with immigrant is Los Angeles, where Boyle Heights and East Los Angeles have one of the highest population of Latinos and immigrants living in Los Angeles. For example, in 2006, in Downtown Los Angeles there has been yearly marches for the rights of the immigrants where thousands of people would protest for the change of the U.S immigration policy (Sinco). Even after crossing immigrants do not get treated the same and would have to fight for equality as shown by the people living in Los Angeles by protesting. “Under the Same Moon” was not the only movie that presented migration but it help convey empathy to the world which allows organizations to be made such as the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles which advocates for human and civil rights of the immigrants and refugees living in Los Angeles.

Migration is nothing wrong in the world, the only thing wrong in the world is the borders and walls mankind create to stop the migration. Immigration is a huge social issue because the

immigrants live their life in fear of getting deported and when immigrants do get deported they get exposed to brutal and inhumane condition of confinement. The immigrants not only suffer a poor life back at home but once coming to a new country does not mean your life has changed for the best, because not every person you meet along the road will be greeting you with open hands. In *Necessary Edges: Arts, Empathy, and Education*, one of Yo-Yo Ma's statements also encourages migration because it creates new culture when he states, "the interdependence of globalization is creating more links with other cultures through which empathetic understanding is vital" (Ma 258). The movie "Under the Same Moon" connects to Yo-Yo Ma by promoting empathy for the audience to see the hardship the immigrants go through in order to cross the border and even once crossing the border, they live their life in fear. People might not know how difficult the life of an immigrant is and the only way they could see it or experience it is through art, in this case a movie. Migration allows people to create new cultures from around the world. Migration happens all over the world from people trying to live a better life to butterfly flying from one place to another.

Music is another form of art that allows the author to express themselves on social issues. A song that critiques a social issue is the song that Macklemore's rapped called, "Otherside" where he explains an issue of drugs and how people get addicted to them. Drugs are a huge social issue in the world especially here in the U.S. Lizmarie Maldonado states, "Heroin use in the United States is a growing problem. In 2014, it was found that: 900,000 adults and young adults ages 12 and older used heroin in the past year" (Maldonado). Drugs have one of the highest killing rates in the U.S as shown by statistics, "Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death worldwide, killing approximately 1.4 million people globally in 2008. At least 80% of lung cancer deaths are attributable to smoking." (Tobacco Atlas) Macklemore tries to show that drugs

are not all fun and games by rapping, “I've seen cocaine bring out the demons inside / Cheatin' and lyin' / Friendship cease, no peace in the mind / Stealin' and takin' anything to fix the pieces inside / Broken, hopeless, headed nowhere” (Line 78-83). As well sending a message to the people in power, or the people who get idolized from their fans by rapping, “He just wanted to act like them / He just wanted to rap like him / Us as rappers underestimate the power and the effects that we have on these kids” (51-53). The reason why people look up to the musicians is because they are successful people, and the famous people might not know how much power they have over the people and the children as well when they create their lyrics and how it could affect the lives of people. Drugs could take away the dreams that people once had, the personality that one person has, and even the life that the person has as well. So artist/musicians can use their power to help and express the negative side effects of social issues, in this example Macklemore tries to tackle down the issue of drug addiction and try to convey a message of what it could do to a person's life. Yo-Yo Ma states, “that feeling and emotions as expressed in art and music play a central role in high-level cognitive reasoning.” (Ma 258) Macklemore's song “Otherside” connects with Yo-Yo Ma by the way he raps the song by putting the aggressive emotion and making the audience realize the hardship that a lot of people go through when taking drugs, and the way he describe every bit making the audience understand the way a drug addict might feel. Macklemore strongly suggest that people should be very careful with drugs especially the famous people who have people that look up to them for examples because drugs could potentially ruin a person's life.

Art does show social issues through music, movies and books by exposing what is going wrong the community or what some people go through in their life. People might not understand the deeper meaning behind the lyric, the melody, the words, or even the visuals that the artist

trying to show but that is what Yo-Yo Ma is trying to enforce in his teachings, “critical thinking” by making the audience try and figure out the figurative language that the artist is using, or the way the author portray a picture. Everything that is being produced has a meaning. The little meaning the art has could actually have a bigger meaning in the future or it might have a bigger meaning to other people. Everyone has a different meaning behind a specific art. Social issues can only be solved by uniting the people through art and helping each other out rather than benefitting from others suffer. Art is just there for us, the people, to get the meaning and interpret it as how we want to use it.

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