



Signature in the Schools: The Voices on Blackwell Island

Exercise: Ridiculous Care and Attention to a Cause

Subject(s): English, Theatre, Social Studies

Goals: Students will be able to:

- Take knowledgeable, constructive action, individually and collaboratively, to address school, community, local, state, national, and global issues.
- Use verbal and nonverbal techniques for presentation.
- Describe how theatrical works can entertain, inform, and interpret the human experience.

Show Connection:

The characters of *The Voices of Blackwell Island* are fighting to be heard in several ways in an environment that does not value, see or hear them as they would like to be valued, seen or heard. In this exercise, students will unpack and utilize the tools at their disposal to amplify their voices and causes. In exploring these tools, students will better understand that they are not powerless and that each and every person has the ability to be a changemaker and voice for the cause they believe in.

Materials:

- Arts and Crafts Supplies
- Campaign Causes Sheets
- Campaign Criteria Sheets

Set-Up:

Divide the class into groups of equal size.

Description:

- In *The Voices of Blackwell Island*, characters like Nellie and Daughter have their own aspirations they reach for in one manner or another. Some of these aspirations might seem as serious as a heart attack and some of them may seem ridiculous and fleeting. The characters also go about fighting for these causes in a variety of ways, some big and some small.
- What, in your opinion, are some of the strongest and most effective ways for a person or group to bring attention to a cause? (Marches, protests, slogans, visual campaigns, conversations, etc.)

- Each group of students has 40 minutes to create a campaign around one of the fictional causes. The groups should take their cause seriously even if it seems rather silly to them. Causes and aspirations that are most often achieved are the ones fought earnestly, honestly, and passionately for. Don't phone this in and laugh off the work you are about to do. If you believe in the cause, your audience will believe in the cause! Fight for it!
- The campaign should include the following, to be presented by the group in a theatrical fashion at the end of the work period:
 - » A visual representation of your cause and what you are fighting for. This could be a poster, banner, logo, street art tag, etc. Something visually informative that conveys the vibe or specific cause you are fighting for or against.
 - » A chant, song, or musical vocalization of some sort that your group can repeat and present to the rest of the class. Again, this should be in reference to your cause.
 - » A short 1-minute speech where one or several members of the group outline what their cause is, why it matters, and how the audience can take action to help the cause.
 - » Two strategies of next steps and actions that your group can take to further the cause. (Civil Disobedience, protests, letter campaign to a specific location, etc.)
- Students should think outside of the box with all of these aspects of your civic campaign. What could you and your group do that would bring attention to your cause and promote change? You may not have the ability to vote for a cause you believe in via elections yet but there are a myriad of other ways to bring attention and action to what matters to you.
- Have the groups present their theatrical campaigns for their causes.

Discussion:

- What about these campaigns stood out to you? Why do you think it left an impression in your mind?
- What sort of emotional, psychological and physical appeals did the campaign use to get your attention and call you to action?
- Everyone has things they experience in life or read about in the news that hit their heart. Things that they know need to be changed. What is your "thing"? What is your cause? What's the roadmap for you helping your cause? What's the first step? The second? The third?
- How could you see adapting some of these strategies to more grounded or real life examples in your own lives?