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USING FEMINIST ADVOCACY, COLLABORATION, AND ARTS-BASED PRACTICES TO HEAL OURSELVES AND OTHERS

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Abstract

We are two art educators who discuss how our individual and collaborative art-making practices, viewed through a feminist lens, enable us to empower ourselves and others to help repair or heal the world. We explain our personal and collaborative art-making processes through political activism in public arenas and in our daily lives using a Marking and Mapping® process with our conceptions of personal, collaborative, and public voice. We each present two individually authored visual statements along with two accompanying artworks and a collaborative piece that combines a written explanation and graphic example of our views about healing ourselves and the world.

Keywords: feminism, advocacy, art-based practices, collaboration, empowerment

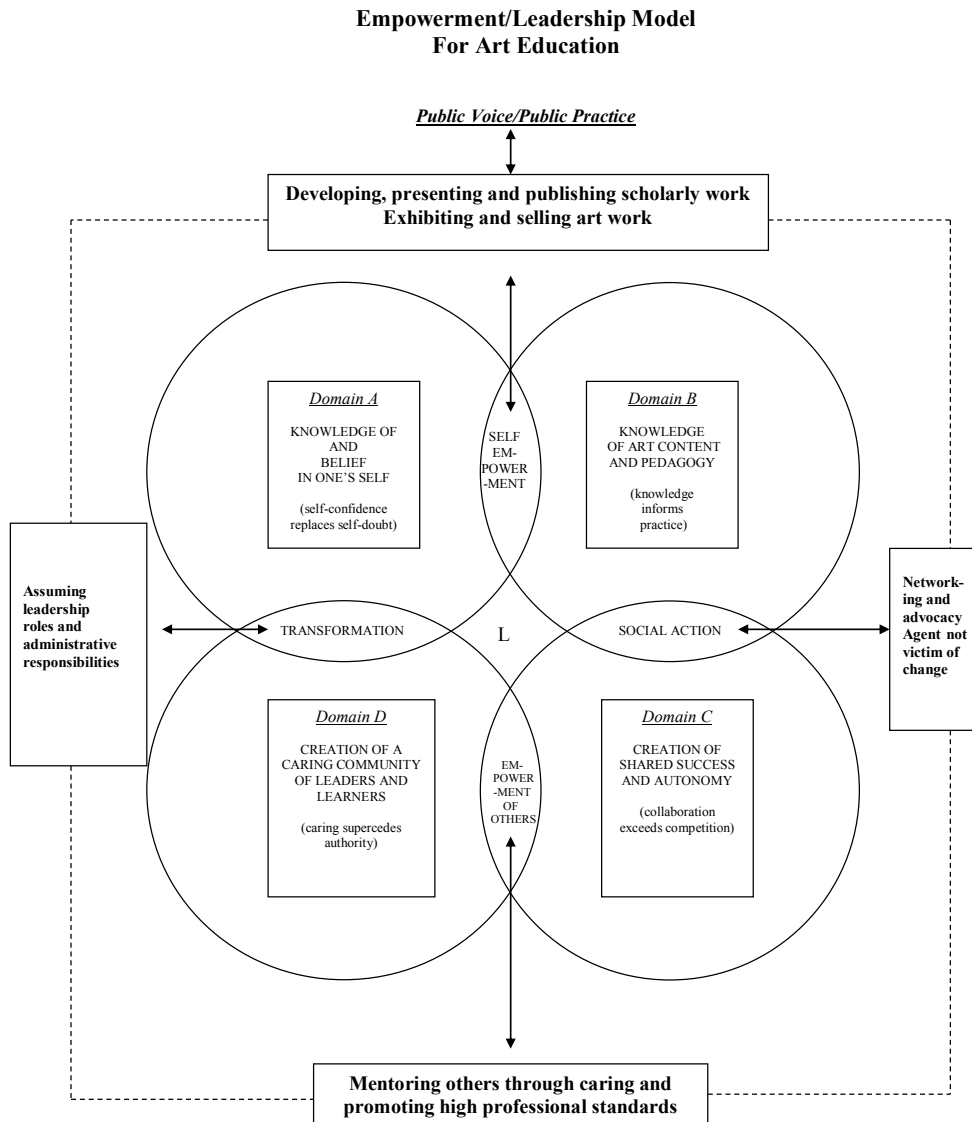
This visual essay is a feminist exploration of professional and personal navigations and discoveries within 40 years of friendship. As authors of this visual essay, we, Renee Sandell and Enid Zimmerman, share a Jewish and New York City heritage. We are both first generation Americans and over the years have worked together on a number of occasions both in our published written work and in creating collaborative, visual artworks.

A Feminist Lens and Empowerment through Voice

Retired from university teaching, we continue to be actively involved in art education advocacy and research at the national level and have returned to using our own art-based practices to nurture creativity, mindfulness, and critical thinking through a feminist lens. One of our goals is to help empower art educators seeking to expand their expressive potential as effective advocates for art education research and practice; and to make their voices heard locally and in public arenas. Our view of feminism is one in which financial, social, and cultural inequalities are at the forefront; and include protesting and activism for greater influence of women and women's issues being included equally in politics, education, health issues, and the media (Rampton, 2015). As our own activism positions of feminism evolve, we continue to advocate for equity, diversity, and inclusion; and challenge the political nature of organizations and those who hold power that do not meet equitable and inclusive standards.

We use *voice*, as a ubiquitous metaphor for empowering suppressed expressions of those who often are not heard, to become agents for change rather than targets of change in an ever-shifting educational reform context. From the literature about feminist voice, our experiences teaching and conducting research over many years, and Enid and Frances Thurber's (2002) Empowerment Leadership Model, we use *private voice*, *collaborative voice*, and *public voice* to enable us, through our writing and art-making, to help heal ourselves and others. In this model, self-empowerment, empowerment of others, transformation, and

social action can lead to belief in one's self, knowledge of content and pedagogy, and creation of shared success and autonomy among a community of teachers and leaders (Figure 1).



Healing the World

We envision our advocacy for creating a better world for future generations as a welcome alternative to the prevalent hierarchical power structures of society in which those who are privileged and have power, be it through wealth, religion, race, and/or sexual identity, deny access to those who often do not have the power to create positive change. In each artwork, be it a personal piece or a collaborative work, the words, marks, images, contrasts, colors, and their graphic arrangement, express our visual voices, giving graphic form to our ideas. We are guided by our notion of *Tikkun Olam*, which often is translated as *repairing or healing the world*. Modern Jewish practice of *Tikkun Olam* has become synonymous with the notion of social action and the pursuit of social justice. This perception of reparation not only references repairing or healing the world, but, also, improving it. *Tikkun Olam*, however, not only emphasizes political activism, as there are various ways to practice *Tikkun Olam* in our daily lives and improve the world and bring it closer to a harmonious state; but, at the same time emphasize performing small acts of kindness as well as engaging in social action and pursuing social justice (Rose, Green Kaiser, & Klein, 2008).

A Collaborative Process of Art-making

We both generate artwork in our own private spaces and sometimes, together, we use a collaborative process to create artworks in which we equally contribute to the final product. We do this through a procedure in which one of us initiates an idea and the other resonates with the conception, reclarifies, refines, or rejects it. Our collaborative work, both written and visual, is concerned with a practice that fosters power for women to act upon issues they identify as significant to use in their own lives and communities. For our collaborative artwork, once an idea is agreed upon then both of us propose an outline of a visual way or ways in which the conception can be presented visually. As soon as there is agreement, through an on-line, computer practice of sending an in-process artwork back and forth, we each work on parts until we reach a consensus that the visual representation is complete. Renee does her part of this collaborative process by using ProCreate on her iPad for digital visualization in addition to hand drawing to make changes and additions; whereas, Enid uses a physical, collage technique to add and alter parts and then photographs her additions and changes.

Figure 1. *Empowerment Leadership Model for Art Education* by Frances Thurber and Enid Zimmerman (2004).

In 2018, we created our first joint artwork (Sandell & Zimmerman, in press) in which we collaborated during the entire process through on-line conversations about how and what was to be included. In this work, we depict, through artful Marking & Mapping[®], our collaborative community-building ideas about voice leading to empowerment through a contemporary feminist lens.

Marking and Mapping[®]

Since 2013, when we began to use Renee’s Marking & Mapping[®] (Sandell, 2013) methodology for visual journaling (Sandell, 2015; Sandell & Zimmerman, in press), our graphic conversations have been about how we as art educators can be instrumental in transforming ourselves and our communities (Sandell, 2015). The transformative nature of Marking & Mapping[®] uses a highly accessible approach to visual expression and is designed to engage artists and non-artists in democratic visualization experiences that communicate authentic, personal, and creative expression (Sandell, 2015). Marking & Mapping[®] provides everyone with opportunities for visual expression of ideas and feelings, by encoding authentic and inspirational narratives. Simple guidelines and tools help guide visual storytelling activities that use creativity to reveal each person’s ‘visual voice.’

Renee uses Visual Fitness, an ability to decode and encode visual meaning, as a vital survival strategy in our 21st century digital world where pocket devices persistently bombard us with graphic information. Towards this end, Renee uses Form+Theme+Context (FTC)[®] through A Balanced Way of Seeing[®] to decode and encode art, as well as museums, leadership, and other phenomena including political issues, in the form of FTC Palettes (Sandell, 2000). These open-ended graphic organizers, used in professional development workshops such as SummerVision DC program (Sandell & Zimmerman, 2017), utilize meaningful criteria that address the formal (what is seen), thematic (what is discerned from what is seen,) and contextual (what cannot be seen but can be ‘googled’) dimensions for which specific evidence is identified for developing balanced creative work with deep insight.

During the 2018 #MeToo Movement, Renee created an FTC Palette for Decoding Sexual Abuse & Harassment. This FTC Palette reflects the Big Picture of Sexual Abuse & Harassment as comprehensive documentation of a complex

feminist issue perceived in a balanced way that affects all citizens. Viewers are invited to mark up this document and make connections between the different columns, as well as the added Remediations Strategies in the bottom section of Figure 2.

form+theme+context[®] issues

ftc[®] palette for decoding & encoding meaning

How does a balance of formal, thematic, and contextual qualities reveal layers of meaning?

The Big Picture of Sexual Abuse & Harassment

Formal Qualities FUNDAMENTAL EVIDENCE HOW IT "IS"	Thematic Qualities BIG IDEA & RELATIONSHIPS WHAT IT IS	Contextual Qualities SIGNIFICANCE & RELEVANCE WHO, WHEN, WHERE, WHY
<p>WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unwelcome/nonconsensual sexual/obscene/ comments & coercive misconduct towards children & adults Looks: obscene eye contact/ grimaces, intimidation Catcalls, lustful gestures, edicule, "laughing at" Lewd Photos <i>Al Franken</i> Cyber bullying and Sexting <i>Anthony Weiner</i> Sexual jokes/demeaning humor <i>Louis CK, Larry David, Ralph Norman</i> "Locker Room" comments about looks (facial, body, skin color, dress) <i>Trump</i> Unwanted Touch: groping, kissing, hugging Molestation, attempted rape <i>Brett Kavanaugh</i> Pressure to have unwanted sex Indecent requests <i>Senator Trent Franks' umugogy offer</i> Force, threat of harm, blackmail <i>Harvey Weinstein</i> Flashing / stalking Rape by one or more Charged date rape <i>Bill Cosby</i> Demanding favors for professional advancement <i>Harvey Weinstein</i> Sex trafficking of minors and adults 	<p>MISOGYNY MANIFESTATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abuse of power leads to sexual abuse, harassment, discrimination, humiliation, assault, violation, revenge, social injustice Exploitation of the vulnerable by those exercising power/status/insecurity <i>Trump, Clarence Thomas</i> Violation of Law: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 Bullying/belittling: character assassination <i>Trump to Hillary Clinton, C. Thomas to Anita Hill</i> Name-calling: <i>Trump & McConnell to E. Warren</i> "Prostitution": Sex Workers Pedophilia: Children at risk Homophobia/Transphobia/Racism: Violent/discrimination of LGBTQ+, TGNC and intersectionality of marginalized identities Personality Disorder (no filters) The "Male Gaze": Objectifying Women invites sexual harassment & abuse <p>CULTURAL SOURCES & PERPETUATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Folklore: boys will be boys, double standard on virginity/prowess. Male vs. Female stereotypes and archetypes. Old Boys' Club/Network, physiological "need" Celebrities: <i>Bill O'Reilly, Kevin Spacey, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Peter Martins, Travis Smiley, James Levine, Garrison Keillor, Jeffrey Tambor, Dustin Hoffman, Harvey Weinstein, Steve Wynn, Jeffrey Epstein, Placido Domingo</i> Macho culture: Bragging sexual prowess: <i>Trump</i> Sex culture: <i>Cher, Marc Ruffalo</i> Sports culture: vulgar locker room talk <i>Trump</i> Job Inequality: Low wage & status Executive Privilege: <i>CBS CEO Les Moonves</i> Advertising: media female objectification: <i>Victoria Secret, cars, booze, Viagra, Hooters</i> Pornography: <i>POORNAB website, porn videos</i> Proud Boys, INCEL Movement: Online Forums Literature: <i>Erotica, 50 Shades of Grey</i> Cable TV: <i>Mad Men, Sex and the City, Gris, SVU, The Affair, etc.</i> Films: <i>Two Women, Carnal Knowledge, The Collector, American Pie, American Beauty, Fatal Attraction, Unfaithful, Spotlight, Room, The Tale</i> Video games: sex & violence Events: <i>Miss America pageants, beauty contests who have been publicly accused of sexual abuse, including harassment, misconduct, and/or assault.</i> 	<p>WHO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The Vulnerable": minors, women, men, people of color, LGBTQ, elderly, immigrants, low-wage employees, service, & freelance workers in a "Gig" economy <p>WHEN:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At all [opportunistic] stages of life. <i>#MeToo</i> Occurring on a single or repetitive basis, depending on "grooming" by perpetrator <p>WHERE AND BY WHOM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic Abuse & Child Abuse family, relatives, friends, neighbors—<i>abuse so kept secret</i> Military: Chain of command, Air Force/Navy Academy, pressure to obey/maintain status quo. Academia: School staff, college professors, administrators, coaches, fraternity Sports: abuse of student athletes by people with access <i>Jerry Sandusky, Dr. Larry Nassar</i> Church: clergy, lay women, Catholic boys and girls, <i>#ChurchToo</i> Work: Corporations, Hollywood <i>#MeToo</i> Prisons: abuse by correction officers Professional Sexual Misconduct: Doctors, therapists, clergy, teachers Nursing Homes: Staff, Patients. Government "perks": <i>George HW Bush, Roy Moore, Bill Clinton</i> Hospitality Industry: guests, housekeepers <p>WHY: SIGNIFICANCE & RELEVANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Destructive/Abusive behavior exploits the vulnerable and often remains a devastating secret until revealed—<i>lasting psychological scars</i> #WhyIDidntReport IMPACT & CONSEQUENCES: Systemic social problem with immediate vs. long term impact and consequences Lifetime suffering on survivor; affecting anguished parents and family members, workplace, place of worship, and community. BACKLASH/Retaliation against Accusers? Accused? Secrecy and underreported cases Deniers vs. open acknowledgment Job Dismissal: <i>Charlie Rose, Matt Lauer</i> Loss of Professional Opportunities: <i>Chuck Close, Kevin Spacey</i> Legal Action: Investigations, civil and criminal proceedings
<p>REMEDIATION STRATEGIES TOWARDS ELIMINATING SEXUAL ABUSE: POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resist and debunk <i>Trump/Fox News</i> campaign to portray men as if they are the main victims of "unproven allegations." BELIEVE survivors! SEXUALITY EDUCATION: Everyone, especially parents, take responsibility and provide information for all generations Clear understanding of the meaning of CONSENT and respect for "NO" Using professional VOICE "speaking truth to power" without fear of contempt and possible job loss "Men take a Stand..." movement can provide powerful consciousness-raising and social change Sexual Abuse/Harassment Training/Therapy, Safe Spaces, and local support services Professional Ethics Committee Reviews New Work Place Models: Leadership messaging from the top by responsible men and more women in leadership roles Effective Models for confronting/reporting vs. whistleblower retaliation 		

NOTE: The red font identifies examples of individuals who have been publicly accused of sexual abuse, including harassment, misconduct, and/or assault.

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Figure 2. FTC Palette for Decoding Sexual Abuse and Harassment by Renee Sandell (revised August 21, 2019).

Personal and Visual Narratives

What follows are personal visual statements with accompanying graphic visualizations that we made in response to certain events in our lives. These visual statements are introduced with brief descriptions about how individually and collaboratively, we responded to political and social issues, that helped us repair and heal ourselves and, thereby, the world around us. In each personal narrative, we first discuss two individually rendered artworks that we created for different purposes. Then we discuss our collaborative artwork in which we share ideas that bring our personal visions into a new configuration that would not be possible if we had created this artwork on our own. The process of creating through the Internet and making changes over time, also, adds a new element to our collaborative art-making.

Renee Sandell: Providing Access to Visual Fitness 4 All® through a Balanced Way of Seeing®

My artwork combines FTC® with Marking & Mapping® (Sandell, 2013) to create art installations that explore the human condition in time, space, and place. In particular, Marking & Mapping® embraces my personal artwork as evidence of my formal, thematic, and contextual visual voice, revealed for example in two different artworks created in 2017. Figure 3, “Leaving Berlin: My Mother’s Immigrant Childhood,” is my contribution to the ArtWatch Collective’s “The One House Project: Artists Stand Up for Inclusion, Tolerance, and Unity.” This timely, community-based exhibit brought together more than 300 participants, both artists and community members, who were given a 12x12-inch wood panel on which to tell the story of one of their ancestors who came to this country from elsewhere, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. ArtWatch Collective then constructed an underlying structure—a house—and attached the completed panels to the outside, covering it completely.¹¹ The process of Marking & Mapping® my mother’s Berlin childhood and immigration story involved the creation of all of the images and text while I listened to my mother’s online recording from her 1999

¹¹ To learn more about the One House Project and view images of panels that were created for the first exhibit (which was presented in November 2017 at Touchstone Gallery in Washington, DC) and the second, larger November 2018 iteration at Black Rock Center for the Arts in Germantown, Maryland, visit the ArtWatch website: www.artwatchdc.com/one-house

Oral History from the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. Hearing her spoken words guided me to create this interpretive visualization of her unique and complex story as a Holocaust survivor who came to the United States in 1938.



Figure 3. *Leaving Berlin: My Mother’s Immigrant Childhood* for The One House Project by Renee Sandell (September 17, 2017).

Empathy (Figure 4) is an example from my ongoing *Silk Meditations* series. These images on painted silk, reveal positive energies contained in human virtues, reflecting sensory states of consciousness through spiritual expression. Immersed in universal gratitude, the works in this series become

meditative mindscapes of visual affirmations needed for healing in our turbulent times. Creating these silk meditations almost daily—and posting them on Facebook, contributed to my own healing while it generated extensive affirmations reflected in warm posted responses from others.



Figure 4. *Empathy* by Renee Sandell (December 5, 2017).

Enid Zimmerman: Creating Visualizations for Self-Healing and Repairing the World

Teaching and learning are changing in new environments where modes of communication are not limited only to writing, but include, multimodalities such as images, audio, video, social networks, and collaborative scholarship. I use art-making and writing methods, including drawing, painting, collage, and photography, to present my ideas visually as well as in written form (Zimmerman & Cooper, 2019; Zimmerman, 2015). Much of my own search for expressing myself visually can be traced back to my commitment to creating visual narratives that not only express what is transparent and evident, but often what is challenging and contain multi-layered meanings. I draw upon visual journaling using Renee's *Marking & Mapping*[®] methodology as an accessible, impassioned, and subjective way of communicating graphically to create almost daily visual and verbal diary entries that help me become more resilient in troubled times. I then use social media to share my ideas about self-discovery, creativity, and wholeness as a personal means of supporting and promoting equality and freedom for everyone. I have conducted workshops and developed correspondences with others, both who practice art-making and those who do not, who are seeking to repair or heal the world and use art-making practices to create restoration and change.

In these two examples taken from my daily practice, in Figure 5, I focus on the need to heal ourselves; and through such healing we also can help mend others as well as the world about us. In Figure 6, I emphasize that all of us have an obligation to welcome strangers and build an environment where tolerance and acceptance of others is fostered. I reflect on my own history as a first generation American as my father's family left Polish Russia in 1913 after fleeing pogroms, in which violent attacks by non-Jews were carried out on the Jewish population. My family was forced to leave their home city of Dryska and after an arduous journey finally arrived in the United States. The soul of our country is built on the contributions of immigrants from around the world and we must continue to welcome, nurture, and honor their talents as a means of creating an enriched and democratic society.



Figure 5. *Instructions to Myself for Surviving Difficulties* by Enid Zimmerman (May 13, 2017).

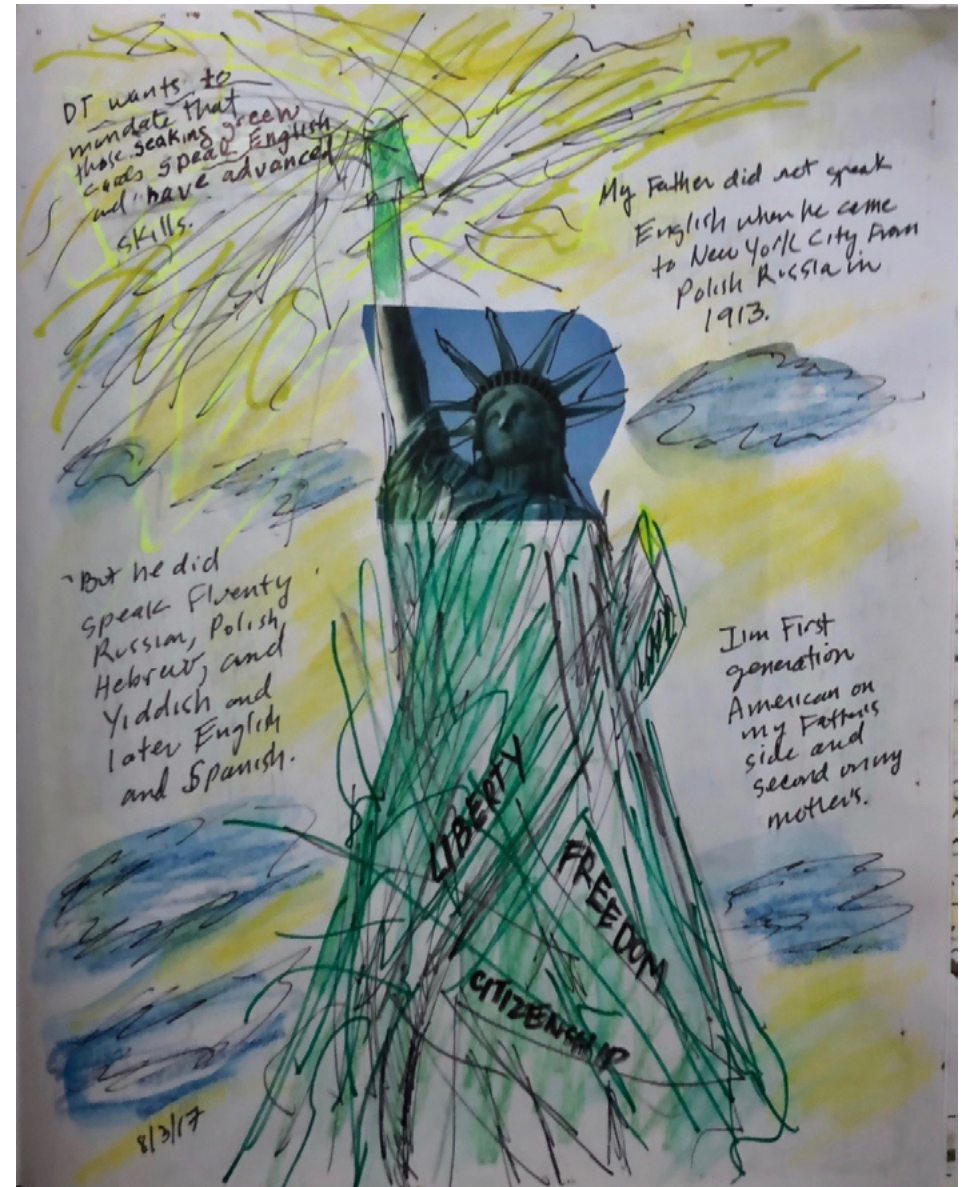


Figure 6. *There is Hope When the Statue of Liberty's Light Shines* by Enid Zimmerman (August 3, 2017).

**Renee Sandell and Enid Zimmerman:
Tikkun Olam as A Proactive Feminist, Collaborative, and Arts-based Practice
for Healing the World**

We collaborated on creating Figure 7, *Visualizing and Repairing through Collaboration in a Difficult and Unsettling World*, using graphic tools to make a statement about repairing or healing the world through loving the stranger and countering divisiveness with understanding and compassion. Through our mutual hands-on and digital art-making, our artwork envisions social action and teaching as processes of empowering ourselves and others to make a difference. We chose to make our collaboration emphasize the idea that through understanding multiple points of view polarization of ideas and intolerance can be mollified and broad-mindedness and acceptance can be integrated and prevail. The many aspects of repairing the world can be found in the words, surrounding images of ourselves, found in Figure 7, that include social justice, art education, feminism, collaboration, healing, spiritual expression, self-discovery, wholeness, critical thinking, equity, mindfulness, freedom, peace, gratitude, spiritual expression, healing, visual/voice, and global understanding all of which can lead to overcoming darkness and despair and bringing light and hope to a troubled world.

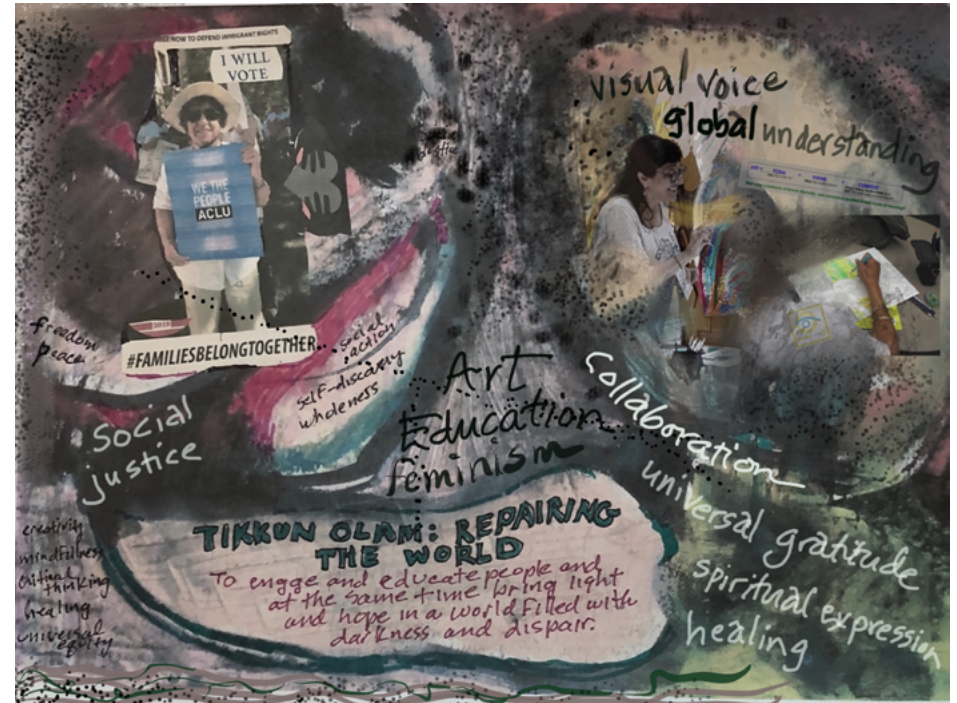


Figure 7. *Visualizing and Repairing through Collaboration in a Difficult and Unsettling World* by Renee Sandell and Enid Zimmerman (August 24, 2018).

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About the Authors

Renee Sandell is founder/program director of SummerVision DC, an expeditionary museum professional development experience since 2010. Renee's awards include the 2019 Lowenfeld Award, 2015-2016 Distinguished Lecturer in Art Education at Miami University and 2013 NAEA National Art Educator, for her leadership and scholarship on her Form+Theme+Context (FTC)® methodology as a balanced way of seeing. Sandell uses her Marking & Mapping® in her own artwork as well as [Visual Fitness 4 All: Engaging Creativity and Insight®](#) hands-on workshops in diverse venues. She can be reached at renee.sandell@gmail.com

In her research, Enid Zimmerman, Professor Emerita of Art Education at Indiana University, focuses on creativity, feminist, global, history, and policy issues in art education. She has written extensively and has co-edited two recent NAEA books, *Connecting Creativity Research and Practice in Art Education* and *Cultural Sensitivity in a Global World*. Her current awards are the Distinguished Lecturer in Art Education at Miami University; the Davis Lecture in Art Education; and the NAEA Elliot Eisner Lifetime Achievement Award. She can be reached at zimmerm@indiana.edu.

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