

**ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO BECOME SOCIAL ACTIVISTS****R. Hayik**

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In a reality packed with cases of social injustices, I used to ponder “that’s not fair!” but do nothing to change reality. However, encounters with critical literacy theory (Friere, 1970; Luke & Freebody, 2000; and Lewison et al., 2008 ) and an innovative research tool called Photovoice (Wang, Burris, and Xiang, 1996) led me into the path of taking action for promoting society. I became an active teacher who encourages her school and college students to develop powerful social identities and become social activist in their own communities.

Photovoice provides a space for students to critique problematic issues pertinent to their lives, share their critique with a potentially influential audience from their community, and hopefully affect some change. According to Wang, Burris, and Xiang (1996), such intriguing tool empowers youth with little money, power, or status through providing them with opportunities for critique and social change. Equipped with cameras, students are encouraged to capture photos of deficiencies or problematic issues that they observe in their reality. They then write commentaries on each photo in English, addressing its problematic sides. Students’ photos and “voices” (written accounts) are then displayed in a walk-in exhibition for influential figures in their society to view. The optimistic consequences include students sharing and discussing problems that prevail in their society with those who can change such reality (such as principals, mayors, political representatives, and inspectors).

Samples students’ “Photovoices” (that will be shared with the conference audience) revealed that students were able to locate problematic issues in their communities (e.g. pollution, under resourced school buildings, poor street conditions, high living expenses, and sexist billboards) and write about the reasons behind their choices. Additionally, they developed powerful voices and courageously spoke against social injustices with the exhibition visitors.

To conclude, I found Photovoice to be an effective tool to encourage my college students to address issues of social justice. As the Israeli society (as well as other societies around the world) grapples nowadays with issues of social justice, utilizing such tool is effective to encourage our college students become agents for social change.