

Community Understanding of Care

Spatial Justice Studio Faculty/Community Fellows Program 2021-22
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Project Description

This project seeks to establish a community understanding of “care” in Winston-Salem, NC, as a step towards building the support for UNCSA High School English Seniors engaged in participatory action projects initiating a care infrastructure in the local community. Simultaneous to the 2021-2022 courses in the academic year, this project began building the foundations to developing a Care Resource Map of Winston-Salem, which will create a visualization of the local and existing care infrastructure as a resource for those seeking care and support through advocacy organizations and community education opportunities, in addition to services that provide food access, housing support, caregiving tools and support, and healthcare support. Students enrolled in courses involved with this project participated in the design and distribution of the Care Resource Map of Winston-Salem initial survey, learned grassroots organizing tools to apply to their literary analyses and writing, and applied their developing knowledge of community and collective care to their participatory action projects. Due to the collective student interest in building care resources among their own communities within their individual action projects, students additionally collaborated on building “accessibility documentaries” of the UNCSA campus and developed their own “action archive” for future students involved in care-centered projects and care resource development to continue a “care revolution” in the UNCSA and Winston-Salem community.

Project Process

The essence of this project centers on building both a community understanding of care and thus access to care. As a teacher of two English seminar courses that implemented work towards this project, I facilitated a space where student artists could write with curiosity and artfulness. Through texts and films that explore experimental narratives and make use of dynamic styles and voice, I encouraged students to draw inspirations to create accessible writing, which means writing that targets multiple audiences of diverse backgrounds while building an original style and voice. In-class creative writing and reflection prompts, throughout the academic year, based on texts/films and cultural analyses supported finding student passions, which helped me design engaging essay and presentation prompts further into our classes. With time committed to practicing writing skills, learning ethical research techniques, building composition techniques, and revising writing, I hoped to facilitate writing prompts that ask “How do we build accessibility around this story, historical moment, poem, film, or archive?” and generate a response from student artists that is a piece of writing that they intentionally complete for sharing a significant concept or call to action that draws in their full community. With this teaching practice and philosophy of building accessibility applied to writing, I included

several advocacy-related projects for students to apply their accessible writing tools to building access to care-centered actions for their communities.

In the Fall Semester, students created individual “advocacy toolkits” on topics of their choice that they selected from their immersion in texts and film that center artistic experiments and/or tell stories through voices or historical lenses that include social movements and/or social change action calls. “Advocacy toolkits” gave students the opportunity to build their own research on their chosen topics and then present their own educational materials through thoughtfully designed infographics and short essays. Topics of Advocacy Toolkits included: Queer Fashion History, Access to LGBTQIA Grassroots Organizations, Racial and Disability Justice, Anti-Capitalism Awareness, Radical Black Theatre, Transformative Justice Practices, Banned Books, History of Local WS Firefighters and OMNIBUS, Queer Utopias, Revolutionary Music, and Environmental Justice. At the end of the Fall semester, students led group teach-in presentations that required the individual advocacy toolkits to apply to an overall theme based on collective interests. Topics of teach-ins included: Black Resistance, LGBTQIA Utopias, Systems of Oppression and How They Affect Us, Inequitable Education, and Intersectionality, Community and Representation.

In the Spring Semester, students continued to build their research, ethics, and community testimony-gathering skills through co-designing the Care Resource Map of Winston-Salem survey, collaboratively building accessible education tools based on local advocate Hazel Mack’s oral history project, in-depth reading analyses of spatially invested literature such as Renee Gladman’s *Prose Architectures* and Teju Cole’s *Blind Spot*, and, finally, the collaborative work towards “accessibility documentaries of UNCSA” and individual care-centered Action Projects.

Throughout both the Fall and Spring Semesters, the majority of participating students attended the Citizen Artist Workshop Series, which included local advocates, a UNCSA alum, and social justice oriented artists as workshop hosts and speakers. These events gave students access to learning how their in-class work could grow into projects for the community through their arts and/or advocacy pursuits beyond graduation. Visiting speakers included Dr. Brittany Battle of Triad Abolition Project, Sara Hines of Unity Wellness Center and Housing Justice Now, Ms. Yvette Boulware, a lifelong activist and nonviolence mentor, Tareake Dorrill of the Dorrill Initiative in NYC, Sherrill Roland, an artist creating pieces that engage audiences with the reality of unjust mass incarceration of the Black community, and Jupiter Neville, a local practitioner of collective and community care through yoga and healing justice.

Throughout this project and the participating courses, it became relevant that our community understanding of care involves collective organizing and thus needed more collaborative tools for implementing the “care revolution.” To do so, students practiced full-class collaboration while creating an “Accessibility Documentary” that allowed students to take part in interchangeable roles as organizers, writers, action designers, evidence collectors, and facilitators. Thereafter, students completed their own individual action projects and supported each other through consistent peer workshops, support distributing flyers and navigating communications, and active support during presentations. Finally, students identified that cultural and community changes that center care can only occur over time in addition to with collective collaboration, and so students voluntarily created a digital “action archive” with access to their action presentations, advocacy toolkits, teach-in presentations, the accessibility documentaries, and, in some cases, letters to future students inviting them to pursue a continuation of their projects and/or encouragement to think towards future actions with personal passions for community care.

Through the entirety of this “Community Understanding of Care” project, the relationship between spatial justice and collective care fit seamlessly through the concept of identifying “care resources.” Testimonies shared in survey responses of the community as well as student reflection responses strongly indicated that care is understood through our interpersonal relationships and it is through these relationships that we access resources that support our individual and collective care. Care is understood as essential to every moment of being, and when directly identified that we all need care, our advocacy within our communities shifts from large and ideal ideas for community changes to daily personal actions we can all take to build our care networks and resources in our immediate spatial surroundings, thus shifting consciousnesses and culture through centering the significance of knowing the stories, histories, and diversity of voices, experiences of oppression, and long-lasting organizing towards changes as part of our everyday spatial surroundings in addition to our manifold interpersonal relationships.

2021-2022 Timeline

August through mid-September: Students do preliminary research on local grassroots organizations, revolutionary voices, and build definitions of care, safety, joy, and accountability.

Mid-September: Students begin workshopping their Advocacy Toolkit topics AND draw maps of Winston-Salem based on memory, followed by full-class reflection and discussion on what is included and what is missing.

Late-September: Students submit project proposals for their Advocacy Toolkits and Advocacy Actions.

October-November: Students read Teju Cole’s *Blind Spot* for an intensive study on place, photography, and storytelling; Beginning of Changemaker Speaker Series featuring co-founders of Triad Abolition Project (Dr. Brittany Battle and Dr. Bailey Pittenger), co-founder of Unity Wellness Center (Sara Hines), and lifelong activist and mentor to current local movements (Yvette Boulware); Advocacy Toolkits are finalized and submitted and presented as Teach-ins.

December-January: Build social media platform for engaging local community with the survey (instagram: @caremapws). Distribute [surveys](#) asking local advocates, artists, and community members to identify Winston-Salem spaces of joy, safety, and/or care resources are distributed and collected by students and course facilitator.

January: Surveys that ask local community advocates to identify spaces of care resources and/or historically significant infrastructures that are often unseen or misunderstood will be distributed with a goal of obtaining at least 20 sites for the care infrastructure map. As the surveys are being populated, students will engage with psychogeography concepts and spatially significant literature (*Blind Spot*, Teju Cole and *Prose Architectures*, Renee Gladman), as well as practice annotated bibliographies and short nonfiction blurbs on spaces significant to personal care reflections and concepts of home.

Note: the map has expanded from care resources to also include unseen historical sites based on conversations with local advocates who wish to see students learning about erased spaces such as Black cemeteries and Black neighborhoods; local advocates have confirmed visitations to the HS seminars to help guide student understanding, learning, and engagement.

February: Surveys completed. Students will practice collaboration, research, and presentation during class time and have assignments to visit sites or find images online. Note on impact of covid-19 pandemic: Through January and February, the covid-19 pandemic surged in the US, thus shifting this project from inviting several visitors to classrooms to a focus on applying our understanding of care to advocacy projects that would address advocacy for care and care resources in the immediate surroundings of HS students.

March: Students create a collaborative “Accessibility Documentary” of their local campus and arts departments. This collaborative action gives students experiential practice with roles of organizing, project management, research and evidence gathering, facilitation, action writing and editing, building a compelling narrative, designing action solutions based on local inaccessibility evidence, and compelling design.

April: Students complete their Advocacy Actions specific to Winston-Salem community and/or UNCSA with the context of the larger Winston-Salem community; students apply their Advocacy Actions to concepts of care, safety, joy and spatial justice developed by the localized care understanding process. All Advocacy Actions were “demonstrated” in the form of flyers, calls to action on social media, and/or other forms of implementation on April 28th, the 45th anniversary of the 504 sit-in victory for Disability Rights in the United States.

May: Students present their collaborative Accessibility Documentaries followed by their individual advocacy project presentations to invited UNCSA faculty, students, and community members. In addition, students distribute access to their “Action Archive,” which includes open access to their project artifacts and, in some cases, letters directed to future students inviting them and sharing personalized project advice to continue the Care Revolution.

Note on the impact of the covid-19 pandemic and continuing to build the Care Resource Map: Along with the Action Archive built by the students in these Senior Seminar Courses, Dr. Pittenger gathered contacts for building the Care Resource Map on an extended project timeline and hopes to continue gathering the support to complete the CRP in the 2022-2023 timeframe.

Care Resource Map of Winston-Salem Survey Responses

Link to original [Care Resource Map of WS google form / survey](#).

Link to social media platform: [Instagram @caremapws](#)

“When you think of care, what do you visualize?”



“How do you define care?”

- Care is the act of tending to your needs- whether that be physical or mental.
- care is something one person feels towards another, not necessarily associated with responsibility
- Care is something that helps someone feel protected and supported. Things are provided to them by mutual aid and what is necessary for their physical, mental, and spiritual health.
- Someone willing to help get you the resources you need
- One of my preferred frameworks for how we can engage and interact with ourselves, the world, and others. A commitment to collective flourishing for all people, especially the most marginalized of the marginalized. A tangible practice of humanizing the places, spaces, and ways in which we've experienced dehumanization as people.
- Care to me is acknowledgment of needs, acceptance of sacrifice and an offering of gratitude for connection back to the universe. Care is what holds humanity together, something we all have a basic need for and that need can even and flow at any moment. Care is the giving of skills, time and energy in the name of humanity and universal, and at times revolutionary, love.

Nominated Care Resources:

Grassroots Advocacy Sites: Bailey Park (Triad Abolition Projects 49-day Occupation site seeking Justice For John Elliott Neville); Crystal Towers (Housing Justice Now and Crystal Towers United site where they successfully advocated against the sale of the building and renovation that would displace elderly and disabled residents); Unity Wellness Center

Arts: a/perature, UNCSA, Stevens Center

Collective Memory: Odd Fellows Cemetery, Old Salem Gardens

Safe Spaces, Education, and Meditation/Bodily Healing: Camino Bakery, BYGood Coffee and Teas, 18 Spring Wellness, North Start LGBTQ Center, Lotus Yoga Academy, Love Out Loud

Essential Resources: HOPE of WS, Green Tree Peer Center, GreeNest

The “Care Revolution” Advocacy Action Projects, Collaborative Accessibility Documentary, and Action Archive

On April 28th, 2022, the students participating in this project demonstrated their collective “Care Revolution Day” to honor the 45th anniversary of the 504 Sit-In victory for Disability Rights in the United States. This “Care Revolution Day” consisted of student demonstrations of their advocacy projects by posting flyers across the UNCSCA campus, residence halls, student commons, and arts departments, as well as a formal display of project flyers, posters, zines, and artifacts at a table in the UNCSCA library. In the wake of the Care Revolution Day, students were assigned 1) at least “documentation note” journal entries to reflect on their advocacy action impacts, successes, and/or generative failures, 2) a letter-style essay to a future student inviting them to pursue their own or continue a current advocacy action project centered on care, 3) a speculative essay imagining a community impacted by their care advocacy, and 4) a brief presentation on their advocacy action project to be completed in the presence of academic faculty, students, and community guests. Each student involved in these projects demonstrated strong skills in building accessible action tools that center care and advocacy for their local communities. For example, students built surveys inspired by the Care Resource Map survey to gather testimonies from their communities on mental health, care resource supports that could be immediately shared with the community, and accessible educational tools on advocacy in the local community as well as concepts of anti-capitalism, disability justice, healing justice, transformative justice, and collective care. Students also built strong skills in collaboration and were able to comfortably and strongly share their “Accessibility Documentaries” at the time of their presentations.

Much of their work can be found in the Action Archive here: bit.ly/ActionArchive2122

Generative Impacts of Covid and Care Work, and Acknowledgement of Continued U.S. and Local Tragedies

Through the course of the academic year and term of this SJS project, we collectively witnessed and/or were directly impacted by the effects of global conflicts, U.S. tragedies, and local disasters and injustices. For example, the Weaver Fertilizer Plant in North Winston-Salem threatened a massive explosion and instigated an environmental disaster in the local community. There was a shooting at a local High School (Mt. Tabor), resulting in increased fears and safety protocols across schools and communities of Winston-Salem. In January through March 2022, the COVID-19 pandemic surged during the academic year, disrupting access to all students due to quarantines and/or shifts between virtual and in-person learning. In addition, the project leader, Dr. Bailey Pittenger, a millennial caregiver for her mother and first year high school instructor, experienced the impacts of the care crisis while providing 24/7 care through impacts of higher essential workloads and the COVID-19 surge impacting care resources and access to care. Through these events surrounding and involved in our community, the work of this project adapted to generate care resources by and for the immediate community of students, thus spurring the “Care Revolution” and promise of continued work towards building a culture of collective care, a care resource map to visualize and support our care infrastructure, and continued advancements of current advocacy projects by future students.

As the 2021-2022 academic year wrapped up and the Community Understanding of Care project was set for its final report, Ms. Yvette Boulware, one of the mentors for nonviolent action organizing in Winston-Salem, was aggressively assaulted by six Forsyth Court Bailiffs while she was conducting Court Watch. She was pushed to the ground before being piled upon by the bailiffs; consequently, she was charged with felony assault on a government official with a deadly weapon, misdemeanor resisting arrest, and contempt of court, which led to her being placed in maximum security at the Forsyth County Detention Center for the duration of 31 hours until her bail could be paid. Ms. Boulware had voluntarily participated as a supporter during the student Advocacy Action Project presentations and is beloved by the community. We continue to mobilize as we seek justice for Ms. Yvette Boulware.

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The energy of care from the student advocacy projects centered on care motivates and inspires countless advocates and teachers. Their voices will continue to strengthen as they journey through their lives, and the work they put into these projects in its first year is a strong groundwork for the future of building our Care Resource Map of Winston-Salem to better visualize and build access to care resources and infrastructures with and by our community.