Centre for Human Rights Education
Mini Symposium, Wednesday 7 October 2015

Abstracts

Dr Sonia Tascon
The Power of Images: Thinking Through Films for Activism
One of the most often used reasons for using films in the realm of activism is that they are powerful. For the activist, concerned mainly with the content of the film, this means that films produce an emotional effect that lingers beyond the film, and may engender action for social change in their audiences. For those concerned with film and filmmaking, this power has aesthetic, ethical and political dimensions, and films’ interrogation needs to occur not only for their narrative dimensions but also the style in which the message is produced. This has ethical and political implications, they would say, particularly to do with representation. In this paper I will try to engage with this tension as two different sets of demands are made of films for activism, but consider how we can navigate them productively, particularly the murky terrain of representation.

Dr Marilyn Metta
What does social activism in young people look like? Engaging young people in social change through participatory social research and activism.
In this presentation, I’ll share some stories about our new social activism project, Understanding through participation: Fostering cross-cultural understandings in schools. It is an original and innovative educational and participatory research project that incorporates the documentary film, How I Became A Refugee as a teaching and educational resource to facilitate discussion, dialogue and engagement with young people in the classroom about the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees, and human rights issues. The aim of the project is to investigate the current attitudes and perceptions towards asylum seekers and refugees amongst students, and how we can engage young people in crafting creative responses to the issues facing asylum seekers and refugees in Australia and globally.

Greg Watson
‘This is really something I can do”: Learning about social change and activism in local communities.
People who struggle against prejudice and discrimination as a daily occurrence also struggle to find ways to respond to this. However, the thought of attaining social change that will address their circumstances or of engaging in activism that challenges prejudice are often judged to be beyond their reach. For this reason, people who join anti-prejudice strategies within their local communities provide opportunities to learn how to support people in their day-to-day struggle against prejudice and how to respond to the daunting idea of social change and activism. Human Libraries provide an example of such strategies and examining them provides a means of learning how to engage people in action that aims to change prejudice. Human Libraries provide spaces in which people, who may otherwise never speak to each other, engage in face-to-face dialogue about difference, prejudice and stereotypes. This paper engages in analysis and discussion of participants’ perceptions of Human Libraries and argues that they teach us how local anti-prejudice action can be used to shape how we understand social change and activism for local communities that seek to act for change.

Dr Rob Garbutt
Human rights and modes of existence
This presentation is designed as an exploration for opening a discussion on the topic, that is, of how Latour’s (2013, 488-9) “modes of existence” might engage with human rights. Starting small, this will involve giving an account of “human rights” as local practice, and considering the transformations as human rights passes through the network. Latour’s modes of existence may assist in tuning our sensitivity to these transformations.