STEPHEN CARPENTER: I thought these three questions could be part of our conversation later. I want us to get up and actually create a public work. But I've been thinking about how might contemporary art and social practice enable conversations about difficult subjects? And that's part of what we're interested in.

Couldn't that be the focus of a curriculum? A multi-week, a multi-session unit of instruction with learners of a range of ages and in the range of spaces. Or why prepare teachers as agents of positive social change? I mean, some people say, oh, we have to prepare them for that, but why? What would come out of that? Or why not, right? What does it mean? Maybe the question should be what does it mean for teachers to be prepared as agents for social change?

Some of you are studying in departments or programs, where social change, social activism, positive social responsibility is central to the mission. Why do that? Is that such a good thing? Or how can creative responses to social injustice interrupt conditions of inequality? We might not be able to change them. Might not be able to stop them. But maybe it interrupts it just long enough to reposition or find other ways, other tactics, other approaches to engage.

I think this is a good time to stop. And let's get up, and let's make some public trouble. I brought with me some children's books. And I also brought some children's toys. How many of you brought cellphones? How many of those cellphones take pictures? Oh, yeah. Now we can work as individuals. We can work in pairs or trios, if we want. All right?

I have some children's books here. I'll share them-- show these to you. Not all of them deal with uncomfortable stories. Some of them do. There's a whole range of things, like *Flat Stanley.* I don't know if you know of the *Flat Stanley.* To me, there's a Henry Box Brown deal here, where you can mail individuals to different places. Here, he's pretty happy about going to visit his family. But Henry couldn't do that.

Or *The Big Orange Splot,* this is about one house being different. And then I won't ruin the story for you at the end, but it's about finding your own way. *Little Blue and Little Yellow,* I don't know if you know this story. But when you mix blue and yellow, you get green. And what does it mean to be blue or yellow? And how does mixing happen?

Tar Beach, about a little girl who-- she doesn't have something or can't go somewhere. She

just imagines that she can fly there, and she can capture that experience. Bell Hooks-- I don't know if you know her children's book, *Skin Again.*

There's a wonderful book about learning disabilities, reading, in particular. And it's called *The Art of Miss Chew,* where the art teacher, her art teacher, essentially figured out she was seeing the world differently. Her reading-- and she was reading the spaces between the words, not the words themselves. Just like an artist might try to render the negative space, rather than the positive space.

Or a Maya Angelou poem and a Jean-Michel Basquiat poem put together-- or Jean-Michel Basquiat images and a Maya Angelou poem, *Life Doesn't Frighten Me Anymore.* These are children's books that I found kids respond to in interesting ways.

So you might choose one of these books and find one of those unexpected public spaces, where you don't think education or art, making your art practice, is supposed to happen. You could take one of these books, and go and read it there out loud. And have somebody else or yourself video tape you or-- not video tape, you can tell how old I am. What is it? Make a video, a mobile video of you.

And you can put one of the hashtags. Where are our hashtags, Steve? Here it is. You can hashtag it, and pop it up on social media, if you'd like. Or you can take still photo of yourself or someone else reading out loud. Or you can take several. Document that experience. What would be interesting is to see what kind of social interaction happens. And think about the critique. Remember those little tiny townspeople and the tiny presidents? The critiques of then the stories of the little people and the stories of those spaces. There's a conversation that happens.

Think about the story you might read in that space in relationship to that space. Or I have these little toys, just three firefighters, two of whom have razor stub and one has a mustache. I wonder how gendered this is. I'm just asking questions right now. Or little animals. Or I have little Lego mini figures. These have to be put together. I mean, you're welcome to take them, and put them together, and use them in the ways that you saw in the photographs, critiquing, having a conversation in a public space.

That story-- where's my-- oh, there it is, *Henry's Freedom Box.* I think I'm going to take one of these pallets. I can't take both of them. I'm going to take one of these, and I'm going outside.

I'm going to read this book outside. I'm going to perform that story outside.

Henry was lonely. One day, he met Nancy, who was shopping for her mistress. They walked, and talked, and agreed to meet again. Henry felt like singing. But slaves didn't dare sing in the streets. Instead, he hummed all the way home. Henry knew they were very lucky. They lived together, even though they had different masters.

STUDENT 1: "Life doesn't frighten me at all, not at all. Life doesn't frighten me at all." Thanks a lot.

GIRL: Well, what's this for?

STUDENT 1: Oh, it's a class assignment I'm having.

GIRL: Oh, OK. I noticed there are some other people as well.

STUDENT 1: There are a couple other people doing the same thing.

GIRL: [LAUGHS]

STUDENT 2: "The house was looking like it was green."

STEPHEN CARPENTER: Does anyone want to talk about-- you want to talk about your own specific experience, either reading a book out loud in public or reading a public space in conversation with your figure?

STUDENT 2: Mainly, people ignored me. Some people, like you said, made sort of a wide-- somebody came, realized they were sort of in the scope of the photograph. And oh, I'm so sorry. Oh. And you were taking a photograph, and you said, no, no, it's OK. You can go in. No, no, no, I'm good. So that was interesting. I used to love to read children's books to my kids. So I mean, it was just so much fun to be out there and showing everybody. And some people looked at me, like oh, OK.

[LAUGHTER]

And some people smiled. And I saw people sort of taking pictures as they walked by.

STEPHEN CARPENTER: They looked stealth at the time, right?

STUDENT 2: [LAUGHS] Exactly. And then I was watching you, and I saw somebody doing posing off to the side in front of you, like wanting to have a picture. They figured this was some thing. And they

wanted to be in it, but not really in it. So they were off on the side, posing while you--

[LAUGHTER]

STUDENT 3: That fascinates me, though. If you don't even know what it is, why are you so desperate to get a picture?

STEPHEN CARPENTER: Nicholas Mirzoeff, visual culture scholar, uses the word "sublime" to talk about those visual moments, or those moments that are so repulsive, you can't look away. And so seductive, you can't bear to look at it. I mean, it's that tension. But he calls that the sublime. So maybe there is something sublime about that that they wanted to be part, but not. They knew something was going on, but they weren't supposed to be part of it.

STUDENT 4: I don't know if we were doing it right. But I just had a little Lego guy, and--

STEPHEN CARPENTER: Can we see the little Lego guy?

STUDENT 4: Yes.

STEPHEN CARPENTER: Can you describe--

STUDENT 4: And we were just playing-- he is a ninja with a hatchet.

STEPHEN CARPENTER: Of course.

STUDENT 4: And so we playing around with whether he had the hatchet or not had the hatchet and giving him-- he had different pictures from magazines or the newspaper. And he was in different contexts. And I put him on the water bubbler and was playing with him on the water bubbler. But it was interesting, and I did think that my kids would have a lot of fun. My students would have a lot of fun with it.

STEPHEN CARPENTER: So, the hatchet-- tell me about why with and without the hatchet? Is this the accessorizing, or why was--

STUDENT 4: We had him in front of the headlines. And according to the headline, if he had the hatchet, the headline meant one thing. But if he didn't, then it meant a different thing. So that context

changed, once that weapon was introduced.

STEPHEN CARPENTER: OK, can you give us an example of one of those headlines?

STUDENT 4: Someone won an reward. And we put him in front of that.

STEPHEN CARPENTER: With the hatchet?

STUDENT 4: With the hatchet, which made it a little bit more ominous. And then without the hatchet, he was like, yay, I got this award.

STEPHEN CARPENTER: [LAUGHS] So you see in that example, you're playing with the various symbolic meanings that are referenced with not just the ninja, but with that hatchet and the text. So there's the layered readings. And even that subtle seemingly innocuous change of hatchet or not hatchet shifts readings-- shifts meaning there. It's very powerful.

I hope some of what we've talked about gives you beginning points or places of departure for your own work as educators or artists. Continue this work. See what else you can trouble, what other kinds of questions you can ask, what other stories might be told. Maybe take the little figures, and go make some more imagery. Maybe find a fire hose, or attempt other performances. Maybe this is an assignment that would work with your students, and give it a shot. And if it does or if it doesn't, maybe share it. Social media, drop me a line. We'd love to hear what you're up to as a ripple from what we're doing here.

I said yesterday, and last week, as an artist, as an educator, as a researcher, I have found that I'm more interested in questioning the answers than I am in answering the questions. And for me, the answers are those social constructs, those practices, those systems that people have put in place. Sometimes remaining unquestioned or under analyzed. And maybe art making through social engagement is one way to provoke reflection, hoping to discover something in the process about those constructs.

I'll leave you with this. The National Art Education Association is a professional organization in North America. It's open internationally. Primarily made of K-12 art teachers, but there are other art educators in the group, higher education professionals, museum educators. There are two journals they publish. *Studies in Art Education,* which is essentially the *Journal of Issues and Research* in art education. And then *Art Education,* which is essentially primarily

for K-12 and museum educators.

And each issue, they typically have six articles in here and then an instruction resource. But this particular special issue that came out in July of 2017 is a special issue. And the call for the theme was creative activity as a human right. And the editor said, instead of getting six, I want to see how many I can get. So he cut down the length of the submissions. These are shorter pieces, but they're really potent little pieces.

There are so many in here. One of the articles in here is called "Socially Engaged Art Education-- Practices, Processes, and Possibilities." And it's about ceramic water filters, public performance, socially engaged art. And I co-authored this with two colleagues, Ross Schlemmer, who is a professor of art education in southern Connecticut, and Erika Hitchcock, who is a high school art teacher in Virginia Beach. And so the three of us put our voices together to talk about our experiences here.

The other piece that I wanted to share with you is one that was written by three art educators at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. I just want to read the opening paragraph to you and then another excerpt, and then we can have a final set of comments. Their article is called "Baltimore Uprising-- Empowering Pedagogy for Change." And it was written by Vanessa López, Adriane Pereira, and Shyla Rao.

"The Baltimore uprising was in response to the death of Freddie Gray, who was fatally injured in April 2015 while in police custody in Baltimore City. The first evening of the uprising, we were home, glued to the television, communicating with each other and our pre-service teachers, worried about violent protests that were erupting in parts of the city."

That's one of those moments within your own community that changes the community. Certainly now, Freddie Gray's name is well-known. And so these three art education professors, who were working with pre-service teachers, were faced with this real life situation. And what is our responsibility, as art educators, as artists, as teachers, as citizens within this community, to prepare our teachers to face these issues, these situations? And how do we do so responsibly? Not only as community members and related to them, to these teachers as our students, but knowing that these folks are going to become teachers who might face similar situations.

And they constructed a pedagogy. They called it a pedagogy for change framework. I just

want to read briefly what they wrote and then open it up. Because I think this piece goes to the heart of what this theme for this week has been, dealing with difficult situations and challenging social constructs, primarily in this case, police brutality. There's elements of white supremacy and racism that flow throughout as well.

They said, "If we, alongside our pre-service teachers engage with self." That's the first piece. So there's four components here, self. "To understand the intersections of identities from our lived experiences, examined through the lens of the historical context of established social injustices in schools and communities." Context being the second. "Then we have an informed understanding of these complexities that," three, "students contribute to the cultural assets of every classroom, with the goal of developing a critical for pedagogy for effecting change were deemed necessary."

So the culmination of self-- not only teachers, but also the selves of the students-- in understanding the context-- social, cultural, political, locational-- and bringing the students in there as cultural assets within the conversation. Perhaps the pedagogy emerges from that formula. I think it's a brilliant piece. And they walk through each of those components for you.