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Public Performance as Global Citizenship Education: You Will Know What You're Getting by How It Comes Up

This ethnographic account follows youth visual and performance artists as they grapple with the possibilities and constraints of staging local performances on establishing a war crimes court to understand how they are crafting an identity as global citizens. I juxtapose a standard workshop model of internationally-supported advocacy efforts involving visual artists in Liberia against a typical planning meeting of a local youth theatre NGO with international funding to consider how the youth artists navigate their interactions with international others in identifying and narrating problems and solutions to injustice in their society. Through participant observation and engagement with their negotiations between international discourses/organizations and national discourses/organizations, I analyze how they are strategic in avoiding being exploited by either and finding agency in both as an instance of how global citizenship education is actualized in informal international education contexts in the global South. I find that these strategic navigations can be categorized into staged and everyday performances which build upon the concept of embodied cosmopolitanism as a form of global citizenship education.

The surprise-eyed letter "oo"s in the fun-fonted words "Cartooning for Justice" seemed to pop off of the page above an image of a young man stationed at a drawing table with a few blank sheets of paper and freshly sharpened pencils. A younger child, perhaps a sibling, reaches upward towards a crumbled sheet while the young man with a wide smile and pencil in hand looks outwards inviting participation. Two local phone numbers are listed in red with a call to join the workshop being held over a period of four days in August 2018. A notable local visual arts organization is listed along with two foreign organization logos which appear to be sponsors. (Facebook promotion, July 24, 2018).

I forwarded this Facebook post for the Cartooning for Justice workshop to John, a Senior Arts Instructor on staff with a local theatre company who teaches the core curriculum in music, dance and drama but often lends his talent in visual art to our production endeavors. He attended the workshop and returned a report addressed to me as the Executive Director including contact information for the international officials who were present representing the sponsors as well as a proposal for partnership between the theatre company and these organizations to fight for justice pertaining to war crimes in Liberia through theatre. The Facebook advertisement described made no mention of the war crimes court, for good reason as safety of the participants was a top priority. However, this framing of justice tied specifically to efforts to establish a war crimes tribunal, a contentious issue in Liberia, did not allow for a broader approach to how the Liberian youth artist attendees envisioned justice in their society.

Centering a youth theatre company and arts education institution I established in 2010 in Liberia, this ethnography draws from a year of in-depth field work, as well as media documentation, internal reports, meeting notes, and my own experiences as an international nonprofit leader within this organization over the past ten years. By highlighting specific instances of how young people in Liberia constantly negotiate their performances of citizenship in a context saturated with international expertise and intervention including their engagements with me as both director and researcher, I extend a vision of global citizenship education in the field of international education that interrogates the informal education practices of youth community theatre performers which I refer to here as *civic “actors.”* Through this notion of *civic “actors,”* I bring together their action-oriented work on social and political issues behind the scenes with their everyday and staged performances among themselves and with international others to demonstrate how they leverage their artistic practices to insert their voices into public discourses with local and international actors. I investigate the ways in which young artists’ visions for their society are made possible and constrained by the agendas of international

organizations in Liberia and what this means for how they perceive their own ability to take on roles as civic actors- citizens who take action off of the stage in everyday life- in local, national and international matters of concern.

This paper intentionally addresses the unevenness of academic discourses on global citizenship education which predominantly features perspectives of North American and European researchers and subjects to the exclusion of those from the global South, particularly youth whose lives are often directly impacted by the implementation of policies and programs informed by this body of research (Parmenter, 2011). Moreover, it provides insight into how global citizenship education necessarily extends beyond the walls of the school to informal civic practices which are more likely to build political socialization as a key component of citizenship education according to Torney-Purta et al's 1999 IEA CivEd study (Quaynor, 2015). The civic "actors" at the center of this study range in age from mid-teens through early twenties. Some are in junior high school, nearly half are in senior high school, and others have begun college but are currently not enrolled or are pursuing technical training through a private agency due to financial constraints. In the time that I have known these young people, it has become clear to me that their families value education as a top priority, oftentimes sacrificing basic needs such as food to ensure greater educational opportunity. Based in a peri-urban location in Liberia, these young people have some access to digital media, primarily Facebook, where they connect with new international online friends and maintain ties with family members in the Liberian diaspora, occasional print newspapers, multiple local and sometimes national radio stations, and regular consistent interaction with expatriates and staff from various international organizations which all serve as means of obtaining information on global current events and issues. Additionally, many of their parents are active members of community-based organizations and local NGOs which have their own awareness projects contributing to household knowledge sharing.

The theatre company is one of the main activities that structures their lives, thus it provides a window into how they are – in the words of a community member – 'coming up'. By creating awareness that blends elements of indigenous theatre conventions with more recent theatre for development practice common across the global South, measuring international discourses against their own lived experiences, and staging contentious social and political issues for local and international audiences, these young people are actualizing global citizenship practices which are often overlooked in discourses on global citizenship education. I argue that youth civic “actors” embodied engagement in contentious global issues rooted in their local realities helps them develop as global citizens.

I begin with a local theorization through analysis of interviews with parents of what citizenship development looks like in Liberia through the vernacular of how young people ‘come up’. I use this local understanding to pinpoint specific instances of what type of citizenship possibilities are enlivened through the way young people in Liberia come up or develop in relation to an openness to people, ideas and discourses from the international community as a form of embodied cosmopolitanism derived from youth interactions with local and national authorities and international others. Finally, I apply these frames to an analysis of both, a workshop on advocacy for the war crimes court, and a behind-the-scenes deliberation among the youth civic “actors” concerning staging performances related to the war crimes court in Liberia. I find that the way the youth civic “actors” grapple with the risks and challenges associated with this process reveal their patriotism and desire to better their nation through aligning their local practices with international discourses on justice.

Local theory: Wulu pa miayee a nelee ya golon gerii mai

Mr. Garteh and I sat on rough wooden chairs in the open classroom at the community school where the theatre company students gather. It was a Sunday morning and the surrounding area was still quiet. Slightly overcast as is common for this time of year, the classroom was fairly dim so we kept both doors open to provide some light beyond the pale stretches peeking through the concrete cut-out windows. Though I was not familiar with this parent as his son was a newer student in the theatre company, he had a kind smile and I was aware of his good reputation as a local tailor with a family business at the main intersection. Leaving the doors open also signaled to passerby that we had nothing to hide, which was important because a married woman meeting with a married man alone can raise suspicion. Mr. Garteh was glad to talk and learn more about the organization expressing appreciation for the invitation to be interviewed. He excitedly shared his son's accomplishments and various community activities and leadership, much of which centered around their family's church involvement and sewing business, but also his son's involvement in student government and with the theatre company. He had attended the previous evening's film screening and discussion of *Land Beneath Our Feet*, which documents a young Liberian's return from the United States with unseen historic footage from his home county, the area where the theatre company is based in the heart of Liberia. Mr. Garteh was glad he and his son had the opportunity to attend, explaining that a good citizen knows about his country. He shared that his son tells him that the theatre company "finds talent in you so when you go out tomorrow you should be able to do something like stand before a group and speak" (Parent interview, July 28, 2019, 8:20am GMT).

When I asked him how he can see that his son is becoming a good citizen he said, "When I see his behavior in the home, I know he will be somebody good. He doesn't make palaver (argue) with somebody outside, he takes education seriously... He wants to do something for himself". Curious, I asked, what is it that he wants to do, and how will you know he has met his goal? He answered enthusiastically, "Well, he'll perform it, the way he does

things. If the child is coming up good the father or mother will know it. We say in our vernacular, the tree that will uh.. The tree that you know, that it will be good, you will see it by what at the time it is germinating. If your orange will come up fine, at the time you put the seed under the ground and it starts to grow you will know that the orange is coming up. The way it starts coming up fine, you will look at it and say yeah, this orange will be a good orange.” I try my own understanding, “So even before the orange is there, the way the tree is growing is how you know the orange will be ok? If the tree is growing ugly, you will know the orange...” Mr. Garteh interjects, “It can’t make it” as I finish by saying, “it can’t be sweet”. We both laugh. He finishes his explanation by summarizing, “The tree that will bear fruit, you will know at the time it is germinating, coming up, and it bears flowers. You will know that here is my tree. I will get something from it.” (Parent interview, July 28, 2019, 8:20am GMT).

During my interviews in 2019, I asked parents for examples of how their child has shown good citizenship. Mr. Garteh’s response that, “you will know what you’re getting by how it comes up” resonated with many of the answers parents shared. I draw from this proverb to look for ways in which the young people involved in this study are ‘coming up’. As another parent shared, “What the theatre company is showing them will be part of their lives tomorrow” (Parent interview, July 28, 2019, 6:32pm GMT). I use this concept of ‘coming up’ to identify instances that might illuminate what kind of citizenship is developed as young people engage in performance-based and performative endeavors as artists.

Extending Concepts of Global Citizenship Education

Most often, global citizenship education centers the experiences of young people in the global North who have the mobility to travel, attend conferences, and sit in classrooms with access to information and ideas that are curated from other parts of the world. Moreover, the

notion of a global citizen often signals a cosmopolitan, well-traveled individual who has experience in surface culture such as enjoying foods from different parts of the world and has some multilingual ability (Silova & Hobson, 2014; Ong, 2009). However, scholars are recently turning their attention to issues-based understandings of global citizenship education highlighting the kinds of knowledge and skills that are necessary to create a sustainable world (Bamber et al, 2018; deAndreotti, 2014; Parmenter, 2011). Youth in Africa, and other parts of the global South, are bombarded with global discourses that have a direct impact on their everyday lives. They often do not have the luxury of dismissing major world events and issues of global concern as something that has or may have little significance to their lives, as global pressures from climate change to economy failures often have immediate and dire impacts on day to day survival. Some say when America sneezes, the world catches a cold, but in economies impacted by the policies and politics, cultural shifts and economic crises of other nations, it also matters if China or Australia or any of the European powers sneeze; countries in the global South may catch a cold. Godfrey and Cherg (2016) have shown how in the United States, youth from communities facing greater income inequality are more civically engaged. Likewise, as those who are most marginalized by global social and economic stratification in education, youth in the global South are perhaps also the most equipped to identify how, where and why systems and structures fail to meet their needs and offer sustainable solutions to the problems in international education (Moya 2002; Campano & Damico, 2007).

Embodied Practices and Global Citizenship

Igarashi and Saito (2014) differentiate between the consumption of culture as objectified cosmopolitanism and an openness to foreign others as embodied cosmopolitanism which can be acquired through habitus. They explain that critical sociologists of cosmopolitanism highlight the ways in which the objectified state yields global stratifications, particularly through education institutions that have the power to determine and credentialize certain forms of

cosmopolitanism. Finally, they identify mechanisms which facilitate cosmopolitanism include increased global flows of foreign people and the spread of human rights which centers humanity rather than nationality. Caruana (2014) removes the all-too-common focus on mobility as a characteristic of those most likely to engage in the objectified state of cosmopolitanism and refocuses on pedagogical practices that are more aligned with the embodied state by drawing on students' lived experience in developing their intercultural understanding, interconnectedness, and acknowledgement that learning and personal journeys are "co-dependent, mutually-reinforcing and continuous" (Caruana, 2014, p. 102). She demonstrates how resilience is built through challenges with cultural dis-location and offers a re-conceptualization of global citizenship education that does not privilege mobility but which focuses on student storytelling as pedagogical practice which embraces diversity, belonging, community and solidarity as a pathway to global citizenship education. Lattimer and Kelly's 2013 study of oral history in Kenya reveals that these kinds of learner-centered pedagogies strengthen students' self-efficacy and enhance their perceptions of community knowledge.

I use these concepts of 'coming up' and 'embodied citizenship' to demonstrate how young artists in Liberia [\[11\]](#) embody a cultural openness in their ability to navigate their relations with international organizations, which present both problems and solutions to the ills facing their societies. With the proliferation of NGOs in Liberia since the end of the war and the long duration of these programs, international perceptions of Liberian youth as victims has impacted the way in which youth self-identify and self-stage in their attempts to live better lives and pursue their future aspirations (Bungu, 2019). As international organizations provide services for victims in the distribution of social services, intervene in social and cultural affairs, and advocate for specific policies, young Liberians incorporate the performance of victimcy into their daily interactions across differentially embodied power (Utas, 2011). Thus youth in Liberia are attuned to the happenings and major debates circulating in global discourses and are skilled in

maneuvering possibilities and constraints presented through development policies and practices.

In Liberia, the bombardment does not only come from media but more prominently from the plethora of international organizations providing direct services and necessities, intervening in cultural and political issues pertaining to human rights, shaping the media often through funding initiatives in the arts and cultural sector, and even supporting advocacy efforts that align with their own agendas. Young people in Liberia have ‘come up’ with nearly fifteen years of these types of international interventions since the end of the civil war and have become educated in maneuvering these systems and structures in ways that leverage their ability to push forward the vision they have for their own lives, communities and nation while at the same time navigating the problematic constraints of having foreign others identify their most pressing problems and solutions. Youth artists, and in the case of this ethnography, civic “actors” who use stage and street performance to engage in public discourse, are potentially more amenable to these challenges of maneuvering possibilities and constraints across cultural and national divisions because the arts worldwide have a long history of patronage. Artists have for centuries relied on the support of benefactors to create their art and sustain their lives. This phenomenon coupled with the historical system of patronage in Liberia creates a situation in which artists are in constant relations of negotiation with governmental, and more recently nongovernmental entities that have the funding to support artistic life.

In these contexts, staged theatre performance is dialogical in nature, “This performative stance struggles to bring together different voices, world views, value systems, and [J11](#) beliefs so that they can have a conversation with one another” (Conquergood, 1985, p. 9). The tension of dialogical performance resists conclusions as the text “interrogates, rather than dissolves into, the performer” (p. 9). This performative work requires the energy to collect information, the imagination to act, think and feel as someone else and the courage to encounter alternatives;

the process is open and ongoing. Thus, the youth artists engaged in this performance practice are engaged in an educational and research process that interrogates the performer through the careful choices of gesture and voicing rather than accepting easy conclusions about problems, solutions and future directions. The youth artists in this study are 'coming up' to ask questions through embodied performance practices that create new possibilities for their own understanding and application, rejection, or indigenization of international discourses. The youth civic "actors" use their embodied knowledge through performance to help others develop an aspirational national vision, sometimes with or in spite of the possibilities and constraints offered through international discourses and interventions.

[J1](#) Maybe add Madison on risk

Talk of a War Crimes Tribunal in Liberia

The intense focus on the establishment of a war crimes court in current discourses on justice in Liberia has been primarily framed by international actors though there are some Liberians who have been very vocal supporters. The excerpt from my fieldnotes above is an example of how international organizations enter Liberia having already identified the problem and solution. Rather than rely on the Liberian artists' interpretations, such as John's, and local understandings of what justice looks like in Liberia, the war crimes court was prescribed as a solution to the problem of ethnic divisions, though these tensions predated the civil war (Burrowes, 2016, Ellis, 2006). Local artists' visions for justice were constrained by this narrow definition and their creative talents were conscripted in support of an international agenda of establishing a war crimes tribunal in Liberia.

Similar to the transitional justice processes undertaken by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Committee, Rwanda's Gacaca Community Courts which function alongside the UN's [International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda](#), and Chile's National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was launched on June 22, 2006 with a mandate to, "foster truth, justice and reconciliation by identifying the root causes of the conflict, and determining those who are responsible for committing domestic and international crimes against the Liberian people..." ([TRC Final Report, 2009, p. 2](#) updated [December 3, 2009](#)). The final report of Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Committee dated June 29, 2009 captured "over 22,000 written statements, several dozens of personal interviews and over 500 hundred live public testimonies of witnesses including actors, perpetrators, and direct victims; a national regional consultation with county stakeholders and a national conference on reconciliation and the way forward provided the Commission a national perspective of the conflict, its causes, trends, impacts and the vision and aspirations of the people of Liberia for a better future. The Commission incorporated desk research, media publications and human rights reports of very prominent international and local human rights institutions into its work" (vi). Its recommendations were based on determinations regarding various types of perpetrators and their population impact primarily focused on accountability but also providing recommendations for economic crime investigation and prosecution and reparations. Accountability recommendations ranged from an extraordinary criminal tribunal to domestic criminal prosecutions, general public sanctions, and the establishment of a national "palava hut" commission. There were further recommendations to the Government of Liberia, the diaspora, domestic Liberians and the international community. However, there have been no official reports from the Government of Liberia or any reputable human rights organization on the status of implementing these recommendations.

Publicly-available sources on the status of the TRC recommendations in Liberia predominantly highlight the failure to establish a war crimes court. The vast majority of information regarding the recommendations of the TRC report appear in Liberian and other African media sources with a few calls to action from international human rights organizations. A recent report of [Human Rights Watch](#) declares that Liberia has not met its international obligation to hold accountable those who have committed war crimes and human rights violations in accordance with the recommendations of the TRC. Other claims have been made regarding advances towards fulfillment of the TRC recommendations with one government official stating that [nearly 90% of the recommendations have been fulfilled](#) through policies and programs such as free and compulsory primary education, women and children's recovery and empowerment programs and political dialogue, psychosocial recovery and empowerment for persons with disabilities, and other benefits in relation to the growth of society though the government has not directly linked these efforts to the TRC recommendations. The 2018 annual report of Switzerland-based advocacy organization [Civitas Maxima](#) provides a detailed account of their efforts to support victims of Liberia's war crimes internationally. However, as all of these sources highlight, to date, none of the parties involved in committing these atrocities during the 14-year long war have been brought to justice in Liberia. Several high-ranking Liberians have been accused, arrested and indicted in France, Switzerland, Britain, Belgium and the United States primarily for immigration fraud. Additionally, a Dutch timber trader was convicted and sentenced in 2017 for illegal arms trading and complicity in war crimes in Liberia and Guinea. The establishment of a war crimes court in Liberia would make it possible for perpetrators to be held accountable for their actual crimes rather than for providing false information on immigration documents. Further, the court would potentially be more responsive to local understandings of justice, restoring control of the judicial process to Liberians (Clarke, 2019).

However, there is no clear public vision for addressing the issues of justice related to war crimes. Aaron Weah of the International Center for Transitional Justice asserts that the TRC has only widened the chasm between victims and perpetrators as current political elites named by the TRC as perpetrators hold the power to obstruct prosecutions (2012). Thus, he concludes that the fulfillment of its recommendations is unlikely. Vinck et al's (2011) population-based survey on dispute resolution and post-conflict reconstruction including county-level and national data in Liberia shows that 91% of those surveyed knew little or nothing about the TRC, and that of those surveyed, only 42% had heard about the recommendations. Moreover, the survey results showed that, "Although a majority of the respondents believed the recommendations should be implemented (62%), they were generally pessimistic that it would ever happen: 45% said this would not happen and 31% believed the recommendations would be only partially implemented" (Vinck et al, 2011, p. 71). The overall lack of awareness of the TRC's specific recommendations and the widespread ambivalence in an aspirational national vision that includes the fulfillment of these recommendations in creating a more just society is cause for greater attention to be given to community-based and qualitative modes of information sharing and data collection, including through the performance work of youth artists, or in this case, civic "actors".

Cartooning for Justice Workshop for Liberian Artists

My taxi passed John on Broad Street as I was heading to the second installment of Cartooning for Justice. He had introduced me to the program coordinators via email in hopes that collaboration could be built from that point. I left the taxi, and joined him on the sidewalk, prepared to climb the steep hill that was the only way to our destination. He laughed as I struggled slowly up the hill; he was accustomed to the long walks not often having the luxury of paying for transportation, especially as the prices continued to climb. After about twenty minutes, we arrived and everyone was still eating breakfast. The main program coordinator,

Teresa, was seated by the door and we introduced ourselves after connecting through email. A few short moments later, the coordinators asked for help moving tables to set up the room theater-style to watch a video. I was impressed as Teresa gave greetings and introduced each person individually, remembering their names from the previous workshop before she introduced a reporter from a prominent local newspaper. She recommended that if anyone would like to leave comments for the reporter, they should only provide their first name for safety purposes as they are still doing some evaluation.

I took notes from the back of the room as the workshop commenced and proceeded through several clips of a documentary and discussion on truth and reconciliation processes in South Africa, Rwanda and Peru. About halfway through the discussion, Teresa shifted the conversation to focus on existing ethnic tensions in Liberia asking how to involve the tribes in these discussions on war crimes. One young man spoke up immediately giving an anecdote about someone who was willing to be prosecuted, admitted what they did and apologized but everyone was told just forgive him. He agreed that, "The issue is tribal lines. If you hit the big man in that tribe, you are making an attack on that tribe. Many people believe that Charles Taylor was wrongfully accused. They see him as a liberator". A young woman continued, "People will still vote for Charles Taylor today. The cost of living has increased to a level that did not happen under Charles Taylor. You kill my ma. You kill my pa. I will vote for you." John joins the discussion at this point, "War crimes court coming to Liberia will bring a lot of difficulty for those pushing it to come and we who will accept it. One, legal justice has advantages and disadvantages. Looking at the disadvantages, criminal court as a whole is rigid; [it] will not "play baby" and create unforeseen circumstances such as hatred toward victim and perpetrator. Two, it consumes a lot of money. Three, it consumes time and will delay development. Once government focuses on this, they will forget other things like roads and schools. And four, superpowers are putting pressure on vulnerable countries to spark conflict and get the

resources they want". Teresa quickly interjects, "Or, the superpower can push for things to be peaceful so that they can also benefit". John responds, "It can cause confusion among people. I read a book: The Hidden Truth in the Liberian Civil War. I was touched that those who did not intend harm to us were the ones killed in the 13 on the beach. The court issue will spark up nationalism, imperialism (resources and diamonds)". Teresa adds, "Or I want your country to have the same kind of laws as I do". John continues, "[That's] military showcasing just to display power and exploit weakness. Liberia should reconcile. We are all family. We are brothers and sisters. We shouldn't do something that will bring shame to our tradition, pain or heartache".

Creating Awareness/Staging Challenges

I was laying as comfortably as possible for a woman five months pregnant during Liberia's dry season in a living room that doubled as the apartment building's storage space with the windows open on a thin mattress and plastic woven mat to provide some cushion from the concrete floor. My room was too hot to even try to relax so this was the last option before moving the mattress out to the open porch right off of a small footpath. John and Josephus walked in and offered greetings. I told them I had just returned from a very long and hot walk in both rain and direct sun from Mary's church program. John told me his adoptive mother had just matriculated from the nearby private university and the music I was hearing from another part of the community was coming from their house. He shares that his biological mother is also in town from the farm to visit for the occasion. I give my congratulations and remain laying down.

I asked John if he had spoken with his friends (fellow Arts Instructors) about the script he wrote for the theatre company on the war crimes court. It was around 3:30pm at this point and he said he had only spoken to Josephus who was with him at the time. We called Mary, whom I had recently left at the church, to see if she could stop by. She had just gotten to her house and was having her hair braided but said she could make it by 5pm. John says that is fine. I ask him

and Josephus if they have typed up their sections from the training, transferring student written responses from the day's activities to the computer for reporting. Both acted confused which I think may have been on purpose as they were clearly just attempting to pass through not intending to put in office hours. I asked Josephus to go get the computer and the notes from the training. John began looking through the files as though he wasn't sure what he was supposed to type. Josephus told him the notes he was looking at were from last month's training, which he had missed because he was in Monrovia. John finds the correct notes and begins typing because he is better at it than Josephus. He passes Josephus the orange Amazon Fire tablet I let him use since his personal computer is broken. On the tablet, he has the script for the war crimes awareness he wants the theatre company to perform and another story about impunity in Liberia through the view of mosquitoes instead of human beings. Josephus is reading the mosquito story. He and John talk a bit about the role of a jury and Josephus clarifies some points in the story that should be more accurate. He is serving on a Grand Jury presently which is a 21 to 42 day process.

After some time, Augustine, a Junior Arts Instructor also arrives with a friend. They continue their work and talk among themselves about what to include in the report and how to structure it. I give little feedback until hearing Josephus read what John has written aloud. The reporting is completely misleading stating that the training started at 9am and both Jr. and Sr. Arts Instructors were there. I reminded John that he himself was two hours late and the only Sr. Instructor present. I talked to them about the importance of accurately recording what happens in trainings so that those who have taken responsibility are recognized appropriately and any issues that arise can be addressed with people who were actually there. I tell Josephus and John to add in the times that each instructor arrived since this is in their attendance book they sign upon entering the training and asked if they will lie in a report that eventually comes to me when I myself was there, what should I believe they are sending when I am not there? John

smiles slightly lowering his head. The reality is that neither has regularly submitted reports from their teaching which has been an ongoing issue the National Director is attempting to rectify. Many of them experienced pay cuts for failure to produce timely reports over the vacation school months. I leave the room to get my food while they are working. I return to the mattress and begin eating. The National Director who lives in the same complex enters shortly thereafter and begins to read over the report. As he talks aloud but to himself about the report's formatting, I encourage Josephus to watch the National Director work on the report so that he is learning how to improve his computer skills.

Mary arrives shortly after 5pm as planned. John has just called her to make sure she was coming and she requested that they put together "small money" for her transportation once she arrives. Josephus hands her the 40 Liberian dollars he retrieved from the fruit basket in the room where I am staying so that she can pay the motorbike boy. She takes one of the plastic chairs from against the wall and sits next to the boys who are gathered around various technological devices to read or write reports. I am still laying on the mattress suffering from mild heat exhaustion but talking to them between short periods of rest. Mary looks at me with pity and I just respond, "I'm tired oh". At this point, I'm sitting up after having helped her lift the chair. She asks why I don't just lay down and goes to get me a pillow. I thank her and lay down again. Mary begins reading over the script as John and Josephus talk with the National Director about the report. Augustine returns with a friend who I am not familiar with. They also find chairs and take a seat. My American self should be very uncomfortable and my husband would probably be none-to-pleased that I'm laying in the middle of a room full of people wearing a simple lappa. But my Liberian self is perfectly fine prioritizing my attempted comfort over a supposedly professional appearance. After all, they did interrupt my nap.

Once everyone has had a chance to look over the script, I ask John to explain the project he is proposing to the other Arts Instructors. He begins telling them about the

organization that hosted Cartooning for Justice and their goal of having the war crimes court in Liberia. He talks about the work they have done abroad around bringing justice to victims and uses the term “impunity” to describe what is happening in Liberia. I ask him to explain what this word means as it is circulating in popular discourses this year. He tells them that it means, “where people commit atrocities during wartime, very very bad things, and still live their lives freely without any consequence.” As they are all familiar with his script by this time, I ask him to share a bit about the larger project we have been asked to implement. He tells them about the possibility of enacting the international trials for local audiences. He tells them the story of Liberian warlord Jungle Jabbah’s trial in Philadelphia with some help from Josephus. He frames it as something they should do to promote awareness and to encourage people to have the war crimes court in Liberia.

I then tell them that it will be up to them and their parents if they take on this project because I am concerned about the risk involved in such a project. I ask them how well they think these performances will be received in Nimba county where there is still strong support for politicians who were known for their contributions to war crimes. That even if they don’t use names, some people might feel like by advocating for the war crimes court, they are targeting their friend and the area that person represents. I give them Teresa’s example from the Cartooning for Justice training when she said she doesn’t want to be in her country sipping tea when she hears that the school the students attend has burned down. I said likewise, I don’t want to be in my country enjoying the holiday season when I hear that something bad has happened to the community school or any of the students. I also shared with them that at the same time, the mission of the theatre company is to empower them to become educated citizens through the arts and if they are truly empowered, they will be able to be active on the issues that they think are important for Liberia. I ask them if they think this is an important issue and they all agree. One of the male instructors says that it’s important because the war crimes

effect all of them. The National Director questions this and Josephus chimes in saying, "I was directly effected. I had to walk for loooong when we were trying to get away." This is a story he has shared with me before.

With that, I told them that this is a time for them to discuss all of these considerations. John takes over the discussion again soliciting input from his "colleagues, ladies first" beginning with Mary. She laughs, pauses, then says the issue is important because just like with the Ebola awareness, there was a risk with them going out but it was necessary for the message to go out. She continues to explain, "And more people heard about it because they listen to us when we go and by the grace of God the Ebola ceased and all of us were ok. None of us was sick. So this will be the same thing. Anyway we have to take some risk. We are a theatre group that carries messages through performance, so we should see reasons to educate the public about the importance of the establishment of the war crime court in Liberia." Josephus joined in saying, "For me, I am willing to even die for my country..." The room filled with expressions of support and surprise at this. "So that I will not have to walk around with a mental problem. Like in the script, the mother wants to kill the person who murdered her children which isn't good but if when you see the person, you are just angry because there's no justice". Augustine then chimed in that he agrees and supports the project. John thanked them all for sharing then turned to the National Director for comment. The National Director expressed his support for their unanimous desire to move forward with the project. He explained that this kind of partnership would require some groundwork meeting with town chiefs a week or two before they arrive in villages where they are not as familiar to make sure that things will be ok and that they will not experience any violence from presenting the topic. A few of them laugh but I remind them that when the iNGOs went out to villages to talk about Ebola, they were attacked because people did not trust them. I warned them that they should not think that just because they are Liberians, people will always be open to hearing from them if they are strangers in that area and

that it would be important to talk to community leaders like the town chief or zoe. They nod understanding. I mention that they will not necessarily have to perform in every community. They can choose the communities where they feel confident that they will be safe and present that in a proposal for partnership or that they can develop multiple scripts, some of which focus more on the international cases rather than on pursuing a war crimes court in Liberia. John thanks them for giving their various perspectives stating that he had not previously thought very much about the risks and that they have all given him better insight on how to think about this project.

I explain that the next step will be for them to draft a memo to the Parent Advisory Committee and the Board of Directors. I tell them what they should include in the memo: a brief project summary of 2-3 sentences, bulleted arguments in support of the project, and summary explaining how they plan on mitigating risks. And that it should not be more than one page. John mentions the many connections they will make from various contacts in human rights working on these issues and I tell him to add a second page that lists all of these people who have encouraged the project with their respective organizations and contact information as it will help the PAC and Board to understand the scope of support for the project, both financially and politically. They ask what will happen if the PAC and Board do not agree, and I tell them they will have to communicate among themselves to find a solution. I ask them if they think this is fair and sensing their discomfort, I tell them I understand that it's a youth organization and they might not feel that it is necessary to have others make the decision for them but that they have to remember that many of the students are children not youth. And that their parents have primary responsibility for what they do. Also that the Board may have other priorities such as maintaining connections that have been beneficial over the years such as with particular political officials who might take offense to this project. John said that he thought about that too as a strong supporter of our organization was implicated in the TRC report.

I also encourage them to lobby the PAC and Board. We talk about how you don't just write a piece of legislation and hope for the best but you talk with people who can push the idea. We talk about who is on the board, how many are Liberians, who they have already met, who they have been in contact with and how they can reach out to make sure their voices are heard on this issue. They gained a new energy realizing the connections they would be able to utilize to move the project forward and John said he will call my husband encouraging him to persuade me. I tell them that I'm not having a say on this particular issue because I don't want to be the person who encourages or discourages if things do not go as planned. I said the decision can rest with the PAC and Board. I make sure they all have both of my Liberian phone numbers and my US number and that they have contact info for the Liberian board President and the International Board Vice President. The discussions transitioned to other administrative and personal matters before I ask them to please leave our apartment area so that I can continue resting.

This example highlights the negotiations among the youth performers as they weigh the risks and benefits of creating awareness on the possibility of a war crimes court in Liberia, an initiative presented to one of the student leaders by a representative of an international NGO. On the heels of election violence in 2018, the young people here contemplate the role and responsibilities of citizens to work towards the improvement of their country even when there is potential risk to their own safety or political backlash from their choice to bring this important issue to light. This example also highlights their dissatisfaction in dealing with the bureaucracy that is present within the NGO structure of even their own theatre company. Though they are leaders within the organization, they have to navigate the expectations and authority of parents regarding the kinds of activities their children should participate in, as well as, maneuver connecting with and convincing a board composed of domestic and diaspora Liberians and other American internationals that their proposal should move forward. It is interesting that John,

who was seemingly skeptical of the international push for the war crimes tribunal in Liberia during the Cartooning for Justice workshop was suddenly inspired to propose this opportunity to the theatre company with such conviction. In his memo to the board, he summarized, “This project is aimed at carrying on awareness, and performing dramas about the necessity of the War Crime court coming to Liberia in various communities, in other words serving as ambassadors of peace and Justice in Liberia.” This draws on the organization’s longer history of sharing educational messages with the broader public, and a more recent trend of ambassadorship that is used to set individuals apart for their ability to influence their communities particularly which as anthropologist Amal Fadlalla describes as “routing visibilities” which produces the hyper-visibility branding subaltern human rights and humanitarianism actors as role models (Fadlalla, 2018).

In a follow-up interview, John shared that he did not change his mind about the war crimes court but he changed his strategy. His central concern was that “not only local war lords and excoms should be brought to justice but also financiers and profiteers” (Online Interview, Feb. 4, 2020, 12:56pm EST). He was in support of establishing the war crimes court in Liberia but had legitimate concerns that things could go wrong on the ground. The issues he raised and was most concerned about were addressed later in the Cartooning for Justice workshop by a lawyer from Liberia who is a very vocal advocate for the war crimes court. From hearing the lawyer’s view, John accepted that “reconciliation comes through confession and forgiveness” and this allayed his fears, giving him confidence to face the problem with sincerity and justice rather than avoiding potential ill outcomes. As a peaceful and patriotic person, he shared that “In no way will I be in favor of war criminals to walk sky free... So the concerns I raised were in favor of the betterment of my country”. He continued that in order to make sure that the court is established in a way that reduces poor outcomes, there needs to be more awareness and people need to be sensitized. He wanted the theatre company to get involved “so [his] voice

could be heard, even much louder.” The access to large local populations and a growing international following which he documents in his memo to the board, would be potential audiences for him to stage his concerns and amplify his voice along with his colleagues.

Discussion

The use of drama in awareness making has a long-standing history in Africa. From ritual practice to theater for development initiatives beginning in the 1980's, drama has been shown to have an immense impact in addressing community as well as national issues (Dugga, 2018). Drama has increasingly been used as a means to communicate information and ideas around contentious issues in areas with high rates of people who do not read or write. Over this last decade of work as a theatre practitioner, I have witnessed how young people in Liberia use the tools of the theatre to not only share information with audiences but also as a method for collecting community input and ideas on ways to make policies and best practices actionable in communities (see Blanks Jones, Flipping the Panopticon, 2015). In creating performances, students work together to analyze major issues impacting their own lives and the nation as a whole, they learn how to articulate their ideas and concerns with their peers and then with broader audiences, and they also become co-investigators in the research process required in dramaturgy to create a highly contextualized performance. By identifying thematic content for performance based on their own life experiences such as serving on a jury, and major issues in current events, the young people in this ethnography are able to create democratic spaces for dialogue among themselves and with their potential audiences. They recognize the inherent risk involved in awareness making and sensitization, and rely on organizational precedents of risk taking and methods to mitigate risk to justify their project.

The theatre company has a mission of empowering young people to become educated citizens through the arts. Many of the young people in this study have been active theatre

makers and performers as part of the traveling company since 2013. The overwhelming majority of parents discussed how aside from classes at school, their students' other home, work, and other religious and community commitments are structured around the activities of the theatre company. For many, the theatre company is their only activity outside of taking classes at the local community school. In interviews, both parents and students described their involvement in the theatre company as a source of pride and identity making, often expressing desire for students to receive certificates, ID cards, uniforms or other markers of belonging within the organization. (enter here Fadlalla branding and routing visibilities)

In student interviews, nearly all reported that they identify as performance artists across the disciplines of music, dance and drama in which they receive training through the theatre company. Further, all respondents shared that they can make a difference in their society through their art, eagerly giving examples of how they garnered the attention of 'big people' in the society such as government officials through their staged performances on girls education. Additionally, they highlighted having thousands of local followers including many adults who began to listen to them during street performances on Ebola awareness and that they were featured with an international movie actor in a US-based newspaper for this work. Other repeated examples of how they have made a difference through their art included being seen and heard on stage by ambassadors from different countries and having the opportunity to perform with stage actors from the UK in a national performance in the capitol city of Monrovia. Through these examples and others, there was a strong emphasis on how performing arts gives them the ability to speak across gerontocratic and national divides, amplifying their voices to new audiences of people who would likely not listen to them in other contexts.

'Coming up' in this context is about more than individual growth but establishing a collective identity within their peer group that positions them to hold space in areas where youth are often shut out. By holding physical space through embodied practice and performance, the

youth are able to insert their own perspectives into national and global discourses. The notion of 'coming up' has as much to do with social and political positioning and having the ability to speak and act on contentious issues where their voices heard, if not as equal, then still as important participants in the discourses impacting social and political policies and practices. As young people act on stage, they also self-stage their potential and ability for civic action in their society and as global citizens.

Years of working between international and national discourses and organizations has produced in the youth in this study an ability to shape narratives and local institutional reporting practices for specific audiences as demonstrated in the false reporting which was highlighted in my fieldwork excerpt. Though this way of reporting may be perceived as unethical, it also serves as an act of cultural translation whereby local actors provide the kind of information that institutions require according to their own standards of success while performing locally in ways that are suitable for those contexts in spite of the constraints of funding institutions (Honeyman, 2016). Caruana asserts that global citizenship in higher education should focus less on international outward mobility and rather, "avert its gaze towards the constant and emergent formation and deconstruction of identities and the development of multiple perspectives about the world that are the essential components of life and citizenship in a pluralistic, interconnected and complex world" (Caruana, 2014, p. 100). In this conceptualization of global citizenship education, cosmopolitanism and localism are always in conversation necessitating a proactive global citizenship rooted in the capability to make change and live ethically in global and local contexts.

Igarashi and Saito (2014) describe this openness to foreign others as an embodied state of cosmopolitanism which differs from notions of cosmopolitanism focused on consumption which they refer to as an objectified state. They explain that critical sociologists of cosmopolitanism highlight the ways in which the objectified state yields global stratifications,

particularly through education institutions that have the power to determine and credentialize certain forms of cosmopolitanism. Caruana removes the all-too-common focus on mobility as a characteristic of those most likely to engage in the objectified state of cosmopolitanism and refocuses on pedagogical practices that are more aligned with the embodied state by drawing on students' lived experience in developing their intercultural understanding, inter-connectedness, and acknowledgement that learning and personal journeys are "co-dependent, mutually-reinforcing and continuous" (Caruana, 2014, p. 102). She demonstrates how resilience is built through challenges with cultural dis-location and offers a re-conceptualization of global citizenship education that does not privilege mobility but which focuses on student storytelling as pedagogical practice which embraces diversity, belonging, community and solidarity as a pathway to global citizenship education. Lattimer and Kelly's 2013 study of oral history in Kenya reveals that these kinds of learner-centered pedagogies strengthen students' self-efficacy and enhance their perceptions of community knowledge.

As the youth civic "actors" in this ethnography craft their stories for each other and for audiences of both local and international stakeholders, they are demonstrating their ability to use their own lived experiences with marginalization in social/economic structures to help others see both problems and potential solutions more clearly (Cooke & Soria-Donlan, 2019). Moreover, and of importance to this context, staging this performance would provide a way for the youth civic "actors" to speak back to adults across the gerontocratic divide whereby they become people rather than children. In this way, theatre performance serves as a forum where adults can "hear" youth instead of simply dismissing their ideas as children's complaints. Their efforts to amplify their voices for justice at home in Liberia do not overlook the need for similar moves towards justice for war crimes for international participants in Liberia's civil war. Rather, they see these issues as working in tangent to spread awareness and create a more just world where there is as much accountability for imperialist attacks through the funding of war crimes as there is for those who committed gross atrocities on the ground in Liberia.

In this ethnographic account, the young theater practitioners encounter the challenges of internal bureaucracy and organizational risk associated with both local and international cultural expectations for working with children and maintaining strategic relationships. The stakes are high as the young people contemplate risks that could result in violence, and the ability to debate the risks and benefits with one's peers and advocate for the voice of the collective youth performers with other stakeholders who may have more power (parents, board) is a civic skill being developed through this experience (Shepler & Williams, 2017). Through these challenges, they face the productive dilemma of crafting an identity as a global citizen between international discourses/organizations and national discourses/organizations while trying not to be exploited by either and find agency in both as an instance of how global citizenship education is actualized in informal international education contexts in the global South.

Conclusion

Centering the experiences of youth civic "actors" who serve in the capacity of Arts Instructors inserts the voices of youth in the global South who are often disregarded in academic and policy discussions on global citizenship education. The flattened hierarchy of the theatre company structure and its model, rooted in community organizing strategies, creates space for artists to bring their full selves and lived experiences to the fore. Not all performance-based organizations, even those that do devising work, operate in this fashion and may not create the kind of environment that encourages young people to push boundaries and draw possibilities and constraints a bit closer to what can be achieved in the present moment. As youth performers work collaboratively to develop a drama, they have to consider their own diversity of views and experiences with key social and political issues, and what they understand to be the effects of these issues on their lives and communities. Differing viewpoints could be a source of contention, but in this context, create an opportunity for the development of complex and dynamic characters which capture a multivocal assemblage of problems and solutions which

address local practices while informing matters of global concern. Young artists in the global South leverage their performance practices to situate their own lives and histories in national narratives and global discourses. As youth performers craft a drama for a specific audience, they have to maneuver between perceptions of contentious issues among themselves, with their parents, and with international stakeholders to find options that work in the best interest of all involved. Youth theatre actors as civic actors are ‘coming up’ with the experiences of speaking across the gerontocratic divide thereby asserting their personhood within their societies, they are being heard by adults in their communities and iNGOs, they claim a voice in development on issues they are often shut out of, and develop civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Youth civic “actors” in the global South are ‘coming up’ as global citizens.

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