



Kimberly Powell

Abstract

My research, funded in part through a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Partnership Grant is about walking as urban placemaking, civic engagement, and geospatial life stories in the historic cultural district of Japantown, San Jose, California. I am exploring the ways in which walking as an intercultural practice facilitates memories, stories, biographies and civic forms of engagement. I am also interested in studying the potential of video walking interviews as a sensory methodology that might facilitate intercultural awareness. Japantown has a civic history rooted in the Japanese American internment of World War II beginning in 1942 (Presidential Executive Order 9066), and serves as a site of memorialization via cultural events, public and performing arts, and historic walking tours. The term "intercultural" acknowledges that the location of culture is not fixed or place-bound but, rather, exists in and across sites, identities, practices, and communication in a global world: it connotes a kind of space and movement characterized by the slippage between categories, "an operation of displacement" (Hay, 1999, p. 8). Thus, the storywalks are simultaneously about specific experiences in and of place as well as about culture in the making. Walking has increasingly been adopted by artists, arts organizations, and social scientists as a means to develop socially engaged, community-based research. People are asked to walk through the town on a 1-hour videotaped walking interview. The basic question I'm asking is: If you were to take me on your own personal tour of Japantown, where would you take me, and why? The walking interview lasts for about an hour. I am using the video camera as more than a static documentation tool. I have videotaped walking interviews with event organizers, community leaders, and artists in the San Jose region or Bay area to discuss the ways in which they see processual walking, movement, or dancing as ways of making sense of history, place, narrative, and identity within a Japanese American cultural context. I am also experimenting with video documentation as it moves with walking bodies or with dancing bodies, in an effort to think about video as an archival material that might be responsive to research involving movement. My collaboration with PJ Hirabayashi has yielded rich discussions about the video-walking method as a means to document place-based narratives, cultural memory, community identity, and everyday civic engagement that underscore intercultural dialogue and understanding. Another level of significant concerns the method of storywalking and its potential for documenting community identity, memory and civic forms of engagement in any community. A third level of significance is that storywalking presents an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which movement functions as ontology (a way of being) and epistemology (a way of knowing).

Bio

Kimberly Powell is Associate Professor of Education and Art Education at the Pennsylvania State University, USA. Her research focuses on artistic practice and performance as critical sites for social action, with a particular interest in theories of embodiment and the senses. Her publications include articles in *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, *Qualitative Inquiry*, and *Studies in Art Education*. She was a section editor for both *The International Handbook of Research in Arts Education* and *The Routledge International Handbook of Intercultural Arts Research* and has authored several book chapters.