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When Silenced Voices Become Wall-Scale Public Discourse: A Social Constructionist Analysis of Two Philadelphia Murals

Silvana Pop
Communication

On the 3,000 block of Germantown Avenue in North Philadelphia's Badlands section two murals rise three-stories tall: *The Healing Walls: Victim's Journey* and *The Healing Walls: Inmate's Journey* completed in 2004 in an effort by Philadelphia's nationally acclaimed Mural Arts Program (MAP).[1] *The Healing Walls* are among over 3,000 murals created by MAP since its in inception in 1984, when it was known as Philadelphia's Anti-Graffiti Network. Today, MAP is the largest public arts initiative in the nation, having engaged over 20,000 underserved youth free of charge in neighborhoods across Philadelphia, and involving more than 100 communities in mural-making activities each year (Golden, Rice, & Kinney, 2004).

Conceived by artist Cesar Viveros in partnership with artist Parris Stancell, *The Healing Walls* were created under MAP's Restorative Justice Program, which involves hundreds of inmates, ex-offenders, and juvenile delinquents every year working on a variety of indoor and outdoor murals (created inside the prisons on parachute cloth and later affixed to community walls). Through art instruction, mural-making programs, and community service, this initiative offers an avenue for those marginalized by society to begin the reintegration process into their communities, having been given voice after "consistently having felt disconnected from society" (MAP, 2010). Participants in the mural-making projects are offered a space for mutual conversation in an effort to break the cycle of crime and violence through the restorative power of art (Golden, Rice & Pompilio, 2006). Reflecting the traditions of this program, *The Healing Walls* came to life as the result of a collaborative process that involved over 100 individuals, among them inmates at the State Correctional Institution at Graterford (a maximum security prison located 30 miles west of Philadelphia), as well as victims of crime, victim advocates, and community members from Philadelphia's Badlands section (Golden et al., 2006). Murals hold a distinctive place in civic life as they represent the world through the eyes of the "common people," as Barnett (1984) asserts. Murals are a movement of authentic people's art that "asserts the fundamental concerns of community life" (Barnett, 1984, p. 10). They enable neighborhoods to develop "a community-based culture that gives them the means to represent their existence as they know it, and if they so decide, to act to change it" (Barnett, 1984, p. 12).

By drawing on Conquergood's (1991) essay "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics," and Berger and Luckmann's (1966) book *The Social Construction of Reality*, in addition to a few related works (Clifford, 1988; de Certeau, 1984; Pearce & Cronen, 1980;

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Rosaldo, 1989; Trinh, 1989), I argue that *The Healing Walls* not only facilitate dialogue and re-establish social connections, but they represent a site of identity building, re-entering of and reintegration into society, personal and collective voice, and the reclamation of public space. I situate this analysis as an innovative project within social constructionism by allying a visual analysis with a social constructionist perspective by bringing Conquergood's (1991) analysis surrounding boundaries and borderlands, and of the self as the "polysemic site of articulation" (p. 185) in dialogue with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) social constructionism. While previous analyses of murals (and public art more generally) have frequently been discussed within the frameworks of critical visual communication and/or visual rhetoric (e.g. Bartal, 2000; LaWare, 1998; Moss, 2010; Smith, 2008), I propose to apply a social constructionist perspective to the visual analysis of murals. In doing so, my approach highlights the dialogic nature of murals and recognizes their role in mediating communication by involving the community in urban regeneration initiatives through art.

In what follows, I first describe the collaborative mural-making process that led to the creation of *The Healing Walls*, and also provide a description of the two murals. I then turn to a discussion of the social constructionist framework through which I analyze the murals. From there, I show that *The Healing Walls* provide a communicative space in the public sphere for those marginalized (i.e. victims of crime and prison inmates) by society to make their voices heard, and reclaim their identities and their civic space, in a critical effort to challenge public perceptions (typifications) of the other, while re-establishing communal connections.

The Healing Walls: A Collaborative Effort

Made up of a diverse mix of working-class residents (mainly African-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Irish-Americans), the Badlands have long been known as one of Philadelphia's neighborhoods most decimated by violence, substandard housing, and poor schools. Between the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Badlands' crime rate, mostly related to gang activity and drug trafficking, was the highest among the city's neighborhoods (Martinez, 2010). In 2003, the year *The Healing Walls* were first conceived, the Badlands witnessed 34 murders, 91 rapes, and 640 registered robberies (National Public Radio, 2004). It was in this neglected community plagued by violence that Jane Golden, longtime Executive Director at MAP, and her team wanted to empower residents to tell their individual and collective stories in hopes of bringing together two disparate groups, while inspiring civic pride and revitalizing their public space. In the mural-making process, the main focus would be on the involved community members, rather than the trained artists who, like Viveros, "simply facilitated the community's mural-making, claiming no pride of ownership" (Golden et al., 2006, p. 27). Rather than just soliciting residents' design approval, MAP was committed to maintaining a close collaboration and respect between artists and community members throughout the entire mural-making process. As a result, *The Healing Walls* were uniquely designed and produced by the people, for the people. In that sense, the murals reflect a "democratic creative process" for personal stories and community-based reflections of truth (Smith, 2008, p. 6). While *Victim's Journey* depicts the viewpoint of those

afflicted by crime who have embarked on the journey toward healing, and who have come to terms with a difficult past, *Inmate's Journey* gives voice to the offenders as they proceed on their path toward rehabilitation, reconciliation, and potential redemption. Thus, traditionally silenced voices are given a space to speak out, publicly acknowledging the lasting emotional and physical scars they continue to bear, engaging their community in the process, while also celebrating life, faith and forgiveness.

Figure 1. *The Healing Walls: Victim's Journey*. Located at 3065 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia. (Source: Mural Arts Program, 2004)

The Healing Walls: Victim's Journey is framed on the right side and along the bottom by three stone angels carved as if for tombstones, with their wings spread. Immediately below the angel in the right top corner stands a stone cemetery monument in the shape of a woman draped by a long robe. In the right lower corner of the mural stands a young boy with his back facing the viewer, and his arms raised to the sky in fists, his head tilted up toward the cemetery monument and the angel above. At the boy's feet lies a white stone dove, along with an assortment of white stones that flow into the lower body of the praying angel, in which the word "Healing" is etched, the letter "l" broken by a tear in the angel's stone pedestal.

The central figure depicted in *Victim's Journey* is Victoria Greene, a middle-aged African-American woman and longtime Badlands resident who works as a prison counselor and who was heavily involved in the creation of the mural. Greene lost one of her three sons during a drug deal related shooting in 1997 (Golden et al., 2006). The woman is shown standing over ten feet tall, to the left of the praying angel, wearing a purple jacket, black hat and pants with a bright

orange silk scarf, looking upward into the distance. She is flanked on her right in the far corner of the mural by two middle-aged women, one African-American who is kneeling with a sad gaze, comforted by a Caucasian woman who is grasping the other's shoulders, looking up towards Greene. Above the women's heads fly eight white doves closely clustered. The women's legs, meanwhile, are covered by a tombstone near an African-American boy whose head is resting on his right arm, his somber eyes looking almost straight at the viewer. Behind Greene, in smaller size, is pictured a young African-American man sternly looking into the distance. A young woman holds onto the man's left arm, while a young girl holds his right hand.

Greene's right hand holds that of a young Latina who is also looking into the distance. By Greene's right side stands an African-American girl in a bright pink dress, holding a dim light in her right hand, eyes closed, head facing upward. The same girl is depicted twice more in soft tones of light blue and white, ghost-like, floating upwards into the heavens, as if ascending out of the body of the girl holding onto Greene's hand. The light depicted in the hand of the highest floating of the girl's dead bodies is bright yellow, shining in the sky (and starkly different from the dim light below). The girl is positioned immediately next to the angel, illuminating the upper left corner of the mural above Greene's head in cheerful tones of soft pink, lavender, and blue in circular brush strokes. Leading these grieving children, victims of crime, through a graveyard, Greene is central in this memorial to the victims and survivors of crime. She stands tall, her head up, looking out into her surrounding neighborhood, representative of all those families who have suffered pain and are on the difficult path of healing.

Figure 2. *The Healing Walls: Inmate's Journey*. Located at 3049 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia. (Source: Mural Arts Program, 2004)

The Healing Walls: Inmate's Journey, meanwhile, illustrates the perpetrators' personal struggles from incarceration to potential redemption, in hopes of breaking the cycle of violence by transforming themselves and, in effect, their community. While *Victim's Journey* is illustrated in a palette of bright colors, and only the stone angels are in dimmer shades of grey, the two most prevalent colors in *Inmate's Journey* are deep reds and blues. Specifically, blue frames the entire mural, and is dominant in the figures' clothes depicted in the right half of the mural. Meanwhile, shades of deep red are predominantly used in the left half, for both the figures and their clothing.

In the lower left corner of the three-story tall *Inmate's Journey* stands a middle-aged African-American man, his back turned halfway, looking towards the viewer, surrounded by dark tones of blue and black. His pants and sweater are drawn in tones of deep maroon and brown. In line with his chest, one sees a deep blue floating heart that is larger than the man's head. To his lower left side, on the ground level of the mural, in deep tones of blue stand seven individuals (likely crime victims) ranging in ethnicity, most of them women, and one young boy. Their faces cannot fully be made out, as they nearly blend into the background. Next to the man kneels a praying middle-aged Latino dressed in a white shirt beneath an unbuttoned red oxford shirt, his head lowered against his folded hands. His gaze towards the ground, the man looks contemplative. In front of him, standing almost eleven feet tall is a bald African-American middle-aged man, in a very similar outfit as the kneeling Latino man, except his red oxford shirt is fully buttoned. His left arm is raised upward at chest-level, palm facing up, his gaze concentrated. A navy blue heart is depicted on his chest, seemingly affixed to his shirt. From his open palm fly red and blue glowing gem-like particles that also appear at the very top of the mural in tones of blue, as well as on the mural's right side in tones of red. Immediately behind him is a barred jail door, through which a middle-aged Latino dressed in trousers, a white oxford shirt and tie, reaches out his arm from behind the bars, as he sternly looks into the distance.

The remainder of *Inmate's Journey* is framed along the bottom by an African-American teenage boy who lies—his arms crossed over his chest, covered by a blue cloth—as though he is in a casket. His face and arms are lit in warm tones of orange, his demeanor strikingly peaceful. Above the adolescent body grow thick, dark green thorned roots, which appear to be growing into the roots of a robust tree stump that rises high towards the very top of the mural. In place of the tree's branches rises a man's bare torso, his arms widespread, depicted in the same green tones as the tree stump. The man is flanked by a second, ghost-like depiction of the same man also shown behind bars, although this time his body appears in light blue tones, and is almost translucent. He stands tall, looking upward with confidence. The most striking part of his body is the bright red heart drawn on his chest, in stark contrast to the rest of his ghost-like figure. Immediately next to the ghost-like body stands a young girl depicted in bright tones of red and blue, her black hair flowing in the wind. The girl holds the translucent man's hand as though she is guiding him, as she looks off into the distance, her feet firmly anchored on the tree's roots. Along the right side of the mural, above the thorns, meanwhile, an African-American teenage girl's upper body is shown. Above her extended, upward-facing palm a heart on fire is depicted

in bright tones of red and blue. Above the teenager, slightly smaller, stands an older woman in a green dress, her left hand rested on her chest; her heart, too, is depicted in red.

Together, *The Healing Walls* tell the story of a beleaguered neighborhood. As Golden (2004) articulates, "art sometimes flourishes in the bleakest settings. People can be inspired to create by an incredible feeling of powerlessness" (p. xvi). Through the restorative power of art, the residents of the Badlands converted their feelings of powerlessness, anger, and grief into public discourse that gives voice to those traditionally not granted the opportunity to speak out publicly. In doing so, *The Healing Walls* also offer an important venue for the transformation and reclamation of the public space in which both the involved individuals and the community as a whole are able to actively engage and cooperate in a "world-making process" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Situating *The Healing Walls* within a Social Constructionist Perspective

Drawing on the work of Alfred Schutz (1967), Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that the world presents itself to us as the world of everyday life. Further, "the world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality by the ordinary members of society in the subjectively meaningful conduct of their lives" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 19), but this world is socially created in the minds and actions of those inhabiting it. Everyday life, then, "presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 19). Social reality, as Pearce and Cronen (1980) assert, "is what people believe that people believe…the locus of social reality is in the heads of individuals, and it has the peculiar attribute of being perceived as shared by others" (p. 233). Communication is central in the sense-making process and for the understanding of this socially constructed world. In the context of social interactions, Pearce and Cronen (1980) contend that "persons construct an interpretable universe or known space within which they live and move and have their being" (p. 6). Essential to the very nature of communication are the concepts of "typification" and "objectivation," which are "socially approved" (Schutz, 1962, p. 149) and enable us to make sense of everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Objectivations are the result of the process by which products of human activity become indicators for subjective processes that remain constant beyond the "here and now" (Berger & Luckmannn, 1966). Objectivations are not only crucial to the human production of signs, but are integral to language, which has the ability to "anonymize" our experiences, thus further detaching us from the "here and now."

Typifications, however, enable us to not only label things and people, but also to appoint schemes of clarification to them that activate a portion of our social stock of knowledge (Natanson, 1986). That is, by typifying something and/or someone, we interpret them as having certain qualities. In a way, typifications create standard schemes of meanings and patterns of interaction. When we apprehend someone, we typify him or her in a certain way (i.e. interpret him or her as having certain qualities), while they also typify us, which guides our interaction on the basis of our prescribed typifications. In that sense, we are "participat[ing] in each other's

being" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 130). Meanwhile, the situation itself in which we encounter the other is also typified, and thus approachable and meaningful to us. By participating in communication, individuals transform what they are surrounded by into meaningful things that can be talked about with others.

On the basis of the concepts surrounding the social construction of reality, Berger and Luckmann (1966) further argue that our everyday life is made up of typifications and the communication patterns they produce. By mutually engaging in communicative acts, our social structure is established and maintained, while we are subjectively creating meaning through participation in a shared situation or context. Social structure, as a result, is "the sum total of these typifications and of the recurrent patterns of interaction established by means of them" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 33). The way individuals experience their social world, and in turn, reality is guided by the total sum of typifications; they are "an essential element of the reality of everyday life" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 33).

Within a socially constructed world, Berger and Luckmann (1966) emphasize a fundamental sense of "at home-ness" that humans share collectively and in which they are comfortable. That is to say, individuals are at home in their world. When individuals find themselves outside or displaced from this comfortable sphere, however, they must engage in a renegotiation process of their sense of self. This notion points to an interesting link between Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concepts and Conquergood's (1991) discussion on boundary phenomena and border negotiations, which complicates the sense of "at home-ness" that Berger and Luckmann (1966) presume. Conquergood (1991) urges us to rethink the relationship between the center and the margins of society, instead advocating the centrality of borderlands, "a rethinking of identity and culture as constructed and relational, instead of ontologically given and essential" (p. 184). He thus undermines a centralized perception or static view of self/identity. Instead, Conquergood (1991) perceives the self as encapsulated in an emerging process that is fluid, ongoing, and generative, while part of an ever-changing social structure. This social structure, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) assessed, is subjectively meaningful and created in the thoughts and actions of people. The self, importantly, is characterized by a sense of plasticity and between borders, rather than squared inside one culture (Conquergood, 1991).

Of particular interest here is Conquergood's (1991) drawing on Rosaldo (1989), who asserts that "in a world where 'open borders' appear more salient than 'closed communities,' one wonders how to define a project of cultural studies" (p. 45). In today's postmodern world, border crossing and the blurring of borders have challenged theorists to alter their approach and move "from centers to 'borderlands,' 'zones of difference,' and 'busy intersections' where many identities and interests articulate with multiple others" (Conquergood, 1991, p. 184). Conquergood (1991) articulates a self from the boundary perspective, in which "the idea of the person shifts from that of fixed, autonomous self to a polysemic site of articulation for the multiple identities and voices" (p. 185). In the socially constructed world that we live in, the self is in flux, made up of what Trinh (1989) identifies as "infinite layers." This is particularly the case for individuals that have incessantly been marginalized by society. These individuals do not

have a central point of identification, but rather one that is in flux in between different worlds; they are always separate from the other, always on the margins, and never "at home." Like refugees, marginalized people come to use space not for the space itself, but they shape it to fit into their identifying process (Conquergood, 1991). As such, marginalized individuals are involved in a continuous process of socially creating their reality, a world of their own, much like Berger and Luckmann (1966) articulated. Or, as Clifford (1988) so poignantly describes, displaced people engage in an "inventive poetics of reality" (Clifford, 1988, p. 6) in which they need to not only come to an understanding of their environment, but of their identities within that environment and community. Identity, then, "is invented and contingent, not autonomous" (Conquergood, 1991. p. 184). Or per Clifford (1988), "continuity, coherence, and unity" make room for "mixed, relational, and inventive" selves (Clifford, 1988, p. 10). Through a dialogic process on both a personal and collective level, those marginalized work towards crafting a more united self, and thus, a shared identity with their community.

As those marginalized (or, those on the margins) "recollect[ ], recontextualize[ ], and refashion[ ] their identities," (Conquergood, 1991, p. 185), they also recontextualize their environment and those around them. In making sense of their new world, marginalized individuals learn a new stock of knowledge, and with that, reappoint schemes of clarification to their environment. In line with Berger and Luckmann (1966), this process also involves the recontextualizing of their objectivations and typifications. The previously assigned and socially approved schemes of clarification appointed to certain people and circumstances are refashioned. Thus, those individuals previously apprehended in a particular way (by means of typification) are re-typified in a new light, and are open to new associations. As these new typifications take hold by means of communicative acts, the social structure is reorganized, and a new reality emerges.

Identity Construction, Community Revival, and the Reclamation of Public Space

The conceptual framework surrounding the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), combined with Conquergood's (1991) articulation of a self characterized by a sense of plasticity, situates *The Healing Walls* as a communicative act that conveys issues of identity building, re-entering of and reintegration into society, personal and collective voice, and the reclamation of public space. *The Healing Walls* create a space for dialogue between not only those directly affected by or inflicted with crime, but between the viewer and the community they represent. In this space, public conversation occurs about the impact of crime among groups who may rarely interact due to their stark differences and (physical and emotional) separation. The murals thus serve as a political statement that creates a visual confrontation by boldly thrusting itself in the present and the physical space of the neighborhood they represent and that helped create them; they are there for all to see. As Golden (2004) argues, murals are "perfect vehicles to explore this terrain; they are big, bold paintings that reside in our communities… Murals in this city have become a part of the phenomenon of…seizing change from the jaws of defeat" (p. xviii). Drawing on both individual and collective stories, *The Healing Walls* serve an

argumentative purpose by drawing from the depths of a community's heartbeat. This boldness is crucial as it reminds the community of its violent past in hopes of confronting the present and collectively striving for a brighter future. While the murals as visuals are situated within the individual memory of those directly affected by crime or those directly involved in criminal acts, *The Healing Walls* speak beyond the individual memory by situating themselves in a collectively shared memory: a memory shared by the Badlands community. That memory serves as the backbone of these murals.

The Healing Walls serve as a bridge between victims and inmates as the murals break down barriers and give a voice to all those impacted by crime. These voices are deeply personal as they speak from the hearts of struggling individuals who, having been involved with or targeted by violence, are in the process of re-identifying themselves as they heal. Both victims and inmates are engaged in identify negotiation. They are, in Conquergood's (1991) sense, selves in process. Influenced by a myriad of, at times, challenging experiences, their identities are "more like…performance[s] in process than…postulate[s], premise[s], or originary principle[s]" (Conquergood, 1991, p. 185). As events unfold, their identities are correspondingly modified in a fluid process. As Clifford (1988) explains, their identities are in "an ongoing process, politically contested and historically unfinished" (p. 9).

This historically unfinished, ongoing process is brought vividly to light when examining specific visual aspects of *Inmate's Journey*. For instance, the man on the far left of the mural whose back is turned halfway, his gaze towards the viewer, is surrounded by the deepest shades of blue found in the mural. The blue tones, in connection with the dark blue floating heart in front of his upper body are representative of the dark place the man finds himself in after committing a crime. He is, in the most literal sense of the word, heartless, in a very dark place—psychologically and physically, as doubly depicted in the mural. Having committed a heinous act against an innocent individual, he finds himself removed from all good in his mind and body, left only with darkness, as depicted in both the man's maroon clothing and the shades of blue that engulf him. His victims, meanwhile, are close to his mind, firmly impressed on his psyche. This closeness is visually translated in the mural through the depiction of the adolescent African-American who lies like he is in a casket, and the group of individuals in the left corner of the mural. Though they are in close proximity to their perpetrator, the individuals' faces are not stern like that of the predator, but content, some even cheerful. That is to say, they are depicted as they were when they were living, before the man ripped them away from their families and homes. Now, all that is left of them is a dark memory, as represented in the blue tones and the almost translucent victims' bodies.

Having realized what he has caused and living through the consequences of his actions, the man begins the long and strenuous path towards rehabilitation, as shown in the kneeling, praying Latino. As he serves his time, he reflects on his acts, struggling to come to terms with who he is. Carrying the weight of his criminal acts, his heart is still cold, as depicted in the blue heart on the shirt of the standing man. Yet, he is ready to stand up, face his demons, and ask for forgiveness, as shown by the gesture of the extended arm with the palm facing up. He is now eager to leave

behind his dark self, and refashion his new, improved identity. Similarly, the man reaching out behind bars is indicative of this act of pulling oneself together (depicted in the man's neatly assembled outfit). This development is exemplary of the very fluid process Conquergood (1991) describes. The inmate, in facing his violent past in an attempt to articulate remorse, is vulnerable and empathic to the point where redemption may be possible and his new self can take hold. The identity of the inmate changes in a way that reflects the different influences on his life. The inmate thus is not only characterized by a sense of plasticity, but he is between borders; he is at the cusp of his old violent self, whilst at the border of a new self. The inmate's existence between borders can be likened to the fate of refugees that Conquergood (1991) discusses: "Betwist and between worlds, suspended between a shattered past and insecure future, refugees and other displaced people must create an 'inventive poetics of reality' (Clifford, 1988, p. 6) for recollecting, recontextualizing, and refashioning their identities" (p. 185).

Like the refugee, the inmate has been removed from his community and must recollect, recontextualize and refashion his identity in order to re-enter society. With this "displacement, upheaval, [and] unmooring, come the terror and potentiality of flux, improvisation, and creative recombinations," as Conquergood (1991) argues (p. 185). This, of course, is an extensive and demanding process, as so vividly depicted in *Inmate's Journey*. The man must not only understand the terror he has inflicted on his victim's family, but how his actions may have affected his entire community. While incarcerated, the man has time to reflect on his actions and may be able to draw "unexpected results from his situation" (Conquergood, 1991, p. 185), which can be likened to de Certeau's (1984) assessment about the refugee who, living a borderlands life, must "create[ ] for himself a space in which he can find ways of using the constraining order of the place …which lays down its law for him" (p. 30). In prison, the inmate must not only accept the law, but he must reflect and come to terms with his wrong doings, as he finds himself outside of his known environment. As he finds himself living "a borderlands life" (Conquergood, 1991, p. 185), the inmate must actively engage the long process of shifting his identity, if he desires to move beyond his actions, and potentially be allowed to re-enter society. Once the inmate has crossed the border from terror and crime to a life on the margins (in prison), he must engage in "creative combinations" (Conquergood, 1991) to learn from his actions. As he reflects and learns, he slowly transforms and grows into a new identity with a fresh, living heart, as depicted by the man rising from the tree, as well as the ghost-like figure who was first reaching out behind bars, and who now carries a bright red, beating heart, firmly holding the young girl's hand.

In order to re-enter his community, however, the man must gain the approval of his fellow community members. Visually, this is most predominantly depicted in *Inmate's Journey* by the girl standing on the tree stump, holding the former inmate's hand. The hand-holding symbolizes the community's necessary involvement with and acceptance of the man as he attempts to re-enter his community. The young girl with the extended arm, as well as the woman in the green dress with the bright red heart, furthermore symbolize the community's support and tolerance, which is vital in the reconfiguration of the man's identity, and also exemplary of Berger and

Luckmann's (1966) typifications. Namely, having been convicted of a violent act, the predator is no longer "human," but seen as the embodiment of evil. By typifying him as "predator" or "criminal," the community attaches very specific attributes to him (e.g. "evil"), stripping away any human-like attributes. By typifying him as such, the community is able to make sense of the violent reality inflicted upon not just the affected family, but also the entire neighborhood. Per Berger and Luckmann (1966), any interactions with that person are then guided on the basis of the associations society makes through those typifications. Once the man is typified as "criminal" or "predator," the interactions with and associations of him are strictly guided (and limited) by the typifications. Once typified, all commonalities between him and humanity have been removed.

As Berger and Luckmann (1966) assert, "language also typifies experiences, allowing me to subsume them under broad categories in terms of which they have meaning not only to myself but also to my fellowmen" (p. 39). Once the person has been objectified as "criminal," the community has set the individual in a narrow category, on the basis of the association made by that category or typification. The community is thus able to collectively come to an understanding of their reality as afflicted by the "criminal" and can communicate about the associated events on the basis of their typifications. In that sense, the typifications serve a collective purpose, as they only function when understood and repeatedly communicated by community members.

Inmate's Journey effectively questions society's typifications and the social stigma about prisoners. By portraying those who have committed crimes not just as "criminals," but as human beings with a heart, longing to re-enter society after a long and challenging internal battle, *Inmate's Journey* calls on us to rethink and redefine our typifications. By situating itself in the midst of the neighborhood, the mural calls on us to question our stern judgments about inmates as the embodiment of evil. *Inmate's Journey* portrays the men not just as "criminals," but as "humans," by repeatedly making use of the depiction of hearts—both cold, blue hearts, and warm, living, red hearts—and thus producing a shift in typifications. As the hearts turn from dark blue to warm tones of red on the bodies of the conceived "criminals," the men become "human" again. Once they have stepped out of the (literally) dark side, the men are able to ask for the approval to re-enter society, by (literally) reaching out their hands, asking for repentance and forgiveness in order to reconnect and re-enter their community. Even though deeply hurt and in the process of healing, the community is willing to take the men back and re-typify them. This is visually expressed through the beating hearts and the red and blue gem-like particles that flow from the men's hands into the hearts of the community members, thus reconnecting two separated groups, and making them whole again. Through this re-typification process, the individuals are able rebuild their communal bonds and trust in one another.

Another way in which *Inmate's Journey* encourages us to rethink our typifications is through the use of direct eye contact made by the man standing in the far left corner, in the darkest spot of the mural. This visual detail is significant because the direct gaze establishes a relationship between the man and the viewer. The man is asking us to relate and identify with him, engage in

conversation with him. In turn, we are asked to stop and problematize our typifications, and with that, the way we encounter our socially constructed world. That is, the man is asking us to consider him not as the untouchable, socially unclean "criminal," but as one of us, as human. His gaze functions as a communicative act that directly and effectively challenges the associations we have made with a specific person by means of typifications. His gaze also challenges his anonymity, and thus aids in re-establishing him as human. It is through this dialogue that the process of re-typification can occur.

That dialogue, of course, was mirrored by the mural-making process itself, in which both victims and victims' advocates engaged in conversations with inmates and ex-offenders, as they met repeatedly in the prisons over the course of several months. Those face-to-face interactions were patterned, as Berger and Luckmann (1966) contend, by the typifications "as long as they do not become problematic" (p. 31). And that is precisely the key factor: only when our typifications become problematic do we question them. This is exactly what happened as the two parties engaged in the, at times difficult and emotionally draining, mural-making process and the conversations that evolved as part of it. Participants began the process as "criminals" and "victims," but through interaction their typificatory scheme was modified, and subsequent dialogues "planned differently in accordance with this modification" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p.31). The remodeling of their typifications led to an enlightened and remodeled social reality "apprehended in a continuum" of the sum of their redefined typifications (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 33). After the murals were completed, their physical wall-scale presence remained as a constant reminder of that dialogue and the need for that discourse to continue beyond the murals' walls—even for those outside of the immediate community. In that sense, *The Healing Walls* "appeal to both cultural 'insiders,' those who see aspects of themselves represented directly, and cultural 'outsiders,' who are invited to consider the figures in novel ways within the broader social discourse" (Moss, 2010, p. 387). By engaging "cultural outsides," the murals become even more of a political statement, as they address the vital dialogue that must occur on a larger scale to ultimately create a more just world.

Just as society tends to objectify inmates, so too do victims face a reality shaped by having been labeled "victim" by their fellow community members, as well as their offenders. Having lost a loved one, or having lived through a violent act, victims seldom have an opportunity to publicly speak out about their grief, anger, and their personal violations. *Victim's Journey* enables those silenced voices to come forth, and boldly step out of the associations made through being objectified, or typified, as "victim." By working through their grief, anger, and dismay, and publicly acknowledging that there is life after crime, individuals like Victoria Greene become human agents for change, as they stand for all those not with us anymore, or those not ready to stand tall and make a political statement.

Victim's Journey portrays Greene as a strong woman, capable of taking the lead and guiding those still grieving on the path toward healing, as depicted by the two grieving women in the left corner of the mural. Greene is no longer the face of "victim," but that of woman, mother, activist and human agent for change. In Conquergood's (1991) terms, she is a self that is in process,

reflecting the different influences in her life. Having stepped outside of the typification "victim," Greene has passed the border from grief, anger, and pain by reclaiming not only her full identity, but through the mural, she (and all those whom she represents) has reclaimed her civic space, her community, her neighborhood. As Greene stated in an interview after the mural's completion, "within these neighborhoods are people who work hard, who want the American dream, who have religious values, know right from wrong. This is a symbol for them to stand up, and have a voice, and have a picture" (NPR, 2004). Thus, the image of Greene is, in Conquergood's (1991) sense, a "polysemic site of articulation for multiple identities and voices" (p. 185). While losing her child to violence will forever remain a part of her identity, Greene is no longer limited only to that one identity of grieving mother, but instead takes on the identity and voice of human agent and leader; she is no longer confined to one domain of our culture (Conquergood, 1991).

Interestingly, Greene stands between the two worlds depicted in *The Healing Walls*, as on the one hand, she has lost a child to crime, and on the other hand, she works as a counselor in the prison system. She is familiar with the struggles those incarcerated face, and thus stands in between the social divide of victimhood and crime. As a result, Greene has to defy the very objectifications she places on predators, whilst also having to work through her own struggles in redefining herself after having been afflicted by crime and losing a child. Much like the refugees' experiences Conquergood (1991) attends to, Greene encountered "experiences that are both violent and regenerative" (p. 185), and she now stands between the borders of victim and advocate, establishing within them "a degree of plurality and creativity" (de Certeau, 1984, p. 30). The creativity in Greene's case was in fact the lengthy mural-making process and the accompanying conversations she engaged in with inmates, victims' advocates, and community members. Beyond creating the murals, they collectively created a dialogic space for the flow of ideas by sharing deeply personal experiences. Through their interactions, they were able to redefine themselves, transcend, and reassign their socially created typifications, which otherwise would have made the process of healing and rehabilitation much more challenging.

The collaborative effort and lengthy painting sessions necessary to create *The Healing Walls* not only gave victims and inmates an opportunity to negotiate "their collective pain, [but] they learned there was a blurred line between victims and perpetrators. They saw that the impact and consequences of crime are more widespread than they thought" (Golden et al., 2006, p. 10). As such, *The Healing Walls* address identity on both the personal and collective level, as they speak to our core values and our experiences with the world. Visually, this sense of collective identity and unity is visually expressed in the repetition of gestures, like the hand-holding in both *Victim's Journey* and *Inmate's Journey*, as well as the hands reaching out, or guiding and comforting others. Such repeatedly appearing elements as the hearts in *Inmate's Journey*, as well as the angels and doves (signs of peace and harmony) in *Victim's Journey* also are representative of the communal bond, shared identities, and collective hopes and dreams of a community. The figures' gazes, moreover, indicate a sense of commonality among disparate groups, with the inmates' and the victims' facial expressions equally conveying pain, as well as confidence and hope. Such common expressions reaffirm that while different, humans are still one. The

Badlands, while struggling and torn, is still one community. As a result, its residents must collectively engage in the process of re-typification in order to reshape their social stock of knowledge and create new associations between one another and their environment, and, in effect, revive their communal bonds and collective identity.

In reading *The Healing Walls* through the lenses of Conquergood (1991) and Berger and Luckmann (1966), a dialogue between two traditionally disparate groups can be explored in which community members' objectifications of the other are laid aside, typifications are redefined, and identities are seen not as stagnant, but as evolving and fluid, as living bodies in process. The personal and collective stories told through the murals not only serve as the backbone of this symbolic artifact, but they are exemplary of concepts surrounding identities that are in process (Conquergood, 1991), as well as how the concepts at the core of a socially constructed world are lived in everyday life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As such, *The Healing Walls* represent a significant communicative act and positive force on both the individual and communal level, providing an opportunity for seemingly "plain folks, perhaps for the only time in their lives, to express themselves and have a say in what they wanted to see every day in their neighborhoods" (Golden et al., 2004, p. 7). By engaging the viewer and stirring up questions, *The Healing Walls* are capable of freeing people from their preconceived notions (typifications) of the other, shifting their consciousness, and challenging their perceptions of the world. "Imbued with a mysterious energy that radiates outward, touching who sees them" (Golden et al., 2004, p. 11), *The Healing Walls* provide a significant communicative space for those marginalized by society to speak up, reclaim their identities, and revive their communal union.

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