Phillips, L.G., (2022). Storytelling pedagogy for active citizenship. In L.G. Phillips, & T.P.T. Nguyen (Eds.) *Storytelling pedagogy in Australia & Asia* (pp. 159-180). Palgrave Macmillan.

My storytelling beginnings

I am a fifth generation white Australian of English, Irish and German heritage. I have savoured the world of stories since embarking on studies in early childhood education in the late 1980s and forging a storytelling career from performing told stories as early childhood pedagogy. Though the spark for stories was probably ignited much earlier. My mother always has stories to tell of the happenings in her life. She especially loves the madness-of-everyday-life stories; those that make you chuckle at your own lunacy or delight at the wonderfully serendipitous. A yearning for stories has pervaded my adulthood, with this hunger somewhat satiated through active participation in Storytelling Guilds and festivals of the storytelling revival. Perhaps as Berger and Quinney (2005) suggest "this revival reflects a culture that is ill at ease, that lacks compelling myths to bind us all together. Perhaps it has something to do with our sense of rootlessness, of separation from extended family...a way to resurrect something we never had" (pp. 8-9). As a white Australian descended from convicts and settlers I am dislocated from my ancestral cultural roots in rituals, values and stories. Since transitioning into adulthood, I have sort meaning of identity, purpose and place through folktales rooted in various cultures across the world.

From 1991, I started performing professionally as a storyteller with young children at conferences, kindergartens, schools, museums, libraries, and festivals. Through this passion for stories, I saw the great educative potential of storytelling early in my teaching career. I undertook an independent project on storytelling in education in the final year of my education degree, from which I published two articles (Phillips, 1999, 2000), which to my surprise continue to be read and cited. My interest in how story and storytelling can catalyse social action was sparked in the year 2000, let me tell you the story.

It was the year 2000, and there was much discussion about reconciliation across many forums in Australia. Prime Minister John Howard refused to apologise to the Stolen Generations, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who had been removed from their families by successive Australian governments. The general public expressed support for reconciliation through large-scale events, such as the *Walk for Reconciliation, Corroboree 2000*. My son at age four found *The Rabbits* by John Marsden and Shaun Tan (1998) in our local library. When we read the story at home I was astounded by the powerful use of metaphor in this picture book. The rabbits symbolically equated with white colonisers, and numbat-like creatures with the colonised. The story is told from an imagined perspective of a numbat. Rabbits, like white colonisers, are an introduced species to Australia with a population that grew rapidly, from 24 rabbits in 1859 to two million rabbits in 1869 (Light, 2008).

I read, *The Rabbits* as acknowledging the shameful events in Australian history rather than pretending such incidents never occurred, as so many Australian books have done in the past. Most adults in Australia were really only taught the white settler version of Australian history at school. I showed *The Rabbits* to the preschool teacher at the community child care organisation where I worked as a trainer and resource officer. The organisation had a strong commitment to confronting social biases through implementation of an anti-bias curriculum (Derman-Sparks & The Anti-bias Task Force, 1989), which the teacher and I both supported. Enthusiastic to engage in critical dialogue with her class of children aged four to five years, the teacher shared *The Rabbits* a number of times. Some days later, the teacher talked to me about how one of the children's parents wanted her to stop reading *The Rabbits* to her son, for he was having nightmares about his baby brother being stolen. A double page spread in the book reads: "…and stole our children" (Marsden & Tan, 1998). The teacher did not want to stop reading the book or stop the dialogue with the children about the issues that the book had

raised, yet she also wanted to respect the parent's wishes and attend to the child's fears. We thought about it together and decided that I would visit the class and tell a story to provide more context to the colonising practice of removing children from their families authorised by previous Australian governments. I told a story of a young Aboriginal Australian woman named Elsie, which drew from the childhood experiences of Aboriginal Australian women documented in the book *Murawina: Australian Women of High Achievement* (Sykes, 1993). On completing the story, two boys aged five expressed their outrage at the acts of the government officials with "Put them in a brown bear cage" and, "Hang them upside down". I heard these comments as violent suggestions. My training as an early childhood teacher drove me to redirect such suggestions to more constructive ideas. I then asked the children, "Well what do you do here when something unfair happens?" to which one child replied, "You say sorry". Then suddenly another boy leapt to his feet with urgency and blurted out, "John Howard did not say sorry". It readily saw a connection between the story I had just told, possible discussions with his teacher and family, and a recurring feature in the media that year. Prime Minister John Howard refused to apologise to Indigenous Australians for the past government policy of forced removal of children from their families, contrary to the recommendation of the *Bringing Them Home Report* (Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997). The boy continued with, "Get John Howard to come here and say sorry to the Aborigines!" I was inspired by what I witnessed as passionate motivation in a child aged five to initiate social action to redress injustice.

I wanted to support the children's enthusiasm to act, but I recognised it was unlikely that John Howard would visit their childcare centre. As a compromise, I suggested that the children write letters to the government expressing their thoughts and feelings regarding the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. This suggestion had barely left my mouth when they all moved from the gathering on the carpet to

the writing area of the room. They busily crafted letters, that asserted their earnest desires to rectify the situation:

> "The Government took Elsie. Elsie sends a letter to the government to say my mother didn't die."
>
> "Say sorry to the Aborigines. You're not very nice government 'cos you didn't say sorry to the Aborigines."
>
> "I took all the Aboriginal children (the sisters, brothers and Elsie) back to their mother."

The next day we wrote a group letter to the government to accompany the individual letters, which included the children's drawings and messages. The group decided collectively upon the following words:

> "To the Government,
>
> Could you please say sorry to the Aborigines for stealing children from their families and home, and invading their land? Please find enclosed our drawings and messages. From…"

As soon as I finished transcribing these words, the children moved spontaneously towards the poster-size letter and signed their names on the bottom. I was stunned that this needed no prompting; they were proud to have their names associated with their plea to the government.

This storytelling activated activism encounter has resonated with me for years, and I have shared this account at many storytelling workshops, conference presentations and lectures with early childhood educators and pre-service teachers. When able to undertake postgraduate research some five years later, this encounter framed my doctoral study titled *Young children's active citizenship: Storytelling, stories, and social actions* (Phillips, 2010).

This chapter will draw from this study along with philosophical and theoretical explanations of the qualities of stories and storytelling to invite social action.

Why story and storytelling provoke empathy and social action

Stories are an inclusive mode of communication, they speak across generations, across cultures, and break down barriers. American philosopher, Martha Nussbaum claims (1997) that story and storytelling are valuable attributes to being global citizens. As explained in Chapter One, Nussbaum identifies the extraordinary capacity of story and storytelling to nurture sympathetic imagination, that is to understand the complexities of humanity through the training of the imagination that storytelling fosters. As children grasp complexities of humanity (such as perseverance and unfairness) by learning their dynamics through story in particular tragedies, they become capable of compassion. Through cultivation of sympathetic imagination, we are then able to comprehend the choices of people different from ourselves. She proposed that sharing tragedies with children acquaints them as citizens with understandings of the misfortune that may happen in a human life but also equips children with understanding of diversity of choice of action. On the basis of such understandings of story, Nussbaum suggested that the goals of global citizenship are best promoted through story in a deliberative and critical spirit to provoke participation as global citizens who act for humanity.

German-born American philosopher, Hannah Arendt (1958/1998) also understood story as having the capacity to carry the weight of tragedy, to convey it and offer insights. According to Arendt, we can only know who somebody is by knowing the story in which she or he is the hero. The place of story in her theory of action is explained through an examination of courage.

> The connotation of courage, which we now feel to be an indispensable quality of the hero, is in fact present in the willingness to act and speak at all, to insert oneself into the world and begin a story of one's own. (p. 186)

Those who have the courage to start something new are seen as heroes in their own stories. Actions then tell about who the heroes are, thereby exposing deeper understandings of qualities of humanity. This view suggests that a person's activity emanates from the core of their being.

Indian anti-colonial political ethicist, Mohandas K. Gandhi's story of igniting en masse non-violent action in resistance to British rule is such a story of courage, and has been widely shared in schools and broader society across India and the world post India's independence. As India's first Prime Minister Nehru (and long-time friend of Gandhi) wrote in the foreword of Indian Government published comic The Gandhi Story (1966): "The Gandhi story has become an essential part of our rich heritage from the past and is still moulding our present"[1]. I recall the 1982 *Gandhi* film being released when I was in high school and being profoundly affected by Gandhi's capacity to ignite change in such a calm and spiritual way. It was probably his story of courage to be willing to act and speak against racist oppression of the British Empire that sparked my interest in activism.

Stories of people doing courageous acts inspire others to act courageously. Education for social change supports displays of civic courage through demonstrations of a willingness to act. To Canadian cultural critic, Henri Giroux (1983), support for civic participation in education must rest on the following pedagogical assumptions. First, students must be active

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[1] More recently, Gandhi's story is appropriated as a Hindu story fuelling the fundamentalist conflict between Hindus and Muslims (Pillalamarri, 2019), yet Gandhi had invested so much of his teachings and actions peace building between peoples of the two faiths: "the Mussalmans are blood of our blood and bone of our bone" (Gandhi, 2004).

in the learning process and be taught to think critically. Second, students are encouraged to speak from their experiences (or histories), that is, their stories. This is what I see as necessary provocative pedagogical practice to build empathy and compassion for relational community-minded citizenship, where we act to ensure equity for our sisters and brothers across all species: to tell stories of courage and facilitate critical discussion and action.

American educational philosopher, author, social activist, and teacher Maxine Greene (1995), also saw that the motivation to act for social change can be created by stories that voice personal perspectives as well as listening to the stories of others in the spaces of dialogue. Spaces for dialogue, that is, students and teachers speaking from their own experiences and reflecting together on issues of critical concern, can inspire students to come together to understand what social justice actually means and what it might demand. Greene saw that these spaces of dialogue could endeavour to nurture what Arendt (1958/1998) referred to as "in-between" or a "'web' of human relationships" (p. 183), perhaps what Aboriginal Australian Elder Aunty Margaret Kemarre Turner refers to as central to in Aboriginal Australian ontology: "We as Aboriginal people, we always relate to other people, connect with them, no matter who we are" (Turner, 2005, p.7). Story does that. It invites us feel the heart and soul of others, which is necessary for feminist constructions of citizenship as relational and community-minded (e.g., see Lister, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Greene saw that people could come together, as Arendt (1958/1998) proposed, through spoken words and action to create something in common. From this understanding, Greene envisioned classrooms that value multiple perspectives, democratic pluralism, life narratives and ongoing social change.

Indonesian sociologist, Yanu Endar Prasetyo (2017) too has argued that "Storytelling is how we learn to exercise our community to deal with new challenges and conscious of alternative futures" (p. 2) and that "stories do not merely recount experiences but open-up

new possibilities for action." (p. 3). And organisations like Global Citizen (a global movement to end extreme poverty) explicitly utilise storytelling to motivate social action (Brown, 2016). I will now share with you two stories I crafted and shared with a class of five to six-year olds in Brisbane, Australia and how they responded as further illustrative examples of storytelling as pedagogy building empathy and compassion for relational community-minded citizenship.

Storytelling for interspecies compassion and social action

I had already spent a couple of weeks with the class and had come to understand that they were concerned about hunters killing birds. I considered Hart's (1997) case for adults to support children's participation in matters that interest children within their local environment. According to Hart, a local focus enables children to be involved directly, and in turn deepens their understanding and connection with the issue. This informed my decision to source a story that could motivate participation in their local environment. I realised that if I wanted to present storytelling that provoked meaningful local social action, a story based on an animal that needed support in our local environment was required, so I sourced information on a critically endangered bird in South East Queensland drawing from *Coxen's fig-parrot cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni recovery plan 2001-2005* (The State of Queensland, Environmental Protection Agency, 2001). This is how the storytelling went.

Louise: A long, long time ago, the land that we live in and the places that we now visit and holiday at were covered with rainforests—beautiful rainforests with huge trees—Moreton bay fig trees and green strangler vine fig trees laden with succulent figs. This story is about a beautiful green parrot who lived amidst these trees. He had a broad round body and short stumpy tail.

Denmark: I know what it is—a king parrot.

Louise: (*points at poster of the Coxen's fig-parrot*)

Child: King parrot.

Juliet: Not the king parrot.

Louise: The Coxen's fig-parrot. He had distinctly blue feathers on his forehead surrounded by a few red feathers and an orange-red patch on his cheek with a blue band below. His beak was pale grey in colour and the tip was a dark grey. His eyes were brown like the colour of the earth. A very beautiful parrot that would fly amidst the majestic fig trees and would call out "zeet zeet" and all the parrots would do the same. Because there were hundreds of parrots, they would call back. (*gestured to all to make call)*

All: "Zeet zeet—zeet zeet".

Louise: And they would fly around together and swoop down when they found a fig tree

abundant with ripe figs, feasting on the seeds (*myself and some children make flying actions and feeding actions*). Their favourite food is the seeds from ripe figs on Moreton bay fig trees and green strangler vine fig trees. There were hundreds of them and they shared these figs with other birds and animals and the Jinibara people and Turrbal people, there was plenty to go around. Everyone ate just what they needed. (*Peter and Charlie continue flying swooping actions).* But more people came from another land. They came in big ships, firstly, from England and Ireland.

Tony: My Daddy comes from England.

Louise: And they came with axes and started to chop down the trees to build houses (*I stood up to act out chopping down a tree – Declan, Peter, Charlie all join in)*. They used the wood to make houses. And then more people came so they built more houses. They chopped down more trees.

Juliet: And they chopped down the fig trees.

Louise: That is exactly right Juliet and then they brought huge machines that could knock down many trees at once. And people came from other countries like India -

Child: Chinese

Louise: (What's another country where people came from to live in Australia?)

UN: China

Denmark: Denmark

Juliet: Japan, China

Max: USA

Denmark: Denmark—my mum came from there.

Declan: Spain—my Mum came from Spain so that is why I chose it.

Louise: Molly?

Molly: Brazil

Louise: People came from all these countries. For all these people to live here they needed houses. Every family that came here needed a house. So, they cleared land to build houses on, so what they would do is chop down trees or get the big machines to knock down many trees. This affected the food supply for the beautiful Coxen's fig-parrot. They were finding it harder and harder to find food because there were less trees, so many of Coxen's fig-parrot died. With fewer left it was harder for them to find a mate to make more Coxen's fig-parrots. This poor little Coxen's fig-parrot flew around looking for others like it screeching "zeet zeet" in search of others that might return his call, but there was silence. And so, it learnt to do everything by itself. Find water by itself. Find figs by itself and preen its own feathers.

Juliet: And it couldn't breed.

Louise: Yes, it found it hard to find another mate. And being all alone it was very vulnerable so the parrot needed to be very quiet. It had to move very quietly on branches so predators would not hear it. Predators like the owl, the goshawk and people. This bird is so rare. So, few of them left now. They think only—fifty!. That is not much more than this class and the class next door. Because they are so rare you know what might be happening? These birds are so rare and so precious that they are worth a lot of money, so some people might be catching them and selling them overseas. What this bird needs, is more forest.

Denmark: More fig trees.

Louise: More fig trees like you're saying Denmark and this bird needs (*hand gesture to Juliet)*

Juliet: A mate then it could breed more.

Louise: So it could breed more to increase the population.

Louise: So that is the story of the Coxen's fig-parrot. That is what has happened to the beautiful Coxen's fig-parrot.

Following the story, the children participated in a re-enactment of the deforestation of native fig trees and the consequential decline in the population of Coxen's fig-parrots (see Figure 9.1). Through the story and the re-enactment, the children linguistically, visually, and

kinaesthetically experienced the impact of deforestation on Coxen's fig-parrots. The final scene of one tree and two birds seemed to leave a strong impression, as expressed by these children's comments.

INSERT FIGURE 9.1 HERE (Children enacting deforestation)

> Juliet: When the people were chopping down the trees I felt like the parrot was dying.
>
> They weren't thinking about the animals. Like if they were chopping down the trees with a bird in it—they've got to be careful of other animals.
>
> Max: What happens to the animals? If they be friends—be kind to the lorikeet [Coxen's fig-parrot] and everything else. So why are they killing them? … Shouldn't have only one more left. What happens to stop killing?

The class then made signs (see Figure 9.2) of key messages they wanted people to know about the Coxen's fig-parrot. Declan wrote "We need to plant more fig trees". As he was writing he proposed:

> "We could plant them in the school and the fig-parrots could come around, so we could see a real one."

INSERT FIGURE 9.2 (Children's conservation signs for the Coxen's fig parrot)

From the idea proposed by Declan, the teacher started to consider and consult with the principal about planting a fig tree at the school. Over the next week, I made contact with numerous organisations in search of native fig seedlings, which included the Threatened Bird Network, the Blackall Ranges Landcare Group (who work in a known Coxen's fig-parrot habitat), and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services Coxen's Fig-parrot Recovery Team. Eventually, it was through a resident of the Blackall Ranges who had devoted much of her life to recovery work for the Coxen's fig-parrot that brought success. I learnt that the Coxen's fig-parrot eats only a few native fig species, and their seeds could only be sourced from these trees, not from nurseries. This resident also advised against planting a fig tree in the school

grounds for two reasons: the hazard of their size; and that to have any chance of supporting recovery of the Coxen's fig-parrot population, the fig trees needed to be planted in known habitat areas, such as the Blackall Ranges. The resident kindly volunteered to travel from the Blackall Ranges to Brisbane to bring seedlings for the children to nurture until they were sufficiently mature to be planted in the Blackall Ranges. Unfortunately, illness prevented her from visiting the class. We then waited for a suitable time for the designated Coxen's fig-parrot expert from the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services to visit after he had collected fig seedlings from the Blackall Ranges.

When a Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services Officer visited six weeks later he also brought a preserved Coxen's fig-parrot from the Queensland Museum collection and a recording of its song. In this way, Declan and the class had an as-close-as-possible experience of a real Coxen's fig-parrot. This visit not only enabled the children to contribute to the recovery of a Coxen's fig-parrot habitat but also led to the children becoming more informed about it and becoming advocates for its recovery. The class went on to develop a petition to the state Minister for the Environment to help save the Coxen's fig-parrot. The children built a connection with the Coxen's fig-parrot and its plight, through the story, dramatization, discussions, sign-making, meeting conservationists, fig-seedling nurturing, petition writing and signature gathering. Across the 3 months I spent with this class I told ten different stories, when I asked each child which story they learned the most from, the most common answer was *The Lonely Coxen's Fig-parrot*.

Storytelling for children's rights

Another story that I told this same class evoked the most sympathetic responses across the project, as well as triggered most of the children's enacted social actions across the three months. It was a story I crafted on biographical details of Pakistani child activist, Iqbal Masih's (1982-1995) life, informed by books (Crofts, 2006; Kielburger, 1998) and websites

(The World Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child, n.d). The story told of Iqbal and his friends having their rights to freedom being abused, but also told of Iqbal advocating for himself and others to ensure their rights were honoured.

Louise: (Everyone close your eyes and I want you to imagine.) Imagine a room which just has a dirt floor and a bed that's made out of wood but there's no mattress, there's just string; strong string across and some sheets on it. This is Iqbal's room. Iqbal is a boy from Pakistan and he shares his room with his Mother and his sister. There are two other beds in that room as well, just the same that have a wooden frame and string over the frame. Now the only thing that Iqbal owned—the only toy that Iqbal owned is a cricket bat, which he kept under his bed. In their house they have another room, that's the kitchen where they make their food. Their house is made out of mud. Mud walls—the mud is set hard—it's like bricks. (Open your eyes.)

This is story of Iqbal. Iqbal lived in Pakistan—a country next door to India. And when he was five his family was so poor that they sent him to work in a carpet factory. He wove carpets by tying knots. And he has to work there as soon as the sun comes up, till when the sun goes down. It's a very long day. He doesn't get to go to school. He doesn't have time to play.

Child: He has to work always?

Louise: He comes home so tired and he doesn't get to eat all day. When he gets home he collapses in his bed and says, "Mama! Please bring me some bread". And he eats some bread then falls asleep. He spends all his time working very long days —not getting much money—just 50 cents a day. That's less than one dollar for a long day's work. His family is so poor that when his Mother gets sick and she needs an operation they don't have the money for the operation and the only place that they knew where they could get the money is from Ghullah: the man who owns the carpet factory. They ask him can they borrow some money—could they have Iqbal's wages in advance. He says, "yes", so Iqbal's mother can have her operation. But now that they owe money to Ghullah, Ghullah thinks that he owns Iqbal. There is a big demand for carpets. Lots of people wanting to buy carpets, so Ghullah comes around to Iqbal's house in the middle of the night and wakes up Iqbal and drags him back to the factory half asleep. Poor Iqbal is so tired. He can't even sleep anymore. And you know what this factory owner does? Sometimes when he is very cross—to wake Iqbal up, he hits him with the hard metal carpet fork used to push the threads down. (Let's see what this looks like.)

Max: Can I be the boy who's sleeping?

Louise: Okay.

Max: (*Raises fist jubilantly*)

Louise: (*to Charlie*) (And you can be the factory owner: Ghullah.)

Louise: (*to Max*) So you go into sleeping position as Iqbal and (*to Charlie*) you are going to be Ghullah, you come to his house and you wake him up. (*Charlie gently rubs Max's back*). Come on pull his arm, come on, that's it tell him: "You have to come and make more carpets."

Charlie: Go and make some more carpets!

Louise: (And Max you wake up—you look a bit sleepy. Get up. Stand up. Sorry let me have a close look at this scene. (*to Max*) You look sleepy (*demonstrate drooped posture and facial expression*). (*to Charlie*) You look serious and strong, you're pulling him. Then back at the factory. (*to Charlie*) You stand here. Let's make the factory scene. Everyone is working in the factory. So, what we need to do is we all need to be in three rows, sitting on the floor squatting do you remember how he was sitting? So, there will be seven in one row facing that way and seven in another row facing that way and seven in another row facing that way.)

Max: Also, I have to do it.

Louise: (*to Max*) (You can stay where you are sitting. Okay so you are working hard tying lots of knots. And Ghullah you are fierce and say, "Work harder").

Charlie: Work harder!!

Louise: (Your bodies are listless and exhausted – their flopping looking out at the windows wishing you were out there playing – exhausted – unhappy – tired – you've been doing this for years day in day out – you haven't played sport for weeks.) *(Tony, Max, Ella, Molly sit with very floppy bodies – nearly falling over with exhaustion*).

(What are you thinking, when you are tying the knots?)

Denmark: Speed—speed.

Molly: I'm imagining what it would be like to play.

Fergie: Go really fast so you can do anything you like after you did it really speedy.

Louise: So, Iqbal works like this for many years. Then one day one of his friends was very sick, he had a high fever. Some of you have been sick lately so you know what it is like to have a high fever and you stay home from school.

Well this boy stayed home from work in the carpet factory, but Ghullah was so angry that he went around to his house and dragged him in and he said, "I'M THE ONE HERE WHO SAYS WHEN AND WHEN YOU CAN'T WORK. NOT YOU!" And he forced this boy to work even though he was so sick. Imagine what that would feel like. When you are sick you don't feel like doing anything—let alone work. And when Iqbal saw this he decided at that point he had had enough of the cruel treatment from Ghullah. So, then he started to work out plans for how he could escape. What he would do when Ghullah wasn't there—he would say to the person who was the foreman (managing the carpet factory at that time), "I need to go to the toilet." He would then go outside and some of his friends would say the same thing then they would run off down to the canal or the fields and they would play. They would have such good time playing together. Then one day when Iqbal got up very early in the morning to go to the factory, he met these people that were on a truck and they told him that what Ghullah was doing was against the law that Iqbal didn't have to work. That Ghullah did not own him. He had the right to not work. Iqbal listened very carefully for this was important information. And he went to a meeting that they had and he told them about his experience of working in a carpet factory—how cruel Ghullah was to Iqbal and his friends. Iqbal told this to a big crowd. And they gave him a special letter. It was called a freedom letter. So, he took it to Ghullah to say that he was free. He did not have to work, so he went back to the carpet factory and he handed this letter to Ghullah and you know what Ghullah said?

Declan: You have to stay.

Louise: That's right he said, "I don't care about that letter." He even ripped it up. "I don't care about that letter. You have to stay here. Your family owe me money, so you are working for me." Now fortunately these people that he met knew that there might be trouble so they came to the factory and they helped Iqbal to get away. And they invited Iqbal to their school. Here is a picture of their school and they called it, "Our own school". It was for children like Iqbal who used to work in factories. Iqbal was ten years of age when he first went to school. He loved it. He just had one book and there's his bag. He loved going to school and the other things that he would do now is that he would help lots of other children to escape or find a way to get out of having to work in factories. He helped so many other children that by the time he was twelve he was

invited to go to Sweden, which is way over the other side of the world, in Europe. He went there to speak to people all over the world about how children are forced to work in factories.

Max: Also, when he went—did he go to India?

Louise: Ahh! Not that I know of. Maybe he might have had to go there to fly out of Pakistan. I'm not sure. When they were getting ready for their big trip to go to Sweden, which was so exciting for Iqbal, for he had only ever travelled to the next village. He hadn't been out of his country, let alone go on a plane. He didn't have a passport. He didn't even have a birth certificate. So, they had to do lots of things to get ready and then they heard that he was going to be given a prize. They told Iqbal. He had no idea what a prize was. He had never heard about prizes. No one had ever noticed the good things that he had done. He was getting a prize for helping so many other children who were working in factories to freedom. So not only was he going to Sweden, but now he was going to America as well. When he was protesting for his other friends who are still forced to work in factories, he would sometimes holding a sign that says: "Don't buy children's blood". Some children work so hard in these factories that they are hurting.

Declan: Carpets should be made by adults.

Louise: That is what I think too. When Iqbal went to the prize ceremony he dressed up and he showed the crowd a carpet, like the ones he made. When Iqbal was in these other countries he was interviewed by newspaper reporters on TV. He visited schools and told them about what was happening in his country and in America he even got to be person of the week by the TV station they call ABC. What I mean is that they voted him the person of the week, so everyone got to know about him. When he came back to Pakistan, he was a hero. Everyone was so excited. All the people in his village, his friends and family came around to meet him. (Max do you still want to play the role of Iqbal?)

Max: Yes

Louise: (Fergie you stand up and you could be a person who has come to see Iqbal come home, so you put these flowers over his head.) (*Max stands proudly receiving flowers and Fergie smiles as she places them around his neck*). And everyone was so excited to see him and then Iqbal said his little speech that he gave at the schools that he visited. He said, "THE CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE PENS NOT TOOLS!"

Max: The children should have pens not tools! (*stands proudly*)

Louise: And then he said, "For the children are"

Max: For the children are

All: FREE!!

Louise: And they all cheered yay!! (*clapping*)

All: Yay!!! (*clapping*)

(*Max bows*)

Louise: This is the story of Iqbal Masih.

Following hearing Iqbal's story Molly shared her experience of the story "I imagined I was the one who worked in the carpet factory and when I was sleeping—he [carpet factory owner] kept on dragging me out of the blankets when I was cold."

In role as Iqbal, Max expressed pride and bowed spontaneously. This was a moment of strong connection to the story that both his teacher and I noticed.

Teacher: He was really in role. Understanding what storytelling is really about. It is not just sit and listen. It is whole thinking.

Max seemed very focused in his portrayal of Iqbal; he took his role seriously and responded aptly to my narration of the story. In the discussion, Max gave this account of his experience of being in the story.

Max: When they [carpet customers] buying, and I use my hands and I use my teeth to work, to make it more easier for me.

This comment illustrates the intensity of how Max empathises with Iqbal, that he uses all his bodily resources to meet the demand for carpets. Perhaps being assigned the role of Iqbal also aided his capacity to imagine and connect with the story, so that he saw the story as his own experience. This account illustrates the capacity of drama and storytelling to enable connections with others (Abbs, 1989; Arendt, 1958/1998; Benjamin, 1955/1999).

And many of the children were motivated to help children forced into child labour.

Max: Help some people around the country [Pakistan] tell some people what is happening in the country we live in.

Molly: To go on holidays there and help them.

Declan: Me too! I was going to say the same.

These five-year olds felt the suffering in Iqbal's story so strongly that they wanted to go there and help. I have found that stories based on real lives possess a greater capacity to evoke a shift in understanding of the other, like Hannah Arendt's (1958/1998) proposition that we really only know who someone is in stories of courage, of a willingness to speak and act. *Iqbal's Story* was about real-life experiences of another child. By being a real account, the children could connect with the children in the story, perhaps imagining that the suffering could happen to them. Emotive connection with an individual's experience of injustice seemed to be one quality of social justice storytelling that motivates young children's active citizenship.

This Prep class went onto tell their Year 6 buddy class the story of Iqbal Masih. The Year 6 class was stunned by the story, which led the Year 6 teacher to orchestrate a unit of learning on child labour for all the Year 6 classes, and for the rest of the year when the Prep class and Year 6 class met, the focus of their investigations was child labour. The Prep class were very interested in supporting schools for children who had been forced into child labour. The Year 6 teacher had a friend who was an emergency architect who had just returned from Pakistan building a school for girls. He met with the Prep and Year 6 class to explain the context and trouble shoot ways the children could assist. The Prep children initiated an educational toy donation collection that was posted to a new girls' school in Pakistan.

Storytelling pedagogy for active citizenship

From these experiences I have shared with you I see that young children possess the capacity to engage with tragedy. Some adults who are influenced by a perception of children

as innocent may be alarmed at sharing stories such as *Iqbal's Story* with young children, as they choose to protect young children from what they view as tragedy. A view of children as innocent shapes a culture of sharing sanitised stories with young children (Zipes, 1983, 1994). The communal space that live storytelling nurtures, enables the weight of tragedies to be shared. Hannah Arendt (1958/1998) saw significant merit in the capacity of storytelling to bear the weight of suffering. I see that storytelling provides space for airing emotions and forging solidarity. In my practice of storytelling pedagogy for active citizenship I create spaces where the children's thoughts and feelings can be expressed and shared, through open conversations after the story as a whole group followed by small group multimodal activities, inviting expressive responses through visual art, drama, writing and making using varying technologies. In addition, I send a transcript of each story home with each child on the day the story is told, so the families are aware of the story content and can support discussions of the stories at home.

My practice of storytelling pedagogy for active citizenship is framed by three motifs: story-tailoring (*responsiveness*), walk in the shoes of another (*empathetic imagination*) and freedom of expression (to *enable knowledge creation*) (Phillips, 2010, 2012). The story is tailored to the audience and the injustices they are troubling with. The story is crafted and told to evoke the whole-body experience of walking in the shoes of those troubled; to viscerally feel their tragedy with empathy and *relationality*. Both in and after the story, carefully curated opportunities are held for the listeners to share their responses to the story to build ideas and plans for actions this story invites.

I hope that you explore and expand on these ideas to increase possibilities for children's active citizenship.

Storytelling tips and suggestions

- Choose cultural stories that you identify with to provoke thinking and discussions about values about what it means to be human.
- Craft stories of local heroes, those who have the courage to speak and act.
- Tell in a circle. By sitting in a circle everyone can see each other, so respect for each and the learning community are nurtured.
- Always provide time to hold conversations about what the story invites you to think about and to do.
- Listen carefully to children's responses, however they are communicated. Provide multiple opportunities for children to process story meanings. Include families in these conversations.

Story resources for active citizenship

https://active-citizens.britishcouncil.org/global-impact-stories - Active citizens is a global social leadership program. The website has stories of action from East Asia and South Asia that may inspire crafting of local stories.

https://afcc.com.sg/ - Asian Festival of Children's Content in literature – showcasing Asian authors, illustrators and storytellers of literature for children – celebrating Asian voices and childhoods.

https://www.magabala.com/ - Australian Aboriginal owned and led publishing house that promotes the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices.

https://books.katha.org/ - a publisher based in India that publishes children's picture books that focus on girls, earth, equity and kindness.

https://store.prathambooks.org/ - a publisher based in India that publishes children's picture books inclusion, empowerment and integrity

https://bookstore.teri.res.in/ - TERI Press – an Indian publisher that publishes children's picture books on the environment, energy, and sustainable development

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