

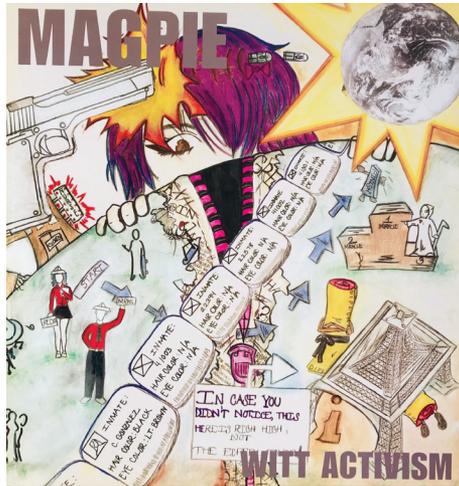
ANOTHER COUNTRY

JAMES BALDWIN OUTDOOR LEARNING CENTER

MAGPIE WITT ACTIVISM

Our students' daily entrance to school is not only a "material" search, it is a "bodily" search. It is a kind of test, in the early morning. What are our students made of besides flesh and bone? Cloth? Leather? Metal? Electronics? It is not only about what students are carrying or their composition as cultural beings. It is also about being identified, it is about who their bodies say that they are. They approach the scanner, identity card in hand, and swipe. The computer monitor flashes the student's photo identification on a screen. Valid, approved, ok. The machine tells our students that they are who they are supposed to be.

From "This is the Way we Go to School "



From Activism to Outdoor Education

The spark for the idea of the James Baldwin Outdoor Learning Center may have come at the same historic moment that metal detectors first arrived at the entrances of DeWitt Clinton High School in the fall of 2005. Students protested and about 1,500 walked out and marched in protest

and The Witt Seminar, a journalism elective on Activism, was born. We were poised to respond to our school's sudden onset of high security, police presence, "captive lunch" and a pervasive "lock down" mentality. We were afraid of the short term effects of an attack on our freedom, yes, but we were also afraid for our future, what kind of students were we to become in this suddenly hostile environment? We all feared suddenly being thrust into a role in a "school to prison pipeline." I set upon our class to ask ourselves the question, now that we are "supposedly" safe, what can we do? How do we act?

ORDERS

**Witness something at our school
new heights of frightening
disregard**

**(hatred of one's neighbor as one's
self)**

**not everywhere, not everyone
but you who are
impressionable**

speak about the depths of Poverty

Violence is only physical

Food insecurity only a symptom

Diabetes only a disease

Obesity only a problem

**of few resources and the desire for
more...**

Change the dialogue

Do now,

Write about a time

**when you witnessed your own or
someone else's**

blindness

Remain truthful

Reorient my identity

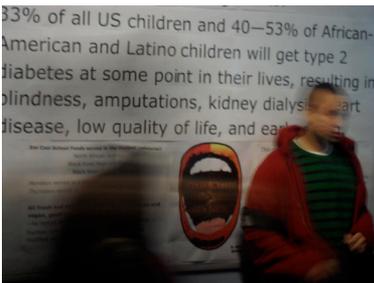
Be stalwart

**amidst the torrent of rushing
bodies**

Step up,

**four thousand students or more
are sinking**

What can teaching become?



One of the goals of The Witt Seminar has been to raise awareness of the health risks associated with fast food, lots of public service announcements



Witt Seminar students at 1st Annual Conference on Activism 2006.

We wrote, we researched, we interviewed and profiled activists, we published and publicized and we hosted annual Activist Conferences. In 2010, the year our school hit bottom, when the halls never quieted and gangs of students roamed incessantly and fear pervaded our school day, we started the Clinton Garden. It became a necessary sanctuary, a quiet place on a riotous campus, and soon would become our best guide and teacher.



Fall Harvest Celebration 2009

It was reported that the Bronx suffered the highest rate of obesity in New York City. Studies still show obesity levels are highest among black and Latino communities, and low-income and rural communities that lack healthy food choices. Popular films like *Food, Inc* and *Supersize Me* persuaded us that Americans were suffering and dying

from a diet of fast food, and we in the Bronx, particularly so. We asked students to “vote with their mouth” and working with partners like Coalition for Healthy School Food and Garden to Café, we introduced fresh, plant based meals into the school cafeteria.

The garden has expanded many times over. Students from The Environmental Affairs Club and Sustainability classes started Meg’s Community Garden in 2016. We planted dozens of fruit trees donated by The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation to establish a fruit orchard and edible forest. In 2017, our students helped build the Sun Club Teens for Food Justice Hydroponic Farm that presently grows 25,000 lbs of leafy green vegetables per year to feed thousands of students in the student cafeteria per day. This past summer, we initiated a summer youth employment program and started a youth market.

In retrospect, starting the Clinton Garden was, simply put, a way to legitimize bringing students outdoors. But as time went on, it was the outdoors that became our guide and now is our teacher. As schooling has become more and more performance driven and high stakes testing has become the norm, we realize that outdoor education is seldom addressed, and can it ever be, from inside a classroom?

We envision multi-generational, community integrated outdoor learning spaces on our campus. We have a wealth of school grounds that offer

the potential of countless sustainable projects. We've learned through permaculture practices that true outdoor education requires nature to provide the curriculum. The rain, the sun, the soil, the wind, the seasons give instruction. Elders, students, community members, you and I are fellow pupils, who also learn with each other.



Summer Youth Interns 2018

To learn more or get involved with the project:
visit jamesbaldwinoutdoorlearningcenter.org or contact Founder and Director Ray Pultinas at ray@jamesbaldwinoutdoorlearningcenter.org