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AReTe EMPOWERED: Promoting Social Justice through the Arts with Artist Paul Batou

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Humane Education 590-OLA and A&E 680, Mentors: Cynthia Daniel and Kari-Anne Innes

AReTe EMPOWERED: Promoting Social Justice through the Arts with Social Artist Paul Batou

In this creative report, I will share about what has led me on the path of social justice and change-making to empower people, and how I connected with award-winning and multi-talented Iraqi social artist Paul Batou. The focus of this presentation will cover an interview with Paul Batou about his life, art, culture, techniques, writings, poetry and visual displays of art within PowerPoint slides to illustrate and tie together what moves this creative and talented artist. Paul's thoughts and experiences filled with fear and hope create internal conflict and confusion that inspire his artworks, which he designed and created "for the entire world to read" and take in. His goal is to have the observer imagine and feel in order to fully appreciate, understand, and embrace the message within each work of art that he shares about his Mesopotamian experience. His story and message are featured in the presentation slides.

This research report is based on information resulting from research on the artist, his art, his book, *My Last Thoughts about Iraq*. Additional information was drawn from other authors' books including *Education for Socially Engaged Art*, *ARTFORMS*, and *Releasing the Imagination*. This research also included viewing the Marcarelli film, *FACING EXTINCTION: Assyrian Christians in Iraq*, a video about Assyrian refugees in Iraq, along with other desktop research and a series of communications with Mr. Batou.

In California, pharmacist Paul Batou is also known as an Assyrian-Chaldean artist with creative inspiration and masterful works of art dealing with social themes and passion about life, love, war, culture, oppression and suffering in Mesopotamia, otherwise known as the Middle

East. Each individual and collective work of art has a message within its unique creation, and is inspired from Paul Batou's time and experiences while living in turbulent Iraq.

The artist brilliantly uses color, images, and written Aramaic language (the language of Christ) to tell his story, invoke feelings, and to create a profound and vivid visual experience. The colors—earthy, natural, warm and inviting with a dash and splash of vibrant colors—are bold and powerful, or softer to enhance the message and feelings within his story. The intensity of his story is delivered with the pressure of the artist's stroke, expressed in his artworks and inspired from the experience and passion for his culture and people's oppression. This presentation will cover information about how I came to cross paths with this inspiring, humble, and gracious artist.

This year, I will work with the Pe-cha Ku-cha presentation format. The pecha-kucha or pe-cha ku-cha PowerPoint features a rapid-fire presentation style that is increasingly used in humane education, arts and entertainment (A&E), social justice and other fields. However one chooses to say it, the pe-cha ku-cha originated in Japan, and is a presentation style consisting of twenty slides that automatically advances every twenty-second. This pre-set and time-sequenced process limits presentations to six minutes and forty seconds. Within the field, this rapid-fire presentation is very likely to be most effective as a pitch to clients for a marketing plan or to persuade a prospect to invest in a product or other worthy cause. "Pe-cha ku-cha nights" are sponsored worldwide around creative, industrial, and social themes like the Ted Talks phenomenon. The pecha-kucha rapid-fire presentation style will work beautifully with this Social Artistry presentation, using visually appealing slides.