

Ants Discussion
Fall Outs Arts Initiative
Minneapolis, MN

Participants: Mazatzin Aztekayolokalli, Carlos Valenzuela, Kerry Muse, Ed Lynn, Al Baker, Lisa Baker, Tom Radke, Claire Monesterio, Kyle Ross

Moderator: Noah Eckstein

This portion of the Ants group discussion, conducted at the Fallout Arts Initiative on November 16th, 2018, in Minneapolis, was condensed for clarity.

Noah: Tom, Do you think young people could save the world?

Tom: God, I hope so [everyone chuckles]. At least as long as I am in it. I hope that we are imparting enough knowledge to them to give them the skills to save this world, cuz' it is going to need some serious saving. I think we are starting to reach the point that there are so many people on this earth that we are going to run out of food, real quick. It is already showing up in places on the other side of the world. They are struggling to feed their people and when people get hungry, they get angry. And when they get angry they go to war. The only way to slow that down is to keep people fed. I hope somebody of this new generation really gets serious about new ways of growing food. New farming methods. New ways to get more output per acre, new ways of processing food. Not to introduce more chemicals into it but to refine the process so that we can get more food out of the earth and into people's mouths. So that they are not waking up in the morning with an empty stomach, angry about it. This generation has to be tasked with finding out new ways of transportation where not everyone has a car. Our roads are at maximum, we can't build our way out of that problem. Our streets are crowded. And, Housing. I remember being in San Francisco 15 years ago, looking at real estate ads in an office, absolutely flabbergasted at what they were asking for the prices of a home. Now, just a starter home in San Francisco is over one million dollars. How can a family with two kids, with student loans, get married and pay a house over one million dollars? How can they get through a day thinking about how much they owe? Must put a lot of stress on their marriage. I do think that the generation now, spends far too much time on their phones. It is like an adult pacifier. I am of the coffeeshop generation. We used to go into a coffee shop, sit down and have conversations with total strangers and we came away friends. Now people go into coffee shops and stare at their phones. They don't talk to each other. They walk down the sidewalks staring at their phones and walk into signposts. They cross streets, the busiest intersections looking at their phones, with earbuds in. So, they have the two senses that would keep them alive at an intersection, occupied. They have to look at Facebook or the news. Well, the world is going on around you not on that 3 by 5 thing in your hands. It is like an opiate. How long before they put chips in our heads?

Claire: They are already chipping children!

Tom: You'll be having a conversation with somebody and they will be staring, just over your shoulder, because they are watching something in their brain. Is that a generation or two away? We are losing our ability to communicate with each other. And these kids are being robbed of that.

Noah: Kyle, how is this affecting kids?

Kyle: I was trained as an Adlerian therapist. We will skip the back story. Alfred Adler would talk about that people need safety, significance and belonging. Just as a core three things. When kids feel a sense of 'someone sees me' and someone sees me for these things that I am really good at, you can see a kids eyes light up. Adler would also talk about this concept of community. From 0 to 5 we are with our family. Where we first try to understand the world. It is great for some people, sometimes it is not so great. But it's the connections we have with people around us that we make meaning out of. If we don't have a community that supports us and sees us for who we really are and the things we do really well, I think we will start to get noticed for things that we do not so great.

Tom: Well, how do kids learn communication skills when they grow up in a family where they are allowed to look at their cellphones during a family meal? Or when there are four kids sitting on a wall outside of school and all four of them are staring at a screen and not talking to each other, not sharing their days or their ideas or their wants or their hopes. They are just hoping to get some kind of feedback from a comment they made on Facebook.

Kyle: You know, this comes up when I work with kids a lot and parents will talk about screen time. The thing I find really interesting is that kids are seeking out the same thing, they are just doing it online. They want a sense of belonging. And sometimes...

Tom: But they are not real people, they are dealing with photographs.

Mazatzin: You know what I think. They are living a Facebook life. In other words, all the conversations amongst themselves are now on Facebook. Even when they are with each other they are like this, (gestures toward looking at a phone), together. Somehow this has really taken over and we have lost, not control, but something.

Al: The exact point I am trying to make. And the reason for returning to your spiritual roots and identity is because the technology has raced ahead of our spiritual growth.

Tom: It is stealing your souls.

Al: We don't let it happen in our home. We don't allow it to go on. Even with visitors, the phone goes away, this is time for dinner. You have to take control of whatever is happening in your life. It is up to you, not the government, not anybody else. That is the discipline you need to have a good life, a full life. The answers are there in

the ceremonies. The art comes from the drums, the pipe. Get a hold of yourself. Start living a good life. You know what it takes. Get rid of your fear. Because you can't carry that on to the next world, it is too heavy.

Noah: Kyle please finish your thought.

Kyle: What sparked that is I get asked by parents a lot about this very thing. People could have a pragmatic solution like limiting screen time. But I think about it in a different way. Kids are seeking the same thing all kids have always wanted, which is where do I belong, how do I connect with people. I take it upon myself in my life to say how do we help people find that from the people around them. I've always admired Mr. Rogers who said something along the lines of it is really easy to say 'not my responsibility'. Not my kid, not my problem. But when we see something happening, let's engage that kid in an actual conversation. Talk about something else and get that connection with someone. I think that this is the time we are going to connect, an authentic interaction and that will stay in kids minds.