



Proposal #1133

## ***Instructionally Related Activities Report Form***

SPONSOR: Raquel Baker

PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT: English

ACTIVITY TITLE: Striking Voices - Representing Untold Stories (Research Series)

DATE (S) OF ACTIVITY: April 17 & 4/22

Please submit via email to the IRA Coordinator along with any supporting documentation within 30 days after the activity.

### **A. ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

- (1) PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY;
  - (2) HOW DID THE ACTIVITY RELATE TO A COURSE(S) AND/OR LEARNING OBJECTIVES?
  - (3) WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE STRENGTHS OF THE ACTIVITY?
  - (4) WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE/WERE THE ACTIVITY'S WEAKNESSES?
  - (5) HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE THIS ACTIVITY FOR NEXT TIME?
  - (6) WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PROCESS?
  - (7) WHAT ARE STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE ACTIVITY? ATTACH STUDENT EVALUATIONS OR ASSESSMENTS (IN ACCORDANCE WITH FERPA RESTRICTIONS YOU MUST REMOVE ALL PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE STUDENT INFORMATION)
  - 8) GIVE A SUMMARY OF EXPENSES FOR THE ACTIVITY (DO NOT INCLUDE ACCOUNTING STRINGS)
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### **B. ATTENDEE LIST- SUPPORTING DOCUMENT:**

In addition to the report form, *in a separate document*, please provide a list of participants that engaged in the instructionally related activity. This for IRA Committee reference only and will not be published on the IRA website. Include your name and the title of your IRA activity on the document.

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### **C. IMAGES FROM ACTIVITY:**

Please provide a few images in this document (or attached separately) that demonstrate student participation.

### **(1) PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY**

Journalist Emily Yellin and Photographer Darius Williams will screen their multimedia journalism project "Striking Voices," which is based on in-depth video interviews with Memphis sanitation workers who went on strike in 1960 and will answer student questions. In session 2, students will present their projects for individual consultation and feedback from the producers.

### **(2) HOW DID THE ACTIVITY RELATE TO A COURSE(S) AND/OR LEARNING OBJECTIVES?**

The final project of this course is a storytelling project where students research a topic related to the course and present the research in a genre matched to their aim.

Students will think about the effect the different genres they read over the course of the semester had on them as readers/viewers: essay, film, novel, short story, poetry, music video, autobiography, performance art.

The workshop series give students access to a journalist, a photographer, a video project, and still photos to continue to think about the effect of each genre on their reception of the material. Students will have direct contact with the finished products of research and have the opportunity to discuss process, genre choices, and the public significance of researching other's stories.

### **(3) WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE STRENGTHS OF THE ACTIVITY?**

This activity provides students with a producer and artistic perspective on research and storytelling. Students developed project ideas by talking to producers working in the field. Several students decided to add an interview component to their projects after seeing the power of the stories presented. Students also learned historical information while engaging craft, composition, and research issues.

Students learned vocabulary in the field. The producers discussed their research process in which about 90% of the work is thinking about their frame, their vision, their orientation on the project. They gave the students their hard-earned knowledge: good storytelling comes from learning how to let people be themselves and tell their own story.

### **(4) WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE/WERE THE ACTIVITY'S WEAKNESSES?**

**Was not able to bring producers to campus.**

**(5) HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE THIS ACTIVITY FOR NEXT TIME?**

Create a calendar in which could bring presenters to campus. This requires the ability to pay for the costs upfront rather than through reimbursement. Work with students for one class period to develop questions for guests.

**(6) WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PROCESS?**

Students did get value from virtual workshop. It was an interactive experience.

**(7) WHAT ARE STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE ACTIVITY? ATTACH STUDENT EVALUATIONS OR ASSESSMENTS (IN ACCORDANCE WITH FERPA RESTRICTIONS YOU MUST REMOVE ALL PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE STUDENT INFORMATION)**

Found differences in perspective between the producer and the photographer extremely helpful. Could understand how to approach a project on a pragmatic and creative level. Stories fueled me to remain vigilant in the fight against injustice and oppression. It warms to know that people are taking the time to best immortalize these horrible events in the hopes that we are then able to grow from. These speakers not only opened a great dialogue within the classroom and their feedback directly influenced my project allowing me to add a storytelling element that I previously had not planned.

From hearing these untold stories I learned about MLKs involvement in another activist movement. I also learned about the history behind the stigma of being a trashman and the effects it had on the family of the children. The image of the Leach family stays with me, as well as the picture from the slideshow the speakers showed us in which a man stood with a picture of himself along with the other men, holding the “I am a man” signs during the protest. I learned that one of the most important skills to researching and presenting history is to listen to the voices of the people. The effect of video may be that hearing the tone of an act changes how I perceive it, Whereas picture can hold meanings that I wouldn’t know unless asked.

The opportunity to learn from Darius Williams and Emily Yellin was incredible. I was amazed at the work they’ve done to uncover and reveal stories about the Memphis Sanitation Worker’s Strike. They were able to tell a story that had never been fully told before, since no one had cared enough to formally interview those who had been on the front lines of the strike. What will stay with me from this experience was when Emily Yellin said that as a white woman she knew she could not ethically and accurately tell the story of those men without inserting her own bias perspectives. This is why she was so determined to provide a space and an opportunity for the men to tell the story

themselves. I learned that this is a very critical point of awareness for a researcher studying marginalized people. We must know when to step back and let people tell their own stories from their perspectives, with their own words. I am very interested as a history major to learn more about video and photography and know that can be used to tell historical narratives. I think this was a great way to bring people into the classroom virtually. It was a valuable experience.

First of all, I think this type of engagement is very important for students. School should not just be coming to class everyday listening to lecture while you take notes. At least for me, I want class to have some diversity throughout the semester where we are exposed to different mediums of learning. This Zoom video that we did is a perfect example of that where we were able to engage with some knowledgeable artists and learn about an important piece of history at the same time. On top of that, the art we were exposed to was very inspiring and also tied to our project well.

It was really fascinating to hear about the design choices that happened behind the scenes during the creation of a documentary. Choices for background images to create a specific emotional impact.

**(8) GIVE A SUMMARY OF EXPENSES FOR THE ACTIVITY.**

\$2500 for 2, 75-minute class visits with journalist Emily Yellin and photographer Darius Williams

\$500 screening fees for documentary and Striking Voices photo series

**B. ON SEPARATE DOCUMENT, PLEASE ATTACH ATTENDEE LIST  
(PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFO REMOVED)**

**C. PLEASE INCLUDE UP TO 6 IMAGES IN THIS DOCUMENT TO DEMONSTRATE  
STUDENT PARTICIPATION (or attached as a separate document)**



Process of Research

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Brainstorming  
talking about your idea  
Voting patterns in  
storytelling as a way  
to grapple with hard  
moments



California State  
University

**INSTRUCTIONALLY  
RELATED  
ACTIVITIES**

C H A N N E L  
I S L A N D S

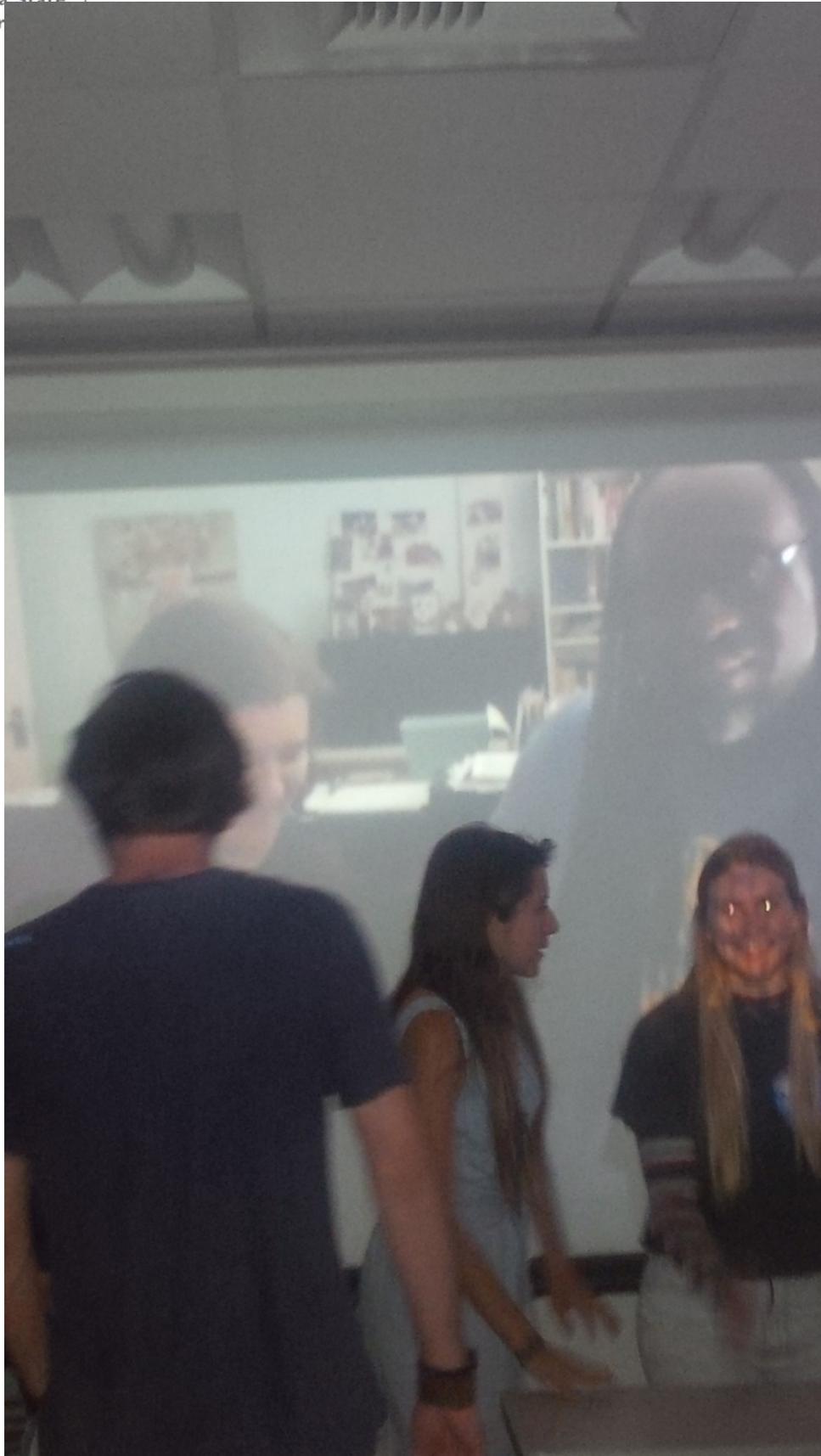




California State  
Univer

**INSTRUCTIONALLY  
RELATED  
ACTIVITIES**

C H A N N E L





Call to a  
storytelling  
the simple  
things that  
tell the story  
center the  
person

## Reflection

From hearing these untold stories I learned about MLK Jr's involvement in another activist movement. I also learned about the history behind the stigma of being a trashman and the effects it had on the family of the children. The image of the Leach family stays with me, as well as the picture from the slideshow the speakers showed us in which a man stood with a picture of himself along with other men, holding the "I AM A MAN" signs during the protest. I learned that one of the most important skills to researching and presenting history is to listen to the voices of the people. The effect of video may be that hearing the tone of an act changes how I perceive it, whereas pictures can hold many meanings that I wouldn't know unless I asked. I definitely feel as though I would've benefited from the meetings more if I would've prepared better questions and come to class more detailed.

## REFLECTIONS:

THIS WAS A STORY I'D NEVER HEARD BEFORE.

IT REMINDS ME OF HOW LITTLE WE AS A SOCIETY  
HAVE MOVED FORWARD IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS  
STUGGLE.

THE BLACK & WHITE PHOTOS AND VIDEO WERE  
AN EFFECTIVE CONTRAST TO THE LIVE INTERVIEWS

Reinforced Mixing Mindsets fluidity of application

# African Lit 4-22

## Striking Voices Evaluation

- What I learned from hearing these untold stories:
  - more so much - from artistic/professional academic compatibility and logistical illumination to the moving details of the story - and how such a heavy story can be meaningfully shared warmly.

- What stays with me
  - The artistic decisions, the photograph images and the pictures of them wearing "I am a man" sign. A lot of perspective

- What I learned about the process of Researching/presenting history:
  - how many layers of revision and attention to organization and planning and improv exists w/in a digestible - tasteful presentation.

- The effect of different genres on me as a reader (video (photography) viewer)

- The photographs acted like highlighted sentences standing out amidst in the paragraphs that were explored by video. The two were separate elements but equisethly complimentary.

also were visitors west speakers opinion of student + extra-curricular activity - Bring Back Field Trips :D Nothing like leaving the classroom to learn.

# Striking Voices Evaluation

What I learned from hearing these untold stories was how to strike a balance in how to present historical facts & events along with a very human empathy to the framework. I learned ~~the~~ first hand accounts to a history that I was personally unfamiliar with; I appreciated their stories but what really stuck with me was the collection of photographs presented by Darius Williams; they told stories without words or notions but through the subject's face. As a viewer of this presentation I thought the effect of different genres & mediums to be quite powerful; it's a diversity of senses that match the overall messages & themes of the piece. Over all it was a fun, educational, & memorable experience that I hope to have the pleasure of revisiting. I have zero complaints other than I would have preferred to have them physically in the class.

I learned a lot of history about what was happening during the Civil Rights Era, as well as learning good tips on how to interview people, collect information, and then present that information. For example, there were a multitude of interviews with different people that all tied together to form a story. The way the interviews were presented made watching the interviews very engaging. One thing I would have preferred is if the speakers were physically in the classroom, rather than the virtual method that was used. If possible, I'd like to see more interactive/hands-on programs so that things can be shaken up in some classes instead of always being a lecture.

# Striking Voices Evaluation

April 22

It was really fascinating to hear about the design choices that ~~happened~~ happened behind the scenes during the creation of a documentary. Choices for background images to create ~~to~~ a specific emotional impact.

Darius Williams described the thought that went into the plain background of portraits, aiming to create a specific focus on the person in the image.

Emily Yellin's emphasis on finding the human element, finding the story that knits together all the stories, and being specific rather than broad — "Don't just say 'candy,' don't just say 'chocolate' — say 'Hershey Bar' — were her words, really reoriented my perspective on the final project.

The decision behind using live-recreation of the kids playing marbles to set an emotional tone and space, especially considering how they typically avoid re-enactment in documentaries and made an exception for it this one time, really impressed me with how much thought goes into even a few seconds of background footage to make a part of the story really impactful.

First of all, I think this type of engagement is very important for students. School should not just be coming to class everyday and listening to lecture while you take notes. At least for me, I want class to have some diversity throughout the semester where we are exposed to different mediums of learning. This Koom video that we did is a perfect example of that where we were able to engage with some knowledgeable artists and learn about an important piece of history at the same time. On top of that, the art we were exposed to was very inspiring and also tied in with our project very well. I would suggest that more IRA funding should be used to get artists, outside scholars, writers, motivational speakers, etc into our classrooms.

## Striking voices Evaluation

The opportunity to learn from Darius Williams and Emily Yellin was incredible. I was so amazed at the work they've done to uncover and reveal stories about the Memphis sanitation worker's strike in 1968. They were able to tell a story that had never been fully told before, since no one had cared enough to formally interview those who had been on the frontlines of the strike. What will stay with me from this experience was when Emily Yellin said that as a white woman, she knew she could not ethically and accurately tell the story of these men w/out inserting her own bias perspectives. This is why she was so

determined to provide a space and an opportunity for the men to tell the story themselves. I learned that this is a very critical point of awareness for a researcher studying marginalized people. We must know when to step back and let people tell their own stories, from their perspectives, with their own words. I am very interested, as a history major, to learn more about video and photography and how that can be used to tell historical narratives. I think this was a great way to bring people into the classroom virtually. ~~was~~ ~~was~~ it was ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~experience~~ a valuable experience.

Reflection: I found the differences in perspectives between the producer and the photographer to be extremely helpful. I was able to understand how to create a piece that would speak to my audience on a pragmatic and creative level. The story although very sad fueled me to remain vigilant in the fight against injustice and oppression. It warns me to know that good people are taking the time to best immortalize these horrible events in hopes that we are then able to grow from.

These speakers not only opened a great dialogue within the classroom and their feedback directly influenced my project allowing me to add a story telling element that I previously had not planned.