

Community Story-Mapping

The Pedagogy of the Griot

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OVERVIEW



"We forward in this generation. Triumphantly. Won't you help to sing these songs of freedom? 'Cause all

The task in *story mapping* is to uncover, recover, tell, and retell the stories of community in order to develop a road map for future action and advocacy. The community members who typically engage in the story-mapping process are school personnel, nonprofit managers, business owners, parents, ministers, and residents. As community members tell their stories, they uncover their assets and develop the collective capacity and efficacy to take care of each other and address the issues that affect them (Sampson, 2012). They teach children and youth by taking on the critical role of elders, and they hold each other morally and relationally accountable for what happens for children in their communities.

In the story-mapping process, teams (usually three to four persons) support communities by collecting, writing, and analyzing multiple stories of survival and hope, in history and present day. In this way, communities can better understand current dilemmas and gauge the necessary steps for future action. By building bridges among and between people, communities, and organizations, we can collectively re-imagine how to live in neighborhoods that take care of each other and

support the promising outcomes for children and youth and secure the health and vitalities of their communities.

We call the storytellers *griots*.¹ Griots (gree-oh) are West African historians, praise singers, and storytellers (and often musicians) who have a repository of knowledge—usually oral—and through repeating the stories, weave the past into the present. Griots hold and practice a repertoire of ways to relate to people and support the life of a community. In the African tradition, the griot/praise singer is akin to the Greek chorus, providing support and a careful eye for the good of the community—in other words, a critical friend to the community.



A griot in Mali shares a story with a group of women in the community. Photo by Emilia Tjernstrom via Creative Commons

An interesting intersection of language: in Spanish, el grillo is a cricket, a familiar voice in the night to remind and comfort. We believe that community members whose stories form the core of “carrying on” exemplify the spirit of griots. Collecting and connecting a community’s stories

¹ Griot is a French word. In other languages, griots are known as “jeli” in northern Mande areas, “jali” in southern Mande areas, “guerwel” in Wolof, and “gawlo” in Pulaar (Fula).



“In the old neighborhood, each funeral parlor is more
I ever have redemption songs.” —Bob Marley

brings power to the griots and to the persons who collect and analyze the stories. Thus we name the story-mapping process the *pedagogy of the griot*.

We expect that being in and with the community through the process of *walking and talking* with your story-mapping team, you will uncover unexpected *assets*, as well as *challenges or issues*. We recognize that sometimes issues upend our ability to use assets to build the bridges of hope that are so essential for advocacy in vulnerable communities. Yet, no matter where home is, home and community matter to all community members and can be viewed as a barrier or a bridge.

We seek to draw on the traditions of the many communities that honor the expertise of elders as griots. In this process, we intentionally interrupt the hierarchy of expertise, as too often community members are not readily viewed as authorities in these situations, especially if those with higher degrees of education or status are involved. If participants are from universities or school districts, we hope primarily they are recorders and story-writers, but it is important to vest the expertise of interviewing in community team members and in the community griots who provide the stories. The story-mapping teams listen carefully and seek to understand. We use story as a moving force for change. As always, because these processes involve connecting to and building relationships with people, we have to remain flexible and adapt the questions or process as needed. Through this process, we collect and collectively sing redemption songs.

OUTCOMES

Story-mapping teams collect, write, and make sense of the stories of place as a powerful tool for advocacy and action.

- *Map and analyze the geography* (physical and virtual) of the community to inventory assets, challenges, and possibilities.
- *Honor, collect, and write the stories* as told by community griots.
- *Analyze the collective stories* to develop a community narrative.
- *Develop dramatic presentations* of the stories.
- *Use the mapping to make decisions* about collective action and advocacy.
- *Analyze the team processes* for the purpose of improving them for subsequent use.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

NEIGHBORHOOD AS COLLECTIVE SOCIAL CAPITAL

The assets of a local community—particularly communities identified as under-resourced, poor, and having low-performing schools—are often overlooked, but the basis of story-mapping is the process of listening carefully to the wisdom of the community collective and honoring the ways that the people have ideas about how to address their concerns (Tate, ed., 2012; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008). Freire (1970; 1994) has offered us the pedagogy of the oppressed and the pedagogy of hope so that we can see the way to collectively

analyzing both assets and challenges and engaging as partners in change efforts.

NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Telling stories has a dual purpose. The most basic is the simple act of sharing stories and experiences as a way of relating to and informing one another. “The storytelling self is a social self, who declares and shapes important relationships through the mediating power of words” (Dyson & Genishi, 1995, p. 5). But there is a deeper benefit: telling stories offers a place where we can recast the stories and use them as catalysts for our own growth and development and that of others (Bruner, 1994). As Dewey (1938) reminds us, “every experience is a moving force” (p. 38). Reflective and interactive storytelling serves a function in uncovering and recovering our collective past so that we can reflect on them and reframe and regenerate options and advocacy for the future. Integrated connectedness to a storytelling network has also been found to be the most important individual-level factor in civic engagement that promotes collective efficacy and impact (Kim and Ball-Rokeach, 2006).

COMMUNITY LEARNING EXCHANGE (CLE) FRAMEWORK

The story-mapping process draws many of its pedagogical emphases from the community learning exchange framework. For over 10 years, the CLE project has actively engaged with over 40 communities across the U.S. The pedagogical approaches honor the wisdom and power of community as text for learning and offer criteria for effective engagement with community: building trust, co-constructing purpose and plans, acting togeth-

er, and deepening and sustaining collective leadership. Several particular pedagogies, including the use of circle and of gracious space, are central to the CLE and to story-mapping (www.communitylearningexchange.org).



A griot performs at Diffa, Niger, West Africa. Playing a Ngoni or Xalam. Photo by Tommy Lorne Miles via Creative Commons

elaborate than the last. The alloy smell of copal, pistols bumping their thighs, each chamber steered

"We forward in this generation. Triumphantly. Won't you help to sing these songs of freedom? 'Cause all I ever have: redemption songs." -Bob Marley "In the old neighborhood, each funeral parlor is more elaborate than the last. The alleys smell of cops, pistols bumping their thighs, each chamber steeled with a slim blue bullet."
-Rita Dove "Nations are talking. Leaders are speaking. The day for which we waited has arrived. That is why we are saying: People of this united land, stand up, stand up with pride!" -Zolani Mkiva "Clap hands, let us invite joy into our conversation, courtesy into our bedrooms, gentleness into our kitchen, care into our nursery. The ancestors remind us, despite the history of pain we are a going-on people who will rise again. And still we rise." -Maya Angelou "When I stand on the front lines now, cursing the lack of truth, the absence of willful change and strategic coalitions, I realize sewing quilts will not bring you back nor save us."
-Essex Hemphill "You can add your voice all night to the voices of a hundred and fifty others in a circle around a jailhouse where your brothers and sisters are being held for blocking buses with no lifts, or you can be one of the ones inside the jailhouse, knowing of the circle outside." -Laura Hershey "I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall after we Indians have gathered around the fire with that salmon who has three stories it must tell before sunrise: one story will teach us how to pray; another story will make us laugh for hours; the third story will give us reason to dance." -Sherman Alexie "Do not pretend to convenient beliefs, even when they are righteous; you will never be able to defend your city while shouting." -Audrey Lourde "Tomorrow, I'll be at the table when company comes. Nobody'll dare say to me, 'Eat in the kitchen,' then. Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am and be ashamed. I, too, am America." -Langston Hughes "We join with others and, in spirit, feel the world, and suffering, the same as them. This is the kingdom of owning the other as self, the self as other; that transforms grief into peace and delight." -Alice Walker "To whoever is cooped up in house or office, factory or woman or street or mine or dry prison cell, to him I come, and without speaking or looking I arrive and open the door of his prison." -Pablo Neruda



STORY-MAPPING PROCESS



*with a slim blue bullet. " -Rita Dove
"Nations are talking. Leaders are speaking. The day for which*

GOALS OF STORY-MAPPING

The overall goal of the griot conversations is to collect and write the stories of community members (community griots) and connect their stories to the larger story of the community's assets and challenges. Keep these goals in mind:

- Discover how individual stories intersect with the voices of the community.
- Connect to and honor the community wisdom and assets.
- Use storytelling as a sense-making tool.
- Locate the voices of systems and structures, informing the ways in which inequity unfolds in those spaces.
- Discover pathways toward collaborative story-making as advocacy and civic engagement.

of dialogue and reflection; we tell stories to each other every day—about important and ordinary events in our lives. There are many processes that formalize the storytelling process so that it can generate information useful to a community. These processes reveal and honor community stories as collective wisdom.

Of the three storytelling types outlined below, this guide largely employs Type 3 but could be customized to include others or a hybrid of the processes.



Rendering of Sambou, griot of Niantanso, 1872.

TYPE 1—PRE-DETERMINED PROMPT

This type involves a pre-determined prompt that asks the storyteller to consider a particular event and tell the story of a conflict or dilemma—typically to a small group of three to six people. The story may be followed by reflective questions from the listeners; these questions are designed to support deeper reflection. These stories help the storyteller talk through a dilemma and come to some ideas about how to address an issue.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF STORYTELLING

Storytelling is consonant with the human experience

we waited has arrived. That is why we are saying: People of this united land, stand up, stand up with

Story-Mapping Process

Step 1: Form a host team and prepare for story-mapping.

Step 2: Prepare teams for community visits with griots.

Step 3: Interact with the Community

- Opening Circle
- Final Preparation for Story Mapping
- Community Walk and Talk
- Griot Storytelling

Step 4: Analyze and produce stories.

- Story Sense-Making
- Story Writing and Sharing
- Learning Walks
- Story Theater
- Action Planning

Steps 3 and 4 may occur at the same location.

TYPE 2—DIGITAL STORY

A digital story asks the director or writer of the storytelling process to frame a story around an individual or collective community autobiography, biography, or issue. The story is told through the eyes, research, images, and perspective of the person or team constructing the script. Typically, the person or the team presents a draft of a digital story for feedback before finalizing the story. For ideas and workshops on choosing images for the digital story, visit

www.storycenter.org).

TYPE 3—INTERVIEWING

In this story-mapping type—the focus of this guide—the interviewer asks griots guiding questions that help start the story, followed by probing questions, if necessary, that support griots to tell their stories. The story often emerges as a dialogue. Or the griot may tell the story in a single narrative while one or two team members take notes or videotape. Depending on the comfort level and style of the griot, other adjustments may be necessary. After the story, the interviewer may ask probing questions. When multiple persons are interviewed in one setting, adjustments may be needed. It may be helpful for several teams to go to multiple sites or to different people in the community. This helps teams to collectively map the story of their community through varied stories and experiences.

***Note:** Innovations on the process are encouraged, but should be chosen carefully. The key is carefully pre-planning and orienting all participants to the processes so that the inevitable glitches, once there are teams on the ground in communities, are manageable.*



STEP 1



Form a Host Team and Prepare for Story-Mapping

ORGANIZE THE HOST TEAM

Determine members of the host team. Preferably, the host team includes persons from community-based organizations (CBOs) who will also be participating in the story-mapping as interviewers or note-takers.

The host team completes the organization for story-mapping (two months minimum). Key responsibilities for the host team include

- **Choosing a central theme** or essential question for the story-mapping experience.
- **Choosing sites and people** (community griots) and making appropriate contacts (See below). This may be in one community with interview teams starting from a central location like a school or CBO or this can occur in two to three community sites at the same time. More moving pieces, however, require more organization (perhaps arranging transportation) and collaboration.
- **Making contact lists** and sharing them with teams. One person should be chosen to troubleshoot and be available on the phone in case something does not happen exactly as planned.
- **Identifying two persons at a central location**—preferably a place all persons are returning to after interviews as they do sense-making, story reading, and

analysis—to receive and print photos as they are completed.

- **Facilitating the on-the-ground experience** in the community and troubleshooting any “glitches” that arise.

CHOOSE A THEME

While the story-mapping experience could be generic, we find it better to organize around a theme or essential question. For example, the Pittsburgh experience in which we piloted this process chose the theme **Rivers of Justice/Bridges of Love** for the story-mapping experience. In addition, the essential question was: **What is the new steel upon which we re-imagine a healthier, more equitable Pittsburgh community?** One of the host team members designed the logo below for the experience. The image was included on t-shirts and materials for all participants.



pride!”
—Zolani Meira

“Clap hands, let us invite joy into our conversation, courtesy into our bedrooms.”



Team members engage in the story-mapping process in front of the large group in Pittsburgh. Photo by UCEA Center for Educational Leadership and Social Justice

CHOOSE SITES & PEOPLE

The host team chooses appropriate sites and griots (storytellers) in the school or community neighborhood. This may require that the host team members engage in more traditional community mapping to get the lay of land in the neighborhood or make contact with a key community leader or organization for assistance. The sites can be churches, offices, businesses, community spaces, or an individual's home. Host teams choose sites because the place and the people there have information about the history or the current situation—assets and issues— of the community.

The host team at a school, university, or CBO needs to analyze the participant list and develop teams of three for each story-mapping site or person. Someone from the host team needs to visit each site and tell each griot the purpose of the process, what to expect, and how the host team will follow up with the griot. There are always contingencies that may compromise the best plans, so alternatives are important.

PREPARE MATERIALS

Note: See appendix for templates and protocols.

- Detailed Agenda
- Protocols that are customized and adjusted for the experience the host team constructs
 - ◇ Circle (Opening and Closing)
 - ◇ Gracious Space
 - ◇ Story Mapping
 - ◇ Story Sense-making
 - ◇ Learning Walk
 - ◇ Theater of the Oppressed
 - ◇ Action Plans
- Lists and contact information of story mapping teams
- Lists and contact information for griots
- Community maps—including a large map of the entire area and more detailed maps (*Note: Participants will use electronic devices for maps in addition to this map.*)
- Blank maps for mapping as the participants walk to the story-mapping sites
- Blank paper for notes
- Camera assignments and central email for those sending photos for copying
- Video or audio recorders
- Consent forms (if necessary)



STEP 2



Prepare Teams for Community Visits with Griots

The explicitness of roles is intended to interrupt the normative pattern of who qualifies as a researcher or expert in order to engage all persons as co-researchers (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008). By “flipping the script” and engaging the community-based organization (CBO) staff as the interviewers, they are coached in and practice the research role of interviewing. In addition, this process, through experience, instructs persons who are not titled as researchers in the process of research, so that we can honor the main validity standard of activist research (Hale, 2002; 2008): Research and the process of research must be useful to the participants, who, in this case, are the CBOs serving vulnerable communities.

These propositions from *participatory activist research* (Hale, 2002) and *appreciative inquiry* (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005) lay a foundation and guide the story-mapping. Possibilities include

- deeper empirical knowledge from on-the-ground sources leading to better outcomes and better research knowledge;
- research and action outcomes that improve tensions when they surface; and
- inquiry models that support reflections and actions to move the work forward.

By engaging the praxis of reflection and action (Freire, 1970) with participants, story-mapping and the analysis and research components of the process rely on the role of story writer as a partic-

Team Formation

Interviewer
Preferably a Community Expert

Note Taker
Host Team Member

Story Writer
Host Team Member or Visitor

ipant who is viewed as a practitioner-researcher. In turn, this methodology presumes that all other participants in the process will hone their analytical skills for use in documenting and providing evidence of their work.

This is an adaption from the generic community-mapping or community site visit processes. Therefore, we are expecting that participants may be making adjustments as they discover what works in the situation and are using their best judgments about how to make those adaptations. For example, a person the team expected to interview is not at the site. The team may have to interview someone else. Or the minister at a church has a last minute emergency and cannot be the storyteller. The team may need to be resourceful and find another appropriate site in the neighborhood as a storytelling place. In any case, the note taker might be recording the content as well

we are a going-on people who will rise again. And still we rise. —Maya Angelou

When I stand

as the process. Adjustments may require changing the number in the group; however, more than four persons on a team might overwhelm the griot.

Once the host team identifies a community griot or location, the interviewer facilitates conversation and storytelling with the griot. A host team member might join a group and serve as note taker on content and process. Remember that the host team should have briefed the community griot on the purpose and process.

All team members participate in community mapping as they walk to and from griot sites. The note taker makes notes on the map, and the story writer takes photos of the community. If necessary, this could be a two-person team, with the interviewer and note taker doubling as story writers. The roles are flexible; however, this process of “flipping the script” on the dominant voices and authorizing expertise from the community level requires vigilance from those who typically have the dominant voices. Therefore, it is important to vest the storyteller and interviewer with that authority. For example, if you wanted to do this process in a school, it would be important to enlist parents as the griots and the interviewers on teams with teachers and administrators.

Interviewers facilitate the conversations at the griot location. The interviewer handles introductions, summarize the process, make griots feel comfortable, and use the interview questions—or other questions that may occur—to have a conversation with griots at the community location. The conversations or storytelling focus may focus on the griots’ history, experiences of change in the

community, current ideas and feelings, or hopes for their community.

Note takers makes notes on the map in the process of walking to and from the griot location in the community. In addition to taking notes on the content, they document interactions and reflections on the experience—inclusive of the location, the environment and the tone of the team. This is intended to produce insights that go beyond the conversation. Note takers capture what is unraveling during the process as if it were a qualitative research project

Story writers listen carefully during interviews (also taking notes, if able) and take photos, both in neighborhood walk and at the griot storytelling site. As the sense-making with the trio unfolds, the story writer collects major themes and write the story to send to a central location to be reproduced for later use.

While the main event is the story-mapping, story writing, and analysis, the “surround sound” for full engagement requires a set of experiences by the teams (interviewers, note takers, and story writers) that prepare them to fully participate. That means they need to participate in **building relationships** in the whole group and in their teams. The best tools for that are from the pedagogies of the Community Learning Exchange (www.communitylearningexchange.org).

Note: *If this is a research project connected with a university, a consent form may be necessary for interviews and photos. It would be useful if the host team could gather those consent forms prior to the day of the storytelling. If not, the group will have to bring a form and get a signature on site.*



STEP 3



Interact with the Community

The story-mapping participants or teams need to meet at a central place in the community where they conduct the story-mapping. A school, church, community center, or conference space of a community-based organization works for this. One person from the host team facilitates at the site and acts as a troubleshooter as snags come up.

The attached protocol for “Someone has prayed me over”, a song by Sweet Honey in the Rock, may be appropriate for opening circle (see Page 24). This choice depends on the audience, as the term “prayed” may not be appropriate in some situations. However, the gist of the message is that of the role of elders and stories in strengthening us.



A mural at a local community organization in Pittsburgh. Photo by Center for Educational Leadership and Social Justice

FACILITATING THE OPENING CIRCLE

This pedagogy occurs at the common community starting site. Be sure to clarify roles and responsibilities. Answer questions. Set up the room in an open circle. A facilitator (usually from host team) who has experience in circle pedagogy reviews the protocol for Opening Circle or Gracious Space and asks everyone to briefly respond to a question that the facilitator designs and is connected to the specific purpose of the mapping.

REVIEWING PREPARATION

The basic preparation for the process should have been completed, so by now everyone is familiar with their roles and responsibilities (see Step 2 on Page 9). However, it is useful to have teams meet and share their roles and responsibilities and ask and answer additional questions.

COMMUNITY WALKING & TALKING

Because participants usually walk to community locations, it seems obvious that they would engage in community-mapping on the walk to and from the story-mapping site. Walk or drive to the location, and, on the way there and back, map (discuss, take notes, note on a map) the assets and challenges in the community. The note taker records on a map and the story writer takes photos as appropriate.

Note: There may be a bus that takes a large group from a central location to the community where the story-mapping occurs. In that case, the bus may take certain persons to locations in the community if they are at some distance. In other cases, people just walk to the location.

realize sewing quilts will not bring you back nor save us.” —Elder Hemphill
“You can add your voice all



INTRODUCING PARTICIPANTS

At the story-mapping site, the interviewer facilitates the introductions. The griots need to know who is coming to talk to them, but everyone should introduce and speak to these questions in the introduction: Who am I? What is my purpose in being here?

Note: The host team should have made contact with the griots, but sometimes these do not always work as planned, or a different or additional person comes.

LISTENING TO THE GRIOT'S STORY

Based on their judgment, interviewers may use the following questions. This is not an interrogation, and the entire set of questions does not need to “be answered.” The interviewer should listen and ask follow-up questions for clarification or to gain deeper information. These guiding questions assist in the interview and story-telling process.

- Tell us a little about your own history. Were you born in _____? How and when did you or your family come to _____? To this community?
- How long has your family been in _____?
- What have been your personal goals in life? What goals have you had in your community?
- What roles in the community have you taken on?
- With what community institutions—churches, schools, businesses—are you connected?
- What would you say are the strengths or assets of your community?

- What are some of the challenges or issues?
- How do you see the purpose of education in this community?
- What possibilities in your community could be built on for the good of the community?
- What are the barriers to resources and assets that are common to the community?
- How do you see your local community within the larger community or city?
- If you could wave a magic wand, what is the one thing you would do to support this community?

CLOSING WITH GRIOTS

Exchange thank yous (and emails or phone) and explain to the griot what will happen with stories.

WALKING BACK TO THE CENTER

After interviews with griots, walk back to the central location where the full group meets. On the way, the story-mapping trio can talk about their experiences, start to make sense of the story in the context of the community, and gather any additional community information.

CLOSING CIRCLE

The facilitator, depending on time, should ask a question in a closing circle at the site or have more informal conversations on the bus (if traveling back to a central location by bus or car). The sense-making starts as soon as you leave, but see agenda for sense-making agenda and protocols.

Note: See attached pedagogy guides in appendix that support processes in Step 3 on Page 11.



STEP 4



Analyze and Produce Stories

sisters are being held for blocking buses with no lights, or you can be one of the ones inside the jailhouse.

While story writers are completing and sending stories to a central location, interviewers and note takers can engage in additional ways of story sense-making. Selected members of the host team support story-writing by receiving completed stories via email, printing and copying emailed stories, and distributing them for analysis.

SENSE-MAKING, STORY-WRITING, & STORY-SHARING

STORY SENSE-MAKING

The teams meet to develop key ideas about the story and give feedback to the story-writer, who will construct a one- to two-page story in about 30 minutes to email. *(20-30 min)*

Note: The following two steps—“Story Completion” and “Team Member Interaction” occur simultaneously.

STORY COMPLETION

After completing the story, the story writer emails the story to the host team member responsible for printing, copying, and distributing stories. *(45 min)*

TEAM MEMBER INTERACTION

While story writer is working, other group members interact with each other, using the *Six-Word Story Networking Protocol* (see appendix).

BREAK

Before moving on, the host team ensures all stories are printed and group seating is arranged. Assign a facilitator for each small group for the next step.

STORY ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS PART 1: SMALL GROUPS

Break into groups of six to eight people. During the meet-and-greet earlier, print enough copies so that each group has a full set of stories. *(45 min)*

BRAINSTORMING COMMON THEMES

Group composition depends on how the host team arranged the story-mapping process. If you have two groups in two different community sites, then story analysis groups are organized around community sites. If this has only happened in one community, then it is one large set of stories.

Divide the large group into smaller round-robin reading groups of six to eight people to do the story reading, unpacking and sense-making. These groups can be mixed up with people from different mapping groups.

In each round-robin reading group, pass around a set of stories. Each small group needs a full set of the stories to share. Groups read stories, noting

knowing of the circle outside." —Laura Hershey
"I am told by many of you that I must forgive and

responses to the following guiding questions for discussion.

- What is the big idea in each story?
- What common experiences do storytellers share about themselves and the community?
- What historical information is useful for the community?
- What are the community's assets?
- What are the community's challenges?
- What common themes emerge among the stories?

BREAK & MOVING TIME (15 min)

ANALYSIS PART 2: FULL GROUP

The facilitator of each round-robin group shares the common themes small group discussions with the full group. (15 min)

LEARNING WALK PARTNERS

Find a partner to discuss your morning experience and take a walk together to discuss your experiences, epiphanies, discoveries, and learning from the day. See the appendix for protocol. (30 min)

STORY THEATER (OPTIONAL)

See the appendix for protocol.

ACTION PLANNING & FEEDBACK

TEAM MEETINGS & ACTION PLANS

Action plan teams are different from story-mapping teams. However, this may depend on the situation and the members of the group whom the host team brings together for story-mapping. These should be role-alike teams (from similar situations), teams from a community agency, or school or a mix of these. The teams construct an action plan—usually on poster paper—that responds to the guiding questions below, or revisions based on your customization). (30-60 min)

Guiding Questions for Action Plans

- What is your plan once you return to your organization, school, university, or team?
- Based on the story-mapping themes and process, what do you want to address?
- What structures or processes and pedagogies will you use and how will you use them?
- What evidence will you use to demonstrate success?
- How will you hold each other accountable?

GALLERY WALK & FEEDBACK

Post each group's action plans in a common space with a large piece of paper for participant feedback. All participants engage in a gallery walk and write comments about the plans using the Four Square format on the next page. Four Square feedback can be used to gather evidence for the process. "Feedback should be collected and returned to you for use by your group."



ACTION PLAN FEEDBACK



Group/Team: _____

+ = kudos Δ = what would you change?

Topic, Content, Evidence of Success +/Δ

Questions or Ideas

Process/Structure for Implementation +/Δ

Affirmations

Group/Team: _____

+ = kudos Δ = what would you change?

Topic, Content, Evidence of Success +/Δ

Questions or Ideas

Process/Structure for Implementation +/Δ

Affirmations



ACTION PLAN FEEDBACK



Group/Team: _____

+ = kudos Δ = what would you change?

Topic, Content, Evidence of Success +/Δ

Questions or Ideas

Process/Structure for Implementation +/Δ

Affirmations

Group/Team: _____

+ = kudos Δ = what would you change?

Topic, Content, Evidence of Success +/Δ

Questions or Ideas

Process/Structure for Implementation +/Δ

Affirmations



APPENDICES



—CIRCLES—

—GRACIOUS SPACE—

—SENSE-MAKING—

—STORY THEATER—

—PERSONAL NARRATIVE EXERCISE—

—APPRECIATIVE LISTENING—

so I shall after we students have gathered around the fire with that salmon who has three stories it must



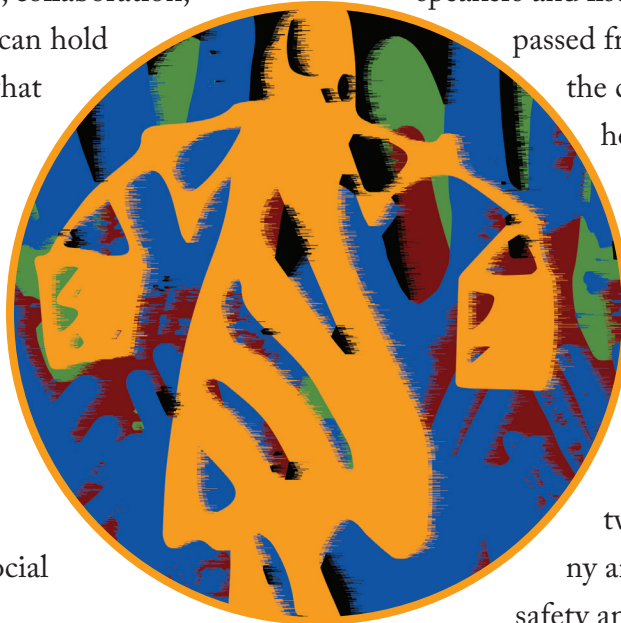
tell before sunrise: one story will teach us how to pray; another story will make us laugh for hours; the



CIRCLES



Circles create a sacred space that lifts the barriers between people, opening up fresh possibilities for connections, collaboration, and understanding. Circles can hold the tensions and emotions that contribute to healing. The process is not about changing others but rather is an invitation to change one's relationship with oneself, to the community, and to the wider universe. The result is trust, strong relationships, and the ability to work together to advance social justice in communities.



values shared among those in the circle. A talking piece is used as a way to ensure respect between speakers and listeners. The talking piece is passed from person to person within the circle, and only the person holding the piece may speak. Two “keepers” of the circle are also identified. The keepers guide the participants and keep the circle as a safe space. While it is possible to have only one keeper, generally a team of two is preferable. Ceremony and ritual are used to create safety and form. Consensus decision-making is also important, as it honors the values and principles of peacemaking circles and helps participants to stay grounded in them.

OUTCOME

To develop and hold relational trust and reciprocity by reflecting on self and use circle time to connect to reflections of others.

DESCRIPTION

Circles tap into ancient practices and modern processes to create trust, goodwill, belonging, and reciprocity. They offer a way of being together that transforms relationships. Participants are seated in a circle focusing on the center where symbolic objects may be placed to remind participants of

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Circles build community by restoring relationships that have been injured by exclusion, inequity, harm, or other divisions. To bring people together in healthy ways, the process needs to do the following:

- **Create safety and trust.** Mistrust can be a logical survival strategy for people who have been unfairly treated by others. Creating safe space can allow trust to develop in a natural way.

third story will give us reason to dance." — Sherman Alexie
"Do not pretend to convert beliefs, ever

- **Honor voice and hold stories sacred.** To tap the wisdom people hold, we need to hear their stories. When we treat these stories in a sacred manner, people will be more inclined to share what is most important to them.
- **Share power among people.** When people come together there is often a significant difference in the power they carry particularly when a participant has a formal position of leadership in the community or in an organization. Power needs to be held lightly so the value of each person can come forth. We need to affirm the dignity of everyone based on their humanity and not their title.
- **Support honest dialogue about important issues.** We need people to be able to talk about the most important issues facing the community. This requires moving past reluctance and opening up to honest dialogue.
- **Foster new relationships.** Sometimes groups will open up honest comments about issues and fail to work through the pain and dissonance that is surfaced. Community gatherings need to be able to work through difficult discomfort and pain in a way that comes out the other side into stronger, deeper connections and relationships among people.

HOW CIRCLES ARE USED

The circle process can be used for any important work between people. It is a well-established

model for opening deeper relationships and honest conversations in organizations. The process has been used to foster understanding between nurse practitioners and teenage parents; bring together faculty to form a Center for Mexican American studies; connect students, school board members, parents, and teachers to improve local schools. Circles have also been used to address inter-generational work, racism, violence, police-community relationships, and to provide alternatives within the justice system.

RESOURCES

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IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

In Community Learning Exchange we most often use circles as a way to open and close the gatherings. We will also use circles to go deeper into issues when it is important to hear all voices and perspectives to create collective understanding of issues.

when they are righteous; you will never be able to defend your city while shouting." —Audrey Lourde

The Circle's Web

Weren't we meant
To stand in circles
Feel the round
The curve
The energy inward
The momentum,
Next, across
The smiling eyes
Pick up the dangling word
Finish or help
Hold up, high five
Shoulder the sagging
Join hands
For grace
The glance of glee
The skip of laughter
The push of angst
The wave of mellow
Cradling the spell of memory.

—Lynda Tredway, 1996

OPENING CIRCLE PROCESS

- Gather in a circle (standing or seated).
- Use a talking piece that is meaningful to the purpose of the gathering.
- The circle keeper welcomes people and reads a poem, quote, or story to set the tone and bring good spirit to the gathering.
- Invite people to introduce themselves, say where they are from, and answer a question to learn more of their story (e.g., *What is a personal gift you bring to this gathering?*).
- Introduce the talking piece and explain a few key ground rules (e.g., *Only the person with the talking piece speaks; go clockwise in a circle with each person speaking; speak from your heart; it is okay to pass when it is your turn; listen with an open heart; hold back comments on what others say.*).

CLOSING CIRCLE PROCESS

- The circle keeper reminds participants of the role of the talking piece and the significance of the particular talking piece being used.
- Introduce a closing reflection question (e.g., *What has moved you in our time together? What are you taking home from this gathering?*).
- Ask people to be conscious of the time in order to be able to hear from everyone.
- Invite one person to do a final closing reflection about the gathering. Arrange this prior to starting the closing circle.
- Thank the hosts of the learning exchange.
- Invite people to stand and do a final spirit reading.



GRACIOUS SPACE



“Tomorrow, I’ll be at the table when company comes. Nobody’ll dare say to me, ‘Eat in the kitchen,’ then.”

DESCRIPTION

Gracious Space—A spirit and setting where we invite the stranger and embrace learning in public.

OUTCOMES

- *Build and deepen trust with other members of a group unleashing their individual and collective power.*
- *Demonstrate the ability to take risks, ask tough questions, work through difficult problems, and uncover creative and sustainable solutions.*

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

When people feel safe and valued they are better able to work collectively on change initiatives than when they feel threatened or insignificant. The gracious space concept from the Center for Ethical Leadership in Seattle draws on the spiritual, intuitive and experiential dimensions of learning.

HOW GRACIOUS SPACE IS USED

Gracious Space can create norms and guidelines to help groups work better together. The Lummi Cedar Project uses Gracious Space to build partnerships between elders and youth and between tribal members and others in their Washington

community. In Texas’ Rio Grande Valley, the Llano Grande Center uses Gracious Space to engage youth and adults in partnerships to improve opportunities for youth, yielding a better quality of life for all. Roca uses Gracious Space to help immigrant youth assert their voice and form partnerships for social justice programs in the Boston metropolitan area. For more examples visit www.communitylearningexchange.org/page/gracious-space.

RESOURCE

Hughes, Patricia with Grace, Bill. *Gracious space: A practical guide for working better together, second edition*. Center for Ethical Leadership, 2010. www.communitylearningexchange.org/page/gracious-space.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS

There is no one way to “implement” gracious space. The facilitators and planners should read the gracious space attachment and think about the purpose of the particular meeting and then design a process that would engage the participants in setting the spirit for gracious space and having the trust to learn in public with the stranger inside or new people.





SENSE-MAKING



SIX-WORD STORY

Interviewers and note takers can engage in this sense-making and networking activity while story writers are completing the stories.

- Each participant thinks about an experiences in the storytelling community mapping process and prepares a six-word story on a card.
- Participants circulate throughout the room and talk to as many people as possible. First they read their cards to each other, and then they share a short story about one aspect of the card.

Example

Riveting story, deep history, redemption road.

- Everyone should talk to at least two other people but may talk to more people if time allows. Each person has experiences that make up part of the whole.
- When talking to each other, participants should try to see what connections or generalizations they can make with other people's stories. These observations will be used later.

LEARNING WALK AND TALK

This activity can be used for teams to walk and talk and make sense of the story, or it can be used by pairs from different groups to share their story-mapping experience.

A learning walk is nearly self-explanatory. A walk and talk provides an opportunity for kinesthetic activity at the same time the participants are reflecting, questioning, and learning from each other. At times these walks are designed to have courageous conversations. Those walks need to have more guidelines about choice of partners and will depend on the level of comfort the walkers have with each other. A good direction includes: choose a partner with whom you feel comfortable but are taking a risk. At other times, these are reflection walks and the facilitator can give a direc-

tion that fits the task: choose a partner in the same group that experienced _____ and take a walk for ____ min OR choose someone you have not talked to in this larger group and take a walk for ____ minutes to talk about _____.





STORY THEATER



Based on the Theater of the Oppressed

A team performance operates on this principle: *If persons are able to transfer their learning and reflection to a different medium, they are more likely to remember and encode the experience.* The objective is that participants will embody the story in some way through using the actual text of the story or a concept, idea, or experience.

The theater of the oppressed theory of action operates on the above learning principle and stresses the content. By acting and enacting stories of promise and oppression or hurt and hope, we can make visible the ways that people felt and acted upon feelings in the story—mapping, telling, and sense-making processes.

The performance can be interactive or include signs or impromptu costumes that participants wear to clarify key points or ideas. There are two general ways to enact the story, but there is no wrong way to do this.

- Participants can enact the story, become characters in the story, and write and act out a brief script from the story.
- Participants can take an idea or concept from the story or process and design the “performance” on the basis of a familiar format (like rhyme or song or tagline from a commercial) or they can create their own format. There can be a narrator for the performance, but narration should be kept to a minimum if used. Humor is welcome!

NORMS OF ENGAGEMENT

- Everyone has a part—equitable participation.
- Remain flexible.
- Take risks.
- Let go of perfection.

STEPS

- Specify the theme or topic for the performance that has originated from the sense-making and story analysis process.
- Allot appropriate time for teams to design and *practice*. Fifteen to 30 minutes is usually sufficient depending on topic.
- Facilitate by going to groups and coaching and urging them to practice before time is up for design.
- Set up the performance space and decide if observers will comment or ask questions.
- Use a process for deciding the order of performance (numbers in a hat/ pick out cards).
- Complete the performances by having a discussion in pairs or trios or full group about the content and the process.

Join with others out, in spirit, feel the world, and suffering, the same as them. This is the kingdom of

writing the other as self, the self as other; that transforms grief into peace and delight." —Alice Walker



PERSONAL NARRATIVE EXERCISE



It is best if you can download and play the song “Somebody Prayed Me Over” by Sweet Honey in the Rock while participants read the lyrics, but just reading the lyrics is also fine.

As the facilitator, talk about an experience of someone who has had a special effect on your life—the somebody who has helped you over. Your story should be no longer than two minutes.

Ask participants to think about a person who has helped them get to where they are—a guide, a mentor who has been important and is the angel that sits on their shoulders. You might ask them to think about what the mentor might whisper in their ears. They can share in pairs, trios, or quar-

tets, or you can use the Appreciative Listening protocol.

You can ask for storytelling volunteers.

NORMS FOR ENGAGEMENT

- Stay engaged.
- Assume best intentions.
- Maintain double confidentiality.
- Do not comment on story until debrief to give warm feedback.
- Stories should be no longer than two minutes.

.....

**Somebody has prayed me over.
Somebody has marked my way...**

**Guidin’ me, inspirin’ me, ancestors live inside me
Daring me to be the future, pullin’ me I hear them callin’.**

—from *Somebody Prayed Me Over*
by Carol Maillard of Sweet Honey in the Rock

.....



APPRECIATIVE LISTENING



“No wherever is cooped up in house or office, factory or woman or street or mile or dry prison cell, to him

The purpose of the appreciative or constructivist listening protocol¹ is to share with a partner a story that connects you personally to the learning. Sometimes listening or silence is difficult for people new to the protocol. At times, the listeners want to ask questions, but listeners need to refrain from this as this protocol helps speakers reflect and construct their own thinking. Even if there is silent time, it is useful for thinking. There

are other occasions in our work for questions, feedback, and co-constructed conversation.

NORMS FOR ENGAGEMENT

- Assume best intentions.
- Listen fully to a partner, sitting eye to eye and knee to knee.
- If there is silence in the designated time, that is fine. Consider it thinking time.
- As the listener, do not comment, give feedback or add your story; you are listening not editing, giving your fullest

¹ The original constructivist listening protocol was designed by Julian Weissglass, Professor Emeritus, UC Santa Barbara. Please transfer this citation to any documents you use for the appreciative/constructivist listening protocol. Weissglass, J. (1990). Constructivist listening for empowerment and change, the educational forum 50(4), 1990. 351- 370. Access the article online at <http://ncee.education.ucsb.edu/articles/constructivistlistening.pdf>.



Two community members engage in appreciative listening during Pittsburgh’s community story-mapping process. Photo by Center for Educational Leadership and Social Justice

attention to the speaker. The listener may use nonverbal responses.

- Maintain double confidentiality—you will not repeat a story heard, and you will not ask your partner about the story told outside of this exercise unless the storyteller raises it again with you.

FACILITATOR ROLE

You will want to model this with a willing person if this is the first time you are using appreciative or constructivist listening with this group. Introduce as a way to have someone listen to you completely without judgment for a designated time (usually two minutes). Start with groups of two.

- The facilitator reviews directions and keeps time. Using a timer that makes noise is good.
- Prepare and have participants respond to a designated prompt.
- State the norms of engagement. Ask if there are questions.
- Let everyone get settled with their partners. If they do not know each other (or know each other well), give them time for interchange to meet and greet before starting. Have each pair decide who goes first. Be a “warm demander” on the protocols for the pair, as it is uncomfortable for some at first—but necessary.
- The first person shares for two minutes (or selected time) without interruption, even if the first person is silent. The listener may

give nonverbal feedback or subvocalize (e.g., “ummm...”). The listener does not provide verbal feedback, questions, other stories, etc.

- If there is an uneven number of participants, the facilitator joins in so that everyone is in a pair.
- Do a clear bordering of this activity by setting time and saying “go” and “stop” after two minutes. Make sure the pairs change partners.
- Debrief this activity at the end, accepting all responses, but not defending the process. It takes some people longer to get used to this than others.
- Two minutes for cross-sharing may be added to the end of the protocol.
- Remind participants of the double confidentiality at end of the process.

ADAPTATIONS

- You may decide to do this in trios after your community has done the pairs work frequently, but it is not recommended to start this way.
- Depending on the content of the sharing, you may decide to ask participants to contribute their own ideas—but not partner’s.
- You can choose to have full discussion afterward, but remember the norms.



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"We forward in this generation. Triumphantly. Won't you help to sing these songs of freedom? 'Cause all I ever have: redemption songs." - Bob Marley

"In the old neighborhood, each funeral parlor is more elaborate than the last. The alleys smell of cops, pistols bumping their thighs, each chamber steeled with a skin-blue bullet." - Rita Dove

"Nations are talking. Leaders are speaking. The day for which we waited has arrived. That is why we are saying: People of this united land, stand up, stand up with pride." - Zolani Mkiva

"Clap hands, let us invite joy into our conversation, courtesy into our bedrooms, gentleness into our kitchen, care into our nursery. The ancestors remind us, despite the history of pain we are a going-on people who will rise again. And still we rise." - Maya Angelou

"When I stand on the front lines now, cursing the lack of truth, the absence of willful change and strategic conditions, I realize sewing quilts will not bring you back nor save us." - Essex Hemphill

"You can add your voice all right to the voices of a hundred and fifty others in a circle around a jailhouse where your brothers and sisters are being held for blocking buses with no lifts, or you can be one of the ones inside the jailhouse, knowing of the circle outside." - Laura Hershey

"I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall after we Indians have gathered around the fire with that salmon who has three stories. It must tell before sunrise: one story will teach us how to pray; another story will make us laugh for hours; the third story will give us reason to dance." - Sherman Alexie

"Do not pretend to convenient beliefs, even when they are righteous; you will never be able to defend your city while shouting." - Audre Lorde

"Tomorrow, I'll be at the table when company comes. Nobody'll dare say to me, 'Eat in the kitchen,' then. Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am and be ashamed. I, too, am America." - Langston Hughes

"We join with others and, in spirit, feel the world, and suffering, the same as them. This is the kingdom of owning the other as self, the self as other; that transforms grief into peace and delight." - Alice Walker

"To whoever is copped up in house, or office, factory or woman or street or mine or dry prison cell, to him I come, and without speaking or looking I arrive and open the door of his prison." - Pablo Neruda