Decolonizing Essay Writing Through Storytelling

How to Reclaim Your Story!
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Ice Breaker

Think of a song that speaks to your identity
Session Objectives

1. Utilize Critical Race Theory to explore and understand the power of storytelling
2. Utilize both media and historical artifacts to explore identity as a means of healing through storytelling
3. Encourage participants to utilize storytelling as an approach to essay writing in advisement by sponsoring student creativity and identifying students’ strengths
CRITICAL RACE THEORY, or CRT, is a theoretical and interpretive mode that examines the appearance of race and racism across dominant cultural modes of expression. In adopting this approach, CRT scholars attempt to understand how victims of systemic racism are affected by cultural perceptions of race and how they are able to represent themselves to counter prejudice.

– Derrick A. Bell (1995)
Group Activity

**Directions:** breakup into groups of five and discuss the following:

1. Who creates the narrative?
2. Who do these narratives impact?
3. Why is it important to interrogate narratives?
4. What is the story that has been created about you?
5. Who created that story?
6. What systems are at play and how do they marginalized communities?
7. How do your students experience this?
Reflection and Share Out

- **Directions:** Breakup into groups of five and discuss the following:
  1. In what places do you hold privilege?
  2. In what places are you marginalized?
  3. What is your story?
  4. What is dominant culture writing about you?
The Danger of A Single Story

https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en#t-293442
What is Storytelling?

Countering stories created by dominant culture to convey factual, lived experiences with the goal of reshaping cultural and social norms as well as the power structures that give rise to the dominant narrative. Bell claims that analyzing disparities between personal narratives and the dominant narratives can raise awareness for both the oppressed and the oppressor, which in turn can build solidarity and lead to widespread change. – Bell (2003)
The Bronx is Burning

• Game 2 of the 1977 World Series was a bit of a blowout, with the Los Angeles Dodgers jumping to an early lead and eventually beating the New York Yankees 6-1. While the action on the field may not have captured its attention, the audience watching from home was witness to a piece of broadcasting history. A few hours before the first pitch, a large fire had broken out in an abandoned school near Yankee Stadium. As flames engulfed the building, not a firetruck in sight, legend has it that Howard Cosell uttered one of his most memorable phrases: “There it is, ladies and gentlemen, the Bronx is burning.”

• It’s a powerful and enduring collective memory, and it almost doesn’t matter that Cosell never actually uttered those words.¹ It was the nation’s glimpse into a time when the Bronx — and many other parts of New York City — were decimated by fire.
What Stories Are We Asking Students to Tell?

Directions: Break up into groups of five and discuss the scenarios included in the chat.
“That visibility which makes us most vulnerable is that which also is the source of our greatest strength.”

– Audre Lorde