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Notes from the Spring 2021 Photoville Educator Lab

Creating with Community

Photoville Educator Labs are produced in partnership with **PhotoWings**

Spring 2021 Educator Lab
Creating With Community
March 20 & 25, 2021

The Spring 2021 Photoville Educator Labs took place across 2 days, during which participants explored projects and methods to inspire students to create art that is collaborative and community-based. How can photography be done in, and with, community? In what ways might the role of the "artist" be expanded? How might it be used to build meaningful relationships, and to reveal stories about our society? How has community engagement been done during the pandemic?

Photoville Educator Labs are professional development workshops for educators to be inspired, connect and collaborate on ways to bring visual storytelling into the classroom. The program is free and open to educators of all subjects and of all ages, but the content will be focused on middle school and high school art teachers working in the DOE and in community programs.

Photoville is a New York-based non-profit organization that works to promote a wider understanding and increased access to the art of photography for all.
photoville.com

PhotoWings

PhotoWings' mission is to highlight and help facilitate the power of photography to influence the world. We help photography to be better understood, created, utilized, seen, and saved.
photowings.org

What's in this notebook?

Throughout our Educator Lab sessions, we had lively, exciting, challenging, inspiring, and fun conversations amongst educators and artists. Together, we asked questions, swapped ideas and workshopped new strategies. We want to share with you to spark community collaboration ideas for you and your students.

We commissioned a team of college Student Notetakers to document the discussions. We asked them to take notes from their perspective and in their style. As young people interested in the intersection of art and education, what stood out to them? And how would they like to share it?

Browse all their notes or flip to the ideas that resonate with you. ➡

Student Notetakers

Crystal Alexandra (They/Them) is a writer and digital storyteller from the DMV based in Harlem, NY.

Fatmata Bah, currently serving as a youth farmer with Hattie Carthan Community Garden & Peer Lead with Lion's Tooth Project – is a student of life and facilitator, who relishes in the chance to broaden people's ideas around wellness, gender, and sexuality.

Cydney Blitzer is a senior in the Department of Photography and Imaging at NYU Tisch.

Alyssa Dickson is a photographer, writer and a student in the Department of Photography and Imaging at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Carly Harrison is an intern with Photoville and a sophomore at NYU Gallatin pursuing peace studies and social arts intervention.

Angelica Negron is a recent NYU Tisch Photography and Imaging graduate with a double minor in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Studies and Art and Public Policy, who is interested in all things art, children, and social justice.

Daniel-José S. Cyan (he/him) has been a photographer since 2014, a freelancer since 2016, and is now the Community Engagement Manager for Lion's Tooth Project.

Discussion Facilitators

Roy Baizan is a Chicanx documentary photographer and arts educator from the Bronx whose work focuses on community and identity.

Jessica Bal is the Education Coordinator at Photoville, and works as a documentary artist, educator, and arts organizer in Brooklyn, NY.

Jasmin Chang is Deputy Director at Photoville, focusing on of Community & Education. She is an artist and organizer who loves building projects that connect people through art and storytelling.

Husband, father, community and youth organizer, activist, and pastor, Zac Martin is the executive director and lead organizer at Trellis Community Developmen

Brenna McLaughlin is a teacher and photographer living in Brooklyn, NY. She teaches at the High School of Art and Design in Manhattan, NY.

Lorie Novak is an artist and Professor of Photography & Imaging at NYU Tisch School of the Arts and Founding Director of Tisch DPI Future Imagemakers.

Josie Wells, a book nerd, and educator, has worked with Photoville as an associate in operations and social media

Thank you to Lorie Novak of the NYU Future Imagemakers and Natalia Guerrero of the Lions Tooth Project for connecting us with the incredible group of young people who contributed to this notebook.

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PRESENTING ARTISTS
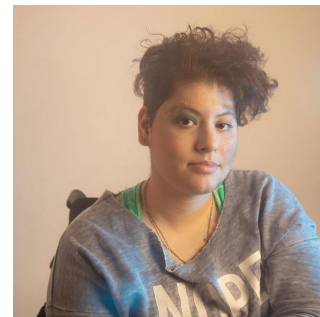
Glo Jackson
Spectrum: Diversity within the disabled community

Glo Jackson (they/them) is a senior at the Henry Viscardi School who became interested in photography when they received their first professional camera for their sixteenth birthday. Photography is one of their favorite art mediums. They are also passionate about musical theatre, reading, and creating a change in the world through multifaceted activism. They want to showcase their life and community within their art.
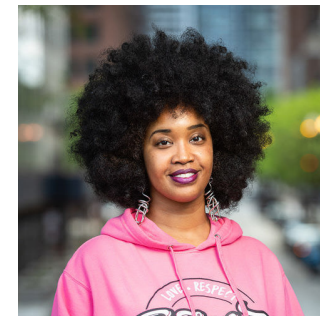
Jasmin Chang
Community Heroes

Jasmin Chang is Deputy Director at Photoville, focusing on of Community & Education initiatives such as teen and teacher programs, as well as The FENCE and other Photoville projects. She is an artist and organizer who loves building projects that connect people through art and storytelling. She is co-founder of Community Heroes, a neighborhood-based public art project. She is currently working on the Winston-Salem Portrait Project, a photographic and sculptural portrayal of the community.

Zac Martin
Community Heroes

Husband, father, community and youth organizer, activist, and pastor, Zac Martin is the executive director and lead organizer at Trellis Community Development, a community development non-profit that helps neighborhoods address injustice through building and maintaining collaboration around advocacy and action. Zac is also the pastor of justice at Recovery House of Worship in Downtown Brooklyn.

Sol Aramendi
Project Luz

Sol Aramendi is a socially engaged artist working with immigrant communities throughout New York City. Her participatory practice promotes change around fairer labor and immigration conditions. She is the founder of Project Luz, a nomadic program that uses photography and art as a tool of empowerment. She is a 2018 Open Society Foundations Moving Walls fellow and also received fellowships from A Blade of Grass (2015), the Ford Foundation (2018), and NALAC. (2018).

Tonika Johnson
Folded Map Project

Tonika Johnson is a visual artist and photographer from Chicago's Englewood neighborhood who explores urban segregation and documents the nuance and richness of the Black community. She was featured in Chicago Magazine as a 2017 Chicagoan of the Year. Her Englewood-based photography projects From the INside and Everyday Rituals were exhibited at Rootwork Gallery in Pilsen, the Chicago Cultural Center, the Harold Washington Library Center, and at Loyola University's Museum of Art (LUMA). Her current ongoing project, Folded Map, was also exhibited at LUMA (2018). Most recently, she was named one of Field Foundation's 2019 Leaders for a New Chicago.

Alyssa Garcia
Las Fotos Project

The oldest daughter of a Mexican immigrant and Boyle Heights native, Alyssa M. Garcia, is an integrative artist and educator with over 10 years of experience in the classroom. She is the current Director of Education and Programming at Las Fotos Project, a photography mentoring organization that works to elevate the voices of female-identifying teenagers from communities of color through photography and mentoring, empowering them to channel their creativity for the benefit of themselves, their community, and future careers.

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Community Art = A Voice for Collective Expression

Notes by
Crystal Alexandra

Facilitator
Zac Martin

Discussion Participants
Amy Tierney, Blee, Jackie Neale, Kim Morris, Margarita Valdivieso, Jessica Bal, Carly Harrison, Crystal Alexandra

Protect Public Art:
- Figure out the safe spaces within the community
- Develop a team of protectors/watchdogs to keep the project preserved
- Turn vandalism/defacing of public art into a new art project
-

Outreach:
- Partner with existing community centers
- Participate in communal events, fundraisers, etc.
- Keep digital spaces updated(blog, social media, etc.)

**Community Art
=
A voice for collective expression**

Questions to Ponder:
- What are impactful activations that I can start in my immediate community?
- What mediums provide/create a portal for community building/collaboration?

Identify Audience & Needs:
- Public housing tenants
- Senior citizens
- Young Gender Variant People
- Marginalized Ethnicities & Cultures

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Notes by
Crystal Alexandra

Facilitator
Jasmin Chang

Discussion Participants
Alexis Lambrou, Amy Tam, Crystal Alexandra, Josh Birnbaum, Kim Morris, Nichelle Ryan, Oscar B. Castillo

Art Education = a collaborative learning experience for a more liberated world

Identify their passions:
- Facilitate a way to share and be vulnerable
- Be specific in your questions.
- Make the discovery process collaborative
- Encourage naming their context/environment and needs

Facilitate to connect:
- Be a guide on the side and not a page on the stage
- Ask Student-centered questions to incorporate feedback and input before they do the program/work
- Use visual cues that remove facilitator from focus (i.e turning off camera)

Art Education
=
A collaborative learning experience for a more liberated world

Questions to Ponder:
- How do you bring this art outside the classroom/facility into the community?
- How do financial resources contribute to how youth tell their stories or have access to various mediums of art?

Strategies for student collaboration:
- Have the youth lead check-ins/introduction, energizers, and closing/reflection questions
- Design various methods that engage photography/mixed mediums for expression

How can we showcase intersecting identities, uplift voices and bring people together?

Notes by
Fatmata Bah

Facilitator
Lorie Novak

Discussion Participants
Glo Jackson, Lorie Novak,
Marj Kleinman, Oscar Villeda,
Ron Foster and Fatmata Bah

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⭐ Due to the COVID pandemic, there is a focus on hyper-local movements (i.e. community fridge projects) and at the same time, there's much more connectivity than ever due to virtual means of connection.

👉 Use classroom projects as a means for community engagement, organizing, and activism

   ↳ Frame photography as a vehicle for change
Link different education communities & create partnerships

   ↳ Work across states & countries

   ↳ Lean on virtual means of connecting

   ↳ Connect with folks you wouldn't think of linking up with in a non-virtual space

"If activism isn't intersectional, what good is it?"

— Glo Jackson
(youth artist)
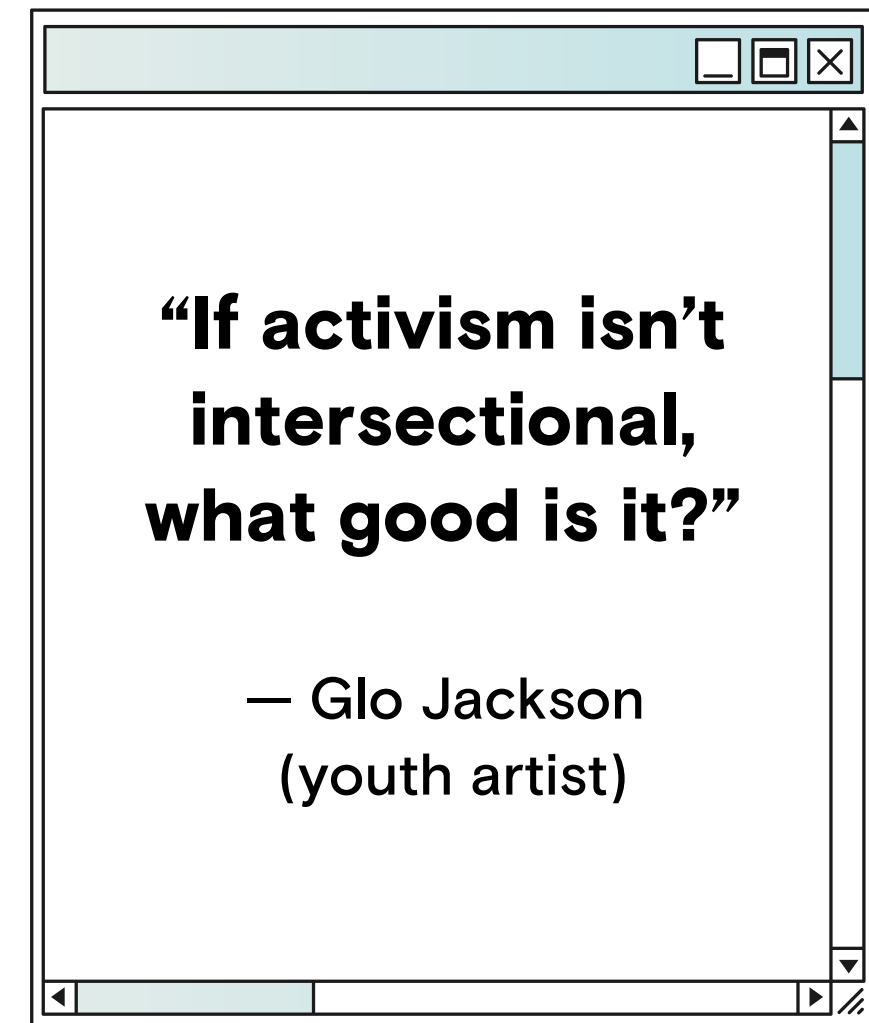
⭐ **As educators, how can we showcase participants' intersecting identities, uplift their voices, and bring them together?**

👉 Find resources to keep both educators and participants informed and aware of issues affecting their community & communities their peers are a part of

👉 Refraining from frequently handing participants the burden of educating folks on the issues affecting them; confusing self-advocacy with self-reliance (i.e. asking a student with physical disabilities to educate staff vs. staff taking the initiative to ask their students support they need)

👉 Keep in mind, communities are not a monolith – black participants, disabled participants, queer & trans participants hold their own individual perspectives and experiences. Be wary of assuming; instead, create an environment that emphasizes viewing matter through an intersectional lens (Kimberlé W. Crenshaw)

👉 Create spaces to explore and celebrate our sameness and the threads that weave us together, as well as the differences that make us unique

👉 Encourage storytelling: give way to multiple voices and allow participants authority over their personal narrative

👉 Motivate participants to use what they have! Often times we may assume we need the flashiest, newest gadgets to document our stories, but that's not always the case — our cell phones make documenting accessible

👉 Honor the importance of feeling seen & heard — especially for the folks who don't get to be celebrated. We live in a world of diversity, and it deserves to exist within all levels of creativity. Inspire participants to think outside the box and resist being pigeonholed into only one way of thinking and existing (honor your multifacetedness)

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It's about action! :
We should put as much
energy into action plans
and strategies as we do
classroom conversations

Notes by
Fatmata Bah

Facilitator
Brenna McLaughlin

**Discussion
Participants**

Kate Bickert, Angela
Ramsey, Fatmata Bah,
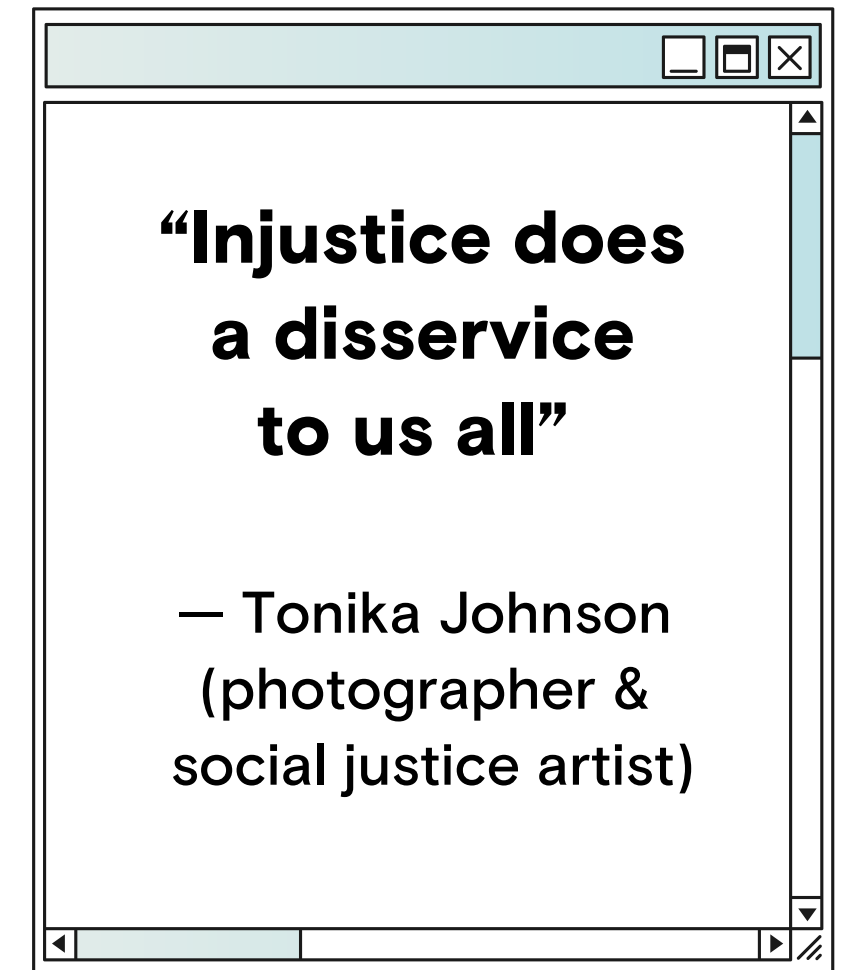Sackona Fitts, Sam Mackey
and Tonika Johnson

⭐ Focus on centering empathy, community, and action in our classrooms

⭐ It's about action! : We should aim to put as much energy into action plans and strategies as we do classroom conversations; promoting change through active ways

Social change through photography × carrying out community action = tangible outcomes

What are some ways we can build community within the classroom?

👉 Recognize commonalities: encourage participants to examine the ways specific issues affect both themselves and those they view as "different"
(i.e commonalities)

👉 Create a space for honest dialogue, allowing folks to share their truth without judgment

👉 Educators: come from a space of neutrality.

👉 As the facilitator, allow folks room to stumble while exploring sameness/differences in their medley of identities, perspectives, and ideas. Redirect conversations to resolve potential clashes that arise– use this as an opportunity as a teachable moment

Find the opportunity to make projects a healing process for those involved = community building

"Injustice does a disservice to us all"

— Tonika Johnson (photographer & social justice artist)

Notes by
Carly Harrison

Facilitator
Zac Martin

Discussion Participants
Amy Tierney, Blee, Jackie Neale, Kim Morris, Margarita Valdivieso, Jessica Bal, Carly Harrison, Crystal Alexandra

How do you balance celebration and safety with public art?

WHO DO YOU HONOR?

ASK YOURSELF

WHO ISN'T RECOGNISED?

WHOSE COMMUNITY EFFORTS ARE BEING OVERLOOKED?

WHOSE VOICES ARE NOT BEING HEARD?

TIP:

Participate in community events. Pay attention to who's not there. How can you bring them in - give them a platform? Age and language are just a couple of the barriers to community participation.

CIRCLE OF CARE   ALLYSHIP   ANCHOR ORGANIZATIONS

Outreach within communities can extend to every corner. Allies open doors and create opportunities for overlooked populations to be celebrated and showcased. What kind of spaces foster a sense of allyship? Anchor organizations can help you to understand the community. The more hands that touch the project the better: a project for the community, by the community.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS

HOW DO YOU BALANCE REPRESENTATION / CELEBRATION AND SAFETY WHEN IT COMES TO PUBLIC ART AND OCCUPYING PUBLIC SPACES?

Creating public art requires that you think about the dynamics of these spaces, and how the project may intervene. Representing one community may jeopardize their role in this space if tension is present. How do you protect the community you want to uplift yet still reach those you want to be learning from and engaging positively with the project? Where do you place resistance?

PERSPECTIVE   COLLABORATION

CREATING SAFE SPACES

SMALL & TARGETED AUDIENCES · PROTECTING IDENTITIES · PROTECTING IDENTITIES

Shadow Lives by Nida Ahmed

AJ Stetson: "Masked NYC– Witness to our Time"

Exemplary works of identity protection and interpreting meaning from vandalism

Zac Martin (facilitator) · Jess · Jackie · Margarita · Kim Amy Tierney · Blee · (notetakers) Carly & Crystal

How to get youth and their communities more engaged, active and interested?

Notes by
Carly Harrison

Facilitator
Josie Wells

Discussion Participants

Benjamin Zack, DaShawn,
Jessica Lie, Josie Wells,
Natalia Guerrero, Carly
Harrison

Share your knowledge, but not at the expense of your students' engagement. Make your personal experience interactive

Listen and collaborate in the classroom. Foster a community around photography

Overcoming boundaries through collaboration

BALANCE YOUR OWN EXPERTISE & EXPERIENCE WITH THE VOICES OF YOUR STUDENTS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Make photography affordable and accessible

Youth mentorship programs

SPOTLIGHT:
Las Fotos Project

HOW TO GET YOUTH AND THEIR COMMUNITIES MORE ENGAGED, ACTIVE & INTERESTED?

Creating projects with intention: What could this turn into beyond my own vision?
Allowing the community to take ownership of the project and move forward with it on their own terms

Being protective of students. Listening and getting to know them. Create safe spaces for them to share, grow and thrive.

CREATING AUTHENTIC, COMMUNITY ORIENTED SPACES OF TRUST & COLLABORATION

SPOTLIGHT:
Tonika Johnson's Folded Map Project

Having courageous conversations and creating containers to hold each other

Fostering spaces of care, connection and personal attention rather than systematic, deadline oriented atmospheres

Measuring the impact of your work not through large scale impacts, but rather how deep the relationship building is and putting more focus into this.

PARTICIPANTS:

Josie wells (facilitator) · Jessica Lie
Benjamin Zack · Natalia Guerrero
DaShawn · Carly Harrison (notetaker)

⭐ **Teaching during pandemic:**

Figuring out different angles re: pandemic and online learning

Educating students through what they're already interested in (Black Lives Matter), and then bringing in things they might not have experience with

How to bring kids together from different grades and what can that facilitate? (Mentorship, etc.)

↳ Same lesson for all grades with some tweaks to fit their age range

Photo essay assignments for students about the past year – how to get them to share their perspective and think of others

↳ Collaborate with the English department as it's a core course and can help them think through their ideas for photo essay

Difference in high school vs college in what is being allowed at school

↳ High school cannot meet in person at all
College may be able to but can't make it mandatory

How to make typical photo scavenger hunts more engaging

↳ Get students to collaborate on list items

⭐ **Engaging with community during pandemic:**

Strategies for engaging with community to photograph

↳ How does that look during social distancing

How to get people to be present during a time when people aren't showing up?

↳ Food is a good way to get people involved but not really feasible right now

↳ What else can be done to draw people in?

↳ Find where people are gathering already, grocery stores etc.

Photographs through windows

↳ Zoom is a window

Understanding the difference between what you can responsibly ask students and adults to do during this time

Bringing together our world and the world we don't know

Notes by
Angelica Negron

Facilitator
Jessica Bal

Discussion Participants

Mark Robinson, Sehar Sufi, Sol Aramendi, Suzie Katz, Alyssa Dickson, Angelica Negron

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Finding Connections:

Disparity in how people thought or felt after 2016 election, wanting to connect across differences

Hard to start connections

Bringing together our world and the world we don't know

↳ You don't need to go to the midwest, there are problems happening here

Collaborating with other schools — how to get to connect?

↳ Finding small towns across the country that are under resourced and alone in their work and connecting with them to get different perspectives
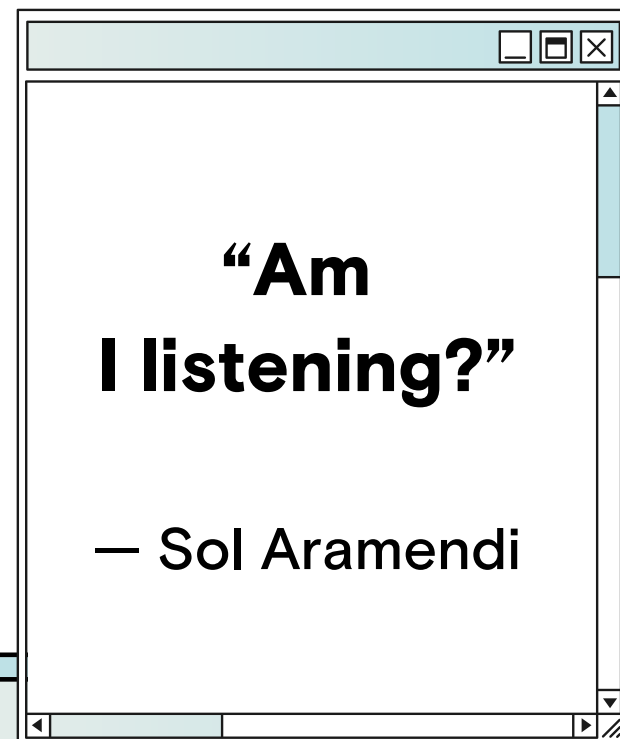
How to Find or Start With a New Idea:

Wendy Ewald book (American Alphabets)

↳ Put cameras in hands of youth and encouraged them to document their lives and express themselves

↳ Everyone has a camera now and is documenting their lives. How do we adapt it to now?

↳ Self exploration: What should I start doing? How can I apply these things specifically to my community?

Big problems — make them small or we get lost

Listening, researching, asking myself again "Am I listening?"

Ask a question to a lot of people and get a lot of answers, divide these answers and then decide from there

Start simple and ideas will come — look for the images, they'll find you

Because there are so many images we can be insecure sometimes, just continue to work on it

Ask yourself how the end product will live in the public realm?

"Am I listening?"

— Sol Aramendi

Breakout Room Participants:

⭐ Aside from photography, our facilitator Roy Baizan (he/they) is a huge fan of gardening, evident by the swathes of green in his background: a room tastefully decorated to resemble a garden of plants and knick-knacks. Roy is a longtime educator at the International Center of Photography, having worked his way up from teacher's assistant to full-time faculty member over the years. Today he joined from the Bronx, where he works at the community center for ICP at the Point.

⭐ Joining today from Rockaway Beach, Queens, Susannah Ray (she/her), a 48-year-old white woman with curly brown hair, attended the Photoville session from her house's studio office, where she displayed many in-progress photographs tacked up on the wall behind her. She works as an educator, mostly on the college level, and teaches at Hofstra University. More recently, she has started volunteering with the community organization RISE (Rockaway Initiative for Sustainability and Equity) as a digital media mentor. Although Susannah is generally used to operating in a traditional classroom setting, she is currently working to build a photo program with RISE and hopes to acquire new techniques and strategies related to remote education during today's discussion.

⭐ Susan Rae Tannenbaum (she/her) hilariously introduced herself as, and I quote, "older than everybody," which evoked inaudible chuckles from the majority of those present. She is a photographer who works with the Josephine Herrick's Project and taught on multiple levels of education from middle school to high school students as well as senior citizens.

⭐ Peter Fitzpatrick (he/him), who initially described himself as "pretty grey," joined the breakout room wearing black-framed glasses and a T-shirt with the word 'Bat' on it. His background, supposedly a messy studio, was strategically blurred out by a low aperture filter while he himself appeared in full clarity, magnificent grey beard and all. Although he didn't disclose much more about himself, it's fair to assume he dabbles in the arts and/or photography, judging by his attendance on this day.

⭐ Ovini Sinclaire (they/them) described themselves as a Black person wearing a blue plaid shirt and green pants, sitting in an all-white room full of books (we love literacy). Although much about Ovini was left to the imagination as their camera was off, their voice was very pleasant and anyone who reads books has got a friend in me.

⭐ DaShawn Lewis (he/him) dialed in from Nashville Tennessee, from an eggshell white room, wearing a shade of basketball shorts I couldn't quite determine over the sound of bad connection. His camera was off, but he also had a pretty nice voice and although I couldn't quite catch the name of the organization he volunteered with (Edgehill Brighter Days Program), I managed to find it a couple of days later after some strategic google searches. His involvement in the program was, as expected, photography-related.

👉 Susannah began the discussion by talking about how difficult it has been to build communities over Zoom during the pandemic, especially with high school students who prefer to keep their cameras off. She posed the question: how can educators overcome these technological gulfs and facilitate meaningful conversations when we are so separated (physically and otherwise)? Side Note: She also mentioned that she observed that the most amount of growth and learning was evident within the students' artwork itself.

👉 In response to Susannah's share, Roy contributed some obstacles he had personally discovered while teaching:
How can we remain connected while also accommodating the needs and limitations of the students?

👉 DaShawn expressed similar frustrations with the current situation in that it forces creators, educators, and students to put previous plans on hold while simultaneously making it difficult for them to make new ones. The unfortunate reality is that a lot of these programs based around the idea of community are best conducted and received in person.

👉 Proposed Solutions: Setting specific times to meet, offering financial incentives to compel more students to take part, establishing a well-organized online infrastructure in order to assemble students who are interested in participating

↳ Freedom is good but having a curriculum in mind can be extremely helpful for both the educators and the students

👉 Adopting flexible mindsets to allow students to create work that is within their physical capabilities–> Encouraging the use of accessible technology (i.e. phones) and introducing broad, interactive prompts to avoid overwhelming the students

↳ Adapting to the current limitations by coming up with creative alternatives

☞ **Susannah** shared her own experience with teaching a photography program during the pandemic and expressed that although the process had its challenges and was perhaps less than ideal, the resulting work was very much worth it

↳ An interesting thing to note from her share and my own experiences as a co-teacher for the NYU Future Imagemakers program: It might be that the multi-faceted, difficult nature of the pandemic has served to stimulate creative expression; or perhaps it speaks to the resilience of artists that they are able to churn out some their best work in the face of adversity; but either way I find it particularly striking that these students can create such thought-provoking work right in the middle of a crisis so detrimental to their motivation and connectivity.

☞ **Roy** corroborated the argument that a specialized curriculum helps a lot; exposing them to a wide variety of artists and projects in mediums other than photography and introducing the idea of immersive storytelling. Immersive storytelling, simply put, is constantly returning to the question: How are we using different visual/technological mediums to tell a more immersive story?

↳ "The personal project is great for the soul, but it is also great for the career. How are we empowering our students to tell their stories while simultaneously allowing them to develop other essential life skills? (storytelling, public speaking, editing, social media curation)"

↳ Stepping outside of one's comfort zone (medium-wise or other) in order to find new ways to connect with others and build community

☞ How are educators meeting students halfway?

↳ **Susan** had a difficult time figuring out how to do this with 6th-grade girls in her classes. Although she tried to stimulate their interests, there seemed to be a disconnect between what she thought might interest them and what actually caught their attention. Personally, I am not surprised. Middle-schoolers nowadays are a whole nother beast. Fortunately, Susan found that seniors and high schoolers were a bit more innovative, especially during the summer when they were able to walk around outside.

👉 At this point, I was asked to contribute my college-student perspective regarding how educators might be able to better facilitate the creative process over Zoom. My answer? Tolerance and understanding have limits. My professors have used a variety of different strategies in order to encourage students to participate while inspiring us to do work that matters to us but the most effective ones have been obligatory participation. My suggestions:

  ↳ Plan to make a certain level of participation a requirement (i.e. establishing a precedent that cameras are on unless the teacher says otherwise or specific circumstances)

  ↳ Assigning one or more responders to each project during a critique can relieve some of the pressure of being a "first responder," encourage quiet students to participate in an open discussion, and provide hesitant participants an excuse to share their thoughts without having to first "raise their hands"

  ↳ Introducing technical strategies, media, and projects that might be exciting and novel (even to the teacher)

👉 Roy: What are some things you guys are looking forward to in the coming weeks or months as the weather improves?

  ↳ Collecting and incorporating student feedback

  ↳ Ovini: excited to work with students who are willing to go outside, such as going on photo walks

  ↳ Peter is looking forward to his online Photo 101 class's first photo walk this Monday, as it will also be the first time they will be able to use actual cameras

👉 Conclusion: At the end of this session (which ended rather abruptly) we still had a lot of questions, but we had also discussed a lot of promising solutions. Just like most issues pandemic-related, many things are still uncertain, but I consider it a blessing that technology enables us to have these productive conversations so that we may learn from one another and adapt to our shared circumstances together.

⭐ My breakout room today was fortunate enough to once more have Roy Baizan (he, they) as a facilitator this week. Although he did not mention his love of plants this week, he did describe himself as a Mexican man with long hair and glasses. In addition, he mentioned that he works as faculty member at the International Center of Photography, teaching photography to students in the Hunts Point area of the Bronx.

⭐ Nic Rey (she/they) introduced herself as an Irish Haitian photographer, attending today from Raleigh, North Carolina. Although she is not necessarily an educator and is funding everything out of pocket at the moment, she is contracted by the Harm reduction coalition and urban survivors union, working with people who use/sell drugs as well as people who work in the sex industry. Recently, as she works with a lot of juveniles she has been trying to blend her work with her interest in photography.

⭐ Mark Yanez (he/him) described himself as a, "mexican man with some facial hair from San Francisco!"
He had a lively background that featured some delectable looking marranitos (soft mexican gingerbread cookies shaped like pigs), a.k.a. his favorite things to eat. He works at the Chrissy Field Center, an environmental and social justice youth center in San Francisco. Photoville has been collaborating with them to curate a photo wall/gallery in the National Park in San Francisco. He came today to get more ideas regarding building a curriculum focused around the arts.

⭐ Alyssa Garcia (she/her), one of the guest speakers in today's session, is the Director of Education and Programs for the Las Fotos Project, appearing today in a white shirt and black-framed glasses. The Las Fotos Project has been working with Photoville for the last few years, taking part in events such as student week, educator lab, and the container exhibitions in Brooklyn. Today she is looking forward to hearing about the kind of work her fellow artists and educators are doing and is open to giving and receiving suggestions.

☞ **Roy:** How are we being intersectional with our practices? How are we thinking and considering all of the different community members in our lesson plans, building equity, and communicating with students over Zoom?

☞ **Mark** started us off by talking about his eagerness when it comes to transitioning from "an entire year of youth programming over Zoom" to an upcoming hybrid youth program this summer, thanks to San Francisco's recent decreases in virus positivity. The program will spend a couple weeks focusing on community building before starting to work on curating the project, and it is clear that the youth have gotten sick of communicating over Zoom. In communicating his enthusiasm however, Mark posed another question: How do we get past the frustration we have with Zoom after a year and a half of operating in that way?

☞ **Alyssa Garcia** echoed her contempt for Zoom and then described some of her personal strategies for educating over Zoom. She makes an effort to be mindful of students who have to share laptops or who experience connection issues, by not requiring them to have their videos on. She has also found that encouraging students, helps them to stay engaged and participate more enthusiastically. Lastly, using soft deadlines, promoting class breaks, and providing resources were strategies that she found beneficial.

☞ **Roy** then expressed admiration for Alyssa's willingness to maintain open communication with her students and her community. Sharing experiences through the pandemic and acknowledging the struggles people have been going through can be extremely effective in helping to build community, foster a cooperative atmosphere, and check in on the wellbeing of the students.

↬ Although many of us have adjusted to this way of living during the pandemic, there are still things that we need to process, and communication can be a powerful way of sharing the burden

☞ Along that vein of thinking, Roy then asked Nic to tell us a bit more about how she has been coping during the pandemic as she is part of a vulnerable community that has been particularly affected by recent events.

🖉 It quickly became evident that Nic has been working with a lot of people who are really struggling. However, she's been doing her best to provide direct services from handing out sleeping bags to people who have nowhere to sleep, to sewing masks for people, to helping with medical tests and providing linked resources, but she wants to be able to offer more than clinical help to the community.

🖉 In response, Alyssa, whose program offers community support and mutual aid, talked about how they have been trying to make relief and recovery a community effort. She emphasized the importance of making sure students have the resources to continue attending after school programming, to remain cognizant of their circumstances, and prioritizing the community's well being rather than the economic situation of the program. They have done this by checking in, providing resources, and following up with the students.

🖉 Nic corroborated this concept, as a lot of young people, including her own son, have had to step up, sacrificing opportunities and taking on heavy responsibilities to cope economically. However, she's excited to see the impact she might have on the kids she interacts with who have an inclination towards art or photography.

☞ Roy recognized the need for a lot of organizations to offer more practical services and said he wished that more institutions would take direct actions, especially the ones with more access to resources (not nonprofits without financial capability)

🖉 His program has been implementing tool kits in the lesson plans in order to empower their students and expose them to possible career pathways that might benefit them in the digital age

☞ Mark concluded our conversation, right before the meeting ended, by talking about how glaringly obvious these issues have become as of late. Community programs like his, Alyssa, and Nic's are often underfunded, but it has become a much bigger issue during the pandemic.

☞ At that point, the individuals in my group started exchanging contact information and offering resources to one another. I personally find it really inspiring that they are all consciously trying to remain cognizant of those who are struggling within the larger community. I think it was really important to acknowledge that there are people experiencing difficulties all across the spectrum from those trying to navigate digital connectivity to those trying to make sure their communities are intact even at the expense of funding or participants to the youth who have been forced to take on additional responsibilities and might not have the time or mental energy to dedicate to creative processes even though they might want to.

Notes by
Daniel–José S. Cyan

Facilitator
Josie Wells

Discussion Participants
Jovelle Tamayo, Kamal Badhey, Mary Louise Miller, Oscar B. Castillo, Sackona Fitts

What are ways and examples to share stories accessibly?

⭐ ML is a photographer. She asked others to share their programs/whatever they are doing. She shared about an experience where she photographed these blind/visually impaired children who were taken to drive bumper cars.

⭐ Sackona used to work for the Bronx Documentary Center and now works for ReelWorks and says she is interested in the multi-media of it all.

⭐ Kamal is a photographer and teaches photography in many places. She is most interested in learning how to "change things up" by hearing what others are doing. She shared her appreciation of Community Heroes and the longevity of knowing the people who are being photographed and the display of said portraits.

⭐ Oscar works with former and current prisoners in an art-based project. He is most interested in learning how other people are working with minimal resources, especially because he is considering the crisis in Venezuela and is keeping in mind how resources can be sparce. Also curious about creative ways to complete those projects and amplifying the communities that are being memorialized.

⭐ Jovelle is a youth educator (6 year olds to high schoolers/college) but not since the pandemic. Is most interested in virtual techniques, has noticed how difficult it can be even for the college aged youth. Is looking for resources on how to keep youth engaged virtually.

⭐ Daniel-Jose shared the website he used for a virtual exhibit with a photography workshop he ran.
https://www.kunstmatrix.com/en

⭐ Kamal mentioned the Center for Documentary Studies. She mentioned a man that has a class called "Anytown" where a town is picked, projects are pre-produced and the participants choose what they want and films are made based on these. Many of these have been done in North Carolina. The final projects were displayed in public where anyone can pull up a chair and watch.
https://documentarystudies.duke.edu/events/screening-anytown-usa-student-films-mt-gilead-nc

⭐ Josie asked people to bring ideas of what has not worked.

⭐ Jovelle mentioned South Seattle Emerald, a program that challenges mainstream media and how white-centered it is. She appreciates Community Heroes and loves the idea of bringing it to Seattle to show publicly and even share in something like a zine. The Missouri Photo Workshop was mentioned, where photos of taken are citizens and a book is released back to them.
https://southseattleemerald.com/
http://mophotoworkshop.org/

⭐ Projectors were mentioned as a way of making sharing work accessible.

⭐ Lorie asked if there was any topic that stood out to anyone.

⭐ ML pointed out the Folded Map Project and talked about how different zip codes can be, even from each other. She had mentioned before this what it's like to live in South Carolina and how segregated it still can be. Her concern, even pointing out Las Fotos, was how projects start up because her experience teaching showed her that the technical skills is not the hard part.

⭐ Ron asked if anyone knew of any city similar to Chicago, like the Folded Map, where you can "fold the map" and the segregation is evident. New York City was said not to, but I pointed out that some street names are shared in different boroughs but are very different.

⭐ Kamal mentioned the couple that was pointed out in the Folded Map video and both her and Lorie agreed that the couple didn't mention the lack of diversity in the whiter neighborhoods, but instead, they focused on the material things they said they did not lack.

⭐ **Kamal** talked about how the grocery store shopping might be seen by an outsider as gentrification.

⭐ **Lorie** asked if there was any cultural shift for Margarita going from Colombia to Germany. Margarita shared that gentrification is not a real problem there- the race question looks different there. Communities of color are more isolated and Germans tend to be inside. She also mentioned that that changes by neighborhood, especially now that she lives in a neighborhood mixed with Italians and Turkish people who have customs of hanging out outside the storefronts.

⭐ **Ron** mentioned Vancouver and how when he visited, there are no places for specific communities (like a Harlem in Canada) because the focus in Vancouver is to specifically make things more equal.

⭐ **Lorie** asked Kamal, Margarita, and Daniel-Jose, about whether or not our students have mentioned gentrification in their photo projects.

⭐ **Kamal** said that working in the Bronx Documentary Center, students have reflected on their home life but have never named gentrification for what it is. It's more embedded into their stories, but there's less focus on it. Daniel-Jose talked about a photography workshop he put together at his last job at a housing rights organization. The youth in that workshop, where the focus was "home", were all affected by gentrification, whether they were watching their neighborhoods change or they were displaced from the neighborhoods they grew up in.

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Notes by
Alyssa Dickson

Facilitator
Brenna McLaughlin

Discussion Participants
Cindy Weisbart, Caitlin Gibbons

How might students bring their strengths and knowledge together to work on an art project?

⭐ Discussion Points:

👉 Look at what groups are doing the work
  Find an event to connect to

👉 Collective experience
  Cautiously diving into our own histories

👉 Benefits of Zoom learning
  Brings in more people from different communities

👉 Learning in the moment in film and photo
  Not as quick adaptation like in person learning
  Realizing Zoom affects the way we have been learning

👉 Important to create interdisciplinary conversations between educators so new connections can form

👉 Building skills in the classroom
  soft/hard skills
  Breakout rooms can provide confidentiality, privacy and safety to students
  Video conferencing w students at home and their families
  No camera bringing out confirmed bias – a conversation to be had in public education

⭐ Thought work

    Working through continuous problems
    Learning about issues in your community/communities
    Starting with something simple so that you can find something new
    Using platforms like TikTok, WhatsApp, and social media groups
    Think about how your work lives in a public realm

    ↳ Strategize how you want your work to be shown

Asking how you want to be represented at school
Making big subjects small
Attain other projects, give space to your project and think about who partnering with
Continuously thinking about intentions, who you're working with, where funding is coming from

    ↳ Taking care of your project and participants

    ↳ Ask how people want to be portrayed

    ↳ Doing project both privately and publicly

    ↳ Ask questions in your community and neighborhood

    Having different interactions of discussions

" Listen first and continuously ask yourself if you're listening!"

— Sol Aramendi

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We want to hear from you!

How are you using this toolkit?
What ideas or thoughts has it sparked?

Please write to us at education@photoville.com
or tag us on social media to share how
you're using our education resources.

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