



**third world majority**

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## DIGITAL STORY BASICS WORKSHEET

Here are some questions to get your story juices flowing, In filling them out you will be able to get key details to getting a first draft

- 1) **Who is my audience?**
- 2) **Who is the narrator? In addition to the narrator who are the other central characters and what are their relationships?**
- 3) **When and where does your story take place?**
- 4) **What kind of structure do you want your story to take. There are many kinds including: Tradition story (with a beginning , middle, and end), Journal entry, letter, poem, song, observational, etc?**
- 5) **What is the main problem that the central characters face?**
- 6) **How do your characters attempt to solve or address this problem?**
- 7) **What experiences, observations, or interactions do the characters have that help them address their problem? Are they internal(inside) or are they external (with other people, or with systems like school, prison, welfare, or both)?**
- 8) **What is the major twist, surprise or unexpected development in the story?**
- 9) **How is the problem concluded? Is there a resolution or an observation about a lack of resolution? What changed for the characters, - particularly what they may have learned, changes in perspective, etc.**

### **Stories outside of Communities for Advocacy:**

There are certain stories communities tell specifically outside of their community to official bodies within society (e.g. City Council, the legislature, mainstream media) in order to effect the messaging of some issue that is being decided in a larger forum outside of that community. These advocacy pieces have a direct agenda and may be specific to the community's experience around a particular issue. Their official audience will require the piece to be persuasive, use pertinent facts to sway uninformed or borderline folks to their issue, and will not necessarily reveal sensitive or controversial issues within the community to a larger audience.

### **Stories between communities for coalition-building:**

While many communities have shared experiences of struggling against racism, classism, sexism, colonialism and the loss of our resources and lands to these systems of oppression, it is rare that we get to build across our communities by sharing our individual stories of heartbreak, loss, and resistance. Sometimes the pain of a community is so deep that the survivors within these communities may have healed but not moved on because they have lost the words and parts of themselves in efforts to bury the stories of these painful experiences.

But, part of the healing of these deep pains can come from hearing a story that puts a voice to your particular struggle. That is one of the magical powers of stories. Stories never end within themselves. Stories give birth and open space for other stories. When communities can bear witness to their joint experiences, a powerful connection can be built as the storyteller and listener give name to a shared pain, which may have different details but is part of a larger story of our communities' resistance.

These coalition-building stories are often more intimate than advocacy pieces, and share to a degree the specific details about a community's particular experience that can help another community give voice to a similar understanding or experience. While coalition building may be specifically referenced in the piece, more often than not the story itself is an artifact of the relationship being built. The story can then be used in discussions or outreach sessions for communities in a variety of contexts.

### **Stories within communities to reaffirm values, wisdom, and history:**

Much of the technology that we use to tell our stories comes from a direct legacy of anthropological voyeurism, colonialism and police/military surveillance. Many communities have a history of trauma and betrayal with the camera that is difficult to overcome. Once those initial fears have been addressed, there can be a sense of empowerment from picking up the camera and telling our own stories to each other in all the raw strength and intimacy that is different from what we share with each other every day.

Our stories are a reflection of our values, wisdom, and history that we have stubbornly kept with us despite a massive institutional push for us to forget and destroy them. The fact that we have nourished their survival, and use them to renew and nourish us in our darkest times reflects how we need to continue telling and retelling our stories in new media, and on our own terms.

The internal stories of communities are the tenderest accounts of our experiences, and use specific image, language and terms that only those within the community may know. It is okay to use these specific details that are exclusive to your community because the stories are meant to be ONLY told within that particular community. The fact that some details and histories are secret and sacred to only that community reaffirms that community's right to determine the use of their image and culture. This becomes a huge part of our moving towards a time when all of our communities are free.

## Tips for Writing Your Own Community Digital Story

### **Tip # 1: Don't imitate the haters: you are not the mainstream media.**

Once you have determined what kind of story you are planning to tell it is important to keep in mind how you plan to tell your story. Often times when organizations think about how best to talk about what is going on in their community, particularly in communities of color, folks reach for the things that they think make them look the most professional and credible. In our society and in mainstream media that usually translates into an adult white male in a suit, handing down "objective" facts buffered by statistics and experts that support his position.

With mainstream media often earning our distrust, we should not strive to take down the master's house with the master's tools (thank you, Audre Lorde) without thinking about how differently and specifically exactly our communities and peoples will tell their stories.

We are not all Hype Williams or anyone else out of the music video complex. Further, while music videos may be fun, many videos that come out of the industry have hateful things to say about our bodies, our relations, and how we relate to each other as communities. If your group is planning to do a music video, you should think about what you will say and use to make sure you subvert the media with your own personal brand of positivity.

### **Tip #2: Think about your Point of View.**

Point of View means many things, but for your project it's both the point and the purpose of your story and the perspective from which you are telling it. The community digital stories that you are going to be creating are three to five minutes in length. In that short time for you to get your message out effectively, you are going to have to put your point out early in the piece so that the audience is hooked into the development of your argument and message.

Why are you telling this story? What are the problems you are dealing with in the community with which you as a youth are struggling but feel are not getting recognized? A good way to start thinking and writing about this is to use the description that you sent into AEF a year ago around this project and see if what that you guys wrote still applies to your work now. Write the description down as a list and then, whoever is working on the script should look at how these problems effect you on a personal level and write these effects down on a separate sheet of paper. That second list is where you are going to pull your digital story. This way you can talk about the problems, but you from a place where you are giving concrete, specific examples from your own experience.

In the same way that people today distrust "objective" media because they recognize it as corporate media, people also respond the most to personal, specific stories because they are rooted in your subjective or your REAL experience. People can't argue with what you feel. On the contrary, while they may disagree or agree strongly with your perspective, they will connect to your story because they have connected to you, your voice, and your life as the audience. As a result, they are more apt to support you and your call to action.

### **Tip # 3: Think about your audience:**

After you have written your lists and are getting ready to write your script, be sure to keep in mind that what details you share, omit, or emphasize all depends on your audience. Try not to get stuck solely on how to best frame your message to your audiences through the story. It is also important for to think about how much *who* your audience is changes the kind of story you tell. For example, the story of what you did Saturday night may change from when you tell your parents as opposed to when you talk about it with your friends at school, etc. Just like that, there are details you might emphasize, leave out,

or add depending on if this digital story is going to be used with other youth in your community, adults in the your community, folks outside of your communities, or funders, etc.

**Tip #4 : Keep your length in mind.**

Remember, your digital story is *not* supposed to be the next “Godfather” series or “Titanic.” By that, we mean it is not about your potential to make successful, blockbuster epics. Instead, the format of a digital story is actually three to five minutes. It is short, sweet, and to the point. For that reason, do not write a fifteen-page script and expect to edit it down to three to five minutes and finish it within the three-day workshop. Generally, a person’s script for a digital story is about **one-and-a-half pages long, double-spaced, and no smaller than 12-point font.**

Therefore, once you have an idea of what story you want to tell, GO WRITE IT. Many of you may not have an immediately easy time with writing at first. If you are having writer’s block, go to a quiet place, put on some music you like (bring such CD’s to the workshop, who knows if you might use it in your soundtrack!) and just start putting your pen to the paper. You’ll be surprised about how easy it is once you start. However, if you that does not work, get a tape recorder and try to free style into the player for a bit. When you feel like you are done, get your pen and paper and play back what you hear so that you can choose the parts you like and dump the ones you don’t. Just make sure that you stick to the one-and-a-half page limit for your scripts!

**Tip #5: Remember your Voice**

Finally, when you get to write your script, don’t think about it in terms of writing an essay. Remember that this is a story--a personal reflection on your life, work, and communities. Avoid using business, school, or grant writing language. Oftentimes, this kind of language is too impersonal and does not affect people as much since it is usually a seemingly objective third person voice of power to which we are often desensitized. These stories are coming from you; so while it may be hard, try writing it in the first person from the “I” or “We”. There are lots of techniques with this where you could write your script as either a poem, a cipher, or even as a letter to someone you care about. There is no limit to your creativity. So, experiment with this and have fun!

Remember, there is no proper or “right” way to speak in your story. For many of us who come from bilingual or trilingual homes, coming to school can be a traumatic experience where teachers and educational institutions drill into us the costs of speaking our languages by either punishing us because we speak a living mix of our two languages (e.g. my family speaks Tamil and English, a.k.a. “Tamil-ish.”.) In any case, we encourage you to write as you speak. Use the specifics of your slang and mix of languages to share the rhythm and the life of your voice and your community with your audience.

**Tip #6: Be Creative**

This should go without saying-- but just as an affirmation and an official reminder--BE AS CREATIVE AS YOU WANT. There is no right or wrong way to tell your story. Storytelling in all of our cultures reflects our own unique wisdoms that have been passed on in poems, songs, ciphers, epics, and novels. Choose the format that feels comfortable

We hope that this lesson plan has enough story tricks for you to use, for now. If you want to see a sample and script of a completed digital story, click on these following links to TWM’s domestic violence digital storytelling site [www.silencespeaks.org](http://www.silencespeaks.org). A really good movie to see is a one done in one of TWM’s youth workshops by a student named B.J. In this story, B.J. talks about his relationship with his father and how he treated his mother. It is a really amazing piece that you should check out below.

B.J.’s Movie is here.

<http://www.silencespeaks.org/stories.html>

B.J.’s script is here

[http://www.silencespeaks.org/stories/lo\\_res/lo\\_bjs.html](http://www.silencespeaks.org/stories/lo_res/lo_bjs.html)

## WRITING PROMPTS FOR FOLKS THAT NEED A LITTLE HELP!

Sometimes as organizers we get crisis fatigue. We have survived so much! From the ancestral pain of colonialism and slavery, to the ongoing institutional, interpersonal, and internalized impacts of these catastrophic events we all organize around. While we are direct survivors of these experiences, we get used to creating antiseptic narratives about our crises in our communities for the people in power: government officials, funders, opinion and decision makers. This language deadens our original memories of these experiences which is ironic because they are what moved us to action in the first place. While its easy to blame these outside agencies for stealing our voice, there is also many reasons why we might want to create this distance. Part of the need for this distance is what we have to do to survive past intense experiences, and part of it is the lack of validation we get in narrating our healing in our own words. Speaking the pain is a way to release it. It is in this spirit that we have come up with the following prompts for your story. Think of these writing prompts and inspirational quotes as free writing tools to help you brainstorm your story. We often get participants who feel like they have no story. With these tools we hope you uncover the many stories that make up you, your community, and your resistance.

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**Growing Up: School, Mentors, and Education:** Growing up can be filled with lots of wonderful and painful memories. Who were the people that made you who you are, your family, friends, elders, heroes/heroines, bullies, and even your enemies. Was there a pivotal moment which made you who you are, when you stopped being a child and became an adult. When you write the memories, give all the sensory details the sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and tactile memory of it all. Remember you are not making a list of everything that happened, but weaving a story that connects these moments,

“If you seek wisdom, dare to cross boundaries and step out of line. Sit beside the women and men doing the work by hand. Participate in life. Listen to the teachers and speak with other students. Close the books. Knowledge is not wisdom.” –The Tao of Women

“Revolution is a serious thing, the most serious thing about a revolutionary's life. When one commits oneself to the struggle, it must be for a lifetime” --Angela Davis

“We have to talk about liberating minds as well as liberating society.” --Angela Davis  
Angela Davis

“A child cannot be taught by anyone who despises him, and a child cannot afford to be fooled.”  
–James Baldwin

“I try to learn as much as I can because I know nothing compared to what I need to know”  
.-Muhammad Ali

“It is not who you attend school with, but who controls the school you attend.” Nikki Giovanni

“There are years that ask questions and years that answer.” Zora Neale Houston

**Self Esteem and Body Image: What is your relationship with yourself? If you could describe your journey of self discovery what would it look like? What are things you do to keep yourself whole, and what are the things you do that rip yourself apart. Who helped you and what did they do to make you more comfortable with your self? Who hurt you and made you feel ashamed about your self?**

"Beloved, you are my sister, you are my daughter, you are my face; you are me." -Toni Morrison

"I am visible--see this Indian face--yet I am invisible. I both blind them with my beak nose and am their blind spot. But I exist, we exist. They'd like to think I have melted in the pot. But I haven't. We haven't."  
- Gloria Anzaldua

"I change myself, I change the world"- Gloria Anzaldua

"Time is a dressmaker specializing in alterations." Faith Baldwin

"To assess the damage is a dangerous act."-Muriel Rukeyser

"Revolution begins with the self, in the self."-Toni Cade Bambara

**Injustice: Naming the pain is a way of releasing it . When we need to tell truth to power our stories are complex because our scars are deep. When you write your story think about what are the root causes and system of oppression (or intersections of systems) that are responsible. Do you want to explore institutional, interpersonal, or internalized impacts in your story? What is the terms that you use inside your community to describe your conditions, is that different from how the people in power describe it, if it is different describe it using sensory details and if possible find out how that split in perception/description happened.**

"There is something about poverty that smells like death. Dead dreams dropping off the heart like leaves in a dry season and rotting around the feet."-Zora neale houston

"As long as one people sit on another and are deaf to their cry, so long will understanding and peace elude all of us"--Chinua Achebe

"That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman?"--Sojourner Truth

Liberation means you don't have to be silenced. If you're going to hold someone down you're going to have to hold on by the other end of the chain. You are confined by your own repression .-Toni Morrison

"Radical simply means 'grasping things at the root.'" -Angela Davis

"Crime is naught but misdirected energy." -Emma Goldman

"Silence is argument carried out by other means." -Che Guevara

"There is a higher law than the law of government. That's the law of conscience." -Stokely Carmichael

"You can't separate peace from freedom because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom. "

--Malcolm X

**Sexuality, Gender, Relationships: What is the dense and beautiful place where we come together in love with each other. As Audre Lourde says the erotic is power. Write about your first time you fell in love, how did you meet, what made it easy and what made it hard. What are your fears about intimacy and what are your joys. How do you and your partner(s) fight? Who or what does it remind you of? How have you come to terms with your sexuality and/or gender identification? Where are you in your journey of self acceptance? Whose voices do you hear when you doubt who you can be?**

Never go to bed mad. Stay up and fight." Phyllis Diller

In true dialogue, both sides are willing to change. Thich Nhat Hanh

The price of hating other human beings is loving oneself less. Eldridge Cleaver (U.S. writer and Black Panther leader, 1935- )

If I cannot air this pain and alter it, I will surely die of it. That's the beginning of social protest. Audre Lorde (U.S. poet, 1934-1992)

Silence is argument carried out by other means. Che Guevara

Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place. Zora neale houston

**Resistance: Isabelle Allende reminds us to write what must not be forgotten. Too often when our stories are told we have to fight the Sally Struthers Missionary filter where we are victims but never agents in our destinies. Telling the problem is one part of our story, being part of the solution is the another. That is why stories of resistance are so important, even if they are about struggles that were lost, there are lessons that can be used for another fights. In thinking about your story share the ah-ha moments of the campaign (like strategy sessions where participants may have had important shift in political vision), the behind the scenes work, action shots of protests. Banner drops, etc. In your example what does peoples power look, sound, smells, tastes, and feels like.**

"Living on borders and in margins, keeping intact one's shifting and multiple identity and integrity, is like trying to swim in a new element, an "alien" element."- Gloria Anzaldua

"...the function of freedom is to free somebody else." Toni Morrison

"Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." Chinese Proverb  
Healing

"It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees." Emiliano Zapata

"We cannot grow a lotus without mud." Thich Nhat Hanh

"Give light and people will find the way." -Ella Baker

"The price of hating other human beings is loving oneself less." Eldridge Cleaver

If we even tolerate any oppression of gay and lesbian Americans, if we join those who would intrude upon the choices of our hearts, then who among us shall be free?- June Jordan

**Reclaiming your creativity/ spirituality: Our relationship to our creative power comes from the same place as our connection to spirit. Unfortunately it has also been a place of tremendous pain as our cultural traditions have been appropriated and our traditional faiths demolished. But as survivors we have not been willing to let the spirit and creative realm go without a fight. Write about what is important to you about your creativity or spirituality. What were turning points in either relationship. Do you see yourself as a creative person why or why not, who were artistic influences or critics? What is your relationship to faith? How does it inform you are?**

I'm glad I understand that while language is a gift, listening is a responsibility.  
Nikki Giovanni

If I can't dance, it's not my revolution! -Emma Goldman

There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.-Mayangelou

I am playing with my Self, I am playing with the world's soul, I am the dialogue between my Self and el espiritu del mundo. I change myself, I change the world -- Gloria Anzaldua

Until lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunters.  
African Proverbs

We are always making God our accomplice so that we may legalize our own inequities.  
Henri Amiel

It has seemed so strange to me that the larger culture, with its own absence of spirit and lack of attachment for the land, respects these very things about Indian traditions, without adopting those respected ways themselves.' Linda Hogan Good poetry and successful revolution change our lives. And you cannot compose a good poem or wage a revolution without changing consciousness unless you attack the language that you share with your enemies and invent a language that you share with your allies. Audre Lorde The Bible has been used as a way of making us accept our situation, and not to bring enlightenment to the poor. --Rigoberta Menchú

That little man says women can't have as much rights as men because Christ wasn't a woman. Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with him. --Sojourner Truth

While you are experimenting, do not remain content with the surface of things. Don't become a mere recorder of facts, but try to penetrate the mystery of their origin.--Isabel allende

The universe is made up of stories, not atoms.--Muriel Rukeyser

i was cold / i was burnin up / a child & endlessly weavin garments for the moon  
wit my tears

i found god in myself & i loved her / i loved her fiercely.--Ntozake Shange