

MODULE FOUR THE STORIES WE TELL

Guiding question/s:

How can stories and messaging be used to help or harm us?
How do we respond when our stories aren't being told,
or when the stories told about us are harmful?

Broad student understandings:

With every story, it is important to think about who benefits, who is harmed, and who is excluded. When you are written out of the story, write yourself back in.

Specific learning goals:

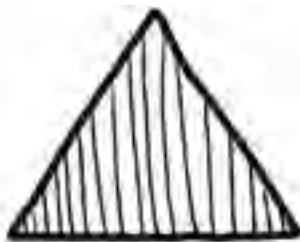
- Assess the different outcomes that can result from “stories told by us” versus “stories told about us.”
- Examine how media stories can be used to send messages that shape perceptions of individuals, groups of people, and events.
- Create a messaging plan to advance project goals.

Prep — Sessions 7 and 8:

- Printouts of Messaging Gallery Walk
- Copies of articles, or links for students reading on computers, as needed
- Optional: Smartboard, computer, or TV for showing videos
- Printouts of **Messaging Gallery Walk**

Resources:

- Same event, two stories:
 - Jennicet Gutierrez Interrupts President Obama
 - [Activist Removed After Heckling Obama at L.G.B.T. Event at White House](#)
 - [EXCLUSIVE: I interrupted Obama because we need to be heard](#)
 - Videos: [Video 1](#) (Obama focus), [Video 2](#) (Gutierrez focus)
 - Black Trans Women Speak Out at LGBTQ Candidate Forum
 - [Pete Buttigieg defuses protesters as 2020 candidates bring campaign to LGBT forum](#)
 - [Black Trans Women Raise Their Voices at CNN LGBTQ Forum](#)
 - Videos: [Video 1](#) (Blossom C. Brown), [Video 2](#) (Bamby Salcedo, Maria Roman, Shea Diamond)
- **Messaging Gallery Walk**
- [Documents: Art, AIDS & Activism in Chicago](#) | Visual AIDS



SILENCE=DEATH

KISSING DOESN'T KILL: GREED AND INDIFFERENCE DO.



SESSION 7

Objective

Students examine how media stories can be used to send messages that shape perceptions of individuals, groups of people, and events.

Students reflect on and individually/private respond to the prompt:

Consider a time when you felt misunderstood.

1. **What was the truth?**
2. **What did the other person or people think instead?**
3. **How did it make you feel?**
4. **What did it make you want to do or say?**

Entry Activity (10 minutes)

The prompt should be posted in text large enough for students to see and repeated out loud for the students. Students may also benefit from a handout with the questions printed with space for their answers.

Students can write/doodle their thoughts for themselves privately, and after reflection can discuss out loud as a whole group, with a partner, or in small groups.

Whole Group Analysis (20 minutes)

Explain that being misunderstood happens on a personal level, but also happens to whole groups of people. Sometimes it comes from ignorance, and sometimes people in power intentionally tell a story about a group of people that makes them seem unimportant or dangerous.

Introduce the idea that the same advocacy event can be told in different ways to send a message about a person or group of people, and the group will work through an example together.

Hi-tech or lo-tech: Show brief [video](#) from the Guardian of Jennicet Gutierrez interrupting Obama at the White House Pride Month Celebration.

Hand out printouts of the story "[Activist Removed After Heckling Obama at L.G.B.T. Event at White House](#)," and read out loud with students following along or asks students to read. Hi-tech or lo-tech options include also having the story up on a Smartboard or PowerPoint presentation.

Discuss the following questions one at a time, seeking student input through verbal participation or raised hands, and asking students to circle the answers in the article as they are found:

1. **Whose name appears in the headline and first paragraph? When is the first time the name of the “activist” appears? Who would you say is the focus of the story, and why? (Answers: President Obama, paragraph two, President Obama).**
2. **What was the reason for the event? (Answer: LGBT Pride Month celebration)**
3. **What was the response from President Obama and the people at the event? (Answer: boos, shouts, “You’re in my house,” “shame on you”).**
4. **What words or phrases are used to describe Jennicet Gutierrez in the article? (Possible answers: activist, heckler, transgender, in the country illegally, “this person”).**
5. **How do you think these words/phrases are supposed to make us feel about her? (Leave open to differing viewpoints, but possible answers: that she is aggressive, different, a criminal, not a woman, a bother).**
6. **How can these messages have an impact on how people see trans women of color beyond just this story? (Possible answer: People may think of trans women of color as “hecklers,” criminals, people who should be ashamed of themselves.)**

Show the brief [Democracy Now clip](#) which shows Gutierrez’s perspective. Hand out printed copies of the second article, “EXCLUSIVE: I interrupted Obama because we need to be heard,” and read out loud with students following along or asks students to read. Hi-tech or low-tech options can display the article digitally.

Discuss the following questions one at a time, seeking student input through verbal participation or raised hands as appropriate, and asking students to circle the answers in the article as they are found:

1. **Who is the author of the article? Whose story is being told? (Answer: Jennicet Gutierrez)**
2. **What phrase appears instead of “heckled”? (Answer: interrupted)**
3. **What were her reasons for interrupting President Obama? (Possible answer: To raise awareness about the dangerous detention of immigrant transgender women).**

**Individual
or Small Group
Analysis
(20 minutes)**

Introduce the second event students will review, on Black trans women speaking out at the CNN Democratic town hall. Explain that this was a forum for presidential candidates to speak on LGBTQ+ issues, and audience members asked each candidate questions. While the issue of Black trans women being murdered at high rates came up at times, no Black trans women were invited to personally ask a question of the candidates.

Hi-tech or low-tech options include showing a brief video or videos of those moments: [Video 1](#) (featuring Blossom C. Brown), [Video 2](#) (featuring Bamby Salcedo, Maria Roman, Shea Diamond).

Students will individually take time to read their assigned article (some students can get [“Pete Buttigieg defuses protesters as 2020 candidates bring campaign to LGBT forum,”](#) and some can get [“Black Trans Women Raise Their Voices At CNN LGBTQ Forum.”](#) As they read, students answer the following questions on their own:

1. **Who is in the headline? Who is the focus of the article?**
2. **What was said about the women protesting in the article?**
3. **What message do you think the article was trying to send about the women and the seriousness of their concerns?**

Students reflect on and respond to the following prompt:

Think back to the time when you felt misunderstood.

Write two different “headlines” about the event, one that focuses on you and your perspective and one from the other person’s perspective.

Example, a student feeling misunderstood because she was thought not to be smart solely because she did not yet speak English: “Teachers struggle to teach lazy student.” vs. “Hardworking student perseveres in school despite lack of support from teachers.”

Note: If you only have time for one lesson from Brick by Brick, this one works well as a standalone.

Modifications:

- **Do the same activity but with the videos alone instead of the articles, or vice versa, depending on the needs of your students.**

**Exit
Activity
(10 minutes)**

Modifications & Extension Activities

- Have students read and annotate the articles and answer the questions on their own before coming together as a group to discuss.

Extension Opportunities:

- Ask students to also consider the different media outlets publishing the pieces and how the students think different types of media outlets make an impact on whose story they think is being told more. Ask them to research the outlets and figure out who the audience for those particular outlets are and consider what the differences could mean about the stories they tell.
- Have students choose an “advocacy moment” from history or current events, and practice telling it from the perspective of the advocates.



SESSION 8

Objective

Students will define an overarching “message” for their project and consider how to respond to opposition viewpoints.

Entry Activity (10 minutes)

“Move into the circle” activity: Gather the students into a wide circle and ask students to move into the circle if what you say is true. (Suggested accommodation: Students can move in whatever way works for them; by stepping in, extending an arm, moving a chair, or other means.) Prompts can start light and get more serious as trust builds. As students get more comfortable, they can suggest their own prompts.

Sample prompts for moving into the circle:

Move into the circle if...

Your favorite color is blue.

You were born in the winter.

You are a morning person.

You would say you have strong opinions.

You feel you have a voice in your school.

You feel your needs are taken seriously by your school.

You see people like you represented in most TV and movies.

You feel that politicians understand your life.

Introduce the history and context of AIDS activism: People in the LGBTQ+ community, and many others, were dying from a disease that the medical community feared and stigmatized and that the government ignored. Instead of allowing their community to keep dying with no help, activists decided to fight back. Groups like ACT UP, and others, worked hard to bring attention to the crisis and demand action. They used a variety of advocacy methods to accomplish their goals.

Have students listen to the brief seven-minute radio segment [How To Demand A Medical Breakthrough: Lessons From The AIDS Fight](#), giving some examples of what AIDS advocacy looked like.

Mini-Lesson + Messaging Gallery Walk (20 minutes)

**Individual
or Small Group
(20 minutes)**

Transition into the **Messaging Gallery Walk**. Be sure to set the room up with pictures taped around the room before the session/class/activity begins.

As students walk around the room to look at the pictures, have them think about and note their answers to the following questions:

1. **What are some different ways AIDS activists got their message across? (Possible answers: protesting, visuals like buttons and signs)**
2. **What makes the signs and artwork powerful? (Possible answers: Bold colors, people's names, "loud" energy, use of symbolism)**
3. **What do you think the activists' goals were? How did they use art and protest to fight for their goals?**

(Possible answers: Their goals were to demand attention to the AIDS crisis and have the government take it seriously. They used art and protest to get in people's faces and make a lasting impression.)

Review some possible answers with the group.

Students spend time individually or in small project groups (depending on whether they are doing the project individually or in a group) filling in a "messaging plan," including brainstorming and recording their answers to the following questions:

1. **Who do you want to be the focus of the story you want to tell about your project issue?**
2. **What is the change you want to make with your project?**
3. **What are three messages you want to send about the issue you care about?**
4. **What is a one-sentence headline about the message you want to send with your project? (Example from AIDS activists: "Silence = Death.")**
5. **Optional: Would a hashtag make sense for your project? If so, what could it be?**
6. **What are some different ways you can put your message out? (e.g. social media account, video, signs, etc.)**
7. **What do you think the challenges will be of getting your message out there? How do you think you can address those challenges?**

**Exit
Activity
(10 minutes)**

**Extension
Opportunities**

**Notes &
Extension
Opportunities**

8. What do you think people who disagree with you would say about your project issue? What could their headline be?

9. What can some strategies be for responding to people who disagree?

Allow for flexibility as students work individually or in small groups--their projects will likely take different shapes, and the concept of messaging and storytelling will look a little different for each project. Grant space for each project to develop in its own way.

Students take two minutes to write their tentative message “headlines” and/or hashtags on giant post-it notes around the room. Students then do a gallery walk with smaller post-its, and post things they like about the message and things they think could make it even better. Take photos of the post-its, or store them for students to come back to later.

Lo-tech/hi-tech: You can provide additional context on how activists brought attention to AIDS by showing clips from [Fight Back, Fight AIDS: 15 Years of ACT UP](#), and/or by having students explore [ACT UP’s timeline](#).

No-tech: Have students spend time focusing on the experiences of people of color in AIDS activism. In small groups, individually, or as a class, students can read and discuss the following articles. Discussion can focus on how people of color make space for themselves in larger movements that are not always inclusive.

- [Early AIDS Activism Was So Much More Diverse Than Media Depicts It](#)
- [Should ‘Pose’ rewrite ACT UP’s diversity issues to include more people of color?](#)
- [Robert Vazquez-Pacheco on Race, ACT UP and Why Older HIV/AIDS Leaders Need to Pass the Torch](#)

Lo-tech/high-tech: In addition to AIDS activism, take time to look at different LGBTQ+ rights campaigns and social media strategies and examine the stories they are telling and the tools they use to get their message across. Examples include No Justice No Pride’s [Call to Action](#), the Marsha P. Johnson Institute’s [More Than A Number](#), Intersex Justice Project’s [End Intersex Surgery](#), the [UndocuQueer Movement](#), and the [Won’t Be Erased](#) trans rights campaign.

For more messaging resources and templates, especially for older or more advanced students, see these resources from [The Body: The HIV/AIDS Resource](#).



**“ I LIKE WHAT I’M DOING. TO HELP PEOPLE.
I DON’T LIKE INJUSTICE LIKE POLICE ARRESTING OUR
COMPANIONS IN THE STREET.
WOMEN THAT LIVED IN OUR
NEIGHBORHOOD WERE
BEING DEPORTED
INSTANTLY.**



The illustration features two women. In the foreground, a woman with dark skin and short hair, wearing a yellow headband with a flower and a yellow shawl, holds a large blue sign. Behind her, a woman with light skin, wearing a pink headscarf and glasses, also holds the sign. The background is filled with large, stylized flowers in various colors (red, yellow, blue, green) and a white dove in flight. The overall style is vibrant and expressive.

**YOUTH^{OF} COLOR
YOU MATTER
& ARE LOVED**

**ONE DAY I
SAID ‘NO.’ LORENA
BORJAS MUST PUT PANTS
ON. LORENA BORJAS
WILL TAKE CARE OF THESE
WOMEN WHO DON’T HAVE
A VOICE.”**