

But, What Is Joy?

Q.C.

DAY 1

Do Now:

Carefully examine the images at the [Museum of Black Joy](#)

Answer these questions:

1. What are the words, thoughts, and feelings that come to you as you look at the photographs on this site?

Looking at the photographs, I feel joy, a sense of community, togetherness, and they capture a still of the happiness in life.

2. Where have you seen images like these previously, if at all?

The images are like any other photos, capturing the essence of one's cherished memories and moments in life, though in black and white.

Discussion Notes

Question	Notes from the class discussion
Words, Thoughts, Feelings	Photographs could capture all the joy in black and white Nostalgic photos Photos show movement but captured in a still frame Depict acts of happiness such as visiting a bookstore
Where else have you seen images like these?	Places and backgrounds are locally in Philadelphia Similar to a Facebook page that is joyful and centered around family

Turn and Talk to your partner:

1. What is joy? How would you define it? What does it look like? How does it feel?

Joy is a sense of happiness with an element of freedom and personal fulfillment. Joy is subjective to every person's experience. It is often seen with laughter and smiles and leaves behind a deep memory. Joy comes with a light feeling inside your body, almost like floating on clouds.

2. In your personal experience, where do you see examples of Black Americans experiencing joy, through celebrations, laughter, victories, and everyday life?

Memorable moments that Black Americans experience joy are from gatherings, family parties, the aftermath of fighting against oppression, moments of everyday life, and similar to joyful experiences of others.

3. Create a definition of “Black joy.”

Black joy is a sense of well-spirited happiness and celebration from embracing their culture and background.

4. In your personal experience, where are examples of Black joy missing? Why is it important to see stories of Black joy?

Black joy is often missing from news reports and media, which often focus on breaking news and racial issues. Moments of excellence and success are often not discussed. It is important to see examples for Black people to see themselves represented in joy.

“What are Under-Reported Stories” Video

- “According to the speakers in the video, what is an under-reported story?”

An under-reported story covers an issue that is important but isn’t getting the attention it deserves or is missing critical information and nuance.

- How are under-reported news stories different from other news stories? Reference examples from the video in your description.”

Under-reported news stories differ because they save lives. There were far fewer coverages of COVID in the first weeks of 2020 despite being critically important. They illuminate deeper issues that we face as a society and bring change by highlighting inequality, corruption, women’s contributions, or the prison incarceration rate.

Exit Ticket:

What makes something an under-reported story?

An under-reported story often covers issues that go unnoticed and unaddressed. They often hold experiences and information that could change how one views the world but are simply left untold.

DAY 2

Do Now:

1. Respond to this quotation from the Philadelphia-based artist Andrea “Philly” Walls’ who created the Museum of Black Joy.

"I can show daily images of what I'm calling Black joy, which is just ordinary moments of grace and kindness and non-traumatic breath."

Walls takes photos of Black joy and says that they are normal moments of grace and kindness. Black joy is commonly represented in day to day life within all the smiles and actions that come. It is often expressed in times of wellbeing and contentedness from being surrounded by friends and family, or simply doing something that you enjoy.

(Worked with Ben)

“I Am Omar”

1. Go through the article and examine all of the images and videos. Which one is the most striking to you and why?

The photo that is most striking to me is of the men praying together inside a home. The framing of the photo with the men in the center, seen through a dark doorway highlights the centerpiece on the role of religion.

2. What did Omar write? How many of his pieces have been found? In what language did he write? What did he write about? How was the content of his writing perhaps limited by his condition of enslavement?

Omar wrote an autobiography, religious passages, and various texts with at least 15 surviving in Arabic. Omar wrote about his captivity in slavery and being Muslim; his autobiography was the only surviving one written in Arabic by an American enslaved person. Being enslaved, Omar had few chances to write.

3. What was happening in Futa Toro before and during the time that Omar was kidnapped into slavery?

Shortly before Omar was kidnapped into slavery, President Thomas Jefferson banned slave importation, Futa Toro’s leader was murdered, and infidels attacked the village.

4. Describe Omar’s escape from slavery, his time in jail, and his re-enslavement.

After four years in slavery, Omar fled on foot from Lowcountry for nearly 220 miles until he spotted a vacant building. The slave patrol was in the building; Omar was recaptured into slavery. He stayed in jail for 16 days and spent his time writing prayers on the walls. News of his ability to write in Arabic spread across the town and a man named Mitchell claimed to have bought Omar from his enslaver but was finally bought by James Owen, a wealthy planter who also had an interest in Omar.

5. What role did Islam play in Omar’s life?

Omar prayed five times a day, strictly observed Ramadan, and wrote prayers in Arabic. Omar was a devoted Muslim and his religious beliefs shaped his life. Omar soon became Uncle Moro, living in a private cabin and had a unique role within the Owens family.

6. What did Omar write in his letter to state Senator John Owen and his church community?

Omar wrote a letter to Senator John Owen, quoting Muslim passages, and drew a pentacle to seek protection, writing to ask to leave the Owens.

7. What did Omar write in 1831 in his “document of resistance?”

In Omar’s “document of resistance,” he quotes lines of Surah AL-Mulk but did not mention enslavers or insurrections. Instead, he stated that he was not Uncle Moro or Prince Moro, but simply Omar who loved to read the Great Quran. He also briefly mentioned his personal life and how Jim Owen never treated him brutally.

8. Describe the quest of the journalists and their group to find Omar ibin Said’s home.

Journalists traveled inland to Futa Toro and used clues from Omar’s autobiography to find the location. They ask villagers for the location between the two rivers and are met with various answers. The journalists drove for miles across roads, searching for Omar’s home. They show Omar’s letter to the local people in hopes of obtaining further information and eventually make their way to Coppe, the ancient village that Omar lived in.

9. Why do the journalists allow one of the men of Coppe to keep the packet of Omar’s texts? What does this tell us about reporting on a community outside of our own?

The men wish to keep Omar’s texts to study it and allow imams to discuss the meaning of it. The journalists allow him to keep it, saying that the texts are theirs. Reporting on a community outside our own gives insight into other practices and cultures.

Exit Ticket:

Put a sticky note on a large piece of paper hanging on the wall (or a “sticky” on a Jamboard) that responds to the question:

Is “I am Omar” an under-reported story about a historical figure or not? Why?

DAY 3

Do Now: Reflect on “I am Omar.” What made the story a positive and accurate depiction of Omar and his experiences?

The story had a positive and accurate depiction of Omar because it recounted his life experiences by reading his autobiography and picking apart all the aspects of his life. It highlighted his dedication to his Muslim faith, and his intellectual achievements rather than his enslavement. The journalists also researched in depth to find the meaning behind his texts and his perspective rather than the story built by whites.

Contemporary Stories from Pulitzer Center

Which article did you choose to read?:

Portraits of a Pandemic: Joining a Broader Movement to Fight for Tenant Rights

- What makes this story underreported?

This story is underreported because it discusses the tenant crisis in Philadelphia, which is not often highlighted in the media and especially from the perspective of the tenants.

- What makes this story newsworthy?

This article is newsworthy because the tenant crisis is an increasingly pressing issue with nearly a quarter of Philadelphia residents living under the federal poverty line.

- What instances of excellence, resistance, and/or joy do you see in the article?

The tenants of the building collaborated together to form a council and sent out a letter to their landlord, Eugene Smith outlining their rights and when they would be able to return to work. Smith responded, wishing to work with them and form payment plans, sparking a moment of excellence.

Notes from discussion with other students. (What articles did they read? What instances of Black excellence, resistance and joy did they notice?)

Odunde: The festival is about Black joy and focuses on African American culture. The festival has a lot of music, food, and art. There was resistance because the event was to be canceled due to COVID-19 and instead turned the festival virtual.

Race & Gender: A Black transgender woman was able to found her own company after high school, a moment of excellence. Her drive to continue being who she is an act of resistance against the discrimination that the Black transgender community faces.

Love: A couple both had COVID-19 and resisted together by fighting off the virus. Joy was expressed after they returned home together.

Brainstorm: What are contemporary issues that are underreported, newsworthy, and would show instances of Black excellence, resistance, and/or joy? What images were included in these articles that helped you better understand and connect to the underreported story?

Contemporary issues that are often underreported and newsworthy, showcasing moments of Black excellence, resistance, and joy include Black success in literature, arts, and theatre. In the article, images were included showing the people highlighted in the stories and to give context on what the situation is like.

DAY 6

Do Now: Examine the visual essay: [Afropunk Brings The 'Black Lives Matter' Ethos Abroad.](#)

- Use five words to describe what you are seeing in these images.

Culture, strength, pride, creativity, identity

- What are ways that YOU can create and curate images to show joy?

To curate and create images of joy, you can go out to capture moments that are striking and resonating into a still frame with anything from attending a festival to two people conversing at a cafe.

“Building Trust”

What are three pieces of advice from the Pulitzer Center journalists on building trust with people whom you interview?

1. Building trust with people whom you interview stems from finding an answer to the reason why you are working on the project.
2. Putting down your camera and being present with the people you are reporting with is essential to establishing a connection.
3. Interviewing people needs trust that is built from spending time and getting to know the person.