

Reframing the Gaze:
Incorporating Joy into our Truth Telling

Jairus E. Hallums
“Arts, Journalism, and Justice” Cohort

How we view minority bodies dictates how we interact with them. Thus, the media could play a role in reframing the gaze. The push for justice begins with a renewed gaze. What if, in our truth telling, we reported more on joy, in the midst of the reports on death, in all its iterations--political, social, and physical. This will tell a more full portrait of the minority experiences, and reframe the narratives that are often told. If we change the lens, such that the trauma of minority life is not the focus, but the beauty of minority life is, maybe the conversation on justice could shift.

This conversation-based unit seeks to teach students to reframe/renew their gaze, so that in reporting on truth, they do not focus only on the dark side of it, but allow the light of underreported stories of joy to shine forth. Students will focus on identifying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating, stories that often go underreported. In the process, they will be able to see the multidimensional aspects of truth, encompassing the beautiful/the joyful, and those stories that we typically see presented. Assessing the fullness of truth, with a renewed gaze, will enable justice work to be authentic, minority life experiences to be represented fully, and reporting to have a new standard by which to operate.

Objectives

Students will be able to discuss various concepts related to representations of minority life, justice, and perspective on particular communities, in order to deepen their knowledge of the ideas presented.

Students will be able to discuss what makes a story newsworthy, and why other stories might go underreported.

Students will be able to define “truth” and “joy,” in their own words.

Students will be able to apply their knowledge/learning of truth-telling in a performance task, which can be used to build community

Students will be able to describe present justice-related issues and use unit resources to brainstorm solutions.

Layout of the Unit

This is a unit that centers on dialogue, with time embedded to reflect, through writing, upon texts.

Three main ideas will be discussed:

- Truth
- The Gaze
- Joy

Performance Task

- I. Students will create a journal of five reflections, over the course of the week, that will allow the space to think through the ideas presented in this unit. In the “Closing” section of each day, there is a prompt/question for reflection, whereby students will be asked to think, deeply.

They are required to write, at least, one page in a digital or paper notebook, for each session.

- II. Students will also choose one of the following to complete as their sixth, and final, entry. Based on the themes they’ve thought through, on truth and joy, students will synthesize their learning about justice, journalism, and the arts.

<p>Using photography as the medium, capture “joy in the struggle” in your community. Write a detailed description of your snapshots, shedding light on the stories you’ve captured.</p>	<p>Students create a space for stories of joy to be reported (or told). Interview individuals about what joy means to them in the midst of injustice. Seek out individuals that have experienced injustice, in some form, and ask what brought them joy in those times.</p>	<p>Write a poem or song in response to a local/national story of injustice. (Students may also respond using another art form)</p>
<p>Reference: “Afropunk Brings The ‘Black Lives Matter’ Ethos Abroad” (Melissa Bunni Elian)</p> <p>The work of Adrienne Waheed Glory (Kahran and Regis Bethencourt)</p>	<p>Reference: Life in St. Louis’s Most Vulnerable Neighborhoods in the Time of Coronavirus</p>	<p>Reference:</p> <p>Black Joy, Uninterrupted (Spoken Word)</p> <p>Backlash Blues (Nina Simone)</p> <p>Black Joy is Revolutionary</p>

DAY ONE:
truth



Open Ended Question

What is your definition of "truth"?

How to Edit

Click [Edit This Slide](#) in the plugin to make changes.

Don't have the Nearpod add-on? Open the "Add-ons" menu in Google Slides to install.



Other Definitions of Truth...

- 1 a: (1): the body of real things, events, and facts : ACTUALITY
 (2): the state of being the case : FACT
 (3)often capitalized: a transcendent fundamental or spiritual reality

 b: a judgment, proposition, or idea that is true or accepted as true

 c: the body of true statements and propositions
- 2 a: the property (as of a statement) of being in accord with fact or reality

My Definition

“Truth” is a
portrayal of the
world as it *really*
is.

Focus Point

Today, I want to facilitate a discussion about the significance of truth, and its importance in news reporting. We do this by asking questions like “What is truth?” and “Why is truth important in the reporting of news stories?” We do this to understand how stories are told, and how they frame our outlook on particular ideas and communities.

“An Essential Business for a Vulnerable Population”

BY SYLVESTER BROWN JR.

You will have 15 minutes to read the text. As you read, jot down notes about...

...his central idea

...his purpose for writing

...key issues he’s highlighting

LET'S TALK

Community Agreements

Be respectful.

Listen intently.

Be engaged.

Remain focused.

(As a group, add any other norm you think is necessary for a productive conversation)

Let's Talk

- a. What issue (or issues) is the author highlighting?
What is the author saying about that issue (or issues)?
- b. Based on the text, what truth is being reported on?
- c. What is the impact of this truth on our perception of the idea, person, or community being reported on?

Today's Reflection

*You are encouraged, in your reflection, to be honest. The subject matter may be sensitive, at times. Allow the reflection to give the space to be honest about your thoughts on what's happening in society, and what's happening in your life.

Why does reporting on a story involving minority communities tend to focus on the negative? Is that [always] the case? Is that [always] a bad thing? Is the truth always negative? Who (or what) determines what “truth” is?

DAY TWO:
truth

Opener

Post a photo of (or identify and describe) a person you consider to be a truth teller in society.



Focus Point

Today, I want to facilitate a discussion about the purpose of bearing witness. We will do this by defining what it means to bear witness, and what it entails (and should entail) in reporting on experiences of minority communities. We do this to understand that bearing witness to truth requires telling a complete story about a community's experiences, for the sake of how others perceive it, and engage with it.

Today's Agenda

1. Review: What is truth? Why is it important in telling the stories of minority experiences?
2. We will view a [clip](#) from “Bear Witness, Take Action,” and discuss what it means to bear witness. What does it look like? (What should it look like?)
3. Students will choose a story from a local media outlet or publication. Respond to the following: How is the author bearing witness to the truth in his/her story?

Today's Reflection

1. How will you “bear witness” to truth in your life, right now?
2. Students will choose a story from a local/national media outlet or publication. Respond to the following: How is the author bearing witness to the truth in his/her story?

Publications	Television News Outlets
<p>Atlanta Journal Constitution Gwinnett Daily Press The Atlanta Voice</p> <p>Pulitzer Resources (Go to “Reporting” or “Issues”)</p>	<p>FOX 5 WSBTV (Channel 2 News) 11Alive</p>

DAY THREE:
the gaze

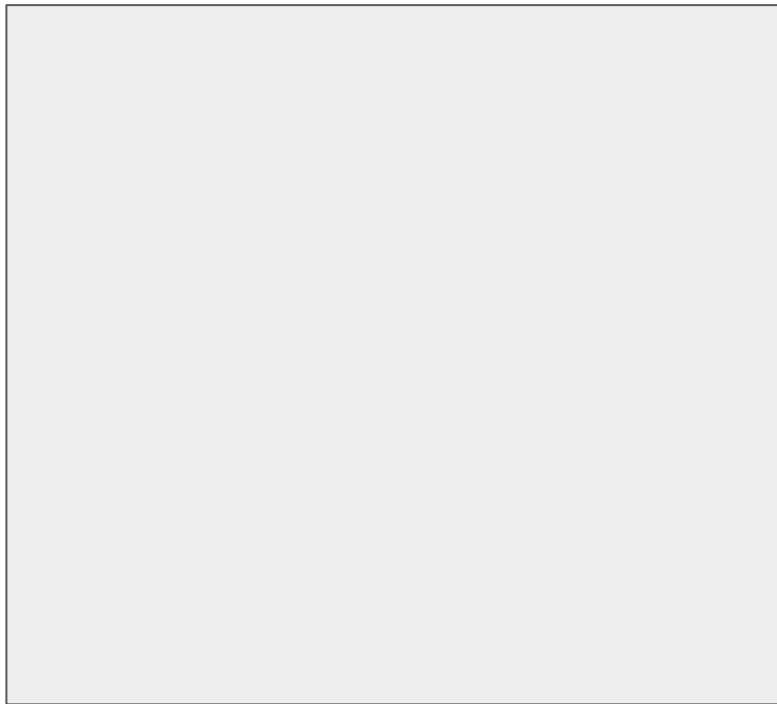
Opener (“This is Not a Box”)

Look to the right, and notice the square.

Draw a square on a scratch sheet of paper, or on a Word/Google Doc.

You will have 3 minutes to turn that square into something else, but making sure you retain the square in the midst of the drawing.

Rationale: This will introduce the idea of how we see ideas, concepts, objects differently, and we approach them differently.



Focus Point

Today, I want to facilitate a discussion on how the gaze impacts how narratives are shaped, and told. We do this by determining, and analyzing, how perspectives are informed, analyzing how certain perspectives lead to certain narratives being told, and then asking ourselves, “If we changed our gaze, what else could we see?” We do this to challenge our perceptions and perspectives of what truth is, in order to understand the fullness of minority experiences.



How to Edit

Click [Edit This Slide](#) in the plugin to make changes.

Don't have the Nearpod add-on? Open the "Add-ons" menu in Google Slides to install.



Questions to Ponder...

What motivates each perspective?

Does the audience, of either network, have access to the truth based on the perspective that is reflected?

What informs our gaze?
(or “How do we come to view things the way
that we do?”)

How do our experiences, beliefs, values, etc. impact how we view things,
ideas, and communities?

Today's Reflection

What biases do I have? How did I come to them? If I were honest with myself, has my gaze hindered my ability to see certain groups in a favorable way? What do I need to do to reframe my gaze, so that I can look upon everyone justly?

DAY FOUR:

joy



Collaborate Board



Opener

What is your definition of "joy"?

How to Edit

Click [Edit This Slide](#) in the plugin to make changes.

Don't have the Nearpod add-on? Open the "Add-ons" menu in Google Slides to install.



Focus Point

Today, I will facilitate a discussion about the importance of joy in truth telling. We do this by asking the questions “What is the purpose of joy?” and “How do we report on stories that reveal joy, as a part of bearing witness to truth?” We do this because joy is an aspect of truth that must be displayed, in order to positively impact the gaze, and to shift the narrative on justice.

Connecting the Dots

“Our sessions together have emphasized big themes about truth and the gaze. Today and tomorrow, we will shift, again, to focusing on joy. The role of media is [ideally] to bring truth to its audience, bearing witness to the experiences of the various communities that make up our society. We find that that oftentimes can be negative. Our gaze-informs how we view things, ideas, communities, etc. The media’s gaze impacts the narratives they tell. Our goal is to be able to tell a full truth, in that we acknowledge the hard realities, but also the bright spots of minority life. Thus, we will look into how to identify, and highlight, joy in the midst of the oftentimes dark realities portrayed in news reporting.”



Web Content

PROJECT

The Globalization of AFROPUNK



After hosting shows in Brooklyn, Paris, London, and Atlanta in 2017, AFROPUNK, an American music festival, debuted in Johannesburg, South Africa for the first on the continent. More than a celebration of

AFROPUNK connects the African Diaspora not only through music, but also socially and politically, proving it to be a global movement that parallels the current politics facing young South Africans.

How to Edit

Click [Edit This Slide](#) in the plugin to make changes.

Don't have the Nearpod add-on? Open the "Add-ons" menu in Google Slides to install.



Today's Reflection

What is the connection between joy and justice?

DAY FIVE:

joy

Focus Point

Today, I will facilitate our final discussion, continuing our focus on discovering joy in our truth telling, and brainstorming ways a renewed gaze, with joy in mind, can shape justice work. We will do this by asking, “How does joy thrive in the midst of the suffering we see reported?” and “What ways can we highlight joy for the sake of justice?” We do this to shift our thinking, and renew our gaze, so that the justice work may be approached in a new way. *(If the perception of particular communities can be altered in a positive, there is the possibility the interactions with these communities can be altered in a positive way.)*

Opener



Here's the link to the
Flipgrid for today:

<https://flipgrid.com/38b9fefc>

Discussion Choice Board

Choose one of the following that most stands out to you. Jot down why it is meaningful for you.

Psalm 30:5b, "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." (Christian Bible)	"Joy is the serious business of heaven" (C.S. Lewis)
"If you carry joy in your heart, you can heal any moment" (Ascribed to several individuals, unsure of originator)	Let us live in joy, not hating those who hate us. Among those who hate us, we live free of hate. Let us live in joy, free from disease among those who are diseased. Among those who are diseased, let us live free of disease. Let us live in joy, free from greed among the greedy. Among those who are greedy, we live free of greed. Let us live in joy, though we possess nothing. Let us live feeding on joy, like the bright gods. (The Buddha)
"Black joy is an act of resistance."	"We need joy as we need air. We need love as we need water. We need each other as we need the earth we share." (Maya Angelou)

Independent Reading

- I. You will read the text, Life in St. Louis's Most Vulnerable Neighborhoods in the Time of Coronavirus. (Guiding questions: What is the central idea? What issues does the author highlight? Where is joy found?)

- II. Join with a partner to briefly discuss the responses to the guiding questions. (This will allow you an opportunity to gain further understanding prior to the whole-group discussion.)

Let's Talk

- What are the common themes among these excerpts?
- What can these excerpts teach us about the necessity of joy in dark times?
- How can a reframed gaze aid in identifying joy in the midst of suffering?
- How might the emphasis on joy help the “other” be seen differently?
- How might our work for justice deepen if we told stories of the joy? How might the majority culture view the minority differently?

Today's Reflection

What specific idea, quotation, or text kept you thinking the most? Why?