

**What is the Role of Storytelling in Cultural Sustainability?:
Four Case Studies**

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Karen Abdul-Malik

INTRODUCTION

Save your fowl, before it stops flapping. – Ivory Coast Proverb.

Humanity has waged a war on itself. Through our habits and lifestyles we have enveloped an apathetic attitude and denial of the decline in our ability to sustain our values, culture and natural ways of living. As we observe the threats of a weakened environment, economy, and ethical society there remains little doubt that changes need to be made. There is the consideration of what new needs to be enacted, but just as well, what old needs to be maintained. We hold on to some customs, sometimes not even understanding their origin, other times internalizing their intrinsic value. Some things are let go for growth, and some things are lost to the detriment of our spiritual being, our connectedness, and our power. “When we maintain no institutions of positive reciprocity, we find ourselves unable to participate in those ‘wider spirits’ ...unable to enter gracefully into nature, unable to draw community out of the mass, and finally, unable to receive, contribute toward, and pass along the collective treasures we refer to as culture and tradition.” (Hyde, *The Gift*, 2007). Thus begs the question, how do we sustain our culture and traditions?

This report presents research on four organizational projects that use storytelling to address social issues and impact the sustainability of culture and tradition. The case studies evince the hypothesis that applied storytelling contributes to cultural sustainability outcomes. The projects have been in existence for five years

or less in predominantly African American communities. Limited literature has been written about the impact of applied storytelling on sustaining culture and, less has been written about programs that have an Afro-centric focus. Further in-depth research, documentation, and statistics would benefit cultural sustainability workers and practitioners of the art of storytelling.

RATIONALE: Making the Case

Talking with one another is loving one another - Kenyan

Programs that use storytelling as a primary source of seeking resolution inherently create opportunities for relationship building. Relationships are the key element in creating sustainable environments. “The performance of stories coalesce relationships across time and space and create shared experiences.” (Langellier, *Performing Narrative*, 2004). Most of human history is transmitted through the art of storytelling. The stories that we tell and the stories that we listen to are ingrained in who we are and how we live. In return, our identity and means of survival is ingrained in the stories that we listen to and the stories that we tell. In *Storytelling in Daily Life: Performing Narrative*, Langellier asks, “What systems of social relations---intrapersonal, interpersonal, public and cultural emerge in storytelling?” “It enables a social process that in turn enables cultural survival.” (Rankin, *Living Cultural*, 2010).

A sustainable society depends upon a sustainable culture. If society’s culture disintegrates, so will everything else. Cultural action is required in order to lay the groundwork for a sustainable future. “Culture is a basic need-it is the bedrock of society.” (Hawkes, *Pillars*, 2001). “UNESCO defines culture as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and

that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (Rankin, *Living Cultural*, 2006). “Tradition is the creation of the future out of the past. [It]is volitional [and] temporal.” (Glassie, *Tradition*, 1995). When culture and tradition are not honored and maintained, social and moral identity is compromised and value systems are weakened. In these conditions, mankind unravels its life support and, culture, social and economic systems become unsustainable. To survive we must engage in activities that sustain our culture and disengage in customs that destroy our humanity and environment. In *Faustian Economics*, Berry points to man’s ancient fear “that in order to survive, we may become inhuman or monstrous. And so our cultural tradition is in large part the record of our continuing effort to understand ourselves as beings specifically human: to say that, as humans, we must do certain things and we must not do certain things.” (Berry, *Faustian*, 2008). “To embrace sustainability is to be sensitive to the threatening consequences of actions and the disastrous consequences of inaction.” (Eckstein and Throgmorton, *Story and Sustainability*, 2003). We cannot survive by living inert. Humanity is in constant motion and our actions reflect our reality. We must build to survive, but it is just as incumbent upon us to respect our limitations.

To do certain things, as Berry states, requires action. Actions are engendered from words. Words are gifted from thought. “Only when the increase of gifts moves with the gift may the accumulated wealth of our spirit grow among us, so that each of us may enter and be revived by, a vitality beyond his or her solitary powers.” (Hyde, *The Gift*, 2007). The gift of storytelling has the incomparable ability to move us into

collective action. Ancestor Brother Blue, hailed as the father of American Storytelling said, "If I had children, this is what I would tell them to do. Be on the case - Trying to do the work. Because you see darling, each of us be the one we are looking for. Go about touching human hearts. Get pass the axiom of birth. Get pass your particular gender, your particular vision, ethnicity. Be a truth walker. Act like you are here to change the world." (KOTC, *Black Storytellers*, 2004).

Storytelling is the heart of cultural sustainability. The telling of our stories evokes revelation within and intimacy without. It is how we connect, and an instrument for passing on legacies that come from the hand and heart. It can tell us how we got to the edge and it is what can bring us back like the natural transition of night into day. Storytelling is used to build, change, transform and sustain. Stories project images of collective experiences, and contain the quintessence of creation. The execution of intended storytelling programs will incorporate the rhythm of life – creation through the power of the word – nommo. In the Bantu culture, "nommo is the life force that produces all life, which influences all things in the shape of the *word*." Its rhythm is fluid and it penetrates everything. (Jahn, *Muntu*, 1961). From the perspective of Nommo, the repetition of words or phrases creates, produces or conjures an energy or palatable emotional force that is capable of transformation. (Reed, *Our Legacy*, 2007.)

Stories are quintessential to sustaining the cycle of creation and to sustaining ourselves as cultural beings. (Dyson, *The Need*, 1994). It is when we are immersed in the knowing of ourselves, when we celebrate the richness of our heritage, when we connect, that we begin to feel fulfillment of our purpose. We

achieve states of happiness, and we keep our gifts moving. “A culture survives when it has enough confidence in its past and enough say in its future to maintain its spirit and essence through all the changes it will inevitably undergo.” (Wade Davis in Rankin, *Living Cultural*, 2006). The notion of sustaining culture and tradition through storytelling goes beyond the themes of preservation. It incorporates awareness of dangerous practices, while sustaining folk life that is beneficial to well-being. “Cultural survival is not about ‘preservation... rather the paradigm is for communities to debate for themselves their developmental choices or interactions with the outside world.” (Rankin, *Living Cultural*, 2006). “In community cultural development practice, participants’ experience of their own creative imaginations and expressions is understood to be intrinsically empowering.” (Goldbard, *New Creative*, 2006).

The role of storytelling in cultural sustainability is a vast topic to be explored in scholarly deliberation. UNESCO suggests that storytelling is a key teaching strategy for achieving the objectives of education for a sustainable future. (Agelidou, *Storytelling and Environmental*, 2010). Publications on storytelling examine storytelling in the classroom, as narrative in corporate culture, within organizational storytelling, and in many other aspects of humanity. Although there are basic formulas to stories and their telling within specific genres, the application of these formats is inexplicably tied to the folk culture of the focus groups. The storytelling projects presented in this volume fall under the auspices of an organizational structure, target specific focus groups and, engage storytellers to manifest the transformative work.

LITERATURE IN THE FIELD

Sankofa – We must go back to reclaim our past in order to move forward; so we can understand how and why we are who we came to be today – Akan

Background: Traditional Roles of Storytellers

Storytelling began on the continent of Africa, but has spread to every land and is heard by every ear. The African American Oral Tradition is an Africanism. “Africanism---those elements of culture found in the New World that are traceable to an African origin.” (Holloway, *Africanisms*, 1990). In the devastation of the enslavement era, African peoples who spoke, Yoruba - Efik - Ibo - Fulani, were intermingled, forced to alienate their indigenous languages and negate their native rituals, customs and celebrations. “Yet, for the majority of them, a shared and unifying element was the heritage of an oral tradition. In a number of different tribes, the most honored person was the griot, the storyteller, who committed to memory the entire history of the tribe, which he then taught to a younger member of the group.” (Tobin, *Hidden*, 1999). “Although foreign invaders stole from Africa her precious gold, ivory, diamonds, exotic animals and her healthy sons and daughters, the legacy of oral tradition was not lost. Those who stayed behind on the Ivory Coast of West Africa and those who crossed over have preserved and passed their stories on to others in a grapevine that has survived both the Middle Passage and the passage of time.” (Finnen, *Talking Drums*, 2004).

The Greenwood Encyclopedia of African Americans avers that although there are contexts in African American culture that are set aside specifically for narrating stories, contemporary storytelling occurs most frequently in everyday situations and

conversation. (Prahlad, 2006). Today that would include mediums from face-to-face encounters, telephone conversations and social media. The article acknowledges variant skill levels. “there are many different kinds of storytellers, some who are masterful performers who entertain large groups, others who are equally skilled but whose audiences consist of other family members or friends, and still others who may not distinguish the stories they tell from the rest of their conversation in which the stories occur. “

Contemporary “Master Storytellers” are so entitled through recognition in their local communities, and/or by the professional storytelling community. “Once the individual has achieved the social identity of master storyteller, the die is cast.” (MacDonald, et al., *Traditional Storytelling*, 1999). These tellers perform in communal venues that include theaters, festivals, classrooms, family reunions and churches. In theater there is a division between the audience and the performers. “The idea of the fourth wall was made explicit by philosopher and critic Denis Diderot and spread in 19th-century theater with the advent of theatrical realism, which extended the idea to the imaginary boundary between any fictional work and its audience. Speaking directly to or otherwise acknowledging the audience through this imaginary wall in a play, is referred to as ‘breaking the fourth wall’ between the actors and the audience.” (Wikipedia: “*Fourth Wall*”). There is no imaginary boundary, no fourth wall in the storytelling experience. The stories, the teller, musicians (if present) and audience become one amalgamated event. In opposition to theater’s fourth wall concept, storytellers can change wording or content in response to audience reaction. In actuality, it is a required qualification of an African American storyteller to employ

devices that keep the audience not just engaged but actively involved in the storytelling experience. New World African storytelling has historically been characterized by a number of performative elements and narrative features, including eliciting interaction through Call and Response. Another technique embraced throughout the diaspora is the use of rhyme for opening and closing storytelling performances. (Prahlad, *Greenwood*, 2006). However, after the concluding phrase of the performance, ex., “Caught that story in the wind...Told it to you...Now you tell it again,” the master storyteller’s gift/role is still in motion. They have a responsibility that extends far beyond the stage and the occasion of entertainment.

Joseph Sobol, PhD. has taken the position that there is a current renaissance or revival of storytelling. Sobol identifies the rise of storytelling performances at festivals, schools, libraries and theaters over the past 30 years as indicators of the revival:

Much as the “the Folksinger” did in the early sixties, “The Storyteller has developed a certain mythic resonance in popular culture and language—perhaps more in the way of a poetic conceit than in an anthropologically specific role. Yet it depends for its emotive force on the idea that somewhere, sometime, there is, or was, such a role—a role with expressive, didactic, oracular, and community-binding functions. Enough people have re-subscribed to the idea over the last twenty years to have created little subcultural pockets of what performance theorist Richard Schechner calls “restored behaviors” (*Between Theater* 35-116). These pockets, taken collectively, constitute what is known as “the storytelling community” and the “the storytelling revival.” (Sobol, *Storyteller’s Journey*, 1999).

African American Storyteller

As an African American storyteller, I contend that the oral tradition is a heritage that crossed the ocean of the entombed but not forgotten, has survived in

coded messages, been sung around fires, whispered among the trees, and stirred up alongside the big pots in the kitchen. “The proud, distinctive art of African oral tradition has carried over into African American folklore.” (Finnen, *Talking Drums*, 2004). Renaissance is a synonym for rebirth and revival. The gift of the African oral tradition always had life. It kept moving. It may have gained new face as a socialized identity in organized storytelling. “In organized storytelling the social roles of tellers and listeners are often more rigidly defined than in casual ‘kitchen table’ telling where conversation and stories flow back and forth.” (Stone, *Organized Storytelling*, 2008). However, African American storytelling can be identified as a continuum of an ancient art and a rich tradition, one to which we have never unsubscribed. “The Black oral heritage is alive and growing among people of African blood, whose ancestors presumably originated storytelling with the creation of civilization in Africa, and among other ethnic groups as well.” (L. Goss, *Talk*, 1989). In a communication with Jo Ann Banks-Wallace, Goss further advocates that African American storytelling is first and foremost about healing and nurturing through communion with The Spirit and one another. “ (Wallace, *Storytelling and Analysis*, 2010).

“The stuff of the storytelling profession has been around from the beginning of recorded time. These materials include the remnants, relics, and shards of the human experience... Storytellers sing of humanity’s triumphs and record humanity’s debasements. They embody and engage both sides of the human condition---the beauty and its monstrosity----keeping both alive. . . . And these most ancient of artists focus their efforts and the attention of their audiences on the changes they regularly experience.”(Peek, *African Folklore*, 2004). In transference to modernity

the description of “storyteller” retains its characteristics. Sobol states, “what unites these artists into a storytelling community is a shared sense that storytelling endows one with not just a job but a mission: it can revitalize individuals and the culture as a whole. This conviction reinforces the growing storytelling scene like steel rods in poured concrete.” (Sobol, *Storyteller’s Journey*, 1999). Although the community of professional storytellers alluded to in Sobol’s description were required to meet certain criteria of the National Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling (NAPPS) and the National Storytelling Association (now known as the National Storytelling Network), the statement is applicable far beyond the range of the listed NAPPS-affiliated storytellers. As indicated in the above statement by Brother Blue, it embodies the sentiment and passion of a vast majority of the storytellers who consider and believe they are fulfilling their life’s purpose through jaliya (the art of storytelling).

I’m gon’ live so God can use me

Anywhere, Lord, anytime.

I’m gon’ live so God can use me

Anywhere, Lord, anytime

I’m gon’ work so God can use me

I’m gon’ pray so God can use me

You ought to live so God can use you. (Traditional in Dance, *Four Hundred*, 2002).

Storytellers affiliated with the National Association of Black Storytellers (NABS) contend that the storyteller’s role is to tell others in society their role through story. In the work on the stage, a griot has special ways of telling these stories so that

they are very entertaining, even though the griot's main intention is not to entertain but to teach the people to know themselves, verifies D'jimo Kouyate in *Talk That Talk*. (L. Goss, 1989). The stage composition has its ending moment, the teaching residency concludes, but the communal responsibility is ever present. This report incorporates the function of the traditional roles of storytellers, and the use of story by community members to sustain their communities.

Application of Storytelling to Sustainability

“Sustainability is both necessary and difficult to pursue. Inherent in the very concept is an endless struggle to achieve an ideal balance of competing legitimate claims for economic growth, environmental health, and social justice.” (Eckstein and Throgmorton, *Story and Sustainability*, 2003).

Much of the literature that correlates storytelling and sustainability has focused on the use of storytelling in urban and rural planning. In *Story and Sustainability*, Eckstein and Throgmorton advance the argument that story, sustainability and democracy are mutually constitutive. The authors engage three case studies and present stories used by planners and community-based practitioners. Eckstein claims, “the best stories, most often, those that produce a will to change are those that disrupt habits of thought and de-familiarize conventional expectations.”

Wendy Sarkissian goes beyond storytelling for urban planning, by providing a community-based model for sustainability in her book, *Kitchen Table Sustainability*. Sarkissian proposes the *EATING* (Education, Action, Trust, Inclusion, Nourishment and Governance) model in order to explore the relationship between

sustainability and community engagement. By using the powerful image of the kitchen table, she presents the cultural relevance of building sustainable communities through a warm and familiar aesthetic. “Kitchens and porches are found throughout the globe as meeting points in which primary relations are bolstered and discourse and tradition provides for modes of responding to local challenges. “ (Fine, *Small Things*, 2010). Through the rich metaphor of “Practical Recipes,” the author has provided an informative and comparative tool for social innovators and culture keepers seeking to organize around sustainability issues. The author’s “Recipes for Action” to achieve transformative change provide an evaluative mechanism for analyzing community-based sustainability projects. Sarkissian approaches the storytelling dynamic in three aspects: 1) addressing cause by asking what are the unsustainable stories that led to the unsustainable situations, and just as importantly, deliberating what stories still need to be told; 2) exploring the need to generate stories around the kitchen table and determining how to expand them to encompass community engagement; and, 3) looking at ideas for using storytelling to bring children to the table as stakeholders.

We have found that people relate more to stories than they do data, ‘evidence’ or directives about what to do. Stories are powerful. They help us make sense of our lives and allow us to make meaning of past experiences. Stories encourage people to find and share their own stories. Spoken aloud, each story becomes a catalyst for others to tell their stories. When stories are shared, each person gains a new perspective. They glimpse their shared experience within the shared experience of the community. Telling stories around the kitchen table, we can go beyond the ‘one-story’ view of reality to embrace the multiplicity of stories that must interweave to create a sustainable world. (Sarkissian, 2009.)

The four case studies in this report extend beyond Sarkissian’s kitchen table

paradigm to assess a more intensive review of the leadership, design, and manifestation of programs that use applied storytelling to engage communities in cultural sustainability issues.

Telling Stories to Change the World by Solinger, Fox and Kayhan is a definitive contributor to the topic and provides a global perspective of how storytelling is used in grassroots, community-based social justice projects. Containing twenty-three essays, the treatise does not focus on the *results* of using storytelling in advocacy and social justice realms, but rather on the *selection* and *construction* of stories intended for transformation and solutions to problems.

Embedded in the selection of storytelling-as-vehicle are several layers of optimism. First, participants share the stance that telling stories requires voice and requires listeners. Imagining and then realizing both voice and audience are profoundly political acts that triumph coercive silencing and break into enforced isolations. Second, telling stories of indignity, tragedy and hope involves the teller in acts of transformation: experience and identity become mutable. The story can have a different ending from the one we already know. You can hear the story differently from me. We can compare. We can rewrite/re-enact/redraw and retell it again. The story becomes a way of remaking the world; being a storyteller in these contexts means being an activist. (Solinger, Fox and Irani, *Telling Stories*, 2008).

The book delivers four distinct themes covering the application of storytelling around social justice issues: the preservation of language; addressing immediate threats; advocating for change with a revolutionary concept; and, the problems and limitations with misuse of storytelling. The authors of *Telling Stories* made the case that storytelling has agency to give tellers authority and expertise. The tellers in the essays rendered personal and communal stories for the cause of survival. In essence, the tellers became cultural ambassadors for sustainability.

The projects in the case studies of this paper explore the use of multiple genres of storytelling, including folktales and historical tales in developing community cultural sustainability endeavors.

Deepening Tradition: Storytellers as Community Cultural Ambassadors

When the drumbeat changes, the dance changes - Hausa

This report explores the deepening of traditional roles of storytellers in predominately African American communities and asserts that storytellers in modernity continue the tradition and become cultural ambassadors by engaging applied storytelling to sustain communities and affect social change. Social Entrepreneurship is on the rise in America and several academic publications, blogs and websites have cited agencies that use storytelling to articulate the world's greatest problems. Storytelling methods are used to build awareness and advocate causes, and just as equally are incorporated into supporting organizational efforts. Incumbent upon the storyteller working to engage the community in advocacy and sustainability issues is the ability to listen, to hear the stories, those that need to be told and the many, as Sarkissian relates, that need cessation. Edward Anderson concurs, "There are many people doing amazing work in the world. And their stories are very different than the one that is too often told, the one that breeds fear and encourages anxiety and hopelessness. We have too much to lose to let that story continue. We must begin to tell new stories of hope and become part of the transformation. What can we do to foster the good work and inspire others by telling the stories that need to be told? (Anderson, *Telling Stories*, 2006). Leaders of storytelling organizations that have a mission to preserve, perpetuate and sustain

culture, relentlessly pursue opportunities by applying the art of storytelling to create or maintain social values. This quality of cultural ambassadorship is an inherent characteristic of social entrepreneurs. In short, social entrepreneurs are changemakers, agents of change who pursue new, hopeful models to make a difference in our world (Anderson, *Telling Stories*, 2006).

This paper will identify the characteristics of social entrepreneurship within the leadership and organizational structure of the organizations that produce storytelling projects with a social justice agenda. It will also critically assess the components of social entrepreneurship or social enterprise that may be lacking, but could be beneficial to the organization and its project.

DEFINITIONS

Words are spoken with their shells, let the wise man come back to shuck them. – Mossi

Applied storytelling, cultural sustainability and social entrepreneurship are terms in motion. As the birthing of these three disciplines parallel the New Age, the definitions are new and evolving. For the purpose of this paper we approach the definitions through contemporary discourse.

Applied Storytelling

“Storytelling applications are answers to communal human needs. The community recognizes the answer storytelling carries for those needs and seeks the people who can carry the task of answering the demand. Applied storytelling is taking storytelling as is and applying it onto a human need.” (Shiponi, *Storytelling Genres*, 2011). With the philosophy that “mounting evidence suggests that stories and the storytelling process can promote recovery, inspire hope, and trigger insight and

personal growth—in short , heal.” (www.healingstory.org). Cristy West offers a preliminary 12-point guideline for applied storytelling under the auspices of the Healing Storytelling Alliance of the National Storytelling Network. The guideline seeks to help storytellers think about the responsibilities, processes and goals of applied storytelling. NSN offers an annual Brimstone Grant for applied Storytelling, citing, “this award focuses on the transformational properties of storytelling, and aims to increase understanding of the ways storytelling can promote change in individuals and communities.” (www.storynet.org/grants/brimstone.html). The NSN Brimstone Grant was credited in *The Healing Heart and Communities: Stories to Build Strong and Healthy Communities*,” for its contribution to the collection of stories written by Allison M. Cox and David H. Albert. In the forward, Margaret Read MacDonald states, “this book will do much to encourage the use of story in human services.”

Applied storytelling as defined in this document is the use of storytelling in the oral tradition to serve humanity with the intent to effect social change. It is clearly distinguished from digital storytelling, written narration, and film.

Cultural Sustainability

“The word ‘sustainable’ has been doing some pretty heavy lifting lately. A Google text search reveals sustainable aligned with food, development, packaging, future, forestry, education, business, energy, architecture, health, fashion, water, technology conservation, tourism, investing, even furniture and flooring. Websites guide individuals and communities toward responsible, sustainable living, chiefly in response to threats posed by growing world population, diminishing natural resources and now global warming.” (Jeff Todd Tilton). Wikipedia identifies cultural

sustainability “as a new interdisciplinary approach aimed to raise the significance of culture and its factors in local, regional and global sustainable development.” Therefore, a pre-requisite or most certainly a mutually co-existing alignment to the list of sustained needs is the sustainability of our culture. The National Parks Service’s internal cultural resource management guidelines define culture as “a system of behaviors, values, ideologies and social arrangements.” Within this basic definition of culture lies a direct correlation to identity.

Therefore, cultural sustainability as defined in this document is a definitive set of ideas and actions designed to maintain the viability of values, behaviors, ideologies and social arrangements.

Social Entrepreneurship

J. Gregory Dees, a pre-eminent scholar in the field, defines the idea of social entrepreneurship as combining the passion of a social mission with an image of business-like discipline, innovation, and determination. “Social entrepreneurship is leadership by people working together to solve large problems, social or environmental, without waiting for government or the private sector to lead the way or find them.” (Light, *Search*, 2008). The major difference in a business entrepreneur and social entrepreneur is the criteria of “mission” for the social entrepreneur. While the majority of scholarly consensus contends that social entrepreneurs are driven to *cause* change, another leader in the field, Peter Drucker, defines it as on the ability to *search* for change and exploit opportunities for change. (Dees, *Enterprising*, 2001).

The definition of social entrepreneurship as applied to the review of the enclosed case studies is: storytelling projects with a social mission; and, visionary leadership that engage opportunities for change using innovative methodologies.

METHODOLOGY

Once the mushroom sprouted from the earth, there is no turning back - Luo

This project began in August of 2011 with the intention of conducting a case study method of research on community-based storytelling projects that are driven by a social mission. In introducing four applied storytelling models, the research attempts to fill the gap in literature on storytelling initiatives that are designed with a socially responsible agenda, and are primarily located in African American communities. The goal of this report is to gain insight on innovative applied storytelling projects by conducting preliminary research on the following factors:

- the structure of organizations
- leadership qualities
- community involvement initiatives
- partnership building
- funding
- communication processes
- creative placemaking designs
- documentation techniques
- replication prospects
- social entrepreneurial efforts
- evaluation; and,
- project sustainability challenges and organizational solutions.

Selection

The role of storytelling in cultural sustainability has far reaching implications from a broad range of applications including uses by: individual storytellers; storytelling groups; storytelling organizations; educators and trainers; corporate leadership; urban planners; documentarians; and, filmmakers. The methodology used in this paper narrows the study to the following selective criteria:

The storytelling projects must:

- 1) be developed under the auspices of an organization;
- 2) be community-based;
- 3) use the oral tradition as its primary engagement of storytelling;
- 4) apply storytelling to a social mission that involves civic engagement or activism; and,
- 5) have tools for measuring impact.

Two major storytelling organizations were the impetus for selection research, The National Storytelling Network (NSN) and the National Association of Black Storytellers (NABS). By the nature of its application descriptive, The NSN Brimstone Grant funds projects for applied storytelling that meet the above criteria. “The grant supports a model storytelling project that is service-oriented, based in a community or organization, and to some extent replicable in other places and situations.” (<http://www.storynet.org/grants/brimstone.html>). The selection process began by participating in conference call reports with 2011-2012 Brimstone Grant awardees. *StoriesWork*, was chosen through this process.

With limited literature on cultural sustainability storytelling projects in the African American community and authored by a member of that community, the

decision was made to focus on projects that were implemented in predominately African American communities, although the analysis is meant to have ethnically diverse application. With this added criteria, the research methods are particularly sensitive to Carter G. Woodson, Anna Julia Cooper, and W.E.B. Dubois historical arguments that “plans for advancing the education of Black people should be predicated on understanding the cultural and historical contexts of their lives and that attempts to portray Black people and Black culture(s) by persons who have limited knowledge of Black life leads to inaccurate generalizations. (Tillman, *Culturally Sensitive*, 2002, and Carter Black, *Cultural Competence*, 2007). This discourse informs an Afrocentric emancipatory research method approach to the case studies presented in this paper.

An Afrocentric emancipatory methodology consists of (a) using qualitative methods to generate practical knowledge about forces that affect the lives of African Americans’; (b) using understandings generated from qualitative inquiry to describe and analyze empirical realities of the relationships identified; (c) identifying any apparent contradictions as well as convergence of the group’s understanding and ‘objective’ reality; (d) participating in program of education and action with the individual(s) under study by presenting findings and developing tools that empower the individual(s); and, (e) identifying and conducting research that will generate practical and emancipatory knowledge and new theories. (Tillman, 2002).

The unique and premiere resource for African American storytelling is the National Association of Black Storytellers, Inc. Projects were sought out through their affiliation with the distinguished organization. “NABS promotes and perpetuates the art of Black storytelling - an art form which embodies the history, heritage, and culture of African Americans. Black storytellers educate and entertain through the

Oral Tradition, which depicts and documents the African American experience. A nationally organized body with individual, affiliate and organizational memberships, NABS preserves and passes on the folklore, legends, myths, fables and mores of Africans and their descendants and ancestors – *In the Tradition...*" (www.nabsinc.org). The mission of NABS does not entirely address the selection criteria for the cases studied, however, the organization's Affiliate Program provides a bountiful resource of storytelling initiatives that are implemented through its associated organizations. The selection of *the Growing Griots' Literacy Learning Program* is a manifestation of its embodiment within the NABS Affiliate, the Griots' Circle of Maryland.

The third case, *Stories-In-Service*, is presented by GRIOTWORKS, an organization based in Philadelphia. Personally having participated in the project was my introduction to the project's purpose and its capacity for being identified within the required criteria for this study.

The fourth project, *SCATTS* (Sustaining Culture and Tradition Through Storytelling), also a Brimstone Grant winner, is a model that was developed by the author through the application of academic material provided in the Master of Arts Program in Cultural Sustainability (MACS) at Goucher College. The organization, *In FACT: Innovative Solutions Through Folk Art, Culture & Tradition* was also engendered while matriculating the masters in arts degree and was the catalyst for piloting the *SCATTS* prototype.

Project Design

The basis for the research on the cases merges Tillman's emancipation research theory with Randy Stoecker's "Goose Approach." Stoecker explains in *Research Methods for Community Change*, that research should be with people rather than on them. (Stoecker, 2005). When analyzing the outcome of storytelling programs that are interwoven with activism, the organizational structure, together with leadership qualities, funding and quantitative data are concrete factors that must be considered, in addition to the humanitarian aspects encapsulated in the mission, objectives, impact and qualitative evaluations.

A large percentage of the factors to consider were developed through utilizing the knowledge gained in the MACS program on both theory and practical application of cultural sustainability. The criteria and design for researching the case studies was informed by discourse and literature from the following courses: Cultural Sustainability, Leadership, Interpretive Planning, Financial Skills, Partnerships, Communications, Documentation, Grantwriting, Oral History, Social Entrepreneurship, and Cultural Policy.

Research was conducted through two-hour interviews with leaders of each organization. Interviews raised a consistent set of questions for comparability across cases, while also allowing for input for specialized questions pertinent to each organization's project description. The interviews were designed for basic research, to gather information objectively, however, applied research is also a goal of this project. The objective of dealing with practical problems within the organizations comes in the delivery of a collective analysis, and not through long-term relationship

building. “Art is about emotion and meaning and intuition and those other intangible things.” (Stoecker, 2005). The art of research in this project was designing questions that would not only gather factual data, but would also cause the interviewees to think critically about cultural and organizational sustainability. In doing so, the intentions of the research began to become project-based. Stoecker describes project-based research as involving diagnosis, prescription, implementation and evaluation. The four case studies only begin to touch on these processes by questioning organizational sustainability avenues and introducing cultural sustainability language to the leaders. The analyses of the cases, is a shared product that may become an integral change agent within the organizations by producing further emancipatory and innovative concepts.

FACTORS FOR CASE STUDIES

What the people think cannot be denied - Basakata

The Structure of Organization

Organizations were assessed as a traditional non-profit with 501(c) 3 status, for-profit, or hybrid. Additionally, data provided information on the number of employees, board members and volunteers, as well as decision-making processes.

Leadership Qualities

Through the interview process the principle players’ leadership qualities were revealed as dominate in executive, influencing, relationship building or strategic thinking styles. (Rath, *Strengths Based*, 2008). Interviewees revealed perceptions of their leadership strengths and weaknesses. A more in-depth study using a written survey would enhance the research results.

Community Involvement Initiatives

Quantitative and qualitative data were collected on community involvement in the planning, execution and evaluative processes of the projects. Dialogue from the interviewees provided answers to such queries as: Was the project preceded by a community assessment? Are community members integral to the design process? How are community members involved in evaluation and restructuring objectives?

Partnership Building

Examining the strategies for partnership building contributes to the evaluation of community involvement. Was the nature of the partnerships aligned solely with funding? Did the partnerships foster new connections? Was helping communities to make their own choices about what matters to them a function of the partnership? Were the partnerships built on like missions or was the project's mission an awareness-building tool to gain support? Was storytelling enlisted to gain partnerships?

Funding

Review of funding patterns explores the project's percentage of grants, donations, and income-based ventures. The research alludes to opportunities and challenges in funding storytelling and cultural sustainability projects.

Communications Processes

The questions concerning communications identify the communicative tools used between project workers, as well as, social media techniques that are engaged to publicize and report the project. Research would be greatly enhanced by gathering and following the organization's communication timeline. A longer period of study in

this context would increase the data on the impact of communications on the efficiency, and effectiveness of projects. Introducing questions about a communication plan would also further the goal of conducting Stoecker's project-based research and Tillman's emancipatory theory.

Creative Place-making Design

Inquiry into location articulates the connection of the project to a sense of place and identity. (Moonsammy, *Complexity of Context*, 2009). Design of the projects is investigated for innovative ideas, and their ability to foster impactful or solution-driven storytelling environments. Does the project involve community-rooted historical perspectives on current issues in the community? (Shopes, *Baltimore Heritage*, 1981). Does the project create a place for sustained vernacular culture?

Documentation

The function of documentation is analyzed and the use of video, written observation; audio; and, photography are included in the research. Was there a project documentation plan? Was the documentation performed by independent recorders? Were there impediments in the documentation process? What percentage of the programs, if any, were documented?

Replication

Research includes a query into the leadership's desire to produce a project that is replicable locally or nationally. Can the innovator's program be effectively scaled up and sustained? Does expansion have an effect on the quality of the project? How flexible is the project in incorporating the characteristics and culture of other locals? What are the replication timeline projections? "Has it aligned its resources,

processes and values to support its innovation? (Christensen, *Disruptive Innovation*, 2006).

Social Entrepreneurship

To assess social entrepreneurial aspects, interviewees were asked if they had implemented or considered any social entrepreneurial objectives, and if so, how did it affect the projects outreach and funding initiatives. Did the organizations use crowdfunding? Were the projects informed by existing social entrepreneurial efforts? Did the organizations connect with other social enterprises that have a similar mission?

Evaluation

Social entrepreneur and educator Rebecca Saltman believes two questions are imperative to evaluative analysis -- How does it get better than this? And, what else is possible? The collection of evaluation data asserts the importance of evaluations to assess the projects and consider improvements. Observation, polls, surveys, and written evaluations aid in calculation of qualitative and quantitative results. The timing of issuing evaluations in the project's process is another analytical factor in interpreting success.

Project sustainability challenges and organizational solutions

Leaders were asked to assess the challenges in sustaining the organization and project, and identify methods for seeking solutions to those challenges. The comparative analysis of the four case studies serves as a gateway to understanding the benefit and challenges across programs and provides a basis for the need of

further research in order to strengthen the argument for the impact of cultural sustainability storytelling projects.

CASE STUDIES

It is 8 that knows what it experienced behind 7 that made it twist so much – Sierra Leone

CASE I: Intergenerational Storytelling with Seniors and Ex-Offenders

Name of Organization: StoriesWork, Inc.

Project Title: *Intergenerational Interactive Storytelling with Seniors and Ex-offenders*

Location: Durham, NC

Website: www.storieswork.org

Interviewee: Lenora Ucko, PhD.

Mission of Organization: To increase empowerment, self-esteem and understanding through the power of interactive storytelling.

Vision of Organization: An ever-increasing global movement to restore and revitalize disempowered members of society through safe, non-intrusive, non-threatening storytelling techniques.

Organization & Leadership

Lenora Ucko, PhD. (Anthropology) is Executive Director and a board member of the 501(c) 3 organization. The number of the Board of Directors varies between five and six. Ucko believes the ideal number of board members is eight to ten. Recruiting Board members currently has top billing on the website. Ucko states, “Board involvement is manifested more in content than in time.” Deliberations are more often conducted by phone. Ucko reveals that the group dynamics of the organization is collegial, however “if there is an ultimate decision that has to be made, which is rare,” then it is negotiated between the Executive Director and the President of the Board.

Nick Winstead, the administrator and all-purpose assistant to the Executive Director, works a 15-hours week, and is the only paid staff. Winstead and Ucko have an egalitarian relationship and operational decisions are made mutually. Ucko relates, “We do not have an hierarchical strategy. There is not one leader who makes all the decisions.” The organizational vision of making a global footprint, begins with international support in the development of StoriesWork’s internet communications. The website designer resides in Guadalajara, Mexico, and the web manager lives in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India. The majority of StoriesWork’s resources come from volunteerism.

Executive Director Ucko only receives payment through grants on line items that are specific to managing the grant, training storytellers, or performing in the role of storyteller.

Overview and Background

StoriesWork was founded in 2000 driven by a concept to serve marginalized groups in diverse communities by engaging a storytelling technique entitled, “Interactive Storytelling.” The definition of the term as used by StoriesWork is different than the most commonly recognized digital interpretation. The contemporary application of the term is most associated with a real time application in digital arts. Wikipedia defines Interactive Storytelling [IS] as “a form of digital entertainment in which users create or influence a dramatic storyline through actions, either by issuing commands to the story’s protagonist, or acting as a general director of events in the narrative.” (WEB: Wikipedia, *Interactive Storytelling*).

StoriesWork applies Interactive storytelling in real time *with* and *among* people using folk stories. The participants interact with the story by questioning relationships, and replacing alternative narrative to change or improve the outcome of the story. “Meaningful storytelling processes and activities incorporate opportunities for reflective dialogue, foster collaborative endeavor, nurture the spirit of inquiry and contribute to the construction of new knowledge. In addition, cultural, contextual and emotional realities can be acknowledged, valued and integrated into storytelling processes.” (Alterio, *Using Storytelling*, 2003). StoriesWork uses folktales from various world collections, and “almost all of them do *not* have happy endings,” explains Ucko. “We shorten the stories leaving out a lot of descriptions and we don’t use a lot of the detail and dialogue. We don’t focus on emoting and we don’t make a drama out of it. We just narrow the story down to the facts. We are not worried about the plot. Our focus is on the human relationships. The one thing that we get across is that human relationships have not changed throughout time. The stories, no matter how old they are, are understandable because the nature of parent-child, husband-wife, employee-employer, farmer-worker, have not changed.” Following the story, the storytellers ask questions that inspect what is going on underneath the story. The questions are designed to spark critical thinking.” Reflection and openness to alternatives is a critical element of the Interactive Storytelling design. In outlining seven conditions and their storytelling connections, Jack Mezirow maintains that storytelling and listening processes provide subsequent reflection and dialogue “for an engagement between tellers and listeners in which they can poke and prod at the assumptions of both parties, turning them over, and

holding them up to the light.” Mezirow further articulates that by exploring the assumptions, “alternative perspectives can be brought into the telling and listening space for examination. “ In this restoration, “tellers and listeners can safely play with pivotal elements of the story, incorporating what-if scenarios based on alternative assumptions to generate and try on alternative endings to the story, the best of which can be moved into practice.” (Meizrow, *Transformative Learning*, 2011). Essential to applying the Interactive Storytelling method is insuring the absence of probing into participant’s lives. If through the process, the participants share personal experiences, it is accepted; however, the storytellers don’t ask, they don’t probe and they do not follow up. It is a non-invasive method of stimulating participates to think about situations that threaten sustainability.

Since 2000, this specialized technique has become a branding tool for the company, and the staff has taught “Interactive Storytelling” through videoconferencing to The Coos Tribe of Oregon and in Australia. Locally, the company has applied Interactive Storytelling to facilitate reading enhancement in youth, deal with aging, and, empower women who have been embattled in domestic violence. In applying the storytelling technique in a Latino population of women who were survivors of domestic violence, the organization’s goal was to sustain cultural language. The total process was rendered in Spanish. The approach fostered a clear understanding that the participants’ culture was acknowledged, respected, validated, and socially accepted.

In 2009, StoriesWorks was approached by the Criminal Justice Resource Center (CJRC). The administration was looking for a creative outlet that would

enhance the re-entry of their ex-offenders into society. “They literally said to us, “We have ex-offenders that are required to check in with us every week, and we are looking for something different. We would like you to run your kind of storytelling sessions with our ex-offenders and a senior group.”

The Social Problem

State and federal prisons held approximately 1, 598,780 prisoners at the end of 2011 – approximately 1 out of every 107 U.S. adults. At least 95% of state prisoners will be released back into their communities at some point. At the end of 2011, 4,814,200 adults- one in fifty U.S. adults – were on probation, paroled, or involved in other post prison-prison supervision. (WEB: *The National Resource Center, and Bureau of Justice Statistics*). The disproportionate percentage of African Americans that are incarcerated and subsequently released for re-entry makes the problem particularly weighted for the African American community that makes up 30% of the U.S. population, but 60% of those imprisoned (Thompson, *Releasing Prisoners*, 2008, WEB: *AlterNet*, and, WEB: *NAACP*). “Ex offenders of color carry a particularly strong stigma as they attempt to become contributing members of their communities.” (Thompson, 2008). The staggering statistical facts combined with the economic recession, has pressured governmental agencies dealing with ex-offender populations to seek alternative, yet effective ways to maximize the benefits of re-entry programs. “Acceptance” for ex-offenders is like water to a recovering plant. Its absorption creates new ideas and answers to the questions: What else is possible? And, how does it get better than this? Establishing community support by creating local stakeholders is the key factor for re-entry related challenges. (LaVigne, Cowan and Brazzell,

Mapping Prisoner Reentry, 2006). Ninety-eight percent of cities surveyed in 2009 *Status of Ex-offender Re-Entry Efforts in Cities in the United States* partnered with non-profit organizations to address re-entry problems. In *What Else Works: Creative Work with Offenders*, Brayford, Cowe, and Deering expound the need for community-based programs such as *Intergenerational Interactive Storytelling*:

The context of creative practice is therefore as equally concerned with social justice and social inclusion as it is with the accountability and reform of the individual offender. It affords responsibility and social agency to offenders and socially excluded people, offering them real opportunities to change while holding them personally accountable for the impact they have on others. By design the relationships developed with offenders or other socially excluded people need to have a view as to what happens post-sentence, or after an order of 'intervention' has ended, and offer a tangible opportunity to lose the 'offender', 'other' or 'excluded' identity. Creative and constructive practice is concerned to challenge the 'otherness' and 'exclusion' of those who may be both in need and presenting potential risks. How this is done requires a local, relational and dynamic context that supports an inclusive, accountable (but not risk-averse or risk-driven) and reflexive practice context. (Brayford, Crowe and Deering, *What Else*, 2010).

Project Design

Intergenerational Interactive Storytelling with Seniors and Ex-offenders is designed to create a safe, non-threatening and non-judgmental space and, the aim of the project aligns with StoriesWorks' objectives to:

- empower people
- help people have confidence in their own thinking
- improve self-esteem
- improve the feeling of acceptability and,
- understand worthiness and potential as a contributing member of society.

The project conducts six (1.5) hour sessions during the fall and six sessions during the spring, held bi-monthly. The program brings together ex-offenders from

the North Carolina criminal justice system and seniors from the Durham community. The joint sessions are held at the Durham Center for Senior Life (DCSL). One session per month is scheduled with the ex-offenders only at the Criminal Justice Resource Center (CJRC). The sessions are independent in the aspect of content, but interdependent in correlation to relationship building. Each session hosts two storytellers and the attendees from the DCSL and CJRC. The number of attendees at each session ranges from 12 to 30. The age range of the ex-offenders is predominately between the late 20's and the 40's. The seniors are age 60 or above. The ethnicity of the ex-offenders is 85 to 95% African American, and the seniors are 100% African American.

One of the storytellers begins the session with a folk story, without adding gestures or facial expressions. "Folktales are the mother of all literature. The foundation of storytelling builds upon traditional literature, stories, poems and songs about the struggles of ordinary people or the common folk. These folktales represent a great, ancient, oral tradition containing centuries of accumulated wisdom. The stories all focus on the struggles of everyday life." (Norfolk, Stenson and Williams, *Literacy Development*, 2009). The tellers weave the tales in a manner that will stimulate the participants in thinking about alternative solutions to the problems presented in the stories. "Rescuing folktales and other storytelling traditions from obscurity has been a way to assert cultural continuity and use the wisdom of heritage to inform choices about how to move forward." (Goldbard, *New Creative*, 2006,). Members from the Senior Center and members of the re-entry group listen attentively. The interaction deepens at the conclusion of the story. The storytellers

engage the questioning technique learned during a four week Interactive Storytelling training program.

Story Sample

The Owl Gets Married (Cherokee)

A widow who had one child, a daughter, found it very hard to make a living and was constantly urging upon the young woman that they ought to have a man in the family who would be a good hunter and be able to help in the field. One evening a stranger came courting to the house, and when the girl told him that she could only marry a man who was a good worker, he declared that he was exactly that kind of man. The girl talked to her mother, and on her mother's advice they got married.

The next morning, the widow gave her new son-in-law a hoe and sent him out to the cornfield. When breakfast was ready she went to call him, following a sound as of someone hoeing on rocky soil, but when she came to the spot she found only a small circle of hoed ground and no sign of her son-in-law. Away over in the thicket she heard an owl calling.

Sundown came, but the son-in-law did not come in for dinner, and when he returned home later in the evening the old woman asked him where he had been all day. "I've been hard at work," was his reply. "But I didn't see you when I came to the cornfield," said the old woman. "I was down in the thicket cutting sticks," was his reply. "You didn't come in for supper either," she said. "I was off working," he said. With that the old woman was satisfied and let it go.

Early the next morning the son-in-law started off to work with his hoe over his shoulder. When breakfast was ready the old woman went to the field to call him, but saw no sign of him, only the hoe lying there and no work done. Over in the thicket she heard an owl hooting. She went back inside and when he at last came home in the evening she asked him again what he had been doing all day. "Working hard," he said. "But you were not there when I came to call you," she said. "I went over to the thicket to visit some relatives" he said. The old woman snapped and said, "I have lived here a long time, and there is nothing living in the thicket but owls. My daughter wants a husband that can work and not a lazy owl, so you need to leave now." And with that she drove him from the house.

Figure 1.1

The executive director, who sometimes acts as the storyteller, illuminates the types of questions asked after rendering the story: “What is motivating this person to do what they are doing? What is motivating this person to keep on doing what they are doing? What would you recommend this person do? What are the alternatives?” There are no anticipated answers. There are no right or wrong answers. The skillful storyteller will bring people into the story who are missing, by asking, “What would the girl’s father do if he were alive?” “Who do you think raised the boy?” The bases of the questions are to probe the interaction and the roles of the people in the story and to discuss how they can better achieve their goals. “Storytelling helps participants co-create and manifest their identities in relation to one another and also enables them to imagine and appreciate each other’s perspectives. “ (Black, *Deliberation, Storytelling*, 2008).

The project design accentuates the vital element of relationship building. Ucko admonishes, “It is not easy coming out of prison and returning to the community. The fact that they interact with seniors who are accepting of them is a positive contributor that eases the re-entry process.” The model also produces a non-tradition role for seniors. In sharing their wisdom and life experiences, they are now in the position of givers instead of receivers, as is the norm when seniors interact with social service agencies and community organizations. The relationship building quality of the project contributes to the warmth and an ipso facto sacredness that is protected by the administrators of StoriesWork.

Project Planning & Implementation

Because of the fragility of the population and the issue of trust and acceptance, more value and planning is placed into building relationships than recording the process and interactions. Photography is the major source of documentation. Ucko believes video and audiotaping would not produce the same result; would cause withdrawal, and, precipitate a distrustful atmosphere. She expresses, “I don’t want to jeopardize the relationship. It is such a fine relationship. Some of the ex-offenders have tears in their eyes at the final session -- I don’t want to tamper with that.” Sound recordings in essence would also violate the sacredness of the space.

Scheduling arrangements are made between the three partners. StoriesWork, CJRC and DCSL. The mission of the CJRC “is to promote public safety through support for the local criminal justice system and to supervise and rehabilitate justice involved individuals through a wide array of supportive services so that they may achieve their full potential as contributing members of their community.” (WEB: Durham County). The catalyst for CRJC’s participation in the Intergenerational Interactive Storytelling Project is their community-based correction program for adult offenders. “The Re-entry Program is designed to facilitate the smooth return of offenders into the community after incarceration in the NC prison.” (WEB: Durham County). Participants meet at CJRC and are transported to the Durham Center for Senior Life. DCSL’s mission statement is “to enhance the lives of older adults through education, recreation, nutrition and social services in welcoming community settings.” The partnership with StoriesWork and CJRC actively engages two of DCSL’s key beliefs: 1) that older adults are a growing valuable community resource and will be appreciated and respected; and, 2) that everyone should be treated fairly, respectfully and with

the highest ethical standards.

In between the bi-monthly sessions there are no communications between the participants and StoriesWorks. Ucko relates, "When the next session arrives, everybody is waiting because they really like the program." Lenora and Nick select the storytellers for each session. Although the sessions are independent in content, for consistency, at least one of the same storytellers returns to the following session. Although the sessions are not publicized because the target audience is pre-selected, StoriesWork shares the success of their activities to their e-mail list of 100 and on the web through their monthly publication, *In The Loop*. The organization also produces an educational quarterly newsletter that is accessible on their website.

Each year the organization must seek funding for the project's \$8,000 budget. In 2012, the National Storytelling Network awarded \$5,000 for the project through the Brimstone Grant, and an additional \$1,000 was granted from the Mark Duke Biddle Foundation. The remaining \$2,000 was secured through fundraising events, including, *Move Your Zucchini*, an evening of community restaurants preparing and selling zucchini dishes for the benefit of the organization.

The presence of seniors is the primary indicator of community involvement in the project. The information provided on evaluation sheets, and through observation is assessed for future planning. Additionally, staff members of both partnering institutions are asked to recommend topics that address the needs of their populations.

Evaluations & Assessment

Executive Director Ucko recommends the use of short-term evaluations for gathering qualitative information from storytelling and cultural sustainability programs that are similar to *Intergenerational Interactive Storytelling with Seniors and Ex-offenders*. “We don’t wait. You won’t find what you are trying to evaluate two months later, if you can find the participants at all. At that point they are too distant from the process, and they will just tell you what they think you want to hear. The participants cannot take the forms home overnight. We want to know the immediate impact. This is what we can work with, we can not evaluate beyond this point and we don’t.” The authors of *What Else Works: Creative Work with Offenders* concur, “It is suggested that there are lessons to be learned from shifting evaluation and research too far away from front-line practice as this may be undermining of the creativity and open and enquiring approach that is core to both effective risk assessment and change-focused practice.” (Brayford, Cowe and Deering, *What Else*, 2010). All questions on the Intergenerational Storytelling Evaluation are designed to assess immediate impact. The results of questions in multiple-choice form are converted into pie charts for comparative analyses. Ucko finds pie charts are successful with grantors. (See graphs below).

Figure 1.2

Ex-Offenders' Evaluation of the Storytelling Session

n =13 participants

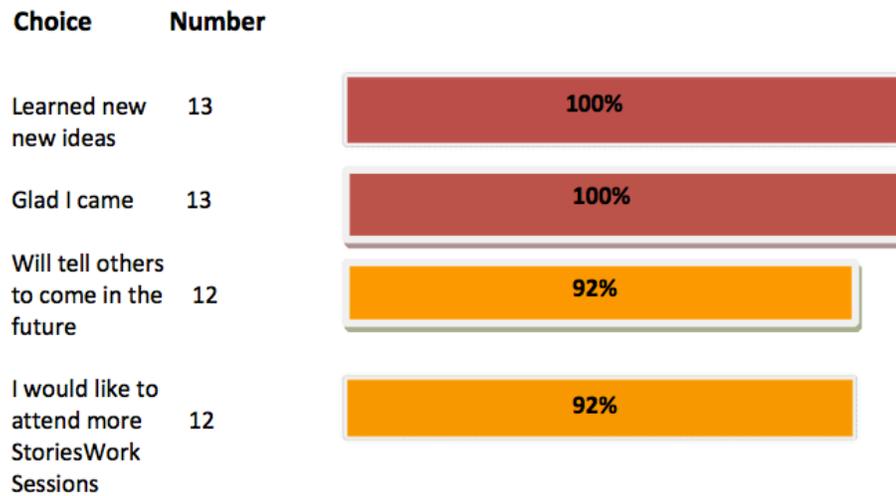
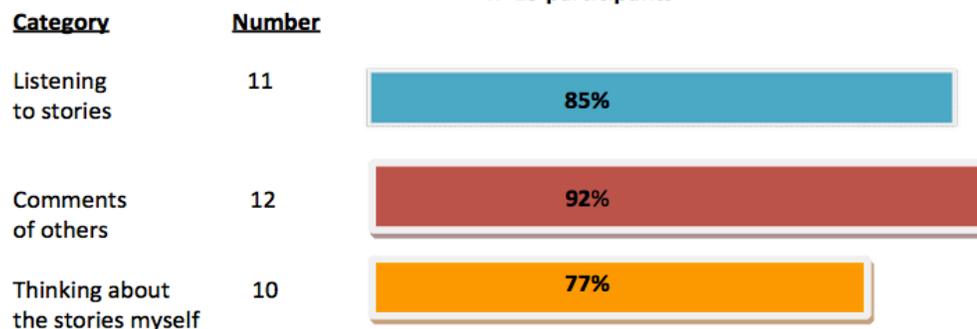


Figure 1.1

Ex-Offenders' Answer to the Question "What did you like at the Storytelling Session? Check all that apply."

n=13 participants



The open-ended questions provide insight into how the participants feel after each session, what thoughts were pervasive during the session, and, how the stories influenced their thinking. When reflecting back at the aim of the program, the answers to the open-ended questions prove a measurement of success. (See Figure 1.2).

**Example Responses to Open Ended Questions from April 25, 2012
Intergenerational Storytelling Evaluation**

Question: This storytelling session influenced my thinking in the following ways:

- I know now that I can speak in front of people.
- Young people and elderly people have humor and wit and seem to enjoy each others' company.
- It gave me options to think outside the box.
- It made me look at the bigger picture.

Question: Stories, I liked best (name up to three stories) and my reason for choosing them):

- The King Stories: I was able to look at the aspect of power differently.
- Farmer: Learned to be equal with everyone.
- The Man Who Went to Get a Special Cloth for His Wife: How not to act on instinct.
- The King and The Pictures: The reason I like this story is the fact that I realize everyone has their own place of peace.

Question: After attending the intergenerational storytelling sessions, I feel:

- Great
- Enlightened
- Free and excited
- Good
- Empowered to look at life differently
- Enlightened and encouraged that my opinion counts
- More open to the ideas and meanings
- Very peaceful
- Happy, energized, and more intelligent
- Happy

Figure 1.2.

Ucko's interview also revealed assessment through observation. She declared, "the seniors do not hang back. They are verbal, open and caring. The seniors stated to Ucko, "We have learned a huge amount from the ex-offenders. We understand better and see what we have in common." The session forged a new circumstance for the seniors and the ex-offenders. Staff from the Criminal Justice Resource Center have stated, "This is the first time that they [ex-offenders] have felt totally accepted. This is wonderful." The environment builds intergenerational relationships. Arms wrapped around shoulders have been the visual image at the end of some sessions. Ucko shares, "One time I was leaving a session, after the groups had already said their goodbyes. As I walked out I saw three of the seniors playing cards, with one of the younger members from the group. There is a reflexive effectiveness in these interactions that they participate in on their own, and they share this with other people, taking it back to their communities. They take back the stories too."

StoriesWork is currently writing a workbook to offer replication of the model. The greatest frustration for the organization was the non-responsiveness from an outreach initiative to other ex-offender and senior citizens facilities. The e-mail outreach included, publicity and a link to their public-friendly and information-filled website.

Although the concept of Interactive Storytelling in the Durham community is sustainable through many volunteers who have trained under the program, the sustainability of the organization is predominately dependent on a passionate leader who is also in a volunteer position. The financial stability of the organization has changed with the recent economic downturn. Prior to 2009, StoriesWork had a

reserve for a rainy day. “Well, It rained,” expressed Ucko, “Now we are hand-to-mouth, as we search out grants each year.”

CASE STUDY II: Stories-in-Service

Name of Organization: GRIOTWORKS, Inc.
 Location: Philadelphia, PA
 Website: www.griotworks.org
 Interviewee: Joslyn Duncan

Mission: GRIOTWORKS brings communities together through the production and distribution of mixed media projects that weave storytelling and folklore into the fabric of modern day society.

Organization & Leadership

GRIOTWORKS was incorporated in 2007 as a sole proprietorship that operates as a hybrid company. A hybrid organization is a “market-oriented, common good mission-centered organization which operates in the blurred space between traditional for profit and nonprofit enterprises.” (Boyd, et al. *Hybrid Organizations*, 2008). GRIOTWORKS conducts non-profit activities under the fiscal sponsorship of the Resources for Human Development and Community Education Center. The owner of the company, Joslyn Duncan, MFA (City College of New York) does not limit the scope of business operations to non-profit engagements. She conducts for-profit events to fund community programs at discounted rates. In accordance to Alter’s Hybrid Spectrum, GRIOTWORKS would fall in the framework of a Social Enterprise.

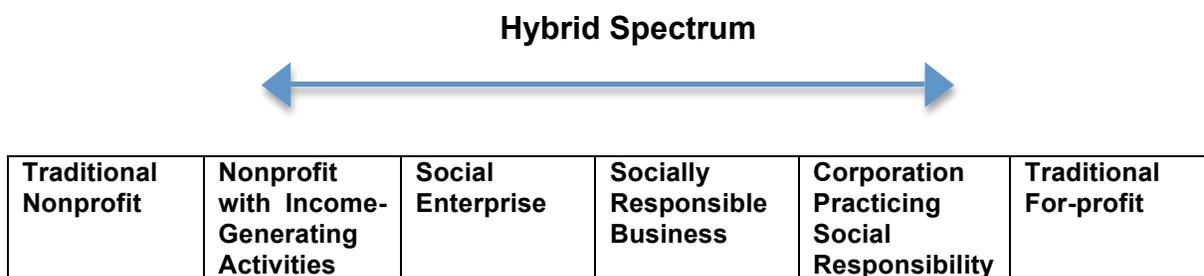


Figure 2.1. Alter’s Hybrid Spectrum (Boyd, *Hybrid Organizations*, 2008)

Duncan is a social entrepreneur who writes, “that she consistently finds ways to merge traditional and cultural values into modern culture and reshape ideas that work into a continuum of community-based activities that invoke progressive change.” The company’s projects are led by the owner and executed through volunteerism and paid-positions allocated through grants and business income. Duncan recognizes her strength in leadership as a visionary, and clearly acknowledges that she has made a difference in her community. She also identifies her weaknesses, one being time-management which has a direct impact on efficient and effective organization. She seeks partnerships that fill these gaps, and partners who excel in qualities that are her shortfall. Duncan advocates that egos need to be neutralized and that the group must focus on the work, in order for the partnerships to collectively create “amazingness.”

Overview & Background

Duncan credits two grass roots organizations for her inspiration:

“For about 8 years, I worked with an organization called the All Stars Talent Show Network, based in New York. The All Stars works with youth to produce and perform in their own talent shows in neighborhoods in several cities. Over those years, I witnessed change, first hand through the production of dozens of talent shows with thousands of participants. In my opinion, their model works and the key factor in the success of each show is getting out into communities and talking to people about the art of performance, how it changes people and how a change in people can impact the larger society.

Having that work as my foundation, I later worked for a non-profit organization called Scribe Video Center, under the direction of Louis Massiah. To date, my work with Scribe has been my greatest inspiration. This organization has produced hundreds of community-based documentaries where the people from those communities learn video skills and tell their own stories. In addition, they do neighborhood based independent film screenings that address issues going on in

communities. Working as the Program Coordinator for Scribe, I was deeply inspired by how effective these programs were. I became very sensitive to the importance of storytelling in communities whether it was through video, or the ability to dialogue with one another after the screening of short films. (WEB: GRIOTWORKS)

While working at Scribe as the Program Coordinator of *Precious Places Community History Project* and *Street Movies! Neighborhood Film Screenings*, Duncan was exposed to the issues that plaque various Philadelphia communities: violence, racial tensions between Cambodian and African American communities; gentrification; separation of families; children being raised by grandparents; and negative media imaging. Simultaneously as she was documenting for Scribe, she began her career as a storyteller, telling folktales to children in various venues throughout the city, including schools and recreation centers. After becoming a member of Keepers of the Culture: Philadelphia's Afrocentric Storytelling Group, the neophyte had a strong desire to learn more about the art of storytelling, "because unlike film, video or talent shows, I could create media simply by opening my mouth and beginning to speak." She clearly marks the difference between film and storytelling, "Storytelling is personal, and it is in the interaction that you can see change right before your eyes."

As she embarked upon the journey to deepen her knowledge of the oral tradition, her creativity and social entrepreneurial spirit rose to a fever pitch and Duncan founded GRIOTWORKS, with the objective to use the power of storytelling to impact Philadelphia's African American neighborhoods. Duncan began her sustainability and storytelling projects through a partnership with the Community Education Center (CEC) in West Philadelphia utilizing grant awards from the Philadelphia Foundation, Pennsylvania Council of the Arts and The Five County Arts

Fund. She conducted multi-media storytelling workshops for youth and held summer camps for three years. Duncan's vision broadened. She wanted to create a program using storytelling that would reflect positive imaging and combat the negative media images of the community. Her idea engendered *Stories-in-Services* in 2009, a perfect merger of her documentary and storytelling skills. One month after the premiere of *Stories-in-Service* Duncan entered graduate school to receive a Masters in filmmaking at the City College of New York.

The Social Problem

Media education is an issue. The imagery of African Americans portrayed in the media has been a perennial subject of embattlement for parents, scholars, educators, activists, artists and storytellers who endeavor to speak truth about black empowerment. "Mass media is a powerful force in American pop culture. Images seen on billboards, television, magazines, and the big screen create lasting impressions. Sometimes these impressions have a negative impact. Mass media can be very detrimental to society if it is not criticized. Many groups of Americans are negatively affected by the images and content of mass media. African Americans are at the top of this list." (Trem, *Negative Images*, 2008). Stereotypes are played out in storylines of the dominate mass media. Marginalized communities do not have equal access nor have "meaningful opportunity to balance the sensationally negative pictures of themselves pervading commercial media." (Goldbard, *New Creative*, 2006). Even when the facts of negative media evinces reality, the disproportionate reporting in comparison to white communities exacerbates

existing inequalities and perpetuates the problem of imagery in black communities. A primary example is the image of poverty. Although the percentage of Black Americans in poverty (27.6%) is greater than the percentage of White Americans in poverty (9.8%), the number of poor people between the two ethnicities only differs by 185,000. There are 4,817,000 White Americans in poverty and 5,002,000 Black Americans in poverty, yet the image of poverty is aligned with the black face of America. The impact of that impression is disillusioning, deflating, and destructive. African Americans have been compelled to seek and create alternatives to White-dominated media (aka 'mainstream' media) because of this history of racist and stereotypical discourses and imagery. (Squires, *African Americans and the Media*, 2009).

In a city known for its high criminal statistics, negative imagery comes in barrages. Philadelphia is listed as one of the top 25 most dangerous cities in the U.S., with a homicide rate four times the national average. Duncan's social entrepreneurial spirit was impassioned when she heard the escalation of the city's murder rate raise from "108" to "250" to "368." Even when she was fighting for her own survival, trying to figuring out where she would get her next meal, she voiced, "the visions kept marinating inside of me, and I thought nothing is going to stop me. How can I be a part of what needs to change in the world?" Duncan reflected back to a story she heard in the news while she was in New York about the new Pearl Theater in her old neighborhood at 16th & Masters Streets in Philadelphia. The newspaper article reported a shooting injury of a 16-year old and questioned whether the newly built theater should have been placed in North Philly. The scene created a bustling of

confusion, a flood of police cars and, an emptying of the theater. One detective reported, “basically they all went crazy, we don’t really know why either.” (WEB: Bass Barn, 12/7/2006). When Duncan called home to see if everyone was all right, her friend replied, “You know Pooky and some of the other kids, got into a fight, and it didn’t have anything to do with the theater.” This story was yet another misrepresentation that raised Duncan’s passion and heightened her desire to create an innovative community-base storytelling program. “When you talk to people in the community you realize that the story is different. *We* have to tell the story. If we have a creative plan to publicly place storytellers in our communities, not only will having access to storytellers provide a great sense of empowerment and cultural identity, in the sense of community esteem, but it will elevate the power for people to see that *your* story is *your* story.” “Storytelling has re-emerged as a method with which people might begin to challenge dominate social discourses (and hence social structures) through their assertion of non-dominate cultural constructions, personal identities and word views in the public sphere.” (Williams, Labonte and O’Brien, *Empowering Social Action*, 2003). Duncan’s plan is further supported by Goldbard’s assertion in *New Creative Community* that “in using new media and in promoting initiative, creativity, self-directed and cooperative expression through other cultural forms, community cultural development practitioners hope to shatter a media-induced trance, assisting community members in awakening to and pursuing their own legitimate aspirations for social autonomy and recognition.” “By documenting the stories in our communities and using social media to share them”, Duncan declares, “Now we have media responding to media.”

The Project Design

Stories-in-Service: Day of Neighborhood Storytelling is a city-wide service project designed to place Black Storytellers in predominately African American neighborhoods at the same day and the same time to share cultural, positive and progressive stories in urban neighborhoods where negative imaging and violence have been sensationalized in mainstream media.

Beginning at noon, three volunteer tellers appear in each of five outdoor venues throughout the city: The Lonnie Young Center (Germantown), Village of the Arts and Humanities (North Philly), Hawthorne Cultural Center (South Philly), Community Education Center (West Philly) and, Malcolm X Park (West Philly). The tellers are accompanied by a volunteer point person and a hired documentary team. The target within the African American communities is identified. Duncan states, "One of the specific objectives for the project is to draw in intergenerational audiences of children, adults and grandparents. A large sense of community is happening online and each generation is separated by their own cultural practices. Grandparents and teens barely speak the same language due to technological phenomena, advancements and changing interests. By turning neighborhood parks, recreation centers and local gathering places into small villages where families are encouraged to attend, we bridge a gap. The stories shared create a platform for family and communal discussion and reflections after the event."

Each site is documented by video and photography and uploaded to Youtube and partner sites.

The goal of the project is six-fold:

1. Bring community members together, in their own neighborhoods to engage in the traditional art of storytelling.
2. Restore a positive cultural image by sharing stories that communicate strengths, sources of creativity, and ideals of progressive unity, that ultimately challenge the negative images often perpetuated in mainstream media.
3. Inspire community members re-telling of stories to their families, friends and social groups.
4. Create a village-like space for established storytellers to offer stories as a tool for social change and community building.
5. Create a space for intergenerational exchange of dialogue about cultural identity and history.
6. Document the event, creating positive and progressive media for the community's served.

Program Structure

We have 3 tellers at each site and while that breaks into 20 minutes each, some people have longer works to share than others. I ask that each group chat about how the length of your pieces and which people will do longer works. It will be best if the musical storytellers open the programs (there's at least 1 musician with each group). If you find your program is short, please let the musical storyteller do an additional song/call and response, etc.

Community Engagement 1:00pm-1:45pm

The overall objective is to get the audience to talk about stories that are important to them.

Here's the suggested activity:

1) Get the audience talking back-- what did you think was important in the stories you heard? Hold up a piece of paper that has a word such as "Community", "Hope", "Family", "Love" on it and ask the audience to tell us what those things are; e.g. "What is Community"?

2) Ask what are the stories you hear in your neighborhood? What's been on the news? What are the headlines?

3) Ask people to come up with their own headlines? What POSITIVE stories should everyone know about? What positive stories are in their families, schools and neighborhood? They can take a minute to write out their headlines (Each site will have construction paper and colored pencils). When they're done writing their headline, they should show their headline and be asked to tell the whole story.

(E-mail dated: 9/21/12)

Prior to implementing the [Figure 2.2](#) event, research is conducted in each community, and provided to the tellers as a resource to tell stories that are sensitive and inclusive of the community. The genre of stories is left to the discretion

of the tellers and may include traditional folktales, historical tales, personal or community stories. One or more of the tellers uses musical instruments. In the village-like setting, an organic or improvisational atmosphere develops, where one teller or musician may drum or play other percussive instruments behind another teller. A quintessential objective is engaging the audience to talk about their communities. This objective is clearly relayed to the tellers through e-mail.

The final gathering for the day brings all five teams together for lunch to share the day's experience, assess the outcomes, and discuss the possibilities.

Planning and Implementation

2012 issued in a new administrative confidence in Duncan's managerial style, without having the partnerships from previous years due to other commitments and differing administrative styles, she was guided to understand that if it was going to be done, she had to believe in herself, trust spirit and do it. Duncan began the project by building a new administrative team and establishing organizational and individual partnerships. The team of two devised a timetable and communications plan and assigned tasks. "When one window closes, doors fly open" could be the motto for the influx of partnerships. PhillyCam, Arts Sanctuary, and Odunde asked to become partners early in the planning stages.

Through her work with Scribe, Duncan used her affiliations to build partnership with the sites that would host the event, and to learn about the current issues, challenges, and hopes of each community. She worked with the hosts to disseminate an outreach strategy for each neighborhood.

Through her relationship with Keepers of the Culture, the National Association

of Black Storytellers, and local spoken word venues she sent out a call to engage 15 storytellers. The organizer relates, “Partnerships with storytellers are crucial. They understand the power of the word, and can immediately connect to the intended purpose of the project.” Tellers from Chicago, Virginia, New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia responded to the call. Denise Valentine, Kala Jojo, Oba William King, Erica Rhapsode Hawthorne, Atiba Kwabeena Wilson, Linda Humes, Sarai Kaba Khepruhai-t Abdul-Malik, Baba Jamal Koram, Charlotte Blake Alston, Khalil Munir, Alyesha Wise, Queen Nur and King AH offered to contribute to the project. Duncan also added the role of storyteller to her list.

The administration worked to complete the teams for each location. With the exception of one site, Malcolm X Park, each location had a set of intergenerational storytellers ranging from 20 years old to above 60. One storyteller was a Master teller; the second teller was in mentorship; and the third teller was non-traditional storyteller whose artistic work reflected the griotic tradition (rapper; tap dancer; poet). Completing the groups were, a video producer, photographer and, point person. Master tellers were the community engagement leaders.

The media campaign was commanded by using Facebook, Twitter and e-mail. Fliers were placed throughout the city; posters were displayed and press releases were dissemination to local radio and newspaper outlets. Communications were maintained between administration and team members through e-mail, text and phone conversations.

Pennsylvania Council of the Arts provided a matching grant of \$1,999. The funds were met through a crowdfunding campaign with Indiegogo and “bucket drops”

at storytelling events hosted by project partners. Duncan affirms, "It is important to note that the approach to asking community members for \$10 donations was significant in community outreach. Our community partners -- Art Sanctuary, Spoken Soul 215, Philly CAM, First Person Arts, the Leeway Foundation, D. Richardson Productions and Vivant Art Collection-- invited me to their events and spaces to tell stories and raise money for the campaign." This strategy built awareness of GRIOTWORKS and the *Stories-in-Service* project. It also created new telling spaces for the African Oral Tradition, and built a bridge between the partnering community organizations and the storytelling community. Duncan was thrilled that the name GRIOTWORKS, was no longer identified solely with her name, but was now known in connection with different community arts and activist organizations throughout the city.

As administrator and editor of the project, Duncan was paid from the \$3900 budget. The budget also allocated fees for the videographers, photographers, researchers, travel, lunch and publicity.

Stories-in-Service had its third installation on September 24, 2012. The stories at Malcolm X Park, where I participated included, Charlotte Blake Alston telling a rhythmic tale of overcoming and strength, an original version of John Henry. I followed with another rap on Black scientists who broke the mold with new inventions, and Oba King led the audience in *I Love My People*:

I Love My People
By Oba William King

My People are strong from the cradle to the grave.

I love my people
 They couldn't break us down, because we were so brave.
 We kept our pride throughout the years
 I love my People
 Worked hard and prayed even shed some tears.
 I love my people
 No matter what the world has put us through
 We come out on top in every thing we do
 I Love My People Just Say it / with me.
 I Love My People I love my People,
 I love my people all the colors of our skin
 I love my people
 If we all work together we know that we can win
 I love my people
 I love the way we walk I love the way we talk I love the way we sing
 I'm blessed cause I know one thing (crowd: I Love my Peo-ple)
 I'mo love my peo-ple and, There is no doubt
 We're gonna be alright Here's what I'm talking 'bout (please say it with me)
 I love my People, I love my people
 Just say it again
 I love my people, I love my people.
 You find my people all around the world.
 I love my People,
 Man and Woman, Boy and Girl
 I love my people
 Always trying to do our best
 I love my people
 We work hard everyday and seldom rest
 I love my people
 If I could have one wish come true
 I love my people,
 Then you'd love me like I love you...
 I love my people...
 Oh won't you say. I love my people, I love my people
 Come on and say I love my people, I love my people...
 No Matter Where We Go There We Are
 We're Not Just Players
 We're the shinning Stars
 I'm gonna spread the word both Near and Far
 about Just how blessed We truly are
 Take this word Across the land Divided we fall United we stand
 Think about your greatness and Our history
 Without my people, where would we be..
 Somebody tell Me! I Love my People...
 With out my people With out your people With out our People Where would we be
 Tell Me
 I Love My People.

All the stories and songs were accompanied by Dwight James, percussionist.

An intergenerational audience included, a few seniors, three young men (20+), two couples, and approximately ten children. The community engagement segment began with an African native exclaiming her surprise to find that storytelling, as expressed in her country, was also right here in her new American community. As the children gathered from other areas of the park, they sang nursery rhymes and games songs along with the tellers. The art of jaliya was encapsulated in the spontaneity of the moment as we created a children's rap about the places *I Love* in my community. Each child gleefully or shyly announced their favorite place and we intertwined their expressions into the repetitive hook.

New concepts require new directions in research. Data for studying storytelling events must be sought in natural field situations, and every attempt must be made to capture their wholeness." (Georges, *Storytelling Events*, 2010). Collecting data on the attending population -- how many, age-range, and ethnicity-- was part of GRIOTWORKS field evaluation process. All team members and site hosts were requested to complete a questionnaire. Duncan believes the most valuable field tool was the footage from the community interaction segment of the project that also includes post-event interviews.

Video notations by Duncan during the editing process provide further in sight into the days events:

Video Snapshots

The Liberian storyteller who showed up to the program as an audience member was invited to tell a story. Before telling his story, he talked about coming to the U.S. as a refugee and how he had been tortured, showing us his wounds. He talked about how he was able to carry the stories with him and shared a spider tale-- with the same aesthetics as the African American storytellers. It was a great moment of connecting the power of story and our

ability to carry these tales through our experiences. To see the smile and delight the brother shared his tale with was very moving.

Sister Caroliese, as an audience member who is a practicing storyteller, led the audience in thinking about peace, love, etc. It was very healing. At one point she told everyone to give thanks for the light and nature -- the wind started blowing. It was as if she called it and it responded.

South Philly had an interracial and intergenerational audience. To see them working together, the children and elders of varying backgrounds, to state their headlines was beautiful. They wanted peace, and to tell positive stories that happened at their schools.

Four little girls debated what was important in their communities. They talked about wanting the killing and shooting to stop. When the video producer asked one of the girls what is peace, she responded, "peace is this, today." They wanted to try out storytelling and performed for the camera. At one point the video producer gave the girls the camera and a lesson in how to record (while the other video person recorded the interaction.)

Everyone gave their headlines and made a commitment to making the headlines come true. Every person from the audience members to the site manager at one point broke into tears when talking about the changes they wanted to see in the education system, in neighborhoods, and in their lives. The director of the center, Terri Shockley, broke down and talked about how much she appreciated being able to gather and listen to stories and as she spoke about her headline, she mentioned that she had not had time to sit and express some of her thoughts-- her husband had recently suffered a stroke, there was no time for counseling, so she felt the program and the gathering of people gave her a space to breath.

A little girl, (who was albino), talked about wanting people to understand each other and made a commitment to speaking up whenever she saw people being unfair to disabled people.

The video producer handed her camera to an audience member, so that she could come from behind the camera and give her headline - shaky camera and all-- this was a powerful expression of community and inclusiveness and the art of storytelling.

"In the process of telling our stories, a form of emotional release happens.

Asking people to tell stories can lead them to a place of self-reflection and create a deep feeling of kinship and love for self and others, culminating in a joy that feeds the

soul.” (Stout, *Collective Visioning*, 2011).

Evaluation & Assessment

The three-tiered methodology of collecting data offers diverse perspective for assessment. The video snapshots begin to provide a window into how the six objectives of the program were met. The videotapes provide visual and auditory evidence of the programs short-term impact. “I know I did the right thing, when I look at the footage,” exclaims Duncan. “The depth of the children’s interaction with the storytellers, and the reaction of the volunteers were the most powerful measures of meeting the community engagement objective. The footage was so personal. They were impacted by culture – the heart of Jaliya. People are not hearing this in public places.”

To further assess best practices, and what may need to change, the responses from team members via an on-line questionnaire provides an effective tool. Figure 2.3 below, shows a sampling of questions and responses regarding the community engagement initiative.

Selection of Questions & Responses

from *Stories-in-Service* Feedback Form Distributed to Team Members

N=6

Question: The Turn out at My Location was:

- Unacceptable Low
- Reasonable
- Good
- Perfect for the Nature of What Occurred

Responses

4
2

Question: The Community Engagement portion of the program was:

- A waste of time
- A nice idea but not essential to SIS
- Confusing but a good idea if further developed
- Successful and an essential part of SIS
- The highlight of SIS

1
5

Question: Describe a highlight of your overall experience, if there was one:

I loved the other storytellers! The musician is on point! He was a true scholar. We played off of each other!

Seeing the children coming, shyly, eagerly, when Oba called to them “ I NEED you!”

One highlight was the community interaction part of the program. At our site we intermingled with the audience and had one-on-one conversations. We took the mic to the audience and we help generate ideas. About 12 folks out of the 20-25 stayed and it was good. The team approach to the event, i.e. site host/tellers/coordinator was straight up community education work. We worked well one another. The Storytellers had an opportunity to talk and decide on performance order, etc. and we just did what we had to do to make this work. The camera crew did their work well.

The highlight was knowing that the event was just as significant to the host site leader as it was the participants.

Audience sharing after the telling. The engagement of the children. Oba got the children off the playground and into our arena. Nice!

I thoroughly enjoyed participating in the event. The light and enthusiasm for the program I saw coming from the participants- volunteers, the recreation staff and especially the youth as they listened to stories.

The actual event with the feedback of participants/audience was powerful.

Figure2.3

The questionnaire asked what didn't work and what needs improvement. Storytellers' responses suggested that they need more in-depth research about the communities and additional information on current issues. Duncan plans to extend the involvement of the storytellers in the community, by partnering them with the site hosts, to establish a richer and long-lasting relationship between the community and the tellers. Such a residential program would resume the storyteller in their traditional role in the community, and create an authentic partnership far beyond a one-day visiting performance with no other relationship-building dynamics. (Zipes, *Creative Storytelling*, 1995 and, Riley and Wakely, *Communities*, 2005).

Sign-in sheets tallied the quantitative data. Ten to thirty-five people attended each site. Three sites were interracial and all sites were intergenerational. Duncan considers the low turn out and an inability to get local schools to commit to partnering unsuccessful aspects of the project. She also criticized her decision to take on a time-consuming Scribe assignment, one month prior to *Stories-in-Service*, which lessened the outreach objective. As project producer, she is also re-considering the structure of the company and exploring the benefits and handicaps of existing as a 501(c) 3, sole-proprietorship or hybrid. Her aim is to use the best design and practices that will enable her to pursue social entrepreneurial goals and help sustain culture in African American communities nationally. The innovator with the intends to produce a *Stories-in-Service* guidebook with DVD for replication of the project.

Case III: The Growing Griots' Literacy Learning Program

Name of Organization: Griots' Circle of Maryland

Location: Baltimore, MD

Website: www.griotscircleofmarylandinc.org

Interviewee: Bunjo Butler

Mission of Organization: to uplift the folklore and traditions of our African heritage through storytelling, poetry, music, and other educational activities.

Vision of Organization: Widen our storytelling circle. We plan to produce storytelling materials, to share Afrocentric cultural information through our website and to create storytelling opportunities for young people and families.

Organizational Structure & Leadership

The Griots' Circle of Maryland is a 501 (c) 3 membership organization. It was founded as the first Affiliate organization of the National Association of Black Storytellers (NABS) in Baltimore, MD in 1989. Among the founders is Mary Carter Smith (ancestor) who co-founded NABS with Linda Goss. Although the Affiliates of NABS function independently, they must meet and maintain certain criteria.

Bunjo S. Butler, director of the *Growing Griots' Literacy Learning Program (GGLLP)* was the first president of the organization, which now has over 80 dues-paying members. The organization operates under the traditional guise of a 501(c) 3 entity, using Roberts Rules of Order as guiding principles for monthly meetings. After four strong years of leadership, Janice Curtis Greene, passed the reigns of the presidency to Robert Smith in December, 2012.

The *Growing Griots Learning Literacy Program* is the brainchild of Butler, MLS, who is also a past-president of NABS. Butler has been the Director of the program since its inception in 2008. *GGLLP* is staffed with three additional volunteers from the Griots' Circle, Janice Curtis Greene, Deborah Pierce-Fakunle and Janet Thomas. As the

program requires 25 Saturdays to implement, the dedication of the staff is unparalleled in terms of other organizational programmatic initiatives. Thomas was inspired to volunteer after, through her daughter's participation, she witnessed the educational and cultural benefits of the program. Fakunle and Greene have both served the organization in official capacities. The staff analyzes the outcomes of the sessions as a group and, jointly make decisions on strategies to improve the program.

Butler is the Manager of the Walbrook Branch of the Enoch Pratt Library. He merged his passion for improving literacy among Baltimore youth with his occupation. The library is an essential partner and is the home of the *GGLLP*. Butler identifies one of his greatest strength's as his desire to create an environment to enhance literacy skills. His education as a librarian and his experience in the storytelling world provided the expertise needed to design the curriculum.

Overview and Background

The abysmal literacy statistics of the Baltimore City Schools motivated Butler to share his knowledge and transform the organization's youth group *Growing Griots* into the *Growing Griot's Learning Literacy Program*. From 1994 to 2008, the participants in the youth group consisted of the children of the members of Griots' Circle and youth participants of Mary Carter Smith's storytelling radio program. The focus of *Growing Griots* was to grow storytellers. Parents of the youth participants were steeped in culture, and individualized training was under parental instruction. In addition to becoming storytellers, the various participants were guided by their parents to add African dance and drumming to their artistic repertoire. As a group they met to prepare for public performances. The organization financially supported

the Growing Griots with travel and room and board to NABS festivals. The children grew up, went to college, and began to explore their careers. The question became: What do we do with the Growing Griots program now that the children are grown?

Butler agreed to take the lead, if and only if, the organization was willing to transform the youth program into a project that addressed the literacy issues plaguing Baltimore City Schools. The idea had long been a concept Butler wanted to build. His first attempt at a literacy program was the W.E.B. Dubois Study Group, but he had challenges mounting the project. The maturation of participants in the Growing Griots presented a prime opportunity to re-ignite the social entrepreneurial idea. Butler revealed, "What we recognized as we were raising that first group of storytellers was that there was a literacy structure around what we were doing, but it wasn't stated. They had to read, write, become comfortable with public speaking and follow direction." In the second manifestation of the program, the primary objective changed from raising storytellers to impacting youth through a literacy program based in the African Oral Tradition designed to enhance reading and writing skills; elevate listening and critical thinking skills; teach public speaking skills; and, entrench the ability to follow directions. The innovator further articulated the difference, "The participants this time would not be our children by birth, but they would be our children by culture."

The Social Problem

According to the literacy facts from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), literacy is defined as "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

Because low literacy and the lack of a high school diploma are highly correlated with unemployment, living in poverty, and children's lack of academic performance, it has a direct effect on cultural, social and economic sustainability. (MD Dept. of Education, *Literacy Works*, 2001). *Begin to Read*'s website illuminates the impact:

Many of the USA ills are directly related to illiteracy. Just a few statistics:

- Literacy is learned. Illiteracy is passed along by parents who cannot read or write.
- One child in four grows up not knowing how to read.
- 43% of adults at *Level 1* literacy skills live in poverty compared to only 4% of those at *Level 5*.
- 3 out of 4 food stamp recipients perform in the lowest 2 literacy levels.
- 90% of welfare recipients are high school dropouts.
- 16 to 19 year old girls at the poverty level and below, with below average skills, are 6 times more likely to have out-of-wedlock children than their reading counterparts.
- Low literary costs \$73 million per year in terms of direct health care costs. A recent study by Pfizer put the cost much higher.

Baltimore Reads partnered with Baltimore City Council to address the high literacy rate in the city. On April 23, 2007, a Resolution was adopted by the Council to determine the status of adult literacy in the City, stating:

According to the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) by the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 40 million adults have limited literacy skills, making tasks such as filling out an application or reading a food label difficult, and 10% of 4-year college graduates with full-time employment have low literacy skills. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports that only 25% of the nation's workforce can read a description of 2 kinds of employee benefits and explain the differences, and only 26% can use an eligibility pamphlet to calculate how much supplemental security income they would receive.

Illiteracy cuts across all racial and ethnic groups and severely impacts the quality of life that individuals are able to attain. Illiteracy creates a deficit of self-esteem that alienates the non-reader from the larger society. Disturbingly, 20% of high school graduates cannot read their diplomas; 85% of unwed mothers are illiterate; and 70% of Americans who are arrested cannot read. Illiteracy is a communicable affliction - an adult who cannot read is unable to provide the support that a child needs to succeed in school nor is the adult able to pass on to the child important life skills. In 2002, Baltimore Reads, a literacy group, reported that 38% of the adult population in Baltimore, or nearly twice the statewide illiteracy rate, could not read. In this city, where the drop-out rate still approaches 50%, 200,000 adults, or 46% of the population over the age of 16, have not completed high school. About a third of Baltimore residents in this same age group are unable to fully comprehend a front-page news story. Such limitations are particularly catastrophic in a population seeking to make a livelihood in an old industrial city that has evolved into a cerebral-based center of commerce. (*City of Baltimore Council Bill 05-0108R Resolution*).

“In recent years, several researchers have emphasized the importance of considering the literacy practices of outside institutions in order to understand the literacy crisis within the classroom.” (McMillian and Edwards, *African American Church*, 2004.). Programs designed to combat Baltimore’s literacy problem are an asset to the Council’s resolve to assess and address the issue. In an urban center with a predominately African American population, a literacy program grounded in the African Oral Tradition substantially contributes to the school system’s limited cultural curriculum. The introductory page in the *GLLP* manual advises:

In the 21st century, this continues to be an undisputed truth- many urban public education systems around the country have not been effective in educating and preparing African American children.

Schools on all levels especially on the primary levels, fail to present the kinds of programs and experiences that maximize African American children’s ability to learn, to read, to write, do basic math, to listen, to follow directions, speak in public and to think critically.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics' 2005 & digest of Educational Statistics:

- African American children age 9 continue to perform below their White and Hispanic peers.
- African American students are out performed by their peers in grade 8th mathematics virtually across the board with 59% of African Americans ranking 'below basic' and only 7% reach proficient.
- African American students are out performed by their peers in grade 8th reading virtually across the board with 49% ranked in the 'below basic' category.

The Griots' Circle of Maryland believes the potential of African Americans are never realized because they are not in learning environments that maximize, stimulate, or allow their cultural, spiritual, educational, social and emotional growth. "The lack of focus on community in many mainstream American schools has often created special problems for children from nonwhite backgrounds." (Eder, *Life Lessons*, 2010). An environment that constitutes a positive learning environment for African American children "recognizes their strengths, abilities, and their culture; and incorporates same into the learning process so that African American children can achieve competency and confidence in mastering the tools/skills they need to survive in this society and to be able to contribute to its creative development" (Hale-Benson 1982 quoted in *GLLP Student Manual*).

The Project Design

The positive learning environment for African American youth is the motivating force behind the design of *GLLP*. "*GLLP* is an African-centered literacy and learning project organized around the African Oral Tradition and

the systematic study and collection of materials relative to the African diasporic experience.” (*GGLLP Student Manual*). The program is constructed to support the current schedule through an environment that eliminates all pass/fail stress and negative competition stress by providing 192 hours of after-school instruction and independent study. Each module is based on the African Oral Tradition and is applicable to selective standards of Voluntary State Standards (VSC), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and International Reading Association (IRA). The original target audience was middle school. Parent participation is mandatory, and parents must attend the first three sessions. The 140-page student manual is distributed to each student, and parents are supplied with an additional copy. It is incumbent upon the parents to aid their children in preparation for each week’s assignment. Documents in the manual advise: “Parents will be responsible for monitoring the home study component of GGLLP because training a child to study effectively is primarily a task that is done at home by the parent. Many parents are surprised when they learn that they are the chief influence in developing good study habits and proper attitudes toward schoolwork and learning. Parents are the most important teachers of study skills because it is they who set the expectations for responsible behavior and quality work, and it only they who can monitor work performed at home.” Parents are encouraged to attend and participate in all sessions. Lunch is provided at every meeting.

GGLLP’s introductory sessions explain the benefits of storytelling, provide a history of the African Oral Tradition (Figure 3.1) and outline the fully

structured program. Students are given a pre-test questioning their knowledge on historical black figures and the identity of the seven principles of Kwanzaa.

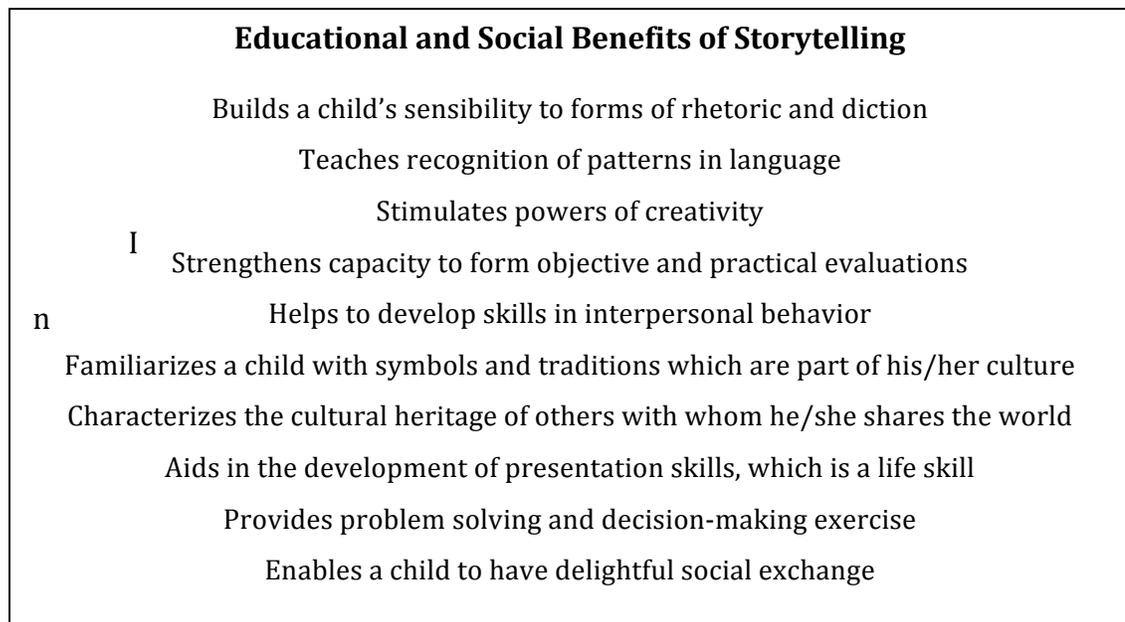


Figure 3.1

A handout further informs participants of the connection of the Oral Tradition to the curriculum. “The African Oral Tradition is a centuries old system of education. African Americans have a long standing history of utilizing the ‘oral tradition’ as it relates to the collection, storing, and distribution of cultural experiences and historical events etc. The GGLLP will continue and add to that tradition by incorporating the oral tradition into the learning process.” The handout lists and details six core components that are integrated into various modules: 1) Storytelling Workshops; 2) Library Use Instruction; 3) African American Studies; 4) Family Trees/Oral Histories; 5) African American/Family Timeline; and, 6) Programming/Culminating Event. “Literacy itself can be seen as entailing the deliberate manipulation of symbolic

material within socially organized practices. Unlike more spontaneous casual conversation, literacy is viewed as more 'volitional' (Vygotsky, 1987), involving a conscious choice of signs to render meaning." (Dyson, *Welcome to the Jam*, 2003).

In the *Beginning Storytelling* Module, students approach stories from four aspects: listening to a traditional folktale, reading the tale, re-writing it and, re-telling it. The lessons focus on story plot and story structure. All modules have a leadership and cultural component. They are replete with lessons on history and culture, including the student's family lineage. Students must conduct interviews and create a family story. *GLLP's* curriculum is designed to be used in the school environment. The students are given opportunities within the sessions to share school classroom applications. The Math component based on keeping score in bowling, accentuates critical thinking skills. "Oral storytelling transforms the abstract, objective, deductive mathematics we have all experienced in school into a subject surrounded by imagination, myth, and subjective meanings and feelings. It allows children to bring to bear their creative and imaginative powers in making mathematics meaningful to themselves." (Schiro, *Storytelling and Mathematics*, 2004).

Interwoven with the curriculum are public performances. Members of the Griots' Circle mentor students through preparation. "Performing narrative binds relationships across time and space in that it brings together actual, potential, and virtual audiences in shared world." (Langellier, *Performing Narrative*, 2004). Each year the students tell stories at the National Blacks and

Wax Museum for Kwanzaa. The museum has been partners with *GGLLP* since its inception. During February the youth present Living Biographies in period clothing. This component includes researching, writing and telling stories about historical figures that are part of the museums display. Students must conduct research for all programs outside of the *GGLLP* sessions. The third performance is at the National Urban League Banquet, and carries a different theme every year. The final presentation is during the graduating banquet in May. All students receive a certificate and are inducted into the Griots' Circle.

Prior to graduation, the students are given a re-test, asking the same questions in the pre-test.

Planning & Implementation

The 2012-2013 year was the 5th implementation of *GGLLP*. The recruiting process began in early spring. Fliers were placed throughout the entire Enoch Pratt Library System and Butler recruits heavily at his Branch. Word-of-mouth from former attendees is also credited with enrollment results. In 2011, age of the target audience was extended to include high school students. The Baltimore City School System has a mandatory Service Learning Program (SLP). "Service-learning is a teaching method that combines meaningful service to the community with curriculum-based learning. Students improve their academic skills by applying what they learn in school to the real world; they then reflect on their experience to reinforce the link between their service and their learning." (WEB: Baltimore City Schools). In *Using Storytelling to Enhance Student Learning*, Maxine Alterio connects the

impact of a storytelling program to SLP goals, “Meaningful storytelling processes and activities incorporate opportunities for reflective dialogue, foster collaborative endeavor, nurture the spirit of inquiry and contribute to the construction of new knowledge. In addition, cultural, contextual and emotional realities can be acknowledged, valued and integrated into storytelling processes.” High school students must complete 75 hours per year in a program that provides, preparation, action and reflection. When students showed an interest in *GLLP*, Butler worked with project partners to enable *GLLP* to become a viable SLP choice. The age-requirement also expanded in the opposite direction, as parents of 4th through 6th graders sought benefits of the literacy program. The volunteer staff meet to review the enrollment, assess program adjustments and select module instructors.

Partner communication is an-ongoing process throughout the year. The role of partners has shifted due to the economic recession. Initially, the largest percentage of the \$6,000 budget was provided by the Enoch Free Public Library. The Library provided space, funded the lunch program, made all copies of the Student Manual and other educational materials and, provided busing for field trips. “I can whistle as I work,” Butler shares, “the benefits of the program accrue to the library. It is a mutually beneficial arrangement.” The Greater Baltimore Urban League donated funds to hire master storytellers as workshop leaders. However, with budget cuts and a limitation of funds for both partnering organizations, *GLLP* began a search for additional partners. Through the affiliation of two staff members, the Injured Worker’s Insurance

Fund became a *GLLP* Partner and the North Avenue Merchant Group donated funds to serve the 70 attendees at the graduating banquet.

Butler states, “The Griots’ Circle has always been responsive to our needs.” Whenever a funding issue is reported, at a general meeting, members become creative. One member, had a birthday party, but asked that all gifts be given in a form of donations to one of three organizations – one being the *GLLP*. The eldest member sacrificed her annual trip to NABS to donate \$1500 to the youth program.

With the majority of the budget assembled, the program begins in the first week of October. Because the students come from beyond the library’s immediate vicinity, some parents transport the students. Parents who remain at the sessions are asked to interactively engage in the program by sharing stories about their African American experiences as it pertains to the curriculum topic. “They are always encouraged to look back at their heroes and shereos.” Onawumi Jean Moss is quoted in *Literacy Development in the Storytelling Classroom*, “It is important to introduce youth to the importance of our ancestors through personal experiences since every culture has stories that reflect their people’s beliefs, customs and history...”

The core group for the year is always less than the initial enrollment. Butler relates, “Students come to know that there is work in the program. I tell them up front, that schoolwork is not an excuse for unpreparedness in your *GLLP* sessions. As we start to move along, we see that parental commitment is not something we can necessarily count on.” Parental input is measured by

student output. He continues, “We know if the parents have been on point, if the students come prepared.” Students who returned for a second year perform at events when requested and mentor the program’s 4th through 6th graders.

Although all students must open an e-mail account, Butler identifies technology as one of the organization’s weaknesses. When the program was initiated in 2008 the library provided funding for documentation of every session. After losing funding, the primary method of documentation became observation, written materials, and the pre-test and final-test results. Photos and videos are taken by volunteers or parents that attend events. However, there is no formalized method of retrieval or archiving the images.

A strength of the program is the economic benefit to age-eligible graduates of the program. All eligible graduates are afforded a summer job with the Enoch Pratt Library System. Additionally, all students must write to the sponsors and share stories of how the program has made a difference in their lives.

Evaluation & Assessment

Diane Williams co-editor of *Literacy Development in Storytelling Classroom*, advocates, “When students learn historic facts and can translate that information into a story by making inferences, by creating a bird’s eye view into the lives of characters and events, and by contextualizing the economy, social, and cultural riches, and when they can clearly juxtapose the prominent difference in the time periods/eras and even incorporate the

antiquated language by shrouding the story around facts, then the assessments will be evident. “

The Baltimore City School graduation rate is on the rise. In 2011 the graduation rate was 71.9% up from the 2010, 65.9%, constituting the biggest gain in decade and a 20% increase over four years. (WEB: City of Baltimore). The drop-out rate is also declining. These factors may in part be attributed to the city’s attempt to literacy issues. Although Butler acknowledges that graduating does not necessarily articulate that the graduate has a proficient literacy rate, the *GLLP* content and statistics provide a reasonable assumption that cultural literacy programs contribute to positive literacy statistics in graduating with proficiency and reducing the drop-out rate. In the five years of *GLLP*’s existence, 80 students have been in the program. 100% of students that matriculated to 12th grade graduated and pursued further education. 100% of all *GLLP* students who are currently enrolled in the Baltimore City School District remain in school.

Butler states, “Consistently at the start of the program we cannot get the students to complete ten names of African American heroes/sheroes. However, by May they can list twenty.” The objectives are also assessed through the quality and completion of assignments. All assignments must be typed.

A Story A Story

Synopsis: Once, all the stories in the world belonged to Nyame, the Sky God. He kept them in a box beside his throne. But Anansi, the Spider man, wanted them — and caught three sly creatures to get them.

Re-Write: The Worth of Fashion by Mariama Patterson (GLLP Student)

The Director believes the written work, growth in confidence through public performances, pre-test and post-test provide sufficient indicators that the programs goals have been met, but asserts that more evaluative methods would aid in a better assessment. The return of students to the program, and student involvement in cultural events outside of the *GGLLP* are other factors used to measure the success of *GGLLP*. Parent testimonies written and verbal provide a qualitative evaluation and are shared with potential funders.

Because of the decrease in enrollment for the 2012-2013 year, the staff has determined that the recruitment period needs to begin in January. The staff also has plans to deepen the by-in of local school administrators and increase grant writing efforts. Butler affirms that the sustainability of the program beyond his leadership is suspect due to the amount of volunteer hours needed to manage the program. To sustain volunteerism, the staff has considered adding a consulting component, and has introduced the concept to other Affiliates of NABS. The consulting fees would go directly to the consultants. Butler is also seeking to present the module to Black fraternities and Sororities for implementation in their youth components. Butler recently won a grant for \$5,000 for his innovation and implementation of *GGLLP*. He donated all the grant money back into the program for staff development, technology training and purchases, and sound equipment. Tools he believes will increase *GGLLP's* impact.

Butler states, "Participants cannot help but leave the *Growing Griots Learning Literacy Program* with more awareness than which with they came.

Everything is about our culture. If you don't get it in the writing, it is caused by the research of family and historical stories and timelines and then furthered through the telling." He continues in comparing growing up in the sixties to modernity, "When I grew up, I was aware of my Black self. I was raised during the Black Power movement, seeing Malcolm and Martin made me aware of my Black self. And, the storytelling, Oh my goodness, my family stories, made me aware of my identity. I didn't grow up with the problem of a lack of cultural knowledge or literacy issues. The stories I read let me understand my uniqueness in the context of humanity. And that is that as human beings there is no difference. Though the stories, the plots are similar, they just come through different experiences."

CASE IV: SCATTS (Sustaining Culture and Tradition Through Storytelling)

Name of Organization: In FACT, Inc.

Location: Willingboro, NJ

Website: www.innovativefact.org

Director: Karen "Queen Nur" Abdul-Malik

The final case study is my own.

Mission: To perpetuate and preserve folklife traditions and use these traditions to sustain communities and effect social change.

Vision: We want to make a better world by building stronger communities through the awareness, appreciation, training and practice of storytelling and other folklife traditions. We strive to create artistic community-based sustainability models that contribute to thriving communities and are replicable across cultures.

Organizational Structure & Leadership

In FACT, Inc.: *Innovative Solutions through Folk Art, Culture and Tradition* was founded as a 501 (c) 3 hybrid organization in July, 2011. The Board of Directors currently consists of eight members with expertise in the

areas of folklore, social services, storytelling, business management, accounting, education, and community organizing. The board is required to have at least one board member under the age of forty. As Executive Director, I manage the daily operations of the organization and report back to the board. The Board steers away from micromanaging the day-to-day activities of the organization and is interactively engaged in selective programs that strongly resonate with their personal philanthropic goals. The Board is required to meet a minimum of four times per year to deliberate the direction and progress of the organization, and set policy. As a leader establishing a new organization, I was responsible for presenting the mission, vision, objectives and goals of the organization and the expectations of the Board effectively and clearly:

General Role of In FACT Board Members

In Fact has a Board that is committed and knows how to give Praise.

PRAISE: **Passionate**
 Resourceful
 Action-oriented
 Innovative
 Strategic
 Engaged

1. To finance their own participation as a Board Member.
2. To serve a term of office that is usually three years.
3. To always act in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws, and to achieve In FACT's mission through prudent and ethical action.
4. To provide leadership to clarify and sustain the mission of In FACT.
5. To secure 100% Board financial contribution.
6. To assume proactive responsibility in maintaining organization's financial growth.
7. To provide information, ideas and suggestions from the field to the Board and communicate the activities and ideas of the Board to the field.

8. To participate actively in deliberations of IN FACT's agenda of issues relevant to the entire cultural and advocacy field.
9. To represent and promote In FACT to the profession and community-at-large by maintaining a working knowledge of the In FACT's operations and services.
10. To assist In FACT in resource development activities.
11. To participate in and be knowledgeable about public policy issues on In FACT's legislative and government affairs agenda. Participate in the corporation's advocacy issues.
12. To attend a minimum of three Board meetings per year and actively participate in the decision making process.
13. To approve and support the financial and programmatic goals of the annual budget to assure In FACT's financial, social, cultural and intellectual success.
14. To participate in establishing strategic plans, and act as a spokesperson to support and disseminate the plan's goals and objectives at local, regional, state and national levels.
15. To actively seek candidates for the Board who have demonstrated leadership skills, a commitment to strengthening community life, and to other goals and objectives of In FACT.
16. To serve on the Nominating Committee if elected and to serve on other committees if requested by the Board or Chair.
17. To help keep the organization attuned to the external environment in which it operates and participate in evaluative processes.

The Executive Director's position is salaried. However, as a start-up organization, payment is not expected for the first three years. Initial funding for programmatic initiatives are through grants, and do not currently include line items for management of the grant, nor staff salaries. The National Storytelling Network funded In FACT's first program, through a Brimstone Grant. The Family, Fun & Workshop Series was created as a pilot program under the SCATTS (Sustaining Culture and Tradition Through Storytelling) initiative. SCATTS is a replicable arts-in-practice community-based model. The phases include field research, a folk artists workshop series, an exhibition

& concert, and evaluation and assessment. The implementation of the project is the responsibility of its creator and the organization's leader.

The results of Rath and Conchie's Strength Finder assessment in *Strengths Based Leadership* revealed that I have a dominant strength in two areas, Strategic Thinking and Relationship Building, followed by Executing. Descriptions of the categories and a partial narrative from my Strength-based Leadership Report conclude:

Strategic Thinking: Leaders with great strategic thinking strengths are the ones who keep us all focused on what *could be*. "Because of your strengths, you can reconfigure factual information on data in ways that reveal trends, raise issues, identify opportunities or offer solutions. You bring an added dimension to discussions. You make sense out of seemingly unrelated information. It's very likely that you generate innovative ideas. You offer unique perspectives on events, people and proposals. You probably inspire people to start projects and launch initiatives. You tend to identify a goal, devise numerous ways of reaching it, then choose the best alternative. This explains why you see opportunities, trends and solutions before your teammates, classmates or peers see them. You display a voracious-that is never fully satisfied -- appetite for knowledge. You devour the written word to savor useful facts. Driven by your talents, you combine your fascination with reading with the ability to figure out what sets individuals apart from everyone else. You are likely to discover things that interest someone. Then you read more about those topics. You aim to collect insights that can inspire the person to take advantage of his or her one-of-a-kind talents, knowledge, and/or skills. To some degree, thoughts come alive for you when questions are posed and answers are proposed.

Relationship Building: Those who lead through relationship building are the essential glue that holds a team together. Without these strengths on a team, in many cases, the group is simply a composite of individuals. In contrast, leaders with exceptional Relationship Building strength have the unique ability to create groups and organizations that are much greater than the sum of their parts. "Chances are good that you may seek wisdom from specific people with

whom you have intelligent conversations. You might listen, as well as share your thoughts. In the process you occasionally move beyond reality and objective facts. Maybe your curiosity draws you to speculate --- that is, reflect or wonder---about particular theories, ideas or concepts. Instinctively, you routinely isolate facts that link ideas, events, or people. You are especially sensitive to how one person's optimistic or negative thoughts can affect the entire human family. This prompts you to pay close attention to what individuals and groups think and do. You sense you are part of the lives of other individuals and accept they are part of your existence. Driven by your talents, you conclude that your life is more meaningful and you are happier when you can dedicate yourself to something of importance to humankind. You are likely to inspire generosity in many people.

Executing: Leaders with dominant strength in the Executing domain know how to make things happen. When you need someone to implement a solution these are the people who will work tirelessly to get it done. Leaders with a strength to execute have the ability to "catch" an idea and make it happen. Your executive dominance is the realm of belief. "It's very likely that you are impelled to change the world one person at a time. You routinely do this by assuring people that you think well of them." You repeatedly remind individuals about their depth of knowledge, talent and skill. By nature, you may be attracted to individuals whose honesty and integrity are above reproach. Driven by your talents, you may be zealous --that is, fervent and enthusiastic--about solving problems that affect the quality of your life. Once in a while you devote all your time and energy to a specific cause. Perhaps your core values explain why you participate in certain social, political, educational, religious, legal or environmental activities. (Rath, *Strength Based*, 2008, *Report*, 2010).

My least scoring leadership style was Influencing. People with strength in this domain are always selling the team's ideas inside and outside the organization. When you need someone to take charge, speak up, and make sure your group is heard, look to someone with the strength to influence. In searching for Board members, I sought to assemble a team that collectively manifested all four strengths. Whereas, in seeking partnerships for the Family,

Fun & Folklife Workshop Series the objectives were to build a team of community members, organization and business leaders that represent the aesthetics of our community; forge new relationships; and collectively possess the tools to achieve the goals of the program.

Overview & Background

Both In FACT, Inc. and the SCATTS model were created through the coursework in the Master of Arts in Cultural Sustainability Program (MACS) at Goucher College from 2010-2012. The project idea and its scope preceded the organizational concept. SCATTS is the groundwork project that was a required submission in our first class, *Cultural Sustainability* with MACS program creator, Rory Turner, PhD. During the same semester, the Theory of Action Plan was delineated in Ross Veatch-Peterson, PhD.'s *Leadership* course. SCATTS is the marriage of passion – a 20-year career as an African American Storyteller and a matriculation in Cultural Sustainability. The goal of the program is to institute a replicable arts-in-practice, community-based cultural sustainability model ingrained in the art of storytelling. The project was placed inside of an organizational concept during *Financial Skills* with Pat Ourendnik , MBA. In FACT came to fruition under the class requirement to create a business plan. During the same semester a course in *Communications* was undertaken. These two courses caused theory to move into action as a campaign was built to enlist board members and advisors. Building the board and organizational structure was a year-long process. During that period, courses such as Documentation, Partnerships, Oral History and Grantwriting

deepened my cultural sustainability skills and increased the ability to effectively build and execute the SCATTS program.

In my double decade professional life as a national storyteller, I have personally experienced and witnessed the impact of the role of storytelling in sustaining our communities. I have seen children and adults develop self-confidence through learning and performing the art of storytelling. I have received testimony about how listening to a folktale about a little girl who discovered she did have gifts after all, deflated self-doubt and fear. After telling a story about Katrina one month after its' vicious impact, I experienced chilling effects as natives of New Orleans and others wept a river of healing tears. I have seen storytelling teach history and raise pride in heritage, when a 10-year old said, "I'm going to be the next Brother Blue." I have witnessed storytelling bridge racial differences in a cultural diversity seminar. I have been waved down on the road to pull over. A young lady got out of a car, and said, "I will never forget you. About five years ago you changed my life. I was always in bad relationships, going in the wrong direction. But after being with you at the Center, listening to your stories and telling mine, I changed. I am now in nursing and living a good life." I've been blessed to see the oral tradition make people laugh together, embrace one another and, be the stillness of one in a silence thick enough to bare the weight of a thousand broken hearts. These occasions were realized from the experience and perspective of one storyteller. But what happens when storytelling is interwoven into larger frameworks and collective spaces?

The SCATTS model pursues the question: What are the possibilities of rebuilding or sustaining thriving communities if we think about systems that enfold

storytelling and other folklife traditions into their processes? With the economic, social, and cultural deficiencies in our communities, there is a need for storytellers and other teaching folk artists to become or reclaim their roles as community cultural ambassadors; to use their art forms to stimulate civic engagement; and to help community members find solutions to community problems through their rich traditions. A study convened by *Champions of Change* evidenced that “the experiences we offer too many young people outside of school are often limited in their purpose and resulting impact. They provide recreation, but no sense of creation. They provide recess, but no sense of success. Conferring on community members a vital sense of identity, belonging, and purpose, folklife defends against social disorders . . . Traditions do not simply pass along unchanged. In the hands of those who practice them they may be vigorously remodeled, woven into the present, and laden with new meanings.” (Arts Education Partnership, *Champions*, 1999).

In October, 2012 SCATTS was realized in the Willingboro Community as an 8-week intergenerational Family, Fun & Folklife Workshop Series introducing folk artists (a quilter, storyteller, doll-maker, and spoken word artist) as community cultural ambassadors.

The Social Problem

Communities have similarities in the demographics of its of members, i.e. elders, youth, business leaders, politicians, artists, religious leaders, activists. But differences are evident in the specificity of social problems as it pertains to each culture and/or community. In seeking solutions to any community problem, we must first understand the community and its relationships. We must know its stories. We

must recognize and acknowledge the treasures of its traditions. Traditions and folk arts are overlooked as valuable resources to solutions that plague our communities. "Although culture may not be perceived as a bread and butter issue --- and thus given little credibility, energy, or funding --- it is a valuable agent for confronting many troubling social issues." (Booth, *Culture Builds*, 1995). Communities within a small radius of each other will substantially identify different problems. In Moorestown, NJ where the demographics are 85% White and about 6.4% Black, environmental issues have been cited in the local newspaper and on the Save the Environment of Moorestown (STEM) website. Less than seven miles away in Willingboro, NJ, demographics 72% African American and 17% White, a different set of issues prevail. The SCATTS model is designed to address any community's social issue, but the proto-type is set in Willingboro, NJ. For the purposes of this case study, we will detail the social problems that are relevant to Willingboro.

The township has been labeled a "Bedroom Community" for two reasons. First, the community is residential and there is limited to no land available for commercial endeavors. As a result, many residents hold jobs in Philadelphia and New York, which leads to the second defining element - time away from home due to long commutes.

These circumstances forge a high level of apathy that exists in the community. Sarah Holley, school board member states, "The lack of community and parental involvement is our number one issue. No one comes to the board meetings, until problems have exploded and it is too late." Mayor Jacquelyn Jennings concurs that the lack of community involvement is a problem in Willingboro. Jennings noted,

“Although Willingboro has excellent programs and services,” there is a lack of awareness of these services among community members.”

Organizations such as the Concerned Citizens of Willingboro, struggle with increasing active membership. Charlotte Forman, a member, stated at the November 9, 2010 Township Council meeting that “as for getting people involved, some just don’t care.” At the February 14, 2011 school board meeting, Selestine Miller, parent of elementary school-aged children, made a plea for “more parental involvement in the education of our children.” At a Board of Education meeting in February of 2011, Board member Grover McKenzie concurred, that there is a lack of cooperation between parents and schools.

Jill Cyrus Director of Willingboro Recreation and Parks Department is passionate about the need for families to get back to the basics, “The economic situation means that we have to do more with less. Increased gas prices mean families have to do more at home. Our family values are such that families don’t know what to do with themselves. Learning together increases understanding and the SCATTS intergenerational objective decreases the silo effect.” Although people engage in activities within individualized groups -- youth with youth, seniors with seniors, Sarkissan believes people do not necessarily think in silos. “People think in stories. Life in community is made up of stories. And storytelling is the ultimate holistic medium. Cultural historian and ‘earth scholar’ Thomas Berry aptly proclaimed ‘the deepest crises experience by any society are those moments of change when the story becomes inadequate for meeting the survival demands of a present situation.’ (Sarkissan, 2009). Storytellers and other folk artists must begin

building their cultural sustainability programs by first knowing the community's story. Cyrus revealed that there has been no community needs assessments conducted. "How can we know what the needs are if we do not ask the questions?"

Willingboro has the highest number of foster children in the state. Ms. Cyrus, Ms. Holly and Ms. Jennings indicate that more programs are needed for middle and high school-age youth. According to a 2007 survey Willingboro has over 300 gang members. Willingboro consistently falls below the state literacy proficiency level (42%); the state average is 63%. As reported in the 2007 Burlington County Literacy Needs Assessment Analysis, many employers in Burlington County recognize literacy as an issue for the county. Out of 14 municipalities, Willingboro is the least proficient. Five municipalities in Burlington County have a higher percentage of adult residents whose literacy level places them at either Level 1 or 2. Each of these municipalities has comparable populations and economic demographics as well as literacy rates below the state average.

Kendall Brunson, Assistant Director of the Recreation Department states, "although we provide performance art and sports for our youth we need cultural programming." The Willingboro Senior Citizens Center was revitalized in 2009, and is rich with programming for our treasured elders. However, the township's youth programs and senior programs don't have collaborative projects. The Mayor articulated a similar concern, "our community needs more exposure to culture allowing us to celebrate our differences and similarities. We need programs in which our culture can be learned."

Preliminary research and interviews revealed that apathy, illiteracy, low

standardized testing scores, economic conditions, high taxes, lack health awareness, lack of cultural awareness, insufficient teenage youth activities, and disconnect between generations are community issues in Willingboro. “Social isolation and “non-connectedness” have high social and economic costs (DCITA, 2005). Understanding the issues and challenges as well as opportunities and strengths in stimulating local creative communities to produce transferable knowledge that can help people participate in socio-cultural and socio-economic life in their locale is important.” (Klaebe, *Connecting Communities*, 2007).

Project Design

The SCATTS model innovatively seeks to merge storytelling and other traditional folk culture as a catalyst for social change by building creative spaces for folk artists to serve as cultural community ambassadors. (Figure 4.1)

The SCATTS concept is unique to Willingboro. It is an innovative program where storytelling, folk arts and social entrepreneurship intertwine. Interviews with township

administrators affirmed that youth and senior programs do not

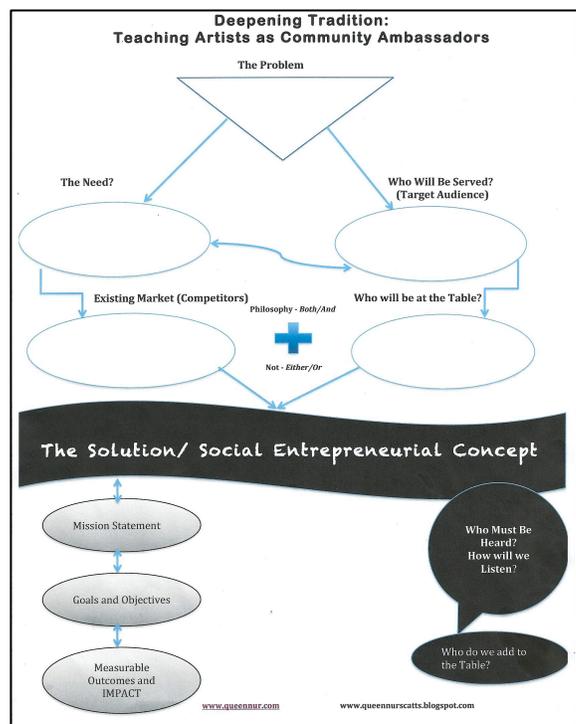


Figure 4.1

converge. SCATTS provides an environment that has a tremendous capacity to marry the openness of the beginner with the wisdom of experience, while promoting mutual appreciation and understanding. “Storytelling is the natural teaching medium about skills,

the environment and survival. By infusing the oral tradition in intergenerational settings that teach folklife traditions, elders are provided the opportunity to use life experiences to communicate history, knowledge and wisdom to youth in ways that youth might not otherwise countenance.” (Rankin, *Living Cultural*, 2006). The cultural competency of SCATTS is a compliment and asset to the township’s initiatives to encourage community involvement, increase youth programming, and generate new family programming. On a larger scale, the program presents a model replicable in any community. SCATTS is not designed to replace or complete with other programs. The collaborative nature of the project seeks to elevate community folklife and combine economic, political, social and cultural resources to address concerns that are prevalent within the community.

Goals:

- Strengthen families and communities.
- Enrich and empower community life.
- Preserve and sustain storytelling & folk arts traditions.
- Use storytelling and folk arts to ignite change.

Objectives:

- Create a community arts-in-practice model.
- Build community partnerships and collaborative arts practices.
- Build awareness of community assets and needs.
- Forge intergenerational relationships.
- Combine resources and generate programs seeking innovative solutions for existing community organizations.
- Produce an Exhibition and Concert featuring new Social Art Work.
- Create a Documentary and Workbook for Replication of Model.

There are four phrases to the design:

Phase I:

Discovery: “Even in the most successful New Economy regions, civic leaders are beginning to take stock of artistic and cultural assets, recognizing that they are essential to

the quality of life, which is, in turn, necessary for sustained growth.” (Psilos and Rapp, *Role of the Arts*, 2001). The SCATTS project begins by documenting community assets through field research. Then merges the findings into a service-driven and action-oriented structured program. Applied storytelling and other folk arts provide the opportunity to ignite change on issues the community identifies as important, not those ascertained by outside individuals, academics, or agencies. The program then provides opportunities to address those issues creatively. There are three objectives in this phase: to ascertain folk culture and values of the community, to collect stories told in relationship to that culture, and to gather from members of the community, the most urgent social issues. The research incorporates field notes and audio/visual documentation. The collection of data is used to assess neighborhood needs, create an assets map and determine the content for the master folk artists’ workshop series for Phase II.

Phase II:

Planning Meetings & Implementation of the Workshop Series: Meet with partners, master artists and media. The first five weeks of the Workshop Series are dedicated to artistic skill building. The Master Artists encourages the participants to form intergenerational teams. Only one workshop is under consideration for a teen-specific audience, the remaining genres are open to induce an intergenerational environment. The second portion generates new collaborative works on social justice issues. A Mid-Series gathering - SWAP (Stories With A Purpose) is the forum for brainstorming projects and identifying the prominent issues in Willingboro. Prior to the assessment, Storytelling is the only pre-determined workshop. Storytelling is involved in the collaborative efforts of the other three workshops. (Example: Praise dancing, Quilting, Hair braiding, The Blues,

Children's Games, Food culture, Soul line dancing, Drumming, Hip Hop, Basketweaving, Folk Medicine).

Phase III:

Exhibition & Concert: The concluding exhibit and concert is a three-hour free public event. The day includes the presentation of new works, storytelling concert, folk arts demonstrations and hands-on activities.

Phase IV:

Evaluation, Assessment and Reporting: To test the assumptions in our social impact theory, we gather quantitative and qualitative data. In addition to using questionnaires, focus groups, unobstructed observation, and interviews, youth are asked to brainstorm on methods of collecting data.

The methods are used to determine if need was identified or impact made; obtain feedback from the participants; make mid-course adjustments; determine what actions can be taken based on the findings; analyze how the community can be better served; and, consider what else is possible and how can it get better than this?

Participants are evaluated in three stages – at the beginning of the workshops series, at the Mid-Series SWAP, and in follow-up. The interviews and unobstructed observations are used to gain insight into how patterns of relationships are unfolding; gather feelings on the process and activities; and, collect different perspectives.

In project assessment we measure success through two basic outcomes:

1) Increased Community Awareness of Applied Storytelling & Folk Art

Output	Measurement/Indicators	Impact
Participation in Master Folk Arts Classes	15 members in each class Consistent attendance 5 Folk Artist employed 7 community partnerships formed. Positive Statements and stories during class, and in follow-up interviews. New skills learned.	-Enrich life through Folk Arts -Increased appreciation of Learning & Literacy -Increased Social Bonds -Increased Intergenerational Understanding. - Ownership and Pride in Culture
Positive Publicity and Media	Articles in Local Paper, State Arts Journals, Websites, Blogging, Facebook, Church Bulletins. 2 Human Interest Stories. TV news coverage Web and other Radio Coverage	- Increased Awareness of Folk Arts - Improved Image of Willingboro - Increased support - Increased conversations through social networking
Attendance at Free Public Exhibit and Concert	250 attendees 10 new transformative collaborative arts projects 10 new stories that speak to community issues 5 organizations requesting folk arts programs at their facility, camp, school, church (presentations or long-term programs)	- Increased appreciation for applied storytelling & other folk arts. -Increased understanding of folk arts, culture and traditions -Documented Folkways and Traditions. - Increased use of folk arts to address community issues.

2) Increased Awareness of Community Assets and Issues

Output	Measurement/Indicators	Impact
Participation in Field Research	Interviewing and documenting 6 seniors, 4 municipal administrators, 6 teenagers, 4 adult members, 3 business owners or CEO's, 4 Organization Leaders/Members 5 new alliances formed Recorded stories	-Newly formed alliances. - Documented assets and needs of community.
Free Public Exhibition and Concert	# Of attendees at event Follow-up Presentation of New works at Community Board Meetings	-Increase in Community Involvement -Increased awareness of resources. -Improved conditions -Improved community equity -Increased sense of empowerment. -Increased legislative support -New community advocates and activist
Documentary and Workbook	Completion and Distribution. Internet Request (long term). Request for Information Replication of Model	Communities serviced through the Model. Increased use of applied storytelling and other folk arts globally. (long term)

Planning & Implementation

After In FACT's incorporation in July, 2011, a six-month communications plan was designed that included board development, partnership building, a 501 (c) 3 application, blogging, website development, and a public relations agenda.

Phase I of the project began in September, through a partnership with Perkins Center of the Arts in Moorestown, NJ. Thomas Carroll, PhD., folklorist and consultant, volunteered to assist in interviewing community members. Community involvement is crucial to the success of the program. Carroll had initiated fieldwork in the community under an independent Perkins project and agreed to share the data and information with In FACT. We divided the task of recording interviews, and came together to hold three focus group meetings. The selected artists for the Family, Fun & Folklife Workshop Series component of SCATTS, came from the discovery phase and In FACT's resources: Alma Day, Veteran Doll-maker; Winnie Thomas, Master Quilter; Queen Nur, Master Storyteller; and, Sarai Abdul-Malik, East Coast Spoken Word Artist. The discovery also included two African American line dance instructors, an African Drummer from Nigeria and, an African Dance group from Liberia. We sought out the "gatekeepers" of the community and asked for further recommendations. The focus groups were small with only two or three attendees, but the input was rich. "Oral history is about asking questions." (Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 2003). The discussions confirmed community issues identified by the townships officials and administration: inactivity of youth, lack of knowledge about programs and events offered in the community, a decline in cultural programs and disconnect between generations.

Partnerships were developing during the same time period as the research phase. In FACT was awarded a \$5,000 Brimstone Grant from the NSN in October, 2011. This provided the finances to fully put the project into play. The Willingboro Recreation and Park Department were essential to planning and implementation. They provided the location at the John F. Kennedy Center free of charge and agreed to advertise the workshop series by distributing fliers to all students in the school district, e-mailing churches, and

providing copies for business postings. Communication with Assistant Director Kendall Brunson was through e-mail and face-to-face meetings. Keepers of the Culture, Philadelphia's Afrocentric Storytelling Group also became partners early in the process.

The lack of having an approved 501 (c) 3 status prevented eligibility for other grants. In an attempt to extend fundraising efforts, the Family, Fun & Folklife Workshop Series was re-scheduled to begin in the fall of 2012. The partnership with Brimstone includes interim reports and formal requests for any change in planning. Due to the lack of raising additional funds, the request was submitted and approved to re-work the line items on the budget allowing In FACT to move forward with the project. Additional funding was raised through a crowdfunding campaign on Indiegogo. The internet campaign exceeded the financial goal by 50% and was a vehicle for national awareness of our project. With a reduced budget (\$21,000 to \$7,000), and a shorter workshop timeline (10 weeks to 8 weeks), the workshops were scheduled to begin in November. The rage of Storm Sandy impacted Willingboro and the John F. Kennedy Center was closed for a week. Delaying the project yet again.

Phase II. Several initiatives were enacted prior to the beginning of the first workshop session. We held a training session for the teaching artists in September 2012. Training materials were provided by our partners City Lore of New York. Patty Bowman, Director of City Lore's Local Learning Network articulated strategies for introducing folk artists to ways of thinking about how to use tradition and folk art to address social justice issues. TAHIRA, board member, storyteller and teaching artist conducted the session with the four artists, leading us in the development of Artistic Statements; developing lesson plans; and infusing our curriculum with opportunities to address social justice issues. The objectives, goals and strategies of the Family, Fun & Folklife Workshop Series were

outlined and contracts and release forms were signed. Our Partners, I am Kenny J Productions, a line dance organization, held a collection for workshop items at their bi-monthly party in October. The collection of supplies was valued over \$200. Our local newspaper, The Burlington County Times, wrote an advance feature article on In FACT and the Family, Fun & Folklife Workshop Series.

Quilting, Dollmaking and Storytelling were scheduled for eight consecutive Saturdays. The spoken word workshop was scheduled for Friday evenings. The proposed fee for the 8-week workshop was \$25.00. However, due to the delays in getting the program off the ground, the Board decided to offer the workshops for free. Initially, no registrations were received. However, once the courses were offered at no cost, quilting teacher Winnie Thomas amassed registrations from her weekday classes at the Senior Center. Quilting had a total of eleven registrants and the Doll-making class included thirteen. Attendance was irregular with class sizes ranging from two to ten. For the first week there were no registrations for Storytelling. By the third week a family of three and 1 adult registered for the class.

The dollmaking and quilting class were conducted simultaneously. Initially we tried to close the sliding wall between the two classrooms. But after the first session the divider remained open and the space was transformed into a folklife orchestra. When the doll-making class concluded, storytelling began while the quilting class continued. The interchange between the children and the adults, the stories and the needles, melded like a harmonic symphony. Within a sociocultural framework, young children learned as apprentices alongside more experience members of the culture. Crucial to the sociocultural approach, was the role of the mediator, the teaching artists, in initiating children into new cultural practices or guiding them in the learning of new skills. When a quilter heard the

activities in the storytelling class she encouraged six of her grandchildren to enroll. The total attendees for the storytelling class eventually rose to ten. Storytelling was also integral to the doll-making and quilting classes. While wearing multiple hats -- administrator, recorder and storyteller -- I asked questions to stimulate the telling of stories and discussion of community issues.

The initial registration for Hip Hop and the Blues consisted only of two other teaching artists. The following week accumulated two youth, one of which was not age-eligible. The Spoken Word workshop was geared toward a middle-school-age and older audience. Willingboro Recreation and Parks Department suggested we house the spoken word workshop inside of the Teen Program already established at the center. Teaching Artist Sarai Abdul-Malik was able to conduct five workshops with an average of fifteen attendees before the program ended for the season.

Flexibility and the ability to seize opportunity was crucial to the success of the project, as there were variants that altered the original plans. Hip Hop & the Blues was a perfect match with the Teen Program and the open space on Saturdays developed into the intergenerational creative place-making space envisioned during the planning stages. Doll-making crossed over into the quilting room where children worked with the elders on quilts after working on their dolls and simultaneously, stories added to the rhythm as family and historical stories were told.

The Mid-Series SWAP, during the fourth session, generated social art that addressed the need to deepen the relationships in our community. During the intergenerational lunch, the conversation continually circled back to the importance of building relationships. When friendship was identified as the vehicle to address the root of community socio-cultural issues, the more experience quilters were excited to share the

history and patterns of code quilts. The adults in the group started telling stories about how friendship was a fundamental element during the enslavement period and how it was important in planning escapes on the Underground Railroad. “Traditional stories or personal stories of life experiences allow elders to communicate history, knowledge and wisdom to youth in ways that youth might not otherwise countenance.” (Rankin, et al. *Living Cultural*, 2006). Teaching Artist Winnie Thomas said, “We should use the Bear’s Paw in the joint project!” The Bear’s Paw pattern was also called the Hand of Friendship by the Quakers. Hanging on a fence of a friend of the Underground Railroad, it sent the message that it was time to take the tracks north through the woods. As the conversation progressed, nine-year old Jordan, chimed in, “We should add a heart.” The decision was made to create a quilt with the bear’s paw pattern, imprints of the children’s hands, a heart, and a squares represented each workshop class. The project in its totality symbolized intergenerational friendship; a connection across artistic disciplines; and the connection to knowing your history as force to move forward.

Stories continued to permeate the remaining Saturday sessions as the students quilted and made dolls. We heard family historical tales, personal stories that spoke to the need to instill old values in today’s world, and hair stories from adults and youth that addressed issues of identity in the African American community. The storytelling sessions followed up on the history of code quilts. The children learned to tell a coded message that seemed to be talking about rabbits and cabbages, but was actually a traditional call and response sung by African Americans to warn that it was time to escape. The interactive folktales concept from StoriesWork was also incorporated, to address an incident in which a child caused a needle injury to another student. The Hip Hops & Blues spoken word sessions taught how to write 12 bars blues and hip hop lyrics on social issues. The teen

sessions began with analyzing lyrics. Three weeks before the tragedy of Sandy Hook, S.

Abdul-Malik introduced the students to *Little Weapon* by Lupe Fiasco.

Little Weapon

Lupe Fiasco

Now little Terry got a gun he got from the store
He bought it with the money he got from his chores
He robbed the candy shop told them lay down on the floor
Put the cookies in the bag; take the pennies out the drawer
Lil' Khalil got a gun he got from the rebels
To kill the infidels and American devils
A bomb on his waist, a mask on his face
Prays five times a day yet listens to heavy metal
Little Alex got a gun he took from his dad
That he snuck into school in his black book bag
His black nail polish, black boots and black hat
He's gon' blow away the bully that just pushed his ass

[Lupe]

I killed another man today
Shot him in his back as he ran away
Then I blew up his hut with a hand grenade
Cut his wife throat as she put her hands to pray
Just five more dogs then could get a soccer ball
That's what my commander says
How old? Well I'm like ten, eleven
Been fighting since I was like six or seven
Now I don't know much about where I'm from
But I know I strike fear everywhere I come
Government wants me dead so I wear my gun
I really want the rocket launcher but I'm still to young
This candy gives me courage not to fear no one
To feel no pain and hear no tongue
So I hear no screams and I shed no tear
If I'm in your dreams then your end is near

[Chorus, Nikki Jean]

Little weapon, little weapon, little weapon
We're calling you, there's a war
If it comes not just too tall for you
You find you something small to use
Little weapon, little weapon, little weapon
Yanked you now, pow

Lupe)

Now here comes the march of the boy brigade
A McCar parade of the toys he made
And in shimmer shades who looks half his age
About half the size of the flags they waved
And camouflage suits made to fit youths
Cause the ones off dead soldier fits a little loose
With AK-47 that they shooting into heaven
Like they trying to kill the Jetsons

They struggle little recruits
Cute, smileless, heartless, violent
Childhood destroyed, avoided of all childish ways
Can't write their own names
Or read the words on their own graves
Think you gangsta popped a few rounds
These kids will come through and murder a whole town
And sit back and smoke and watch it burn down
The grave gets deeper the further we go down
<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/lupefiasco/littleweapon.html>

After analyzing the lyrics, students were guided to discuss how it would feel to be held hostage by a gunman and encouraged to share what actions they would take given the immersion of their feelings. In the writing assignment that followed the teens were instructed to free write about what the gunman was feeling and how he got to that point.

Cheyenne Williams, 14 years old responded:

He had a gun in his right hand cocked to the side unlike a real man
Sweat dripping down his brow. Time stops. I remember seeing him last
night on the streets crying out for help from anyone that would listen.
But of course no one came. I know he's upset but why was he on the
streets? Trying to get away from a broken home that had him alone all
the time. Standing there in the classroom door locked. He still had the
gun in his right hand. Pointing at me then my friend Timmy with eyes
open, eyes of innocence that have been broken. But shy? Being left
alone all those nights. Running the streets with the wrong type. I've
seen him crying -walking home tried to look away but he attracted so
much attention - but no one stopped to help. He's point the gun at
himself saying I'm sorry. He says for all the wrong. Every woman I
touched, every baby & mother I've dropped in cold blood, every father
I've taken. He ain't never had that. The gun still in his right hand but
pointed at his head.

Caroliene Frink Reed avers that Blackstorytelling maintains a premise that spirit is never separate from the art of Jaliya. Predisposing this topic to middle school children, just three weeks prior to the national tragedy of Sandy Hook infiltrating every home in America, confers the underpinnings of spirit and universal connectedness.

Selections of student's written work, photographs and video clips from the other classes were posted on In FACT's Facebook Page.

The publicity for the final concert and exhibition targeted a large audience. The Burlington County Times wrote another advance story and as organizer I was featured on Fox Good Day. We distributed 1500 postcard fliers throughout the community, utilized our constant contact list to send over 1000 notifications, posted on FACEBOOK, and distributed fliers to all Willingboro public school children.

The Exhibition and Concert was now folded into the annual Willingboro Kwanzaa Celebration, held on December 29, 2012. Four additional organizations partnered with In FACT in Phase III: Girl Scout Troop 22504; Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc, Rancocas Valley Alumnae Chapter; Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc, Zeta Delta Chapter, and the Underground Railroad Café. The Festival provided greater exposure of the folk arts-in-practice cultural sustainability initiative. Approximately 260 people attended the free public event that hosted Family Fun & Folklife presentations, workshops, performances, a feast, craft making, and the One Million Bones Project. Attendees were asked to bring a dish. Local restaurants contributed to the Karamu (feast) with ethnic cuisine that included jerk and curry chicken, sweet potatoes, potato salad and fried fish.

The exhibition displayed 30 quilts, seven of which were made during the Family, Fun & Folklife sessions, all of which were made by students in the class, with the exception of the Still Family Historical Quilt. The dollmaking class displayed eight dolls that were completed in class, together with a collection from Alma Day. The presentations were presented with mutli-media. Sarai's presentation was designed on an 6x4' infographic, Winnie presented the documentary, *Geez Benz* and the youth storytellers told stories during the Quilting and Dollmaking presentations and in the storytelling workshop. Carr and Servon argue in *Vernacular Culture and Urban Economic Development*, that it is both possible and preferable to advance an urban economic development strategy that

stems from neighborhoods' local cultural assets. The Exhibition contributes to this point as it provided an economic impact. The advance quilters and doll-maker sold goods, and the storyteller and spoken word artists were queried about opportunities to performed and conduct workshops at other venues.

The event was documented through videotape, and photography by GRIOTWORKS. The venue provided the opportunity to conduct a survey and collect evaluations about the Family, Fun & Folklife portion of the program and the entire day's events.

Evaluation & Assessment

Communities invest in best practices of survival when there is an understanding, appreciation, honoring, and ownership of their cultural heritage.

The Family, Fun & Folklife Workshop Series was the public introduction of In FACT. We began the process by conducting fieldwork in the community through interviews and focus group meetings. A community survey would have gathered more data on perceived needs of the community and would have built a greater awareness of the project. A survey was conducted at the Willingboro Kwanzaa Festival to assess awareness, viewpoints, and interest in African American folklife traditions. A similar survey will be placed on-line and in the next issue of the township newsletter to better assess desired classes and community issues pertinent to community members.

The Final Exhibition & Concert at the Willingboro Kwanzaa Festival was a huge success in terms of building awareness of storytelling and other folk arts in the community and publicly introducing the organization. Through observation, and informal comments the pride in African American culture and in the values and history being taught was acutely evident. In addition to the quilting, storytelling, doll-making and spoken word

presentations, over 260 people witnessed applied storytelling & folk arts in action. Additionally, other folk art workshops and presentations were integrated into the festival including two workshops hosted by our partners *Keepers of the Culture: Philadelphia's Afrocentric Storytelling Group* -- Headwrapping Techniques and Kwanzaa 365. Johnson Kolalowe, discovered during Phase I of the project, conducted an African Drum Class. An African Dance class was conducted by Ronsha Dickerson, a member of the world renowned Universal African Dance and Drum Ensemble from Camden, NJ. The group received rave reviews for their performance later in the afternoon.

The festival provided the opportunity to introduce an international social justice issue -- Genocide. One of our advisors, Karen Chigounis, donated clay necessary to make bones for the One Million Bones Project. The project's goal is to lay one million bones on the Washington Mall June 8-10, 2013. Statistics were presented orally and visually: Sudan, 200,000 civil deaths and 2.7 million people displaced; Somalia: 1.55 million people displaced; Burma: Black Zones- soldiers can shoot any person on sight, Campaign of Burmanization- government troops rape ethnic minority women for pregnancy; Democratic Republic of Congo: 5.4 million deaths. (WEB: Onemillionbones.org).

Signage was a powerful addition to the Festival. Designed by volunteers, graphic artists Marion Pardlo, and Coniqua Abdul-Malik, Masters in Corporate and Public Communications, information-filled charts and an interactive board engaged audience members. The Delta Sigma Theta Teen Group explained how to tweet and use the board to the audience. The young women recorded the tweets on the interactive board. Evaluation forms were completed for each workshop at the festival.

A different set of evaluative questions was collected from all Family, Fun & Folklife students after the Mid-Series SWAP and at the conclusion of the sessions. Video

and audiotapes of the classes also provided in sight into assessing achievement of goals. Additionally, the Burlington County Times wrote a third article that provided feedback from a public perspective. In an attempt to further our community outreach, and deepen community involvement in our planning and implementation processes we provided sign-up sheets. Eighty-six e-mail addresses were collected, four people signed up to volunteer for the organization, and six people representing organizations joined the Burlington Kwanzaa Collective. These evaluative tools together with unobstructed observation provide measurable achievements toward the short-term objectives. Although the projected numbers for three of the four workshops fell slightly short and consistency of attendance was not met in those workshops, the introduction of the organization and its mission was highly successful, as was deepening the awareness of the folklife traditions and folk artists in our community. Student reaction, artist feedback and public affirmations solidify that storytelling and other folklife traditions are integral to sustaining culture. The artist debriefing is crucial in furthering the analysis, as we look deeper at perfecting the program, increasing community involvement, producing a higher quantity of social art, and deepening the transformative nature of the art that is created. From an immediate assessment, a longer time period is needed for Family, Fun, & Folklife Series. Skill development precedes the creation of a second project that addresses social issues. The seven-week period did not allow for sufficient time to create deep work on pressing social issues. The class evaluations, together with observation, the artists' debriefing, and the community surveys will shape the Family Fun & Folklife 2013 design and, provide data for future goals of incorporating an artist and civic activist residency program and building a folklife center.

Family, Fun & Folklife Workshop Series Evaluation Results

Hip Hop & the Blues Spoken Word Workshops Evaluation Results (#N-18)

(Approximately 85% of respondents attended all sessions)

The sessions made me think:

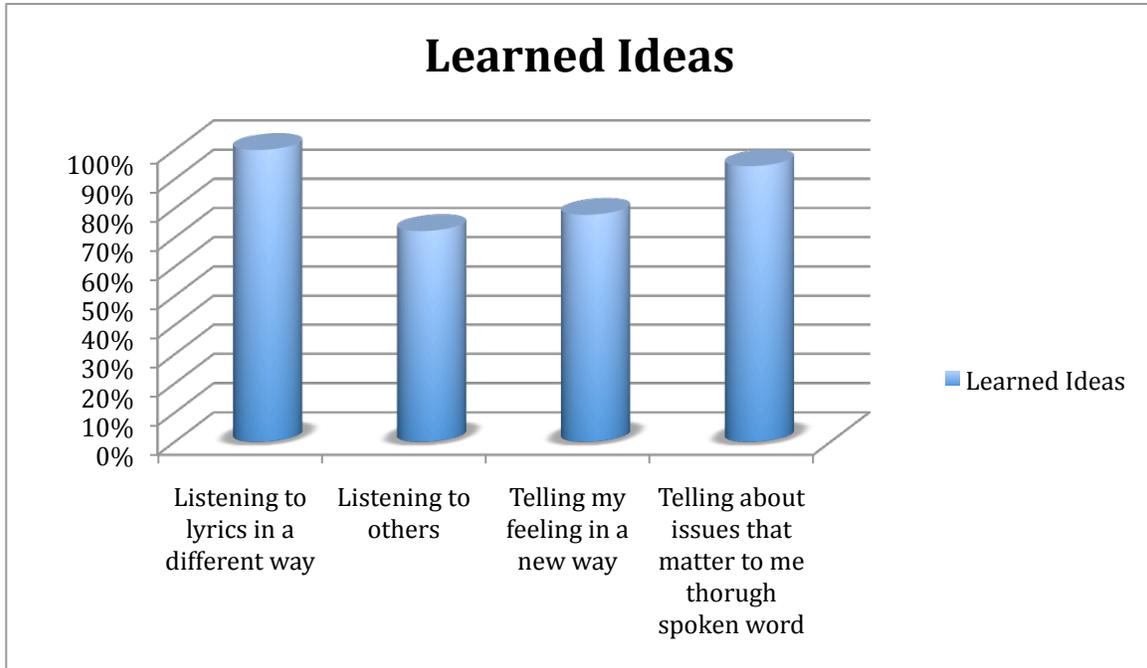
- That I could do things that I didn't know I could do
- Wow! I'm So Deep!
- What things are happening in the world
- More of music
- Differently about the blues, inspired to write even more
- About how people are treated
- About things we need
- About my grad studies and revisiting my passion for human rights and art (photography/music, etc.)
- That I belong here
- Of homeless people
- Ways of interacting with teens
- Made me think a lot because I never really thought about it like that
- That I was in a recording
- More about the lyrics that I listen to
- Of different ways to teach poetry
- About hip hop
- About being a superstar
- On how people can talk to other people about different lessons and can have fun too!

The sessions made me feel:

- Good inside like there is somewhere I belong
- I can do anything
- Happy to know new things
- More meaningful
- Interested in hearing what the kids had to say
- Wonderful
- Educated
- Revived, motivated, inspired, fun
- More opened
- Ok
- I felt good about the opportunity to create music
- Good and made me think a lot

- Ok about me
- Good
- Proud of the kids seeing their creativity
- Good about myself
- Like a super rap star
- Great

I learned new ideas from these sessions:



I would love to learn more about spoken word:

Yes = 15

No = 2

Maybe = 1

I would like to talk about these topics:

- Women's rights. How to remember the lyrics
- Anti-bullying
- Life & the Youth
- Everything
- Education
- Me anything others
- College

I shared this experience with other outside of the session:

Yes =8

No=10

My friends,
My friends and family (2)
Mom and staff
Family
Mom (2)

What I liked the most was:

- The singing and rapping
- Hip Hop
- Seeing the kids creativity
- Speaking in front
- The different music and songs
- The music
- I don't know
- The kids expressing themselves
- How my lyrics were true
- Me rapping about women's rights
- How we got to express ourselves
- When we shared rhymes
- Being a superstar
- Rapping
- Listening to the rap
- Sarai's energy
- Fun new experience

I would like to participate in open mic, spoken word events:

Strongly Agree	(5)
Somewhat Agree	(9)
Not Likely	(2)
Never	(2)

If this were offered again, I would take classes

Yes = 15

No = 1

Maybe = 2

Additional Comments:

- Instructor was cool - allowed me to learn something in my own way by writing a song/rap

- Sarai did excellent job with the sessions I have been to. I really like the group activity that we participate in, with hip hop and the blues.
- I liked learning about the different genres and how she explained what they meant.
- Our instructor was educated and nice.

Doll-making and Quilting Workshop Evaluation Responses (#N-7)

(Respondents attended 1 to 5 sessions)

The sessions made me think:

- Memories from my grandparents
- Of possibilities to engage kids/adults in crafts
- How wonderful it would be to have a quilt made by my grandmother
- About our heritage
- Of how quilting sustained the oral tradition of storytelling in some African American Communities
- About community and how we can all learn from each other
- Friendship

The Sessions made me feel:

- Welcomed
- Involved in the craft community
- Comfortable and happy
- I can make a contribution for my culture and community
- Good
- Welcome and at home
- Productive, by seeing instant progress I received satisfaction.
- Good fun
- Couldn't Stop Smiling

I shared the experience with others outside of the session:

- Yes. Church members, students at Willingboro High School; and so on and so forth.
- My friend who told me about the session and other friends
- Friends and Family
- My children
- My sister
- My co-workers

What I like most:

- No face dolls
- Making a quilt and hearing African stories in the background
- The union with others

- The hands-on- results
- Re-learning sewing techniques
- Feeling welcomed even with the difference in age
- The opportunity to work with other artists on the cusp of success and upward thinking.

I would like to learn more about:

- Quilting (5)
- Doll-making (5)
- Storytelling (5)

I learned new ideas from these sessions:

- New skills in a traditional art form (5)
- Different ways to create using the art form (6)
- Different ways to use storytelling (4)
- Listening to others (5)
- Telling my feelings in a new way (3)
- Telling about issues that matter to me through my art form (1)
- Using the art form to tell a story (4)

I would like to talk about these topics:

- History of dollmaking and quilting
- How to help others connect to someone else
- Quilting and storytelling
- The African American image and the Media
- Self-esteem in our young ladies
- Etiquette
- Use of free time for youth
- Cooking
- History
- Hairbraiding

If this were offered I would take it again:

Yes – 100%

I would like to participate in more events that include storytelling:

Strongly Agree – 6

Somewhat Agree – 1

Additional comments:

- This is getting me interested in sewing again
- Promote at Middle School (Memorial) and Local Churches, along with Provident
- Looking for ways to spread the word through storytelling

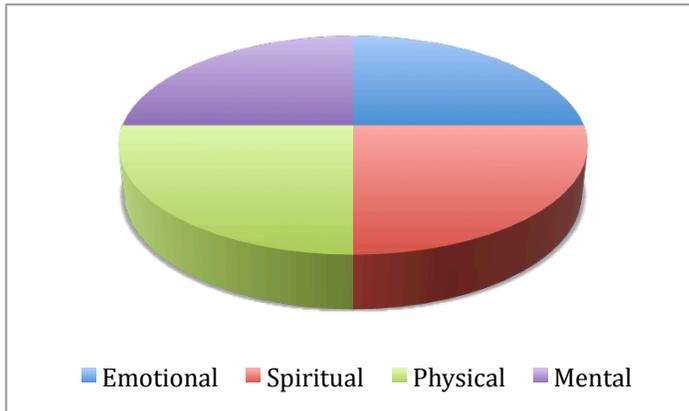
The forty-four workshop evaluations and fifty-two surveys collected from the final event, begin to provide a larger research sampling, and greatly increased community involvement in the research process. Nineteen of the 52 surveyed previously knew about the Family, Fun & Folklife Workshop series, and 100% of the respondents identified that they are interested in some type of folk art classes. The survey questions attempt to assess, contemporary thought on the role of folk art, culture and tradition, as well the community's opinions about the most pressing issues on the local, national and global levels.

COLLECTIVE ANALYSIS & SUMMARY

Big Fish are caught with Big Fish Hooks - Tanzania

Storytelling is not an art form that is lauded as of one civilization's greatest creative achievements. (Skillman, *For Safe-Keeping*, 2010). Yet, the four case studies presented here contribute to documenting the power of storytelling in creating sustainable communities through programmatic initiatives that merge the oral tradition with civic engagement. Each case serves a local population by understanding the community's story, then uses story to bring awareness to the community's assets and address the community's issues. Although the causes are different -- easing the re-entry of ex-offenders into society, combating negative media imaging of African Americans, improving literacy skills, and elevating and perpetuating folklife traditions -- they share similar impacts.

Relationships



When we speak of sustaining communities, we must first begin with what makes a community. We must begin with people. When people feel good about themselves physically,

spiritually, emotionally and mentally, then we have 360° of Self. It is when we feel whole that we give the best extension of ourselves to our families. The strength in family ties builds stronger communities.). It is within our closest circles that we begin to experience compassion, support, and caring, and embrace our identity. When people know themselves and are well supported in their inner circles they have a greater capacity to radiate outward and contribute to the greater society. The concept of community implies the existence of ties between people with these ties being sufficiently strong to motivate individuals to act for the good for the good of the collective rather than just the self (Madrid quoted in Riley and Riley and Wakely, *Communities and Communication*, 2005). "Individual acts make everyday differences and add into something larger. Movements and traditions are these acts lifted and joined by man." (Kodish, *Experimenting*, 2010).

When things get broken, mending begs. When there is a break or element of absence in self, individuals need to re-work their story to become whole again. Each case uses story to either re-create a sustainable self as in the objectives of StoriesWork and GLLP or reinforce the binding that completes the 360° of self as in

the mission of GRIOTWORKS and In FACT. All of the cases forge creative placemaking environments where relationship building is generated through the foundation of storytelling. It is these relationships that extend past self and past family that strengthen community. Stronger communities make a better world. How do we measure happiness and feelings of good? How do we measure pride in one's culture? Sometimes it is not necessary. Sometimes it's just something to be relished and oftentimes it is measured in spirit and not in numbers. When a homeless family is fed, and the mother can smile with her children for a time, instead of reacting to their needs in a stressful manner, the compassion, is immeasurable. When we think about world reaction to the tragedy of Sandy Hook in Newton, CT., the giving was not a result of measurement. No one asked, how deep is your pain? What is your level of tragedy? Across the nation and around the world, people gave to the point that the town officials had to asked for cessation, because they had no where to store any more donations. The giving came from spirit. "Spirit cannot be quantified, measured, explained by or reduced to meet rationale conceptual categories as European thought demands. Spirit is ethereal. It is neither 'touched' nor 'moved', 'seen' nor felt in the way that physical entities are touched, moved, seen and felt. These characteristics make it ill-suited to the mode of European academia and written expression." (Richards, *Let the Circle*, 1980).

Thriving Communities

Thriving communities have citizens who are engaged; economic development plans that include the arts; and, mutually supportive partnerships. StoriesWork, GRIOTWORKS, GGLLP, and In FACT have programs that help build thriving communities. Each

organization partners with other organizations to engage community members in artistic and civic ways and facilitate the use of storytelling as a solution to problems. The economic impact of GLLP can be measured in the summer employment program for the youth and StoriesWork builds confidence and acceptance levels in re-entry citizens that contribute to their employment abilities. In FACT creates environments in which folk artists can sell their wares, and the organization aspires to further the township's economic plans by building a folk arts center within the town's central and most active edifice. GRIOTWORKS seeks to implement residencies that will stimulate payment to artists. The greater economic impact in sustaining culture through storytelling has to be fully explored and calculated. But when youth remain in school and have strong literacy skills; when re-entry civilians feel comfortable speaking out; when a community is inspired by the words of a storyteller; and when community members learn new folk art skills and witness the economic potential of art, then the possibilities of long-term impact increase. Partnerships with organizations have proven to be a tremendous catalyst in reaching organizational objectives. However, community-based storytelling organizations should invest in identity groups on a deeper level in order to reinforce collective collaboration and mutual support. By expanding authentic partnerships to include identified groups in pre- and post-event processes the probabilities of meeting need and deepening the socio-cultural and economic impact would increase. (Riley and Wakely, *Communities*, 2005). Our survival is interdependent. The saying "Each one Reach One" has a perennial life span. It is what sustains us.

Storytelling is a global phenomenon that is used by organizations for social, cultural, environmental and spiritual sustainability. It is universal in its application. But

organizations may also find they have similar challenges as in the case of the four cases presented here.

Funding

The economic crisis has caused foundations to tighten their budgets and earmark their giving, often leaving organizations without budgets to pay administrators. The sustainability of the organizations rests on passion-driven leaders. Paul VanDeCarr won a Brimstone Grant for researching and writing about funding strategies for storytelling. *Storytelling and Social Change: Strategies for Grantmakers* will be published in the Spring, 2013. It was advantageous to elicit VanDeCarr's opinion on the direction leaders should pursue in their attempt to arrest the problem. VanDeCarr states, "Part of the nature of the beast is that organizations receive funding for programs prior to receiving operational funds." This is where new organizations prove they can successfully administrate and implement a proposed idea. Paul continues, "During this phase and perpetually, partnerships are essential. For instance, Lenora might seek partnerships with a National Organization that deals with re-entry." In this line of thought, Bunjo Butler could seek partnerships with Baltimore Reads, or National Reading Organizations. Joslyn Duncan should seek to partner with city agencies, and In FACT might look to national African American organizations, social enterprises or national arts groups. In seeking partnerships, Van DeCarr states, "Fundors trust you more when you are aligned with an established partner." One of the first questions asked by politicians, policy makers, program administrators and government officials is, "Is the program working?" That is they want to know. "Is the money that we are spending on a particular program yielding positive results and accomplishing the goals set forth?" (Norfolk, Stenson Williams, *Literacy Development*, 2009). VanDeCarr, elaborates, "Will the participants in

a program get jobs? Get better connected? What documentable change is going to come because of this program? The programs must be well-structured and measurable.” Ucko is on point with the philosophy to absolutely have an evaluative process for short-term assessment. But given Van DeCarr’s argument, there is a need for long-term evaluation, even if the qualifiers are not all attributed to the influence of storytelling. The bottom line begs the question: Does the serving organization’s methodologies and resulting analysis match the partnering organization’s philanthropic goals? Does success look the same to both organizations? Dollars cannot be sought just because money is needed. That mode of operation caused Amy Skillman’s founding organization, PAIRWN to become defunct. The PAIRWN Board sought partnerships that did not have the same mission alignment. A mutual partnership will have the same expectations. Because ROI (Return on Investment) is a harder concept to measure in the case studies presented here, and wherever arts are expected to provide the fundamental impact, it may be more effective for partnerships to focus on ROE (Return on Expectations). Documentable ROE will help to prove change or transformation. VanDeCarr believes expectations that are concrete and specific provide a more viable plan. “How is storytelling going to build community and reduce violence?” Here is where numbers are needed to capture the vision, particularly for funders who are not in the arts.

Capitalizing Opportunities through Social Entrepreneurship

VanDeCarr also explored the benefits of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurs seek opportunities. This undoubtedly leads to more networking, blogging and internet research for organizational leaders. Opening a position for a college intern for academic credit may be a way to negotiate additional help. By reducing the administrative load, interns can also help leaders hang up or at least set aside the wearing of multiple hats.

In the case of In FACT, it would allow better implementation of the storytelling curriculum in the folk arts classrooms. For GGLLP it could alleviate the technology deficiency. StoriesWork could extend its outreach and following up on its replication efforts and, GRIOTWORKS could deepen its connections with city officials. Social entrepreneurs also go beyond the microcosm in looking at an issue. They search out the root of the problem, and create innovative solutions. For StoriesWork, this may mean, creating programs targeted to youth populations who are statistically at-risk for incarceration. For GGLLP it may foster a partnership that deals with transforming school curriculums. In FACT may need to pursue becoming involved with policymakers and researching economic development plans of the township. GRIOTWORKS may need to go deeper in its application to sustain communities by creating projects that go beyond one event.

The spectrum of storytelling in sustaining cultures is broad, and the four cases are a small example of the power of storytelling to transform and strengthen communities. “Although the transformative power of storytelling has been deeply acclaimed” (Williams, Labonte and O’Brien, *Empowering*, 2003) and the cases herein inform the argument, leaders of storytelling organizations need to build collaborative efforts in order to expand the possibilities of reconstructing communities; uncovering knowledge that has been subjugated to dominate ideas, particularly with marginalized groups; and, brainstorming long-lasting storytelling initiatives that address the bane of the world’s largest problems that bleed into and through our communities.

The chances of success are significantly increased if the action and research are grounded in a set of plausible hypotheses about the underlying social impact theory and business model, which includes an effective operating model, and a viable resource strategy. (Guclu, Dees and Anderson, *Creating Opportunities*, 2002). To effectively

inculcate Guclu's concept of success in cultural sustainability storytelling projects, it is recommended that leaders deepen preliminary research of the community's cultural assets, intensify community involvement with an interpretive plan, and develop thorough communications plans that maximize public relations and social media opportunities. The quest is to increase capacity for community building and life sustaining actions by sustaining storytelling energy over time and to attract the disempowered and keep them involved. (Burnham, *Sustainability of Storytelling* 2001, Courthoys, *Interpretive Possibilities*, 2006). "Above all, solutions to the threats facing minority cultures, their oral tradition must be co-designed with the communities." Community engagement is critical at all levels from planning to evaluation. "It is the community members who must become the real, informed decision makers in any project process. They are the ones best equipped to identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats." (Rankin, *Living Cultural*, 2006).

The four organizations are exemplary in their demonstrative application of storytelling in strengthening communities. Strong communities sustain culture. However, inherit in the word sustain, preserve and perpetuate is relativity. To relate is to compare and to compare is to measure. There is a need for more intensive follow-up with relationships developed through the initiatives, as well as documentation and perhaps tracking of participant transformation or application of the story processes learned and the benefit it bestows on the greater community. Audiovisual documentation would further the argument that the cases have thus far made.

Storytelling is a living art, and it is through the senses that we experience culture and feel change. As visionary leaders of organizations that apply storytelling to manifest innovative solutions to today's problems, we need to extend the 360 °of Self concept to

360 ° of Community. The world we live in is not all spirit, nor all analytics. We must operate in the balance. If we comprehend the physical and mental quadrants as quantitative, i.e. the numbers, and understand the emotional and spiritual quadrants as the qualitative, i.e. the spirit, then we will recognize that we need both halves to complete the whole. It is in the wholeness of the circle that we find answers to the questions what else is possible and how can it get better than this?

This document is submitted for academic purposes and as a resource for further investigation into the role of storytelling in cultural sustainability. You can pour through its pages at the library and surround yourself with stacks of literature on the subject, but it is highly recommended that you embrace an experiential approach --- go listen to a storyteller.

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