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Introduction to *Lavil* Curriculum

It can be a challenge to create curricula for a book as far-reaching as *Lavil*—a book that, while full of tales of resilience and strength and even hope, is also rife with struggle and pain. How do we sit with these stories, take in their lessons, and find the right words and strategies to teach about them?

And yet that is what we have done, or attempted to do, in the unit that follows. Whether the topic is colonialism, chronic poverty, governmental corruption, or the 2010 earthquake, Haiti has consistently been subject to oversimplification by outsiders searching for an easy explanation. We feel it's crucial for students and teachers in the United States to use this curriculum to grapple with oversimplified notions of life in Haiti, and in Port-au-Prince, in particular. In these lessons that are designed for high school students and college undergraduates, you will find multidisciplinary approaches to examining the powerful oral histories documented in *Lavil*. They seek to inspire students to think of themselves as oral historians and global citizens; through critical thinking, empathy building, and artistic exploration, we hope that students will forge connections with the narrators in this book, but also with the people in their classrooms and communities.

We have designed each lesson to be modifiable according to your classroom's needs. Some educators will have the flexibility to facilitate a full-scale oral history project in their classrooms. Others will only have a day or two to spend on a particular narrative from *Lavil*. However you engage with the book, we hope that you and your students find this curriculum generative, challenging, and inspiring.

Fundamental to the mission of Voice of Witness is the importance of listening to people's stories. This is the goal of our book series but also of our curriculum; the accompanying lessons encourage students to have conversations they haven't had before, and to consider perspectives previously unknown to them. The lessons we have created for *Lavil* do not set out to prescribe any particular ideology or way of thinking about the struggles faced by the people of Haiti; rather, we hope that they inspire students to be critical thinkers, empathic listeners, and inquisitive beings who value one of the most precious human resources: stories.

We'd like to thank Steven Mayers of City College of San Francisco, Voice of Witness Education Advisory member, Katie Kuszmar, and *Lavil* co-editors Peter Orner and Evan Lyon for their useful feedback.

With Respect,

The Voice of Witness Education Team

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An Introduction to Haitian History

Many U. S. students have had little or no opportunity to learn about Haitian history, even though much of it was deeply impacted by the colonial practices of Europe and the United States. We hope that the stories in *Lavil*, and the lessons that follow will serve as a compelling introduction to Haiti, and can be used in U.S. and world history classes.

Before engaging with the stories and curriculum, teachers may find it useful to activate student's prior knowledge about Haiti by utilizing a KWL learning strategy: **W**hat do you know about Haiti? What do you **W**ant to know, and at the end of the unit, what did you **L**earn about Haiti?

The following Haitian history introduction is adapted from the *Lavi*l appendices by co-editor Evan Lyon, and may serve as a point of entry for students encountering Haiti for the first time.

In Port-au-Prince, in the days following the January 12, 2010, earthquake, a Haitian friend lamented out loud—as we sat together, but speaking to no one in particular—that "Haiti needs to stop changing history." The scope of the disaster was just settling in, but she was referring to the country's legacy of settling historical precedents.

Haiti is a small nation, occupying the western third of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola. It is smaller in size than the U.S. state of Maryland. But the history of the "New World" cannot be understood without considering Haiti. Haiti has also been central to a number of events of global significance—from first contact with western Europe, through slavery, colonialism, and revolution, to creation and maintenance of external debt, and, most recently, the global response to the 2010 earthquake.

It is likely that Christopher Columbus made first contact in the New World in northern Haiti in 1492. Less than half a century later, the indigenous population was decimated—more than 90 percent of the island's original inhabitants having died from disease, enslavement, or other brutalities. By the end of the eighteenth century, the colony of Saint-Domingue was producing more than two-thirds of France's overseas wealth, with sugar the dominant caste crop.

A deadly industry was created to transform sugar cane into granulated sugar and liquid molasses. Sugar cane grows year-round, and the colony's industrial sugar mills ran around the calendar and around the clock. The industry depended on relatively cheap and expendable slave labor. It was less expensive to import a new African slave than to slow the agricultural or industrial production. Life expectancy for a slave in colonial Haiti was twenty-one years.

The importance of the 1791–1804 Haitian revolution cannot be overstated. It has been an inspiration for the world's oppressed and a source of great fear for the powerful for more than 200 years. The conflict beginning in 1791 culminated in a military victory against Napoleon's army and Haitian independence on January 1, 1804.

While the United States continued to profit from chattel slavery for a full sixty years after the Haitian revolution and lived with such convoluted inhumanities as the "three-fifths

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compromise," Haiti made its politics plain. For example, the 1806 Haitian Constitution states: "Every African, Indian and those issued from their blood, born of colonies or foreign countries, who might come to reside in the Republic, will be recognized as Haitians …" Citizenship could be obtained after one year of residence. Haiti's mere existence, let alone its open shores, was an affront to colonial world order. In the words of anthropologist Ira Lowenthal, "Haiti was the first free nation of free men to arise within, and in resistance to, the emerging constellation of Western European empire." It would be another 150 years before much of the colonized gained independence. The roots of what became the modern human rights movement are contained in the Revolution and Haiti's early governance.

Soon after independence, Haiti encountered a number of all-too-modern consequences typical of the post-colonial world. This includes the first example of foreign debt creation. In 1825, under threat of invasion, Haiti agreed to pay "reparations" to France for property seized during the revolution, namely themselves and the land of the former colony. With no cash reserves or sanctioned foreign trade Haiti had no money to pay this "debt." It had to borrow from France (and others) to meet the payment. This initial debt, equivalent to $21 billion in today's money, was paid well into the twentieth century, to say nothing of further indebtedness accrued over the intervening decades. Traces of this initial debt were paid until 1947.

In a direct analogy to what is called "structural adjustment" in the post-WWII global economic era, Haiti's internal development and foreign trade was heavily influenced by its creditors. Non-economically productive sectors such as public health, education, and environmental and food sustainability were neglected in favor of agricultural and natural resource exportation.

Though politically independent, throughout the nineteenth century Haiti developed according to the priorities and the constraints of creditors in Europe and the United States and fell ever further into debt. The twentieth century saw the increasing influence of the United States—including a military invasion between 1915–1934, continuing with a number of U.S.-backed governments until the 1957 election of François Duvalier, whose rise to power was part of a backlash against the elite, light-skinned governments that followed U.S. occupation. This brutal Duvalier family dictatorship lasted until 1986.

Most recently, Haiti suffered a "natural" disaster of unprecedented concentration. Only a small number of natural disasters have caused greater casualties: flooding in China in 1931, the Bhola cyclone in present-day Bangladesh in 1970, and the Tangshan earthquake in 1976. The earthquake on January 12, 2010, is estimated to have killed 220,000–316,000 people in its immediate aftermath. As a recent comparison, the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 carried a similar death toll but this was spread over many hundreds of miles of coastline and more than eight nations.

The devastation of the earthquake in Haiti was concentrated in Port-au-Prince, the city's southern suburbs, the small urban center of Léogâne (closest to the epicenter), and as far south as Jacmel on Haiti's south coast. The images and stories that followed the disaster may well have given most people in the world their framework for understanding (or misunderstanding) Haiti.

It is impossible to understand the disaster of the earthquake without understanding the city of Port-au-Prince. The intensity of images and stories that followed may well define a moment in

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the global media's history. It certainly seems like most people have some sense of Haiti as seen through the media's framing of the disaster, and it often seems as though it's through perception of the earthquake and its aftermath that many have come to understand (or misunderstand) Haiti.

—*Evan Lyon*

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CONTEMPORARY HAITIAN HISTORY TIMELINE

This timeline focuses on events that may be referenced in the narrator's stories, covering a few major events in the decades leading up to the 2010 earthquake as well as the immediate aftermath.

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1946: Léon Dumarsais Estimé is elected the first black president of Haiti since the end of U.S. occupation. He appoints François "Papa Doc" Duvalier as the director of the National Public Health Service.

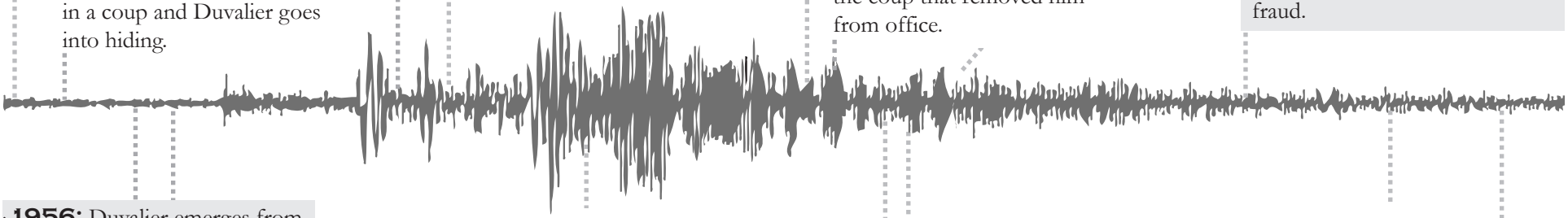
1950: Estimé is removed in a coup and Duvalier goes into hiding.

1956: Duvalier emerges from hiding and wins the election for president of Haiti with over two thirds of the vote, though there are reports of voter fraud and intimidation at the polls.

1958: Duvalier begins organizing the National Security Volunteers, a paramilitary group that will become popularly known as the *Tonton Makout* (bogeymen).

1964: Duvalier is elected preisdent for life, ruling over a police state marked by corruption and human rights abuses.

1971: Duvalier dies. His 19-year-old son Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier succeeds him as president for life, though reluctantly.



1985: After years of hardship and repression, uprisings and riots begin throughout Haiti. A parish priest and vocal exponent of Haiti liberation named Jean-Bertrand Aristide returns from exile and gives popular sermons in Port-au-Prince.

1986: Jean-Claude Duvalier flees in the wake of popular unrest and is flown out of Haiti on a U.S. Airforce plane.

1990: Jean-Bertrand Aristide is elected by popular vote in what is considered the country's first truly democratic election.

1991: Aristide's attempts to reform the military and other policies anger the nation's elites, and he is overthrown in a coup. He states that he believes the CIA has backed the coup that removed him from office.

1994: U.S. President Bill Clinton sends an intervention force to Haiti that restores President Aristide to power. Aristide disbands the Haitian military.

1995: René Préval is elected in Haiti's first peaceful transfer of power between elected presidents.

1996: Aristide starts a new political party calld *Fanmi Lavas* (the Family of the Flood).

2000: Aristide is reelected with over 90% of the vote. The U.S. and other states issue sanctions following the lopsided election and claims of electoral fraud.

2004: U.S. forces airlift Preisdent Aristide from the country, and the international community establishes the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti.

2006: René Préval is reelected to the presidency.

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CONTEMPORARY HAITIAN HISTORY TIMELINE

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January 12, 2010: A magnitude 7.0 earthquake strikes ten miles southwest of Port-au-Prince. Two strong aftershocks follow shortly thereafter.

January 13, 2010: Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive claims that over 100,000 people died in the quake. The Red Cross says that up to 3 million people were affected.

January 20, 2010: A magnitude 6.1 aftershock hits west of Port-au-Prince.

February 1, 2010: Doctors Without Borders reports that it has treated over 11,000 patients since the earthquake, with 1,300 surgical operations.

October 16, 2010: Jean Salgadeau Pelette becomes the first Haitian to die of cholera in more than a century, contracting the disease through exposure to contaminated river water.

December 3, 2010: 2,071 people have died from cholera and as many as 91,770 cases have been reported.

2011: Popular musician Michel Martelly is elected president.

2012: A study by the Inter-American Development bank puts the earthquake's cost between $7.2 and $13.2 billion, based on a death toll of 200,000 to 250,000.

2012: The *New York Times* reports that 357,750 Haitians are still living in 496 tent camps, and only $215 million of the $7.5 billion disbursed after the earthquake has been spent on permanent housing.

August 2015: 700,000 Haitians have suffered from cholera and over 9000 have died from the disease.

October 2015: The Presidential elections suffer from inconsistently applied voting procedures. Eight opposition candidates demand changes in Haiti's electoral council and national police department.

October 2016: Hurricane Matthew hits Haiti's southern coast. Mourad Wahba, United Nations official, calls it "the largest humanitarian event" in the country since the 2010 earthquake.

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Lesson Plan One:
Port-au-Prince and Haiti's Andeyo

Time Needed: Two class periods

Materials:
- Marielene's and Frantz's narratives from *Lavil*
- Definition of *andeyo*: Haitians refer to all parts of Haiti beyond the edges of Port-au-Prince as *andeyo*, or "outside." When residents of the city return to their hometowns, they often say they are going *andeyo.*

Objective: Students will critically examine the advantages and disadvantages of living in rural areas, and will be able to identify 3-4 vulnerabilities specific to Haiti's *andeyo*. Students will be able to distinguish between open-ended and closed interview questions, and will write ten open-ended, story-generating questions in preparation for an oral history project. Students will also explore the concepts of empathy and basic human rights.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: Speaking and Listening SL.9–10.1, SL.9–10.5. Writing W.9–10.3. Language L.9–10.5. Reading History RH.9–10.2, RH.9–10.4

Connections: This lesson can be paired with any of the lesson plans designed for *Voices from the Storm: The People of New Orleans on Hurricane Katrina and Its Aftermath*.

Essential Questions:
- Whose responsibility is it to ensure that people can live where they want to live, and not just where they can survive? Why?
- Should things like close proximity to a hospital and a school be considered basic human rights? Why or why not?
- Do first person stories communicate information in ways that news stories cannot? If so, how?

Narrative Excerpt: "They call it the Republic of Port-au-Prince. Everything you need is in Port-au-Prince. If you need a driver's license, you need to come to Port-au-Prince. If you need a passport, you've got to stand in line in Port-au-Prince. If you need to change the title of your car, you need to come to Port-au-Prince. For a long time there used to be only one airport, that's Port-au-Prince. So much of the infrastructure of our society—the government, the universities, everything—is in the Republic of Port-au-Prince. And so everybody wants to be in Port-au-Prince."
—Lamothe Lormier, p. 110

"You don't find enough income in those areas in the countryside. There's not much to do. No electricity, no Internet. It's very difficult. You live in the forest, just live off the land. You eat coconuts. You make a little farm and grow sugar cane and sweet potatoes. I don't know how to farm. I can raise chickens because all you have to do is feed them and put them in a cage at night so wild animals don't eat them or they don't get lost in the woods."
—Frantz Santil, p. 59

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Day One

Step One: Respond in writing to the following written prompt (5 minutes):

- *Think about the opportunities you are afforded and denied based on where you live. What are they and why? Think about things like access to schools, hospitals, and natural resources such as clean water, jobs, government representation, transportation, etc.*

Step Two: Ask for a few volunteers to share their answers to the prompt with the class (5 minutes).

Step Three: Silent Sustained Reading: Assign Marielene's narrative to half the class and Frantz's narrative to the other half (20 minutes).

Step Four: Once students have finished reading their assigned narratives, divide them into groups of four (with two who read Marielene's and two who read Frantz's in each group). Ask each group to collectively brainstorm a comprehensive list of advantages and disadvantages of living in an urban center versus a rural area. Encourage them to consider what they read in the narratives, and also what they've observed about rural versus urban life in their own country (20 minutes).

Step Five: Ask each group to designate one presenter to briefly share the group's brainstorm with the class. As groups present, make a list on the board of some of the advantages and disadvantages that are repeated most often. Save this list for tomorrow's activities (10 minutes).

Day Two

Step One: Display the list of advantages and disadvantages from yesterday on the board. Students respond in writing to the following written prompt (5 minutes):

- *Looking at the list on the board, which disadvantage of living in the country puts its residents in the most immediate danger during a natural disaster? Why?*

Step Two: Pair Share: Students find a partner and share their response to the prompt (5 minutes).

Step Three: Ask the class to keep Marielene's and Frantz's narratives in mind as you transition into an activity about crafting interview questions that generate a compelling story. You might begin this activity by asking the students to imagine which specific questions Marielene's and Frantz's interviewers asked them. On the board, define "open-ended question" as a question that cannot be answered with a yes, no, or in a single word. Explore this idea by asking students to volunteer example questions. Make two columns on the board, and write the closed-ended questions on the left side and open-ended questions on the right side. Once students get the hang of it, give them some closed-ended questions and ask them to turn them into open-ended questions. Examples may include (15 minutes):

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- Where are you from?
  Describe where you grew up.
- Was it hard leaving your country?
  How did it feel when you first left your country?
- Do you believe that democracy is a good form of government?
  Tell me about your thoughts on democracy. What works, what doesn't, and why?

Step Four: Students return to their groups of four from Day One. Each group should go back through Marielene's and Frantz's stories and identify words, descriptors, and phrases that Marielene and Frantz use to describe Haiti's *andeyo* (15 minutes).

Step Five: As a group, look through your list of descriptions of Haiti's *andeyo* and think about Marielene and Frantz's stories. Imagine you had the opportunity to interview either Marielene or Frantz. Choose one narrator to (hypothetically) interview, and create a list of ten open-ended, story-generating questions you would like to ask (15 minutes).

Step Six: Ask each group to share two of their open-ended questions aloud with the class (5 minutes). Alternatively, if time allows, facilitate a role-playing exercise with the class. Choose one student to play the role of Marielene, and invite the class to ask the student playing Marielene the open-ended questions they have drafted. Encourage the student acting as Marielene to respectfully embody her character and tone as much as possible. Next, choose a student to play the role of Frantz, and repeat the activity.

Media Resources:
Book: *Haiti Glass* by Lenelle Moïse. This collection of poetry and prose recollects the author's experience growing up as a Haitian immigrant in the United States through lyrical, imagistic exploration. Book trailer available here: http://www.lenellemoise.com/haitiglass.html

Film: *Inside Disaster*. Documentary film on the 2010 earthquake. Note that there are some graphic images in the trailer: http://insidedisaster.com/haiti/see-the-film

Interviews: Short oral history interviews with Haitian immigrants from StoryCorps:
https://storycorps.org/listen/mario-loiseau-and-mabou-loiseau-150619/
https://storycorps.org/listen/jim-saint-germain-and-carlos-walton-160722/
https://storycorps.org/blog/voices-from-storycorpsu-geralda-and-samantha/

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Lesson Plan Two:
Vulnerability and Trauma in Haiti

Time Needed: Three class periods

Materials:

- copies of Alina's narrative from *Lavil*
- ball
- butcher paper and markers
- copies of Close Reading Handout
- highlighters
- copies of three interview questions for group interviews

Resources for discussing trauma in the classroom:
UC Berkeley Graduate Division Teaching & Resource Center: Discussing Traumatic Events. http://gsi.berkeley.edu/gsi-guide-contents/discussion-intro/discussion-resources/

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility: Teaching About Controversial or Difficult Issues: http://morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/teaching-about-controversial-or-difficult-issues

Objective: Students will complete a close reading of Alina's narrative and use higher-level thinking to examine the interrelatedness of the traumas she faces. To demonstrate their learning, students will identify four instances in which a specific trauma Alina faced left her vulnerable to another trauma.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: Speaking and Listening SL.9–10.1, SL.9–10.5. Writing W.9–10.3. Language L.9–10.5. Reading History RH.9–10.2, RH.9–10.4

Connections: You may choose to do a close reading with any of the narratives in *Lavil*.

Essential Questions:

- How can enduring one trauma increase one's vulnerability to experiencing another trauma?
- Whose responsibility is it to alleviate someone's trauma and/or oppression? Why?

Narrative Excerpts:
"Since I came back from the Dominican Republic, I've been sleeping here at the hospital. My older son is with me. I told the doctor that I was going to go back home to the place I know in the Dominican Republic. It's called Isabel. I liked it there. I had my Haitian friend with me to help me out. Here, I suffer. But the doctor said no, because I won't find the ARV (antiretroviral drugs) there. But, I think that's where I'm going to go anyway because I have nowhere else to go."

—Alina, p. 131

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"They told me not to breastfeed him. I didn't listen. I didn't think he could catch the virus through breastfeeding. They told me not to breastfeed him, but I didn't have money to feed him other things. They said if I did, it wouldn't be good for him, but they didn't explain why. They didn't clearly say that he'd be infected."

—Alina, p. 129

Day One

Step One: Discuss the definitions of trauma and systemic oppression with your class. The resources for discussing trauma under the materials section can help facilitate this conversation.

Step Two: Respond in writing to the following prompt (5 minutes):

- *Do you believe that the experience of trauma can be generational? Explain your reasoning.*

Step Three: Toss a ball to a student and ask them to share their response to the prompt. When that student is done sharing, they will toss the ball to another student, asking that student to share their response. Repeat this activity (5 minutes).

Step Four: Read Alina's story aloud as a class using "popcorn" reading. Instruct students to highlight any words or concepts they don't understand in yellow (15 minutes).

Step Five: Ask students to share the words/passages they highlighted and write them on the board. As a class, facilitate a discussion breaking down each of the words and concepts, checking for understanding as you go (10 minutes).

Step Six: Second Reading. Distribute Close Reading handouts. Students should reread Alina's narrative quietly and independently, this time filling out the handout as they read. Encourage them to highlight each of Alina's experiences with trauma in pink (20 minutes).

Step Seven: Debrief the second (close) reading as a class. Answer any lingering questions, and remind students to bring both their Close Reading handouts and their copies of the text to the next class (5 minutes).

Day Two

Step One: Respond to the following written prompt (5 minutes):

- *Think back to Alina's story from the previous class. What would have helped Alina? What could have been done to alleviate her suffering or interrupt her trauma? Explain.*

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Step Two: Divide students into groups of three or four and give each group a large sheet of paper divided into four quadrants. Instruct each group to label the four quadrants with SELF, INDIVIDUALS, SOCIETY, GOVERNMENT. Groups should write down their responses to the writing prompt in the appropriate quadrant. Additional prompts include: What, if anything, could Alina have done to help herself or prevent her suffering? What could individuals in her life (family members, friends, neighbors, etc.) have done to help her? What about society? Government? (20 minutes).

Step Three: Tape each group's quadrants up on the board so everyone can see each other's responses. Facilitate a group discussion about trauma and responsibility (15 minutes).

Step Four: Return to Alina's story and ask students to choose one section that focuses on one particular trauma (for example, they could choose Alina's positive HIV results, her experience in the Dominican Republic without access to TB or HIV treatment, her inability to leave the hospital because she has no place to live, or her inability to send her young child to school because she can't afford it). Create an alternative map of what her life could have looked like had appropriate interventions been offered. Label the interventions based on whether they originate from Alina herself, individuals, society, or government, and note where more than one intersect (20 minutes).

Step Five/Homework: (Optional) Thinking about Alina's life, write a two-page essay exploring the connections between the traumas she faced and systemic oppression. How did one trauma lead to another? Can you compare the trajectory of Alina's life and another story of oppression you've read in class or in the news?

Day Three

Step One: Respond to the following written prompt (5 minutes):

- *Think about the last time you shared something important or difficult with another person. What inspired you to share your story with them?*

Step Two: Pair Share: In partners, students share their answers to the written prompt (5 minutes).

Step Three: Talk to the class about oral history as a way to collect people's stories about their own lives and experiences. Write the following prompt on the board:

> *An interviewer sat down with Alina to talk to her about her life. What do you imagine Alina might have needed from the interviewer in order to feel safe and brave enough to share her experiences? What could the interviewer have done to make Alina feel respected, comfortable, and empowered?*

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Ask for students to share their thoughts and record their answers on the board. Designate one student as a Recorder and ask them to duplicate the list onto a piece of butcher paper. Hang the list up in the classroom. List may include the following (20 minutes):

- Respect (cultural awareness, eye contact, etc.)
- Clarity about why the interviewer is conducting the interview
- Clarity about where and how the story will be shared
- Nonjudgment
- Active listening (no checking your phone, the clock, etc.)
- Offer anonymity (use of pseudonym, change locations, etc.)
- Comfortable space
- Openness (share a little bit about yourself with the narrator)

Step Four: Group Interviews. Divide students into groups of threes and distribute copies of interview questions (handout). Students will take turns playing the role of Interviewer, Narrator, and Observer (20 minutes).

- Interview: Asks the questions.
- Narrator: Tells their story.
- Observer: Writes down notes about what worked well, what they noticed.

Step Five: Debrief the group interviews as a class. Use the following questions as a basis for discussion (10 minutes):

- Were you more comfortable as an interviewer or as a narrator? Why?
- Did anything surprising come up?
- As an observer, what did you notice?

Media Resources:
Article: This Scholastic article explores strategies for facilitating close reading in the classroom: http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/common-core-close-reading-0

Website: Information about post-earthquake trauma in Haiti from the Trauma Resource Institute: http://traumaresourceinstitute.com/haiti

Film: *Poto Mitan: Haitian Women, Pillars of the Global Economy.* Documentary about five Haitian women, narrated by Edwidge Danticat: http://potomitan.net

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CLOSE READING HANDOUT

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Student's Name:

Write a brief summary of the story you read.

Themes/Words repeated in the story:

Words/Concepts to clarify:

Questions you think the interviewer asked the narrator (based on the text):

1.

2.

3.

4.

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Group Interview Questions

1. What were you like as a little kid?
2. What does "home" mean to you?
3. Describe a moment in your life when something unexpected happened.

Remember to ask your narrator follow-up questions!

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Lesson Plan Three:
Responding to Crisis and Trauma Through Art

Time Needed: Three class periods.

Materials:
- George's and Snake's narratives from *Lavil*
- canvases or pieces of white butcher paper
- paint, pencils, magazines and/or other materials for collage
- glue
- stencils
- overhead or video projector

Objective: Students will explore the need for art during a time of crisis or trauma, examine the artist's role during times of crisis or trauma, and will create one piece of art responding to a personal, social, or political trauma.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: Speaking and Listening SL.9–10.1, SL.9–10.5. Writing W.9–10.3. Language L.9–10.5. Reading History RH.9–10.2, RH.9–10.4

Voice of Witness Connections: This lesson can be used with Amir's narrative from *Patriot Acts* or Muhanned Al-Azzah's narrative from *Palestine Speaks*.

Essential Questions:
- When a social, political, or environmental crisis is taking place, do artists have a responsibility to address it through their work? Why or why not?
- In what ways can art impact society and culture?

Narrative Excerpts:
"After the earthquake, there was a lot of stress, but I had a lot of demand, people were asking me for my work. So I had to get back on my feet and do the work. I lost everything, but after a few months, I started the shop back again. I made a big effort to pull together my soul and my strength, everything I had, to concentrate because I was working. I started forgetting about the stress. All I did was do this work until I forgot, about everything, the past, and then, you know, it was just my work."

—George Valentin Valeris

"I'll never forget the first time I tried graffiti. It was a Friday and I was going to another neighborhood not too far from mine to buy some food. As I was eating my food, I was observing some children who were playing on the side of the street. I enjoyed the site, so I grabbed a piece of charcoal and started to draw on the wall, then I sprayed it. It was depicting the scene: the children playing with kites or with circles, the street vendor selling food next to the pile of trash, and the destroyed houses in the background. I wrote: HAVE A CONSCIENCE FOR HAITI."

—Snake

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Day One

Step One: Students respond in writing to the following prompt (5 minutes):

- What is it that makes some art "political"? What distinguishes political art from non-political art?

Step Two: Ask for a few volunteers to share their responses with the class (5 minutes).

Step Three: Read Snake's narrative from *Lavil*. This can be done as "popcorn" reading, Silent Sustained Reading (SSR), or in small groups (15 minutes).

Step Four: Using an overhead or video projector, share the examples of political graffiti displayed on this website: http://www.noupe.com/inspiration/showcases/50-stunning-political-artworks.html. Choose 10-12 images and briefly discuss each one with the class, using the following questions and prompts (20 minutes):

- What do you notice about this work?
- What can you tell about the artist's point of view?
- Do you have an emotional response to this work? How does it make you feel?
- Which materials do you think the artist used to create this work?
- Do you believe this work has the capacity to create change? Why or why not?
- Who do you think is the intended audience?

Step Five: Divide the class into groups of three or four. Ask each group to brainstorm a list of five works of art that either contain a political message or respond to a social or environmental crisis or trauma. Encourage them to consider songs, raps, poems, paintings, drawings, collages, graffiti art, dance, or any other art form they can think of. Once they have made their list of five, each group should choose one of the works of art from their list, and closely examine their chosen piece using the five prompts suggested in Step Four (these prompts can be written on the board or distributed to each group on half sheets of paper). Give examples if needed (15 minutes).

Step Six: Groups will designate one member to share the work they chose and their answers to the prompts with the class (10 minutes).

Day Two

Step One: Students respond in writing to the following prompt (5 minutes):

- *Make a list of the ways in which people cope after a national crisis (a natural disaster, military attack, or anything else that affects an entire country). Be sure to consider how people cope on a micro level (personally, at home, with their families) and on a macro level (in society, politically, culturally).*

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Step Two: Go around the room and ask each student to share one coping mechanism from their list (5 minutes).

Step Three: Read George's narrative from *Lavil* as a class (15 minutes).

Step Four: Write the last line of George's story on the board: "The easiest part for a Haitian artist is to create." As a class, deconstruct this statement. What does George mean? What is the context? Why does he believe this? (10 minutes).

Step Five: Prepare for partner interviews. Let the class know that they will be assigned a partner, and that they will be both conducting an interview and being interviewed by their partner. Before assigning the partners, ask students to write five open-ended, story-generating questions to ask their partner. Specify that at least one question should pertain to personal, social, environmental, or political crisis. Some examples include:

- Describe a time in your life when you faced a crisis. This could be something that happened to you personally, something that happened to your country (such as a mass shooting), a natural disaster (such as a hurricane, earthquake, or tornado), or something else entirely. How did this crisis affect you, and how did you cope with it?
- What strengths do you draw on when facing difficult situations in your life? Give an example.

Give the students ten minutes to write their questions and connect with their assigned partners (10 minutes).

Step Six: Partner interviews. Each interview should be ten minutes long. After the first ten minutes, use a bell to signal that the pairs should switch roles (20 minutes).

Day Three

Step One: Students respond in writing to the following prompt (5 minutes):

- *Think back to your interview yesterday. What came up for you when you were talking about crisis? If you were to create a piece of art about this topic, how would you express it?*

Step Two: Using an overhead or video projector, share with the class some examples of Haitian vodou flags. There are some good pieces here: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/01/vodou-flag-_n_5909160.html.
As you move through the pieces, ask students to think about what these flags might symbolize for the artist and for the country (10 minutes).

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Step Three: Art project. Students may choose to create either a flag, in the style of George Valetin Valeris's Haitian vodou flags, or a piece of political graffiti, in the style of Snake.

Encourage each student to choose a theme pertaining to a personal, social, political, or environmental crisis or trauma. Students can choose to explore something very close to them, or they can choose to focus on something that happened to their city, state, or country. Provide students with either canvases or pieces of butcher paper and the necessary supplies to create their piece of art (markers, paint, magazines for collage, stencils for graffiti, etc.). Keep examples of the Haitian flags and graffiti on display if possible (45 minutes).

If students do not finish their piece of artwork in class, it can be assigned as homework or continued the following day. Create a gallery display with all of the students' work when they are finished, and consider inviting other teachers to bring their classes to view the exhibit your students have created.

Media Resources:
Lesson Plan: The New York Times.
This lesson plan explores political cartoons and how to create them with your class.
http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/09/17/drawing-for-change-analyzing-and-making-political-cartoons/?_r=0

Poem: "Poem for the Poorest Country in the Western Hemisphere" by Danielle Legros Georges:
This short poem uses metaphor to counter Haiti's reputation as the poorest country in the western hemisphere.
http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/gallery/samples/12_POE_DanielleGeorges.pdf

Documentary film: *When the Drum is Beating.*
This film tells the story of Orchestre Septentrional, a popular, 60 year old orchestra in Haiti and how it relates to Haiti's broader history.
www.whenthedrumisbeating.com/about/

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Lesson Plan Four:
Conducting a *Lavil*-themed Oral History Project

Time Needed: Two class periods—several weeks or a semester long unit, depending on scope.

Materials:
- Fran's narrative from *Lavil*
- copies of the quotes under Narrative Excerpts
- index cards
- copies of Oral History Project Planning handout
- Getting Started: A Quick Guide to Setting up Your Oral History Project handout

Objective: Students will critically examine natural disasters and their long-term effects, identify populations of people vulnerable to natural disasters and be able to explain why those populations are vulnerable, and will develop a plan for an oral history project to conduct in their community. These projects will seek to illuminate the issues studied in *Lavil* and their impact in school and local communities.

Related Core Curriculum Standards: Speaking and Listening SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.5 Language L.9-10.1, L.9-10.5 Writing W.9-10.3 Reading History RH.9-10.2, RH.9-10.4

Connections: This lesson can be used in conjunction with the lessons for *Voices from the Storm: The People of New Orleans on Hurricane Katrina and Its Aftermath*.

Essential Questions:
- Who, if anyone, bears responsibility for natural disasters?
- Are certain populations of people more vulnerable to natural disasters than others? Why or why not?
- What does an oral history project provide that other ways of teaching and learning do not? What value do first person stories hold?

Narrative Excerpts: "That Tuesday, January 12, I had gone out to buy my fish. Just as I was arriving back at home in time to feed my children, I saw the house begin to shake. While the house was shaking, my children ran outside yelling "Jesu, Jesu, Jesu." I held onto them. The house crashed down. I had a lot of things broken, but I didn't lose anyone. I saw people who died, people who were crushed. And there were many people sitting on empty ground just like this. Nobody had homes anymore. We all held our children and we sat."

—Marielene Lelenna

"And listen, I'm telling you, the worst catastrophe was not the earthquake. It was—it is still going on—it is what the Haitian government and so-called international community did after. The lies and the social injustice are worse today than before the earthquake. The distance between the rich and the poor. The so-called help, international help, has not in any way helped to restructure this society."

—Lyonel Trouillot

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"On the day of the earthquake, I was at a government building to pay taxes for the radio station. I heard the noise, and I thought that it must be a thunderstorm. I was on the fourth floor. I suddenly felt that I was flying. I can't explain what happened because the next thing I knew, I was in a different part of the building. I don't know how I jumped or flew, or whatever happened. I was jumping up, and then I quickly lost consciousness."

—Fran

Day One

Step One: Students respond in writing to the following prompt (5 minutes):

- *Describe some of the emotions that would come up for you during a natural disaster and how those emotions would impact your behavior in the days following.*

Step Two: Students turn their desks toward the three people closest to them, forming groups of four. Designate each group member as a number 1, 2, 3, or 4. Set the timer for one minute, and have the 1s share their responses to the prompt with their small groups. Set the timer again for one minute for the 2s, 3s, and 4s (5 minutes).

Step Three: Read Fran's story from *Lavil*. This can be done aloud using "popcorn" reading, as Silent Sustained Reading (SSR), or in small groups, depending on the needs of your class (20 minutes)

Step Four: Snowball discussion. Write the following prompts on the board:

- What stood out to you most about Fran's story?
- If you could ask Fran one question, what would it be?
- How would Fran's story have been different if it had been told by a third person or as a newspaper article instead of as a first person narrative?

Example news reports about the 2010 earthquake:

- New York Times. "Haiti Lies in Ruins, Grim Search for Untold Dead." 13 January 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/14/world/americas/14haiti.html?_r=0
- The Guardian. "Haiti: a long descent to hell." 14 January 2010. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/14/haiti-history-earthquake-disaster
- CNN. "7.0 quake hits Haiti; 'Serious loss of life' expected." 13 January 2010. http://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/12/haiti.earthquake/

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Students start out in pairs, and are given five minutes to discuss Fran's story and the prompts written on the board. After the five minutes are up, each pair connects with another pair, forming a group of four. Set a timer for five minutes again while the groups of four share what they talked about in pairs and discuss with each other. After five minutes, each group connects with another group, forming groups of eight. Set a timer for five minutes again, encouraging each group to share their discussions from their pairs and smaller groups, and discuss together. Once the groups of eight are done with their five minutes, set the timer one last time for a large group discussion with the whole class, this time allowing ten minutes (25 minutes).

Step Five: As a large group, brainstorm different experiences, traumas, and crises that people in your area may have endured. Some of this will be universal (parental divorce, eviction, poverty, domestic abuse, bullying, arrest and incarceration), and some will be regional (hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, gang violence, mass shooting). Ask for students to volunteer their ideas and make a master list on the board. Encourage students to think through the various stakeholders in each crisis situation (ex: if the topic is eviction, the stakeholders may include the families being evicted, the landlords and/or corporations doing the evicting, the courts legislating the evictions, other neighborhood residents, and local policymakers). If possible, leave this list on the board for the next day (10 minutes).

Day Two

Step One: Students respond in writing to the following prompt (5 minutes):

- *If you had to choose one of the topics from the group brainstorm yesterday around which to conduct an oral history project, which would it be and why?*

Step Two: Have students share personal writing anonymously with the class using the paper ball method. Each student crumples their written response into a ball and throws it in the middle of the classroom. After all the papers are mixed up on the floor, each student will grab one and open it up to read. (10 minutes).

Step Three: Distribute Planning an Oral History Project handouts. Students can choose to work in groups or by themselves as they work on articulating their specific topic, identifying stakeholders, and brainstorming potential narrators (10 minutes).

Step Four: Listen to excerpts from oral history interviews. This can be done as a large group, using a speaker, or in smaller listening stations, depending on access to headphones and media players. The following are some great resources for oral history interview archives:

- WFMT Studs Terkel Archive: http://studsterkel.wfmt.com
- Storycorps: https://storycorps.org/listen
- Densho: http://www.densho.org/about-densho
- The Library of Congress Voices from the Days of Slavery project: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices

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Encourage students to take notes about open-ended questions, pacing, and follow-up questions while they are listening to the excerpts (20 minutes).

Step Five: Students return to their Planning an Oral History Project handouts and continue filling them out. Using their notes from the listening exercise, they should begin to craft some open-ended questions and begin to think about archiving or presenting their final project. Will they create a blog, podcast, chapbook, or performance? Which delivery system would best reflect their topic and narrators' stories? Float around the class as the students are working to answer any questions and offer suggestions (15 minutes).

This lesson plan can be modified to meet your class's needs. For example, after completing their project planning, teachers could instruct students to complete one interview with someone in their family about a personal crisis, natural disaster, or sociopolitical crisis as homework. This approach would keep the lesson plan at two days. Another option is to ask students to conduct three mini-interviews (15 minutes each) with people in their families or communities, choose one interview to transcribe and edit, and share with the class. This approach would likely require two to three weeks. Should you choose to ask students to conduct a full oral history project, the following timeline can be adapted to best meet your class's needs:

- **Week One:** Students will have scheduled their first interview, aiming for it to be 30-45 minutes.
- **Week Two:** Students will conduct their first interview and begin transcribing it (this is a great website for transcription: https://transcribe.wreally.com/login).
- **Week Three:** Students will finish transcribing interview one and schedule interview two.
- **Week Four:** Students will conduct interview two and begin transcribing it.
- **Week Five:** Students will finish transcribing interview two and schedule interview three.
- **Week Six:** Students will conduct interview three and begin transcribing it.
- **Week Seven:** Students will finish transcribing interview three and schedule interview four.
- **Week Eight:** Students will conduct interview four and begin transcribing it.
- **Week Nine:** Students will finish transcribing interview four and edit the transcript for interview one (Editing handout attached).
- **Week Ten:** Students will edit the transcripts for interviews two and three.
- **Week Eleven:** Students will edit the transcript for interview four and begin planning their final project.
- **Week Twelve:** Students will work on their final projects (blogs, podcasts, chapbooks, performances, plays, etc.).

The attached handout, Getting Started: A Quick Guide to Setting up Your Oral History Project, should be useful in helping you determine the scope of your project as well as some oral history best practices.

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Media Resources:
Book: *The Butterfly's Way: Voices from the Haitian Dyaspora in the United States*, anthology of first-person stories, edited by Edwidge Danticat.
http://zinnedproject.org/materials/the-butterflys-way-voices-from-the-haitian-dyaspora-in-the-united-states

Book: *Voices from the Storm: The People of New Orleans on Hurricane Katrina and Its Aftermath*. http://voiceofwitness.org/books/voices-from-the-storm

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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT PLANNING WORKSHEET

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Brief description of topic and population you would like to interview:

Stakeholders in my area of interest:

Essential questions related to my topic:

Goals of my project / How can an oral history project benefit my narrators?

5 potential narrators:

Sharing my project: Which platform for amplifying these stories would best meet the needs of the community? Why?

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Lavil Curriculum – College/University

At Voice of Witness, we strive to provide teachers with a diversity of support and resources as they begin planning how they will use our books in the classroom. Below, we have outlined several potential assignments around which to center your teaching of *Lavil*. We have made sure that each of the assignments is flexible and modifiable to fit a wide variety of college level classes, including, but not limited to: Cultural Studies, English, Global and International Studies, Humanities, Psychology, Sociology, and various seminars. Each of these assignments and projects are designed to facilitate critical thinking, broaden literacy and language skills, increase cultural awareness and competency, and foster connection in the classroom and greater community.

We recommend the following supplementary resources to pair with *Lavil*:

- *Poto Mitan: Haitian Women, Pillars of the Global Economy*, documentary film about five Haitian women, narrated by Edwidge Danticat
  http://potomitan.net
- 10-minute YouTube video update on the women after the earthquake
  http://potomitan.net/trailer.html
- *The Butterfly's Way: Voices from the Haitian Dyaspora in the United States*, anthology of first-person stories, edited by Edwidge Danticat
  http://zinnedproject.org/materials/the-butterflys-way-voices-from-the-haitian-dyaspora-in-the-united-states
- *Why Haiti Needs New Narratives: A Post-Quake Chronicle* by Gina Athena Ulysse
  https://books.google.com/books/about/Why_Haiti_Needs_New_Narratives.html?id=MEh9CAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&hl=en#v=onepage&q&f=false
- "How Humanitarian Aid Weakened Post-Earthquake Haiti"
  https://www.thenation.com/article/how-humanitarian-aid-weakened-post-earthquake-haiti
- *Scourge*, a hip hop theater piece by Marc Bamuthi Joseph
  http://livingwordproject.org/lwp_projects_scourge.html
- *Inside Disaster: Haiti*, documentary on earthquake
  http://insidedisaster.com/haiti/see-the-film
- "Poem for the Poorest Country in the Western Hemisphere" (and other poems) by Danielle Legros Georges
  http://www.massculturalcouncil.org/gallery/samples/12_POE_DanielleGeorges.pdf
- "Five Years After Haiti's Earthquake, Where did the $13.5 Billion Go?" NPR article by Richard Knox
  http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/01/12/376138864/5-years-after-haiti-s-earthquake-why-aren-t-things-better
- United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
  http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights

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Assignment #1: Annotated Bibliography
Choose one theme from *Lavil* around which to further your research. You may choose access to medical care, sexual violence, religion, the arts, or something else. Once you've chosen your theme, write an annotated bibliography using peer-reviewed scholarly articles written in the past five years. Each annotation should be 150-250 words.

Assignment #2: Analytical Paper
Using their annotated bibliographies as a starting point, students will identify a central idea or question to pose in their papers. Analytical papers do not argue a point or hypothesis; rather, they thoroughly explore a central idea or question. Students will reference *Lavil* as well as scholarly articles to analyze their central question or idea. Potential questions may include:

- How does poverty amplify the impact of natural disasters?
- How does oral history as a form affect our understanding of Haiti? Compare *Lavil* to nonfiction, third person accounts of the earthquake.
- Does a person's experience of one trauma increase their vulnerability to experiencing another trauma?

Assignment #3: Oral History/Photo Essay Project
Choose one theme from *Lavil* that can be examined in a broader, international context. Can you connect some of the themes from *Lavil* to problems occurring here in the United States? One example would be access to medical care and education in rural environments. How does this impact the narrators in *Lavil* who live outside Port-au-Prince, and how does it impact people living in rural areas in the United States?

With your chosen theme in mind, design and conduct an oral history project and photo essay in your community. The attached handout, Getting Started: A Quick Guide to Setting up Your Oral History Project, will help you to frame and plan your work. For helpful tips about creating photo essays, explore the Photo Essay Ideas page from Anne Darling Photography and Design: http://www.annedarlingphotography.com/photo-essay-ideas.html

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Lavil Discussion Questions

1. Haiti's history is complex; it is one of struggle, resistance, and independence, but also one of imperialism and colonialism. How do you think Haiti's colonial history has impacted its identity as a country? How has colonialism shaped the stories that are told about Haiti?

2. In his introduction to *Lavil,* editor Peter Orner writes: "The minute you begin to listen to someone, anyone, they become something far more than the adjectives we use as a shorthand to describe them." What does this quote mean to you?

3. When the earthquake hit Port-au-Prince, many families lost their homes in a matter of minutes. What physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual effects might this kind of catastrophic loss have on people?

4. Frantz Santil says in his narrative that "poor people really don't relax." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?

5. Djenane describes her mother as "free" and "happy" when she dances. George talks about his dedication to his art—making Vodou flags. Can creative expression (such as dance, or any other art form) help to mitigate the impacts of oppression? If so, how?

6. In his narrative, Lamothe Lormier writes: "Haiti is a leader. Ours was the first slave revolution in human history that succeeded. To me, that's a lot to share with the world." Is this the dominant narrative that is shared about Haiti? What do people in other countries around the world think about Haiti? Who or what controls which stories get shared about a people or place?

7. Adrienne tells the heartbreaking story of her young daughter's rape, and the Haitian police's refusal to help her. How must Adrienne have felt when she learned about what happened to her daughter? When the police treated her, and not her daughter's rapist, as a criminal? What long-term impacts can these feelings have on someone's mind and body?

8. Bazile, who endured abandonment and homelessness while growing up, says that the earthquake in Haiti finally made her feel equal to everyone else, since they became homeless as well. Does this perspective make you think about natural disaster in any new or different ways?

9. Several of the narrators in *Lavil* talk about their experiences with TB (Tuberculosis) and HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). Their health problems are clearly compounded by factors of oppression, and poverty. How does political corruption in Haiti impact access to medical care?

10. Several of the narrators in *Lavil* discuss the vast differences between "the city" (Port-au-Prince) and "the andeyo" (the country). From their perspective, what are some of the benefits and complications of living in each place? For example, how might the anonymity of living in a city like Port-au-Prince be both beneficial and challenging? Can you relate to the experiences of city or country life described by the narrators in *Lavil*?

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Getting Started: A Quick Guide to Setting up Your Oral History Project

With so many questions to consider at the outset of an oral history project, getting started can feel overwhelming. The following few pages are designed as a reference for teachers and students developing their plan of approach. Also included is a modified version of the consent form we use at Voice of Witness with all of our narrators.

Identifying and shaping a project

There are many determining factors and essential questions that shape an oral history project. This includes types of projects, themes or topics, project intentions, potential narrators, potential audience, and more. In planning an oral history project, teachers and students will benefit from a discussion of these essential oral history questions. Planning a mindful, carefully considered oral history project can yield tangible benefits by enhancing the process for all participants.

Contacting potential narrators

When engaging in the process of selecting narrators for your oral history project, there are a few considerations to keep in mind. One example is creating a "chain of trust" by connecting with local non-profits, historical societies, and other organizations that support the communities that you'd like to share stories from, considering insider/outsider dynamics, and more. Here are a few others:

- *Seek out narrators that are enthusiastic about telling their stories.*
- *As an interviewer or project coordinator, model a "two-way street" approach to interviewing, by allowing your potential narrators to ask questions about you.*
- *Be clear about the intentions of your project, and how it can be beneficial for both teller and listener.*
- *When selecting potential narrators, remember that everyone has a story and that an "unamplified" voice does not have to be someone who has or is suffering through a crisis.*

Interview preparation

Preparing for an oral history interview can incorporate a variety of approaches. These range from conducting informal "pre-interviews," scouting the most comfortable environment for an interview, securing permission via a release form (VOW template included), crafting a set of "open-ended" interview questions (questions that can't simply be answered with a yes or no), and making sure audio or video recorders are functioning properly. In our work at Voice of Witness, we've come up with others that teachers and students may find useful:

- *Learn as much about your narrators as you can ahead of time.*
- *Plan enough time for each interview*.
- *Send a list of potential interview topics to your narrator beforehand.*
- *Bring food or snacks to the interview!*

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Conducting an interview

This is where an individual interviewer's "style" really emerges. Some interviewers engage their narrators in back and forth dialogue, some prefer to remain more quiet, letting the narrator do most of the talking. Of course, this style is also determined by the personality of the narrator. Some are natural storytellers who need very little to warm to their themes, while some need a bit more time, guidance or nurturing. Here are additional interview techniques to consider:

- *Ease into your interview and have a brief, informal conversation before turning on the recorder.*
- *Maintain attentive and respectful body language.*
- *Ask follow-up questions. Sometimes the most powerful questions during an interview are the ones you don't prepare in advance. Narrators usually appreciate hearing details of their story reflected back to them, and this also creates an opportunity to "go deeper" into the details of a story.*
- *Listen to your narrators without making judgments about them.*
- *Don't let moments of silence fluster you. Silences during an interview can be useful as your narrator is thinking, reflecting about something, or is considering sharing a particular story.*
- *Build in "wind-down" time. After the formal interview is finished, turn off the recording device and have a brief informal chat with your narrator about anything you'd both like. Keeping it light is usually a good idea. Taking this time affirms the human experience you've just had and lessens the "transactional" feel of an interview.*

Transcribing

Transcribing is a way to extend the relationship with your narrator, and can be a time-consuming process. The rule of thumb: it usually takes about 4-5 hours to transcribe an hour of audio. With this in mind, teachers and students may want to conduct shorter interviews or transcribe shorter portions of an interview without transcribing all of it. There are several kinds of software and apps that can make the transcription process easier to manage, although it's worth noting that there is no standard method for transcribing interviews. Some people press play, listen to six words, press pause, write down the words, and repeat. Others will listen to the whole tape, taking as many words as they can, and then return to the beginning and go more slowly through, filling out their initial notes. In both approaches, make sure you record the time-code periodically (every few minutes) so that you have an easy reference point later between the transcript and the audio files. The foremost concern when transcribing is accuracy. This means that you'll have to listen to some sections a few times to get them right. It's important to keep the speaker's word usage, syntax, and idiosyncrasies intact. Throughout the transcription process, make sure you save an unedited version of your audio or video recording!

Editing

There are many schools of thought when it comes to editing oral history transcripts. Many researchers and academics do not edit transcripts at all, while some oral historians' approaches range from very light editing, all the way to a more literary style of editing, which includes reorganizing the text in order to turn the raw transcript into a polished narrative. This last approach acknowledges the myriad choices to be made when turning an audio story into one that will be read. Of course, individual editing preferences will be determined by the many ways in which oral history can be shared: podcasts, video, live performance, books, etc.

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While there are many variables when it comes to editing, here are a few guiding principles that will serve you through the editing process:

- *Honor your narrator's voice. Keep in mind that capturing the fluidity with which your narrator speaks doesn't necessarily mean leaving his or her words unaltered.*
- *Preserve quirks and idiosyncrasies. If the grammar reflects an accidental mistake, and stands out, it's often best to fix it. However, if the narrator's grammar is part of his or her geographic or cultural dialect, you might choose to keep some or all of it intact.*
- *Strive for fluidity. The goal is to produce a story that flows well and "reads" smoothly.*
- *Seek narrator review and approval of final edited version. This practice is consistent with the goal of honoring individuals and wanting to present their stories in an accurate, respectful way.*

Sharing and preserving the stories

Oral historians have a strong desire to honor the people who have told their stories, so this phase of the process entails sharing these narratives in a broader context. Oral history is often most powerful when a voice can be perpetuated. There are, of course, many ways to amplify oral histories: books, websites, podcasts, film and video, live performance, photo essays, and more. It's worthwhile to consider potential media at the start of the project, and it may help to ask the following questions:

- *Who is the intended audience?*
- *What kinds of technical skills and financial resources do I have at my disposal?*
- *How will my choice of delivery system honor and support the communities where the stories came from? In other words, where does your community go for culture and information? Through books at the local library? Gatherings at the community center? Online? Through live performance? Film or video?*
- *How can I best preserve and archive the stories in a way that will enable continued access? Many oral historians develop relationships through the course of their projects that enable them to have their narratives archived with local historical societies, cultural centers, museums, universities, churches, or various nonprofits. Engaging in these relationships early in your project can help to ensure that the stories will continue to be shared and preserved.*

Examples of oral history in various media:

- WFMT Studs Terkel Archive: http://studsterkel.wfmt.com
- Storycorps: https://storycorps.org/listen
- Densho: http://www.densho.org/about-densho
- The Library of Congress Voices from the Days of Slavery project: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices

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849 VALENCIA, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94110 | PHONE: 415.642.5684 | FAX: 415.642.5858

I, _____ (full name) hereby give permission for Voice of Witness to record, transcribe, and consider this interview for publication.

I understand that I have complete control over how my interview can be used, and can choose to remain anonymous if the interview is used in any form. (This includes, and is not limited to, excerpts of the interview in newspapers, magazines and the Internet.)

I will receive a transcript and/or recording of my interview from Voice of Witness for my personal use upon my request.

I grant Voice of Witness permission to use up to 15 minutes of an audio and/or video clip for purposes of promoting the book and the organization's mission only.* Voice of Witness will share the clip with me and obtain my consent and final approval before using the clip. I will give my written consent or recorded verbal consent.

I understand that Voice of Witness will not publish anything without my consent, and will do everything to protect my privacy. They will not share my identity or personal information with anyone else.

_____
Signature

_____
Date

_____
Address

_____
City, State, Zip

_____
Phone #

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Other way of getting in contact

* Promotional use of the clip includes, and is not limited to, posting on the Voice of Witness website, educational use in classrooms and at teacher workshops, events set up to promote the book or organization, and in some cases shared with reputable media outlets to promote the book.

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