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Approaches to The Scripting Process

Prompts and Processes

After all these years of people bringing their stories to CDS, I would like to think the scripting process gets easier. But it doesn't. Writing for many is a painful process, and moving from the big idea of the story to the little script of a narrative is even more excruciating. To take some of the pain away, we want to treat the process of getting the words down on the page as a completely different subject.

In the preceding chapters we discussed the insights and structure for your story, how to work through a group process to hone in on a story idea, as well as the considerations for working with multiple forms of media. In this chapter we will discuss how to find your best creative voice for self-expression in writing, about how writing happens, and about what makes the way you write unique and powerful.

As with our approach to digital storytelling in general, we find that our practice is ideally suited to group settings. And while you can use these ideas to get started on your own, success happens just as often by comparing your work to others, and by hearing a variety of examples. So find a few friends, declare yourself a writer's group, gather once a week for a month, and share your writing. Your digital story will thank you for your efforts.

Our Friend, the 4 × 6 Index Card

Of all the suggestions that we have made in helping people to prepare their writing, the use of 4 × 6 index cards has garnered the most praise.

The idea is simple: novice and experienced writers alike inevitably suffer from a malady aptly called "blank page syndrome." The weight of filling a blank page, or more than likely, many pages, can easily crush our creative initiative, and as a result, cause us some difficulty in getting started. In our workshops, when we have found a person blankly staring at their monitors with a deer-in-the-headlights look in their eye, we like to hand them a 4 × 6 index card and say, "You have six minutes and only the space on the front and back of this card to create a draft of your story. Write whatever comes out and don't stop until either the time or the card runs out." We might also give them a prompt: "This is a postcard. Choose a person that you think this story is for and write them a postcard about the story. Start with, 'Dear.'"

The card is small, and it is finite. It seems possible, and perhaps even easy to fill. So for the novice, we are saying, "Just get this much down, and we'll work from there." And for writers confident in their ability to write countless pages of prose, this exercise is a creative challenge. To them, we say, "We know you could write a novel, now just try and say it in only this much space."

One of my favorite Mark Twain quotes is from a letter that he wrote to a friend: "Forgive me, this is a long letter. I would have written you a short letter, but I didn't have the time."

Shorter isn't always easier for the mature writer. The 4 × 6 card also helps condense the narrative by breaking the story down to its most basic elements and forcing a writer to ask, "What are my choices in the beginning? How quickly must I get into the action of the narrative?" Usually, this approach means sacrificing the long exposition that accompanies the first draft of a story. But in the end, if the writing is no longer than the front and back of a 4 × 6 card, or one double-spaced, typewritten page, it ensures that the writing will lead to a two-to-three minute story complete with narration.

Writing Exercises

In a group process, we are proponents of writing exercises. While we are fully aware of the potential and beauty of free writing, it's important to have a class spend ten to twenty minutes writing down whatever comes to their mind. I have found that the shared themes and ideas of a prompted idea can connect people to each other in wonderful ways.

This is my favorite prompt:

> In our lives there are moments, decisive moments, when the direction of our lives was pointed in a given direction, and because of the events of this moment, we are going in another direction. Poet Robert Frost shared this concept simply as "The Road Not Taken." The date of a major achievement, the time there was a particularly bad setback, the experiences of meeting a special person, the birth of a child, the end of a relationship, or the death of a loved one are all examples of these fork-in-the-road experiences. Right now, at this second, write about a decisive moment in your life. You have eight minutes.

The writing that comes from this prompt, when it comes unannounced at the beginning of a workshop, often goes straight to the emotional core of the author's life. The act of sharing of these kinds of stories can be instantly bonding for a group.

If the goal of the exercise is to prompt distant memories, we have not found a better approach than writing instructor Bill Roorbach's idea of having participants in the workshop first draw a map of the neighborhood where they grew up. Reaching back in one's memory to locate the layout of the streets, where friends lived, the names of friendly or strange neighbors, the way to the store, or the secret paths to school, inevitably opens up an infinite number of possible stories. The physicalization of a memory, trying to remember a time by remembering the places of that time, the

places you traveled through on a daily basis, a neighborhood, a house, or a room, usually leads quickly to events that are rich with the kinds of meaningful inspections that make good stories.

There are innumerable prompts that might work for various situations. Sometimes these may have nothing to do with the subject initially being explored. Simply jumping into writing on some subject, can unlock the mind. Even if the writing is not further explored, the process may lead people back to their chosen story with new perspective.

Here is a short list of some themes for which prompts could also be built for powerful stories. Books about writing are filled with these exercises, so don't forget to pick up a few when it's time to delve deeper into your interest in writing beyond the digital storytelling experience:

- Write to a mentor or hero in your life to say thank you.
- Tell the story of a time when "it just didn't work" – a point, at your job or at some other event or activity, when you would've been typically competent or successful, and how that all changed when everything fell apart before your eyes.
- Describe a time when you felt really scared.
- Tell the story of a "first" – first kiss, first day on a job, first time trying something really difficult, the first time your heard a favorite song, etc.
- Tell something about the stuff in your life and what it reveals about you, a favorite appliance, a toy as a child, a keepsake, clothing or furniture.
- Tell a story about the body; a scar or injury, a family trait, your grandma's hands?
- Make a list of things you absolutely cannot stand, and things you feel you cannot live without, choose one from each column and make a story that connects them
- And of course, the old standby: Tell me a time when you were embarrassed?

These Stories from These Pictures

Digital stories often start with the pictures. Our easiest direction to anyone thinking about making a digital story is to look around his or her house and find images that provoke memories and stories that are meaningful. Then, see if there are other images around the house that are part of that story. And in the end, you will try to connect the memories that link all of these images together.

As we talk about storyboarding and structure, the notion of illustrating the script, or accentuating the writing with images, is emphasized as an outgrowth of a successful draft of the narrative. However, some people that come to the workshop have taken the absolutely opposite approach to the process. They will pull out the photos for their story, arrange them on a table, and sort them out in order from beginning to end. Then, with the story visually organized, they start writing. Is this approach effective? Of course it can be – great stories have emerged through this process.

As we discussed in the last chapter, this approach is not meant to hold back your writing, do not start with the concern over having or not having images. If you find that you would like to see an image in your story that you don't have available, you

can look to an illustration, or appropriately implicit or metaphorical images you can find or create to capture the sense of the writing that suit the purposes of your story.

Getting into the Scene

We spoke about "finding the moment" in the Chapter 5, but it is worth re-visiting this idea in more detail here, as we think this is a key component to successful storytelling. When authors come to our Digital Storytelling workshops, we have them share first drafts and talk about their ideas for their stories. Oftentimes, I find myself discussing the notion of scene with the authors. As an example, I can take one approach to my own story about my father's death:

> Well first of all, let me just say, I was seventeen at the time and I had finished high school that summer. My dad had smoked three-packs-a-day, and had been trying to quit smoking for a couple of months. He was sixty-one, and had a difficult life as a union organizer working in Texas and throughout the South. But we had gone on a vacation the month before and he seemed like he was doing okay.
>
> He came down from his bedroom saying that he had a terrible pain.
>
> We called the doctor. The doctor said that it was probably an ulcer attack. He had had several of those. We waited. He got much worse. We decided to rush him to the hospital. It was a heart attack. He died within a half-hour. My mom was hysterical.
>
> It was a night I will always remember.

What we have is a fairly typical set of expository contexts, and a sequence of events that most people use to casually recall a major catastrophe in their lives. This approach is a fairly direct and distanced recitation of the facts, and it usually finishes with a statement that is conclusive. In this example, the recalled memory is understated and obvious to the extreme. If this were a dramatic dialogue, a speech by an actor pretending to be natural, it might work, but it does not convey the experience with clarity and depth.

But here is a description of the same memory that I shared at my mother's memorial in 2001, twenty-seven years after my father died:

> I will never forget the sound of my mom's voice when the doctor said, "George is dead."
>
> "God No! No! No!"
>
> A scream. A release. An explosion.
>
> The sound of her wail bounced off all the walls of the emergency room at Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas, bounced down the streets and through the trees, bounced out into the night sky, all the way across the universe of my young mind.
>
> In a single moment, a single pronouncement, everything changed for my mom. It divided her life in two, and it taught me that love can reach down into the cellular essence of awareness, and with its rupture, tear a human being in half.

What differentiates these two texts for me is the fact that in the second text, I am asking my audience to immediately journey in time with me to the exact instant when it all really happened. No context, other than the assumption that "George" must be someone really important, and the feelings, best as I remembered them, that accompanied the defining moment of the experience; my mom's reaction to the doctor's words. And finally, with over twenty-five years of perspective, what that means to me now.

In the above example, I tried to take the audience into the scene at the hospital. I could have described the way it looked and smelled, where we were standing moments before the doctor came up, and what happened afterwards, but all of that was assumed when I said it was the moment that my father was pronounced dead. Instead, it serviced the quality of the writing to strip away all of the descriptive material. We have found that audiences really can build an elaborate understanding of the story if they can get a sense of the context of an event. Furthermore, we know that much of what seems like important background, or exposition, is in fact superfluous to what really happened and what it really felt like to be there.

Taking the audience to the moment of an important scene, one that either initiates or concludes your tale, and putting them in your shoes, is why we listen to the story. We want to know how characters react. We want to imagine ourselves there as participants or witnesses, and we want to know what someone else takes away from the experience and uses to lead their own lives forward.

This idea of scene is related but separate from the terms of the specific disciplines of literature, theater and film. Dramatic scenes all have complex sets of conventions that allow us to observe the action of characters within a continuous time of the narrative. In our thinking about scene, we want to encourage people to share at least one portion of their narrative as a scene – to write as if they were there, inside the events as they unfolded, experiencing the shock, surprise, or amusement, for example, for the first time. For many stories, this strips away the superficial consideration of the events, and gets to the heart of the matter.

Character Studies and Personal Story

We know that most parents are multi-faceted, complex humans. In one story, it may serve to have the parent in the classic role of the ideal mentor, thereby filling one stereotype of parenthood. In another story, the parent may be a beast, or display beastly behavior, but if we are mature enough, and we are given one small nugget of context, for example: "When they got drunk, they would be mean," it is sufficient for us to imagine that they had good days as well. We are probably aware that the story is a cautionary tale about human behavior, not the evidence to indict the guilty party.

Lajos Egri, author of the bible for my training in dramatic theory, *The Art of Dramatic Writing*, reduced all great storytelling and theater to the author's understanding of the true nature of the characters he invents in the world of his narrative. Like most people, when I watch a film or a play, I know when character development has been rendered ineffective when I am able to say to myself, "You

know, that character would have never said those words, or behaved in that way." In any story, the characters strengths and flaws drive the series of events forward, leading logically to the climactic clash or coming together that delivers the conclusion of the story.

When we write in the first person about real events and real people, we make the same choices as the fictional author, that is, describe those details of the character that are pertinent to the story. It is nothing short of egomaniacal to imagine that our characters are faithful portraits of actual people. In our digital stories, they are not even sketches, but rather, more like cartoons or contour drawings – brief and subtle outlines that highlight their most compelling, and relevant qualities.

Some of the writers that have participated in our workshops are fixated on elaborating their characters. They fear providing too simplistic a picture of the people they are describing, or their behavior in a given context, so they expand the narrative with a multiplicity of facets in order to feel more "fair." Personal storytellers are not judges or juries, they are faulty witnesses. And as faulty witnesses, we seek truth inside and around the simple lines of the sketch of their memories. We, the audience, are only capable of judging the approach they take to establishing the narrative, and whether or not their attitude and tone reflect balanced judgment or unreasonable accusation.

By letting the story dictate the degree to which we know the background of the character, we avoid cluttering some of the prose with assessments that cancel each other out. We can communicate which characteristic, for the purpose of the story, we can fill in with the broad brush of a stereotype sufficient enough for our small tale so the audience can fill in the character with the complexities of their own experiences.

Interviewing

What if writing is not an option? From the beginning, CDS found itself in environments or work with specific individuals where for reasons of literacy, language difference between instructors and participants, expedition of process, and the simplification of engagement with the storyteller, we work to the script through an interview process. In attempting to stay true to our ethical precepts, we still work to make the storyteller responsible for the edit, and we have developed a number of techniques to manage the process so our storytellers feel like their words are shaped by themselves, even if writing is never involved.

These techniques include recording the interview and then editing it side-by-side with the storytellers, as well transcribing the story in interview format, reviewing the edit with the storyteller, and then re-feeding the original lines to the storyteller for their recording sentence by sentence. If done well, we can not distinguish between these efforts and written pieces as texts (other than these pieces many times sound more natural).

At the same time we do refer to traditions of media journalism and documentary to inform our process, particularly how we might shape the interviews and the interview process.

Interviewing Techniques

Guidelines for the Interviewer

1   Study the questions so that you are not reading from the page, and feel free to ad lib. Being able to sustain eye contact assists the interviewee in relaxing and responding in a natural way.

2   Allow the interviewee to complete his or her thoughts. Unlike a radio or TV interviewer that is concerned with "dead air" in the conversation, give the interviewee all the time desired to think through and restate something that is a bit difficult to articulate. Interruptions can cause people to lose their train of thought or become self-aware and steer away from important, but perhaps emotionally difficult information. Let the interviewee tell you when he or she has finished a question before moving on to the next.

3   When appropriate, use your own intuition when asking questions to get more detailed responses. Often, a person's initial thoughts about a question only retrieves a broad outline of a memory. Feel free to request specifics or details that would clarify or expand upon a general response.

4   If the story is about information that is specifically painful or traumatic in the person's life, carefully assess how far you will allow the respondent to delve into these memories. In many situations where the interviewer is not a spouse or a loved one, you may cross into territory that is much better approached in a therapeutic environment with experienced guides or professionally trained advisors. We have come perilously close in interviews to taking people into an emotional state from which they cannot return at the session. This is embarrassing for the respondent, and an emotionally inconsiderate act on the part of the interviewer, as the interviewee may not have the therapeutic support to cope with these issues in the hours and days after the interview. Don't feel you need to hunt for emotionally charged material to make the interview effective. If it comes naturally and comfortably, so be it.

5   Finally, along with ensuring privacy in the interview, make sure everyone is comfortable: comfortable chairs, water at hand, and the microphone positioned so as not to disrupt ease of movement (a lavalier, or pin-on microphone, is the best).

Fragments of Understanding

When you are stuck, really stuck, as a storyteller working on a script, often as not it means you are still in the story. The story cannot write itself because what it represents for you in the moment, insight is emerging, but perspective is still months or years away. In our workshops, we suggest to certain writers, forget all the advice about "insight", "moments" and the circle of storytelling, and just write a poem. Fragments. Thoughts. Juxtaposed.

Perhaps the distinction between the reflective writing style emerging from our workshop environments and poetry is overstated. The purposed and immersive quality of story, as we understand it, is often derailed by people's relationship to the

subject. The stories are inherently fractured, inconclusive, and confusing. So perhaps the writing, in an attempt at authenticity, should be the same.

Or put another way:

Never kneel to one
Notion of narrative
The needs of the narrator
Exceed those of the form

Excellent examples
Of enduring expression
Exist in abundance
And create their own norm.

Finally, A Few Words on Style

During my high school and early college days as a young journalist, I carried around a copy of *Elements of Style*, the William Strunk and E.B. White companion for all writers. I have to be frank, except for their call for economy, economy, economy, not much stuck in my sense of the rules of good style. In other words, I am the last person to teach anyone about formal issues of style. Having said that, Strunk and White might have been apoplectic at much of what I love in the styles of the writing of our students. What works, particularly as the words leave the page and are spoken by the authors, is not a case study in language usage according to conventions of grammar and syntax defended by the gatekeepers of the English – or any other – language.

What works is truth. By this, I mean that an author's truth about how he or she conceives of a personal way of storytelling is their style. How does truth happen in storytelling? Here is where the metaphor of journey, or quest, serves me best. Good writing has a destination and seeks the shortest path to the destination, but no shorter. The destination is usually the punch line, the pay-off, or the point of the story. Detours should never be accidental, unconscious, or indulgent. Each word and each apparent digression is critical to the final resolution of the characters' action.

I am a traditionalist in this idea, having never fallen for what feels to me to be a experimental conceit of an "anything goes" approach to narrative.

But that is my truth. I have had the pleasure of hearing thousands of people share their stories, and each with their own style of telling. In that sense, I accept that when it works, it works.

The good news about those of us living at the beginning of the twenty-first century is that we have an awareness regarding how we tell our stories, and how telling has much less impact than how we are heard. Stories do a number of things to people, but only a small part of what they do has to do with story content and our stylistic intentions. When people hear a story, what is occurring in their lives at that moment that either focuses or distracts their attention? What is the context in which the story is being heard? What is the ambience of the environment? And who else is in the audience? Context changes everything about the impact of a story on the listener.

So trust your own voice – the way it feels right to you to put things, and your own approach to these stories. And make sure that when it comes time to share your story, you are certain that the context best suited to your story is being appreciated to its fullest.

The Author's Reflections on First-Person Narrative

Critics of our work suggest that our emphasis on first-person perspective cannot allow for hybrid forms of narrative that include combining storytelling with persuasion, argumentation, analysis, and dispassionate reflection. We readily concede that our work is a reaction to the swing of the communication pendulum over the last two centuries from sentiment to objectivity.

The Industrial Revolution established a model for breaking information down to little nuggets of data. That dissolution process, like many industrial processes, provides the constituent elements, but leaves out the soul of things: a tomato can be made in a lab, but who wants to eat it when offered a homegrown garden tomato instead. This process can be extended to writing in that we often analyze with dispassionate authority, but we miss the essence. Our heads become too separated from our hearts.

In the social and natural sciences, objective observation and neutral communication have proven impossible – we change the thing observed by observing it. We carry the ideological and subconscious fetish of objectivity in all our thinking. A researcher or journalist can certainly synthesize, but the participant in the experience retains a privileged vantage point, and as audience, we want their narratives as unfiltered as possible, so that we can work through assessments from multiple perspectives.

From the very beginning we have believed in framing all narratives in the first person. This was simply more honest. Our unique perspective on experience is all we have, but it is just that. Our stories are not a doorway to truth, but they are one portal where light can fall through. And the more light, the better.

8

Storyboarding

A storyboard is a place to plan out a visual story in two dimensions. The first dimension is time: what happens first, next, and last. The second is interaction: how the audio – the voiceover narrative of your story and the music – interacts with the images or video. In addition, a storyboard is also a notation of where and how visual effects such as transitions, animations, or compositional organization of the screen will be used.

Storyboarding in the film world is a high art, bringing to life a vision of a scene. This composition includes imagining the many choices available to a director regarding camera placement, focal point, shot duration, possible edits, and camera-based effects such as panning and zooming. Storyboard artists combine illustration skills and a sense of stage business (where actors, props and sets are placed before the window of the camera), with cinematography and cinematic theory to write the roadmap for the director and film crew to organize every part of a film production.

The art of film storyboarding has taught anyone working on a story (from mega-movies to digital stories) one important lesson: planning on paper will save the enormous expense of time, energy, and money when it comes time to produce your work. Taking the time to organize your script in the context of a storyboard tells you what visual materials you require. If this exists, from the selection of images you have in your archive, then it just tells you the order of things and makes your edit go quickly. But much more importantly, especially for novice storytellers, storyboards clarify what you do not need, and saves you from scanning, photographing, shooting, designing, or recording things that don't fit into a particular story.

Recipe for Disaster

Our cautionary tale concerns Rick, just an average guy, getting ready to make his first digital story:

> "What a great morning," thought Rick, stepping out his back door and going to the little studio he had cleared out of a corner in his garage. "Today, I become a filmmaker. I am going to make my first digital story this weekend. Today, I'll assemble all the material I need. Tomorrow, I'll edit it all together."

Rick's story was a tribute to his parents. Their fortieth wedding anniversary was in a week, and he had a great idea about a retrospective on their lives. He had taken two large boxes of photos and a few old 8mm films from his parent's home earlier in the week. He was confident that if he could just sort through the stuff, the story would write itself. "I know that's how Ken Burns does it, just gather all the sources and piece it together like a puzzle."

He had his computer fired up. He had a scanner and digital camera handy, and the video camera set up on a tripod next to the old 8mm projector. He was going to project the film against a sheet he had hung on the wall and then record it. "Ingenious," he thought to himself.

The day began smoothly. Rick organized the photos into piles representing five decades of his parent's life together. "These are great," he thought. "I'll scan these eight from the 1950s, and these twelve from the 1960s, but the ones from the 1970s, when I was born, there are at least thirty of these I have got to use." And on it went. The piles grew, but no scanning yet. He broke for lunch.

Then came the film. "Old 8mm film is really beautiful, isn't it?" he thought. "My parents are going to love this part when I had my first little swimming pool. Wow. I'll just transfer it all, and then make my selections tomorrow during the edit." Despite a few glitches in the camera, he eventually got it right, and by 4 pm, the video was recorded. He thought about taking notes about which sections were on his two-hour tape, but since he was having so much fun reminiscing he never got around to it.

"I have to find the right music – old show tunes and stuff. And I need a few archival images, and I bet I can find that stuff on the Internet." After dinner he got online, and around 11 pm his eyes grew tired and his hand had gone numb. But he had everything he needed – just all in one big folder on the computer.

Rick woke up in the middle of the night and opened his eyes. "... The part where they are looking out over the Grand Canyon ... I can cut to a shot of me digging myself into the sandbox when I was three. That will be so cool. I can't wait to start."

The next day, he scanned his images, played with Photoshop, and he captured so much video on his computer that he ran out of hard drive space. He played with his morphing software. He did everything but start on the story. Sunday evening came and it was still a big mess. The workweek was a nightmare, so he only had a few hours to actually edit.

When the event approached on Saturday, the best thing he came up with was an extended music video, fourteen minutes long, with whole sections of images, film and titles bumping, flipping, and gyrating for reasons unknown. Several of his parents' friends fell asleep during the showing, and at the end there was a spattering of applause. Rick attributed the reaction to the heaviness of the gravy on the chicken stroganoff that was served at the dinner.

His mother, of course, cried through the whole thing.

His father, always supportive, thanked him, and said, "Rick, that was, well, really ... interesting."

Digital stories have an advantage over film production – you are often using available material at the core of your project as opposed to creating all-new footage. But as our story shows, the material itself can be profoundly compelling for the storyteller, particularly if it is a first visit in a long time. But without a script, and an idea of how the story is told, composing a digital story can overwhelm the best of us.

Rick's tale is the worst-case scenario for the digital storyteller: So much wonderful content and so many cool tools to play with, but so few ideas for how things will actually come together. We have met many people that have had symptoms of these obsessions, and in our workshops, we work to try and gently bring them back down to earth. We affirm that the material might seem irresistible, but we encourage students to write a first draft and complete a bit of storyboard work prior to diving into their family's photo archive.

Professional filmmakers use the storyboard as a critical production management tool, saving countless hours of experimentation by avoiding non-essential material. We want to encourage our participants to reach for their highest level of organization to maximize the precious time they have to create their stories. For many of our workshop participants, life may give them only a few such opportunities to really mine the archive for the critical stories of their lives. But we want to honor all different kinds of creative processes. For some, time is not so extravagant a luxury. If you can afford to excavate your archive completely, to fully examine the creative palette of multimedia tools, and to work through a series of drafts of your project to make a highly polished piece, the rewards are worth the effort.

Making a Storyboard

Our reference here is from a tutorial developed by the Center for Digital Storytelling in 1999 called MomnotMom, and is based on a reflection by staff member Thenmozhi Soundararajan.

The specific section that we refer to below consists of a title, six photographs, and a short video clip. The soundtrack is a nice piece of guitar music. We've laid out the storyboard on the next page.

Notice how few words of the voice-over are under each picture. Each line takes about six to ten seconds to speak. In general, three to four seconds is about the ideal length for any still image to appear on the screen. If it's too short, then it's hard for the viewer to recognize what's being shown; too long, and boredom sets in. If you're laying out your storyboard and find lines and lines of text under any one picture, rethink your script or your images.

Can the script be cut down, and can the image be left to fill-in for the missing words? If the text remains long, can more than one image illustrate the essential words? You may also want to use some effects to extend the viewer's interest in a single still image. But for now, try to use the best effect of all: letting images speak for themselves, and using words to say the rest.
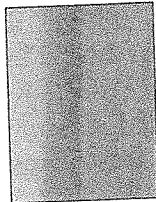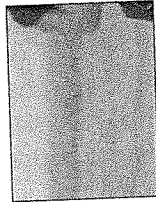
Images

Effects Image Pan Image Pan Image Pan Image Pan Fade In
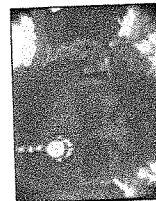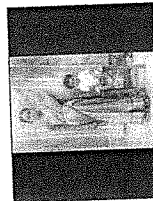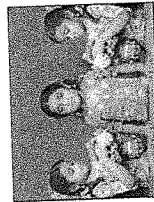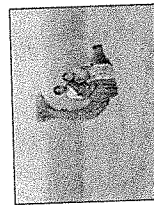
Transitions Cross Dissolve

Voiceover It is a curious photo, because in most photos I always imagine that people pose for the future, but in this moment, this photograph, I feel like she is searching for her past. There is a picture of my mother that I always keep with me.

Fade in

Soundtrack guitar chord progression

Images

Effects Cross Dissolve Cross Dissolve Cross Dissolve Alpha Channel Motion

Transitions Cross Dissolve Cross Dissolve

Voiceover Across oceans and between cultures, a young woman, a doctor, a wife, I think back to who she was as a girl,
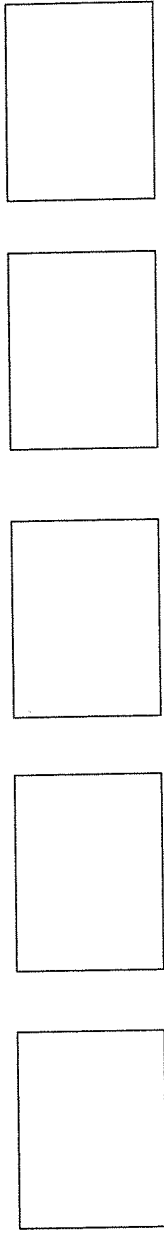
Soundtrack guitar chord progression

Some Ways to Make Your Storyboard

1. Get a piece of posterboard, preferably large (22″ × 17″), and a packet of Post-it notes. Sort out the image material you plan to use and label each of the Post-it notes with the name and, if needed, a phrase describing the image.

2. Create five or six horizontal rows across your posterboard, leaving room for writing text below each Post-it. Fill in the text of your script in pencil, and place the appropriate images above the appropriate words. The Post-its will allow you to move things around or take them out as need be and you can erase the text if you want to move it around.

3. Instead of labeling Post-its with the name of each image, you could go to a copy place and photocopy your photos. Tape or glue your copied images to the Post-its, and lay out your storyboard. The advantage here is that, just as on the computer, you can easily move things around.

4. If you'd like to work on a smaller page, photocopy the blank storyboard template on the next page or visit www.storycenter.org/books and download the .pdf file.

5. If you are familiar with desktop publishing software like Quark XPress or Adobe's InDesign, or you know how to layout tables in Microsoft Word, and you know how to scan images, you can make your storyboard right on the computer.

6. Any of these methods will work. Do whatever is convenient and easy for you. A storyboard will speed up your work in many ways. It can show you where your voice-over should be cut before you record, and it may help you to determine if you have too many or too few images chosen before you begin scanning. Storyboarding is a valuable tool, and it can also be fun. Get others to join you in your storyboarding process and make it a collaborative project.
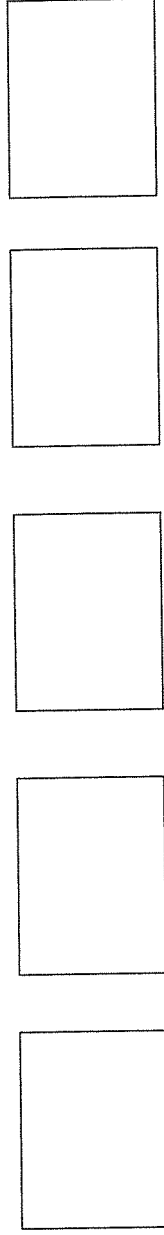
Images

Effects

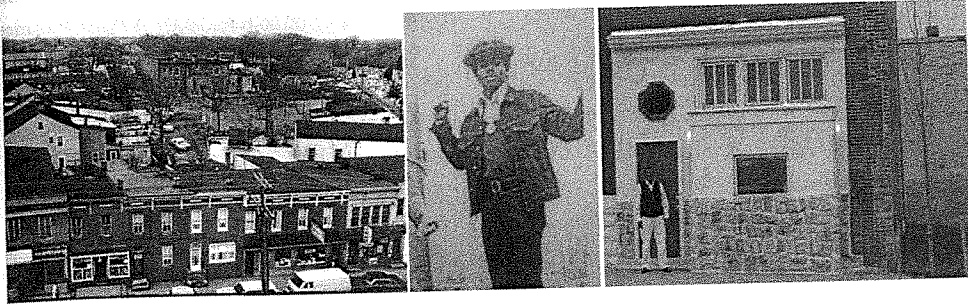Transitions

Voiceover

Soundtrack

Images

Effects

Transitions

Voiceover

Soundtrack

Interlude 4
Ray's Story

The place where I worked is no longer there.

I started working in this building when I was 14. It was a shell, we put a floor in, walls, shelves for a gift shop named "Chan & Chee" (for Chandler and Conchita). She was born in the same building. Two years later the steel ball struck the building. Now it's a county-owned garage.

Where the cars are parked, that used to be houses, the homes of my friends and extended family. That was the first place I recall them taking away peoples homes.

The row house down the street is no longer there. It was my grandparents' house, then it passed to my mom. We played basketball at the Stanton Freedman Bureau School just up the alley. My mom graduated from that school. That was my recreational place.

Gone is my Psychedelic Shack behind the house. It was "Ray's Place." Sheepskin rug, African prints, Indian bedspread, TV, record player. I'd go there after school and spend my weekends there… It was my escape, my Walden, my sanctuary.

We stayed here three more years after the store went, then we moved away. Shortly after, they tore the down the whole block, except for the school. To replace it with the Maryland Dept of Business and Management. 45 Calvert St.

Gone in an instant are the mortar and bricks that inhabited the souls that shaped, defined and shaded my young life.

I moved to West Baltimore in 1975. The brick row homes and the mortar that connected the community atmosphere was similar to what was I lost. Folks trying to hold on to what they have. Later I purchased a store-fronted building. I started working on it, improving it, while I was seeing the decline of other buildings. Just right next door to me they tore a building down. The wrecking ball has come again and the old feelings have begun to resurface.

But unlike Chan & Chee's gift shop, my Psychedelic Shack and our home, I'm putting earnest effort in to reclaiming community space. In the wrecking I still see renewal.

Wrecking and Renewal
– Ray Baylor

Thoughts by Stefani Sese

Ray is very active in the revitalization of his West Baltimore community. He came with his grant-writing hat on and couldn't break free of speaking in broad sweeping terms about the destruction urban renewal had wrought on once thriving black neighborhoods. He wrote several drafts but he just couldn't get away from the third person or the terminology to find the personal part of his story.

As we were looking at his photographs he began to describe his old neighborhood in Annapolis, MD. He showed me the old house; the place where he and his friends had played in the alley behind the all-black Freedman Bureau school; the store that he remembered working in. As he spoke, I typed what he was saying and asked questions. He had a treasure trove of rich detail and stories in the two photos of his old neighborhood, a place that no longer exists. He talked about his sanctuary behind the house, and I asked him to describe it. Best of all, he still had a photo of himself from that time! After a while, as he spoke and I typed, we had a text for Ray to edit. A personal story.

It's often very hard to write in a personal voice. Sometimes being passionate about what you are addressing in your story makes it even harder. It was a joy to take the journey with Ray and uncover the memories hidden in those old images.

The story circle is a key part of the CDS process, but the one-on-one work that happens between the facilitator and the storyteller is also where a lot of the final story-mining takes place. It's a matter of listening hard to what the photos are saying, to what's in between what the storyteller is telling you, in order to find the questions that will help someone discover their insight and their voice.

As I watch my old neighborhood shift subtly and then drastically in the wake of increased development and gentrification, I remember Ray's story.

He reminds us of the centrality of place. Laying down roots and creating memories contributes to building a thriving community. Ray's story is a reminder of how easily this can be destroyed if we are not mindful of how development occurs, who it benefits, and who it uproots.