

# Family Oral History Interviews

NRCAL Workshop, April 2015

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- *"The old griot had talked for nearly two hours up to then . . . 'the oldest of these four sons, Kunta, went away from his village and he was never seen again' . . . I sat as if I were carved of stone. My blood seemed to have congealed. This man whose lifetime had been in this back-country African village had no way in the world to know that he had just echoed what I had heard all through my boyhood years on my grandma's front porch in Henning, Tennessee."*

--Alex Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, Dell, 1976.  
Page 719.

# Principles of Learners Lives as Curriculum

- Families and communities are important to schools
- Home languages and cultures should be infused throughout the school year
- Teachers should be allies and advocates for students and families
- Asset-based approach (not deficit-based)
  - Funds of knowledge



# Family Interviewing

- Interviews bridge communities.
- Interviews are held to find fascinating stories, not facts!
- Focus on a theme.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Active listening takes practice.
- Look for “golden moments” in the story to elaborate on.
- Gather photos and artifacts.



# Learning to Listen



- Listen to silence
- Listen to sounds in a particular place
- Play music and listen for instruments, lyrics.
- Draw a picture of what students heard/saw in their minds during the listening.
- When a story is shared, write down words, phrases that students hear

# Sharing Interview Stories

- Identify different formats to share interview stories:
  - Listening stations
  - Creative writing, individual journals and class books
  - Using ipads (Keynote, Green Screen)
  - Dramatize stories





# Celebration: Family Authors!

- Dialog journals
- Dictated stories
- Collaborative books
- Posters with quotes and words of wisdom
- “The story of my name”
- “A childhood memory”
- “A moment that changed my life”
- Share at a celebration literacy family event



# Curricular Connections

## Social Studies Standards

- Strand 2: Time, Continuity, and Change
- Strand 4: Individual Development and Identity
- Strand 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

## Big Idea and Key Understandings:.

- Oral histories can help us understand ourselves, our families, and the world. Both ancient and modern cultures use oral histories to make sure that important people and events are not forgotten.



- “My mother has told me once and for all the useful parts. She will add nothing unless powered by necessity, a riverbank that guides her life. She plants vegetable gardens rather than lawns; she carries the odd-shaped tomatoes home from the field and eats food left for the gods.”

— Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*

- “A story can take you through a whole process of searching, seeking, confronting, through conflicts, and then to a resolution. As the storyteller and the listener, we go through a story together.”

— Maxine Hong Kingston, *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*

# Notes from previous slides

## Slide 1:

- What roles do families and communities currently play at your school site?
- What roles would you like them to have?

## Slide 3:

- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, XXXI(2), pp. 132-141.
- Image from: Vietnamese Oral History Project UCI:  
<http://ucispace.lib.uci.edu/handle/10575/5233>
- Project website: <http://ucispace.lib.uci.edu/handle/10575/1614>

## Slide 4:

- Kelin, II, D. A. (XXX). To feel as our ancestors did: Collecting and performing oral histories.
- Images from:  
[http://www.umb.edu/iaas/research/current/chinese\\_laundries\\_ma](http://www.umb.edu/iaas/research/current/chinese_laundries_ma)

In whole group, create a list of topics about schooling in the US.

- In small group, identify questions you might ask families about these topics.
- Practice interviewing one another. Look for golden moments to elaborate on in the story!
- Asian American Family Oral History Project
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksHu\\_NNWEKE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ksHu_NNWEKE)

# Notes from previous slides

## Slide 5:

- Practice listening to a piece of music and write down words, phrases, draw!
- Putamayo: Music from the Tea Lands: Picking flowers
- Painting: <http://www.paintingschinese.com/chinese-paintings-picture/chinese-brush-paintings/br-0042b.jpg>

## Slide 6:

- Image from:  
<http://symposia.library.csulb.edu/iii/cpro/CommunityViewPage.external?lang=eng&sp=1000026&suite=def>
- History project on Asian Americans working in Southern California

## Slide 7:

- <http://ww2.kqed.org/news/2015/02/28/korean-folk-drummers-ring-in-the-lunar-new-year/>

## Slide 8:

- <http://www.edutopia.org/oral-history-projects>
- <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/oral-history>
- <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/community-stories>
- McGraw Hill Curricular map example with Common Core standards:  
[achievethecore.org/file/2098](http://achievethecore.org/file/2098)