

Voice of WITNESS

AN OCCASIONAL MAGAZINE

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The Automated Welfare State

Stories behind
biased algorithms

**Exploring, Reflecting,
Reconstructing**

VOW launches new
four-year Vision Plan

Where Are They Now?

Reconnecting with
past narrators



ISSUE #3 | FALL/WINTER 2022

About Voice of Witness

Voice of Witness advances human rights by amplifying the voices of people impacted by—and fighting against—injustice

mission

“Voices of witness” become “voices of authority” in mainstream discourse and meaningful reform

vision

OUR FOCUS AREAS

Over time, we have organically developed core areas of focus: migration, displacement, and the criminal justice system. Supporting people impacted by these issues—among the most systematically silenced groups in the US—to tell their stories is emblematic of our deep commitment to centering marginalized voices.

OUR APPROACH

Our work serves as an essential storytelling tool in the broader ecosystem of human rights, creating opportunities with communities to heal and strengthen through the oral history process, and forging space for these voices to be heard as a part of efforts to dismantle systems of oppression. Through our programs, we conduct and support oral history projects, develop educational resources, teach ethics-driven storytelling, and partner with on-the-ground advocates to support their work.



Photo: Cynthia Stone Media, Global Brain Health Institute



Book Series

The Voice of Witness Books Series depicts human rights issues through the edited oral histories of people, VOW narrators, who are most deeply impacted and at the heart of solutions to address injustice. The series explores issues of race-, gender-, and class-based inequity through the lenses of personal narrative.

Education Program

The Voice of Witness Education Program brings unheard stories and our ethical oral history methodology to classrooms and organizations across the US, connecting students, educators, and advocates with training and tools for storytelling in order to advance social change.



Partnerships & Services

Through our partnerships and consulting, VOW offers expert storytelling and program support to nonprofits, advocates, schools, foundations, and more. These customized projects and workshops use VOW's award-winning approach to promote empathy, build relationships, and amplify community voices.

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Refreshing Our Theory of Change

OUR VISION FOR A MORE JUST FUTURE

Social justice cannot be achieved when the firsthand perspectives of people (“narrators”) marginalized by systems of oppression are decentered or missing from mainstream narratives, or are gathered through unethical, extractive processes.

We updated our Theory of Change to clarify and outline these primary challenges that the organization addresses within three areas of focus: **narrators and communities**; **educators and classrooms**; and **narrative contexts** (the spaces and institutions that create dominant narratives, e.g., media, academia, politics).

Our key strategies include:

- + working with communities to conduct ethics-driven oral history projects;
- + building partnerships and supporting grassroots organizations;
- + developing curricular resources and providing educational support;
- + facilitating capacity building and trainings; and
- + forging space for unheard voices within institutions and platforms that create dominant narratives.

The transformative power of our work lies not only in **what** stories we tell, but **how** we tell them—via our ethics-driven, narrator-first approach that recognizes “voices of witness” as voices of authority.

Together, these strategies are not just about resistance, but also creation and healing. We aim to transform the mainstream discourse by centering marginalized voices within education, media, movements, and policymaking. We also strive to equip students and communities with the tools and training to tell their own stories through oral history, and to support practitioners and institutions in using ethical storytelling methodologies.

theory of change



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Photo: Rodnae Productions,
Courtesy of Pexels

A Note from Mimi

Cofounder and executive director, Voice of Witness

Dear Readers, The past two years have been a time of reflection and transition within VOW as we approached the end of our current five-year vision plan in June 2022. That plan emphasized a deeper, more focused commitment to centering marginalized voices at every level of our work and created a path for financial and operational growth.

After a generative initial period, the pandemic negatively impacted fundraising efforts crucial to sustaining this work. Other impacts of the pandemic—*isolation, exhaustion, grief, racial trauma*—on the VOW team individually and collectively catalyzed necessary conversations around how we care for ourselves and each other. The ongoing racial violence in the US during recent years had disproportionate impacts on our BIPOC team members, narrators, and partners.

Entering into the 2021–2022 fiscal year, we wished to explore equity more deeply, with a greater balance between internal and external solidarity and empathy. We also affirmed the need to continue investing in building deeper relationships with community partners in order to more strategically amplify the voices of those at the intersection of injustices—who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic yet left out of mainstream narrative contexts.

With ongoing uncertainty and fatigue from the pandemic, we also reflected on what it would mean to change the pace of our work cycle to enable more depth. We wanted to explore how it may be *more impactful, humane, and innovative to prioritize wholeness, spaciousness, and depth over relentless productivity* moving forward, for both VOW staff and the community partners in our network. **We wanted to explore sustainability in human terms, as well as in financial and programmatic terms**, recognizing that the people doing this work need care and solidarity in order to sustain and extend that care and solidarity to our broader communities.

These questions informed the nine-month vision planning engagement that we subsequently undertook. We took a deep look at our programs, operations, and culture, and identified areas where we can further embody our values—articulating not just *what we want to do* but, of equal importance, *who we need and want to become*. Through this process, we have added *wholeness* as a core value, alongside our longstanding values of: empathy and compassion, equity and dignity, integrity, critical thinking and inquiry, collaboration, and literary merit.

In this magazine you will find our refreshed Theory of Change (page 2), an overview of our new Vision Plan that will guide us over the next four years (pages 6–9), and several highlights of our recent work that show VOW’s key strategies in action within our focus areas: narrators and communities; educators and classrooms; and narrative contexts.

This work is fueled by you, members of our community. Our sincere thanks for partnering with us in advancing human rights and ethical storytelling.



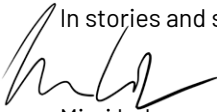
In stories and solidarity

Mimi Lok



Photo: Elle Wildhagen via 100cameras

Putting Our Vision into Practice

PROGRAMMING

Going from a product-oriented approach to a values-oriented and community-led approach

The ongoing racial violence during the past two years—from George Floyd's killing and continued police brutality to increasing anti-Asian violence and inhumanity at the US-Mexico border—has reinforced the need for deeper care and collaboration, both with the communities that we are part of and those with which we are in ongoing solidarity.

In 2020, what began as a simple act of checking in with VOW narrators revealed experiences that were not often being reflected in news media coverage of the pandemic. This evolved into the *Unheard Voices of the Pandemic* project, which, through partnership with former and current VOW narrators and editors—and media outlets like the *Guardian*, *Salon*, the *Nation*, and *Prism*—brought these urgent stories from the margins into the mainstream. Being responsive to community needs without the constraints of our typical oral history book production cycle created space and freedom to reconceptualize our processes for developing new projects.

With this new Vision Plan, we recognize an opportunity to formalize and further prioritize structures that are relationship and journey-oriented rather than product-oriented. We commit to ensuring processes are community-driven and place narrators and community partners at the center of our work even more deeply and proactively, from conception to completion.

This shift will also lead to more timely and effective programming; by focusing on the issues and stories narrator communities identify as most pressing, the resulting projects will be more impactful.

This Practice...

Becomes...

Producing one print book every 12–18 months along with educational resources via an open call for proposals



Engaging with narrator community organizations and individuals through listening sessions and convenings to support them in envisioning, proposing, and initiating VOW oral history projects that focus on critical social justice issues they're facing; responding to their needs on a collaborative timeline; and creating space for more flexible storytelling project formats in addition to print books

Supporting projects with post-launch outreach, partnerships, and resources



Building in time and space for community partners and practitioners to collaborate and lead on project development upfront and throughout, so that relationships and impact strategies are well established before post-launch outreach and advocacy

Partnering with curriculum specialists from the narrator community when the book is near completion



Developing relationships with educators and specialists from the narrator community at the beginning of an initiative and including an educational lens throughout the project

Creating broad oral history resources for a variety of classrooms



Narrowing and deepening the focus toward Ethnic Studies to respond to the growing needs of classrooms seeking these resources

Conducting capacity-intensive, tailored oral history project consultancies with nonprofits and school districts



Offering consultancies that impact the spaces and institutions that create dominant narratives, and developing capacity-building workshops and trainings that emphasize the ethics-driven practices of oral history beyond just story creation

Producing generalized communications and marketing



Designing more targeted communications and outreach to community-rooted, value-aligned media outlets and organizations in addition to mainstream narrative platforms

ORGANIZATIONAL CARE

Advancing empathy and solidarity

Impacts of the pandemic on the VOW team individually and collectively, along with ongoing racial violence in the US during recent years, catalyzed necessary conversations around how we care for ourselves and each other.

We identified the need for more structure and support for the VOW team, which is half-BIPOC and majority women, recognizing that the people doing this work need care and solidarity in order to sustain and extend that care and solidarity to our broader communities. In our new Vision Plan, individual development focuses on embodying “wholeness” and care for staff through increased mental health, wellness, and professional development resources while creating clear structures for setting boundaries (personal, professional, and workload). We will also continue to utilize and iterate on recently developed resources, including individual staff well-being plans and our BIPOC Crisis Response and Care Protocol.

We will update our performance management and review system to shift from being product-oriented to values-oriented and formalize ways to increase collaboration, collective feedback, accountability, and transparency across teams.

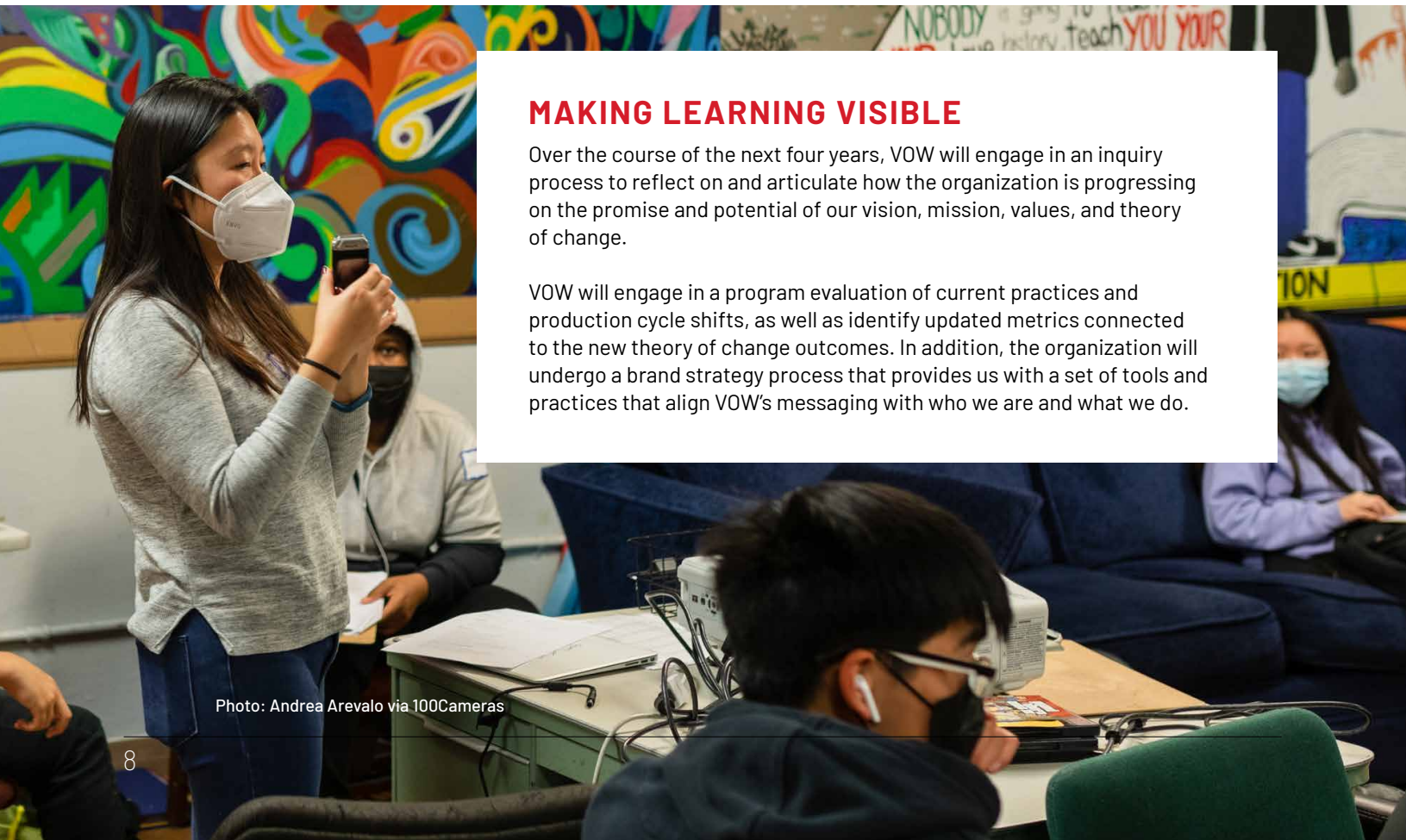
This Practice...

Creating staff resources reactively as needs arise



Becomes...

Developing an organizational infrastructure with clear access to care and wellness guidelines, professional development opportunities, and maps that outline growth in roles



MAKING LEARNING VISIBLE

Over the course of the next four years, VOW will engage in an inquiry process to reflect on and articulate how the organization is progressing on the promise and potential of our vision, mission, values, and theory of change.

VOW will engage in a program evaluation of current practices and production cycle shifts, as well as identify updated metrics connected to the new theory of change outcomes. In addition, the organization will undergo a brand strategy process that provides us with a set of tools and practices that align VOW's messaging with who we are and what we do.

Photo: Andrea Arevalo via 100Cameras

Fueling Our Vision & Growth

The budget to fuel our four-year Vision Plan is **\$5.7 million**, an approximate organizational growth of 38%.

VOW will add new staff positions to deepen our programmatic capacity across the book series, education program, and community partnerships, and allow for more interdepartmental collaborative opportunities.

The amount envisioned for expansion of staffing is \$517,899, covering:

- + A full-time Community Engagement Assistant in FY23**
- + A full-time Finance and Operations Manager in FY25**
- + A full-time Facilitator and Assessment Coordinator in FY25**
- + A part-time Managing Editor in FY26 (the current Managing Editor becomes Editorial Director)**

Other new expenses include:

- + \$200,000 for the creation of a VOW Community Story Project Fellowship to begin by FY25**
- + \$100,000 for a program evaluation engagement throughout FY23–26**
- + \$50,000 for brand strategy and website redesign consultants**
- + \$15,000 for increased wellness services for staff**

To achieve our vision, we're embarking on an accompanying growth campaign to raise \$5.7 million by 2026 as part of this four-year vision plan. These investments will ensure that our organization continues to grow at sustainable but ambitious levels, thereby deepening our impact in our work to center and amplify unheard voices.

While news of injustice floods the mainstream media, so rarely do we get to hear from the people most impacted. There are so many stories that need telling, so many people that need to hear them, and so many students from impacted communities—our next generation of leaders and changemakers—who crave to see themselves reflected in their learning.

Our work serves as an **essential storytelling tool** in the broader ecosystem of human rights, creating opportunities with communities to heal and strengthen through the oral history process, and forging space for these voices to be heard as a part of efforts to dismantle systems of oppression.

Voice of Witness is ready to make a deeper impact, but we can only do it with your help. Join us today!

Contact us at dev@voiceofwitness.org.

Not a Number:

Global Stories from
the Automated
Welfare State



Photo credit: Pablo Jiménez

One of the projects in progress for our oral history series is *Not a Number: Global Stories from the Automated Welfare State*. It will share first-person stories from around the world that examine the ways in which biases written into the computer programs of digital tools increasingly mediate access to basic human needs such as housing, food, physical safety, medical care, financial capital, employment, and family integrity.

Under conditions of austerity, ethnic and religious nationalism, and white supremacy, these digital tools allow states to hide consequential political choices behind a smokescreen of neutral, objective, and rule-bound decision-making. But more than a century of discriminatory human choices are buried deep in the tools' code, invisibly reproducing and amplifying structural inequalities.

The rapid global spread of this automated welfare state has been underway for at least fifty years, and yet, it is only now being recognized for what it is: **a human rights crisis**.

Missing from current conversations and academic research about the risks and potential of the automated welfare state and its use of predictive analytics, big data, and artificial intelligence are the perspectives of those communities targeted by these technologies.

The automated welfare state has real, life-altering consequences for those who are impacted by it. Stories that combine first-person narratives with deeply reported contexts and global perspectives are desperately needed for social activism, community organizing, technology design, and public policy.

An exclusive excerpt from Sara Peavey's oral history in *Not a Number* follows.

Sara shared her story while sitting on the floor of her apartment during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Due to New Mexico's health mandates, we could not meet in person so the interview took place over a Zencast call. Sara is a second-generation social services recipient. As a child, Sara grew up navigating social services for her mother's disability. When Sara turned eighteen, her only option for medical insurance was through Medicaid. She was twice removed from Medicaid by an automated system, and these experiences with the digital welfare state highlight the shift from in-person hearings to telephonic hearings.

Missing from current conversations and academic research about the risks and potential of the automated welfare state . . . are the perspectives of those communities targeted by these technologies.

Sara Peavey

BORN IN: 1993, Chicago, Illinois
LIVES IN: Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA



Photo: T. Rayne

“I started seeing a therapist in early January 2016. My appointments were weekly, which I couldn't afford out of pocket. I left my job at Build-A-Bear a year later in January 2017 because I was about to move to Texas, but that fell through.

A month later in February, I began working at this place called What Goes Around, a cute little consignment store here in Albuquerque. I was making \$12 an hour. I felt like I was getting my life back. I'd had over a year of therapy and it was helping me so much. I had just moved into my own apartment. Two months later, I went to my therapy appointment in April. The front desk was like, "Your health insurance is denied." I had no idea. They were like, "Don't worry, we'll put this as 'self-pay,' and we'll bill you later."

Once a year, Medicaid asks for your pay stubs to renew eligibility. I'd been on Medicaid since I was eighteen so it was routine to send in the last two weeks of my pay stubs every year. I'd faxed them to the Medicaid office in early April and

thought everything was fine. I don't remember getting a letter saying, "You've been approved," like usual. But I also don't remember getting a letter saying, "You haven't been approved." I went to that therapy appointment and that's when I was told that my insurance had run out. When I went home and told my mom, we called the human services department and found out that I was making "too much" at my new job, so they couldn't offer me health insurance anymore. I was shocked because I was pretty much making the same amount that I was at my previous job. I didn't know how my income was okay before but not now. I thought, *Why I didn't get a letter?* I was just dropped. I requested a fair hearing where I could go in front of a judge and plead my case on why I deserve to be covered for health insurance and how my job doesn't provide that. What Goes Around only had five employees and wasn't legally obligated to provide health insurance.

After my suicide attempt, I was still very unstable. It wasn't until early fall 2017 when I had this fair

hearing and it was really scary, going in front of a judge. It's not a fun thing to do when you're pleading for the most basic thing, like, "Please, I need coverage to see a therapist." The fair hearing was held over the phone. I was on my work break and called in from the back room. There were two representatives—one was from a human services department and the other was a witness. Then there was the judge, and me. They asked me, "What's your story?" I said, "I don't know why they said I made too much." I told them that I had had a suicide attempt and therapy is lifesaving for me, and how important it is that I have health insurance. Then the Medicaid representative just said, "You made too much."

It was all numbers. There was no human aspect. That's when I found out that because I made about \$13 more a month, I couldn't be on Medicaid. I was like, "Are you serious? I can have my

job take off that much money a month for me, if that's the case." They said that wouldn't work. I was crying. I wasn't in a place mentally where I could stop therapy. I was still figuring out what was going on in my head to lead me to that suicidal place. I was sobbing on the floor in the back room of What Goes Around. The judge got off the phone and the Medicaid representative got off the phone, and this really nice woman—the witness—stayed on. She said, "I've been in a very similar place." She told me about a working while disabled Medicaid program that I should try applying for.¹

1. Officially known in New Mexico as the Medicaid Working Disabled Individual (WDI) Program, it is a buy-in program that enables people with disabilities to continue working while they receive Social Security benefits and health care through Medicaid. It also provides Medicaid health care to individuals approved for Social Security Disability Insurance but are waiting the mandatory two-year period for Medicare health care coverage to begin.

About the Editors of *Not A Number*



Virginia Eubanks is a writer, researcher, and educator who has dedicated the last two decades to thinking, talking, and organizing around technology, economic justice, and welfare rights. Eubanks' work on algorithmic injustice, artificial intelligence, and the digital welfare state is path-breaking and her two books, *Digital Dead End: Fighting for Social Justice in the Information Age* and *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*, have been essential to bringing these issues to broad public consciousness. The latter book was reviewed in the *New York Times Sunday Book Review*, excerpted in *Harper's* and *WIRED* magazines, and has been translated into Korean, Chinese, and Spanish.



Andrea Quijada has been an organizer and advocate for media justice for over two decades. She is currently a PhD candidate in Art History researching surveillance as entertainment in US visual culture. She is the former executive director of Media Literacy Project (MLP) where she developed curriculum and provided media literacy trainings to various audiences across the United States and in Britain, Uganda, Germany, Venezuela, and Mexico. Throughout her thirteen-year tenure at MLP, her work included community education, direct action, communications, and civic engagement efforts with policy and regulatory entities. She has also served on many nonprofit and foundation boards throughout her career including Generation Justice, Enlace Comunitario, and Astraea Foundation.

This project will result in a Voice of Witness oral history book, as well as free curriculum and a longform, multi-media investigative journalism series.

Checking In with VOW Narrators

Luz Hernandez

Born in Honduras, Luz survived abuse and serious health challenges before migrating to the US at age 14. After experiencing mistreatment in the foster care system and homelessness in the Bay Area, she graduated from college and worked as a housing case manager for foster youth. Luz shared her story with us under the pseudonym Soledad Castillo in *Solito, Solita* and again in 2020 for *Unheard Voices of the Pandemic*.

From *Solito, Solita: Crossing Borders with Youth Refugees from Central America*: “The gangsters took money from my father, so we didn’t have enough money to eat for the rest of the trip. We stayed in Guatemala for one day and then got in a van to go to Mexico. We went from van to van. We had to lie down with many people, one on top of the other. The coyotes [smugglers] put cardboard on top of us so La Migra [the authorities] wouldn’t see us if they pulled us over. It was hard to breathe, and we didn’t eat either. They didn’t want to stop.”

Luz is currently a student at UC Berkeley Social Welfare Master’s Program. One of Luz’s goals is to support young people in the community who come from financially and educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. She has a strong desire to help people of color, especially undocumented young people. She wants to show marginalized communities that there are people out there that care about their physical, social, and emotional well-being. Luz believes each of us is unique; that we all have our stories and purposes in this world. She strongly believes that our traumas and experiences don’t define us, and she aims to build a community full of powerful and determined youth.

VOW: What are you up to these days?

Luz: I’m about to start my second year in UC Berkeley’s Master of Social Welfare (MSW) program. This summer, I’ve been working four days a week as Project Assistant at East Bay Sanctuary Covenant. I’m also continuing to work with filmmaker Shabnam Piryaei on the participatory project documentary, “No Separate Survival” about asylum seekers. This fall, in addition to my classes, I’ll be interning at Child Protective Services and also preparing to earn teaching credentials for school social work.

VOW: How has life changed since your story was published (in both *Solito* and your 2020 *Unheard Voices of the Pandemic* narrative)?

Luz: I am more open about who I am now and proud of the person who I have become, regardless of the challenges I have experienced before. I am currently mentoring two students, one at City College of San Francisco and one incoming UC Berkeley undergrad. I am proud to use my voice and experiences to inspire other students.



Hanima Eugene

We first met Hanima Eugene in 2019 through the Underground Scholars Initiative, a student organization on the UC Berkeley campus that focuses on recruitment, retention, and advocacy for formerly incarcerated and system-impacted individuals. She was a graduating senior at UC Berkeley just three years after being paroled, and joined VOW's Education Advisory team. We wanted to hear about Hanima's experience during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was occurring during a pivotal stage in her life. From *Unheard Voices of the Pandemic*:

"My plan is to work with incarcerated women, doing research on law and social factors, especially California murder and domestic violence laws that remain on the books and denote women as property. There are a lot of criminalized survivors in prison, so I want to collaborate with those women to perform research to create reports and develop some policy recommendations to support and help free them. My main concern is what the country will look like in the next couple months. I thought I had everything planned out. I was going to graduate; I had interviews scheduled. I thought I had it pretty mapped out so I could transition back into full-time employment. But coronavirus disrupted everything in my life... Formerly incarcerated people are struggling and have additional barriers."

VOW: What are you up to these days?

Hanima: I am currently working with Community Works, leading the organization's reentry work spanning San Francisco, Alameda, and Contra Costa counties. I'm working with the CA Coalition for Women Prisoners as Coordinating Committee leader and supporting Survived & Punished National as part of its leadership body. As cofounder and executive director of Unapologetically HERS, we launched our inaugural Participatory Action Research Leadership program inside of the Central CA Women's Facility.

VOW: How has life changed since your story was published in *Unheard Voices of the Pandemic* (recorded summer 2020)?



Hanima: I have taken on greater responsibility as primary caregiver for my now 90-year-old grandfather who recently suffered a stroke and is unable to do things he once could. I have had to advocate and learn how to navigate the Veterans Administration and Medicare systems to ensure that my grandfather has the support he needs to live comfortably in his old age. I have also been spending a lot more time with my son, rebuilding a relationship that was all but shattered during my incarceration and supporting him through various life transitions.

VOW: Is there anything you want readers to know about you, your current work, and/or your community?

Hanima: Advocacy is a way of life. I have spent the last 20 years advocating for myself, and others similarly situated and impacted by the criminal legal system. Today, I am making time to do more advocacy for our elders who are unable to navigate these systems on their own and who are in desperate need of support and guidance. Advocating for basic needs and entitlements is pivotal in the journey towards equity for all.

Note: Hanima's name has been changed at her request.

Bringing Light to Climate Migration through Community Partnerships

Drought, famine, floods, sea level rise, wildfires, biodiversity loss, and many other environmental changes will displace an estimated 200 million people by 2050. Although the world's developed countries have largely caused the climate crisis, its consequences—including displacement—will disproportionately impact historically exploited countries and communities.

Understanding how climate change drives displacement and creating legal protections for “climate migrants” is critical to addressing migration in a warming world. Voice of Witness community partner East Bay Sanctuary Covenant (EBSC) has been exploring this intersection and advocating for policy change that addresses climate migration.

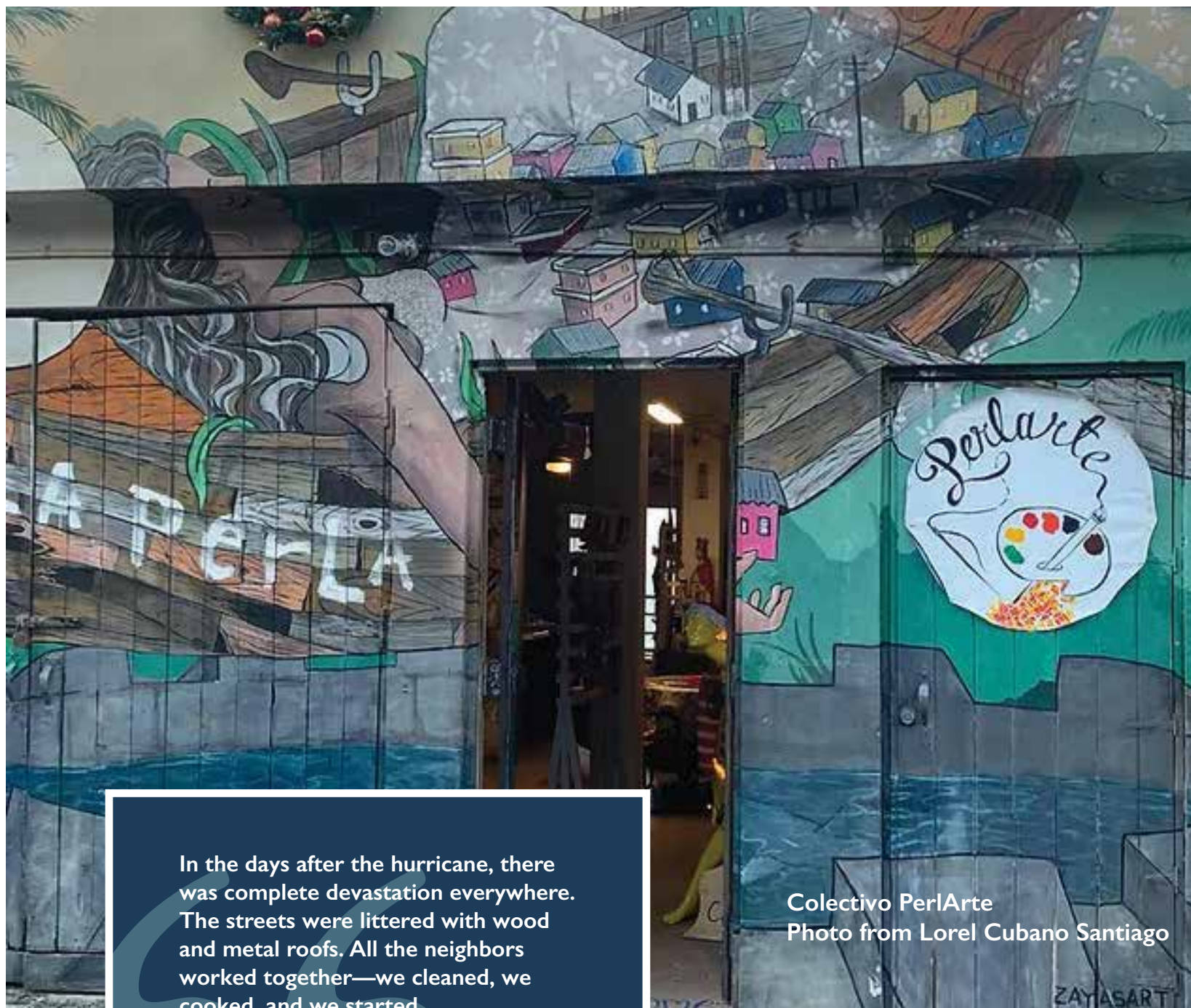
EBSC leads Amplifying Sanctuary Voices, a community-based oral history project centering the stories of people who have migrated to the US seeking sanctuary. This storytelling initiative consists of a coalition of community organizations, including Voice of Witness.

Amplifying Sanctuary Voices' new educational exhibit, “Bringing Light to Climate Migration,” positions climate change as a major factor in the forced migration of peoples throughout the world. The exhibit, currently on display at the UC Berkeley Student Union through April of 2023, focuses on

various nuances of climate-induced displacement and migration of the Rohingya people, as well as people in Syria, Haiti, Puerto Rico, and the Northern Triangle of Central America.

The project highlights the ways in which climate change exacerbates environmental disasters, poverty, food insecurity, and intergroup violence. Climate change refugees are currently not considered “refugees” by the legal definition provided by the 1951 Refugee Convention, which states that people must have faced persecution in their home countries to be considered for asylum.

Through interviews with migrants and experts, classroom presentations, and educator guides, the exhibit shares stories of those displaced by climate change, expanding our understanding of climate migration and fostering empathy and action. **Voice of Witness narrator Lorel Cubano Santiago is featured in the exhibit's section on Puerto Rico, shown on the next page.**



In the days after the hurricane, there was complete devastation everywhere. The streets were littered with wood and metal roofs. All the neighbors worked together—we cleaned, we cooked, and we started rebuilding...Our art gallery, PerlArte, became a community center. This was the place where people could come for a breath.

—Lorel Cubano Santiago, excerpted from the Voice of Witness oral history book *Mi María: Surviving the Storm*.¹⁷

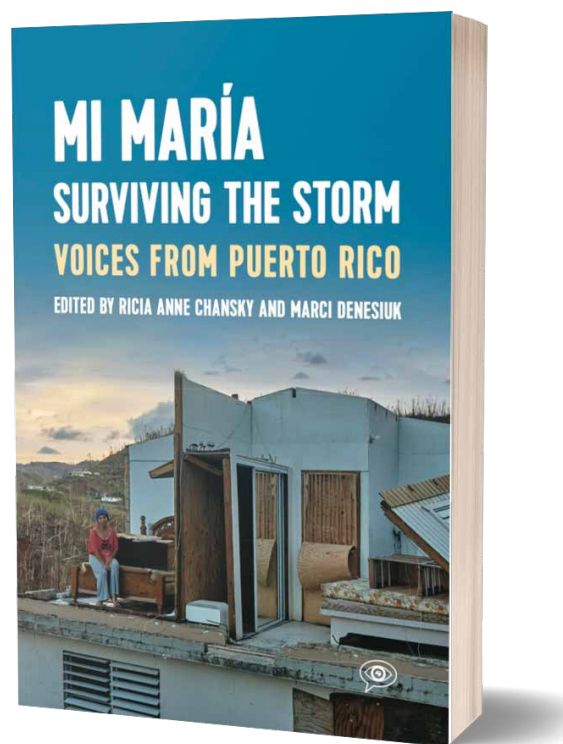
Colectivo PerlArte
Photo from Lorel Cubano Santiago

Mi María: Surviving the Storm Impact Report

In September 2022, VOW published its twenty-second book, *Mi María: Surviving the Storm*, edited by Ricia Chansky and Marci Denesiuk. *Mi María* shares stories from those who survived Hurricane María, which battered Puerto Rico for over twenty-two hours on September 20, 2017. In the aftermath of the hurricane, the people of Puerto Rico were largely ignored, and the abject lack of US government support has left many on the island without electricity, clean drinking water, food, and medical care to this day.

Mi María brings together 17 stories of perseverance that ask what it means to be a US citizen in a colonial context, how communities come together in the wake of disaster, and how precarity is exacerbated for those on the frontlines of the climate crisis. The project goals for *Mi María* were to:

- Shed light on the aftermath of Hurricane María in Puerto Rico; bring attention to government abuse and neglect; and highlight the long-term challenges following climate disaster
- Connect narrators to each other and to Puerto Rican diaspora communities and amplify the ongoing conversations around colonialism in Puerto Rico
- Partner with community organizations in Puerto Rico and on the mainland advocating for community healing, rebuilding, and self-determination; support community-led storytelling and narrative change
- Contribute to resources available for students and educators across the country to explore issues of climate disaster, migration, economic injustice, colonialism, and more in the context of Puerto Rico



Collaboration and Community Partnerships

As with all of VOW's books, collaboration with community organizations, advocates, and educators was an essential piece of this project. For *Mi María*, community engagement began at the book's inception through working with students at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, where the book's editors are both professors.

As editor Ricia Chansky explains in the book's introduction, when classes at the university resumed a month after the hurricane, the campus was one of the only locations on the west coast of Puerto Rico with running water and stable electricity. Although this created a safe haven for students, it was quickly apparent that many of them had experienced devastating losses from the storm. Ricia created an optional hurricane memoir assignment that gave students a place to voice their experiences and ease the transition as they returned to their classes. She noted:

“Every student filled notebook pages with handwritten accounts of the hurricane and its aftermath, and, as I read their words by candlelight—it would still be months before electricity was restored to our homes—the desire grew to begin a project that would amplify stories of the hurricane in the hopes of generating immediate relief and building long-term change.”

Not only did these students inspire *Mi María*, they also became an essential part of the book’s development. VOW staff and the editors trained 100 students in ethical oral history work. The students, all of whom had survived the hurricane, went back to their home communities to gather narratives. Many of the stories they collected appear in *Mi María*.

We are thrilled to share that after *Mi María*’s release Ricia received a prestigious \$500,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to establish an oral history and documentary filmmaking lab at the University of Puerto Rico, enabling students to lead grassroots storytelling projects rooted in decolonial approaches to access and dissemination.

Collaboration continued to be an important element of the *Mi María* project after the book’s publication, as VOW formed partnerships with community organizations and advocacy groups to further amplify narrator voices. Our *Mi María* partnerships and outreach focused on organizing and co-hosting events that introduce the stories

and issues to wider audiences, while also providing platforms for partners and narrators to share widely about their current activism and detail how readers and audiences can act in solidarity with Puerto Rican communities.

These events have included partnerships with Haymarket Books, the San Francisco Public Library (SFPL), Busboys & Poets, Defend PR, Amplifying Sanctuary Voices, Columbia University, and others. Partnership highlights:

- VOW connected with Defend PR, a multimedia media project designed to document and celebrate Puerto Rican creativity, resilience, and resistance. Its cofounder, Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi, is the director of the documentary *We Still Here*, which chronicles the youth activists working to rebuild their community of Comerío after the hurricane. Eli spoke alongside *Mi María* collaborators at an event organized by VOW and SFPL focused on storytelling as a vital medium for healing after disaster.
- VOW established a partnership with Busboys & Poets, a Washington, DC community gathering space and bookstore that inspires cultural change by connecting people around art, culture, and politics. *Mi María* was Busboys & Poets’ summer 2022 book club selection, which culminated in two public discussions. Writer and educator Raquel Ortiz moderated the event.



Educational Resources

With *Mi María*’s publication, VOW released accompanying lesson plans developed in partnership with curriculum specialist and *Mi María* narrator Zaira Arvelo Alicea. This was the first time VOW has hired a narrator to fill this role, and Zaira’s experience as both a Puerto Rican who survived the hurricane and its unjust aftermath, and as a narrator in the project gave the lesson plans an added layer of depth.

The resulting Common Core and Puerto Rico Department of Education aligned lesson plans allow teachers and students to advance their understanding of colonialism, globalization, climate crisis, and interrelated issues: representation and cultural identity, economic policies, access to resources, migration, community responses to disasters, and more. The curriculum is free to download on the Voice of Witness website.

Teaching Empathy at Amos Alonzo Stagg High School



Photo credit: Sandra Mech

How do you measure empathy? How can you demonstrate the impact of developing empathy skills in students? How does empathy influence the choices students make later in life? These questions form the basis of a new report that is being developed by the Voice of Witness education team and teachers Lisa Thyer and Chris Wendelin.

For the past seven years, Lisa and Chris have taught a class called “Voice of Witness” at Amos Alonzo Stagg High School in Palos Hills, Illinois. The curriculum for the course is centered around VOW’s books, methodology, and educational resources. The goal of the class is to use the oral history process to build community and nurture empathy and critical thinking through active listening, storytelling, and social-emotional learning experiences.

Last spring, Stagg and VOW sent out surveys to alums of the Voice of Witness class to get

a better understanding of how the class has shaped their lives. Thirty-six alums responded to the survey, and eighteen of them participated in follow-up qualitative interviews. The results of the survey were overwhelmingly positive. A high percentage of alums reported that the course impacted their values, what they chose to study after leaving high school, the career choices they made, and much more. The full report with the survey results, excerpts from the interviews, and additional analysis and recommendations will be shared with educators, administrators, and school districts next spring.

SNEAK PREVIEW OF THE DATA:

100% of alumni said the VOW class helped deepen their understanding of empathy.

90% of alumni said VOW class helped them develop connections with new people.

95% of alumni said the VOW class taught or improved their critical thinking skills.

95% of alumni said the VOW class taught or improved their communication skills.

100% of alumni said the VOW class gave them an opportunity to be creative.

95% of alumni use the skills learned from the VOW class regularly in their lives now.

86% of alumni said the VOW class broadened their perspectives on social justice issues and the world.

100% of alumni said the VOW class had a positive impact on their lives.

“The whole reason I became a journalist was because of this class. It became a defining moment for my entire life. I don’t know where I would be, honestly, if we hadn’t done VOW and I hadn’t had that ‘aha’ moment where I realized that sharing people’s stories was what I really wanted to be doing.”

—Cheyanne Daniels, Class of 2016

“A lot of what I learned about empathy is that people are going through things that they don’t talk about. Even though we’ve made a lot of progress, mental health is still taboo. I learned not to assume everyone’s okay. And I think one thing VOW taught me is sometimes it’s better to listen.”

—Kaleigh Fitzgibbons, Class of 2020



The report will be used to advocate for more Voice of Witness-style courses around the country. Sign up for VOW's education newsletter online to receive the report and accompanying course toolkit this spring.

Partnering with the Puente Project



Voice of Witness partnered with the Puente Project to produce an online oral history collection capturing the experiences of the students centered in their work during the pandemic.

The Puente Project is a nonprofit that works to increase the number of educationally underrepresented students who enroll in four-year colleges and universities through interdisciplinary programs. Throughout the pandemic, students mentored by Puente were able to lean on each other during an increasingly isolating time. Voice of Witness was honored by the opportunity to help Puente amplify student voices through our oral history storytelling process.



The VOW Education Team led two virtual workshops in June that facilitated space for students to interview each other and then edit their own narratives for the book. Students from all over California at different stages of their academic careers were able to join and participate. They came together to form new friendships, gather each other's stories, and refine their own experiences to share widely.

Fourteen narratives have been included in a collection titled "What Was About to Happen," which serves as a time capsule for a uniquely challenging period that these students faced. They tell us about their moments of bravery, resilience, joy, heartbreak, depression, anxiety, fear, achievement, and more. Excerpts from Andrew and Jocelyn's oral histories give us a glimpse into some of the insights gained through the challenges of the pandemic.

I try to help my mom out as much as I can. I knew there were things she needed or she needed help with, like paying some bills, the house rent, or groceries. I didn't hesitate to provide her money. I know it's stressful enough for her without a job, so I didn't really mind helping my mom out. We needed food on the table to survive at the house. Luckily I had my grandma cook, and we'd go over for dinner most of the days. My mom's not the kind of person to ask for help. And I have really started to see this in school settings, not just in my mother. We as students of color or workers of color are typically afraid to reach out for help. There's a stigma for men that we must do it on our own. But in reality our mental health is affected if we don't ask for help.

—Andrew Z.M.

Andrew is a first-generation, Latinx, third-year transfer from Pasadena City College at the University of California, Berkeley. He is majoring in sociology, and plans to attend law school. He is a part of many communities on campus, such as NavCal, the Educational Opportunity Program, Disabled Students' Program, Underground Scholars, and Puente. Andrew envisions himself returning to his hometown and the William Mead Projects to create free legal aid workshops with community partners.

In a weird way, this pandemic was a blessing in disguise. I never really had any underlying academic problems. I always had good grades, I was always a good student, but I was never a proactive student. I always stayed quiet and reserved and dreaded any kind of participation I had to do in class. Now in distance learning, I feel more at liberty to express myself. Since we were all behind screens, I had that confidence to raise my hand, ask a question, meet people, talk to people, and not be afraid. I also felt that we were all experiencing the same thing and we all kind of felt out of place because nobody had ever done these things that we were all forced to adapt to. It was definitely something that kind of allowed us all to relate and allowed me to be comfortable to express myself.

—Jocelyn D.

Jocelyn is a second-year student at San Diego Mesa College in California. She is hoping to transfer to San Diego State University in the fall of 2022. She is a youth group coordinator and volunteer at her local parish. Jocelyn is majoring in psychology in hopes of becoming a marriage and family therapist in the future.

Creating an Oral History Cookbook

Oral history is a useful tool for all students, and particularly for English Language Learners, as it incorporates literacy, critical thinking, culturally relevant content, and a participatory vision of history. Through oral history activities, students can connect their own cultural knowledge with their academic journey and find more opportunities for visibility and voice, while building their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

Bringing first-person narratives into the classroom, especially from families of multilingual students and/or immigrant community members, helps students envision their own experiences within the curriculum.

An oral history cookbook is one accessible way to highlight the stories within a family and community. Interviews center around a recipe that's meaningful to the narrator, and students learn why they chose it and what cooking it means to them. For teachers and students, this is an opportunity to connect on a deeper level and provide space for families to share their knowledge and be experts in an aspect of their students' learning.

VOW offers a free *Oral History Cookbook Guide* that can be downloaded from our website.



Voice of Witness teamed up with the Latitude High School class of 2022 to create a cookbook called *Shmack!* featuring 37 family recipes that students documented through this oral history project. Enjoy hummus and its story by Amatasalam Ahmed.

HUMMUS

By: Amatasalam Ahmed

This recipe has been in our family for generations. hummus is a meal known to be served at any time, from breakfast to dinner and on special occasions. In my family, we prefer homemade hummus rather than store-bought because of the taste and flavor added when we make it, especially since we make it with much love and care.

This meal was first made by my great-great-great-grandmother when she was younger. She mixed ingredients and made something delicious and savory out of it. This recipe was then passed down to my family where our mom taught us all about how hummus was a meal, that it was not only something simple to make but also had a lot of meaning behind it, which is why women have it as a meal at their weddings.

My mother told me before the existence of a blender it would usually take about two days to create this meal. They would have to boil the chickpeas overnight, and in the morning they would take a mortar and pestle, and smash the chickpeas until there was a smooth consistency. Chickpeas originated from the Middle East so it was always easy to access.

Ingredients

- 2 cans chickpeas
(rinsed and drained)
- ¼ cup of fresh lemon juice
- ½ tsp of salt
- 2 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil
- 4 blocks of ice
- 3 cups of tahini
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 1 cup hot water

Steps

First, you take the two cans of chickpeas, open each can and drain out the liquid from each can. Then you rinse out both cans. Keep doing this until the water from the can turns clear. That will show that the chickpeas are all clean. After they are clean, place them into a bowl to start the next step.

After putting the chickpeas into a bowl you will begin to see the skin rubbing off. Be gentle because they will be very slippery and squishy so gently rub the skin off the chickpeas. Make sure you get the skin off for every single one because you want the hummus to be very smooth and not bumpy or it will taste bad. After getting all the skin off you will start to cut up 3 cloves of garlic into very small cubed pieces.

After cutting up the garlic, you want to put the peeled chickpeas and minced garlic into a blender. You will need to keep blending the two ingredients together until you get a powdery paste. When they are in the blender it will keep getting around on the sides of the blender so you want to take a spoon and keep pushing it down until you get that powdery paste.

The next ingredients you will pour in are 3 cups of tahini, 4 blocks of ice, and ¼ of fresh lemon juice—blend those with the powdery paste, and keep doing so. Little by little you will pour in hot water until you see that creamy paste. Once you get that creamy paste you will get a bowl to pour it in.

Once you pour the hummus into the bowl you will then let it sit on the countertop until it cools down. You do not want to put it in the fridge right away because the hot water you poured in will make the hummus all clumpy. Once the hummus cools down you will then put it in the fridge for about 20 to 25 minutes. Once it's chilled, you are ready to serve.

Serving Suggestions: This meal should be served in an open bowl and smear the creamy texture all around the middle and the sides of the bowl. Usually, this meal is eaten with soft and flat homemade bread but it can be eaten with crunchy tostadas or any type of bread. Most people in Yemen eat hummus with chicken and add a spicy sauce because it brings more flavor to it. For the toppings, we add olive oil and extra veggies like jalapeños. Adding herbs like ground sumac as a topping makes the hummus even richer.

Voice of Witness Ethical Storytelling Principles



The transformative power of VOW's work lies not only in *what* stories we tell, but *how* we tell them—via our ethics-driven, narrator-first approach that recognizes “voices of witness” as voices of authority.

The following principles are informed by VOW's nearly fifteen years of experience conducting ethics-driven oral history storytelling and centering the voices of people impacted by—and fighting against—injustice. We are grateful for our community of partners, narrators, editors, and advocates who helped shape these core tenets. While we approach storytelling through an oral history methodology, these principles are relevant to many forms of community-based storytelling. This framework is grounded in values of respect, dignity, empathy, transparency, collaboration, and equity.

1. Invest in relationships to build trust, mutual respect, and collaboration.

Relationship building, partnership, and co-creation at every stage—with narrators and project partners such as direct service organizations—are key to an ethical process. Investing in partnerships and moving “at the speed of trust” is vital in order to reject an extractive or transactional approach where someone “parachutes in” to collect stories and then abruptly leaves. Demonstrate empathy and compassion and prioritize narrator agency and dignity, supporting people's ability to shape and tell their stories in a way that best reflects their truth. Stay in touch with narrators after the oral history process, developing the relationships further and connecting narrators to organizations, movements, and more opportunities to share their stories if they are interested.

2. Prioritize ongoing informed consent and transparency throughout the process. Ensure narrators have ownership and control over their stories.

Before a project begins, narrators should be fully informed on the scope and purpose, their participation, how their narratives will be used or shared, and who the audiences are. Clearly communicate that narrators have the right to opt out or request their narrative be retracted at any time during or after the project. Offer anonymity and pseudonyms to protect privacy, and discuss any possible safety concerns in advance. Provide multiple opportunities to share drafts, edits, and approval. The narrator should always have ownership over their own story.

3. Honor authenticity, complexity, and the whole person, rather than approaching with preconceived expectations or framing narrators as victims or heroes.

Let narrators take the lead in where the conversation goes, creating space for nuance and showcasing the joy, wonder, strength, and humor in addition to any potential trauma or hardship. Stories should not portray narrators as one-dimensional victims or heroes but instead challenge implicit biases, resist simplicity, and use strength-based framing. Prepare in advance by learning about the history, current events, and context of the narrator communities you'll be working with, in order to be ready to listen, understand complexities, and ask thoughtful follow-up questions. During the editing process, honor and respect the narrator's authentic voice, syntax, and linguistic patterns.

4. Use a trauma-informed approach.

Sharing one's story with someone fully committed to deep listening can often be a healing experience. However, recounting traumatizing experiences can also be painful and lead to retraumatization. It's vital to be supportive and responsive, including avoiding potential triggers, soliciting ongoing input, and respecting narrators' self-determination and right to opt out. Actively provide choices to narrators, such as selecting the location of interviews or specific interviewers, whenever possible. Trauma-informed care is a framework through which practitioners understand the far-reaching impacts of trauma on people's lives, recognize the signs of trauma, and prioritize emotional well-being and the prevention of retraumatization in their interactions with narrators. Come equipped with specific trauma-informed strategies and referrals to professional support systems.

5. Position narrators as the experts.

Narrators are the experts of their lived experiences, and those who are most deeply impacted are at the heart of solutions to address injustice. Oral history storytelling can make space for stories that otherwise might not be heard and create a platform for narrators impacted by—and fighting against—inequity to share their expertise. Approach projects with humility and an expectation of ongoing learning. This creates an opening for the narrator to teach and the interviewer to listen deeply.

6. Acknowledge and mitigate power dynamics and biases.

An ethical approach to storytelling requires examining power dynamics within a project. Understanding one's positionality and openly reflecting on power, privilege, and representation is vital to developing more equitable and inclusive ways to document and share stories. This includes addressing the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape the stories; understanding insider/outsider dynamics and identifying interviewers that will make narrators feel most comfortable; and ensuring the storytelling process is mutually beneficial to narrators by discussing their own goals for the project. Based on the project and context, consider compensating narrators for their time.

7. Ensure stories are accessible to narrator communities.

Reflect on the ethical considerations related to narrator agency and access. For example, how can a given project's publication or archive design choices (e.g., books, websites, podcasts, community center exhibitions, etc.) create reliable access for the communities that shared their stories? What collaborations or partnerships should be pursued that best reflect that commitment? Input from project participants can help inform and shape these decisions.

View and download this resource on the VOW website.

Sharing Our Methodology: Consulting with Nearpod

At Voice of Witness, we not only work to share the content of our stories, but we also believe it is crucial to share the *methodology* of our storytelling. By forging space for ethics-driven oral history practices—and embedding these values and processes into the culture within institutions—we are building the capacity for people to question whose voices are being heard, whose stories are being silenced, and what they can do about it from their positions.

VOW has facilitated numerous workshops and trainings over the years for a variety of organizations and companies. Recently, the education platform Nearpod reached out to VOW to lead an oral history workshop for their staff, hosted by their Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) employee resource group. The goal was to provide best practices for ethical storytelling that their teams could integrate into their personal and professional lives to uplift voices in their own communities.

We tailored the program to jointly honor AAPI Heritage Month and the classrooms that Nearpod serves. Participants read a narrative excerpt from Oscar Ramos, a longtime educator who shared his challenging experiences teaching during COVID-19 in VOW's *Unheard Voices of the Pandemic*, and they listened to a podcast created by a Filipinx-American student who interviewed her *lola* (grandmother). In preparation for their own practice interviews, participants responded to prompts using the Nearpod platform to draw, write, and even audio record their thoughts around how to create safe and brave spaces for each other.

"It was helpful to see everyone's responses on how to show empathy while listening," said Al Bako, art director of Flocabulary at Nearpod and coordinator of the event. In breakout rooms, staff were paired up to alternate the experience of being interviewer and narrator, using guided questions and their own curiosity to gather stories from their partner. "I had a really great conversation with my breakout group partner, and the topics got surprisingly deep in a short period of time," said Al.



Over the course of the workshop, Nearpod employees were able to hear new stories and see each other in a new light. Beyond that, they learned how to take these oral history skills and translate them into different parts of their lives outside of the session. As Al noted, "That knowledge is so valuable, whether you're interviewing a new staff member, getting closer to family, or listening to a friend vent." Participants spent time reflecting on how they currently approached meetings, whose voices were amplified at events, who was being invited into which rooms, and what it would mean to intentionally open these opportunities to more people.

Our ethics-driven storytelling drives our oral history projects, but it can also be a tool that asks us all to examine how we communicate and make space for each other, and how we can do it more intentionally and equitably.

How Oral History Storytelling Can Support Ethical Fundraising

This past June, VOW held a webinar for fundraisers to showcase how oral history storytelling can support ethical fundraising. Fundraisers know better than anyone the need to effectively illustrate the impact of a nonprofit's work. Highlighting first-person stories from program participants is one method to demonstrate value to potential supporters and donors beyond just numbers and statistics.

Oral history is a particularly powerful tool for ethically collecting and sharing people's stories. Through gathering, preserving, and amplifying the voices of communities interacting with nonprofit services, oral history practices allow organizations to illuminate their work in a way that centers the lived experiences and expertise of their constituents.

The workshop provided an introduction to ethics-driven oral history storytelling and shared best practices that can help nonprofit fundraisers and development staff engage with personal narratives using processes that foreground the dignity, ownership, and authority of those sharing their stories.

Voice of Witness staff shared our Ethical Storytelling Principles (see page 26), explored important considerations when using storytelling for fundraising, discussed a recent case study, and included time for personal reflection and questions. Participants from nonprofits across the country attended and commented that the session was "very clear, well prepared, and full of helpful information," in addition to "providing tools we can immediately use."

Introductions



Erin Vong
Education Specialist
& Program
Coordinator



Ela Banerjee
Community
Partnership
Coordinator



Kathleen Brennan
Director of Institutional
Partnerships and
Strategy

VOW can create customized events and workshops for nonprofits and businesses interested in incorporating the skills and practices of oral history and personal narrative.

Contact kathleen@voiceofwitness.org for more info.

Ten Things You Can Do

Brave stories and bold movements are powered by the community! Turn your empathy into action with these 10 ideas to further your partnership with VOW in advancing human rights.

1. Read. Check out the entire Voice of Witness Book Series on the inside back cover and commit to reading one that is new to you this year. Then, share a VOW book with a friend or colleague.

2. Donate. We believe that social justice storytelling is critical to advancing human rights, and we see our donors as vital partners in this work. Our 2022 end-of-year fundraiser



is our most ambitious yet, with a goal of raising \$125,000 from our individual supporters. *Make a donation on or before Giving Tuesday (November 29th) and we'll send a VOW ebook to a recipient of your choice!*

3. Share your network. Our end-of-year fundraiser utilizes peer-to-peer fundraising. One of the quickest and most effective ways to expand our community of supporters is through you! Join our team of “champions” that helps spread the word to their networks about our work and asks for contributions to our end-of-year fundraising goal.

4. Maximize your gift. Partner in one of our campaigns to offer a 1:1 “matching gift” to incentivize new donors; donate by check or ACH to eliminate transaction fees; ask your company or a friend if they'll match your gift.

5. Amplify VOW's work. Sign up for our newsletter and follow us on social media. Share our posts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, and encourage your network to do the same!

6. Donate time. Time is an incredibly valuable gift to give, and we recognize the value of time from our volunteers as equally as money from our financial donors. We are often in need of editorial and education advisors, and **we are also seeking new members for the VOW board.** Visit the “Get Involved” section of our website for more information. Also consider volunteering your time with some of our partners: East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, Centro Legal de la Raza, National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, Youth UnMuted, and V-Day.

7. Hire us. Could oral history storytelling amplify the work that you're doing? Through our consulting services, you can hire VOW to facilitate workshops, provide program or curricular support, or work with you to develop and guide in-depth, customized storytelling projects that advance your mission and goals.

8. Commit to inclusivity. Read Community-Centric Fundraising's 10 principles and join us in aspiring to transform fundraising and philanthropy, so that they are grounded in racial and economic justice: <https://communitycentricfundraising.org/ccf-principles/>.

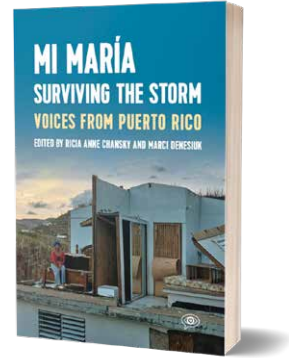
9. Partner in our Sharing History Initiative. Help us get more copies of *Unheard Voices of the Pandemic* and *Mi Maria* into underresourced classrooms and communities throughout the country. Learn more at <https://voiceofwitness.org/education/sharing-history/>.

10. Shop our holiday gift guide. Give a gift that makes a difference!

Contact the development team (dev@voiceofwitness.org) to discuss your interest in any of these items.

VOW's Holiday Gift Guide

Give a gift that makes a difference!



For the coffee lover in your life:

Mi María: Surviving the Storm paperback + specialty coffee and chocolate from Sandra Farms run by *Mi María* narrators Israel and Sandra González in Adjuntas, Puerto Rico. Purchase from our friends at haymarketbooks.org and sandralfarms.com.

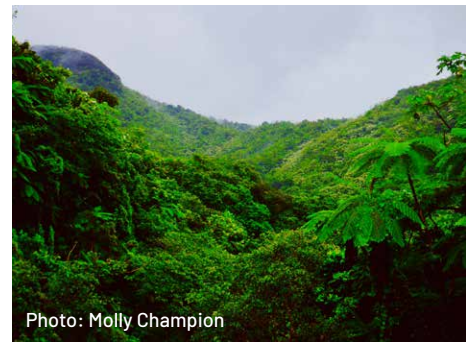


Photo: Molly Champion

For the minimalist in your life:

Mi María: Surviving the Storm e-book + adopt a tree from Finca Hekiti agroforestry project run by *Mi María* narrator Vivienne Miranda Rodríguez in the Las Marias mountains of Puerto Rico. Purchase from our friends at haymarketbooks.org and fincahekiti.org/adopt-a-tree.

For the book lover in your life:

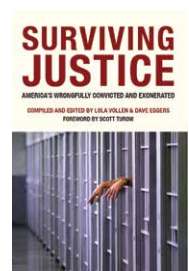
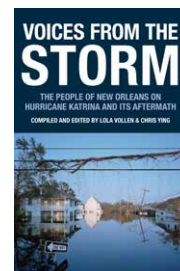
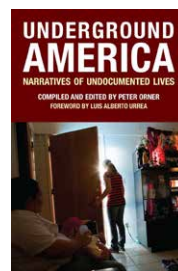
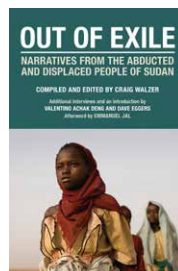
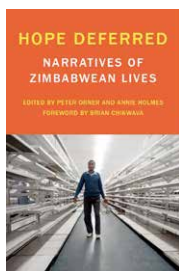
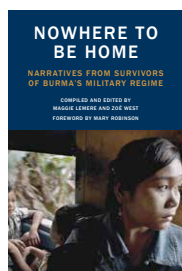
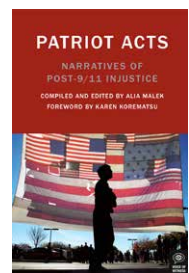
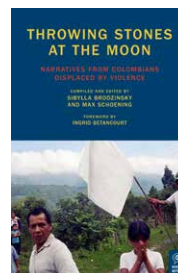
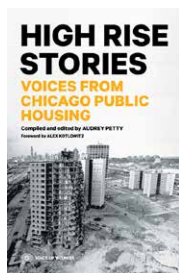
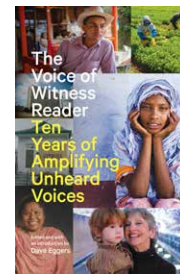
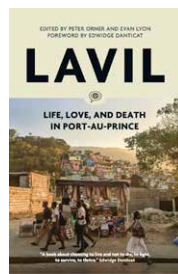
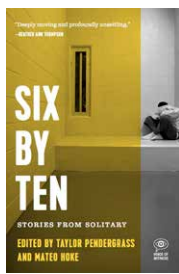
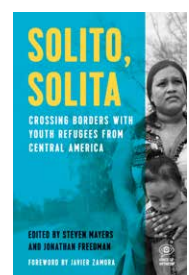
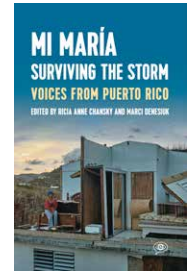
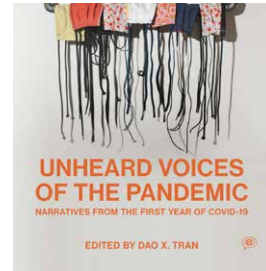
Bookshop.org gift card + a VOW book of the reader's choice. Purchase from Bookshop.org and your gift will financially support independent bookstores.



THE VOICE OF WITNESS BOOK SERIES

The Voice of Witness book series amplifies the voices of people directly impacted by—and fighting against— injustice. We use an ethics-driven methodology that combines journalistic integrity and an engaging, literary approach to oral history. The series explores contemporary issues of race-, gender-, and class-based inequity through the lenses of migration, displacement, and the criminal justice system. We also work with narrator communities to create corresponding curricular and training support for educators and advocates.

VOW's full backlist will soon be available for purchase through our publishing partner Haymarket Books. Many titles are available now.



With Gratitude

We're incredibly grateful for the people who make this work possible—our community of narrators, editors, volunteers, advisors, strategic partners, funders, board, and staff. We truly couldn't do this work without the generosity of those listed. Thank you for being our partners in this work over the past year. (*List as of July 2022.*)

Abundance Foundation
Tara Acharya
Acton Family Giving
Aesop Foundation
Zaina Albalawi
Anonymous
Christopher Archer
Zaira Arvelo Alicea
Violaine Autheman
Rick Ayers
William Ayers
Spencer Ballard
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