



Archival Educators Roundtable

Newsletter

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Table of Contents

2

Welcome Letter

Marissa Vassari

3

Editor's Letter

Janet Bunde

4

**Distance/Disruption:
Archival Education and
My Work From Home**

Brett Dion

6

**Access, Analysis, and
Adaptation: Education
at the National Archives
during the COVID-19
Pandemic**

Sara Lyons Davis

12

Archivists, Heed the Call for Help!

Michael DiMola

14

**Using Primary Sources
in Remote Learning:
A Virtual Conversation with
a Student & Teacher**

Jasmine Sykes-Kunk
Jan-Kristòf Louis-Mansano
Charles Joyner

Happy New Year to our AER community!

As we can continue to adapt our work to meet the changing archival education landscape, so has the Archival Educators Roundtable adjusted how we support and connect with each other. Our first virtual Annual Meeting this past summer allowed us to engage with colleagues from across the country, and in November we held our first AER Drop-In Meeting. In June, we will be holding another Drop-In to offer additional structured support and feedback for those interested in using primary sources in education and outreach.

An enormous thank you to our first Guest Editor, Janet Bunde. Her vision for and work on this issue has led to a meaningful collection of articles. I am excited for our readers to continue to find avenues of connection, new perspectives, and inspiration in the authors' pieces.

Marissa Vassari
Education Program Manager

Editor's Note

I am writing this introduction at the close of 2020, a year characterized by a global pandemic, an overdue reckoning with structural racism and inequality, and a divisive political election. The end of any year inspires both introspection and prognostication; this year demands the former and resists the latter.

Yet in this moment, rather than merely recounting how we pivoted to remote instruction, or looking forward to a return to “normal” operations, I want us to consider a question: *What should we keep?* It’s a familiar question, perhaps even a comfortable one: in appraising collections and in planning lessons, we balance what is important with our available resources. Our decisions about what to include and what to leave behind reflect our priorities. As the authors in this issue remind us, these decisions also have long-lasting effects on our students and on whose voices are preserved. In that spirit, then, I encourage us all to think critically about our practices — those born of necessity during a pandemic, but also those from before — and determine which of them we should keep.

The contributors to this issue share with us some of their successes in the past year, and in so doing, suggest some examples to follow. Brett Dion describes how distance from the collections in his archive granted him a new perspective on his work, leading him to identify and complete projects that connect history to the present. Sara Lyons Davis underscores the power of government documents to promote civic engagement and describes efforts at the National Archives and Records Administration to improve and diversify their outreach to educators across the country. Michael DiMola urges those of us working at cultural institutions to think about the K-12 educators and students we can reach to consider their needs when deciding which collections to digitize and how to promote their use. Finally, Jasmine Sykes-Kunk, Jan-Kristòf Louis-Mansano, and Charles Joyner discuss what can happen when a carefully planned digital exhibition finds its way to an educator who asks students to engage with the materials and a student who responds to them thoughtfully.

From these colleagues — archivists, educators, and students — we can discern a set of priorities and learn new practices. It’s now up to all of us to realize them.

Janet Bunde

AER Newsletter Guest Editor
2020–2021

Distance/Disruption: Archival Education and My Work From Home

By: **Brett Dion**

Archivist & Special Collections Librarian
Bank Street College of Education



Portraits of Lucy Sprague Mitchell (left) and Charity Bailey, with new labels, hanging in the Bank Street Library

TRUE STORY: During lockdown in the spring, I would connect with a remote desktop application to access my office computer. I did this often to search for a document. But other times, when I really felt frustrated with working from home, I would just turn on the office's webcam and feel soothed by the sight of about a quarter of the Bank Street College Archives that was visible to the webcam. Somehow, seeing work that I couldn't do made me think harder about work that I could do.

So education from the archives happened in the early months of work-from-home life, but it did not happen in a classroom or for a group of students. Instead, I focused on projects that, once completed, would enhance access to

our collections and to our institutional history. It was time to rectify previous oversights and improve access, respectively. The work started in the Bank Street Library, where there are two framed portrait photographs of women. One is the institution's co-founder and leader for four decades, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, and the other is music teacher and recording artist, Charity Bailey. Neither had ever had their names attached to their portraits, let alone exhibition labels connecting them to the Library. Now biographical blurbs with an emphasis on literacy and the women's publications support the portraits.

Lucy Sprague Mitchell's "Credo for Bank Street" is an oft-quoted set of beliefs that have guided Bank Street for generations. It's been around for so long

that its origins have been clouded over by time and organizational shifts. I'd been rooting around for the first appearance of the credo for a year or so before working from home. On March 13, 2020, my last day in the office, I scrambled to scan several printings of the credo from different sources. At home, I got to work writing a document analysis with plenty of primary and secondary sources to support the narrative. With the approval of Bank Street College's President and the Graduate School's Dean, I announced the serialized "Creation of the Credos" over three weeks in April.

Another series was unfurling in April, in the form of videos compiling well-wishes from faculty to students. Jess Wontropski, Childhood Programs Co-Director in the Graduate School, rallied her colleagues to record short clips of support, which she then edited together and shared online. I thought the Archives could contribute a historical perspective, and in my video clip I told the school that Bank Street had been through global challenges before, mainly the Great Depression and World War II. It certainly wasn't the venue for any kind of presentation of primary sources, but I thought it cast the Archives as a valuable source for school morale and provided an emotional connection to our past.

Lucy Sprague Mitchell's memoir, *Two Lives*, is a primary source that's been heavily researched and held in high regard by Bank Street College since its publication in 1953. Despite its length (nearly 600 pages), its content of biography and progressive education history, and its release by a major publishing company, the book was issued without an index. I wanted this valuable resource to be more accessible, not only for its own content, but because I believe it is a gateway text for researchers who want to learn more about Mitchell and may seek out the Bank Street Archives to follow up. I set out to create an index for *Two Lives* over several weeks of the spring. The final product now lives electronically in the "On Lucy's Life" column of a libguide of the Bank Street Library. I look forward to the time when the Library can fully reopen and allow the College and

visitors to easily browse through the book in person again. For now, eager readers and researchers can find the ebook via HathiTrust. Regardless of the book's format, everyone can have the help of the index.

Collectively, this work kept me from burrowing into a solitary, internalized state of mind at a time when I generally should be advocating for more institutional support for the Archives and archival education. Paradoxically for my work as the College's "lone arranger," I've actually connected with more people in the school in the first months of work-from-home life than I had in my first two years in person as Bank Street's Archivist. Some of this work led to explorations with faculty on how to involve the Archives in Graduate School courses, and while I was stymied by limited access to the analog collections (only about 5% of the Archives are digital or digitized) over the summer, I know the new allies I've made in 2020 will be eager to try involving the Archives in 2021 and beyond.

In my usual work as an archivist, I'm often leaning towards a methodical, deliberate, structured approach. Sometimes, it feels as though I'm a builder, and my concrete and steel are the schema, collections, data, and boxes of foldered documents. But when I had to work from home and I was unable to access that structure, a new approach was needed. I had to think less about concrete and steel, and lean towards an elemental, essential approach. I thought of this work like water gently finding paths of least resistance and reshaping small sections of landscape. Effectiveness took a different shape. But in the short term, at least, it felt just as meaningful as the work I'd done before the lockdown.

Access, Analysis, and Adaptation: Education at the National Archives during the COVID-19 Pandemic

By: **Sara Lyons Davis**
Educational Specialist
National Archives at New York City

At the beginning of the year, like many in the United States, I never anticipated that the past several months would have been spent working from my guest room, as opposed to my usual office at the National Archives at New York City in the beautiful beaux-art Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House in Lower Manhattan.

As an education specialist with Museum Programs at the National Archives, I am part of a national team of educators, program specialists, curators, and other archival professionals who strive to meaningfully connect with the public, increase access to the more than 15 billion documents in our holdings, and engage the public with our resources. When the COVID-19 pandemic altered the American cultural landscape, our educational programming had to consider these changes and adjust accordingly. Our team had plans in place for virtual programming, but none that had imagined a long-term public health scenario that would dramatically disrupt and transform the education landscape. Students in New York and around the country began to move to remote learning in March. We needed to provide support to them and their teachers, and we needed to do so “in real time.”

Assessing Resources

Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, National Archives education staff offered onsite and distance learning programs for students and in-person and virtual professional development webinars for educators. We had, and have,

a robust collection of standards-aligned, interactive programs based on historical topics and documents in our holdings. My colleagues and I had experience connecting with educators and students, but our student programs were largely designed for in-person classroom settings. Suddenly, the majority of students were learning from home, and we had to review how our programs and methods of connection could meet this need.

Not only did we have to find ways to reach newly homeschooling families, but we also had to consider how other organizations were presenting their content. Could the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights attract audiences in the same way as live animal cams and digital programs with their trainers? The programs developed by the National Archives had been designed to be meaningful pedagogical tools with engaging formats and scripts for participating students. These foundations became more important than ever as suddenly many students (and the adults supporting their schooling) were online for increased hours. We have had to deepen collaboration across our national education program and consider our programming strengths and weaknesses as the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all areas of our programming, from small to large. Making content useful and relevant has been paramount to the success of these programs.

Our mission as an agency is to provide public access to federal government records in our custody and control. Public access to government records strengthens democracy by allowing Americans to claim their rights of citizenship, hold their government accountable, and understand their history so they can participate more

effectively in their government. As educators, we support this mission by providing quality civics education and demystifying the documents we hold and, often, the ways in which the public can access them. Part of the way that we increase accessibility is by supporting educators who want to incorporate our documents into classroom use. Students who understand their history and are comfortable with working with primary sources become informed citizens. We help students develop skills and strategies for making sense of the founding documents and connecting them to their own lives. It is a fundamental goal of National Archives education programs that the historical contextualization of the records—along with methods for researching connected documents and history—will help students feel confident in making their own informed decisions about the primary sources and history and, as a result, current events and civic responsibility.

The Education team reviewed our goals and considered the adaptations that teachers were already making to create successful virtual classrooms. In thinking about how to promote our educational resources, we also expanded our consideration of who may be connecting with us. For example, newly homeschooling families may not be familiar with one of our most frequently used and recommended educational

resources— [DocsTeach](#). Taking a wide view of our offerings and what we were promoting helped us look for opportunities to refine and improve our offerings.

DocsTeach

DocsTeach is the free online tool for teaching with documents from the National Archives. Using DocsTeach, one can access thousands of different types of primary sources— textual documents, photographs, moving images and film, posters, and maps. Educators can create activities based on these documents or use activities already developed by National Archives educators and other teachers. Educators and homeschooling parents complained of limited time and multiple online obligations. Based on this feedback, we developed a free online mini-webinar series designed to highlight lessons clearly and effectively, in just 20-minute sessions. The recorded mini-webinars are a new resource we can offer to support educators (or parents) unfamiliar with DocsTeach. We received positive feedback, and as much of the U.S. prepared to start another school year virtually, we rolled out another series of mini-webinars focused on strategies for virtual learning.



During the DocsTeach Mini-Webinar: Finding and Sharing Primary Source Documents, participants learned how to find primary sources and utilize National Archives resources for primary source analysis

K-12 Distance Learning Programs

These connections with teachers forged through the DocsTeach mini-webinars also helped to promote our K-12 Distance Learning programs. These free programs are offered to students in elementary school through high school, with each program designed to align with appropriate educational standards.

Our elementary program, Superhero Bill of Rights, is aimed at 3rd through 5th graders and explores rights protected by the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights. In this program, students think about the Bill of Rights as a superhero and the five freedoms of the First Amendment as its superpowers. They analyze primary sources from the National Archives and identify the corresponding First Amendment freedom. Finally, students consider how they can exercise the First Amendment superpowers in their own lives. All of our work is based on the documents entrusted to the National Archives. In all of our distance learning programs, we had to consider how to make the programs interactive in a remote classroom with individual connections, when the lesson had previously been designed with handouts and opportunities for small group work. The Distance Learning Team adapted their existing programs for use over remote connections, and pre-program activities and handouts became optional. The chat box became a key element for student participation, allowing all students to respond to questions and share their document analysis at the same time.

Expanding Program Connections

In reviewing our program offerings, we looked to create connections that included our youngest learners, as well. Before the pandemic, we had a popular pre-K storytime series at our flagship museum in Washington, D.C. We worked to replicate this experience and create one that,



A child participates in the interactive Young Learners series

while not able to replicate sitting on the Archives carpet together, would aim as closely as possible to that in a virtual world. We launched a Young Learners series and introduced our young students to history through an interactive, online chat with historical reenactors. Our young listeners heard Clara Barton recount her nursing career, Susan B. Anthony speak of her fight for woman suffrage, and President Lincoln talk about his role in bringing a Thanksgiving holiday to a divided country. The reenactors and our educators took live questions from viewers. After the live stream, these programs were posted to our YouTube channel. We also modified a number of DocsTeach activities for younger students, including photo analysis of a Mathew Brady image of Clara Barton. Questions guided the students through the exercise, as they were asked how the photograph matched their expectations of what a nurse looks like.

Re-envisioning and Reconsidering

We have also had to reconsider many of our expectations for some of the largest National Archives programs. As the permanent home of the original Declaration of Independence, our biggest day of the year is July 4th, Independence Day. Our popular annual celebration includes patriotic programs, historical reenactors, music, confetti, and streamers! Our challenge this year was how to make this commemoration a meaningful one... virtually.

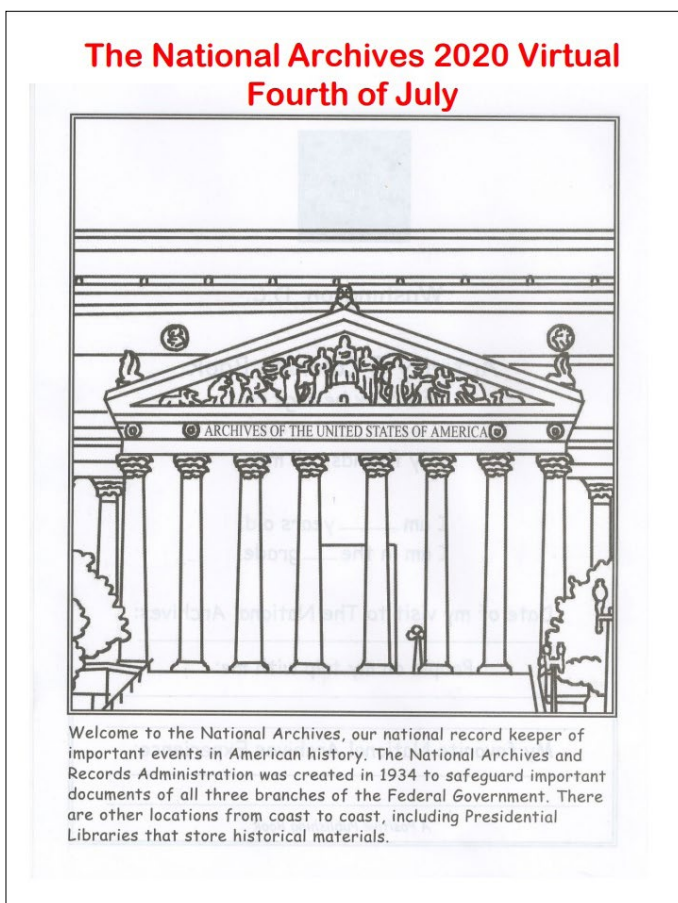
In this new environment, we shared supplementary educational and family activities, such as a coloring book that included National

Archives images and patriotic symbols. We had online conversations between the Archivist of the United States, the head of our Foundation, and historical reenactors speaking of “their” experiences of Independence Day. Educators provided a virtual “show and tell” of records that addressed which goals set forth by the Charters of Freedom had been reached—and which hadn’t.

This was a unique year for our country. The summer saw protests across the political spectrum as well as a national conversation on museums and monuments and how to most appropriately preserve and interpret our national history, even when it may not display some aspects in the most positive light. Archivist of the United States David S. Ferriero addressed this challenge directly:

“Two hundred forty-four years ago, our founding fathers declared our independence and mutually pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor. Today, as in 1776, we face fear, uncertainty, and challenges to our lives, economy, and general welfare. Throughout our history, as a nation united, we have confronted and overcome such threats. Let us continue to stay united as we strive for a more perfect—and more healthy—union.”

Similarly, our July 4 education programs acknowledged and addressed this challenge as well. In speaking of the allegorical Barry Faulkner murals in the Rotunda of the National Archives, visitors see artwork depicting the writing and adoption of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States. The powerful men who crafted these documents are shown, but Faulkner did not include everyone who had a part in the creation of our country. The everyday women and men who may not have had a voice in the Continental Congress and other halls of power also contributed to the independence of our nation in incalculable ways. We know that there are limitations of the phrase “all men are created equal”—the reality is that women and persons of color were not included. They fought for



Coloring page of the National Archives facade from the National Archives 2020 Virtual Fourth of July Coloring Book, a downloadable activity that was part of the virtual program



The National Archives celebrates Independence Day with musical performances, a dramatic reading of the Declaration of Independence, and history-related family activities on July 4th, 2019 in Washington, DC [caption from Flickr]

freedom from the king and Great Britain while also risking their lives and places in society. This acknowledgment that the Founders did not all live by the words they wrote on these documents was supported through various levels of review. While exploring how we can increase access to our programs, we have also been able to look at who we are reaching and how we can best and most inclusively serve the public. The comments received from the virtual attendees were largely positive, and we were able to expand access to participants who would not otherwise have been able to travel to Washington, D.C., for the traditional in-person events.

Future Benefits

Given the “new normal,” we have successfully transformed our robust educational program to a fully virtual one, and we continue to seek and find ways to improve our outreach. This new approach largely removes limitations

of geography — participants have logged onto National Archives online education programs from nearly all 50 states and several countries. As we continue to develop programs for this moment, we are also looking toward the future and hope to carry forward the best parts of what we have learned from these past several months. This accessibility, we hope, will make connections with the National Archives and, by extension, its documents, a consideration for educators, students, and school districts across the country. Being fully virtual, we are reaching increasing numbers of students and educators nationwide, including many who never would have had the opportunity to take advantage of our in-person programs.

More than ever, we had to make the National Archives education experience worth it, and we also had to consider how to promote the work we were doing. We were fortunate to work with many great partners such as the National Archives Foundation, National History Day,

and the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration (CILC), among others, who helped us share information about our programs and offerings. These outside partners, in addition to National Archives blogs, social media, and email newsletters, helped us to reach more educators, school administrators, and the general public who may not have otherwise been aware of these resources.

The National Archives is entrusted to preserve and maintain the founding documents of our nation. As educators, we have a responsibility to support the public through access, analysis, and understanding of these important records and the rights held within them. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to consider both our moments of success and opportunities for improving the truly national education program we offer so that its relevance and appropriateness for the current moment is at the forefront of what we do. This important work has continued and expanded over the past several months from guest rooms, home offices, and kitchen tables across our national team as we work toward returning with this knowledge to our more traditional office spaces off the marble hallways of the National Archives.

Archivists, Heed the Call for Help!

By: **Michael DiMola**

Social Studies Educator

Urban Assembly Gateway School for Technology

The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the inequities of our educational system: outdated laptops, nonexistent Wi-Fi connections, remote classroom fatigue, days of isolation, and an acute, intense fear of sickness and quarantine. Students face a whole host of issues that have stunted their educational growth. Without equitable access to resources or recourse to their normal support structures, some students struggle to find meaning in their studies. Educators are overwhelmed, and learning communities are understaffed. Yet this does not have to be the final word. All educators want to see student achievement, yet many do not know where to start. Archivists can make radical inroads to improve students' and educators' lives. They have a unique and awesome ability to empower and reinvigorate learning communities.

Below are some suggestions for archival outreach from an educator's perspective.

Outreach can be informal

On the first day of school, my principal proclaimed that we are all first-year teachers. She opened us up to the idea of trial and error. Failure was a reality, but it wasn't a death sentence. In this moment, educators are looking for new and more interesting ways to teach old subjects. Archivists can and should aim to build relationships with educators—and connect with students—to reach this goal. Cold calling a school and setting up an opportunity for professional development is a great first step. All too often, educators participate in very formal Zoom calls that are too didactic. The presentation might be neat and polished, but educators, like students, need collaboration and intimate discussions.

Learning is messy and uneven. Let's embrace that reality. One archivist working with a small group or a single school can have a great impact. One could call to gauge interest and then host a remote meeting to assess wants and needs. These intimate sessions have the ability to create true collaboration with a school and give direct aid where it is needed most.

Consider the complexity of the documents you put online

Do you already have an amazing outreach program? Are your primary sources topnotch? If your catalog is beyond comparison, then the next steps to reaching educators can simply be this: adapting and modifying sourcing. Educators scour the Internet to find the perfect primary source because we value high quality material. But educators spend even more time adapting and modifying material. We know that our students read at different levels. Some students read below grade level and struggle with syntax. Others may only need help with a vocabulary term or two. Easy access to primary sources that can easily be abridged or adapted, or that are already abridged or adapted, would be invaluable. An excellent teacher will use three different versions of the same reading assignment (a high-, medium-, and low-level text) in a lesson. If archivists could create an online resource of primary sources at different reading levels, educators and students would reap the benefits. Modified versions of documents give students the ability to build their skills, select challenges during reading assignments, and grow as readers. This is a very simple task with a very meaningful end result.

Provide translations of core documents to further outreach

Growing as an educator also means admitting mistakes and confessing to a sin or two. And I have a terrible secret. I use Google translate far too often to reach my English language learners. If there is any point of pride I have taken all year, it was when I located a Spanish version of the Declaration of Independence. My students were dissecting and discussing this document for a class assignment. I had three students that could have been forced to read a subpar Google translated version. Finding a good translation saved me, but more importantly it saved them. Archivists who can translate documents should do so. English language learners can often fall through the cracks of a classroom without proper support. Translation services are not always perfect, and that's okay. Many students recognize this failing. However, what is not lost on students is the effort. English language learners are more likely to produce better work when they know teachers are doing everything in their power to see them succeed. Translation of select and important documents will undoubtedly empower English language learners and promote a more equitable education.

Diverse voices and experiences matter, especially in the documents you share online

Throughout the pandemic, students have felt isolated and excluded by remote learning. This was especially palpable for students of color during the spring of 2020. Systemic racism has taken lives and devastated the hearts of far too many. Educators have been tasked with the awesome responsibility to inspire youth and to dismantle racism. Resources that highlight the experiences and perspectives of Black and Latinx people are needed now more than ever to decenter whiteness. When students learn from sources that reflect their identity and language, they feel included. Moreover, diverse primary

sources are not simply for students of color but for all students. If we as a society are to destroy the roots of racism, then all students must see and hear from diverse voices. Teachers must update, revise, and their curricula. Archivists have a crucial role to play in advancing a more equitable education. Your ability to research primary sources and share them has never been more vital.

Beyond the classroom and the reading room, archivists can mentor students

Finally, the most crucial role an archivist can play is being a mentor. If you are truly interested in redefining the role of an archivist, then leading a research club is a no frills and fun way to make meaningful change. Archivists, like librarians, have a wonderful sense of curiosity and exploration. Students, now more than ever, need to be inspired. An online club dedicated to exploring new topics and practicing research can cut to the essence of learning. A research club can be co-hosted with an educator. The commitment can be minimal, too: an hour a week. And the most important part about this club isn't research. It is the experience of students interacting with professionals, fostering meaningful relationships, and transforming their lives.

Archivists, heed our call for help! Archivists, librarians, and educators alike all have the power to step up and empower students. We gain everything when we roll up our sleeves and do the good work.

Using Primary Sources in Remote Learning: A Virtual Conversation with a Student & Teacher

An edited conversation between **Jasmine Sykes-Kunk**, Reference Associate at *NYU Special Collections*; **Jan-Kristòf Louis-Mansano (Mr.K)**, School Counselor and 8th Grade Advisor at *Arts & Letters 305 United*, a K-8 public school in Brooklyn, NY; and **Charles Joyner**, 8th grade student at *A&L 305 United* to discuss an assignment to creatively reflect and respond to the NYU Special Collections Black Solidarity Day Digital Exhibition.

*This discussion was held via Zoom on December 10, 2020.
Edited and contextual content is added in square brackets.*

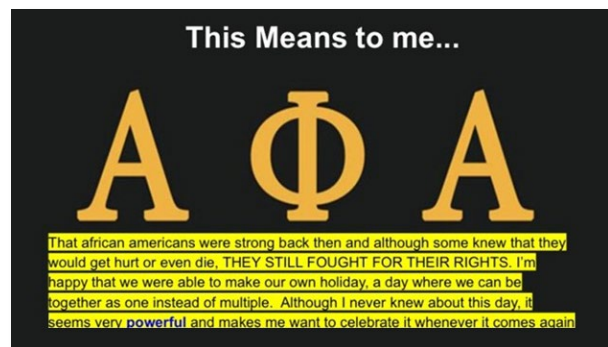
Jasmine Sykes-Kunk: Thank you so much for meeting with me, Charles and Mr. K.

Charles Joyner: Thank you for interviewing me.

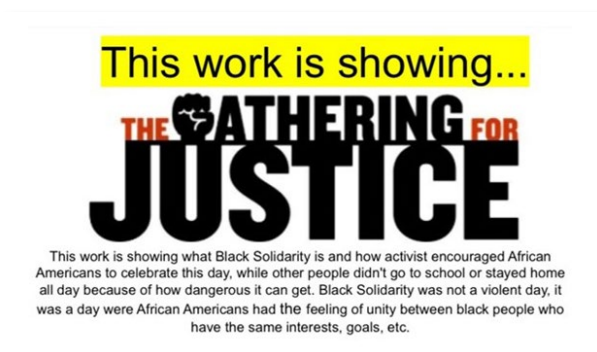
JSK: I work in an archive, and we have all kinds of really interesting things. A lot of the work I do is to let people know about what we have and help them with research and other projects. Since we're closed because of the pandemic, people can't come in to see the materials. Plus, most of what we have is really old and delicate, so they can't be checked out. So we try to make new things like this digital website about Black Solidarity Day. I thought it was really cool how Mr. K used the site as an assignment and the Google Slides that you made from it, Charles. What you were thinking about when you made these slides? Can you tell me about your project?

CJ: As you can see, the title is "This work is showing," and I put how activists encourage African Americans to celebrate this day and Black Solidarity was not a violent day. It was

a day where African Americans can have their feeling of unity between Black people who have the same interests and goals, etc. So [in this slide] I was just explaining what the day is based off of what I read.



So this is the Alpha Phi Alpha sign which my dad is in, it's a fraternity and I was talking about what it means to me. So, like, the first thing that came to my mind is what was the fraternity my dad was in. [In this slide] I was explaining how, although some knew that they would get hurt, they still fought for their rights. I'm happy we're able to make our own holiday where we can be together as one instead of multiple. Although I never knew about this day, it seemed very powerful and makes me want to celebrate it whenever it comes again. Also, some facts about Alpha Phi Alpha is that it was founded in 1906 at Cornell University, which is a college my sister goes to. And I know that since not that many Black students at the college weren't able to fit in or blend in. Not blend in, but they were sticking out, and they weren't treated very well. Alpha Phi Alpha was created for them to work together and finish college together so that they didn't feel isolated.



And then this last one was the “Connections to this post.” These are all the things that I feel like connected to what Black Solidarity Day is, which is fraternities, sororities, activisms, new generations. Continuing this day and celebrating it with different generations, never giving up because they created this day where we came together and we all celebrated the work we've done and being proud. The last bullet point is African Americans. That was my whole [presentation].



JSK: Oh, thank you for sharing it. It was beautiful! You hadn't heard of Black Solidarity Day before. What did you think of the assignment? Have you had assignments like this before?

Note: Advisory is a period focused on social-emotional learning and growth. Each advisor works with a small group of students and is the liaison between parents and subject teachers. Before the pandemic, advisory met twice a week, but it now meets daily during the first period.

CJ: Last year in seventh grade and sixth grade also, we didn't really get these advisory assignments until eighth grade. We've started doing a whole bunch of them. We did one on Black Solidarity Day, which was different than the rest of them, which were using creativity; this one is reading an article and writing about what you feel about it. I actually like this one a lot because I was able to do slides, which also allowed me to blend in some of my creativity and some of the facts I learned about this day.

JSK: Well, thank you, Charles. Mr. K, can I ask you, what was it like assigning these kinds of projects in advisory? Is this something that you've done in the past? Do you always teach about Black Solidarity Day?

Mr. K: Although this is actually the first year that I've taught about Black Solidarity Day, in the past, I've always found a way to implement culture into our advisory. Since I started in education, I've worked in predominantly Black schools. So this is the first school I've worked in that's been diverse in the way that it is [predominantly white]. When I saw Black Solidarity Day, I was like, okay, let me find a way to highlight different cultures and not just focus on just the months.

I do my best in advisory to go beyond just the academics and to understand that I basically place the kids in the lesson and in the curriculum to make them be part of it, so that they're teaching me, and I'm teaching them as well. So throughout the year, I'll have assignments about different ways when it comes to culture, when it comes to food. One assignment I do is “How wide is your universe?” where I actually have the kids do some introspection about the people that they are with. If you're white and your circles are predominantly white, can you really understand what the Black kids are going through? And if you're Black, and your circles are predominantly Black, can you really understand what other races are going through also? It's a way to just open that up for everyone to be able to really see each other.

JSK: Thank you. Are there any other ways that primary sources or exhibitions would be helpful for you in building those projects?

Mr. K: So the sources that we've used in the classroom that I've realized have been most successful are original sources, [like] when I show actual poetry or something that's written in somebody's handwriting. You know, it'd be great to be able to hear Frederick Douglass, but we can't. [It would be great] if the archives can provide work where it's not me speaking

in 2020 but understanding the context that this was written in. And, you know, seeing the advancement and the courage and how much sacrifices that a person had to do to get to that point. And for them [the students] to see it in their own words, in their own work or photographs from that time, I think it's more effective, and it will be more about retention and not so much memorization.

JSK: Thank you. And Charles, how does it feel for you to use these kinds of documents? Do you like working with original source materials? Have you ever used anything like original documents or research before?

CJ: Yeah, like in the books, it would show the original source or it would show a photo of it, but I haven't really read an original source. I agree with what Mr. K was saying, that it allows us to see in our own way [and] gives a different perspective of what we're reading. I think it helps a lot.

JSK: Are there any things that you would like to see in a website like the exhibition— anything that would help us to make it better for you to use?

CJ: Yeah. When you say the exhibition, you mean like the article you gave us right? I feel like, maybe more connections to the [present] day. Like how I made the connection to fraternities, maybe you could add that? Maybe you could then add facts to that are things that helped us make this day, or how we achieved this day, maybe?

JSK: Thank you for that. Maybe, Charles, next year, when you go to a Black Solidarity Day assembly, or you get to go to a protest right then, you can come back to this website, and you can upload your picture and then it becomes a part of this exhibition. This will become a community gallery of all of these documents. So far, we haven't received any submissions yet; at first, I was thinking that the website would be successful if people would submit things, but I think the website is even more successful

because of the way that Mr. K chose to make it an assignment. At the end of the day, what's most important to me is that people can learn from the documents and can access them. If you wanted, you could submit your presentation. Anybody in the class can submit their piece, and it will become a part of this exhibition. It will be showing your name and your experience of Black Solidarity Day in 2020, and other people can learn from your [work]. And I'm just really grateful and proud of the work that both you, Charles, and Mr. K, have done. So thank you.

CJ: Yeah. Thank you for making that article and allowing me to learn today. I really like this sort of online archive. So instead of actually going to one, you can just search.

Mr. K: So when I was in the classroom in an elementary school, I used to take my students on trips once a month. I took them to see a Broadway show once, and I told them that we were to go to Times Square first, and one student got up and said, "Oh, that white place." I said [to myself], Okay, we need to change this narrative. And I realized a lot of my students— at the time I was working in East New York [a predominantly Black working-class and poor neighborhood in Brooklyn]— they didn't feel like the city belonged to them. It felt foreign, and it was also because they were just there in East New York, and the only place they really went was the park, the corner store and home. That was it. So every month I took them, and because [of that], I realized accessibility was a big issue. I will say that though I prefer to be in person, I do see the benefits of having [this exhibition] online, where many more people all around have access to it. And that's something that's been lacking in the arts a lot.

JSK: Well, the hope is that this website will stay up and the digital exhibition will be there for future years but also that NYU Special Collections is a place that you can also come visit.

Mr. K: I don't know how long we will be remote for, but there are different things that we can do to change the books and to hear the perspectives outside of the classroom setting.

JSK: This has really been a gift to see how you are using the exhibition. Thank you both for your time.

Member News

Have some news to share? We'd love to hear from you!

Email us at AEReditor@rockarch.org



AER Newsletter

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