Empowering Voice Through Creative Expression

The Bonner Community Engagement Curriculum

Overview: This workshop promotes critical thinking, creative expression, and reflection. In it, participants will engage with a powerful and moving TED Talk featuring a young woman speaking about her own journey in "Emitithal Mahmoud: A young poet tells the story of Darfur." This TED Talk is an example of the creative style of voice empowerment through poetry and the advantage of expressing an opinion on a public/political issue in different styles of voice exposure. After the viewing, participants will have a brief discussion/reflection about the video and then break into groups based on a specific topic that was picked by the students. Another option is having the facilitator assign topics, and participants will begin the session with research completed. Participants will then apply the knowledge and passions for that specific public/political issue through the participants own style of creative expression. This training also promotes International Perspective, a Bonner Common Commitment.

Category: Empowerment, Team Building, Reflection, Expression, Communication, Research, International Perspective

Level: Applicable towards all students that have a desire to empower the voice of people around them in a creative and engaging activity, but recommended to more moderate students who are empowered to take action.

Third Year or Fourth Year (1st semester) Students

Recommended Bonner Sequence: This training is recommended for

Bonner Students during the third or first semester of the fourth year, as part of the Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion 4x4 model, Stage 4: Adaptation.

Dialogue Across Diversity and Inclusion 4x4 Student Developmental Model			
Stage 1: Exposure	**Stage 2:** Understanding	**Stage 3:** Application and Discussion	**Stage 4:** Adaptation

Focus or Goals of this Guide:

· Participants will learn how to connect personal experiences with relevant public/ political issues
· Participants will be able to identify challenges and opportunities for the specific public/political issues selected
· Participants will leave with the knowledge that voice empowerment and expression is needed

Materials:

· Computer(s) with internet access or download TED Talk first to avoid access problems
· Projector
· Flip Chart/Markers or Whiteboard/Markers
· Artistic Supplies (colored pencils, markers, colored paper, etc.)
· Emitithal Mahmoud: A young poet tells the story of Darfur [video]
· Public/Political Issue Research Questions/Notes Handout
· Emi's TED Talk Key Questions and Quotes Handout for participants (pass out before starting the workshop to all participants)
· Optional: students can be assigned a specific public/political issue and before meeting come in with research on that topic.

How to Prepare:

Review the trainer guide. Watch the video and become familiar with the TED Talk and the questions that go with the talk. Prepare the handouts and other materials for the workshop. Note: if facilitator assigns public/political issues before meeting: pick issues, send the research question handout, and assign the groups in order for research to be done on the issue before workshop is done. Review and modify the workshop to fit the size of participants and issues. Please note that if the hyperlinks seem to not work, the links are posted. Just copy and paste them into the search bar.

Brief Outline:

This workshop is organized around leading participants through a series of discussions and a group activity that will demonstrate the importance of empowered voice toward public/political issues.

The outline for this 80-90 minute workshop has the following parts:

1) Introduction of TED Talk poet Emi   suggested time 2 minutes
2) TED Talk Viewing   suggested time 10 minutes
3) Discussion of TED Talk Takeaway suggested time 10 minutes
4) Break up into groups   suggested time 10 minutes
5) Group Activity   suggested time 30 minutes
6) Presentation   suggested time 20 minutes
7) Closing/Debriefing   suggested time 5 minutes

Part 1) Introduction of TED Talk by poet Emi Mahmoud
Suggested time: 2 minutes

As the facilitator, you will explain the purpose of this session and briefly go over the purpose and outcomes of the workshop. Then an introduction to the poetry writer [Emtithal Mahmoud](), giving a brief background about Emi.

Script example of what facilitator may choose to say:

"In this session, we are going to watch a TED Talk about the different ways of expressing voice and then apply that knowledge to an activity of expressing your own voice. The TED Talk speaker is Emitithal Mahmoud who was born in Darfur, Sudan, and

moved to the United States in 1998. The War in Darfur is a major armed conflict that began in February 2003 when the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Justice and Equality Movement rebel groups began fighting the government of Sudan, which they accused of oppressing Darfur's non-Arab population. She became aware of the importance of education when her parents took part in a protest after Sudan's government stopped paying teachers. This became an ignition to her flame, which empowered her to make a difference through writing poetry. She attended Yale University, where she encountered the art of poetry and where she won her first poetry award in 2015, which was a tribute to her mother. Mahmoud has been an activist advocating for attention to the continuing violence in Darfur, by taking part in a speaker tour, as well as being invited to a 2016 roundtable with President Obama when he was visiting the Islamic Society of Baltimore."

Link to more info → https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emtithal_Mahmoud

Part 2) TedTalk Viewing
Suggested time: 10 minutes

Show the TED-X talk, with the instructions that the students should answer the questions on "Emi's TED Talk Key Questions and Quotes" handout about the video.

Link to the TED Talk can be found below → https://www.ted.com/talks/emtithal_mahmoud_a_young_poet_tells_the_story_of_darfur#t-639745

Part 3) Debriefing and Discussing the TED Talk
Suggested time: 10 minutes

Continue by discussing "Emi's TED Talk Key Questions and Quotes" answers and any other comments that the audience would like to discuss before moving onto the next part of the workshop, this can either be conducted as a large group or break into small groups and reflect on the handouts. Make sure to note that the TED Talk is an example of the creative style of voice empowerment through poetry. The advantage of expressing an opinion on a public/political issue in different styles of voice exposure is necessary due to the idea that <u>a person can be seen, but not necessarily be heard</u>. As demonstrated in society due to the color of someone's skin or religion they practice they can petition an issue or express their opinion however, the people around them unfortunately will turn a blind eye. They will be seen by society, but not heard.

Part 3) Public/Political Issues Brainstorm
Suggested time: 10 minutes

After the discussion, introduce creative "voice empowerment" and how the participants will get a chance to creatively express their voice and use it as a tool for social justice and awareness. Below are two options that as the facilitator may choose.

Option 1: Have the students either list top public/political issues they would like to focus on and break the audience into groups based on those topics.

Option 2: Or the facilitator research topics and assign those topics to students before the meeting, so they will come to the meeting prepared with prior research done on a specific public/political issue that can be applied to the group activity.

Have some examples of public/political issues to introduce:

- Refugee Crisis
- Climate Change
- Gun Control

- Abortion
- Hunger
- Death Penalty

Link to more examples → http://www.library.vanderbilt.edu/govt/pubpol.php

Part 4) Creative Expression of Public Issues
Suggested time: 30 minutes

Have each group create their own style of expression based on their selected or assigned public/political issue (ex. poem, skit, song, dance, etc.). The creative expression style on the topic picked can target any part of the issue the participants decide on (ex. express feelings/emotions of people involved, how the issue affects/ feelings of the participants, etc.).

1. If the participants picked topics at the workshop and then were divided, then allow for the participants' research time in order to familiarize themselves about the public/political issue.

2. Or if the participants had done prior research they can apply the research to their group activity.

As they are working on the activity have them think about:

- The purpose of the assignment
- The reason they chose the style of expression
- The attitude each group member has towards the issue

Part 5) Presentation
Suggested time: 20 minutes

Each group will take turns presenting their creative style of expression towards their public/political issues. The questions below can be written on a board or flipchart in order for the groups to see what questions will be asked of them during the presentation.

Have participants answer the following questions about their presentations:

- Why did you choose this style of expression?
- How does one way present or cover something in a different/new way than normally discussed?
- What was the thought process towards the issue?
- How did each group manage to empower each participants' voice?
- How does a creative form of expression benefit awareness on this issue?

## Part 6) Closing/Debriefing
Suggested time: 5 minutes

Bring the participants back together after presentation are complete. Explain that the idea behind this workshop is to acquire different methods of voice empowerment. Participants will be able to engage in issues within campus and the community around them through creative expression. Note: the participants may all have chosen to do poems, but that within itself has a variety of styles. Touch base on how being heard and seen is important especially when people are afraid to talk about an important issue or feel that its too uncomfortable to address an issue. Without people speaking what they think and being heard, there would not be change in the world, so encourage the participants to be that voice of change. If not being seen or heard with one way of voice expression, then choose a different approach because the power of words is the most influential way to make change.

Credits:

- Developed in 2017 by Baneen Al-Akashi, Bonner at Allegheny College
- "Emtithal Mahmoud." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 10 July 2017. Web. 11 July 2017.
- Mahmoud, Emtithal. "A young poet tells the story of Darfur." Emtithal Mahmoud: A young poet tells the story of Darfur | TED Talk | TED.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 July 2017.
- "Vanderbilt Library." Political Science / Government Information | Government Information Portal | Library | Vanderbilt University. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 July 2017.

Followed by Handouts:

- Research Handout (page 7)
- TED Talk Handouts (page 8-9)
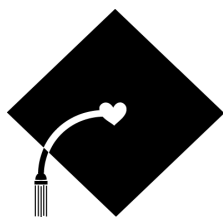
Public/Political Issue Research Questions/Notes

Research the public/political issue and answer the questions below. The information provided will be used for the activity:

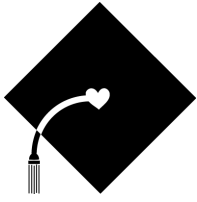| What is the issue?	Who is involved?	How does it affect people?	Where is the issue occuring?

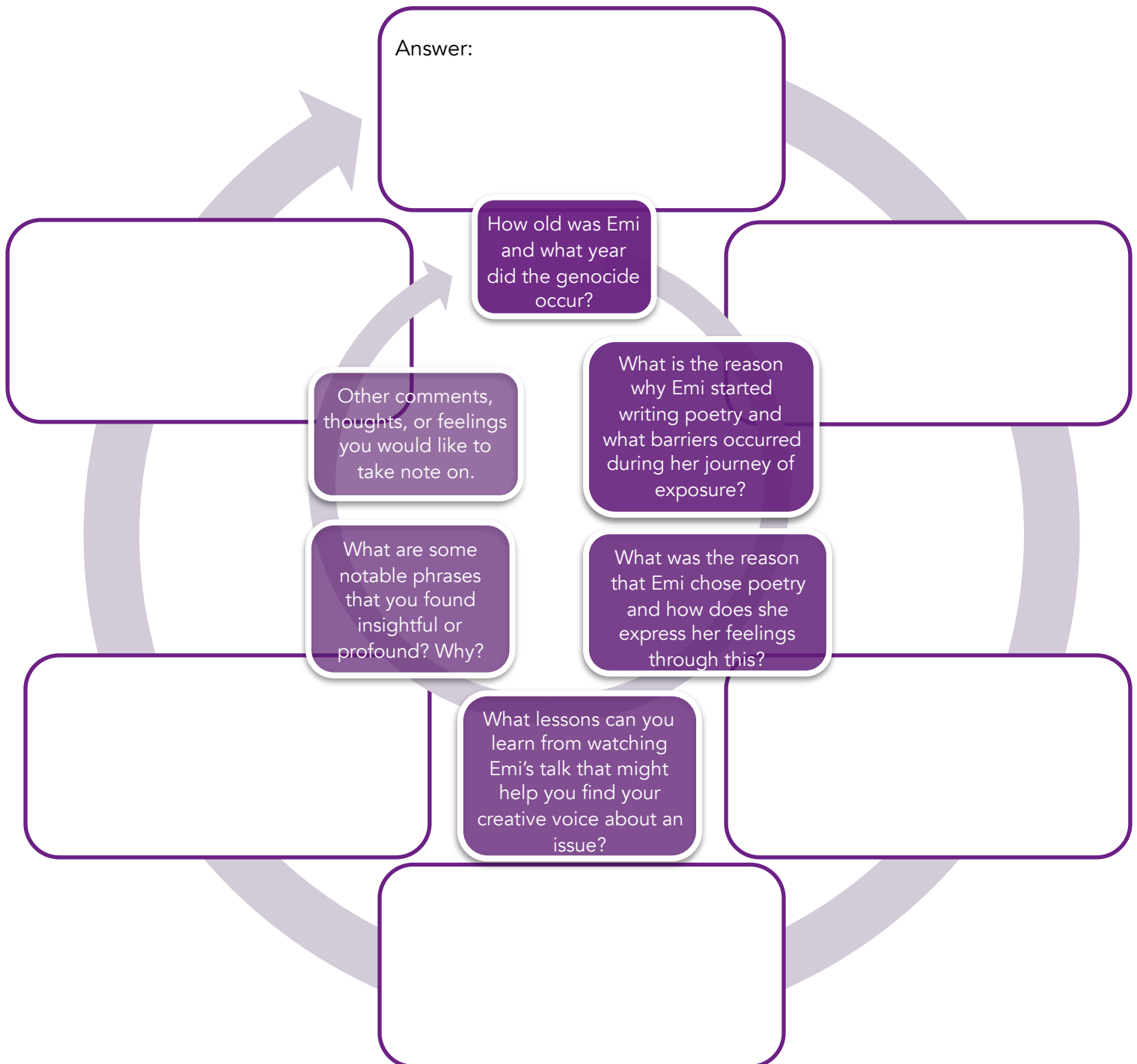| Why is it important to address?	When did it become a problem?	What are your feelings towards this?	Any other comments or concerns:

TED Talk Questions & Quotes

Answer the following questions as you watch the TED Talk, and then add final thoughts after TED Talk is over.

Key Questions:

Answer:

How old was Emi and what year did the genocide occur?

What is the reason why Emi started writing poetry and what barriers occurred during her journey of exposure?

Other comments, thoughts, or feelings you would like to take note on.

What are some notable phrases that you found insightful or profound? Why?

What was the reason that Emi chose poetry and how does she express her feelings through this?

What lessons can you learn from watching Emi's talk that might help you find your creative voice about an issue?

<u>Key Quotes:</u>

After viewing the TED Talk, reflect on the following quotes and write what you think and feel about each one.

I was setting up the projector when a classmate of mine said, "Why do you have to talk about this? Can't you think about us and how it will make us feel?"

And I said, "Zeinab, isn't it strange that your only problem is that your heart was too big?"

But joy -- joy is the armor we carried across the borders of our broken homeland.

When someone is standing in front of you, mind, body and soul, saying "Witness me," it's impossible not to become keenly aware of your own humanity.

Laughter and tears are both involuntary human reactions, testaments to our capacity for expression.