

Primary Research and Public Memory: A Service-Learning Partnership



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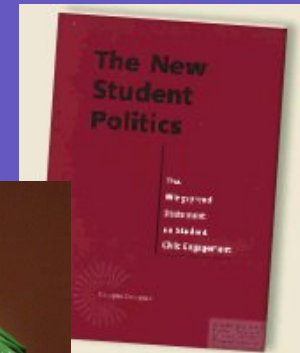
Project Background

- Service-learning partnership between Oklahoma City University and the OKC National Memorial
- Honors Composition I: “Research & Writing at the OKC National Memorial”
- All assignments connect to the project
- Seventh year of ongoing development



Some Bedrock Practices

- Sustain a long-term relationship with a community partner
- Ensure students are: “active producers (as opposed to consumers) of knowledge” (*Wingspread Statement on Student Civic Engagement*)
- Give students plenty of creative control over the process and product
- Remain open to the learning that comes from collaboration and creativity
- Work hard behind the scenes to scaffold academics and community problem-solving



Civic-Engaged, Primary Research

- Oral history interviews
 - Bombing survivors
 - Relatives of the deceased
 - Rescue workers
 - Citizens donating rare artifacts



Uses of the Students' Primary Research

- Content for the digital exhibit
- An archived oral history recording
- Transcript for further scholarship
- Component of future tangible exhibits
- Content for the professor's scholarship and scholarship of teaching



Deeper Connections to Academic Learning

Primary research

- Gaining a deeper understanding of research sources by **generating primary research** artifacts for future researchers

Researched writing

- Producing texts that matter to an audience beyond the classroom
- Producing texts that require multiple revisions to responsibly represent their subjects



Sample Exhibit: A Memorial Profile

Some Purposes of the Profile:

- To encourage museum visitors to feel personally connected to the Memorial's story
- To help museum visitors come to know someone who died in the bombing by expanding the narratives just hinted at within the Gallery of Honor displays



“The Many Faces of Carrie Ann Lenz”





Left to Right: Mike Slack, Doris Jones, Caitlin Cairns, and Kyle Anderson

This profile is dedicated to the memory of Carrie Ann Lenz. It was made by three Oklahoma City University students with the help and support of Carrie's mother, Doris Jones.



You can get to know Carrie, born August 4, 1968, through her facial expressions, which, even in her childhood, reflected her multi-faceted personality. She worked with federal officers in the Drug Enforcement Agency as a Asset and Forfeiture agent, had been a sorority sweetheart, and could even fix a riding lawnmower. But no matter what she was doing, Carrie was known for her ready smile and contagious laugh.



Carrie was an active member in her sorority, Sigma Kappa, while attending Central State University (now the University of Central Oklahoma). Sisterhood was a big part of Carrie's life, and so was her relationship with her mother. Once, during college, Carrie went home sick with a cold and needed her mother's care. It was after this that they developed a close, lasting friendship.



Carrie met her husband, Michael Lenz, at a drag race in Moore, Oklahoma during her senior year in high school. They began dating on Valentine's Day, shortly after meeting, and continued dating while in college. Carrie and Mike decided not to get married until after Carrie had graduated from college and found a secure job. They were wed on September 15, 1991.



Carrie was outgoing and spunky. She and her husband, Mike, went SCUBA diving while on their honeymoon. Shortly after their return, one of Carrie's best friends, a kindergarten teacher, asked her to share her adventure with the class. On the day of the presentation, Carrie showed up dressed in full SCUBA gear—flippers and all!



Animals were a big part of Carrie's life. Carrie and Mike raised field trial dogs. One rainy day, Carrie and her mother returned from shopping to find her litter of newborn puppies stranded in an open field, about to drown in a stream of rushing water. Carrie grabbed a gym bag out of her car, ran across the field, and loaded the puppies into the bag to carry them to safety. On the way to the house, Carrie slipped and fell, plastering herself in mud, but she managed to keep the bag of puppies above her head. Doris remembers Carrie being covered in red mud from head to toe, "but she kept those dogs up!"



When Carrie's mother was asked what she believes Carrie's greatest achievement was she replied, "Carrie set goals for herself and she truly achieved all of those goals. She wanted her life to go a certain way and she achieved that." Carrie aspired to be a DEA agent after working with federal officers in the Murrah building.



Carrie was six months pregnant on April 19, 1995. Her son, Michael James Lenz III, was one of three unborn children killed. In the museum's "Gallery of Honor" you will find that Carrie's shadowbox includes a pacifier and a diaper pin to ensure that her baby is remembered as well. Along side those objects are a few other symbols donated by Carrie's mother and father.



Carrie made this cross-stitch and gave it to her mother. Especially now, these words ring true. With the aid of this exhibit, we hope, in the words of Carrie's mother, "to never forget who Carrie was."

Gaining Insights into Research, Collaboration & Community

A Few Things We Learned Along the Way . . .

- The importance of preparation and project management
- Being sensitive to the interviewee
- Establishing a relationship of mutual trust
- Using the power of stories for communicating the richness and complexity of a person or event



Gaining Insights into Research, Collaboration & Community

A Few Things We Learned Along the Way . . .

- Searching beyond the Web or library
- Appreciating the sources of *secondary* research
- Understanding the behind-the-scenes work of curators and scholars



Always Digging More Deeply . . .

- Reflecting on what it means to “represent” history as a researcher, narrator, author
- Realizing we are now *making* memories and history for young visitors to the museum



To Continue Today's Conversation

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