

Thinking Out Loud

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Trevor Harris: Storytelling uses oral tradition to share some aspect of our culture. Storytelling is also a powerful way for a person to find their voice. My name is Trevor Harris, and this week on KBIA's Thinking Out Loud, we hear from a group of students who recently used storytelling as a way for young women to explore their identities and the social issues they care about it. MU students Michaela Tucker and Kelsey Kupferer created Making Waves as a way for teens to use radio production to tell their stories. That's up next on this week's Thinking Out Loud on KBIA.

Kelsey Kupferer: Hey everybody, I'm Kelsey Kupferer, taking over Thinking Out Loud today to bring you stories reported, written and produced by local high school students as part of Making Waves Youth Radio Initiative. Making Waves was founded about a year ago by me and Michaela Tucker to empower young people to share their true stories. Today you'll hear stories from four Rock Bridge High School students.

So let's get started! I'm here now with Making Waves youth reporter Mariah Doze. Mariah, thanks for being here.

Mariah Doze: Thanks for having me!

Kelsey: Mariah why don't you start us off by telling us about your story, and how you chose the topic.

Mariah: My story is about educational inequality in the classroom, and how stereotypes influence that educational inequality. With the issues going on at Mizzou right now, that's something that hits really close to home, and it's an issue that the world needs to hear about. And I wanted to be a part of making sure that happens.

Kelsey: What was the most challenging part for you in reporting this story?

Mariah: Definitely trying to get all of the story into this small, compact style of journalism. Journalism is really succinct, you have to get a lot of detail in a little amount of time. And it's just so hard because this story that I picked has so many nuances, so many different routes you can take to get to the same point, and finding the best, most direct route that still includes that emotion, and all that passion that you really care about, is really hard. It takes some getting used to.

Kelsey: What was the most fun part for you in putting together this story?

Mariah: Definitely seeing it come out the way it did is really amazing. When you look at where you started you see all your drafts and in the beginning you don't know how it's going to work. How's it gonna be the best story you can tell? But then you finish it and you voice it and it's over and you look at it and you know that everybody included will be really happy with the product you produced, it's a really good feeling.

Kelsey: What do you want people to take away from listening to your story?

Mariah: I just want people to have a more optimistic view on our education system. Just to know that it can improve. And we can always take steps to improve it. I know a lot of people who have given up. They feel like it's just really hard to deal with things, especially things like race relations, that are so sensitive in the classroom, but I feel like there's so much we can do. I just want people to know that we can do that and we can take steps to improve it. I just want people to know that there's still hope.

Kelsey: Is there anything else you would like to add about your experience reporting this story?

Mariah: I feel like everybody should have a chance to get into the world of journalism because it's really important that everybody has a chance to express something about themselves that they feel is important to the world. Journalism and the media has such a big impact in the way we see things and if we can all have a chance to add to that perspective we'd be a more well-rounded society.

Kelsey: Here's Mariah's Story, *Educating Beyond Stereotypes*.

[*Educating Beyond Stereotypes*]

Kelsey: Mariah produced that story with me and Michaela Tucker as part of Making Waves Youth Radio Initiative. Today we're bringing you stories written, reported and produced by Rock Bridge High School students. I'm here with youth reporter Jenna Liu. Alright, Jenna, tell me about your story.

Jenna Liu: Around the time I was thinking about what I wanted to do there was just so much vitriol in the news toward immigrants from the political side and from news pundits, and it got me

thinking about my own identity as a first generation immigrant, as the child of immigrants who moved here about 20 years ago. And then, when I was thinking about that, I was also thinking about how when I was younger I was going through a lot of internalized racism and trying to reject my identity, trying to reject my culture. And I was looking at the similarities between those two things and realizing where they converge and a lot of it had to do with me feeling like I was an outsider. Like my family, because they had come here, because they hadn't like, sailed across on the Mayflower, that we were somehow lesser than everyone else. And a lot of that was due to the fact that we weren't white. And doing some more research, and talking to some friends who were also first gen Americans, I began to see a very clear divide between immigrants of color and white immigrants. White immigrants were very willing to speak openly about their culture and to celebrate it. Whereas for a lot of Chinese American immigrants it's something that has been in the past a source of shame. And I think it's only been in the last few years that I've truly been able to realize what I was going through when I was younger, and accept myself and really engage in some self-reflection about both myself and internalized racism and the whole mentality of being an immigrant in American.

Kelsey: What do you hope people in the Columbia community gain by hearing your story?

Jenna: I think one of the most pressing issues right now is definitely Syrian refugees who are coming to Missouri and given the fact that there's been so much opposition against people coming into our state I think it's so important for people in Columbia to realize that outsiders aren't dangerous, that they're not different, that they're just people. And I think it's important to celebrate the humanity in everyone. And part of that is accepting people who are different than you. So I hope my piece can both shine a light on feelings that some first generation immigrants of color have been experiencing - maybe they haven't been able to confront it themselves, or maybe they have friends who aren't aware of the issue - but I hope it is able to encourage at least some discussion between them. I hope it's able to help someone in some way.

Kelsey: Here's Jenna's story, "Where are you really from? Colorism and Racism in Immigrant communities."

[“Where are you really from?” Colorism and Racism in Immigrant communities]

Kelsey: That was “Where are you Really From?” Colorism and Racism in immigrant communities by youth reporter Jenna Lu. Today we're bringing you stories produced by local high school students through Making Waves Youth Radio Initiative. I'm joined now by youth

reporter Zoya Kahn. So Zoya, your story is titled Growing up Muslim in Mid-Missouri. Tell me why you chose the topic you explored in your story.

Zoya: I chose to talk about something that was pretty personal to me, just because it's not something I really talk about too much otherwise, and I thought this would be a really good outlet to kind of get that story out so more people could hear about it. And it's just something that's really personal to me and I wanted to share it with others.

Kelsey: What do you hope people end up taking from your story?

Zoya: One thing is that Muslims are not all the same. That's pretty clear in my story hopefully. And just that it's difficult sometimes to be different, in high school or just in life in general. So, just that it's OK to be different. That's one thing I really hope they take away.

Kelsey: What's one thing you learned throughout the course of reporting your story?

Zoya: I think one thing was listening to other people's stories, because we did a lot of listening, which I think it was really kind of eye opening to hear other people's stories and hear perspectives that I never even thought about and to understand their point of view.

Kelsey: Is there anything else you want to share about your experience with Making Waves?

Zoya: It was a really great experience and I really enjoyed talking with my friends at school who I talk to almost every day but, you know, I didn't ever really talk to them about social issues and important issues in life that you don't really talk about with anyone else. That was really cool.

Kelsey: Why do you think it's so important to talk about those issues?

Zoya: In the society we live in today, I feel like we really need to have a really open mind and be able to think about different perspectives, and that's kind of what you get when you think about these issues and when you can talk about them openly, you can find solutions to things that would be difficult just doing yourself.

Kelsey: Here's Zoya's story, Growing Up Muslim in Mid-Missouri.

[Growing Up Muslim in Mid-Missouri]

Kelsey: Zoya produced that story with me and Michaela Tucker as part of Making Waves Youth Radio Initiative. You're listening to Thinking Out Loud. I'm Kelsey Kupferer.

I'm here with a group of youth reporters talking about their experiences with Making Waves, a local youth radio program. Joining me now is youth reporter Madison Wright. So Madison, tell me about your story.

Madison Wright: I decided to talk about performance based acceptance and how that has impacted my life and the anxiety that it has caused me in the past, and connecting that to performance based acceptance that people might feel this pressure to perform in order to be accepted in their own life. And how that could affect them in day to day life. And how we should transition from "this is what I need to do in order to be loved an accepted" to "this is who I am, and that's why I should be loved an accepted, by others and by myself."

Kelsey: Why is this topic so important to you?

Madison: I have a lot of experience with this topic and it's something that I struggled with for a long time. It did give me a lot of anxiety, and it caused a lot of problems in my life. So I think to be able to shed some light on that, and to process that for myself, and also to be able to help someone else who was struggling with that would be awesome. Would be such a great feeling.

Kelsey: What was one thing you learned throughout the course of reporting your story?

Madison: One thing for sure that was really helpful for me was being able to process everything that had happened with my swimming and being able to dive deeper into that and really think about why was this such a big issue for me and how does this still impact my daily life. And to be able to put that into words and be able to not only analyze that and process that for myself but to share that with other people was really helpful to me.

Kelsey: Here's Madison's story, "Challenging Performance-Based Identity."

[Challenging Performance-Based Acceptance]

Kelsey: Madison produced that story with me and Michaela Tucker.

You've been listening to stories produced by Making Waves Youth Radio Initiative. To hear all of our stories, and to learn more about the program, visit our website: makingwavescomo.org. You can us on Facebook, and on Twitter at @MWYRI.

That's all I've got! Thanks for listening to Thinking Out Loud.