

The Teaching/Learning Social Justice Series

Edited by Lee Anne Bell

Barnard College, Columbia University

Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline

Tara J. Yosso

Understanding White Privilege

Creating Pathways to Authentic Relationships Across Race

Frances E. Kendall

Elusive Justice

Wrestling with Difference and Educational Equity in Everyday Practice

Thea Renda Abu El-Haj

Revealing the Invisible

Confronting Passive Racism in Teacher Education

Sherry Marx

Telling Stories to Change the World

Global Voices on the Power of Narrative to Build Community and Make Social Justice Claims

Edited by Rickie Solinger, Madeline Fox, and Kayhan Irani

Telling Stories to Change the World

Global Voices on the Power of Narrative to Build Community and Make Social Justice Claims

**Edited by
Rickie Solinger, Madeline Fox,
and Kayhan Irani**

“Our Stories, Told By Us”

*The Neighborhood Story Project in
New Orleans*

RACHEL BREUNLIN, ABRAM HIMELSTEIN, AND
ASHLEY NELSON

In the Beginning

Abram:

I was teaching writing at John McDonogh Senior High, just down the street from where I live. I use the word “teaching” loosely, as mostly what I was doing was failing to teach and collecting a paycheck to participate in a crime against children. John Mac was deeply dysfunctional, too chaotic to permit much in the way of school education.

I went home sour every day, and then I’d see my students in the streets, and know what the denial of education meant for the possibilities available to them.

Rachel was teaching at the school as well, and it went better for her, but it was still far from the level of teaching we wanted—a writing program where the kids owned the stories, and there was redemption for our neighborhoods and school. Because, to be honest, the stories coming out of the school were a beast: shootings, fights, and 80 percent not passing the exams required for graduation.

Rachel:

My friend, Ms. Ida Mae, was one of the janitors at the school. The queen of the Creole Wild West Mardi Gras Indian tribe, she worked all year to build a beautiful suit to wear on Mardi Gras morning. I hated to see how students deliberately threw trash on the ground for her to pick up. When I encouraged them to take some pride in their school, they denied responsibility, “It’s her job.” If they saw her only as someone who picked up their garbage, it was partly because the school didn’t encourage anyone to be seen as a well-rounded person—a part of churches, clubs, and other organizations like Mardi Gras Indians, who might have been artists, musicians, or dancers outside of their time at school. Nor did it encourage an acknowledgment of emotion—

how struggling families, the stress of avoiding violence, becoming a parent, and having other adult responsibilities well before you got a diploma could affect school work. As one of our writers explains it, “Things was moving fast. Your maturity level was high. You seem older than you appear. Older and more knowledgeable people will draw you for good and for bad.” There was an incredible gap between the students’ life experiences and these educational institutions.

Although there were many committed teachers at the school, there was a lot of distrust between the staff and the students. Every year, students were gunned down in the streets by other youth without an official acknowledgment from the school except for the ten-foot chain link fence laced with barbed wire, metal detectors, and uniform checks every morning. Parents and grandparents recalled days when they could sleep with their front doors open, when your neighbor would “bid you the time of day.” They complained, “Kids these days, they ain’t got *no* respect.” Without faith in a system, many of



Ms. Ida Mae, Queen of the Creole Wild West; Rachel Breunlin

our students moved into the underground economy of drug dealing where they set their own rules. Before I lived in the Seventh Ward, before I heard gunshots at night and learned the next morning that another boy from John Mac had been shot around the corner from me, I was more sympathetic to this economic argument. Afterwards, it just wasn’t good enough to just understand where the problem was coming from.

Young people were already speaking about the problems in raps, freestyles, poems, and graffiti. They were carrying caskets and wearing memorial t-shirts for fallen friends. Still, they were isolated from the larger dialogues. As a city, we didn’t know each other’s stories. I was lucky to have a small group of students and a fairly open curriculum. They taught me a lot about New Orleans—the difference between street smarts and school smarts—and I struggled with why it seemed “never the two shall meet.” I put together small publications. I watched students who did really well in my class spiral and get kicked out of school. I watched public housing being torn down, rivalries between different areas of the city—known as wards—escalate into violence.

I experienced the joy of watching students feel the power of their own words, even as they grumbled about revisions. It was the first time many of my students had been required to write more than a couple of pages. Yet every time I felt like I was making progress, I’d be slapped with another setback. The school was over-enrolled. My last year as a writing teacher, there were more than fifteen floating teachers—i.e., without their own classroom—and the administration had changed for the fourth time in as many years. My classes were relegated to the storage room of the library.

Ashley:

I’ve always enjoyed writing. I wrote little poems and songs as a kid and soon found out that writing is one thing I am good at. I decided to stick with it. I attended John McDonogh Senior High where a good education is a myth. It didn’t bother me. I was just happy for the free ride in high school—what teen wouldn’t be? During my 10th grade free ride, I met Ms. Rachel, who was the creative-writing teacher in a closet of a classroom in the back of the library.

She had six of the worst kids in the school, but she did her thing—she taught us, ya know. We were always having interesting discussions and writing about things that were on our minds. Ms. Rachel let us get loose. We could write freely and not worry about what was written until it was done. She pushed us. If she knew we could write two pages, she made us write four. She told us we could do it in a class with no air conditioning, no books, and trash and graffiti everywhere. We believed her, so we wrote.

Abram:

I started talking to Rachel about what a real writing program would be like, and how to get students and their families involved. She had these books she

had been producing in her classes, and they looked excellent, and her kids were seriously proud of them. The idea began to percolate: writing books about things that meant something to the students. I wanted to have them take ownership of the work, not to feel like it was for school work, so came up with the idea of paying them a thousand dollars—an advance on the royalties that would be due to them if the books sold more than a thousand copies. A lot of the issues driving students away from school were economic: Desire for after-school jobs or hustles. Writing has always been work to me, and I've always demanded a paycheck for my efforts, so I wanted to honor the work the writers would be doing. Plus it made a good comeback: when one of the writers would complain about how hard the work was, I'd say, "That's why you get paid."

Rachel:

Abram told me the story of his great-grandfather—a Jewish immigrant who ended up being a circus photographer and then settling in Clarksdale, Mississippi—who wrote autobiographies that weren't necessarily good, but nonetheless demystified the process of writing for the entire family. Abram had grown up believing he could make books and already had two to his name. He wanted the Neighborhood Story Project (NSP), as a book-making program, to do the same.

With a background in urban and applied anthropology, I was excited that the project would be a bridge between the classroom and the neighborhoods where the students lived. Rather than looking at the deficits in our students and communities, I wanted to build on the strengths. I wanted young people to learn the deeper histories of their communities, see the connections between their own experiences and others, and be able to share their perspectives with them. There has been a lot of talk of schools being open to the community, but I was at the point where I thought the school should take a few steps into the neighborhoods as well. After all, there was nothing nicer than walking home from school and hearing my students call out, "Hey, Ms. Rachel!" Theory and potential practice aside, I was burnt out of teaching without having secure, full-time work. I wanted to wish Abram good luck, but then I thought of Ashley—all her anger and analysis and poetry—and said I'd do it.

Abram:

We started trying to make it real. The Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans was interested in the idea of having teenagers write books for the whole community, and they took me on as an Americorp position. Neighbors and friends stepped up and contributed what they could, and mid-year the University of New Orleans agreed to pay Rachel's salary.

The school was overbooked and didn't have space for the writing project, so we rented an apartment across the street, and were given a table. We brought

our favorite books from home and stocked the bookshelf. And then we went recruiting.

Ashley:

My 11th grade year, Ms. Rachel came to me and asked would I be interested in a writing project. I asked what kind and she explained the idea of the NSP. I thought, "A thousand dollars and I get to leave school? I'm all in."

Abram:

With seven students on board, we hosted a family dinner party at Rachel's house. With the students and their parents, we talked about the commitment—said we needed to build trust early on because there would be some hard moments. The students talked about their neighborhoods, and the parents shared stories and advice.

In the classroom, the first two months were spent becoming serious writers and serious readers. We wrote poems, kept journals, read good books, and talked about what made for good writing. We read *Our America: Life and Death on the South Side of Chicago*, and *The House on Mango Street*.¹ Rachel talked about the difference between the right and left side of the brain, and letting ideas percolate. We took field trips to places that would theoretically inspire writing. We started talking about ways to make the books interesting: struggle, plot, dialogue, and description.

And we got experts; photographers, writers, journalists started hearing about the project, and came in to do guest lectures, to teach the skills that Rachel and I didn't have, to give the writers a break from the long days.

Ashley:

Our assignment was to write a book about our block, but that was hard because I came from a housing project where we were all one community. Everybody hung everywhere. I couldn't just write about Orleans Avenue, for example, because it's not the only part that was happening in Lafitte. I told the class, "I'm gonna write about the whole project." It was also hard to know what story to start with because I didn't know what I wanted to show with writing a book. I had to find out what I wanted to tell people through the stories.

We began reading books similar to what we were going to publish, which helped me find my writing voice, but I still didn't have my inspiration. Most days I went to class, I didn't even feel like writing. I had so many other things on my mind that writing was too much to deal with: trying to balance school, a part-time job, plus I was writing a whole book—I didn't think I could manage. At one time I told Abram, "Man, I quit." He responded, "No, you don't." And there went the conversation. I was back to writing.

Rachel:

In November we started fieldwork. While most of the neighborhoods the students would be working in were predominantly African American, there were some areas where there was more diversity. Part of the goal of the project was to hear from people you normally wouldn't get to know, and to "defamiliarize" what you already think you do. As Zora Neale Hurston writes in *Mules and Men*, culture can be hard to see because it fits "like a tight chemise. I couldn't see it for wearing it . . . I had to have the spy-glass of Anthropology to look through at that."²

Teaching interview skills is a lot about interpersonal dynamics. How do you make someone feel comfortable with the interview? How do you ask for more details without seeming pushy or invasive? How do you narrow in on what is really important to the person you are interviewing? We had an all-day retreat at my house to discuss methodology and the ethics of doing fieldwork. We talked about stepping back from our everyday lives and explored the notion of cultural relativity and being open-minded to other people's stories.

We wrote practice questions and spent time interviewing each other before the students went out on their own. Their first round was with family members. The interviews lasted about five minutes—most were rapid fire and vague. The students were frustrated and Abram and I knew we needed to reassess the process. We were getting a chance to record stories that normally didn't leave the neighborhood, and we wanted to honor their experiences by making sure the students had enough mentorship and guidance to do good work. We decided to accompany them.

With this decision, we shifted how we viewed our work. It was no longer the students with one foot in the classroom and one foot in the neighborhoods—we were now hanging out on porches and front stoops, talking about book-making, and helping students to record their communities' stories. Kesha Jackson and I strategized with her grandmother, Mrs. Robinson, on who she should interview. Mrs. Robinson called her friends to see if they wouldn't mind talking—the next day, we were sitting at the Palm Tavern hearing Ms. Celie tell stories about the family's business.

Abram went with Sam and Arlet Wylie, brother and sister who lived above a corner store on St. Claude Avenue, to interview neighbors ranging from the white circus punks who lived next door to the drug dealers on the corner. Here Arlet reflects on the guys who used to hang out on her block:

We never went outside—staying to ourselves was the best thing for us, or so my mom thought. She didn't want us conversating with the riffraff, or "street trash," as she called them. "Thugs" was also another word she used frequently.

Our block of St. Claude is known as a hustle spot. A lot of people see these young teenage boys who hang outside as having no lives, no jobs,

no morals, and no family values. I thought so, too, until I got to be a teenager and started hanging outside on my balcony.

Throughout the rest of the book, both Arlet and Sam explore this world they were cautioned to stay away from in an effort to let people know "the stereotypes are not all true."

Ashley:

My first interview was with my grandma, who I've lived with on and off over the years. We talked about the closeness of Lafitte and it reminded me of the day my mama died. It gave me the idea for the first story I really cared about: "Help from the Strangest Places." It was about the day of my mama's funeral and how the community came over to lend their support. Writing this story helped me figure out what direction I wanted to take my book and that was showing the togetherness of the community I come from.

Rachel:

A dialectic quickly developed between the interviews and stories—interviews led to more stories and vice versa.



Ashley interviewing Charmaine; Rachel Breunlin

Abram:

And so the books began to come into being. There were crises and breakthroughs weekly. Some days we argued, some days we wrote away from the hard parts of our lives. But most days we did it, we interviewed, took pictures, wrote down the stories that we kept hidden from most of the world.

Ashley:

It was hard trusting readers to understand and not judge. I was scared, but the Neighbourhood Story Project (NSP) family made writing this book amazing. We laughed at the funny stories and cried during the bad ones. What made it great was you could write anything and it was appreciated.

Abram:

We got the stories and interviews ready to be read. And then we let people read the drafts, and the books became more real. Each book had a committee of readers: a family member, a fellow teenager, and someone from the city who wanted to be a part of the Neighborhood Story Project. We would read the draft, and then talk about the book, where it was confusing, or needed more, or would endanger the writer or the neighbors. As we let people read the writing, and know the stories, people, including us, started believing that the books were already books, just waiting to be printed. And having people read the work put the fire under us.

Rachel:

At this stage, we were weaving together the interviews from the neighborhoods and the stories of the students' lives, and continuously talking about how to balance the honesty of a writer and the ethics of a fieldworker. We wanted to honor both sides of the project. Kesha wrote a story about growing up with a mother on drugs and the loneliness she felt living with her grandmother while her mom was in a rehab program:

There were times when I was left inside alone and hungry. There were days when I would wake up without my mom and nights I didn't sleep. I had to sit there and think of places where I thought she would go, and I would call and they would always say that she just left or wasn't there when I knew that she was right there.

After a few months, Kesha took a trip to visit her mom, Pam, bringing along a tape recorder and list of questions, partly derived from her own writing.

K: So when you used to be gone, and I used to be calling for you, how did you feel?

P: It used to hurt, you know, because I never wanted to send you through any hard feelings or—I never, I made a promise when you was born and I let the promise go—and this is bringing back a lot of feelings [crying] . . .

K: It's OK. Sometimes when I used to call you, you used to be right there.

P: Mmhm.

K: Most of the time.

When Kesha came back to class the next day, she had gained the confidence to tell her story—in all its complexity—without worrying that it would jeopardize her relationship with her mom. Thinking about women's role as caretakers led her to structure the rest of her book around this theme.

Arlet and Sam wrote their book together. They balanced their different perspectives on family and community by writing complementary stories and doing a long interview with their mom together. Here, Arlet asks her mom, Emelda, about this process:

A: What is it like for us to be working on this book?

E: When I think about them, and I think about the book, it's just overwhelming pride that I feel. I hope that it makes them feel better about themselves. Maybe you don't feel so frustrated because now somebody knows your story and somebody knows your struggle. And it's inspiring because you're still standing. And you did not have to resort to some of the stuff that other people say they resorted to that lived in similar situations.

Abram:

During the spring semester, we did workshops on how to talk to the media. Ebony Bolding and I led the lesson, her talking about losing a year of school after a reporter twisted her words around while covering a story about a school shooting, me recounting a scene from the movie *Bull Durham* where the experienced player coaches the rookie on how to handle the media. The basic idea was that we wanted to shape the news, not be shaped by it. We spent time figuring out what we wanted our message to be, and then practiced staying on message no matter what kinds of questions the reporters asked us.

Rachel:

Of course, we were seen as a kind of media as well, and people's preconceived ideas about being interviewed—developed from police reports, social service workers, and reporters without any accountability to the community—influenced whether they wanted to talk to the students.

Ashley:

Consequently, the fieldwork wasn't always easy and welcoming. Sometimes people acted negatively towards us and the tape recorders. Who can blame them? Getting slammed by the media is common where I am from.

Rachel:

In Ashley's neighborhood, a barber named Freeman demonstrated some of the problems we were up against, but also the large impact of deep community work. Freeman had been in the neighborhood for over fifty years and Ashley thought he'd be willing to do an interview. The first time she asked, he responded, "For how much money?" I explained it was for a school project and he looked skeptical. There were faded photographs of Malcolm X on his wall, a past with the Nation of Islam, and a general skepticism about why this white lady was working with Ashley. How did he know we wouldn't make money off these books? I explained our non-profit status—that the sale of the book would go into funding the program in the future—but said we understood his concerns.

A week later, he sat in the barber chair talking to Ashley, but said he wouldn't sign the release form until we showed him the transcript. When we returned an edited interview a few weeks later, he was holding court on Orleans Avenue with a number of older guys in the neighborhood. He took the interview and started reading out loud to a hushed crowd. When he finished, another wave of recollections moved through the crowd, while Freeman said, "This is good. This is better than I thought." When we asked about the release form, he said he wasn't ready: "I want to share it a little more with my think tank. Come back tomorrow." When we returned, he said the interview was over by his aunt—"a church-going woman. I wanted to make sure I got the family history right." It took a few more stops to pick up the release form, but in the process, the interview passed through multiple readings. The community had a say in how their stories were shaped, and it made a big difference to their confidence in the project.

In each neighborhood, we brought the stories back for editing. In almost every instance, the interview passed through a number of small revisions as family and friends looked them over and gave advice. I recall sitting in Walter's bar while the bartender looked over a rough draft of the chapter she was in. One of her regular customers said, "I never thought anybody'd do something like a book down here."

"That's Aline's granddaughter."

"I know. She's doing good."

Books Come Out

Abram:

I don't know how to talk about that night. Too many people in one room, the air conditioners failed, so we were all sweating. But here is the sentence that stays with me: Three hundred and fifty people, white and black, old and young, Christians and anarchists, in one room, on the same page, here to celebrate the publication of five books and six new authors. It felt like a functioning society, and that was the reward. The books were beyond what Rachel and I could have dreamed. More than yearbooks of a block (which would have been enough, Dayenu) the books had become literature.

We had envisioned block parties to celebrate the book releases, but the blocks couldn't wait and were at the citywide party. "This is my book," people said, and I've never felt better hearing it.

In the month before the storm we sold out of the first printing. Two thousand copies of the books, circulating around the city.

Ashley:

My book, along with all the others, shows our lives. They show our communities and they tell our stories. While writing this book, I released a lot of built-up energy. People needed to know about me, my family, and my neighborhood. In the project, all we really had was each other, but we remained happy. I told what I thought. I told the truth.

Rachel:

Since publication, each book has taken on a life of its own—traveling farther than we could have imagined into other high school classrooms, college curricula, juvenile detention centers, women's centers, independent bookstores around the country, and libraries. They have been excerpted in places like *Harper's Magazine* and *The Houston Chronicle*, and featured in other local and national press. Our students, as writers and agents of their own experiences, were shaping the way their communities were seen in New Orleans and around the country.

The biggest impact, however, was in the lives of our students, their families, and neighborhoods. The morning of the book release party, Kesha and I rented a car to drive across Lake Ponchartrain to pick up her mother, who had gotten special permission to come to the event from her rehab program. Kesha's book, *What Would the World Be Without Women? Stories from the Ninth Ward* was centered around the story of her mom. We wanted her mom to look through the final book before the event, so she could get comfortable with the finished product. Pam said, "I'm healing myself through Turning Points [the rehab center]. This is how Kesha's healing herself." Over the next few weeks, Pam sold over fifteen copies to other women in her program.

Before the storm, we were able to have three of the block parties. Each one had its own magic. The women who ran the Lafitte Residential Council, who were featured in Ashley's book, sponsored hers in the Sojourner Truth Community Center. The Wylies hosted their party at their new house, and Nine Times Social and Pleasure Club, featured in Kesha's book, surprised her with a second line parade during her block party in the Upper Ninth Ward. Neighbors, family members, and teachers danced through the streets with the books. As the evening came to a close, everyone autographed copies of the book. The sense of authorship extended beyond Kesha—it was her story, but it was theirs as well.

The Levees Fail

Rachel:

The week before the storm, the NSP was back at John Mac recruiting for the next wave of Neighborhood Story Project writers. The administration and teachers were excited about the books—planned on using them in their classes and encouraged other students to apply. Over forty students came out for the informational meeting.

We were also organizing Ebony's block party in the Sixth Ward for that weekend. Her mom, who worked in the cafeteria where Ebony went to



Kesha's block party; Rachel Breunlin

elementary school, had been promoting the event and many of Ebony's former teachers and classmates were planning to come out for the party. They also wanted Ebony to do a special reading at their school. I picked her up on Friday night to make sure she liked the music on the jukebox and said, "We just need to keep an eye on this storm."

Ashley:

I was preparing for Ebony's block party that Saturday. I heard her mama was cooking all kinds of good food—chicken from Man Chu's, dirty rice and red beans. I called Ms. Rachel to make plans to get there. She tells me it's cancelled because there is a storm coming. This is how I found out about Katrina. I thought it was just a normal Saturday. I had no idea that it would be my last time in New Orleans and have it feel like home.

Abram:

There aren't words to talk about how we felt when the levees broke. The next few days were some of the most intense in our lives. One by one the text messages came in, a little more floating and hopeful. And then we went home to bury and salvage. All of the writers were safe, all of the neighborhoods gone.

Rebuilding

Rachel:

For a long time, all we could think about was what we had lost. As we reconnected with people in the Neighborhood Story Project network, they were not only thankful to have the books, but to have gone through the process of participating in them. Mark Damico, one of the neighbors interviewed in Jana Dennis's book on Midcity, said that while many of his friends felt like they had lost neighborhoods they never really understood, his block of Palmyra Street was close knit, in large part because of Jana's book. In exile, the writers used the books to explain the New Orleans they knew to new classmates and neighbors.

John Mac—like the majority of New Orleans Public Schools—didn't reopen the year after the storm, and we began to look for other avenues to help people tell their stories until we could get back to the school. Nine Times Social and Pleasure Club members, inspired by Kesha's book, decided to write a book of their own. On Monday nights for more than eight months, we hosted writing workshops in our homes and interviews all over the city to tell the story of the Desire Public Housing Development and the creation of one of the first second line clubs in the Ninth Ward. The project brought club members back together who were just beginning to rebuild their lives in the city, and gave them a chance to document the people and places important to the story of their benevolent association. Their book, *Coming Out the Door*

for the Ninth Ward, came out on November 17, 2006, two days before their parade.

Abram:

That Friday, fourteen months after Katrina, we celebrated what we still had. We had this new book, on its way to becoming a bestseller in New Orleans, and we had each other. There were 600 of us in a church hall—including the other NSP writers and their families. We started with prayer and readings from the book, middled with food cooked by Nine Times, and ended with dancing in preparation for Sunday's second line.

On Sunday, November 19, 2006, Nine Times gave the Ninth Ward its first second line since the flood. The process of making a destroyed city a home again is a slow one, especially with so many of us all over the map. People came in from all over the Diaspora to participate in the Nine Times parade. The Neighborhood Story Project hosted a "stop" along the parade route and the Wylies, back home again, helped us sell copies of *Coming Out the Door*.

There is no blueprint for rebuilding a city and a culture. We've all been trying to figure out how to respond. The guys from Nine Times, together, have given one of my favorite responses to the displacement and loss: Their book spans the distances and recounts our history. Their parades draw us near.

Ashley:

I came back to New Orleans to finish school and to continue working with the Neighborhood Story Project. But I also came home to be a part of the help because I believe just by being here we're pulling our home together again. Since I graduated, I've been going to Delgado Community College, teaching writing classes with the NSP, and working at Pizza Hut and a youth program called Rethink. Just by being here and participating makes it a little more like New Orleans—the New Orleans I wrote about.

Rachel Breunlin is the co-director of the Neighborhood Story Project and an instructor in the anthropology department at University of New Orleans. Her most recent article (with Helen Regis), published in *American Anthropologist*, was "Putting the Ninth Ward on the Map: Race, Place, and Transformation in Desire, New Orleans".

Abram Himmelstein is the co-director of the Neighborhood Story Project and the author of numerous books, including *Tales of a Punk Rock Nothing* (with Jamie Schweser; New Month from the Dirty South, 1998) and *What the Hell Am I Doing Here?: The 100 T-Shirt Project* (Garrett County Press, 2003). A publisher, writer, and public school teacher, he is currently rebuilding the NSP's writing program at John McDonogh Senior High.

Ashley Nelson, author of the Neighborhood Story Project's *The Combination*, has taught in writing programs such as the NSP, Young Authors/Young Aspirations, and New Orleans Outreach. She has also worked with Rethink, Kids Rethinking New Orleans' Schools. After a year of Americorps service with the NSP, she is now a student at Delgado Community College.

Notes

- 1 LeAlan Jones and Lloyd Newman, with David Isay, *Our America: Life and Death on the South Side of Chicago* (New York: Pocket Books, 1998); Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).
- 2 Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990).

Further Reading

The Neighborhood Story Project, a partnership between the University of New Orleans and the Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans, is a community documentary organization dedicated to creating important literature about our city. Through teaching writing and interviewing, publishing, and hosting readings, book releases, and block parties, we reweave the fabric of community.

The Neighborhood Story Project: www.neighborhoodstoryproject.org