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Your Voice is Not Forgotten

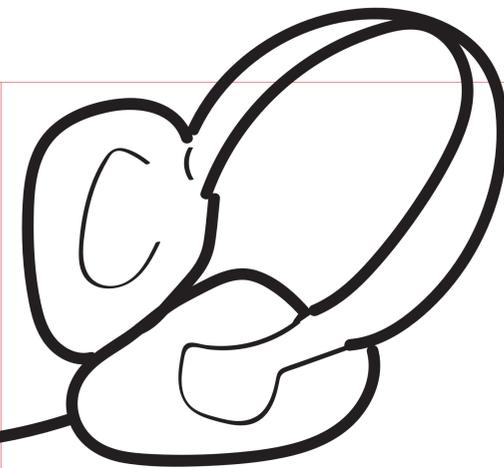
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Abstract

This socially-engaged art project explores acts of storytelling about the city of Detroit through the experiences of marginalized women. I will source oral histories from women who utilize the YWCA Interim House, the only domestic abuse shelter in Metropolitan Detroit, and record anonymous audio narratives. This project engages with a community to record stories, histories and creates an archive for the YWCA and other survivors.

The project utilizes anthropological research techniques pertinent to recording feminist oral histories. Through the anonymous recording of audio narratives this project challenges the invisibility of women's stories in the patriarchal recording of history.



Objectives

I hope to discover a way for these women's voices to be heard and relay the power of sharing stories in the face of societal-induced shame. My goal is that this project is completed in a non-exploitative manner by constructing narratives that combat stereotypes about intimate partner violence victims, specific to the metropolitan area of Detroit.

Challenges

I'm not an anthropologist nor a social worker. I'm a visual artist. Research and readings from the American Culture class, Feminist Oral Histories was helpful, but I have a lot to learn. Each interview becomes more natural, more of a conversation. Retaining anonymity and celebrating voices of participants became a large task as well.

Real-Life Impact

The staff at the YWCA feels strongly that being present, listening, and using conversation as a form of therapy, aids in the healing process. Copies of the interviews are given to participants and the YWCA retains an archive of stories.

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
metropolitan detroit

What I Learned

I went into this project seeing the final outcome as an installation which would live in an art gallery, or an art context. After many intense conversations with my advisors, we came to the conclusion that these very intimate stories deserve to live somewhere special. This project has become supplementary to my practice, but these stories are simply too profound to be reduced to material or media in an artwork.

Library Partnership

The library was immensely helpful in providing information that both challenged and supported my project-sources that dealt with intimate partner violence in ways sensitive to both qualitative and quantitative manners. Library funding also provided the means to travel back and forth to Detroit.

Further Work

I am currently constructing a sculptural element, a cocoon-like object, that a listener will enter into in order to hear stories.



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