

A Look Into “Borderless Seed Stories”

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Michigan Library Scholar 2024
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Keywords: Oral History, Arts-Based Research,
Literature Reviews, Exhibit Design



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Thank you!



01

Project Scope





A Big Redirection!



“Internationalizing the Seed Library”

This exhibit is the first to be completed under the banner of “International Studies and seed libraries” and will act as a marketing and outreach tool. As such, the exhibit will not be a comprehensive resource, but instead will provide a **narrative structure centered on highlighting the experiences of international community members and seeds.**

“Borderless Seed Stories”

“Borderless Seed Stories” is a collection of **oral histories, literature, and archival research** that aims to **highlight important work going on within the Southeast Michigan gardening community, situating local seed/farming reclamation efforts within the broader global context** of political, economic, and cultural frames... The goal of this exhibit is not to be an exhaustive guide to understanding seed work and its accompanying stories, but rather to introduce visitors to local initiatives as they relate to global conversations of seed justice.





02
**Transgressiv
e &
Relational
Learning**





Teaching to Transgress (1994) by bell hooks

- “To enter classroom settings in colleges and universities with the will to share the desire to encourage excitement, was to transgress... Agendas had to be flexible, had to allow for spontaneous shifts in direction.” (7)
- Pedagogical practices as emerging “from the mutually illuminating interplay of anti-colonial, critical, and feminist pedagogies” (10)
- “education as the practice of freedom” (11)
- “The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created.” (207)





SeedSongs (2015, 2016, 2018) by Rowen White

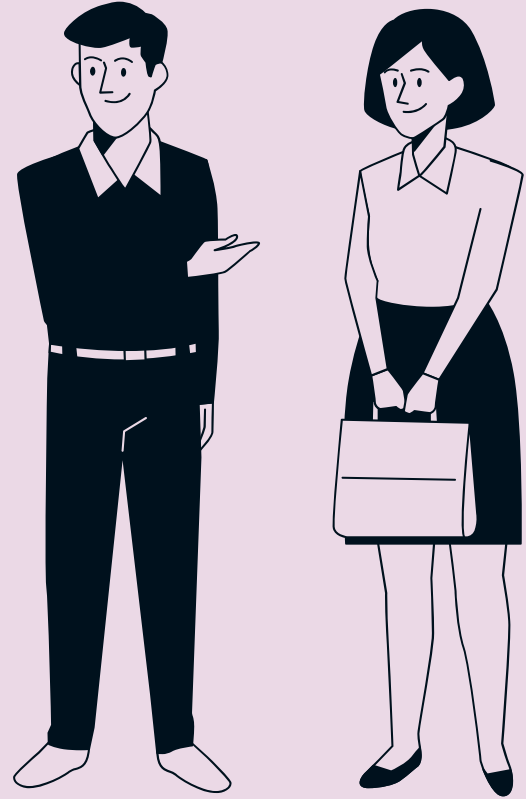
- “They have been the most unconventional teachers, these humble seeds, reminding me that all that seems lost truly isn’t..just laying dormant until the time is right for them to return to the earth.” (Fertile Resistance and Reconciliation)
- The beauty of recognizing and honoring our seeds as living breathing relatives, is that we see the stories, cultural memory and wisdom they carry is also alive” (Reawakening Relationships)
- “Our greatest wealth is not only in the seeds and their stories of abundance and nourishment, but in the connection that is made between people who share seeds.” (Currency of Connection)





03

**Research &
Design
Process**



Literature Review

SJ_Panel Resources/Readings ☆ 📁 🌐

File Edit View Insert Format Tools Extensions Help

90% Normal text Arial 11 B I U A

Link to selected & highlighted resources: additional files from sj's readings

POETRY & PERFORMANCE

Living Nations, Living Words: An Anthology of First Peoples Poetry

- (US) poet laureate joy harjo (born in Tulsa, Oklahoma and is a member of the Mvskoke Nation)
- https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=jLsCFAAAQBAI&oi=fnd&pg=PT11&dq=indigenous+poems+about+seeds&ots=H00s5b406y&sig=w0Sug_0u53pTAsQmdV_SASqIWoYh=onepage&q&f=false → access on google books through umich account; also borrowed from hatcher
- Project description: <https://loc.gov/programs/poetry-and-literature/poet-laureate/poet-laureate-projects/living-nations-living-words/> → has links to the collection, educator guide, and story map
- Story map link: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/arcgis/storymap.html?appid=7314d6680e6fa47be889d>

Disaster Capitalism, Mutual Aid, & Community Resilience

Guntra A. Aistara

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01 **Food Systems**
and how we talk about food sovereignty and seeds.

02 **Seed Rematriation**
as it relates to foodways, Mother Earth, and healing.

03 **The Garden**
and how it frames "The Native," and the Edenic Narrative in colonialism.

04 **Internationalism**
as it relates to globalization, colonial borders, and ownership.

ders), the project and poems: "For my n Poetry, I conceived the poems. I want this map s peoples of our country ! find us fairly a, and nearby

ization (Deborah A. , pg. 37–38); Current, I

, Living Words

Actually existing tomatoes
Politics of memory, variety, and empire in Latvian struggles over seeds


















Guntra A. Aistara

Abstract: In March 2012, a small farm in Latvia with a collection of over 200 tomato varieties was charged with the illegal sale of seeds not included in the European Union's Common Catalogue. The farm's collection includes traditional Latvian varieties that have never been officially registered, Western varieties imported illegally during the Soviet years, and Russian varieties that came into use during the Soviet years and are now defended by Latvian gardeners as "traditionally grown" and representing the taste of their childhoods. The debate highlighted the continuing struggle over Latvia's geopolitical positioning between Russia and the European Union and control over seeds as a tactic of empire. I explore the cultural memories embedded in the contested tomato seeds and how they contribute to an intertwined imaginary of the Latvian landscape idyll with a Soviet sociality. I argue that the innovative resolution to this conflict represents a process of transculturation in a contact zone between empires (Pratt 1992).

Keywords: biodiversity, borders, cultural memory, intellectual property rights, seeds, variety



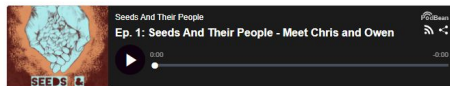
Oral History Research

Name ↓	Last mo... ▼
 shiloh bss transcript_zoom.vtt 	Jul 18, 2024
 shiloh bss transcript_macwhisper.docx 	Jul 18, 2024
 shiloh bss recording.m4a 	Jul 18, 2024
 shelly bss transcript_zoom.vtt 	Jul 18, 2024
 shelly bss transcript_REV.txt 	Jul 18, 2024
 shelly bss transcript_REV 	Jul 18, 2024
 shelly bss recording.m4a 	Jul 9, 2024
 phim bss transcript.	
 phim bss transcript.	
 phim bss recording.	



SEEDS AND THEIR PEOPLE - EPISODE 1: MEET CHRIS AND OWEN

Jan 04, 2020 | 4 comments



Borderless Seed Stories Shelby Stakenas Oral History 1

This interview has been edited for brevity. SJ uses they/any pronouns, and Shelby uses she/they pronouns.

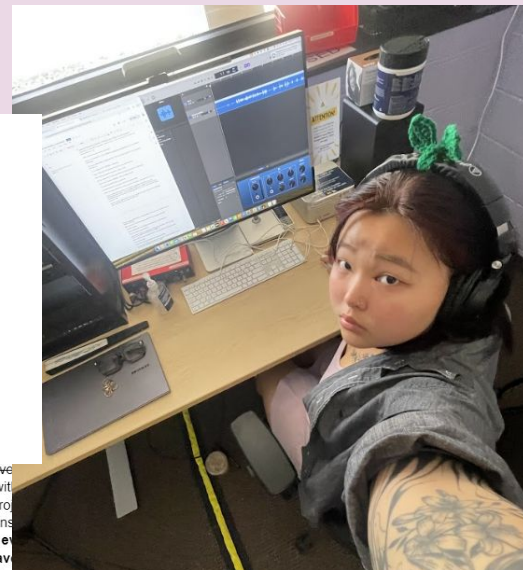
SJ: Good afternoon. My name is SJ Shin and today I'm interviewing Shelby Stakenas on July 9th, 2024. Can you state your name as you would like to be called for this recording?

Shelby: I'm Shelby. It's nice to meet you.

SJ: All right, so the first question that I have is what identities do you hold that you'd like to share with us?

Shelby: I think the identity that I most relate with is student. I really love being at the University of Michigan and coming here and having an opportunity to work with the people I have and learn in this environment has been the most impactful to me. I also come from a low income community. And so I'm a member of a very interesting community, comparatively, at the University of Michigan. We have a wide range of people here and that is a specific subset that I am proud to be a part of. I'm a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. I love—it was just Pride Month and so that's a very exciting thing. And I think those are the ones that I relate to most.

SJ: Can you share with me when and where you were born, and who raised you?

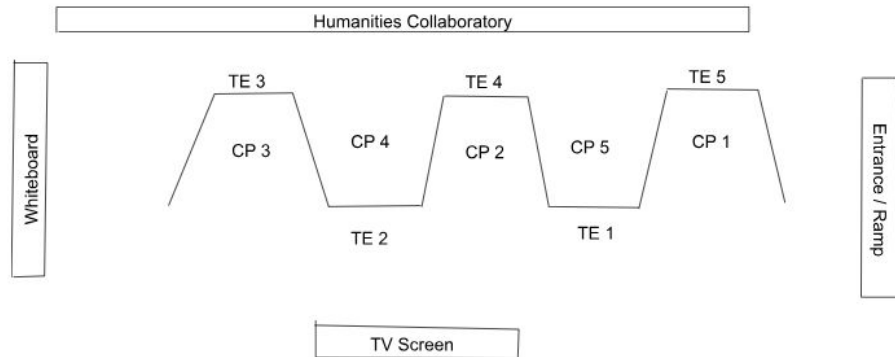


- b. For Shelby: How did you get involved?
9. What were your initial goals and visions with shift and change over the course of the project?
- facilitating community conversations
 - were your initial goals – maybe even chosen to focus on – and how have indigenous collaborative garden, can also be about work as community gardener
 - "Anishinaabe community organizer, seed keeper, and storyteller."
 - what role does storytelling play in your work?
10. What role do you think you hold in the garden? What sort of role has the garden grown to be in the community? What do you hope it to be?
11. A word this project has been exploring is "reclamation" of (selfhood, skill, culture, land, food sovereignty, etc.). Do you resonate with this word, whether that is through your own personal practice, or through the community initiatives/garden?
- reclaiming ancestral food ways, healing from trauma of colonialism and ongoing occupation of homeland
 - relationship w place, w human and more than human, reclaiming relationship to ancestors, and descendants that grew even here yet
 - place based lifeways as indigenous peoples

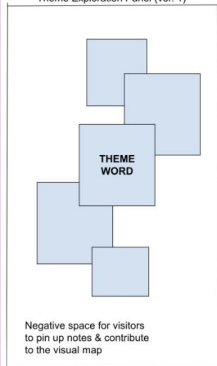


Exhibit Design/Curation

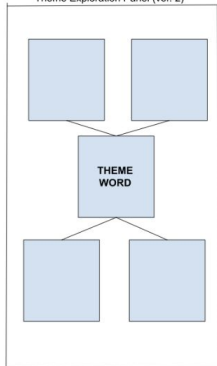
Exhibit Layout



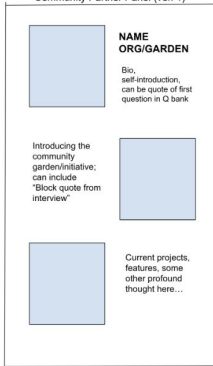
Theme Exploration Panel (ver. 1)



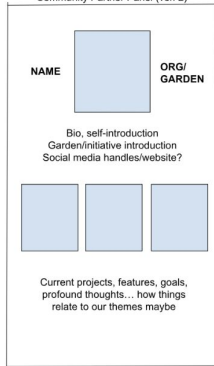
Theme Exploration Panel (ver. 2)



Community Partner Panel (ver. 1)



Community Partner Panel (ver. 2)



"142_Laos_Cascades de Kuang Si, aux environs de Luang Prabang" by [beatrice.boutetdemi](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](#).

Options for quotes over image:



Culture and Connection

Phimmasone also discusses her experiences with her identity as a refugee, and how food and seeds come together as a way of knowing and illuminating oneself, explaining, "Laos is a neutral country, but is the most bombed country in both World War 1 and 2. We were a casualty of war... It empowers me to know that I don't owe this country anything... This all started with food, but now I know my identity... I want to preserve our culture first through food, through our ingredients, through seed saving." Food has

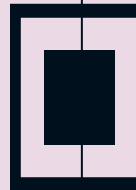


04

Challenges



Challenges



This is hard!

Lots of moving parts in the project, reorienting and refocusing, LOTS of conversations with so many people, a hybrid working model that was my salvation and my downfall

Staying committed to learning

Excitement and pleasure is important in learning, but there are many points where I feel no excitement nor pleasure! A 12 hour work session feels terrible! Being stuck in a room listening to audio and doing transcripts can be boring!


Burnout (and the importance of rest)

Cognitive overload and feeling overwhelmed, juggling multiple jobs, exhaustion and the mental toll this research takes, reading about... really depressing things... among other things

An intense (!) imposter syndrome

Am I good enough? Should I be doing this project? Did I just mess up that interview? How am I going to get this done? I should have written better. I am not god's strongest soldier.





05

Recommendation

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Recommendations



Research Funding

- Grants to provide compensation for not just the interns and staff members (us!), but also to our community partners and interlocutors
- Expanding projects beyond the scope of MLS (BSS is just a small portion of initiatives related to the Seed Library)

Additional Projects

- Digitization of the exhibit
- Zine collection to distribute and share with the community
- Expanding the Oral History collection with southeast MI gardeners, farmers, organizers, and activists
- Circling back to our initial idea to interview the international community
- Programming ideas in partnership with the Seed Library: upskilling workshops, community conversations, facilitated dialogues, open mics and story sharing





Thanks



Do you have any questions?

Contact me:

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