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International House of Philadelphia

Interviews that humanize

Philadelphia

Proposal Narrative

Introduction

The United States, traditionally known as a melting pot of diverse people and backgrounds, has witnessed a resurface of overt hostility towards certain racial, ethnic, and religious groups. As political polarization increases, it has become more difficult to acknowledge the points of views of others and to recognize the similarities between all of us. Instead, it is now getting easier to ignore the positive human qualities of those we perceive as different. This process of dehumanization is removing our motivation to seek harmony between groups. If we want peace between different groups of people, we need these groups to humanize each other by understanding the other's heterogeneities, struggles, and aspirations. We all want to show that we have positive human qualities, we all want to be humanized.

Project Description

Our goal is to produce a film documentary that focuses on interviews about how people from different groups want to be viewed and humanized. Each interview will be an opportunity for the person to address the rest of the world and to say something that shows that they are worthy of humanization. The interviewee will have the chance to say something that celebrates their background, draws parallels with people outside their groups, dispels stereotypes about their group, points out injustices, or brings light to anything they think to be the important. We will conduct these interviews in Philadelphia, a city rich in history and home to numerous diverse neighborhoods.

We will compile these interviews into the first 2/3 of the documentary and then show them to viewers from different backgrounds. We will survey their reactions to the film and use this material for the final third of the documentary. What we hope to accomplish with this Davis Peace Project is to create a film that shows that all groups of people are worthy of humanization and that their arguments can touch the hearts of viewers.

The specifics of the filming are as follows. We will conduct 30-40 interviews in the city of Philadelphia and nearby suburbs. We will interview people at different locations such as train/bus stations, family/corporate restaurants, food trucks, public libraries, and coffee shops. We will ask the following two questions to every interviewee: 1) Is there any group you identify with that you think is marginalized, stigmatized, oppressed or not humanized? Then: 2) If you could say something to the rest of the world as part of that group, what would you say? Beyond those two questions, we will also allow the interviewees to expand on any important thoughts or

concerns that they deem important. Interviewees will be compensated with a \$25 gift card for their 5-10 minute effort.

Since Philadelphia is home to traditionally diverse neighborhoods such as North-Philly, Yorktown, Northeast-Frankford, Kensington, and West Philly/University City, this city will provide us with the opportunity to reach marginalized groups. We want representatives from the African-American, Muslim, LGBTQ, and Hispanic communities. We want to reach city workers, food-truck owners, coffee shop workers, homeless people, construction crews, and others. Other groups in Philadelphia will also be interviewed in order to maximize the diversity of the participants.

Once the interviews are filmed, we will combine them into 30 min of footage that include our motivation for the film, the methodology, and the interviews. We will host an event at the LightBox Film Festival (Capacity: 300), located at the International House of Philadelphia, where we will invite people in the area to watch the first 2/3 of the film. People who participated in the film will also be invited. After the film there will be a reception and viewers will be asked to complete brief exit surveys. Specifically, we will ask the viewers how they reacted to hearing people from different groups argue their humanity and present their similarities to others. We will then analyze the response data, discuss, and visualize it in the 15-min conclusion of the final product.

We believe our team is well equipped to make this film possible and impactful. We have two team members with an extensive portfolio in filming that includes documentaries in YouTube channels. Additionally, one teammate is from a scientific/research background and will provide guidance in systematizing the interviews and exit surveys. Furthermore, our team members are diverse in ethnicity, nationality, and age.

After completion of the film, we will publish it online and will try to maximize its reach by submitting it to film festivals such as The International Short Film Festival, The Thessaloniki Documentary Festival, and Visions Du Reel. The high-quality of the film equipment we aim to buy will be paramount in increasing our chances to place in one of these festivals. We believe our documentary will have the novel characteristic of having excerpts of audience react to parts of the film.

This project is sustainable because it will produce a high film-quality documentary that will be available online and, hopefully, shown in a film festival. This film will be a lasting product that helps viewers to humanize different people. We hope this film also helps us gain insight into what made viewers more likely to humanize the interviewees. Finally, this film could provide the opportunity as a seed to apply for other grants and perform more documentaries in other places of the United States and the world.