# Oral History

## for Community Engagement



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WHY YOU ARE

# here

# Agenda

**01**

WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

**02**

HOW ORAL HISTORY CAN INSPIRE YOUR COMMUNITY
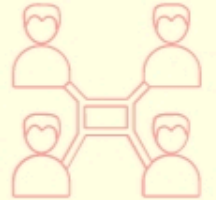
**03**

PLAN A PROJECT

Who, What, Why, How

**04**

GET CREATIVE!

**05**

TALK AMONGST YOURSELVES

Brainstorming and Q&A

Who am I?

Who are You?

Who are We?

# What Is Oral History?

*Traditional, Academic, Elite*

**So Much More**

Start

Now

# What Is Oral History?

## So Much More:

-------------------------------------------------------------------------->

(1) The Encounter
(2)Sharing the Encounter
(3)Creating Social Change
(4) Technology, Creativity, MultiMedia

# 1 Planning the Project: Basic Formula for Success

Collect Stories

Make Something

Create An Exhibit

Have Public Programming

Get Feedback, Solicit Involvement, Make it Grow

**2** Planning the Project:
The Pitch & Mission

What is the **Big Idea**? **Goal**? **Mission**?
How will this project **Explore** that?
With whom can you **Partner**?
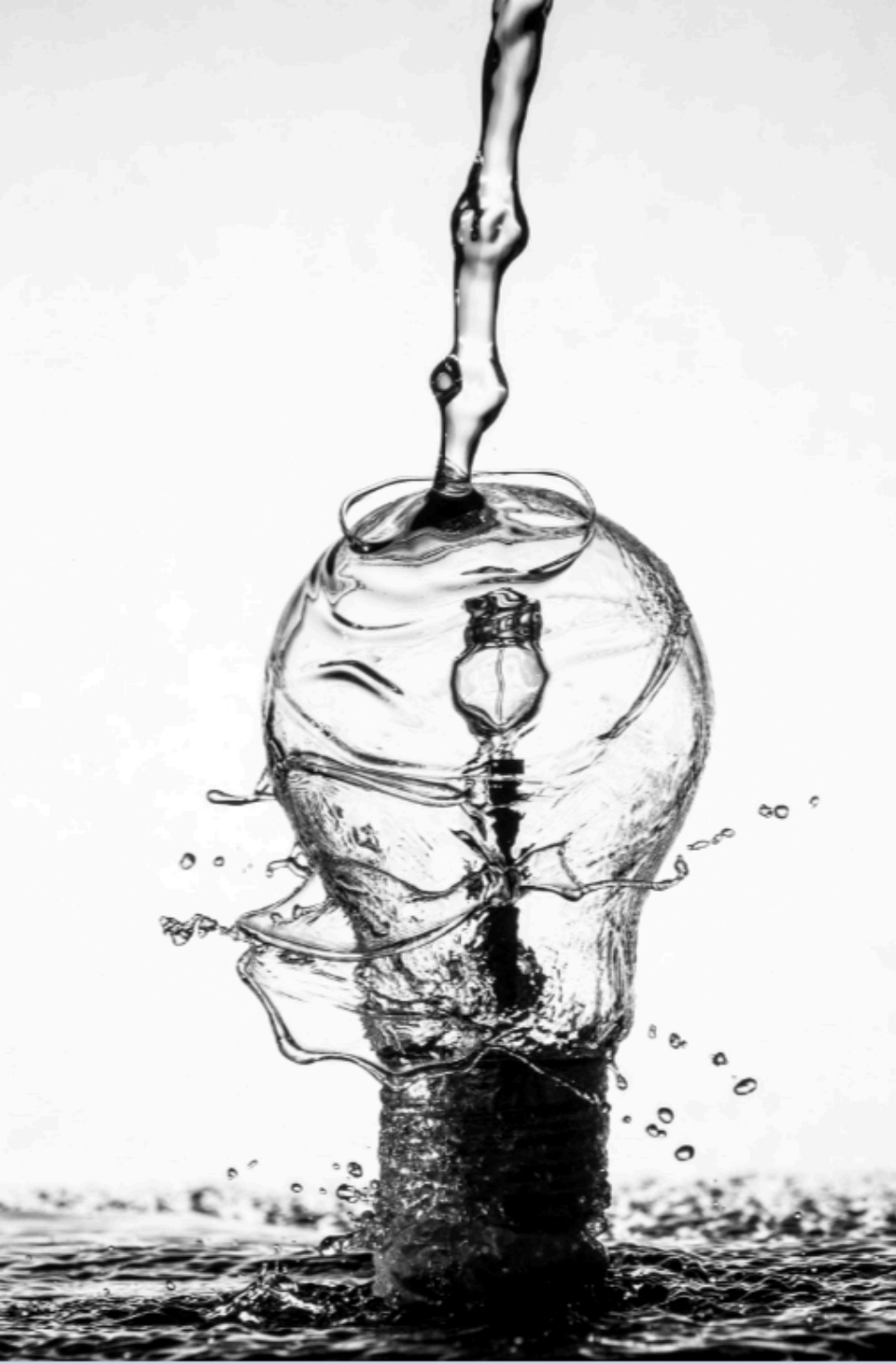What **Community Resources** do you need?

# 3 Planning the Project: Begin at the End

## What Will the Finished Product Look Like?

## When Will The Public Event Be?

## What Do You Want to Happen Next?

# 1 Planning the Project: Basic Formula for Success

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**2** Planning the Project:
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What is the **Big Idea**? **Goal**? **Mission**?
How will this project **Explore** that?
With whom can you **Partner**?
What **Community Resources** do you need?

# Westport**Voices**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Why start an oral history and storytelling project in Westport?

Stories have power.

They have the power to educate and enlighten, to connect people and resolve conflicts. They can bring back the past, help understand the present and give us a glimpse of the future.

They can create a defining narrative about a community – which can unite people around shared experiences, shared values, and a common commitment to the future. And they also may tell a story that doesn't represent all that a community actually is.

Take Westport. There are narratives of the past and the present, of a homogenous town vs. the diverse quirky arts community that it once was. Of a divided community vs. a united one, with neighbors looking out for neighbors. These two narratives are a bit at odds with each other.

I'm sure that the truth about Westport lies somewhere in between, and the stories we tell and share can go a long way to help illuminate what our community is really like, how it's changed over time, and how the prevailing narrative barely scratches the surface of all the unique stories and people that make up our town.

Developing projects like the ones described below that expose the depth underlying the surface can help change perceptions and connect people in the community more. Conducting interviews, creating audio installations, making short films, developing a multimedia website, building a social media presence, and hosting other storytelling programming can showcase the diversity of Westport and change the prevailing narrative. And may just promote civility and improve relationships within our community.

## PROJECT DESIGN

In keeping with the theme of the Library's remarkable renovation, our first oral history project will be about Transformation.

We will collect video and audio interviews with Westporters about their own transformations and how their individual stories relate to the community as a whole.

**Option 1:** Find an interesting cross-section of individuals and collect their Transformation stories. We may hear stories about a family's challenges and how Westporters supported

the family during that time. We will look for stories from our seniors about retiring, or changing their life, or starting a next chapter and how Westport played a role in their lives through all those stages. There may be stories about building up or tearing down, life shifting unexpectedly or changing deliberately, stories of failure or overcoming challenges. We will collect stories of how Westport has transformed over the years, and find out what people think about where it's headed and where it should be headed in the future. This is where we can really build community and have meaningful conversations and create change in town.

**Option 2:** Start with the Library and then our other iconic insti... individuals there about Transformation – as sort of a "bou... For instance, at the Library, we could interview pe... personal transformation and how it fits in to... the library can tell their own stories, t... of people who live and work in W... has transformed them. W... institutions: Coffee... groups, place...

## GOALS

The ultimate goal of this project is to launch a sustainable theme-based multimedia and multidimensional oral history and storytelling project. And to create and build an oral history archives to be housed at the Library and made available to the public and to researchers now and in the future.

Our mission is to: Collect interviews, Share stories, Explore Complexities, Build community.

## WHY/HOW

Westport is, on the surface, a lovely, quiet, homogenous, affluent New England town. But this narrative barely scratches the surface. It doesn't include all the diverse backgrounds - races, ages, religions, genders, backgrounds, socio-economic status, and work and life experiences - of all the people here. By reaching into all the different places and spaces in Westport, asking people to share their stories and encouraging others to listen, we can build community in a whole new way. The time is right, too. Recently, the town is becoming more aware of how racism, sexism, anti-Semitism - not to mention politics - are dividing us. Developing WestportVoices into a town-wide participatory documentary project will go a long way to help ensure our community builds connections and increases understanding and empathy.

We will do this by:

- Collecting interviews with as wide a variety of Westporters as possible around particular topics - beginning with Transformation.
- Sharing stories online and through the library media outlets.
- Developing interactive public programming that brings people together.

# 3 Planning the Project: Begin at the End

## What Will the Finished Product Look Like?

## When Will The Public Event Be?
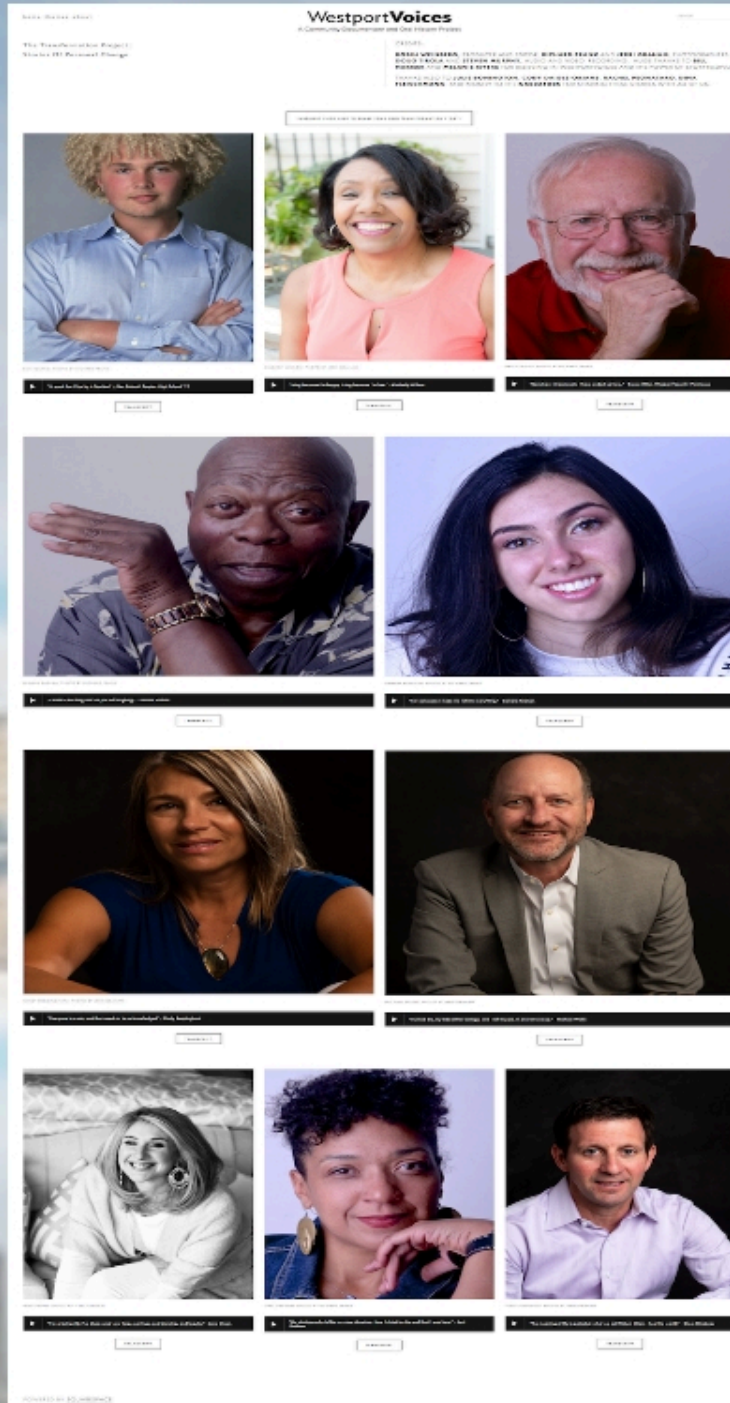
## What Do You Want to Happen Next?

**WestportVoices**

Audio

# Westport**Voices**

## Website

# So Now,
# What Else Is Oral History?

Storytelling, Audio, Video, Documentary, Podcasts, Interactive Exhibits, Participatory Media, Photography, Live Events, Sound Walks, Maps, Museums, Websites, and Any Other Creative Project You Can Imagine

# Get Creative

## Create Space For Conversations



SUPER SOUL SUNDAY



let's have DINNER and talk about DEATH

**Death Over Dinner**

Death Over Dinner

# Get Creative

## Create Opportunities for Listening

**Big Stories**

Big Stories Small Towns

bigstories.com.au

**Big Stories, Small Town**
http://www.bigstories.com.au

**The Four Chairs Project**

# Get Creative

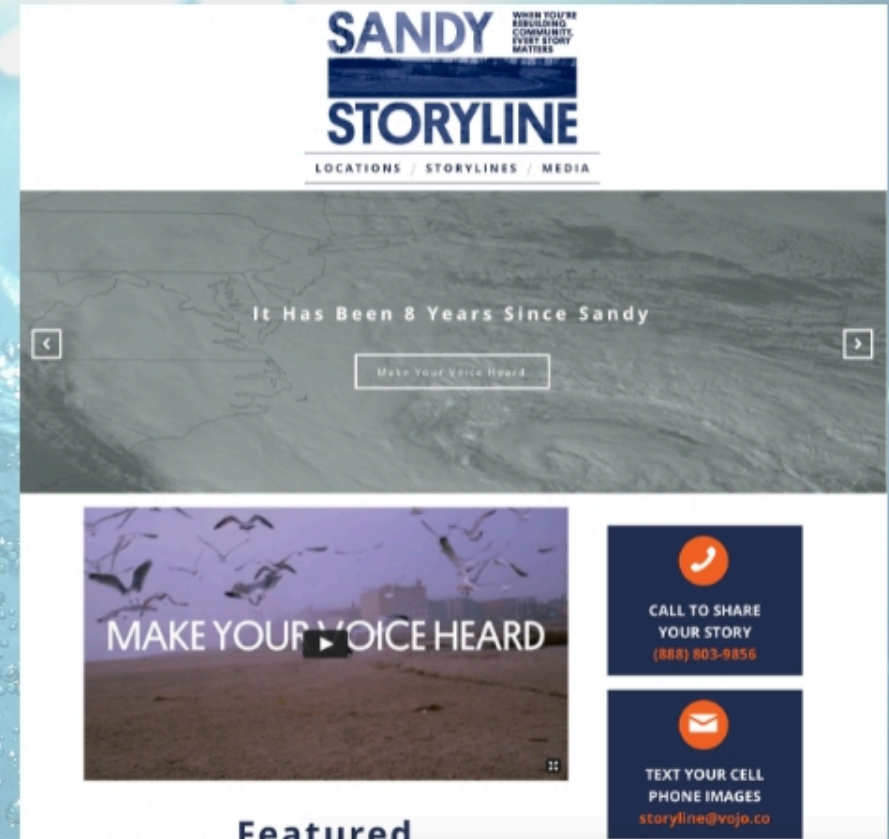## Create Opportunities for Participation

### It Gets Better

The It Gets Better Project exists to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe.

G It Gets Better / itgetsbetterproject

**SANDY STORYLINE**
WHEN YOU'RE REBUILDING COMMUNITY EVERY STORY MATTERS
LOCATIONS / STORYLINES / MEDIA

It Has Been 8 Years Since Sandy

Make Your Voice Heard

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

**CALL TO SHARE YOUR STORY**
(888) 803-9856

**TEXT YOUR CELL PHONE IMAGES**
storyline@vojo.co

Featured

It Gets Better Project
itgetsbetter.org

Sandy Storyline
sandystoryline.com

DOUBLE ISSUE

NOVEMBER 5, 2018

TIME

GUNS
IN
AMERICA

A TIME and JR Project

time.com

COLLECTION

**An Ex Axe**

1995 / Berlin, Germany

She was the first woman that I let move in with me. All my friends thought I needed...

♡ 28   💬 6          ⚬⚬⚬

🔒

Locked until

05.04.2020

EM   Posted

♡ 14   💬 8

Museum of Broken Relationships

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rlin, Germany

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♡ 33   💬 12          ⚬⚬⚬

COLLECTION

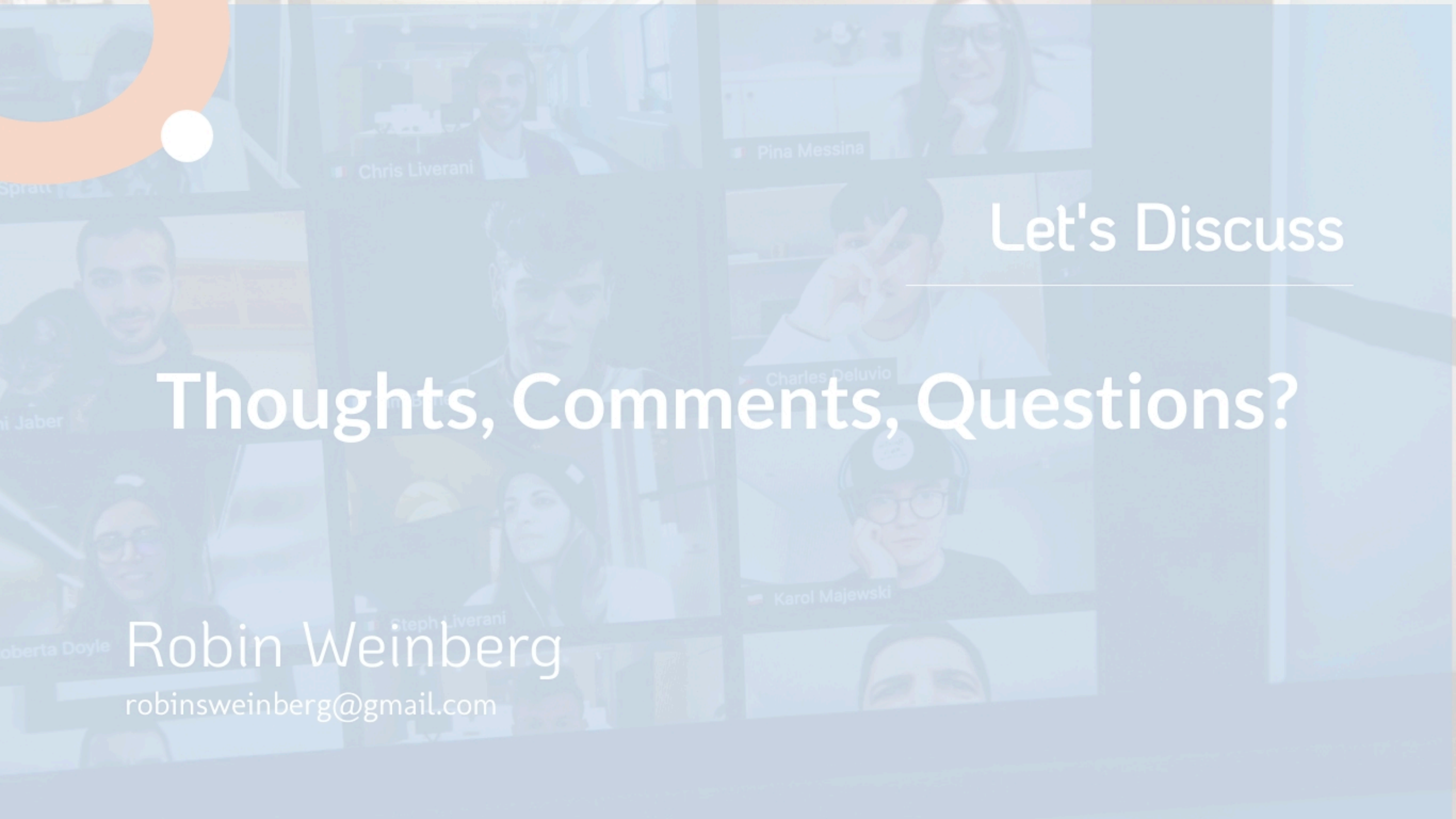**Handcuffs**

2005 / Zagreb, Croatia

Atam me...

♡ 69   💬 10          ⚬⚬⚬

COLLECTION

**Divorce Day Mad Dwarf**

1995 / Berlin, Germany

The divorce day garden dwarf. He arrived in a new car. Arrogant, shallow and heartless. The dwarf was closing the gate that he had...

🔒

Locked until

15.5.2025

VL   Posted Feb 22, 2016

**Brokenships**

HUMAN LIBRARY®

*un*judge someone.

Meet Our Human Books

Let's Discuss

Thoughts, Comments, Questions?

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