

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

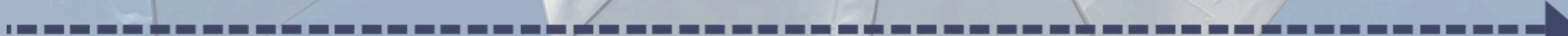
Start

Now



What Is Oral History?

So Much More:

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

Oral History & Storytelling for Community Engagement

Brings Together
Disparate Voices

Offers New
Ideas & Experiences

Brings History,
Tradition, Culture, &
Heritage to Life

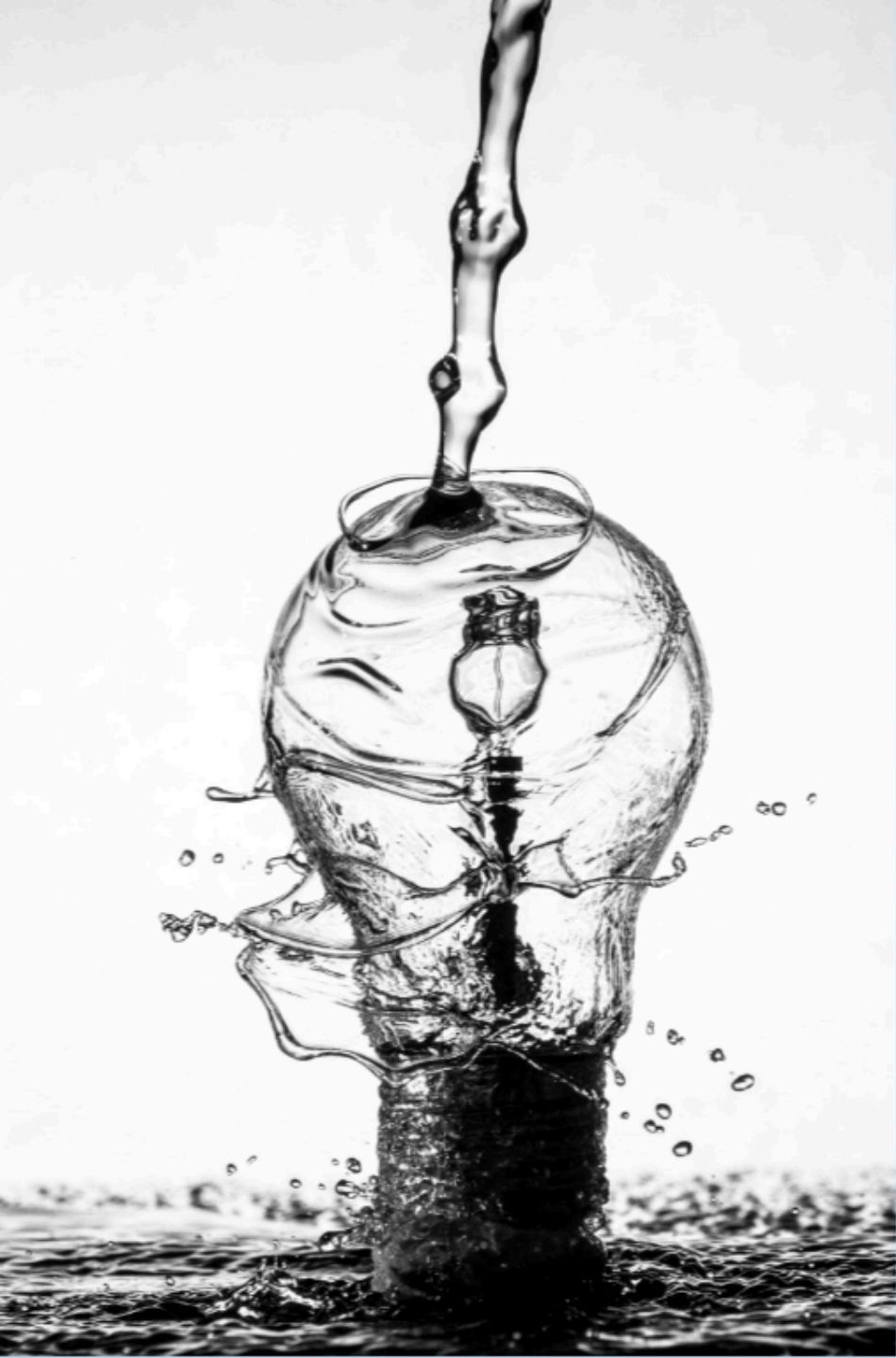
Raise Awareness &
Inspire Action

Activates Public
Discourse

Celebrates Diversity
Builds Connections

Creates Empathy





1

Planning the Project: Basic Formula for Success

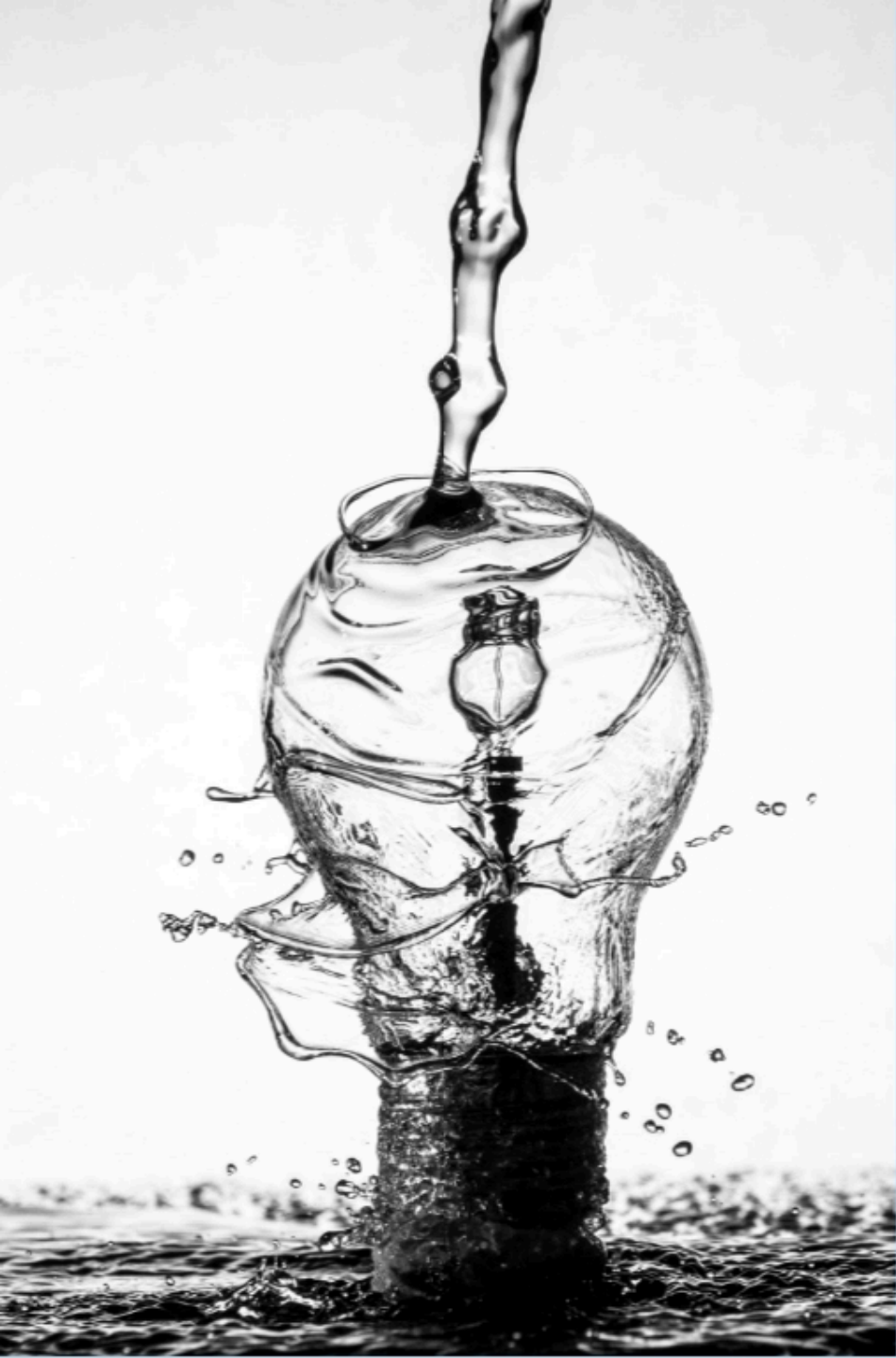
Collect Stories

Make Something

Create An Exhibit

Have Public Programming

Get Feedback, Solicit Involvement, Make it
Grow



2

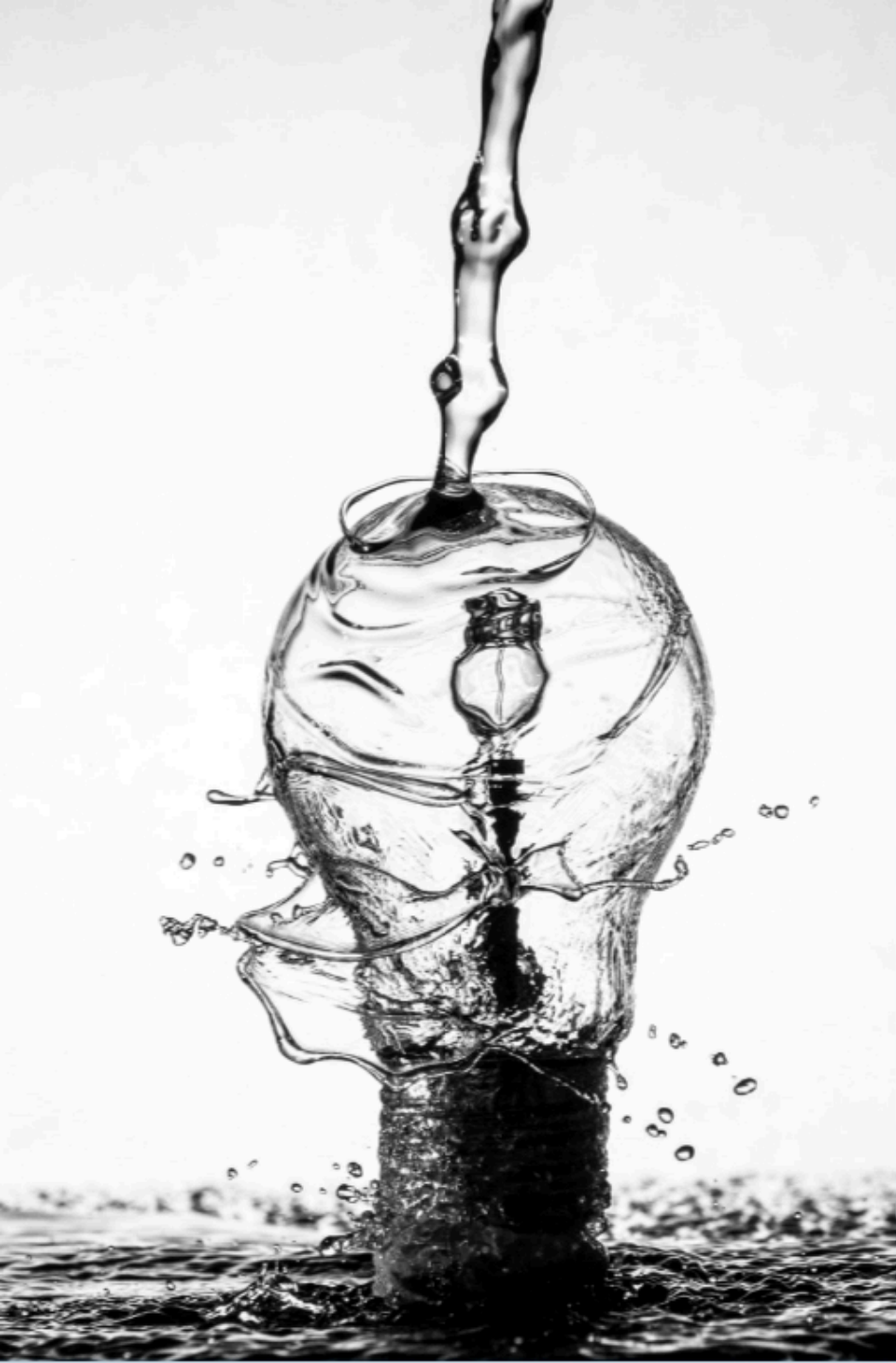
Planning the Project: The Pitch & Mission

What is the **Big Idea? Goal? Mission?**

How will this project **Explore** that?

With whom can you **Partner?**

What **Community Resources** do you need?



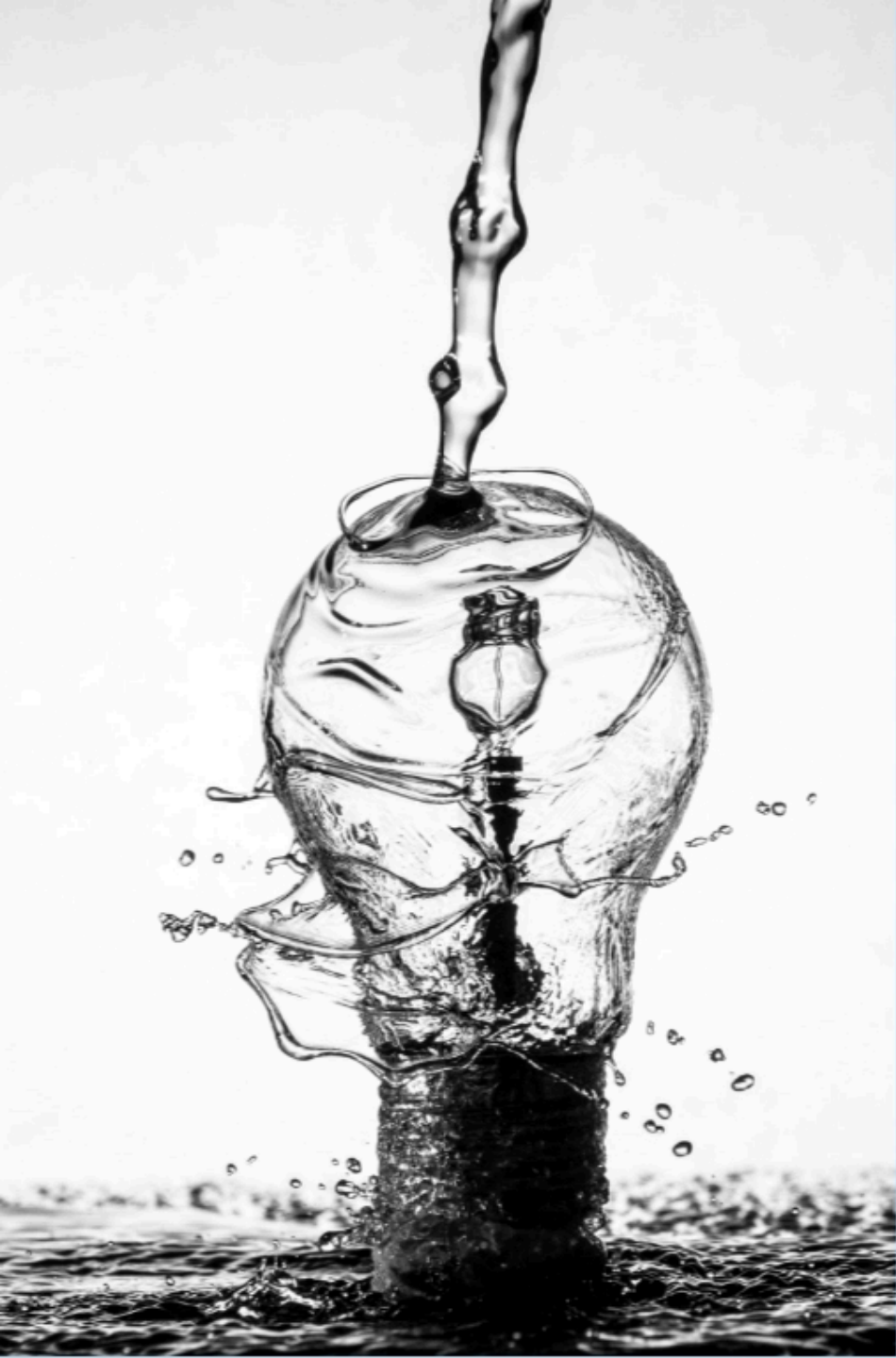
3

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

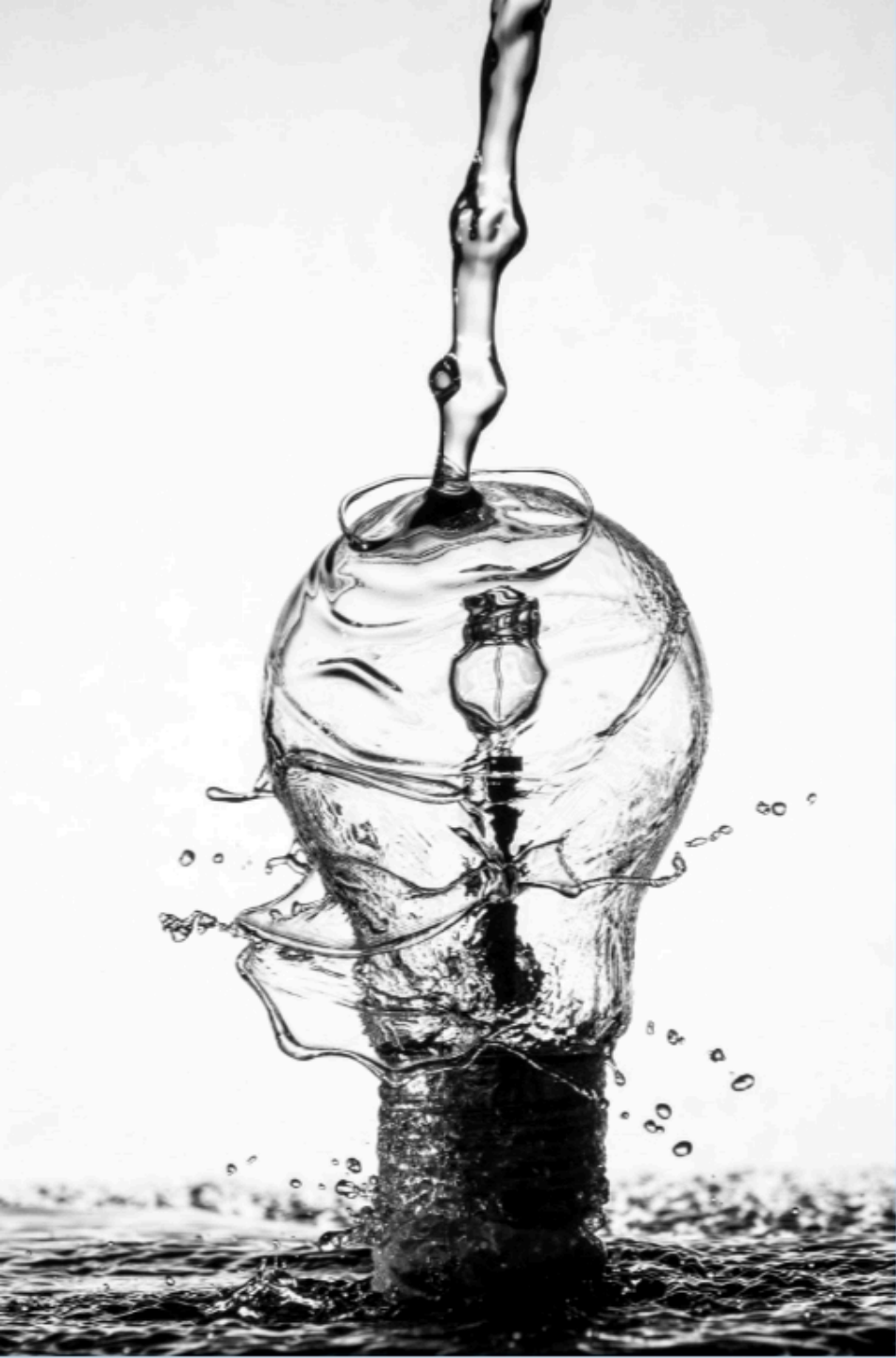
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WestportVoices

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.

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.

PROJECT DESIGN

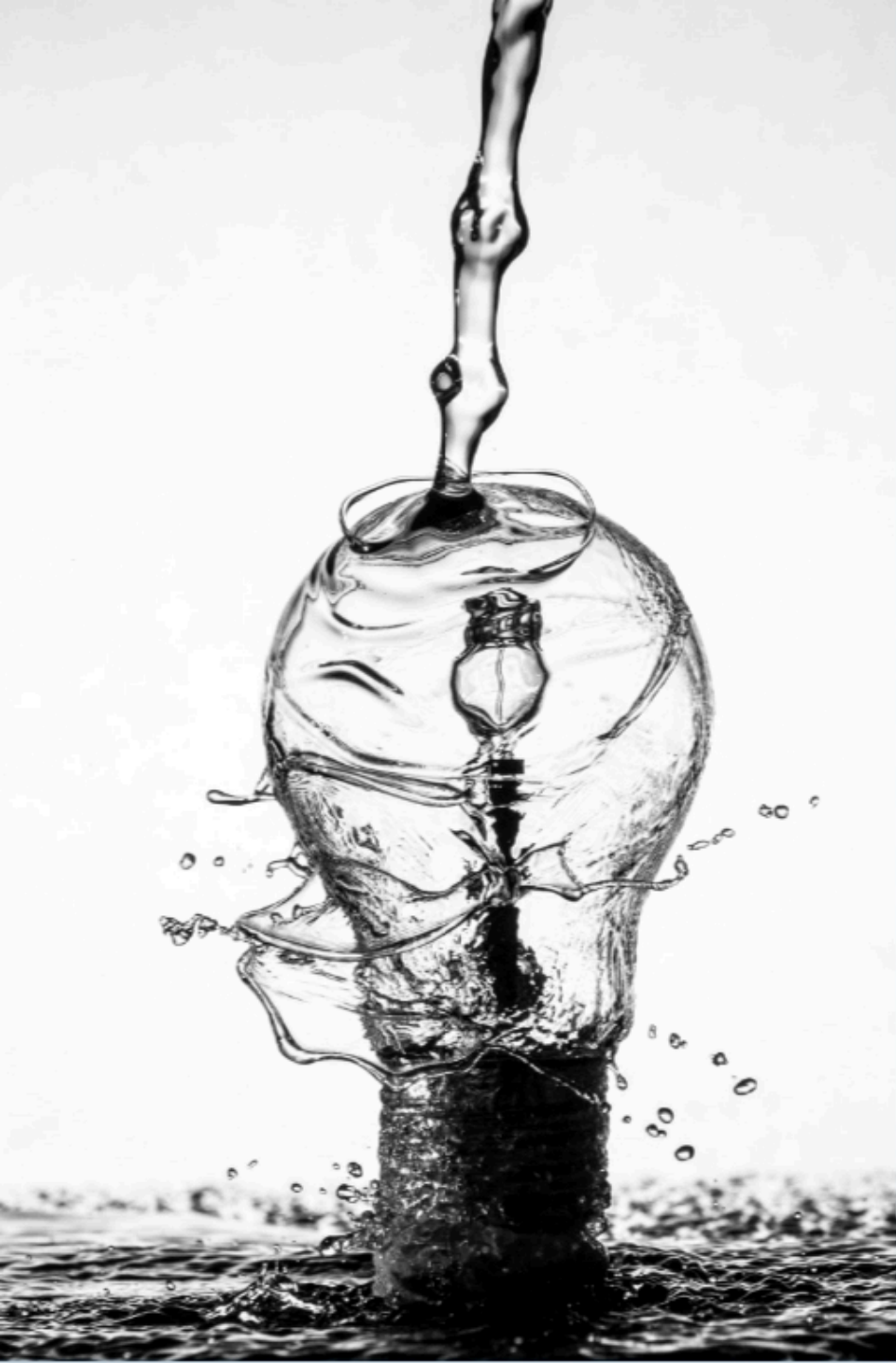
In keeping with the theme of the Library's remarkable renovation, our first oral history project will be about Transformation.

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 institutions there about Transformation - as sort of a "br..." For instance, at the Library, we could interview pe... the library can tell their own stories, t... of people who live and work in t... has transformed them. W... institutions: Coffee ... groups, place...



3

Planning the Project: Begin at the End

What Will the Finished Product Look Like?

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What Do You Want to Happen Next?

WestportVoices

Exhibit

WestportVoices
THE TRANSFORMATION PROJECT: STORIES OF PERSONAL CHANGE

Jerri Graham: photographer, mother, entrepreneur

"My photography is like my cave drawing - how I chisel on the wall that I was here."

WestportVoices is an interactive oral history project that introduces the community to a selection of individuals through dynamic storytelling, compelling photography and interactive programming.
Use your smartphone or tablet to scan the QR Code to go to westportvoices.com and hear their stories.

WestportVoices
THE TRANSFORMATION PROJECT: STORIES OF PERSONAL CHANGE

Cindy Reesinghani: mother, wife, massage therapist

"Everyone is a mix, and that needs to be acknowledged."

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WestportVoices
THE TRANSFORMATION PROJECT: STORIES OF PERSONAL CHANGE

Michael Wolfe: magazine publisher, writer, filmmaker

"I turned 50, my kids left for college, and I left my job. In one fell swoop."

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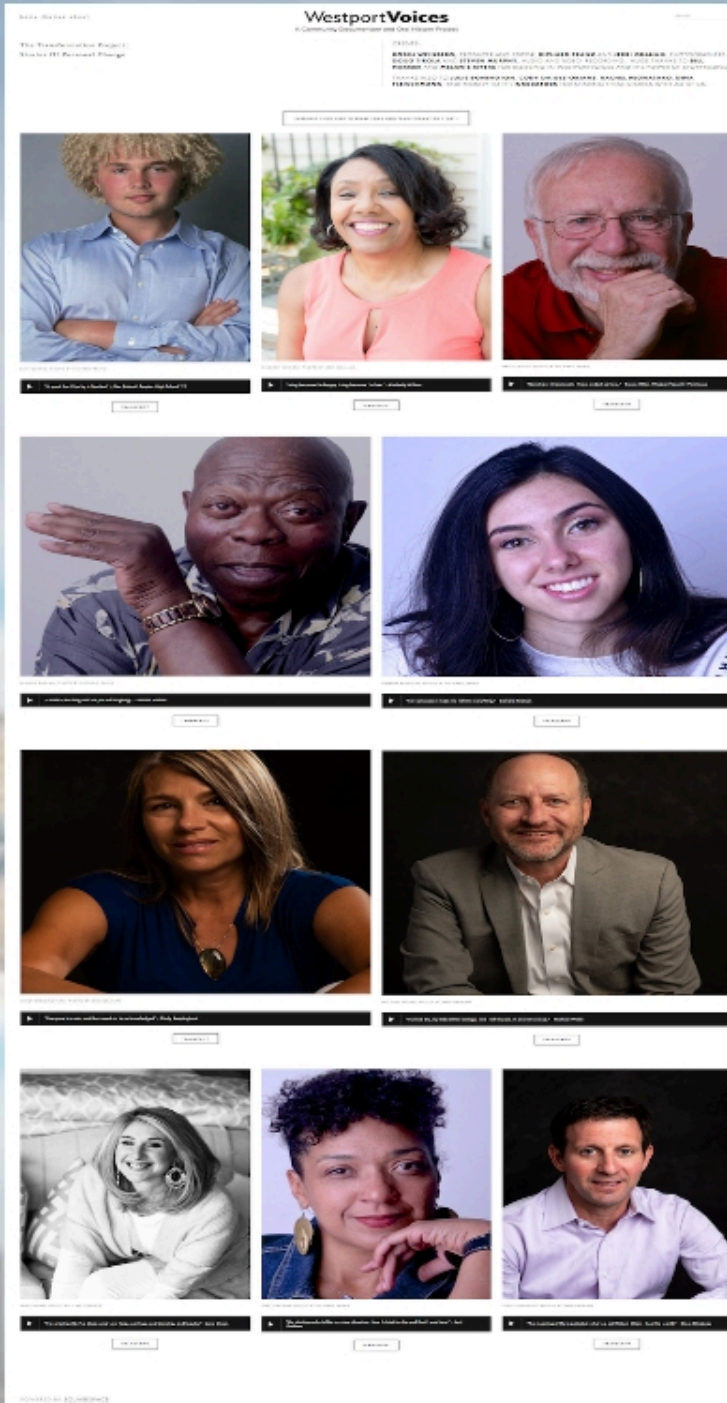
WestportVoices

Audio



WestportVoices

Website



Westport**Voices**

Public Event





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**
SMALL TOWNS

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.

 It Gets Better / itgetsbetterproject

It Gets Better Project
itgetsbetter.org

SANDY STORYLINE
WHEN YOU'RE BUILDING 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
Sandy Storyline
sandystoryline.com



Get Creative



Create *With*
Not *About*

Create Opportunities
for Change





DOUBLE ISSUE

NOVEMBER 5, 2018



GUNS IN AMERICA

A TIME and JR Project

WHEN DO WE
GET TO STOP
LIVING
IN FEAR
OF AMERICA?

BLACK LIVES
MATTER

DISARM
HATE

GUN RIGHTS
WOMEN'S
RIGHTS

T&G
TEXAS GUN
SHOW

BLACK
LIVES
MATTER

not justice

WARD

TIME

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 ☰



ress

erlin, Germany

ce and in
re just over
ress on...

♡ 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

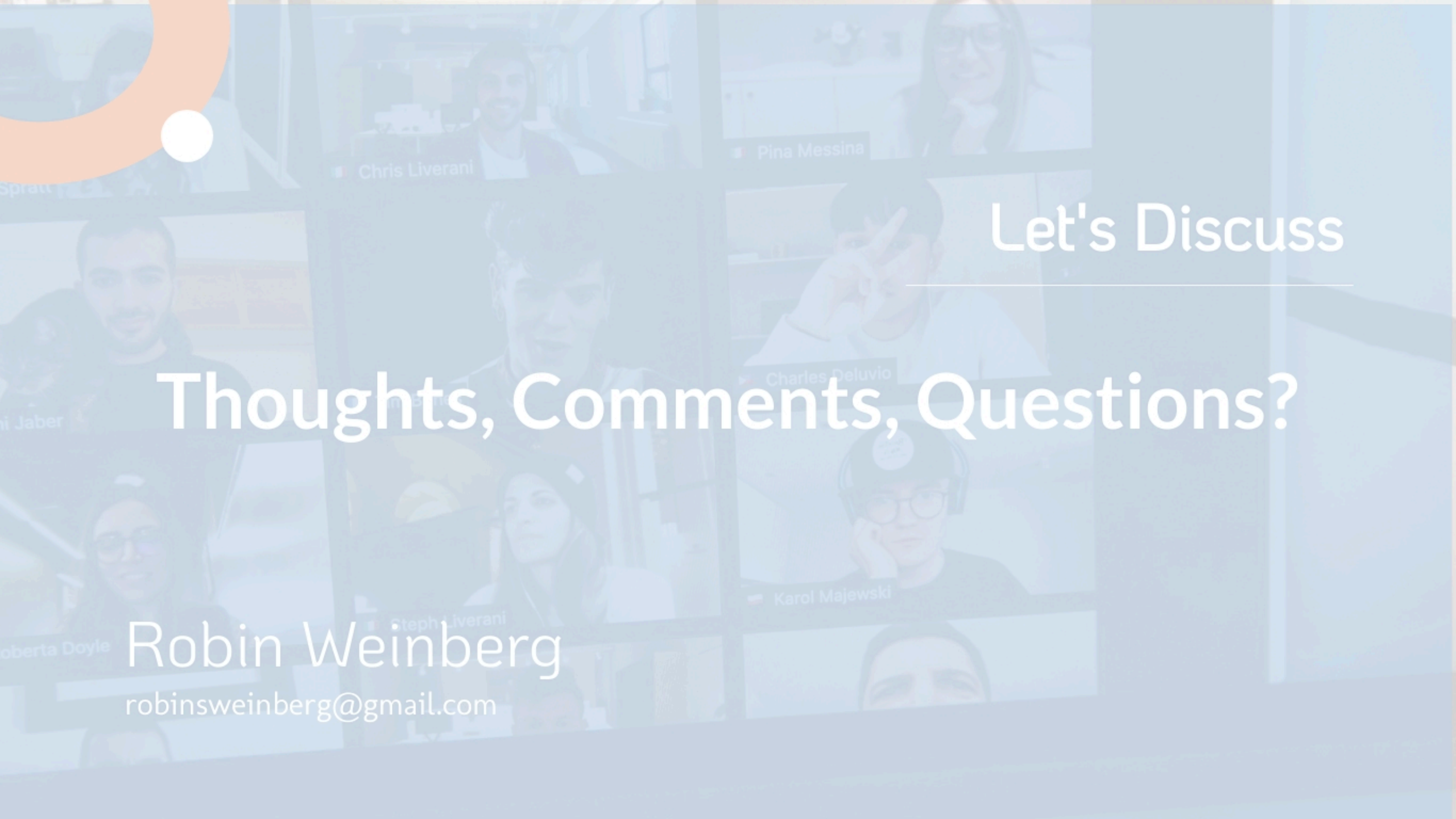
VL Posted Feb 22, 2016

Museum of Broken Relationships



HUMAN LIBRARY[®]

unjudge someone.



Chris Liverani

Pina Messina

Let's Discuss

Thoughts, Comments, Questions?

Charles Deluvio

Karol Majewski

Steph Liverani

Roberta Doyle
Robin Weinberg

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