AFTERSCHOOL EXCHANGE ACTIVITY

LOOKING INTO THE PAST AND PRESENT THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

PREPARATION

Grade Levels: 6-8
This activity is most effective if delivered in three separate 45-60 minute sessions with groups of 10-12 participants. Allow extra time for participants to go out into the community to take pictures.

Prerequisites
Before beginning this activity, download photos from the Library of Congress’ American Memory Web site. (http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/) This site provides free and open access through the Internet to written and spoken words, sound recordings, still and moving images, prints, maps, and sheet music that document the American experience. It is a digital record of American history. You will need five photographs that depict the idea of “community” – pictures of people in the places they live and work. Use the links below to select and print out the photographs you would like to use with your group; be sure to record all available information about the photos you download: date, subject, location.

- Touring Turn of the Century America
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/detroit/dethome.html

- Edward S. Curtis’s The North American Indian
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award98/ienhtml/curthome.html

- Ansel Adams’s Photographs of Japanese Internment at Manzanar
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aamhtml/aamhome.html

- Photographs from the Chicago Daily News
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpcoop/ichihtml/cdnhome.html

- History of the American West 1860-1920
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/codhtml/hawphome.html

- America From the Depression to World War II
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsahtml/fahome.html

- North Great Plains, 1880-1920
  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/ndfahtml/ngphome.html

© 2006 Educational Broadcasting Corporation
Materials Needed
Group leader will need:
• Computer with Internet access
• Photos (downloaded from the Library of Congress website; www.loc.gov (see links above)
• A copy of the handout Analyze This! for each participant
• Chart paper and markers

Students will need:
• Cameras (digital, 35mm, or disposable)
• Poster board, photo album, display board or some other way to display photos
• Markers

Academic Goals:
Students will:
• understand the difference between a primary source and a secondary source
• analyze photographs to discover clues about the past
• identify and photograph people and places in their community
• create a primary source to document life in their community

Social Goals:
Students will:
• develop active listening skills, allowing peers to speak and share their opinions and experiences
• develop group speaking skills as they provide suggestions for a group project
• work in small groups and present to an audience of their peers

STEPS

Introduction (15 minutes):

1. Ask the participants how we can learn about what happened in the past. Accept all answers, and write them on the board or on chart paper in two separate columns. Do not label the columns. In the first column, list history books, encyclopedias and movies; in the second column, list interviews, diaries, autobiographies, photographs, letters, etc. (These are primary sources, or actual records that have survived from the past. History books, encyclopedias and most movies are secondary sources, created after the events occurred. If participants suggest “books,” which can be either primary or secondary sources, clarify the response by asking them to specify the type of book. A history book is a secondary source, while a first-person account or autobiography is a primary source.)
2. Ask the group why they think you organized their responses in two separate columns. How should they label each column? Answers will
vary. Explain that one column lists actual records that have survived from
the past, such as letters, photographs, articles of clothing. These are known
as primary resources. The other column includes accounts of the past
created by people writing about events sometime after they happened, like
the history book you use in school or the movie “The Patriot.” These are
called secondary sources. Explain that historians use both primary and
secondary sources in their research, but that for this project they are going
to focus on primary sources.
3. Tell the group that they are going to create a photo journal of their
community – a primary source that will document present-day life in their
community. Explain that before they start, they’re going to learn more
about primary sources by examining some photographs from the past.

Activity 1 (30 minutes):

1. Tell the group that you have some primary source photographs you would like
them to examine. They are to study the photographs carefully and see what
they can conclude about the photographs.
2. Distribute the handout Analyze This! Divide the participants into five groups.
Give each group one of the photographs you prepared for this activity. Ask the
participants to examine the photographs and complete the questions on the
handout. Give them about 15 minutes to complete this task.
3. After the participants have examined the photographs, ask each group to show
their photograph to the rest of the participants, and to share their predictions
about the photograph. After each group has shared their predictions, share the
information you know about the picture with the group. Ask your students if
they were able to obtain historical information from these primary sources.
How? (Student answers will vary.)
4. If you have access to the Internet, have the participants do the “Analyzing the
Evidence” interactivity on the AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES Web site at
www.pbs.org/wnet/aalives/analyzing.html. This online quiz walks users
through the process of analyzing primary source documents by asking a series
of questions about the document. Each question has a hint that will help users
select the correct answer. Ask the students to select “A Gathering of Men” and
“Collared Men,” the two photographs highlighted in the interactivity.
5. Inform participants that before they create their own primary sources (photos),
they must have a clear idea of what they want to document.

Activity 2 (45 minutes):

1. Seat participants around a large table with the facilitator standing in a visible
location with a flip chart or other writing surface. Ask participants to describe
their neighborhood. Ask them to consider the various establishments in their
community. Where do people in their community gather? Where do they
shop? Where do they eat? Where do they socialize? Responses may include
churches, schools, restaurants, laundromats, delis, or other shops. Record all answers on the chart paper or board.

2. Next, ask the group to think about the people they would like to include in their photographs. Do they want to photograph each other? Staff members from their afterschool program or community organization? Local politicians, shopkeepers, or other figures in the community? Where should these individuals be photographed?

3. Work with the group to finalize a list of subjects to photograph. You should have from 10 – 20 subjects – the more the better.

4. Have the participants pair up, and assign each pair two or three subjects to photograph. If participants are going to take pictures of individuals or inside private establishments, make sure the appropriate people are contacted and permission is granted beforehand.

5. When the participants go out to take their photos, make sure that they document the subject(s) of the photo, the location and the date.

Activity 3 (45-60 minutes):

1. Once the photos are developed or printed, have the participants label each one with the name of the subject(s), date and location. Instruct them to write on photographs with a No. 2 (or softer) pencil; pen ink will deteriorate the photograph over time.

2. Next, participants should determine what would be the most important details about each photograph to leave behind. Students may opt to write letters or stories to accompany the photographs, to provide biographical information, to create a "key" or footnotes for each photo, to digitally record a message for future generations, etc. The possibilities are endless and flexible but the primary challenge for participants will be to leave enough information behind to provide a useful tool for researchers in the future.

3. When all the photos are in place, gather participants to discuss the results. Ask them if they feel they have created primary sources that may be of value to historians in the future.

4. Display the photos for other members of the organization and community to observe. This may be done on poster board, in an album, on a bulletin board or otherwise. If the photos were taken with a digital camera, consider sharing them on Flickr, (http://www.flickr.com) a free online photo management and sharing application.

Extensions:

There are numerous extension activities that could be done to enhance the learning of these activities, depending on the resources of the organization and the interests of the participants.

1. Watch AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES Episode 1: “Listening to Our Past” to learn about how primary source documents can reveal clues about the past.
2. Learn more about the places in your community that you photographed. Visit your local historical society for information, and ask people in the community to share stories and memories about these places. Long-time residents, community leaders, and local historians are all good sources. When you've got all your information together, record your photos and the stories that go with them in a Web site or PowerPoint presentation for all to see.

CREDITS
This AFTERSCHOOL EXCHANGE activity was written by Thomas Bromage, Director of Education Services, Madison Square Boys and Girls Club, in connection with the PBS series AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES. (http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aalives)
Analyze This!

Examine the photograph assigned to your group and answer the questions in the space provided.

1. When do you think this photograph was taken? Support your answer with evidence from the photograph.

2. Where was this photograph taken? Is it a formal portrait, or a more candid snapshot? Support your answer with evidence from the photograph.

3. Who do you think is shown in the photograph?

4. What can you tell about the time and place this photograph was taken? Support your answer with evidence from the photo.