

Wave Farm Radio Intensive: Curriculum Guide

for independent study or class use

Content Advisory

This curriculum studies the issue of police violence and violent community responses to police brutality and inequality. Some of the background materials may include disturbing images and descriptions of brutality, violence, and death.

Participants may find it helpful to: take breaks, cry, talk to a trusted friend or family member, practice mindfulness techniques, such as meditation or breathing exercises, spend time in nature, take a walk or run, write about it, and of course make art.

Background

In 1992, in the wake of the L.A. uprisings that were set off by the verdict in the Rodney King trial, two artists in L.A. sat down to have a conversation about growing up in America. Jacki Apple is a White woman who was raised in Manhattan in the mid-20th century. Keith Antar Mason is a Black man who was raised at the same time in St. Louis, which is still today one of the most segregated cities in America. In this workshop, participants will listen deeply to the resulting radio art piece, consider the context of the conversation, reflect on racial disparities in the United States, and create a radio work.

Timeline

If you're following the curriculum on your own, set a timeline for yourself with a firm deadline for the final production to be finished. Try to be realistic with your timeline in terms of how much time you have each day and how long you will actually want to spend on each part of the process. You might give yourself a week to do deep listening and reflecting and a week for production. Or just a couple of days for listening and reflection, and a couple of days for production.

Part One: Listening

[Redefining Democracy in America: Part 6: A Leap of Faith](#)

For the purposes of this workshop and any other careful listening to a text or work of sound or radio art, it's helpful to listen to a piece several times in different contexts. Aim to listen to the piece at *least* twice: once while somewhat distracted, and once listening closely. Do not text, write, or look at social media or other text-based media while you're listening, either time.

Other ideas for listening

- Listen once before reading anything about the piece or the context for it. Read the description of the piece and listen to it again.
- Listen to it at least once without headphones, as if it just happened to come on the radio. Listen to it again with headphones.
- Listen while you keep your hands busy, for example by drawing or doing other hand work.
- Listen to it while moving your body, for example taking a walk, cleaning the house, or exercising.
- Learn more about the L.A. uprisings and listen to it again. ([*See Further Reading and Listening*](#))
- Skip a day, then listen to it again.
- Listen to it alone, then listen again with a friend or family member.
- Listen and take notes.
- Listen once while just focusing on the conversation between Jacki Apple and Keith Antar Mason. Listen again while just focusing on the narrative overlaid on the conversation. Listen again and try to hear both at the same time.
- Listen once and pay attention to the sound design, why did the artist choose those sounds? How do you think they produced the piece? What sounds would you need to collect in order to make a piece like this? What other questions do you have about the production of the piece?

Part 2: Reflection

If you're working on your own, spend some time writing or otherwise creating a reflection on the piece (draw a picture, write a poem, make a collage, etc.).

If you're working in a group or pair, have a conversation about the piece together. Creative reflection as in solo study is also possible, either on your own or as a collaboration.

Prompts for Reflection

- What do you think the core message of the piece was? What were the artists trying to communicate? What message did you get?
- What stood out to you about the conversation between Jacki & Keith?
- What was similar about their experiences growing up, and what was different?
- How do you think the poetic narrative relates to their conversation about their lived experiences?
- When you listened to the piece, were there things you felt are “of its time” or specific to the 1990s? What is different now compared to then? What is the same?

- What are your thoughts about the sound design? Were there elements that tied it together particularly well? Was anything distracting from the core message?
- Why do you think the artists used the image of a train in the poetic narrative?
- What is your experience of the racial divide in America?
- What historical events in your lifetime do you remember?
- This piece was made almost 30 years ago, in 1992. Almost 25 years before that, in 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. mentioned police brutality in his “I Have a Dream” speech. In the summer of 2020, the US saw record amounts of civil uprisings protesting police brutality. What, if anything, changed between 1968 & 1992? What changed between 1992 & 2020? Between 1968 & 2021? What didn’t change? What do you think things will be like 25 or 30 years from now? What do you *hope* things will be like? What needs to happen to make the change you hope for?

Part 3: Creation

Working on your own, with a partner or group, create an art work designed for radio broadcast inspired by *Leap of Faith*. The piece should reflect on your own experiences of US history, the racial divide, or policing. You may create a radio play, poem, music, sound art, interview, documentary, or other audio production.

Creations should adhere to the [FCC guidelines](#) for obscenity and profanity (if in doubt, leave it out). Works may be as short as 2 minutes or as long as 28 minutes. Remember that our focus is not just a radio show, but radio *art*. If the production sounds like an ordinary podcast/radio show, it’s contents should not. If the content sounds like an ordinary podcast/radio show, its production should not. Get creative!

Creative Prompts & Challenges

- Interview or record a conversation with someone whose experience and life story is different from your own. Use that recording as a starting point for your production.
- Tell your life story through news events of your lifetime. How did that historical context impact you, or change who you are?
- Interview or record a conversation with an elder in your family or community about historical events from their life and how it impacted them personally.
- Write a radio play about a contemporary part of history that might be a stop on the *Leap of Faith* “ghost train.”
- Create a collage of sounds from news reports and other found sounds. (*before deciding to create a collage, see [Copyright, Licensing & FCC Guidelines](#)*)

- Can you make your nonmusical sounds follow a beat or rhythm?

Basics of Production

1. Start with a general idea for your project. Will you need to write a script? Or will you go freeform?
2. Gather audio, either by recording it or collecting field recordings or found sounds online. (*see [Sources for Free Sounds & Music](#)*)
3. Editing and production.
 - a. Some people might create an outline first, then add the sounds to their DAW and move them around. Others might start with the sounds and work from there.
 - b. Be sure your sounds are telling the story you want to tell.
 - c. Save often!
 - d. Enjoy the process! Just as in writing, you will have various drafts, and will be working on refining the work over and over until it's finished (or you hit your deadline, which sometimes comes first, in which case it's just done).
4. Rendering.
 - a. You'll need to export or otherwise transfer your work into a shareable form. It is advisable to save both an mp3 and wav formatted copy.
 - b. Save your file with a name you'll recognize later.
5. Sharing.
 - a. For streaming "broadcast," you may want to upload to Soundcloud, Mixcloud, or another audio sharing service.
 - b. You can also share your file to individuals on a service like Dropbox, Google Drive, or WeTransfer.
 - c. Host a listening party! Invite friends & family to listen to the piece together. If you use a service like Zoom, you can often share the audio from your computer/device in the same way you'd screen share.

Further Reading and Listening

About the Artists & the Piece

- [Read a description of the piece.](#)
- [Redefining Democracy in America — BREATHE](#) (a partial script)
- [Jacki Apple Web Retrospective](#)
- [Keith Antar Mason by Coco Fusco](#) in BOMB magazine

History of the LA Uprising

- [On the Tenth Anniversary of the Rodney King Uprising in Los Angeles, a Look Back at One of the Largest Uprisings in Modern U.S. History](#), from Democracy Now. Includes a radio documentary produced by Pacifica station KPFK in LA. About 30 minutes long.
- [PBS NewsHour | Looking back at LA riots after beating of Rodney King | Season 2017](#)

History of Police Brutality in the US

- [The Long, Painful History of Police Brutality in the U.S.](#)
 - *In 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson organized the [National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders](#) to investigate the causes of these major riots. The origins of the unrest in Newark weren't unique in a police versus citizen incident. The commission [concluded](#) "police actions were 'final' incidents before the outbreak of violence in 12 of the 24 surveyed disorders."*
- [Breonna Taylor: Timeline of black deaths caused by police](#)

Tools & Resources for Production

You will need something to record on (a phone with a voice memo function is sufficient, so long as you can transfer files for editing), a computer or tablet for audio editing, and software for editing.

Recording & Editing Software & Apps

- [Audacity](#): free, open-source digital audio workstation (DAW) for Mac or PC.
- [Soundtrap](#): browser-based DAW with free option. Works on most browsers.
- [Reaper](#): slightly more complex DAW. A license for personal use is \$60, but you can install for "evaluation" for up to 60 days before it gently reminds you that it's not technically free.
- [Voloco](#): vocal effects & auto-tune app (available for iOS & Android). Paid subscription, but there is a free trial period.

Sources for Free Sounds & Music

- <https://freesound.org/>
- <https://freemusicarchive.org/>
- <https://archive.org/>

Production Tips & Tutorials

- <https://www.buzzsprout.com/blog>
- <https://radiodramarevival.com/so-you-wanna-create-a-radio-drama/>
- <https://transom.org/topics/techniques/>

- <https://www.constellationsaudio.com/resources>

Copyright, Licensing, & FCC Guidelines

- https://freemusicarchive.org/license_guide
- <https://learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/using-copyrighted-music-and-media-in-your-podcast>
- <https://www.fcc.gov/media/radio/public-and-broadcasting#OBJECTIONABLEPROGRAMMING>

More About Radio Art

- [Wave Farm](#)
- [New American Radio](#)
- [Radia](#)

This curriculum was designed by Jess Speer in conjunction with the [2020-2021 Wave Farm Radio Artist Fellowship](#).