

KUOW's RadioActive Youth Media

By Jenny Asarnow

40 refugee youth from all over the world, all English language learner students, interview each other about the challenges they've experienced in their lives. Seven incarcerated youth serving time in Seattle's juvenile detention center record original poems based on their life experiences. A dozen LGBTQ youth at a rural summer camp create interviews and radio plays about gender identity. Youth who harvest crops all summer as migrant farm workers create audio portraits of one another. Eight youth from all over the Seattle area create a daily podcast as part of a radio summer camp.

What RadioActive Is All About

These are just a few of the topics at workshops that RadioActive Youth Media has facilitated over the past couple of years. We are a youth media education program at KUOW Puget Sound Public Radio, Seattle's leading NPR station. Our mission is to create spaces where youth (typically high school age) discover what public radio journalism is all about, and where they gain skills and knowledge to help them create meaningful radio stories and podcasts about the topics that matter most to them. KUOW's youth media program began in 2004 in response to demand from high school students who wanted to learn about public radio. From its origins as an informal summer internship, RadioActive grew over the years into a youth-driven workshop that's been described by participants as "an invaluable experience" and "intense in a good way."

Our workshops range in length from one hour to 12 weeks, and cover skills like asking open-ended questions, digital audio recording and editing, writing for broadcast, journalism ethics, and performing a radio script in a studio. In our longer workshops, youth create completed work, ranging from poetry, to

radio plays, to award-winning enterprise journalism.

The impact is clear. Past participants in RadioActive workshops call them "inspiring," and "life changing." "I never knew I could express a story so clearly this way and I feel excited to make more!" wrote one student from our full-time summer camp. "RadioActive has given me everything that school hasn't," wrote another. She added, "It allows me to be creative while challenging me constantly. It opened my eyes to journalism as more than just conveying information, but as a form of storytelling, a form of art, and a way to share the human spirit." Added another, "I learned many great things that I never thought of learning."

RadioActive's most popular mobile workshop teaches youth interviewing skills. We have facilitated this workshop at dozens of libraries, classrooms, and community centers. Youth build skills of inquiry and active listening, along with technical audio-recording skills. They learn about the other members of their group, and learn to identify practices that elicit in-depth information sharing and storytelling.

Can you make this happen in your community? I think you can. Read on to learn how the basic interviewing workshop works.

You Can Do It: RadioActive Interviewing Workshop

After brief introductions, we gather youth in two concentric circles, so that each participant is facing a partner. We prompt them with a simple open-ended question to ask their partner, such as "how was your weekend?" However, there's a catch. The youth have to be "bad listeners." After the youth have a chance to practice their (often hilarious) bad listening skills, we debrief by asking reflective questions such as "what did your partner do to show they weren't listening?" "How did it feel to not be listened to?" "How did it feel to be the one not listening?" This reinforces that not listening doesn't feel good to either participant, and sets the youth up to listen actively in the next round of our activity.

The second time around, the youth practice being good listeners. Again we prompt them with an open-ended question, such as "what's your favorite place in the world?" We ask them to stick to one topic for one to two minutes, challenging them to practice asking follow-up questions.

After several rounds of this, we listen to a couple of short interview clips that illustrate what to do and what not to do in an interview. In the discussion that follows, we ask the youth to share

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Resources to Learn More

Why This Teen Stopped Hiding Her Dad's Abuse

http://bit.ly/kuow_radioactive_teenabuse

FB Conversation about Noel's Story

http://bit.ly/kuow_ivy_fbconvo

Stories from a Two-Day Workshop with Farmworker Youth in Mt. Vernon, Washington

http://bit.ly/kuow_radioactive_frmwkr_yth

RadioActive Explores Minority Representation with Hari Kondabolu

(RadioActive podcast)

http://bit.ly/RadioActive_Podcast_Kondabolu

what interview starters and stoppers they noticed while listening to the clips. Typically, youth come up with such interview starters as open-ended questions, follow-up questions, and treating the interview subject with respect.

From there, it's time to put this knowledge into practice. Since our program emphasizes the use of professional radio technology, we pass out handheld digital audio recorders and teach youth how to use them. However, you could just as easily ask youth to use their own smartphones to record their conversations. Regardless of what equipment youth are using, we emphasize two technical skills: holding your microphone about six to eight inches from your subject's mouth, and wearing headphones. If you're recording audio and not wearing headphones, it's just like taking a photo without looking through the viewfinder. You might get something good, but you never know.

Now, youth divide into pairs and interview one another for five to ten minutes each, typically using this prompt: "what's a challenge in your life that you've overcome, and how did you overcome it?" (If you have more time, you could prompt youth to brainstorm alternative open-ended questions to ask each other.) Finally,

we reflect on the whole process and find out what youth learned. Typically, they reflect that interviewing is fun, but it's hard to stay on one topic the whole time. This often leads to a discussion about preparation, and youth reflect that next time they do an interview, they want to prepare more questions ahead of time.

That's what a one-hour RadioActive workshop looks like. Want to do more? Consider devoting a season of after school or summer time to an audio journalism or podcasting workshop. RadioActive holds an intensive six-week introductory workshop at KUOW's studios every summer, and 12-week after-school workshops in the spring and fall at locations throughout the Seattle area, with a focus on geographic areas with less access to high-quality arts programs. (See a sample agenda and calendar for RadioActive workshops at the end of this article.)

This fall, we are partnering with the Seattle Public Library's Columbia Branch to offer our 12-week intensive after-school workshop for six youth ages 16 to 18. By the end of the program, each participant will complete a professional-quality radio story, such as the kind you might hear on NPR's *Morning Edition* or *All Things Considered*. All of our students'

stories will be featured on KUOW.org and will be archived by the Seattle Public Library. Many will broadcast on KUOW's airwaves, reaching tens of thousands of listeners. Each participant will receive a \$375 stipend for the work, ensuring that this workshop is accessible to all youth. At the end of every RadioActive intensive, we celebrate with a community listening party open to friends, family, and the public.

Each participant in a RadioActive intensive creates a story on a topic of choice. In fall 2014, an intro workshop student, Noel Gasca, chose to tell her story about a young woman, Ivy Jacobsen, who had decided to stop hiding her father's sexual abuse. Noel knew Ivy from high school. Ivy had graduated a couple of years earlier and had given a graduation day speech about the abuse she'd experienced. Now, Noel interviewed Ivy, chose clips from the interview she wanted to include, and wrote a script to tie the narrative together. She went through several rounds of edits with me, her editor, and was supported by a staff mentor as well as a story partner, a fellow participant in the workshop. Noel carefully fact-checked each aspect of Ivy's story. She interviewed Ivy's mother and former teacher to get more perspectives on what had happened. She found a recording of Ivy's graduation speech and layered the audio into her story. She voiced her script in a studio and mixed it all together. Then we posted her story online. Within 24 hours it had gone viral, with more than 100,000 views. One listener wrote on KUOW's Facebook page, "Thank you for sharing this story of courage, strength, and hope, as it's inspiring for people of all ages to end abuse in their lives."

Being a witness to someone's story changes your life. Telling your own story changes your life. Hearing stories changes lives. The first step is to listen. I encourage you to teach the youth you work with to listen, because that skill will open them up to hearing each other's voices, and that will change their lives. YALS

KUOW's RadioActive Youth Media Interviewing Workshop

Time: 45–75 minutes

Materials

- Computer and speakers
- Digital audio recorders and headphones (or ask youth to bring their own smartphones and headphones)
- White board or chart paper and markers
- Pen and paper for students

In this workshop, youth learn to identify active listening, and learn interview practices such as asking open-ended questions and follow-up questions. They practice using digital audio recorders and get to know other members of the group.

Time	Activity
PREP	
	Gather materials Load these links to listen to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sigur Ros on NPR's Bryant Park Project https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIMGPIH4XPo ● Clare Martin interviews a stranger at Seattle's Pike Place Market as part of KUOW's RadioActive Youth Media workshop. https://soundcloud.com/kuow/radioactive-interview-example (Optional) Load these RadioActive stories to listen to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For older youth only: http://kuow.org/post/why-teen-stopped-hiding-her-dads-abuse ● http://kuow.org/post/water-sound-freedom-my-ba
OPENING 5 MIN	
5 min	Introduction to the workshop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Today you're going to learn to do an interview like a broadcast journalist does! We'll talk about what kinds of questions you can ask to get interesting and informational answers. Then you'll practice by interviewing a partner." ● (Optional) "You'll also learn how to use professional recording equipment for doing an interview!" ● "This workshop comes from KUOW's RadioActive Youth Media in Seattle! They work with high school age students who make their OWN stories about the topics that matter to them. You can hear them at kuow.org/radioactive." ● Questions?
BUILDING INTERVIEWING SKILLS 20–25 MIN	
10–15 min	Rotating Circles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● "Before starting, we have to be comfortable asking and answering questions of each other." ● [Standing] Divide the group into two and have one group form an inner circle, shoulder to shoulder, facing outward. The other group forms an outer circle facing inward. Everyone should be facing a partner. ● Give the group a topic to talk about with their partner: What was a highlight of your weekend? <i>CATCH: Be BAD listeners.</i> ● After 30 sec, direct people to stop and ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whose partner was an excellent bad listener? What did the bad listener do? ○ How did it feel to not be listened to? ○ How did it feel to be the one not listening? ● Ask the outer circle to rotate once to the right, so each person has a new partner. Now we're going to be GOOD listeners! ● Give the group a new question. 1 minute per question. The challenge is to stay on topic for the whole time. After each question, the outer circle rotates once to the right. Alternate which circle is asking the question. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tell me about your family? ○ What's your favorite place in the world? ○ What is a challenge that you've overcome, and how did you do it? (2 min for this question—let both circles ask and answer)

10 min	<p>Interview Starters and Stoppers [Seated]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “We’re going to listen to two short samples of interviews from public radio shows. As you listen, write down a few ideas on what makes an Interview Starter and what makes an Interview Stopper. By Starter, we mean a question that gets an interesting, compelling, emotional, detailed answer. By Stopper, we mean a question that gets awkward silence, one-word answers, or uninteresting answers.” ● Listen to Luke Burbank’s interview with Sigur Ros for 2 minutes ● Listen to Claire’s Pike Place interview for 1 minute ● Group discussion: What did you hear that were Interview Starters? Stoppers? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chart these answers. ● If these haven’t been brought up, suggest these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Open-ended questions. That means something that can’t be answered just “yes” or “no.” Open-ended questions begin with who, what, when, where, why, or how. ○ Listen and ask follow-up questions that make your partner dig deeper or be more specific. Can you give me an example of a good follow-up question to “What is a challenge that you’ve experienced?”
INTERVIEW PRACTICE 20–35 MIN	
5 min	<p>Divide into pairs or groups of three using your preferred grouping method.</p> <p>Brief tech lesson:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Show youth how to use the audio recorders (or instruct them how to use their smartphones to record a Voice Memo). ● Always wear your headphones—otherwise, it’s like taking a photo without looking through the viewfinder! ● Identify where your microphone is. Hold it about 3-4 inches from your partner’s mouth and to the side. ● Now you’re going to try interviewing each other using our recording equipment. We’ll work in pairs (or groups of three) and you’ll have 5–8 minutes each to interview each other about a challenge your partner has experienced and how your partner overcame that challenge. <p>Instructions for interviewing each other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask each group to choose their roles for the first round (everyone will get a chance to do all of them). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interviewer [in pairs, this person holds the audio recording equipment and wears headphones] ○ Interviewee ○ Producer [only for groups of three—this person holds the audio recording equipment and wears headphones] ● Your topic is “What’s a challenge or problem you’ve overcome and how did you overcome it?” ● Challenge yourself to stay on topic the whole time! Follow your curiosity and ask follow-up questions that get at emotion, detail, and stories. ● Let youth know how much time they’ll have for the interview (5–10 minutes each).
15–30 min	<p>Interviewing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5–10 minutes per person (depending on the size of your groups, age, and time available). ● Circulate around the room and give suggestions/encouragement. ● Give a 1-minute warning before the end of the round. ● Do enough rounds to allow each person to take on each of the roles.
CLOSING 5 MIN	
5 min	<p>Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What questions worked well to get interesting answers? ● What was challenging? ● What other questions do you have about interviewing? ● What would you do differently next time you did an interview? <p>Feedback:</p> <p>Ask for a thumbs up, side, or down on each of these questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you know more about interviewing than you did when you started? ● Did you have fun? ● Do you want to interview someone in the future? <p>Any feedback on this workshop?</p>

LISTEN TO A RADIOACTIVE STORY (OPTIONAL) 10 MIN	
10 min (if time)	<p>Listening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen to a story from KUOW's RadioActive Youth Media workshop. This story was produced by a young person age 16 to 18. The youth did all of the interviewing, recording, writing, and audio editing (with the support of adult mentors). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What parts of the story grabbed your ears? What questions do you have about how this was made? What do you think the person had to consider when interviewing?

RadioActive Youth Media Spring 2015 After-School Intro Workshop Calendar

FEBRUARY						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
8	9	10 5:00–7:00 pm Introductions, Partner interview & kit skills, transcribing <i>HW: transcribe your interview</i>	11	12 4:00–5:00 Lab time 5:00–7:00 Focus statements, writing your script 7:15–8:00 Parent open house	13	14 10:00–3:00 Field trip to Pike Place Market! Vox pops, scenes, portraits <i>HW: finish your script</i>
15	16	17 9:30 Lab time 10:00–3:00 Media literacy and media representation, Meet KUOW staff, record your voice	18	19 4:00–5:00 Lab time 5:00–7:00 Audio Editing <i>HW: Edit your story</i>	20	21
22	23	24 4:00–5:00 Lab time 5:00–7:00 Listen to partner stories, interviewing <i>HW: Preinterviews and pitches due Thursday</i>	25	26 4:00–5:00 Lab time 5:00–7:00 Pitch Meeting <i>HW: Revised focus statement due Monday</i>	27	28

MARCH						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 4:00–5:00 Lab time 5:00–7:00 Sound in the story <i>HW: Plan creative elements for your story</i>	4	5 4:00–5:00 Lab time 5:00–7:00 Journalism ethics, photography <i>HW: Photos due April 7</i>	6	7
8	9	10 4:00–5:00 Lab time 5:00–7:00 Transcribing interviews, pulling cuts <i>HW: Transcripts due Thurs.</i>	11	12 4:00–5:00 Lab time 5:00–7:00 Editor meetings <i>HW: Do additional interviews, rewrite your lede, pull cuts by Tues.</i>	13	14

15	16	17 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 Group feedback session, writing for radio 2	18	19 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 Writing a first draft of your final story	20	21
22	23	24 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 What makes great radio (or podcasts), planning the listening party HW: First draft due Thurs.	25	26 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 Workshop your first draft with your mentor	27	28

April						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
29	30	31 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 Distributing stories, audio editing 2 HW: 2nd draft due Thurs.	1	2 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 Group feedback session HW: Third draft due Tues.	3	4
5	6	7 3:30-6:30 Lab time 4:00-7:00 One hour script edit with your editor HW: Fourth draft due Tues.	8	9 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 Work on a third draft with your story partner	10	11
12	13	14 3:30 Start Lab time 4:00-7:00 One hour script edit with your editor HW: Fifth draft due Sat.	15	16 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 Work on your final draft	17 10am-12pm (optional) Watch a live radio show and meet journalists!	18 9:30 Lab time 10:00-6:30 Final script edit, mouth edit HW: Final script due by email 6pm.
19	20	21 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 Voicing your final stories! HW: Rough mix due Thurs.	22	23 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 Rough mix HW: Polish your mix for Tuesday.	24	25
26	27	28 4:00-5:00 Lab time 5:00-7:00 Final Mix HW: Final mix due Thursday 4pm.	29	30 4:00-7:00 LAST DAY Listening to final stories, Session Review		2

MAY						
Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
3	4	5 4:00-5:00 KUOW Staff Party 6:30-8:00 LISTENING PARTY!!!!	6	7	8	9

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