

PUSHING THE ELEPHANT

A film by Beth Davenport and Elizabeth Mandel

LESSON PLAN 2

Using Stories to Inspire
Community Action



Photo credit: Arts Engine

COMMUNITY CLASSROOM

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COMMUNITY CLASSROOM is an innovative education resource providing short documentary film content and accompanying curricular materials, lesson plans, and homework assignments to high school and community college instructors and youth-serving community-based organizations. Modules are drawn from documentaries scheduled for broadcast on the Emmy Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*. Content is grouped into subject specific segments that correspond to lesson plans and educational activities. All COMMUNITY CLASSROOM lesson plans are designed with key education standards in mind, and are available free of charge online, along with the film modules.

COMMUNITY CLASSROOM is a program of the Independent Television Service, created with support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Lesson plans were developed with guidance from the American Association of Community Colleges, KQED Education Network, National Association for Media Literacy Education, National Council for the Social Studies, National Council of Teachers of English, National Women's Studies Association, National State Teachers of the Year, and PBS Teachers.

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The Film

Rose Mapendo's story is one of survival and forgiveness, of pragmatic action in the midst of immeasurable pain, of a mother's fierce determination to save and protect her children, and of a spirit that refuses to give up hope in the face of almost insurmountable odds. Through Rose's own words, *Pushing The Elephant* describes the ordeal she and her family endured as survivors of ethnic violence during the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo in the late 1990s.

Not long after hearing that Tutsis were targeted for massacre, Rose and her family were rounded up and sent to a Congolese prison camp. As Banyamulenge Tutsis, a minority ethnic group in Congo, they were expecting to be killed. The family then spent 16 months in the death camp, where Rose's husband was killed, and where Rose gave birth to twins under the most adverse and extreme conditions. On a concrete floor in a dark cell, with no running water and nothing clean for the babies, she used strands of her own hair to tie off the umbilical cord.

In spite of the wretched conditions in which they were kept – with little or no food, expecting death at any moment – Rose did what she could to protect her nine children. She named her twins after the prison's army commanders, hoping that would save their lives. When it became clear that her eldest son, John, was going to be killed, Rose, John, and Aimee, her eldest daughter, came to an agreement. They decided that the only way to save John's life was to let Aimee be taken by an older soldier at the prison who had his eye on her. After the family was relocated to another camp, Aimee discovered she was pregnant. When the soldier found out, he sent her powdered milk and said he would talk to Commander Joseph Kabila, Congo's future president, on her behalf. Four days later, future President Kabila, who was then the commander of the Army, came to the prison and ordered the family to be taken to the human rights office.

In 2000, Rose and her family fled the Congo and were resettled in Phoenix. Her daughter Nangabire, who had been living with her grandparents, remained behind. Worried that Nangabire could be raped or forced to marry, Rose started making inquiries and found her daughter in a refugee camp in Nairobi, Kenya, where hundreds of thousands of refugees from Congo and other war-torn countries await resettlement.

When Nangabire came to Phoenix, she had many difficult adjustments to make: learning a new language, negotiating a large American high school, and becoming part of a family she hasn't seen in 13 years. Learning of her father's death and her family's ordeal in the prison camp, while also dealing with the memories of her own harrowing experience as a refugee, left Nangabire feeling sick and unable to let go of her past. But, with Rose's encouragement and support, she is able to move past her anxieties and bad memories and look to the future.

While caring for her large family, Rose also assists other Congolese refugees. In 2005 she helped found Mapendo International, an organization that resettles refugees who have been overlooked by humanitarian organizations. In her Phoenix community, she helps settle Banyamulenge survivors of a massacre in Gatumba, Burundi, bringing them together with a local organization's community service efforts and hosting them at an event in her home, where her children and others join together in traditional Congolese singing. Rose travels back to Africa, offering hope and encouragement to refugees in Nairobi and offering prayers at the site of the Gatumba massacre. Over her son's objections, she also goes to Congo where she meets with village women to plant the seeds of empowerment. A self-taught woman, Rose works to raise awareness of women's issues in the Congo and surrounding areas; she uses herself as an example to inspire other women to look at political and cultural conditions from their own perspective and become active in making their voices heard in order to effect change in that war-torn country and their refugee communities worldwide.

With her deep religious convictions, Rose has an unwavering belief in forgiveness, which has been central to her survival and her ability to help her fellow Congolese who have suffered the trauma of war and displacement. To her, forgiveness means letting go – of vengeful feelings, and of the burden of hatred. Her mission is to seek peace, which is not possible without forgiveness. She delivers her message of peace and forgiveness on many platforms: at meetings of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, on national television news programs, in intimate, grass-roots meetings, within her family, on Capitol Hill and now, via *Pushing the Elephant*.

Rose and her brother, Dr. Kigabo Mbazumutima also founded a new organization called Mapendo New Horizons, designed to help bring peace and reconciliation in African territories, including the Great Lakes region. You can find more information at www.mapendonewhorizons.org.

Lesson Plan 2

Using Stories to Inspire Community Action

Estimated Time Needed:

One to two 50-minute class periods, plus student work outside of class to gather a story from a school or community source

Grade Levels:

9-12, College (Note: This lesson includes discussion of how a family suffered during war).

Subject Areas:

Current Events, Geography, Global Studies, Government, Political Science, Social Studies, Sociology, U.S. History, Women's Studies, World History

Purpose of the Lesson:

In this lesson, students will explore how storytelling can be a powerful way to illustrate how problems affect people and to inspire collective action that can bring about positive change. The class will first analyze the potential impact of the experiences described by Rose Mapendo, a woman whose family suffered severe hardships during violent conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Students will then gather and share a true story from their own community that explains the human impact of a local issue.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Explain the meaning of a quotation and apply it to a personal experience.
- Infer how a woman who speaks about her family's wartime experiences can bring about positive change.
- Use media to gather a story that illustrates the human impact of an important issue in their own community.
- Provide written analysis for how that story could be used to raise awareness, further dialogue, and inspire collective action on that issue in your community.

Materials:

- Equipment to show the class a film module
- Film Module: Rose Mapendo Tells Her Story (Length: 9:38)
- Student Handout A: The Power of Stories
- A map of Africa, showing the location of the Democratic Republic of Congo
- Teacher Guide for "The Power of Stories" handout
- Student Handout B: Story Project Analysis

Procedures:

1. Post the following quotation where everyone in the class can see it: "One person cannot push an elephant, but many people together can push an elephant."
2. Ask students to take a few minutes to reflect on the quote, write an explanation of what they think it means, and provide a description of how it relates to a personal life experience.
3. Have students share what they have written with a partner. Then, invite a few pairs to share their responses with the class.
4. Tell students that the quote is from Rose Mapendo, a woman whose family experienced severe hardships during war in their homeland of the Democratic Republic of Congo, or DR Congo. Show students where DR Congo is on a map. Explain that as a result of the conflict there, Rose's husband was executed, she and nine of her ten children were imprisoned in a death camp, and she was separated from another child for 13 years. Now that the family is reunited and living in the United States, Rose regularly speaks about what happened to her and her family in DR Congo. (Note: To give your students more background on the war in DR Congo, please see the lesson plan, Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Causes and Impact.)
5. Distribute the student handout and explain that the class is going to watch a film module that shows Rose Mapendo speaking about her experiences. Go over the handout with students and ask them to complete it using information from the module. Then, show "Rose Mapendo Tells Her Story" (length: 9:38).
6. After watching the video, ask students how they felt when they heard Rose describe her family's suffering in the prison camp. How did the visuals (e.g., view from a barred window, stone walls) shown while Rose told of the birth of her twins affect student reactions to her story? Using the Teacher Guide to facilitate further discussion, review student responses on their handouts and talk about why stories like Rose's are important to both tell and hear.

Explain that like Rose Mapendo, students can also use the power of storytelling to help others. Tell students that they are going to complete a project where they will select an issue, share the true story of someone affected by that issue, and then explain how that story could be used to bring about positive change.

Depending on available resources, students could use text, photographs, audio recordings, slideshows, video, or other forms of media to tell the person's story. Consider showing students a number of the following examples of digital storytelling for inspiration:

Video:

Stories for Change (<http://storiesforchange.net/stories>)
This database of digital stories – many of which are downloadable – addresses issues like housing, violence, health care, and more. A Promise Made (http://storiesforchange.net/story/a_promise_made) (length: 3:33) is a story about end-of-life treatment decisions.

Center for Digital Storytelling

(<http://www.storycenter.org/index1.html>)
Another database of community stories. Unable (<http://www.storycenter.org/stories/index.php?cat=5>) (length 2:12) addresses domestic violence.

IOMPretoria (<http://www.youtube.com/iompretoria>)

This video (length: 4:03) tells the story of a migrant worker in Swaziland who struggles with HIV and AIDS in an area with limited medical services and other resources.

Audio with photographs:

VoiceThread (<http://www.voicethread.com>)

This example isn't issue based, but shows how one woman described a photograph to share a story about her mother, and others online then commented on it: Ellie Tells a Story (<http://voicethread.com/?#q.b165019.i881375>). For this project, the student could also 'comment' to add their Story Project Analysis.

Audio:

StoryCorps

(<http://www.npr.org/series/4516989/storycorps>)
This collection of stories is not always issue-based, but illustrates how audio can be used to tell a person's story. This one tells of a man who was bullied in junior high school for being gay: Looking Back at the 'Tremendous' Hate of Bullies (<http://www.npr.org/2011/01/07/132722052/looking-back-at-the-tremendous-hate-of-bullies>) (length 2:24)

For each example shared with the class, discuss what visuals and/or sounds were used. How did those elements influence the way that students reacted to the person's story? What issue was addressed in each story? How could the story be used to raise awareness about that issue? To further dialogue? To inspire others to do something about this issue?

7. Help students get started on their projects by first considering various school or community issues that they are concerned about. Instruct each student to trace his or her hand on a sheet of paper, brainstorm a list of concerns (e.g., bullying at school, helping refugees in the community, teen pregnancy, students who drop out of high school, homeless youth or families, etc.), and list one issue on each finger of the handprint. (If students have trouble coming up with ideas, consider having them complete this step with a partner or consult Web sites about volunteering, like Do Something.org (<http://www.dosomething.org/>) or VolunteerMatch.org (<http://www.volunteermatch.org/>.) Students should circle the one issue they want to focus on for the project. They should then list in the palm of the handprint potential people who might be willing to explain how this issue has affected their lives, or possible community organizations that could connect students with someone.
8. Give students time outside of class to gather the story for this assignment. Students should then complete the Story Project Analysis handout and turn it in with their finished story.
3. Examine further the theme of forgiveness versus vengeance. Ask students to describe an experience when they had to choose between forgiving someone and seeking revenge. What happened? Which did they choose? What might have happened if they had chosen the alternative? In the video, Rose said, "When you don't forgive others, you keep building a hell for yourself." What does she mean? Do students agree or disagree? Where does justice fit in? Watch the Religion & Ethics Newsweekly report, "Rwandan Reconciliation" (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/april-17-2009/rwandan-reconciliation/2708/>) that describes how some Rwandans are trying to forgive and move forward after their country's massive genocide. What impact did forgiveness have on those in the report? What if they had sought vengeance instead? Finally, have students explore the concepts of forgiveness or vengeance in other ongoing or historical conflicts, such as local gang violence, the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, or Cambodia under Pol Pot.
4. Evaluate DR Congo's potential for achieving peace and prosperity. Using the Global Classroom's Six Factors of Economic Success (<http://www.sad34.net/~globalclassroom/tools/toolssixfactors>) as a framework, have students conduct research and then write essays to synthesize their findings and analysis.

Extension Activities:

1. Increase the impact of the community stories that students gathered for this lesson. Have students share their stories beyond the classroom by contacting reporters, partnering with community leaders connected to their chosen issue, or sharing stories online via social media. Alternatively, students could organize a community event where their stories are accompanied by discussion opportunities about the related issues as well as information on how people can help.
2. Consider the strengths of women as leaders. In the video, one of the participants in a panel discussion suggested that women should be at the table of peace negotiations. The class also hears in the video that in DR Congo, women are not involved in politics and "do not have a say." How do students think the inclusion of women's voices might affect peace negotiations in DR Congo? How do female leaders affect change at your school and in your community? To study these questions more deeply, check out Community Classroom's related "Women and Democracy" (<http://itvs.org/educators/collections/vote-democracy/lesson-plans/women-and-democracy>) film module and lesson plan.
5. Explore the work of human rights organizations. Have student pairs research one organization and write a profile about it that explains who the organization serves, summarizes where and how it conducts its activities, and describes volunteer opportunities. Consider also inviting someone from a human rights organization to speak to your class about career opportunities in the field.
6. Compare and contrast Rose Mapendo with women's rights pioneer Sojourner Truth. Have students watch the end of the video again where Rose speaks to a group of women in DR Congo about how women are the key to change, and if women do not free themselves and look at what is possible, then they will suffer. Then, ask students to read a bio (<http://www.notablebiographies.com/St-Tr/Truth-Sojourner.html>) about Sojourner Truth and her famous speech "Ain't I a Woman" (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/sojtruth-woman.html>). How is Rose similar to Sojourner Truth? How is she different? Have students organize their thinking in a Venn diagram.

Related Lesson:

Conflict in Democratic Republic of Congo: Causes and Impact

<http://www.itvs.org/educators>

This lesson helps students make personal connections with Rose Mapendo (featured in this lesson) and her family. Doing so will help put a human face on conflict in DR Congo – a far away and unimaginable conflict that is the deadliest since World War II. Students will then investigate various events in DR Congo's history, determine the causes and impact of the war, and analyze the effects that war has had on women in particular.

Background Resources:

BBC: Q&A: DR Congo Conflict

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11108589>

This resource includes information on the status of the conflict in DR Congo and the purpose of the United Nations mission there.

The CIA World Factbook:

Democratic Republic of the Congo

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cg.html>

Find a map, geographic and political information, and key issues related to DR Congo.

Digital Storytelling Guide

<http://langwitches.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/Digital-Storytelling-Guide-by-Silvia-Rosenthal-Tolisano.pdf>

This how-to guide provides step-by-step instructions for several types of digital storytelling, using media tools readily accessible to schools.

Discussion Among Social Entrepreneurs: Storytelling and Social Change

<http://www.socialedge.org/discussions/marketing-communication/storytelling-and-social-change/>

This article and related discussion on the Skoll Foundation's Social Edge site examines how the use of compelling narratives and creative media helps people to understand and connect with social issues.



Photo credit: Arts Engine

Student Handout A

The Power of Stories

Directions: Use information from the video to respond to the prompts below.

1. Name at least two reasons that Rose Mapendo speaks out about what happened to her and her family in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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2. List some of the audiences with whom she has shared her story:

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-

-

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3. Make inferences about how telling her story to these audiences can help Rose to:

Raise awareness:

Advance dialogue:

Inspire action:

4. How does Rose's quote about "many people together can push an elephant" relate to her efforts to bring about change in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

The Power of Stories (Teachers Guide)

Note to Teachers: To help facilitate discussion, sample responses for the student handout have been provided below. Students may have other findings.

1. Name at least two reasons that Rose Mapendo speaks out about what happened to her and her family in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

- *To raise awareness about the situation in DR Congo*
- *To inspire others to help those who are still suffering*

2. List some of the audiences with whom she has shared her story:

- *Attendees at conferences (Ex: Those attending the meeting shown at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR, the UN refugee agency)*
- *General public (Viewers of CNN and Rose's other TV appearances)*
- *Politicians at the White House (Those listening to her speak in the Rose Garden)*
- *Students in your classroom (Your class watched scenes from a documentary film about Rose and her work as an activist.)*

3. Make inferences about how telling her story to these audiences can help Rose to:

Raise awareness: Many people are not familiar with conditions in death camps or the war-related atrocities being committed in DR Congo. Rose's first-hand account of her family's hardships increases empathy and understanding about the human impact of the conflict there.

Advance dialogue: Rose talks about the importance of forgiveness and seeking peace in an effort to help end conflict in DR Congo. Rose also encourages women to talk with one another about their experiences as part of their healing process, and to come together to bring about positive change in their communities.

Inspire action: After hearing about Rose's experiences, the public may wish to make financial contributions to organizations that assist refugees. The international community may try to help secure peace and stability in DR Congo or encourage the prosecution of war criminals.

4. How does Rose's quote about "many people together can push an elephant" relate to her efforts to bring about change in the Democratic Republic of Congo?

Rose will not be able to bring about significant changes in DR Congo by herself; however, by telling her story, she can get many people involved in the process of achieving peace and stability in that country.

Student Handout B

Story Project Analysis

Name of the Story:

Issue Addressed by the Story:

Person the Story is About:

Summary of the Story:

1. How could sharing this story raise awareness about this issue?

2. How could sharing this story help people to have productive conversations about addressing this issue?

3. How could sharing this story inspire people to want to act and help those affected by this issue?

4. With whom should this story be shared?

5. Should the story be told differently to different audiences? Explain.

Standards Addressed in This Lesson's Activities

Sources

SL. 9-10, 11-12.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

WHST. 9-10, 11-12.1 Writes arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

WHST. 9-10, 11-12.2 Writes informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, and technical processes.

WHST. 9-10, 11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST. 9-10, 11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

WHST. 9-10, 11-12.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Content Knowledge

Sources

<http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>

A compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning).

Behavioral Studies, Standard 1: Understands that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity and behavior.

Behavioral Studies, Standard 4: Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Geography, Standard 9: Understands the nature, distribution and migration of human populations on Earth's surface.

Geography, Standard 10: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Geography, Standard 13: Understands the forces of cooperation and conflict that shape the divisions of Earth's surface.

Health, Standard 2: Knows environmental and external factors that affect individual and community health.

Historical Understanding, Standard 1: Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns.

Historical Understanding, Standard 2: Understands the historical perspective.

Language Arts, Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

World History, Standard 44: Understands the search for community, stability and peace in an interdependent world.

Guide Credits

Curricula Writer

Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is an educational writer with a background in secondary education and media development. Previously, she served as PBS Interactive's Director of Education, overseeing the development of curricular resources tied to PBS programs, the PBS TeacherSource Web site (now PBS Teachers), and online teacher professional development services. She has also taught in Maryland and Northern Virginia.

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Pushing the Elephant is a co-production of Arts Engine and ITVS. The Emmy Award-winning series *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts.

About ITVS:

The Independent Television Service (ITVS) funds and presents award-winning documentaries and dramas on public television, innovative new media projects on the Web and the Emmy Award-winning weekly series *Independent Lens* on Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. ITVS is a miracle of public policy created by media activists, citizens and politicians seeking to foster plurality and diversity in public television. ITVS was established by a historic mandate of Congress to champion independently produced programs that take creative risks, spark public dialogue and serve underserved audiences. Since its inception in 1991, ITVS programs have revitalized the relationship between the public and public television, bringing TV audiences face-to-face with the lives and concerns of their fellow Americans. More information about ITVS can be obtained by visiting itvs.org. ITVS is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people.

About *Independent Lens*:

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community or moment in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites, and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

About PBS:

PBS is a media enterprise that serves 354 public noncommercial television stations and reaches almost 90 million people each week through on-air and online content. Bringing diverse viewpoints to television and the Internet, PBS provides high-quality documentary and dramatic entertainment, and consistently dominates the most prestigious award competitions. PBS is a leading provider of educational materials for K-12 teachers, and offers a broad array of other educational services. PBS' premier kids' TV programming and Web site, PBS KIDS Online (pbskids.org), continue to be parents' and teachers' most trusted learning environments for children. More information about PBS is available at pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org Web sites on the Internet.