



LEADERSHIP WALKING TOUR WORKSHOP

Spring 2014
In Review

A collaboration between
The National Congress of Neighborhood Women
Student Community Action Tours
The High School for Enterprise, Business & Technology


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In spring 2014, students from The High School for Enterprise, Business & Technology, or EBT, designed and led the Williamsburg Activism Walking Tour. The tour focused on stories of community, activism, and multiracial leadership in the neighborhood—from the struggle for fair and affordable housing to the boycott of Eastern District High School in 1992 to the the growth of working class feminism in Brooklyn.

Leading up to their tour, students took part in a special project-based course at EBT, the Leadership Walking Tour Workshop. They interviewed neighborhood leaders, researched the history of Williamsburg, reflected on community leadership and power, and engaged with theater of the oppressed and a range of investigative methods. Throughout, students—and facilitators—were challenged to ask questions about our relationship to the material.

In this pamphlet, find out more about the workshop!





The workshop brought together three organizations: EBT, the National Congress of Neighborhood Women, and Student Community Action Tours.

STUDENT COMMUNITY ACTION TOURS

SCAT is a platform for students to investigate and retell the life and history of the community around them. Students interview local residents, analyze maps and documents, and play interactive games. Then, they lead walking tours based on what they've studied. Through SCAT, students are challenged to rethink history by combining personal narrative with community history; reclaim immediate neighborhood surroundings; and develop shared consciousness through group-based tour-design, intergenerational research, and theater of the oppressed. Each SCAT course is developed on a site-by-site basis. SCAT runs semester-long courses, briefer, one-month courses, and one-time workshops for teachers and students.

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF NEIGHBORHOOD WOMEN

NCNW has been dedicated for over 30 years to empowering poor and working class women to become community leaders. The Neighborhood Women Legacy Project honors these grassroots women activists by disseminating their stories, placing plaques and renaming public and private spaces. On May 31, students, parents and teachers from Grand Street Campus convened to honor Juanita Orengo-Rodriguez with a plaque outside their campus, the 14th such biographic demarcation in the neighborhood.

COURSE SEQUENCE

1. RETHINKING BOUNDARIES

Who gets to define “the neighborhood”?

The workshop began with a series of activities to unpack this question, starting with the “boundary game.” Students split into two teams separated by a boundary in the middle of the room. Each half was given a “rule” (e.g., walk around in figure eights). Over the course of the game, the boundary moved toward one side of the room, pushing back anyone who couldn’t adapt to the other side’s rule. How does this dynamic play out in the real world?

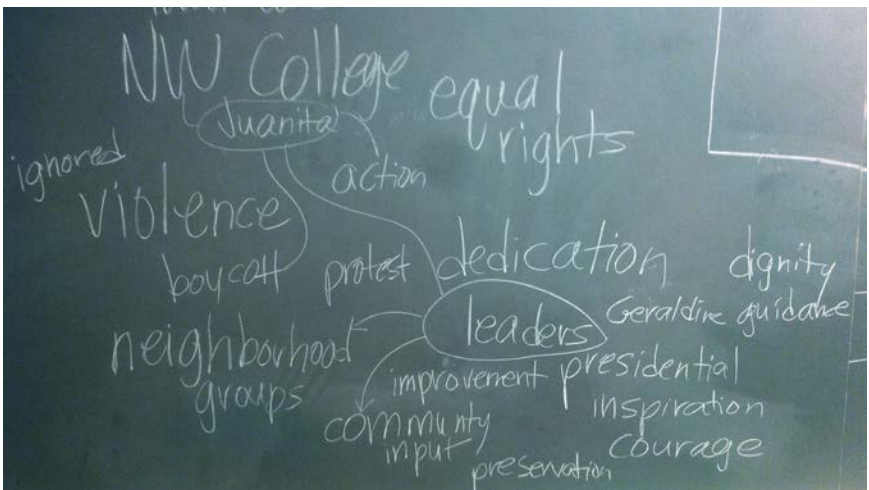
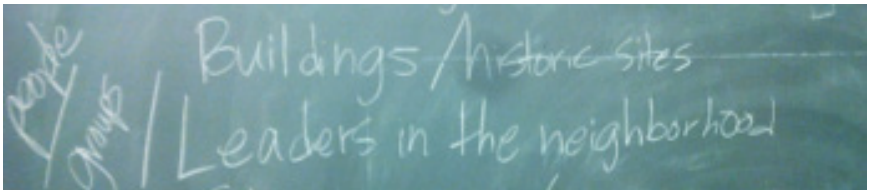
Then, we looked at depictions of New York City, from subway maps to city ads. What do they show? What do they not show? Who were they made for? Following this conversation, students worked in groups to map the neighborhood surrounding the school, their own neighborhood, and the routes that they take to get from one to the other.



3. INVESTIGATIVE METHODS

If you wanted to learn more about the life or story of a neighborhood, what methods would you use?

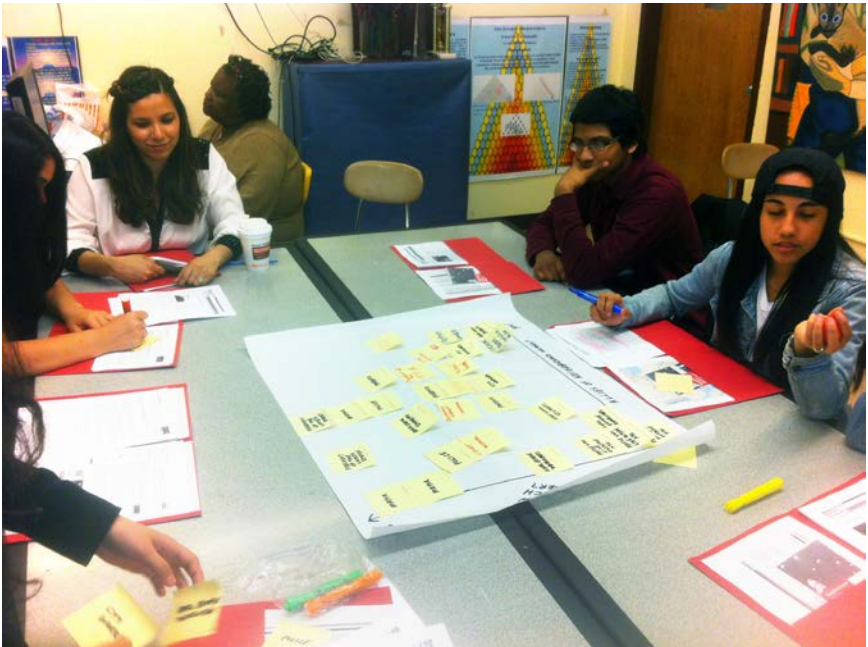
Following discussion about how observation, primary and secondary documents, multimedia, and people could be consulted to find out about the story of Kimani Gray, we started investigating the story of a particular group with a lot of influence in Williamsburg, the National Congress of Neighborhood Women. We watched a video of women protesting the closure of Greenpoint Hospital. Then, in groups, we read different accounts of the group's activism. We ended with a word cloud, with students shouting out words or themes that stood out to them in this initial investigation.



4. POWER MAPPING

In the neighborhood, who holds the power? What kinds of power? How might different groups of people be involved in or affected by an event?

With an eye to these questions, students dug further into the stories of the NCNW, with documents covering the Greenpoint Hospital Battle, the Eastern District High School Boycott and the life and work of activist Geraldine Miller. This time, students made a power map for the actors involved in the stories, as well as some (e.g., the President of the United States) who didn't come up but could play a role. On the x axis, actors were placed from left (none) to right (a lot) according to their alignment with the goals of the NCNW; the y axis charted each actors' amount of institutional power.



5. ORAL HISTORY

Who better to ask about activism in Williamsburg than those involved in it? And, what types of questions would we ask them?

In an oral history primer, students began by interviewing each other and reflecting on what it's like to be a talker and a listener. In pairs, students had one minute each to talk uninterrupted about two random topics, shoes and food. Then, in the same pairs, they took two minutes each to talk about two topics: what they envision for themselves after high school, and a story of their choice about the NCNW. During this last segment, each student wrote a series of questions that they would ask a NCNW member. Finally, the students conducted interviews of neighborhood activists! After the interviews, they reported back to the class about each interviewee.



6. PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

What would you include in a walking tour of a neighborhood?

Places where significant events happened? Places where people take care of everyday needs or have fun? Other places? Personal reflections or experiences in the neighborhood? As a class, we reflected on the board. Then, what stories do you want to share with others? In groups, students made collages with pictures, words, and chunks of text from their documents, interviews, and reflections.



7. DESIGNING AND PRACTICING TOURS

Where would you put different stories or themes on a tour map? What would you combine into a single stop or separate into multiple stops? What would you say for each stop and ask an audience? How would you sequence everything, from beginning to end?

In multiple sessions, students created maps and scripts for their tour. A week before the tour event, they practiced the tour for each other. In prep, we played a "fishbowl" game. Each student talked about a familiar place for two minutes, as if they were leading a tour. For each, two others stood up, listened, and responded. Then, everyone reflected on the interaction: first, the speaker; then, the two-person audience; finally, the rest of the class.

4. [a theme]: Transformation

- a. grand st.
- b. whole neighborhood
- c. hospitals

Q? Small world day care and swinging community center

5. [person or theme]: Jan Peterson

- a. small world daycare
 - b. Swinging 60s comm. center
 - c. Mid West Tucky Johnston honor Jan Peterson
- Q?

6. [something yo

- a. - hood/hol
- b. equal ri
- c. ? such a

She wa



8. WILLIAMSBURG ACTIVISM WALKING TOUR!

For a neighborhood audience, students gave their tour!

They spoke about the history of the neighborhood, reflected on their role in it, and asked the audience to consider the relevance of these stories in their lives. At the end, they received certificates from Councilman Antonio Reynoso.



REFLECTIONS

“One of the most important lessons is how to be a leader and take a stand for the changes you want.”

Nancy, 10th grader

As we prepare to conduct the workshop again and students rerun the tour, here are a few of the questions that drive our thinking.

How can additional methods from the Student Community Action Tours toolkit help students build on their investigations from the spring? For example, what could students learn from a photo scavenger hunt or another kind of mobile observation? How could interviews of neighborhood residents, in addition to activists, strengthen students’ perspectives on neighborhood change?

How can the history of the National Congress of Neighborhood Women be a springboard for looking into other stories of community and struggle in Williamsburg and beyond? What could students learn from groups that interacted with NCNW outside Williamsburg? Or groups in the neighborhood involved in events outside the reach of NCNW? Or those focusing on entirely different issues, especially issues of student interest? How do the stories of the past 40 years in this neighborhood connect with those in students’ home neighborhoods?

Interested in learning more about the Leadership Walking Tour Workshop or adapting workshop activities to your space?

Contact NCNW at info@neighborhoodwomen.org or SCAT StudentCommunityActionTours@gmail.com.



