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An Untold History: Intergenerational Trauma & the Armenian Genocide

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An Untold History: Inter-Generational Trauma & the Armenian Genocide



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Erik Anderson

HCOM Senior Capstone

Concentration: Practical & Professional Ethics

A Creative Video Documentary

Prof: Dr. Stromberg

Division of Humanities and Communication

Fall 2019

**An Untold History: Inter-Generational
Trauma & the Armenian Genocide**

An HCOM Senior Capstone Project

By Erik Anderson

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Erik Anderson

Dr. Stromberg

HCOM 475

26 September 2019

Capstone Project Proposal

1. **Name:** Erik Anderson **Concentration:** Practical and Professional Ethics
2. I plan to be creating a creative project in the form of a video documentary which explores and uncovers the lives of those who have been effected by trauma in some way or another. I plan to conduct interviews with those who have been effected by trauma, attempting to uncover their stories and discuss a difficult topic that they might not have ever talked about before. Through conducting these interviews I hope to help heal people through the speaking about their traumatic events and discussing an issue they might not have otherwise discussed. Through doing this research I hope to help inform and uncover to people that we all have been effected by trauma in some shape or another, and that it is very important to talk about it if we are to heal and recover.
3. My topic aligns directly with the courses theme of trauma, but I am going to specifically focus on the recovery aspect through the conversations and interviews in the video documentary.
4. My purpose in the project is to enlighten people about the trauma and hardships that we all have gone through and the importance of discussing these troubles in order to help the healing and recovery process.
5. My format will be a video documentary consisting of interview with different people of all ages discussing a traumatic event in their life. I feel as though this format will be a great way

to get various people's stories out there so that the audience can learn from a variety of different people.

6. Title: Trauma Uncovered - A Video Documentary

7. I plan to conduct interviews with various people who have dealt with trauma at some point in their life or another. I hope to hear some very tough stories that people might not have discussed before, because I feel as though it is very necessary in the healing process. I am going to seek some assistance from my cousin who is a film expert, so that maybe he can assist with some of the editing and camera work. I am going to find the potential candidates from all ages and backgrounds, come up with some challenging questions, and then conduct the interviews. If some people wish to remain anonymous then we will use a voice over.
8. I expect to uncover some truly gut-wrenching and uneasy stories in these interviews. I feel as though a lot of people have never been asked about trauma in their life and that it might not be easy to talk about at first, but it will truly be an amazing healing experience, both for the interviewee as well as the audience.
9. The necessary skills to do this project would be good interviewing skills as well as video editing and directing, which I am going to seek more assistance from my cousin. I am going to conduct the interviews and he will most likely be behind the camera doing the directing. I am going to go over the editing process with him.
10. My next steps would be to find the candidates who are willing to be interviewed and talk about a traumatic event in their life as well as reaching out to my cousin to see if he is available to help with the videography portion of the project.

11. The timeline for this project will be to find the candidates and conduct the interviews at some point in October, that way we can have all of November to edit the video and put the final touches on it before the festival. I plan on coming up with the interview topics and questions in the next couple weeks as well as looking for potential interviewees.

Proof of Documentation

See Attached Video

Erik Anderson

Dr. Stromberg

HCOM 475

15 December 2019

Reflection Essay

When I was registering for classes at the end of the spring semester, I knew that I would have to take Senior Capstone for my final semester. When I observed the class themes, this section's theme of trauma and recovery really stood out to me. This is not just because I feel that many people are faced with trauma, but because it is a topic that is rarely talked about. As a communications major, I feel as though this is a very important topic that needs to be addressed. We rarely think about how many people have had to deal with trauma, although statistics show that almost everyone has had to deal with a traumatic circumstance at one point or another. I felt as though this class would help me gain a better understanding and empathy for those who have dealt with trauma, and what is necessary to truly recover.

Throughout the course, we talked a lot about trauma and some of the ailments associated with it, including PTSD and inter-generational trauma. These conditions have the ability to effect a tremendous number of people, many times even unbeknownst to the individual. Trauma has the ability to not only effect the individual who suffered the trauma, but also future generations and their families, such as holocaust and genocide survivors. Inter-generational trauma is a prime example of how an individual who was faced with an extremely hard circumstance and is not quite able to fully get over what happened, this also has the ability to effect the individual's children, as well as future generations. A lot of times, the circumstance can be so traumatic and

life-changing, that it is nearly impossible for the person or their family to forget the atrocities they faced.

For a few weeks throughout the semester, we talked a lot about how inter-generational trauma has the ability of effecting families for many generations. We discussed various the holocaust and various genocides throughout history. These terrible events in history were so horrific and traumatizing that they not only directly effected those who suffered through them, but also their families and descendants. We can talked about the Armenian genocide for a bit, which my great-grandfather who is Armenian, survived and lived through. I felt a deep personal connection to this topic, because although I am only one eighth Armenian, my great-grandpa George Oren had to face a lot of adversity to accomplish his goals in life. For this very reason, I felt a deep connection to this very subject, and decided to talk about my family's history in overcoming these tremendous hardships and how inter-generational life trauma has effected my family. I decided to do a creative project in which I would interview my Armenian family members who knew my great-grandfather George Oren, and worked with him in the tire business he started in Oakland, in 1946. For the video documentary, I interviewed my grandmother Joanne, who is half Armenian, half Swedish, and daughter of my great-grandfather George, as well as my father Doug, who worked with him for 20 years and is his grandson.

For the video documentary, I decided to recruit my cousin Michael Plaza, who is an aspiring video director and producer, and owns his own production company entitled *Plausible Productions*. He was able to assist in providing the camera equipment, and helped me with directing and editing of the video. We conducted the interviews of my father and grandmother at our cabin in the Santa Cruz mountains, in which we discussed in depth my grandfather Oren's

legacy, his Armenian heritage, and how inter-generational trauma may have effected him or the rest of his family.

I am very grateful for the theme of this class and what I learned because it allowed me to learn not only about trauma and inter-generational trauma, but also how it may have effected my family or other families, and how it still has a tremendous impact today. My goal in conducting this creative project was to not only inform others about a topic and a nation's history that many people do not know about, but also to help uncover a bit more about my family's history that I may have not known otherwise.

The Armenian genocide was one of the most traumatic events in history, that is almost rarely, if ever, talked about or mentioned in textbooks. The genocide left many homes and families divided, broken, and left for dead: "The Armenian genocide was the systematic killing and deportation of Armenians by the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. In 1915, during World War I, leaders of the Turkish government set in motion a plan to expel and massacre Armenians. By the early 1920s, when the massacres and deportations finally ended, between 600,000 and 1.5 million Armenians were dead, with many more forcibly removed from the country" (history.com). The reason this genocide is rarely talked about is because the Turkish government still denies that a genocide ever happened today, although the history and evidence of the over 1 million carcasses thrown off of cliffs and into the river in Syria, shows otherwise. Although Turkish government officials still deny the genocide today, this past October U.S. Congress passed a landmark vote to officially recognize the Armenian killings of 1915 as a genocide. This is a huge step for not only the Armenian community, but also serves as major key in any recovery process as the admittance of a wrongdoing and harm.

My great-grandfather was born in Chicago we believe, in either 1906 or 1907, just 8 or 9 years before the Armenian genocide began. We believe his parents decided to move to America from Armenia in the early 1900's due to increased tensions between Armenians and Turks. Luckily, they were able to make it to America before the mass exterminations of their people began, or needless to say, my family or I would not be here today. It was not until I took this class until I realized just how much trauma can effect not only one individual, but those closest to them as well. I also learned, through interviewing my father and grandmother, just how motivated and hard of a worker he was to open two tire stores in the Bay Area. Despite his family having literally nothing and facing extermination when they came to the U.S., he worked his way from the ground up to achieve his dreams and become a successful entrepreneur.

I am very grateful for Dr. Stromberg suggesting I due a project in which I explore my Armenian heritage and background, because I was able to uncover a lot about my family and the history of Armenia that I did not know before. Trauma is a very difficult topic that effects more people than we actually think. It is never easy to reminisce on such hard circumstances and times, but a lot of times it is surviving these traumatic instances or circumstances that allow them to be as strong as they are. What I was able to learn from this class in doing this project is that one of the major keys in recovering from trauma, is to just talk about these issues with a friend or family, as difficult as it might be.

Works Cited

History.com Editors. "Armenian Genocide." History.com, A&E Television Networks, 1 Oct. 2010, www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/armenian-genocide.

