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## Final Project: Ignatian Pedagogy Certificate

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Final Project: Ignatian Pedagogy Certificate  
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1. When Mary Robinson came to speak at Loyola, she talked about the link between human justice and environmental justice. She talked about how there is no separation between the two. In my UCLR class, we discussed this idea throughout the semester, especially since it was a greenhouse learning community course. From this space we then delved into the concepts of human justice, in particular, the universal reality that we are all mortal (and death is natural), thus vulnerable, and further, interconnected in the reality of our vulnerability and reliance on one another.

We then read the two plays *The Laramie Project*, and *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later*. These plays delve into the very important conversation that arose after the brutal murder of Matthew Shepard, a student at the University of Wyoming, Laramie.

What this project hoped to look at was how the plays serve as an opening to the very difficult discussion about “homosexuality, sexual politics, education, class, violence, privileges and rights, and the difference between tolerance and acceptance” (*The Laramie Project*, Kaufman, x). Further, about how a community writes it’s own history (*Ten Years Later*, Kaufman, 103).

After reading both plays, I had two journalists come into class and discuss the journalistic implications that the play was portraying. Since the plays focus heavil, especially the second play, on how history is written and how journalism or the stories we tell creates an idea of our historical stories, I thought having two journalists come in and further discuss the ideas in the play would be helpful.

The next class period after the guest speakers I asked them to reflect on the talks and asked them a few questions, which they answered in writing.

The questions were:

- a. In *The Laramie Project: Ten Years Later* there is a “moment” about the 20/20 piece that showed the “whole story.” After reading both of these plays, what would you say is the “whole story?”
  - b. How do you think Laramie residents wrote their history? Give concrete examples?
  - c. Why is how we write our history important? How can it be political?
2. The reason I chose this particular play to discuss was because it is about a very important topic, hatred, and how this play calls to question the ways in which we

discuss, or avoid, talking about difficult or uncomfortable topics, in particular, the topic of hate. Also, the ways in which we write our histories are not only socially political but also calls into question how we either self-reflect, which could ask us to adjust our stories, or how we might respond with blame, and as a result, “throw out the data” (*Ten Years Later*, Kaufman, 143). We as humans desire to have control over our stories. We also like to have an ending to a story so we can, in a way, move on. These strong desires are very prevalent in the plays, and they are creatively depicted alongside the tension of the violence and hatred that was simultaneously present throughout the interviews. This space is so difficult to wade through, and that is the space I was asking the students to reflect on and wrestle with: the space between violence and hatred and the stories we tell ourselves about our own/our community’s identities.

3. This project served to actively involve students in reflection and discussion about a very difficult topic: hate. Resulting in many questions such as, how do people discuss and choose to respond, or not respond, to hate? Do they want to talk about it? Do they want it to go away? Does it even exist? Am I part of a community that promotes/teaches hate? Do I tolerate or do I accept? Do I need to change? Do I need to change the story?

4. Outcomes:

The following are reflections that students either answered in writing, or that I heard in our discussion in the classroom.

When asked what the “whole story” is (a phrase used in a 20/20 episode based on the incident, that was produced six years after Matthew’s death, and is prevalent in the second play), the students reflected on the deep complexity that writing our own histories entails. They wrote that...

- a. We can’t ever get the entire story because we will never be able to hear from Matt himself.
- b. The whole story includes all that is in both plays.
- c. It was a hate crime: the town was shook and couldn’t deal with the truth themselves.
- d. The story is the entire conversation of what happened after the incident.
- e. The facts of the actual case need to be taken into account.

When asked about how the Laramie residents wrote their own history, the students responded with...

- a. History is written via beliefs.
- b. Historical views are tainted with political views.
- c. There is a need to hear many voices, for the many voices make history.
- d. The residents were writing their own history and learning from it as they went.
- e. Writing and listening to one’s history can serve as a learning experience and as growth, all depending on how and who writes it.

- f. To deny the hate crime means the hatred and bigotry can continue.
- g. The history is wrapped up in the town identity. We need to get rid of the story so the town is not defined by it.
- h. They wrote their history as honestly as they could without going down as a town identified as just a hate crime town.
- i. Their history was written/understood through word of mouth.
- j. Many belief systems serve to write the town's historical story.
- k. The different social perspectives and discriminatory mindsets impact the history.
- l. The history was written alongside the town's engagement with violence
- m. The history created positive changes in Laramie (more discussions, LGBT groups, pride parade).
- n. There is both a collective as well as an individual history that is told.
- o. The town understood themselves as the victims, taking the focus off of the topic of hate and violence.
- p. How we write our history reveals how we reveal our mistakes.
- q. History is a political act: both sides need to be taken into account, and it needs to be factual, written correctly, and be true.

5. Further applications: I will certainly continue to delve deeper into this discussion in future classes. The students really responded to this very difficult and never-ending discussion. They found it valuable considering this is a current and relevant topic and they (like I) are eager to find words and ways in which to engage in conversations about topics that are so weighted, heated, political, and painful, in a less violent and more vulnerable way.