

Hyebin Lee
Rising Third-Year Award
Faculty Advisor: Prof. Mona Kasra

Project Outcome Report

Project Overview:

UVA has a diverse community. There are students and faculty from all over the world – China, Korea, Nigeria, and Egypt, just to name a few. There are also people working in the back like electricians, janitors, chefs, and drivers. They go unnoticed until we are in desperate need of something like getting locked out of our dorm rooms.

As a student coming from a diverse background, I've always been interested in getting to know people's stories. There is a general idea of UVA college life centering around fraternity/sorority, but oftentimes, this does not apply to many people, including myself. What about international students? What about marginalized groups? The UVA community also consists of people other than students and professors. The vision of the project sparked as I was walking down the street, wondering about the stories of people I walk passed by every day. I expanded this vision to seeking out "invisible people" in this community and hearing their stories.

I propose to make a short documentary series of about 4 episodes that will be distributed online. My vision for this project is to tell the stories of people who are often unheard of or underrepresented. Each episode will focus on highlighting one person from the community. The format of the episode will be like an interview, and through interview questions, people will share their narratives.

This project is inspired by the Humans of New York project, but it does not strictly follow the frameworks of the HONY project.

Outcome Overview:

The project features two episodes highlighting two different people in the UVA community. All interviewees come from different races, ages, and cultural backgrounds. This project faced many challenges, through which I grew as a filmmaker. Two episodes will be released in late April, and I plan to continue this series in the future.

This project went through some changes. At first, I was focused more on seeing past titles. I envisioned contrasting the interviewees' titles and their narratives: filming them at work and outside of work. However, through research and interviews, I concluded that those two are interconnected and both tell who they are as a person. Therefore, the focus of this project changed to presenting people in the community as who they are through the lens of their work, personal values, and how they perceive their purpose in life.

There were many challenges throughout this project, through which I grew a lot as a filmmaker. Firstly, it was very difficult to find interviewees from the UVA community. Oftentimes, people either rejected or didn't reply to emails. Secondly, my proposed schedule had to be changed a lot due to multiple unexpected illnesses/injuries, and tragedy. This pushed me to be flexible and quickly adapt to changes. However, this left me behind the original proposed timeline. Third, during the filming process, one of the cameras failed. Fortunately, I had two other cameras running, so I still had good coverage, but losing that camera was crucial because it was the primary camera. Fourth, one of the interviewees changed the location of the interview thirty minutes before the interview. Because this was a last-minute change, I couldn't recruit someone to help me with filming. As a result, this was challenging because I had to film and conduct the interview while walking. The content of the interview was spectacular, but I was not entirely satisfied with the aesthetic of the footage. Lastly, I realized in post-production that I spoke too much. When the interviewee was sharing a story, I reacted with "mhm," and it got picked up by the mic. These reaction audios were extremely challenging to remove. I couldn't remove all of them.

This project was challenging in so many ways. However, I learned a lot from it because of all the challenges. I learned so much about interviewing and how to go about interviewee searches. I also learned the mechanics of cameras and working with lighting. Post-production was a lot of learning as well. My color correction skills improved a lot. After many drafts (and with the help of my mentor), I was able to come up with a version that best present the stories of the interviewees. From this, I learned how different cuts can shape the narrative differently.

I plan to continue this project in the future and add new episodes. I feel much more confident as a filmmaker.

Link to the project:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhNNTFKy3Gw6Om6dHg7LPIjxTpPgPX5GL>

Budget:

Expenditure	Cost
Mac Mini and magic trackpad	\$1,008.77
Tomorrow's filmmakers' Online lessons	\$97.00
Adobe Creative Cloud All Apps (\$19.99 per month)	\$239.88 (1 year)
Zoom H6 - Track portable recorder for audio	\$279.99
Dji ronin s3 pro combo and camera battery	\$1,220.32
Rode videomic pro+	\$189.54
Total	\$3035.50*

* \$35.50 was paid out of pocket.