Artículo de investigación

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PhillyCAM: A Hub for Media Makers on Ranstead Street

PhillyCAM: Un centro para creadores audiovisuales en Ranstead Street

PhillyCAM: Um centro para criadores de mídia na Ranstead Street

Abstract

This article fulfills a double objective: on the one hand, it presents in detail and richly an outstanding experience of community television in an important city such as Philadelphia. It does so based on a particular event, such as the presence and work of a lady -television producer, who has a track record in this field and is recognized for her experience and creativity. And on the other hand, it presents a narrative based on the ethnographic method that is expressed in the first person, thus indicating a very fluid type of writing that guides the reader's interest along a path of facts and descriptions, which is exciting. The presentation of community television shows the activity of those who participate in it, including the way in which the expert television technicians who are on the channel support them, and have managed to reach important agreements in terms of production. It also points out the dialogue format in which progress has been made and which guarantees that what comes out of these teams corresponds to the needs and interests of the communities involved.Both the topic and the way it is approached and written contribute and enrich the field of communication for social change, within which it is inserted.

Keywords: Community television – Ethnography - Community production - Creativity – Dialogue - First-person narrative–

Resumen

Este artículo cumple un doble objetivo, por un lado, presenta detallada y ricamente una experiencia sobresaliente de televisión comunitaria en una ciudad importante como es Filadelfia. Lo hace a partir de un hecho en particular, como fue la presencia y trabajo de una productora de televisión, quien lleva una trayectoria en este campo y es reconocida por su experiencia y creatividad. Y por otro lado, expone una narrativa fundada en el método etnográfico que se expresa en primera persona, señalando así un tipo de escritura muy fluido que conduce el interés del lector por un camino de hechos y descripciones, que resulta apasionante. La presentación de la televisión comunitaria muestra la actividad de quienes participan en

ella, incluyendo la manera como los técnicos expertos en televisión que están en el canal los apoyan, y han logrado alcanzar acuerdos importantes en términos de la producción. Señala además, el formato de diálogo en el cual se ha avanzado y es el garantiza que lo que sale de estos equipo c orresponda a las necesidades e intereses de las comunidades involucradas. Tanto el tema como su manera de abordarlo y escribirlo aportan y enriquecen el campo de la comunicación paravel cambio social, dentro del cual se inserta.

Palabras clave: Televisión comunitaria – Etnografía – Producción comunitaria – Creatividad – Diálogo - Narrativa en primera persona

Resumo

Este artigo cumpre um duplo objetivo: por um lado, apresenta de forma detalhada e rica uma experiência marcante de televisão comunitária em uma cidade importante como Filadélfia. Fá-lo a partir de um determinado acontecimento, como a presença e o trabalho de uma produtora de televisão, que tem experiência nesta área e é reconhecida pela sua experiência e criatividade. E por outro lado apresentam uma narrativa baseada no método etnográfico que se expressa na primeira pessoa, indicando assim um tipo de escrita muito fluida que guia o interesse do leitor por um caminho de factos e descrições, o que é emocionante. A apresentação da televisão comunitária mostra a actividade de quem nela participa, incluindo a forma como os técnicos especializados de televisão que estão no canal os apoiam e têm conseguido chegar a acordos importantes em termos de produção. Destaca também o formato de diálogo em que se têm avançado e garante que o que sai destas equipas corresponde às necessidades e interesses das comunidades envolvidas. Tanto o tema como a forma como é abordado e escrito contribuem e enriquecem o campo da comunicação para a mudança social, no qual está inserido.

Palavras-chave: televisão comunitária – Etnohrafia - Produção comunitária - Criatividade - Narrativa em primeira pessoa - Diálogo

As I sit down today to write about PhillyCAM, the COVID-19 crisis rages outside my door. Philadelphia is under lockdown orders, creating an eerie emptiness in the streets. Silence surrounds me like a warm blanket, perfect for processing hours and hours of ethnographic data and interviews about PhillyCAM.

On October 4, 2019, a Friday afternoon, I observe the live recording of Live Culture, a PhillyCAM monthly live show. This episode is special because community television pioneer Dee Dee Halleck, who is visiting Philadelphia, is the show's featured guest. Dee Dee and I go way back. We met in the early 2000s and we've always been drawn to each other. I love to hear about her experiences pioneering legendary initiatives like Paper Tiger Television, Deep Dish TV, and Democracy Now!. She was also one of the few women to play an integral part in New York's original beatnik scene. She tells me extraordinary stories about New York radicals in the 1960s and I describe to her my experiences researching community radio in Latin America.

This episode of Live Culture is about the history and significance of community television in the United States. The producers have several goals: to honor the community television initiatives that broke ground in the 1970s, such as Paper Tiger Television in New York City; to introduce PhillyCAM as part of the second-generation of this community media tradition; and finally, to celebrate PhillyCAM's tenth anniversary: its first broadcast was October 23, 2009.

My goal today is to learn more about PhillyCAM, one of Philadelphia's iconic community media initiatives. PhillyCAM includes a public access channel [1], and WPPM, a low-power FM radio station. PhillyCAM trains local residents in media production with the aim of incubating hyperlocal media content. At the time of writing, WPPM featured seventy-nine community radio producers and PhillyCAM's public access television station was home to one hundred regular programs and two hundred stand alone specials every year, all entirely designed, produced, and edited by community producers with staff support. PhillyCAM's two-story building houses the television studios and production facilities on the main floor; the low-power FM radio station is tucked into a corner of the second floor. One of most fascinating elements of PhillyCAM is that it hosts and facilitates these two very different community media initiatives. The public access television channel is part of the city's franchise agreement with cable companies. PEG channels such as PhillyCAM TV strictly observe and protect First Amendment rights, meaning that any opinion can be voiced, including expressions of homophobia, racism, or misogyny. In contrast, WPPM radio is guided by community radio principles. Community radio is a notion anchored in Latin American historical understandings of participatory media as strongly aligned with social justice. Thus, WPPM has strict rules that guide its programming. There are limits to what can be said on WPPM that do not apply to PhillyCAM TV. These contrasting approaches could be the focus of this entire chapter, but I will postpone it for a future study.

PhillyCAM's large television studio is all set for the show, which opens with Nasha Taylor, Community Engagement Director, holding hand-written signs that announce each segment and present the credits. Nasha wears thick, bright yellow, wool gloves that contrast with the cardboard signs, giving the shot an intense vintage look—kind of like a silent film. The handwritten signs are clearly an homage to *Paper Tiger Television's* famous DIY aesthetics. A segment about a punk band playing in Philadelphia's Center City ends with a sign that reads Fracture—the name of the band.

Using PhillyCAM's green screen, the next segment shows Dee Dee Halleck sitting on a typical Philly stoop as she reads from W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro*. In the section that Dee Dee reads, Du Bois addresses the notion that "all Negroes are the same," which circulated in the city. He argues that inside communities, it is clear that there are major differences between different classes. As the background switches to a local mural that features a large image of Du Bois, Dee Dee explains that he lived in Philadelphia and taught at the University of Pennsylvania.

Dee Dee then explains the origins of public access television; a series of *Paper Tiger Television* clips follows. We see the famous hand-printed signs and several of *Paper Tiger's* iconic producers. We are reminded that, at the time, *Paper Tiger* was the only TV broadcaster engaged in questioning the entanglements between corporations and media.

[1] Public access channels are part of what is known as PEG channels (public, educational, government). Apart from its public access channel Philadelphia has five educational channels and one government channel. When they sign franchise agreements with cable companies, some municipalities demand PEG channels in exchange for using the rights of way to run the television company's cables.

We see *Paper Tiger* producers interrogating images of gender and women in the media, denouncing media manipulation, and exposing the limitations of corporate media. After Dee Dee situates community television in its historical framework, the program shifts to focus on Gretjen Clausing, PhillyCAM's Executive Director. Gretjen explains that PhillyCAM is part of the public access television tradition and tells a bit of its history.

This is followed by a series of scenes from the 2000 Republican National Convention, which was held in Philadelphia. Legendary media activist groups, including *Philadelphia Indymedia Center, Prometheus Radio Project, DU TV Channel 54, and Spiral Q,* with their giant puppets, played important roles covering and questioning the convention. Amy Goodman appears in the clips as Dee Dee explains that, at the time, the daily news program we know today as *Democracy Now!* was in the early stages of development. Goodman had come to Philadelphia to work with *Philly Indymedia*, co- producing stories about the role that *Indymedia* and other media groups played during the convention. PhillyCAM, like most community media, did not appear in a vacuum. The focus media activists brought to independent and participatory media in Philadelphia during the 2000 RNC prepared the ground for the organization to take root.

In its next segment, the episode showcases contemporary videos about PhillyCAM today. We see images of PhillyCAM headquarters as a hub of activity, a building where people from the greater Philadelphia region come together to collectively produce their own media. The program ends with a final conversation between Dee Dee and Gretjen about the importance of protecting and expanding public media spaces, such as PhillyCAM and *Paper Tiger TV,* where people from all walks of life can become media producers.

Figure 1

Credit: Photographs by the author

PhillyCAM as a hub for community dialogue

It's September 30, 2019 and I am hanging out with Zarinah Lomax, CEO and host of Talking the Walk, a TV program about the experiences of people who have lost a loved one to gun violence. Zarinah and her crew of long-time PhillyCAM members --Earl Weeks, Charles Clarke, and Donald Butler-- are preparing to shoot this week's episode. Somehow, three large pizzas appear out of the blue—I never find out where they came from, or who ordered them. They are sitting on the large table in the hallway, so we start eating. Vanessa Maria Graber, the Station Manager of WPPM (PhillyCAM's community radio station) walks by and stops to introduce a young African American man; he is a Drexel student doing an internship with WPPM. Gretjen Clausing, PhillyCAM's executive director, walks by with Maria, a young journalist from Serbia (Belgrade) doing a fellowship with PhillyCAM as part of a United States State Department program. Gretjen and Maria join our group near the pizza and Maria tells us that, in Serbia, community media do not exist. Zarinah tells Maria about her television program, on which mothers of young people who have been lost to gun violence tell their stories and talk about their pain and their process of healing after the murders of their children.

This snapshot of my days doing ethnographic observations at PhillyCAM reflects what I experienced every time I walked into the building: it was a busy hub of conversations, collaborations, and other interactions, all centered on media making. I first stepped inside PhillyCAM's three story building in October 2016, three months after I moved to Philadelphia. My first impression was that the building was a meeting place for local media makers, young and old, white and people of color, queer, cis-gender, groomed and ungroomed, coming and going carrying tripods, microphones, and cameras, sitting around the building's many social areas, sharing ideas and experiences as radio and television producers. Located on Ranstead and 7th Street, in the very center of the city, just a block from the iconic Liberty Bell, PhillyCAM's building hosts an explosion of participatory media. I wondered what behind-the-scenes elements made this dynamic space possible? I decided to explore every corner of the building to discover the conditions and human processes that contribute to PhillyCAM's buzzing hive. With the green light from PhillyCAM's leadership, I conducted ethnographic observations from September to December 2019. I spent time in every room of the building and attended classes, training sessions, and production meetings and spent hours just hanging out in the hallways, the entrance lobby, and the kitchen areas.

PhillyCAM's building is remarkable even before you step inside. A colorful façade and two very large signs alert passersby that this place is about media: a bright yellow sign reads "PhillyCAM" and a vivid pink banner announces "People Powered Media." The street level of the building is mostly walled in glass, allowing passersby to see what's going on inside. In an interview, PhillyCAM television producer Allen Watson Sr. recounted how he discovered PhillyCAM. Allen works as a as head of security in two buildings, one on each side of PhillyCAM. He walked past the building every day for years and, through the windows, he saw groups of people talking and meeting; he had no idea what it was all about. One day, October 4, 2018, he saw a particularly large group of people immersed in an in-

tense interaction. He decided it was time to walk in and find out what was going on, "and it seems that, since then, I have never left." The building's open, transparent façade was designed to ignite people's curiosity, inviting them to see that this is a place for everyday folks like them.

When someone comes in the door, the first person they encounter is Media Center Manager Sofie Trippet. Sofie has been a PhillyCAM producer since 2016, and was recently hired as Media Center Manager. Apart from her managing role at the front desk, Sofie continues producing media, including a music magazine and documentaries such as *Grievance*, about sexual harassment in the work place and sexual abuse. She tells me about her experience as the first person to greet people when they come inside the PhillyCAM building:

> They call me Sophie here, but my name is Sonia Trippet. When people come in, it's a big mix. There are people who have no clue, but once you tell them, they show an interest; some other people, you tell them and they say 'oh, ok' and they walk out, and there are people who come in because they already know about it, someone told them about it, so they have a plan. So, basically, I try to figure out where they are and kind of guide them to find where they want to be. So the first step is to explain to them that they have to become a member.
> Once they become a member, I need to guide them to who they should be communicating with to . . . implement their plan, so to speak. 'Cause some people come in and they already have footage, for example; so they have to become a member but they don't have to go through the process of producing from scratch, so they can go straight to Debbie Rudman, our TV Programming Director, who will help them with editing and getting a slot on the channel. Others have to start from scratch. All kinds of people walk through these doors; people in different age brackets, they can be in their 20s, or in their 50s, people with all kinds of special needs, we have a guy who produced a show and he's blind . . . you see what I mean? It's not limiting.. you can still come here and accomplish your goals, to do what you want to do even if you have disabilities ...all different types and walks of life, people you wouldn't expect! Sometimes people come without any expectation at all, and they are doing it [producing media] and they surprise themselves . . . sometimes we have homeless people, and they go through the process . . . it's all people who love media, and they come here and find out that they can pay 30 dollars and be able to use all these facilities, without having to pay thousands of dollars (personal communication, October 2, 2019).

Sofie explains how she implements one of PhillyCAM's main principles, which is that everyone is welcome to become a member:

> When people come through the door, I take [them] at face value . . . kind of like we're just having a dialogue. They are just talking to me about things that they want to do or are interested in and then, from there, the walls go down and everyone is comfortable, and they feel that someone is listening to them, that someone understands what they want to do. And then what you have to do is be open to listen to what they have to say, and then everything will flow.

> Like some people come in and they just want the basic information, but some others come in with 'I have this idea!!!' and they go on and on and on and you just have to give them that, listen, and I just talk to people and they kind of draw me into their project, and then it's even better because they are like, 'ah! I got someone interested!'... You have to engage with them at the level they are engaging with you: if they are talking, let them talk and if they are not, leave them their space...it's all about giving the attention that they need, to whatever degree, from the smallest to listening for an hour until they explain their whole plan..because they will sit for hours, and I listen, because I feel that this is their process, and at the end of the day **we are all artists, and every artist has a different process, and you have to give them that respect** (personal communication, October 2, 2019, my emphasis).

I learned that every staff person, instructor, facilitator, and equipment room facilitator at PhillyCAM goes through a training that emphasizes listening, meeting people where they are, and assuring anyone who comes in that, no matter who they are or their level of ability, PhillyCAM is for them.

Who are the producers at PhillyCAM?

When I meet Gabe Castro on Monday, October 7, 2019, she is about to lead an Introduction to Community Media session that will run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.; this introductory session is for people who are interested in becoming television producers. It is 6:10 p.m. and a few participants have begun to gather in the front lobby. I leave to go for a walk around the block.

I return at 6:29 p.m. and the lobby is packed. Gabe leads us into the main studio, where chairs are arranged in a circle. Each chair has a colored folder with a name tag inside. Gabe asks us to write our names on the tags, which also include a list of pronouns; we are supposed to circle our preferred pronouns: she/her – he/him – they/them (I eventually learn that all PhillyCAM gatherings include the preferred pronouns practice). This session includes twenty people, the majority of whom are people of color, with a good gender balance. Most people seem to be in the 30-50 age range with a couple of younger participants. We sit down and Gabe introduces herself and tells us that we will start with a round of introductions. She tells us to divide into groups of 4 or 5, according to the colors of our folders. We introduce ourselves to our group members and select a spokesperson to tell the entire class about our group. I end up with an African American woman and a white man.

She is from North Philly and wants to produce a program about art and social justice. He (I'm not sure where he's from) is a photographer who specializes in architectural photography. He wants to learn editing and how to shoot with drones, to enable him to take photos over construction sites. What brought these twenty Philadelphians to PhillyCAM? Some are poets, or they write and want to learn podcasting, or they are

artists interested in making their art into video. Others have already produced their own videos and want to learn more.

Two days later, I attend another introductory session, this time for radio producers. Vanessa Maria Graber leads the Introduction to Community Radio session for about ten participants, and again the majority of the group is comprised of people of color. They include a cartoonist who worked at a local paper that folded recently and now wants to explore other media production venues; an artist and musician searching for ways to translate their art to media; and a participant who uses "they" pronouns and has worked all their life with people with special needs. They want to explore PhillyCAM as a venue for telling the stories of children living with AIDS and women at the end of life. A high school teacher is interested in developing a radio initiative for local schools. Asocial worker, who works with individuals dealing with opioid addiction, wants to explore ways to tell their stories. The participants come from all parts of the city, including Fishtown, North Philly, South Philly, West Philly, down the street on 7th street, Center City, and someone from a Northwest suburb.

Vanessa asks the participants to answer two questions: "What do you think is missing from the media today? What would you like to see in the media in the future?" The group is very talkative and critical of current mainstream media. They observe that media content is one-sided, narrow, inauthentic, and unrelatable. They critique the lack of media representation of people with mental health challenges, people with disabilities, and various immigrant communities, as well as the general absence of young people and international voices in the media. They note that there is nothing unconventional or radical in mainstream media. The group also expresses their dissatisfaction with the opacity of city government and how difficult it is to find out how our tax money is used or how to file a complaint with city government offices.

Participants have clear ideas about the type of media they want to see in the future: authentic content that represents all types of people and in-depth coverage of issues that are important to different communities, for example of Black history. They also mention oral histories and histories of the city's neighborhoods that could include the role that local neighborhoods played in the Underground Railroad, the role of Quaker communities, how slavery was experienced in the region, and how communities rise and fall. They want to see more art and content featuring local musicians and artists, like the famous punk bands and house shows in West Philly, and multilingual programming. One participant brings up the need for what they call "satellite PhillyCAM," bringing the radio station out of the building to broadcast from community spaces.

I leave around 8:00 p.m. and realize I am starving. It's raining hard and I walk the wet streets and sidewalks to Hiro Ramen at 11th Street and Chestnut. My steaming bowl of noodles is heavenly. After I eat, I take the Chestnut Hill East train to the Stenton station and walk the four blocks to my house. I am exhausted but elated, knowing that this exceptionally inspiring day of fieldwork did not happen miles and miles from my home, as my fieldwork did for so many years researching community media in Catalonia, Colombia, Chile, and Nicaragua. Today's research happened right here in my hometown.

As the weeks pass, I meet more PhillyCAM radio and television producers. I confirm what Sofie observed when I interviewed her: PhillyCAM members come from all walks of life, have different abilities and goals, and come from different neighborhoods, suburbs, and nearby towns. And yet they all have something in common: their passion for media making;

> Allen Watson, Sr. tells me about *Allen's Neighborhood,* the local music program he produces.

The show is monthly, but Allen is now trying to transition to weekly production, a major undertaking. He has a plan: instead of asking musicians to come to the studio, he wants to take the station's field equipment and shoot on location. He is in the process of getting a crew of three people, although he ponders for a moment, saying he can most likely work with two. Since Allen works nearby, he comes to PhillyCAM to hang out every chance he gets.

Donald Butler doesn't have his own television program. He volunteers as a production crew member for other PhillyCAM programs, such as directing *Talking the Walk,* Zarinah's program about gun violence. On other shows, Donald does camera work or lights. Donald worked for years at Philadelphia Community College and, before he retired, he came across a newspaper article about how COMCAST, the city's main cable company, was trying to avoid its financial responsibilities to public access. This is how Donald found out about PhillyCAM. He decided that after retirement, he would dedicate his life to the project. He retired in 2015 and immediately became a PhillyCAM member. As soon as he finished his training and certification, he began working as a television producer.

Arianne Bracho is originally from Venezuela, where she was a journalist. When she got to the United States, she was unable to work as a journalist, due in part to her limited fluency in English. That is, until she found PhillyCAM, where she became part of the team of reporters that produce *Atrévete*, a monthly Spanish-language citizens' journalism television program. She said that the moment she stepped into the PhillyCAM building, she felt she belonged. It was the first time she'd had this feeling since she immigrated to the United States.

Vanessa introduces me to A.D. Amorosi, producer of Theatre in the Round, a radio show about regional local theatre. On his show, Amorosi covers stage plays, playwriting, opera, performance art, cabaret, improvisational stage craft, burlesque, and drag. While he tells us about his program, Alonzo H. Jennings joins our circle. He is the producer of Jazz for an Eclectic Mind, which broadcasts on WPPM every Monday from 6 to 7 p.m. Alonzo talks about his time working in Africa, setting up vocational schools in Ethiopia and Ghana. Alonzo says the group he worked with had a system in which they only spent eighteen months in each country; after that time, locals were expected to take over the school and continue the work. He emphasized that this mode of operation was totally different from USAID, which stayed in-country for years and years, using funding to pay the salaries of USAID officers rather than to directly benefit African communities.

Alonzo said his group went in to a community and came out eighteen months later, no matter what.

Zarinah Lomax, the host of *Talking the Walk*, asks me about my teaching and we become engrossed in conversation about what it means to teach young people. She is a teacher of at-risk kids. She teaches two different groups: high school seniors and younger kids, thirteen to fourteen years old. Zarinah says she enjoys the younger kids more, because they are eager to learn and listen.

Ken Heard directs his own television program called *Polemics: Journal of the Workingclass Struggle*. He insists that "workingclass" should be one word, because it is all about being united. I was lucky enough to attend the filming of the first-ever episode. He tells me that he has been a member of PhillyCAM for four years. Before starting his own show, he did camera work for other programs. This first episode of his show had three segments, each of which featured Ken and an invited guest talking about aspects of the experiences of the workingclass. In the first segment, Rosita Johnson shared her expertise on anti-apartheid activism in South Africa. Then, Jay Bragsdale talked about the "Lest We Forget-Museum of Slavery" (https://lwfsm.com/), a local memory initiative dedicated to the experience and legacy of slavery in Philadelphia. In the last segment, Angela Vogel, a labor activist, talked about the local drivers' union.

In early November, the station managers agree to let me attend PhillyCAM's annual television producers' retreat, held in Center City. I leave home early, but as is typical with SEPTA, the city's transportation system, my train from Mt. Airy is cancelled because of tree trimming. By the time I finally arrive, everyone is already immersed in group sessions. There are about fifty people in the room and, once again, the majority are people of color. I realize this is the only media circle I've encountered in Philadelphia with a majority non-white membership. Since moving to the city in 2016 to take a faculty position at Temple University, I have been an active participant in various initiatives that bring together media owners, producers, journalists, and media researchers. I have experience with Temple's Klein College of Media and Communication, the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Advanced Research in Global Communication, and the Lenfest Institute; all of these spaces are populated by a white majority with a few people of color. At PhillyCAM, the numbers are reversed.

At the producers' retreat, people are working in small groups to discuss four questions: 1) How should PhillyCAM interact with Philly's neighborhoods? 2) How can PhillyCAM encourage civic engagement? 3) What type of professional development or training do PhillyCAM producers want? and 4) What should the 10th anniversary of PhillyCAM look like? The groups engage thequestions intensely. Each group then selects a representative to summarize the main points of their discussion to the assembly.

The discussions demonstrate a sophisticated level of understanding of complex issues. Speakers' responses to the four questions reveal extensive knowledge of how local communities experience different problems; it is very clear that this group of people understands not only their communities' needs, but also the immense potential

and opportunity in each community. A woman introduces herself as coming from Philly's suburbs. She says her group talked about how, in the last five years, the neighborhoods in Philadelphia have gone through dramatic changes. Her group proposes dividing the city into five districts (NW Philly/ NE Philly/South Philly/Center City/Fishtown) and creating content about challenges and solutions in each of the five districts.

Charles Clarke, who introduces himself as "he/him/me," says that PhillyCAM should hold town hall meetings in the different neighborhoods to learn about the main issues facing each neighborhood and how to respond.

The discussion reveals that PhillyCAM producers are acutely aware that their communities include a variety of diverse social spaces with a high potential for civic engagement. Scott, who introduces his pronouns as "he/him," says his group discussed the neighborhood question. They suggest connecting with senior centers in different neighborhoods, because in senior centers there are "a thousand stories to be told." He explains that PhillyCAM could organize screening sessions in senior centers to bring content to the people who live there. Ken, from another group, mentions engaging with public libraries throughout the city; another group says African American churches are key organizations for civic engagement in some neighborhoods, so PhillyCAM should partner with the churches. Another participant says her group thought PhillyCAM should have a presence at local events and on university campuses. The organization should offer media production workshops in schools, so that many more people could learn about PhillyCAM. Kelly says her group thinks PhillyCAM should participate in community block parties and engage with all types of community events, especially in those communities that aren't already connected with PhillyCAM. Another group suggested providing more information on local policy issues to demonstrate the importance of civic engagement and increase voter participation.

Some of the discussion centers around the need to make PhillyCAM's focus even more local than it already is. A group suggested producing PSAs about specific issues in each neighborhood and taking the TV studio on the road to broadcast from the neighborhoods, letting people see for themselves that PhillyCAM producers are people just like them. Another group says that PhillyCAM members come from different neighborhoods all over the city, so members should focus on their own neighborhoods. Members who have taken the Field Production class should take the camera out into their neighborhoods.

Two groups tackled the tenth anniversary question. The groups' suggestions include: a three- day film festival offering screenings of PhillyCAM content; a documentary about what PhillyCAM has accomplished in these ten years; a PhillyCAM Greatest Hits program, and a television series profiling PhillyCAM producers. One group suggests holding an awards ceremony for the staff and teachers, who put up with the whims and needs of producers. One of the groups wants to establish a PhillyCAM Day, or create a public art piece celebrating the anniversary, an installation of some sort that would share the celebration with the entire city.

I leave as the sun sets and the event comes to a close. I walk through Center City, reflecting on the PhillyCAM producers' remarkable awareness of the power of media. This group has a profound understanding of the ways community media can bring people together, connecting communities via shared hyperlocal storytelling, promoting civic engagement, and producing and distributing information on local issues.

Youth Making Media

On October 7, 2019, Ariel Taylor, PhillyCAM's Youth Media Coordinator, alerts me to a Youth Radio Production session that is about to start. I go to the Community Room where Lorne Peart, the radio production instructor, and seven young people sit around a large conference table. They welcome me and I join them at the table. One of the participants is eighteen years old and the rest are seventeen. Confirming the pattern I have seen in other spaces, the majority are young people of color. Some of the boys are returning participants who took part in PhillyCAM's youth radio summer program. For the girls, everything is new. The session starts with a round of introductions, mainly for my sake, as they all already know each other. Lorne asks the participants to state their names, their pronouns, and what they bring to this space. It's amazing to me how comfortable the mixed-gender group is with the pronoun issue; they seem very used to saying their pronouns. The introductions start with me and I am the only one to omit my pronouns. After everyone else introduces themselves, I jump back in and say that my pronouns are she/her.

The young people are trying to figure out what kind of radio program they want to produce. Lorne leads the discussion, asking questions and, once in a while, making suggestions. Most of the time he just lets them figure it out on their own. At one point, for example, one of the participants suggests using an image of a clock to plan the show; another participant, who already has radio production experience, goes to the large paper board and draws a circle. Together, the kids begin to decide on the structure of the program. The circle represents the 30 minute program and they outline two minutes for the introduction, three minutes for "Man on the Street" (MOS), etc.

One African American participant suggests a theme for the show: "What is art? Is art objective? How do we decide that something is or is not art?" The boy drawing the clock suggests that they adopt this theme, but apply it to music. It seems that in previous meetings, they had all found common interests around music. They transfer the question about art to music: "How do we relate to music? How do we decide that we like some music and not other music?" The discussion is all over the place and no one has a clear idea of the theme. They are trying to formulate a discussion section for the program, but what exactly is the issue to be discussed? At some moments, Lorne steps in to help the kids focus on coming up with a concrete plan and keep track of the time. At one point, I suggest they rehearse the discussion, to see if that brings more clarity. They like that idea and set up a mock discussion. One of the participants offers to sit out of

the discussion and keep time with his phone. He gives a signal and the discussion starts. One of the kids talks about what music means to him, how it is very emotional; someone else jumps in and says that for them, music is essential, that music saved their life, that they can deal with all the anxiety and stress in their lives as long as they are listening to music. They say they can be in a terrible mood and music can totally change their perspective, bringing them to a much better place.

Another participant jumps in, but she focuses less on the general meaning of music in her life and more on the types of music she likes. She says that there are two types of rappers and one type is exemplified by Cardi B (and other rappers that she doesn't like and doesn't listen to), because "rap is all about poetry, the poetry of the people and the poetry about the experiences of the people, and rappers like Cardi B have lost that." She lists the rappers she does listen to, the ones that "sing the poetry of the people." She says that people go through a lot and rappers are singing about what the people have to go through. I wish I could remember all of the names she listed. She talks about Eminem, and explains that he may be white, but that once you know what he went through in his life, then you can understand him as a real rapper too. Another girl jumps in, not entirely in agreement with the first girl's list of "poetic" rappers; they disagree on some and agree on others.

The boy with the timer interrupts to say it's been five minutes. They continue for three more minutes. When it's over, they seem pleased with the eight-minute discussion, which is what they had planned. They ask Lorne and I for feedback. We observe that the girls tend to speak much more softly than the boys, which brings an imbalance to the discussion. After some back and forth, one of the girls agrees to lead the discussion. One of the boys offers advice: "You need to know that if the eight minutes are great, it's on you, but if it falls flat, it's also entirely on you." The discussion leader seems very worried about this. Several times she mentions that she's on a debate team, but leading a discussion is a whole different ballgame. Lorne assures her that she'll be fine. They will rehearse and there will be questions and bullet points she can use. More back and forth. At the end, everyone agrees on two discussion leaders: the girl and one of the boys with previous radio experience. This negotiation was the most difficult part of the planning session. The rest seems easier. The group decides who is in charge of the "Man on the Street" segment, who is in charge of finding a guest musician, and who will prepare questions for interviewing the guest.

The name of the program is *Hear Us Out* and this is episode five (https://phillycam.org/youth-radio-phillycam). The sections agreed upon are: Introduction (2 min); Discussion (8 minutes); Man On the Street (3 minutes); Guest Musician (12 minutes, including introduction, performance, interview, and analysis of lyrics); and Announcements and Credits (5 minutes). By the time the class is over, the kids have a precise schedule of their program's segments. They each know their responsibilities. This class is on Monday and Lorne asks them to send all the bullet points, discussion questions, guest questions, and names of guest musicians to the group chat by Wednesday, giving the kids two days.

As I walk out of the room, I can hardly believe that this level of order came out of so much initial chaos—this is what it means to incubate hyperlocal storytelling in communities. Two weeks later, on October 23, I am again hanging out at WPPM studio. A few minutes before four, Lorne shows up and he's very excited to find me there; we hug hello and he tells me the youth radio group is going to do a mock program in the studio—kind of a rehearsal, and if I want to observe, I am more than welcome. I accept the invitation. The kids start to pile into the studio. One of the boys is managing the board. The other four kids will host and conduct the program. They rehearse the discussion segment with questions such as: "Do you like mainstream music?; What elements make you like or dislike a song?; and What type of music do you like?" The flow of the discussion is somewhat stilted and difficult.

After the eight minutes are over, they stop and do a feedback session. They are not pleased with the discussion. One of the kids says they were paying too much attention to giving equal time to every participant and that, if the discussion picks up between two participants, the host should let them go. He says it's all about the flow and how natural it feels. He thought the discussion stayed at a very general level and he did not hear anything that he hadn't heard before. He observes that if he were listening to the radio and this was on the air, he would probably change stations. Lorne gives them some feedback too. They ask me and I try to say I'm here only to observe, but they insist. I make two suggestions: first, they should think about some potential answers to the questions beforehand. To me, it sounded like they didn't know what to say and they were trying to come up with answers on the spot. Second, I suggested they illustrate general answers with specific examples of songs or bands. They decide to try again.

The second time, the girl in charge of the discussion explains why she listens to certain types of music, emphasizing that she cannot, for example, listen to Cardi B. "Why?" asks another kid. She eloquently explains that Cardi B reflects an image of African American and Latinx communities that she hates, all about people selling drugs and getting rich fast. She says she doesn't like this as a model. She thinks about her little brother and sister and the negative messages the music of Cardi B sends to them. Her co-host does not agree and responds that she thinks no artist should be judged for reflecting their background. The first speaker immediately says she doesn't at all mean that Cardi B should be judged for the community she comes from. "Don't get me wrong." She says the rapper should be criticized instead for presenting a caricature of that community in her music. The co-host responds again, saying she doesn't pay much attention to the political images in Cardi B's music.

Some of the other kids around the table jump in, saying they never consider the political or intellectual issues in the music they listen to—instead, they explain, it's all about the beat. The host says that the type of engagement the artist has with the community is very important to her; she always researches artists or bands to see how they relate to the African American and/or Latinx community. The flow of the conversation is very different from the first take. It is intense and passionate and they know it. When the eight minutes are over, they are ecstatic. High fives all around; everyone is very happy with the segment.

Next, they decide to rehearse the musician interview. They ask me to pretend I am the guest musician. One of the girls is in charge of conducting the interview because she is the one who knows the musician personally. She asks me several questions and I answer the best I can. I am nervous in the role because I know nothing about being a musician. I'm so nervous I can hardly focus on the questions, which revolve around what music makes the artist feel, or the role it has in the artist's life; there are also questions about the role of music in contexts of mental illness. I end up telling them that music helped me a lot while growing up with a bipolar father. The conversation shifts as one of the other kids starts talking about her own diagnosis of bipolar disorder and depression. She says music helps her cope. Time goes by quickly and soon the interview segment is over.

We have to leave the studio right away because the next show's producers are waiting outside to begin prepping for their own show. They are a group of four or five men in their 40s or 50s, all people of color. As I pass by, I ask one of them what their show is about and he tells me it is about re-entry into community life after prison. As I listen to the episode of Hear Us Out that was aired, I enjoy the kids' storytelling skills:

> I'm going to be honest, before I was even friends with you, I would only listen to mainstream music. But then I started hanging out with you, and I remember one day, when we were on the bus here, you played some Yoyi for me, and I got into that, and I started listening to music I never listened to…
>
> I think in the mainstream hip-hop scene the artists are exploiting where they come from, but sometimes it is overdramatized…
>
> I think there's a lot of interpersonal racism when it comes to hip-hop because people associate it with being bad because of the stereotyping of the Black community… but I don't think hip-hop is bad, I think people are really telling about where they come from, people are telling how they went through a struggle… Cardi B had a song called *Get Up* and it shows how she went from a place of hurt and pain to reaching the top and I think it's important for Black young males and Black young women or anyone in a minority to hear…

The "Man On the Street" section is well edited and includes several young people talking about their favorite music genres. The responses are diverse and include punk, metal, Japanese and Swedish metal, rock, rap, and New Age music. Kids express their personal connections to music: "If I am mad, I listen to something that reflects how I feel"; "Jazz is chill, and it's freeing, and it's something that brings a lot of people together."

The interview segment features Shirmina Smith (https://www.blkhistoryuntold.com/shirmina) and Blue Jay from *Your Favorite Jawns* (https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Art/Your-Favorite-Jawns-309833093047175/), a local artists' collective. Shirmina and Blue Jay respond to a question about what it feels like to express themselves as Queer and non-binary artists: "Being Queer through my art is newer to me, not because

I wanted to hide it, I just didn't care to talk about it. It was very personal to me, I didn't care who knew about it, but talking about it and writing poems about it allowed me to see it on paper, which is a whole different perspective." Shirmina talks about a photoshoot titled *Rage*:

> I self-proclaim that I am an angry Black woman, I think sometimes our anger is weaponized against ourselves if we are not allowed to be angry, and I wanted to artistically display that… and embody the rage that isn't us but that made us who we are… and I think it's very important to not hide that because anger has created movements, and if we hide our anger, it's a disrespect to ourselves and a disrespect to everything we stand for… you are feeling things for a reason… emotion is movement and if you subdue it you're going to be stalling.

To the question, "How important is it for the kids in the inner city to get out of their neighborhoods and travel?" Shirmina responds:

> It is mad important! And I am projecting my voice because it is so important! It's important that you know where you come from and celebrate who you are and the environment that has raised you, but it's also important to get outside of your environment and know that there are other types of environments and other types of cultures and experience things that you haven't experienced.

Clearly, the program's main theme, music, created a framework for self-expression, dialogue, and the exploration of many issues that young people experience, including struggles with gender identity, feelings of marginalization among young people of color, and the use of art to process social and political conditions.

Involving youth in media production, however, is not always so easy. On other occasions I observed not-so-exciting training sessions. Once, at a 360 camera class, only one participant showed up. At the time, asbestos had been found in two high schools in Center City, forcing them to close. The city was trying to relocate a thousand students to other schools, but when the class was taking place, the closed schools' students were not attending classes anywhere, which may explain why the class was so poorly attended.

Despite the no-shows, from 4 to 6 that afternoon, Ariel Taylor, the Youth Coordinator, and Gralin Hughes Jr., the video instructor, devoted all their attention to the single participant who showed up. The class was entirely hands-on and focused on learning by doing. They demonstrated how the camera functions and how to shoot 360 video. We all went to the studio and the student learned how to set the camera on a gimbal, how to turn it on, its different modes, and how to use an app to see the shots. And despite the innovative nature of the technology and the uniqueness of the shots, the student was extremely passive and uninterested. Unless Ariel or Gralin suggested something to do with the camera, he showed zero initiative and focused only on his phone. We moved outside to the alley behind PhillyCAM where the student, at the suggestion of Ariel and Gralin, did some shots by circling the camera above his head and moving it close to the ground.

Later, we all watch the footage and it is very interesting, but the student's lack of enthusiasm and initiative amaze me. Ariel tells him they are going to let him go early and, as soon as he can, he leaves. The only bit of enthusiasm I see in him is when Ariel tells him that she will post some of the footage to Instagram and he gets excited and asks her to tag him. Maybe social media will be the only entry point for this participant? I think about Ariel and Gralin's perseverance and patience. In the college classroom, I am never expected to display so much patience. I reflect on how taxing this must be for the instructors, and I doubt I would be able to stay motivated in their place.

PhillyCAM: Incubator for Hyperlocal Storytelling

On a Sunday afternoon in October 2019, after searching my closet for fancy clothes, I head to Center City with three friends from G-town Radio to attend the 2019 Cammy Awards, the annual ceremony PhillyCAM holds to honor its best producers. Although the Cammys are inspired by awards ceremonies like the Emmys and the Tonys, PhillyCAM's awards criteria are unique: there are awards for the most inclusive, the best connector, best community responder, and most innovative, among others. One of the winners at the 2019 Cammys was Ricky Clover, who received the Excellence in Production Award for Production in TV for his animated television series *Marky*.

I met Clover on one of my early visits to PhillyCAM. He was deeply immersed editing an episode of *Marky* and when I inquired about his work, he showed me the piece he was working on, a 12-minute animated short about a middle school aged kid named Marky, whose hair is messed up because chemicals fell on his head. The accident happens during his first day of middle school, so his weird hair makes him a target for bullies. It is the first episode in a four-part series. The drawings are sharp and complex, and include many hyperlocal elements typical of Philadelphia: the traditional small row houses with stoops, the blue and red SEPTA trains we all see as we navigate the city, the bridges over the Delaware River linking us to New Jersey. The images are layered with local sounds, such as the rumble of the subway passing a rowhouse street… it is an amazing work of art and craft. *Marky* uses original music composed by Kali, a local hip-hop artist.

At the Cammys, one of the hosts interviews Clover:

> Q: What is the inspiration behind *Marky*?
> A: What inspired me was being in middle school in 1992, so all the characters in *Marky* are based on my experiences and people I knew, friends of mine back in the day. [The first episode of] *Marky* took me a year to do, and I had to do all the voice over, and all the technical stuff… and all the training came from PhillyCAM (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dFeHvSIuAzY)

The production of hyperlocal media content is one of PhillyCAM's most notable accomplishments. We see a wide range of images, sounds, music, animation, and stories

that reflect the lived experience of Philadelphia's neighborhoods and the surrounding communities in New Jersey and Delaware.

One evening, I stay to watch A.D Amorosi produce his radio program on a local theatre stage. His guests are José Avilés, Melissa Sabater, and Frank). Amorosi is interviewing them about a new bilingual play that will open soon at Arden Theatre in Center City. Avilés is the founder of *Teatro del Sol*, the first Spanish/English bilingual theatre company in the city. He talks about the importance of representing the experiences of the Latinx communities in our region on stage. The new play, which he directs, is *Good Cuban Girls,* written by Iraisa Ann Reilly. Avilés explains that the play is about the tensions between modernity and tradition, an issue frequently faced by local Latinx families. He says that audiences find the play very emotional. "They are a mess when the play ends because it is every family's story," he states. Amorosi asks about the origin of *Teatro del Sol* and Avilés recounts that, for years, he was part of a group of actors who shared a space below the Bourse, an art/culture space in Center City. He became increasingly aware of the lack of theatre that reflected the Latinx community and *Teatro del Sol* was his response. The company tries to develop one new play per year. One of their previous plays, *One Day Old,* was about the children affected by the "Peter Pan" program, which sent Cuban children to the U.S. to escape the Cuban Revolution; their parents were not allowed to leave Cuba and the children ended up in orphanages in the U.S. Avilés links the story with the immigrant children who are now being held at the border, separated from their parents.

Teatro del Sol's web page describes *Good Cuban Girls:* "Marisol is a Cuban-American woman studying poetry at a liberal arts college, just far enough away from home. After a couple of days home for the summer, her gringo boyfriend visits to share in a traditional Cuban dinner and meet her family. Rice and beans are served up with an awkward argument about culture and politics. Marisol is left to choose between her family and her future, harboring a secret that may cause her grandmother's instantaneous death. *Good Cuban Girls* is a coming-of-age story that navigates the first generation American struggle for cultural preservation in the face of exile." The next Sunday, because I listened to Amorosi's radio program, I head to Arden Theatre to see *Good Cuban Girls.* I have never seen a bilingual play. Subtitles are not an option in live theater, so the audience has to know both English and Spanish to follow the plot. The play is very funny, while also confronting serious issues such as generational schisms within Latinx communities and interracial dating.

Zarinah's television program, *Talking the Walk*, is entirely focused on giving a voice to the victims of gun violence in Philadelphia, highlighting the family members left behind, the survivors. Each thirty-minute episode follows one Philadelphian who shares their experiences of grief and resilience in the aftermath of gun violence. In one episode, Danielle Shaw-Oglesby, a local hair stylist, talks about the experience of losing her 23-year-old daughter Kiki to gun violence on March 18, 2018. Kiki (Dominique Kimani Ogelsby) was a senior at Penn State University. Seven weeks after Kiki was murdered, her father walked on stage at Penn State to receive her posthumous bachelor's degree. Speaking to the camera, Danielle explains that in parenting Kiki, she insisted on the

importance of education "because she has some things—we know, she has some things against her. First, she is black, two, she's a female, you know? And with those things against you, you have to be educated."

These are just a few examples of hyperlocal media content produced at PhillyCAM. There are so many more instances of PhillyCAM-produced radio and television that reflect the experiences of local communities in their own languages, using their own cultural codes and their own signifiers. The programming reveals a rich, complex, and diverse symbolic universe that is typically neglected by mainstream media.

PhillyCAM: Another Way is Possible

In 2004, I had the opportunity to travel to Northern Colombia to research a citizens' media initiative similar to PhillyCAM called the *Communication Collective of Montes de María.* What drew me to explore the Collective was its commitment to opening a social space where people could re-invent themselves. The Collective is located in one of the most war-ravaged regions of Colombia, a place that became a battleground for right-wing paramilitary militias, left-wing guerrilla organizations, and state security forces. These three armed groups waged war in the towns, farms, and roads of unarmed agricultural families. For years, the region was terrorized by these groups; fear, mistrust, sectarian ideologies, and militaristic logics permeated the social fabric of the communities. In the midst of all this, the Collective opened a space where children and youth could be who they wanted to be, without the pressures of the reigning social environment. Away from the aggressive, macho, and heteronormative "normal," inside the Collective, youth could explore other ways of being: gentle, open to other sexualities, committed to team work and consensus decision making. They could experience what, in the Colombian context, is known as *cultura ciudadana* [culture of citizenship], a term that refers to a social fabric in which state institutions meet individuals and collective needs, and individuals respect the rule of law while the state guarantees civil rights. In *cultura ciudadana*, social processes are driven by collective (rather than individual) needs and interests (Rodríguez 2011, chapter 2). At the time, I wrote:

> The Collective articulates two goals for their work. First, developing a pedagogy for peaceful coexistence and second, strengthening a culture of citizenship--understood as empowered citizens committed to solidifying a local participatory democracy founded on rights and responsibilities. Since 1994, approximately thirty six hundred boys and girls, one thousand teenagers, one hundred and fifty parents, and eighty teachers have participated in the Collective's projects. The Collective operates in a large 1920s-era house built in the traditional Caribbean style of high ceilings, mosaic floors, thick white adobe walls, and Moorish arches. The house is packed with communication technology. Television production equipment is stored on one side, radio production equipment on the other. A video projector and a wide collection of locally produced and commercially distributed programs, films, and documentaries

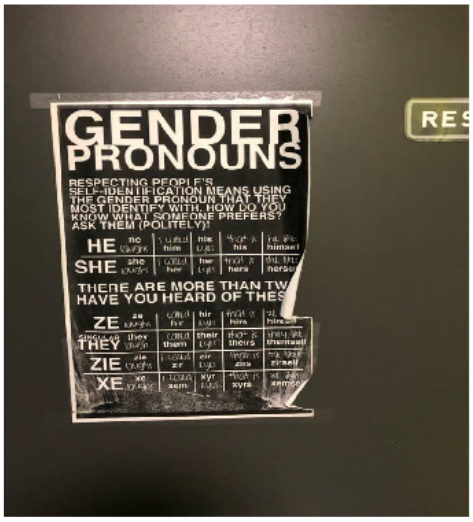
line the walls. The most striking feature is the beehive of movement inside the building. At all times of the day and night hordes of little boys, little girls, teens, and women come in and out with video cameras, recorders, cables, monitors,lights, and microphones. Some of the training and production happens here in the house on the plaza, but most of it does not. People come in to pick up equipment to be taken to workshops and production sites far and away in neighborhoods, local schools, and nearby towns and counties, and communities of displaced families. Soraya and Beatriz [founders of the Collective] insist that communication is just a pretext for the Collective. The ultimate goal is not to produce media, but to transform collective imaginaries. They happened to find a way to accomplish this goal by involving children, youth, and women in radio, video, and television production, but it is very clear in their minds that their target is to offset the erosion of the local social fabric caused by violence, including both social violence and also the violence brought into the region by armed conflict. In the words of Wilgen Peñaloza, one of the oldest participants, the Collective operates as "a school without walls, where children, teens, and women from the region **are encouraged to re-invent themselves, to become different human beings"** (Rodríguez 2011).

When I first encountered PhillyCAM, I sensed the same drive to cultivate a space that operates under an alternative ethos, using an alternative set of principles to guide behavior and interactions.

Physical Spaces Incubating an Alternative Ethos

The physical spaces in the PhillyCAM building are designed to foster alternative values and principles. In every lounge and meeting room there is a large poster explaining non-binary gender pronouns and other gender/sexuality terminology.

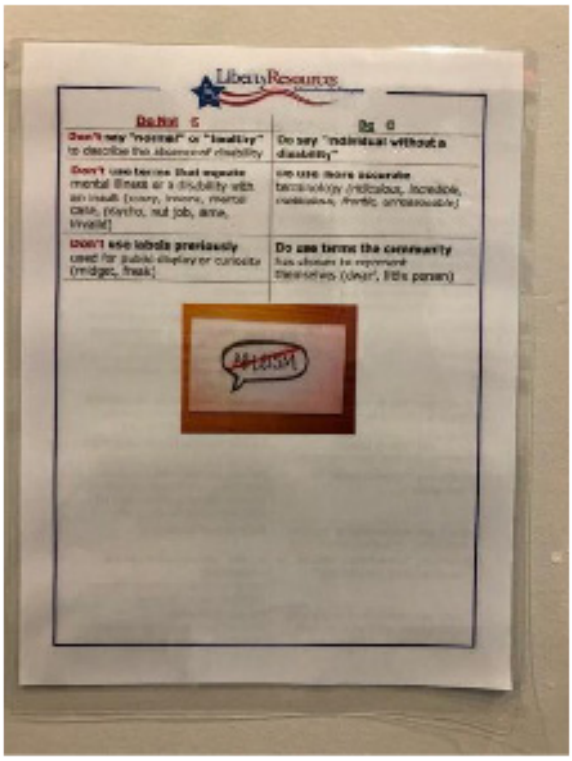
Image 2



Credit: Photographs by the author

Other signs contrast stigmatizing language with more inclusive modes of speaking about people and encourage non-violent ways of interaction.

Image 3 and 4



Credit: Photographs by the author

Some signs promote collective actions to protect a clean space for everyone.

Image 5, 6, 7 and 8

Credit: Photographs by the author

PhillyCAM is not the only community media center to carefully design a physical space that encourages specific values, ethical principles, and ways of interacting. For example, Lucila Vargas (1995) documents a community radio station in Mexico that realized their immaculate white tile floor intimidated potential members from the poor agricultural communities that surrounded the station. The directors noticed people were hesitant to come inside the station for fear their muddy shoes would dirty the white tile, so they replaced the floor. In his brilliant book on Aboriginal media in Australia, Eric Michaels (1994) describes Aboriginal leaders rejecting studio designs sent to them by the central government. The leaders created their own version of what a community radio station studio should look like. Architecturally, their radio studio responded to Aboriginal lifestyles, and included several outdoor areas and breezeways. Similarly, PhillyCAM's architectural design includes several features that invite participation, collaboration, and teamwork, including the large windows that allow passersby to see what's going on inside and various social spaces where people can congregate to discuss production projects, find members for production crews, or just pass the time. There are two kitchen spaces where members can store and prepare food, make coffee and tea, and wash dishes.

Everywhere inside PhillyCAM's building, messages in very large font remind people that no matter what the world may be saying about who they are and what they are able to do, inside PhillyCAM they are legitimate media producers, storytellers, journalists. PhillyCAM is for them:

Image 9, 10, and 11

Credit: Photographs by the author

Training People to Co-exist in Community

On Monday, October 5, 2019, I attend PhillyCAM's two-hour Introduction to Community Media session. This session is the second step, after a 45-minute informational presentation and a tour of the facilities, in the process of becoming a PhillyCAM member. These sessions take place once a month. Gabe Castro, Programming and Production Coordinator, generally leads the Intro to Community TV session and Vanessa Maria Graber, WPPM Radio Station Manager, leads the Intro to Community Radio session. After completing the Intro session, the third step for people who want to become PhillyCAM members is to take a class. Each time a member takes a class, they become certified in the technology the class features. Only members certified in a particular piece of equipment or technology are allowed to use it. Members who want to have their own radio program must also complete twenty hours of volunteering for WPPM. According to Vanessa, this requirement encourages radio producers to meet and interact, become part of the community, and collaborate on specific projects, allowing the station to avoid becoming a place where producers only show up to do their own radio programs and are never seen again.

Gabe gives this group of PhillyCAM newcomers a PowerPoint presentation that covers many the basics. She explains: 1) they cannot produce commercial media; 2) the content they produce is first and foremost for PhillyCAM; they are owners of their content and can post it on other platforms, but it has to go on PhillyCAM channels first; and 3) PhillyCAM's television access is predicated on protecting First Amendment rights, which means that at any given time, very different people will be in the building. Gabe emphasizes this point, saying that everyone needs to coexist with different opinions and learn to work together. Then there is a section defining sexual harassment. Members should not engage on any type of "hitting on people"; she tells us to imagine that all members are wearing one of those old swimsuits that goes all the way down to the knees and the elbows and we should never touch anyone on the body parts that would be covered by the swimsuit. She explains other code of conduct issues, and it's clear that every one of her warnings is based on a real case. She warns the group not to bring firearms and reminds them that if they are using a fake gun in a production, they should alert the staff in advance. She tells us to please refrain from unhygienic or unsafe behavior, a warning inspired by the time someone brought live chickens into the studio. She advices the group that they should never have open flames in the studios: once radio programmers decided to set fireworks in the WPPM studio on the 4th of July. Finally, she tells us that it is prohibited to consume alcohol or illegal drugs on premises. Step by step, Gabe shares with us PhillyCAM's ethos: we all need to recognize and embrace diverse identities; the space is ours, but we need to protect it and take care of it; we need to be attentive to the needs of others and pay attention to who they are, respect their personal space, opinions, and views—even when we strongly disagree with them. Some behaviors deemed "normal" in the world outside are not welcome inside PhillyCAM; on the other hand, certain practices essential to PhillyCAM's culture are rare out the door.

One evening in September, I go to the station to observe a class called Adobe Premiere Pro. I arrive too early, so I go around the corner to have a bite to eat. At

the pizza place, the guy behind the counter clearly has a Spanish accent, so I switch to Spanish and he does too. We go through the usual, "You don't look like you speak Spanish," "Soy colombiana," "De dónde?" I discover that he is from Puebla, Mexico; I mention how much I like the traditional poblano sandwich called *cemitas* and we end up deeply immersed in a conversation about Puebla's food: *chiles en nogada*, mole, and *cemitas*. He takes out his phone to show me photos of a small Mexican restaurant he owns in New Jersey, just across the river, fifteen minutes from where we are. I wonder how it makes sense to work as a server in a pizza place in Center City when you also own a Mexican restaurant. He starts talking about Colombian food and asks me if I know how to make *sancocho*, arepas, and *bandeja paisa.*

The computer lab is packed when I get back and I sit in one of the only chairs available. I introduce myself to the instructor, Gralin Hughes Jr. There are about ten students in the class, and again, they are predominantly people of color. The instructor seems to be the youngest person in the room. Posters on the wall reflect PhillyCAM's personality: freedom to dream combined with a clear social contract: "Change the Media. Change the World" and "Fight for Internet Freedom." Also posted are "PhillyCAM Lab Use Guidelines: all users must make reservation; headphones must be worn; members are responsible for saving their project files on their own flash drives; PhillyCAM is not responsible for work stored on the computers; we institute regular clean up and upgrades of the computers and will delete any unclaimed files left on the drives."

There are some technical problems at the beginning of class that prevent the students from logging in. Ryan Saunders, the Technical Director, spends about an hour working on the problem; he tries one solution after another and doesn't give up until every student is logged in. I believe he identifies what is going on and bypasses the students' log-in information, logging everyone in as an administrator. I am impressed by his persistence in trying to get the class going, as the issue looks really serious and could potentially derail the session. Gralin uses his own computer and projects everything on the wall of the room. He asks students to try everything he shows them and he walks among the computers to help. Students learn how to use Adobe Premiere's transitions and special effects for both audio and video editing. Gralin's teaching style is impressive. He explains everything in ways that make it really easy to understand. It makes me want to take the whole class. His patience when people mess up is also remarkable. Watching him help students untangle their attempts at editing sends me back to elementary school in Colombia, when our French knitting teacher, Madame Giraud, would take our utterly tangled knitting, untangle it bit by bit, and give it back to us all warm. I've never forgotten the feeling of an orderly, warm knitted piece when she returned it to me, and the satisfying feeling of extracting order out of chaos. Gralin does the same again and again, when students are lost in front of a tangle of windows holding video clips, audio clips, transitions, and special effects.

The staff at PhillyCAM work hard to foster community among members with initiatives like the twenty volunteer hours required for new WPPM producers. At the television producers' retreat, a PhillyCAM member is asked to speak about what it means to be a volunteer. His experience is set as an example for others, sending the message

that you do not have to produce your own program to be a member; you can volunteer just to help others in their productions. The speaker, a retired man, talks about how he and his wife both volunteer helping others produce their programs and how this has presented him with amazing opportunities. He has done camera work, audio, and studio prep. He recalls working for a television series called *Stages* and that the producer of the series thanked him in an award acceptance speech at the Cammy Awards.

Several monthly events allow members to connect and find crew members, mentors, etc. These include Mentorship Mixes, Pitch Events, and Teach and Learn events where members can learn and share expertise on different aspects of media production, such as using social media, screen writing, TV studio production, and acting. Gabe says: "This is how we teach each other; we learn from each other."

PhillyCAM's staff frequently act as mediators when conflict erupts among producers. Since 2015, Charles Clark has had a WPPM radio program focused on labor issues. He tells me that he produces the show with Jim Moran, a white long-time union member. Charles is passionate about unions and the experience of the working class but, as an African American, he questions some of the actions and attitudes of predominantly white unions. He recounts that, when they began collaborating on the radio program, Jim would get angry when Charles made negative comments about how unions treat African American workers. He explained that, even to this day, some union documents have language that clearly excludes African Americans. Any criticism of unions really upset Jim. He tells me that Vanessa was great at talking to Jim and smoothing things out. He tells me that now Jim "is chilled because he realizes that I'm not saying this in ill faith."

As I spent more time observing at PhillyCAM, I began to understand the unique character of the cultural environment the staff cultivates, with an ethos that walks a delicate balance between strict rules and procedures and patient nurturing. Every last member of the staff makes an effort to help participants feel welcome at PhillyCAM, ensuring them that whoever they are, what they have to say will be valued and appreciated. Inside PhillyCAM, people who are often perceived as victims of poverty, homelessness, unemployment or underemployment, or who are seen as disabled, or marginalized, are perceived as media makers with a voice and something to say.

One evening, as I was leaving a production class that ended at 8:30 p.m., Roland Boyden, Access Facilitator, was standing by the front desk. Students from the class I observed, plus students from another class, were pouring out of the building. An elderly woman using a walker was telling Roland that the last time she came to class, someone helped her to the bus stop. Roland did not understand what she wanted, but kept asking her questions, to try to understand. When they finally understood each other, another student who was leaving the building, a young guy, heard the conversation. He offered to walk with her to the bus stop. At that moment, I felt I had entered an alternative reality where people behave very differently than they do in the world outside: attentive to the identities and unique needs of others; appreciative of difference and what each perspective can bring to a public sphere.

Staff continuously remind participants to keep the space clean and that there are procedures to follow: you cannot bring a live chicken into the television studio or set fireworks inside the WPPM studio. You won't be allowed to touch, let alone check out equipment, unless you have been certified. The building buzzes with seventy-nine community radio producers and more than a hundred television producers every day. Rules and procedures are necessary to keep the potential chaos at bay.

Community Journalism at PhillyCAM

Understanding how journalism happens at a community media venue such as PhillyCAM is complex and requires a nuanced analytical framework that includes old debates such as the professionalization of journalism and the legitimacy of citizen journalism[2]. Other key elements of that framework include an awareness of the failed business model of commercial journalism, and an awareness of the limited representation of vulnerable communities and communities of color in mainstream newsrooms. In other venues, I've written about what I call "the Latin American approach to citizen journalism." I am including the lengthy quote that follows to make explicit the lens through which I am looking at PhillyCAM's journalism initiatives.

> The Latin American approach to citizen journalism differs from the Global North's approach, where the term citizen journalism is used to refer to online platforms recently made accessible to any user for posting audience-generated content (Allan and Thorsen 2009, 4). In Latin America, citizen journalism is a practice of resistance that emerges as social movements, activists, and other social justice collectives refuse to embrace the notion that only professional news organizations can practice journalism and nourish the public sphere with information key to democratic processes. The Latin American approach to citizen journalism still maintains the basic foundational principles of traditional journalism, such as the importance of verifying facts, identifying, and securing specific sources, and maintaining autonomy (Guedes Bailey 2009). This citizen journalism is understood as a practice driven by social responsibility and public interest. For example, most community radio and television stations in Colombia have their own journalistic code of ethics and style manual, in which community communicators specify their journalistic principles as they deal with issues ranging from responsibility and accountability to source selection and terminology (i.e., what terms will be used to refer to guerrilla combatants).

[2] The terms citizen journalism and citizen reporter do not refer to "citizen" as a person with citizenship status or a passport. Instead, citizen journalism and citizen reporter are terms anchored in notions of citizenship defined as political action and commitment to shaping the community. In this sense, a citizen is the person who engages on a daily basis in processes of social change. A citizen reporter is a person who uses journalism to advance social change in their community (Rodríguez 2001).

> Despite the recent enormous waves of enthusiasm and hype surrounding citizen journalism as a byproduct of the Internet (Papandrea 2007, 523), citizens as journalists have been around since long before the rise of online public spheres. In the early twentieth century, social movements and media activists appropriated media technologies, divorced them from their corporate originators, and nurtured public spheres with their own counter-information. "For example, print technologies were appropriated by anarchist movements in the United States, and revolutionary groups in Mexico and Russia. By 1920, Bolivian tin miners were using radio technologies to mobilize their unions in their struggle for social justice against corporate and state oppressive forces (Downing 2010, Huesca 1996). Similarly, during the 1968 revolts, workers and students' movements benefited from technological progress and lower prices in the systems of reprography to publish their own newspapers, as shown with the *prensa marginal* in Mexico (Trejo, 1980), the "parallel press" in France (Chadaigne 2002), or the underground press in the United States (Lewes 2000)" (Rodríguez, Ferron, and Shamas, in press) (Rodríguez 2014).

Strongly embedded in community media's long history, citizen journalism initiatives thrive in Latin America, where journalism schools and governmental and non-governmental organizations frequently offer journalism training for community media-makers and other non-professional reporters and journalists. Lately, a new trend has developed whereby corporations fund citizen journalism training programs in an effort to meet their "social responsibility" commitments. After more than thirty years of continuous training and discussion of the role of citizen journalists, citizen journalism in Latin America goes far beyond "letters to the editor, man-on-the-street interviews, and call-in radio and television shows" (Allan 2009, 30). Well-trained and frequently compensated, citizen journalists cover issues and problems, but also moments of joy, celebration, and creativity in the communities they know so well—because they are members of those communities. In the United States, citizen journalism looks very different. Citizen journalists are expected to work as volunteers, rarely do they receive professional training, and they typically work with no resources (i.e., transportation, meals, equipment). A notable exception to this trend is City Bureau (https://www.citybureau.org/civic-reporting-programs) in Chicago, which offers journalism residencies and fellowships for citizen reporters. Their eleven-week fellowship comes with a stipend of $2,750.

In this section, I document my observations of PhillyCAM's two main television journalism programs: *Voices* and *Atrévete*, the bilingual news program. In early October 2019, I arrive at PhillyCAM late on a Friday afternoon to attend a production meeting for *Voices*, PhillyCAM's main English-language journalism program. Monica Robinson, a television journalist who also works for CBS Channel 3 in the city, has coordinated *Voices* for the last two years. She tells me *Voices* is a monthly thirty-minute local news show. A new show airs the first Monday of every month at 6:30 p.m. and it is rebroadcast every Monday for the rest of the month. The format includes three or four pre-produced news stories plus a studio guest. The main goal of *Voices* is to train PhillyCAM members as community journalists.

In a recent article in *Journalism Practice*, Crittenden and Haywood (2020) describe Robinson's role. My own observations and their research on *Voices* make evident the precarity and limitations of the training that *Voices* reporters receive:

> There was a lot of initial enthusiasm to engage anyone who had taken basic video production classes at PhillyCAM and expressed an interest to cover community events.
> However, it quickly became apparent that, although members had technical proficiencies, they were unfamiliar with reporting techniques and journalism principles, like knowing how to fact check, understand bias, address conflicts of interests, and communicate multiple sides of a story. The program responded to this need by developing supplemental trainings and seeking out resources that would enhance PhillyCAM's ability to teach basic journalism skills. As part of that effort, they also brought in Robinson. Robinson has twenty-two years of professional experience as a broadcast affiliate news producer and currently works full time at CBS 3 Philadelphia. During her off hours, she serves as one of the contracted facilitators who organizes the stories for each month, assigns people to small production teams, coaches volunteers through the process of developing interview questions and writing scripts, assists with field shoots, and reviews completed packages before they air. There is a designated volunteer who exclusively hosts the live show by introducing the news packages and, as time permits during the show, interviews local community experts. Once each episode has aired, a PhillyCAM technical staff member reviews the footage, makes minor edits to clean up any technical glitches, and uploads the content for on-demand playback on PhillyCAM's website, YouTube channel, and Vimeo (Crittenden and Haywood 2020).

Monica serves as a journalism mentor, helping the *Voices* team members as they develop their stories from pitch to broadcast. Each story involves a team of three: a reporter, a videographer, and an editor. Monica emphasizes that she wants her reporters to learn how to produce fair, balanced, and accurate journalism. The *Voices* team includes fifteen to twenty PhillyCAM members, but they do not work consistently; at any given time, some *Voices* reporters are active while many go dormant. "It all depends on what is going on in their lives," says Monica.

At 6:30 p.m., only one *Voices* reporter has shown up for the meeting. Monica sets up a Zoom connection and another reporter joins the Zoom call from home. She tells Monica about her progress on a couple of stories she's working on and she hangs up. Then Darrell Lloyd comes in. He is very excited about a story he is working on, a ten-minute interview with Marianne Williamson, who will be in Philadelphia talking to a group of Drexel and Temple college students. The Students for a Democratic Society organized the event, to be held at the First Unitarian Church on Chestnut Street. Darrell asks Monica to help him find a videographer for Saturday at 2:00 p.m. He says he is ready to conduct the interview, but needs someone to do the camera work. The other reporter sitting at the table offers to do the camera work, but he is too new and is not certified; only a Field Certified *Voices* member can do the work.

Monica gives Darrell a hard time because he hasn't submitted any of the paperwork that *Voices* producers are supposed to complete for their stories, and the event he wants to cover is on Sunday, only two days away. The paperwork includes submitting the story's theme and a script (or at least an outline, she says). She asks, "Did you send me the pitch form?" He says, "No, I didn't." She asks, "... and what about this other form?" "No, I didn't, because I am just developing the story right now." She responds, "No, because you told me about the story last Sunday, and today is Thursday." The discussion goes back and forth, until he says, "Listen, I am all about the work. I am not about the paper." She responds with laughter and turns to me, "Do you see this????" The whole interaction is intense, but it never sounds like she's yelling at him; she maintains a wide smile and there's a humorous tone to their negotiating.

The *Voices* crew is preparing the November 4, 2019 episode, which includes a story about the 2020 U.S. Census and the community members who are training as "census ambassadors." The ambassadors go into their communities and talk to people about the importance of responding to the census because federal funds are allocated to communities based on the numbers counted. A *Voices* producer is already editing the story. Another story covers the Nighttime Chinese Festival, a local celebration of the Chinese community. The third story is about the June 21, 2019 explosion and fire at the Energy Solutions refining complex, located between the Philadelphia airport and Center City. The final story is about Reading Tree, a reading program for children that was recently launched by the city's public library system. The in-studio guest is a Salvation Army representative who will talk about the upcoming holiday season and how the organization helps the needy. The team also discusses a story about a local art exhibit; this story is a co-production of *Voices* and *Atrévete*—the Spanish-language news program.

Some other reporters arrive and join the conversation. They talk about news stories recently produced by the Voices team and stories in development. They are proud of a recent story on voting machines. Darrell pitches a story about the Fraternal Order of Police, the local police union, and the case of Karl Holmes, a local policeman accused of sexual abuse. Jordan, a young video producer and editor, wants to show Monica his edited story about the Enon church in North West Philly. We watch the video on Monica's computer, but for some reason there's no sound. The image is crisp and well-edited. Jordan tells Monica he will go home and check the upload to see why there's no sound. She tells him she will review it at home when the sound problem is fixed. Jordan is working on another story about the Chinese Night Festival. Monica asks him if he wants it to air on November 4, their next show, or later. He says he wants it to air on the next show. Monica tells him she needs the finalized story at least three days before. Is he going to have enough time to edit it? He responds that he will. He has the coming Wednesday and Thursday free from his day job, as well as tomorrow morning. He will use all his free time to edit the story and it will be ready. The focus and intensity remind me of any newsroom; it is the kind of place where reporters and journalists are passionate about the art and craft of producing news stories.

The November 2019 episode of Voices begins with a drumbeat that sounds over a title reading: “Community news from the streets of Philadelphia.” What follows is a rapid montage of shots showing **Voices** reporters on the job, microphone in hand, walking the streets, interviewing people, covering protests and demonstrations. We see mostly people of color (both reporters and interviewees), including Muslim women in their hijabs, wide shots of large groups of Philadelphians marching in the streets, and local politicians arguing, all interlaced with shots of iconic sites in the city.

Amanda Johnson, the host of *Voices*, introduces each story and transitions from one news story to the next. This episode includes a story about the Marian Anderson Awards Gala, where Kool and the Gang were honored with a tribute that included various iconic jazz musicians. Jordan’s story about the YeShi Night Market aired too. Another story features Tree House Books, a bookstore in North Philadelphia where children can access books for free. The bookstore was founded by a Black Panther, Temple professor, and community activist affiliated with the Church of the Advocate, who realized there were no bookstores in the area. He soon discovered that a used bookstore was not viable in the community, which prompted him to transform the bookstore into a non-profit organization serving local children 12-15 years old. The space is now dedicated to promoting reading through afterschool programs, homework help, and literacy through the arts. In another segment, Donald Terry reports from Harrisburg (Pennsylvania’s capital) on recent changes to the state’s health insurance system. Two of the news stories are particularly political. One story covers the city government’s vote on a new gas plant that Septa, the local transportation company, wants to open in Nicetown, a predominantly African American neighborhood. The city approved the plant despite residents’ strong opposition; in the shots we can see neighbors at the voting session screaming: “Shame, shame!”

Finally, a story about the recent "Gun Violence Reporting Summit” explores best practices for journalists covering gun violence. This story is particularly interesting because interviewees explain specific strategies for reporting on gun violence in ways that do not further stigmatize communities. The strategies include focusing on regular gun violence and not only mass shootings; avoiding the type of reporting that only mentions the age and race of the gun violence victim, without exploring personal stories and the impact on families and communities; and avoiding “parachute journalism” by investing in reporters who spend significant time in communities to learn and understand their experiences of gun violence. The story explains that paying attention to language issues is key, such as in the case of the phrase “officer-involved shooting,” which translates to “police shooting someone,” but erases who was shot, why, and what exactly happened; it’s a phrase that erases the humanity of the victim. The story features journalism experts who advise against using stigmatizing language, such as calling neighborhoods “war zones.” Derogatory terms such as “urban gun violence” should be replaced with “community gun violence” and reporting should focus on the lives of survivors of gun violence; the physical impact of violence is important, but the trauma communities and families will carry for the rest of their lives is more important. At the end of the story, a group of high school students from Carver High School for Engineering and Science and their journalism instructor, Kit Bradley, are interviewed by Voices. The students talk

about their commitment to moving beyond current ways of reporting on gun violence and starting new journalistic habits: "I want to make these stories more human," says one of the students (https://www.facebook.com/phillycam/videos/2189636487805196/).

On November 7, 2019, I get to PhillyCAM at around 6 p.m. to watch the production of *Atrévete*, PhillyCAM's bilingual news program. Leticia Nixon, one of *Atrévete's* seasoned citizen journalists, is already there. It's rainy and cold and Leticia is worried that the program's guest for this week will not show up due to the bad weather. However, at around 7 p.m., guest Alfredo Navarro appears. Leticia is relieved. Gabriela Watson-Burkett (Gabi), the show coordinator, arrives, greets everyone, and heads to the express studio. She introduces me to Odin Palacio, the host, who is originally from Panamá. I tell him I am from Colombia and he tells me his grandfather is from Colombia too. They are getting ready to begin and the space in the small studio is crowded, so I opt to leave and watch through the glass door. Gabi has to stand against the wall. From the other side of the glass I can see what is going on, but I cannot hear anything during the production.

This episode of *Atrévete* includes a story about a local Latinx festival in South Philadelphia that featured Day of the Dead altars, including some by César Viveros, a Mexican-American artist who came to Philly to share his beautiful altar art; it is the first time *Día de los Muertos* has been celebrated in Philly with public altars. Another segment focuses on local celebrations of *El Día del Indígena* [Day of Indigenous Communities]. Claudia, a Colombian journalist and active member of the *Atrévete* team, reports from Colombia, where she is visiting friends and family. She reports from a rural area high in the Andean mountains, about a holistic health clinic in the Colombian Coffee Region. The images are amazing; we see a clinic with gardens and lush flower beds between examination rooms. The final segment centers on Alfredo Navarro, the studio guest. Navarro explains that he is from Acapulco. Ten years ago, he and his wife founded a local Mexican folk ballet called Ballet *Folclórico Yaretzi.* Navarro explains that Yaretzi means *ser or persona amada* [to be a loved person] in Nahuatl. He says his wife came up with the name. They teach traditional Mexican dances to children and young people in Norristown and South Philly. Their students include children as young as 9-years-old, but also adults, elders, and "really anyone who wants to dance."

As I write this section, I become curious about what *Atrévete* has been up to during the COVID-19 pandemic. I search their webpage and find that the May 2020 episode begins with a story about Carmela Apolonio Hernández, an immigrant from Honduras and mother of two children, who has been living inside a local church since November 18, 2017 to avoid deportation. The church's sanctuary status means immigration authorities cannot enter to detain and deport Carmela. Thus, as long as she is inside the church, she will be able to stay in the United States.

However, this means that she hasn't been able to leave the church building in twenty-six months. *Atrévete* reports on what we can learn from Carmela as we stay home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Spanish, Carmela shares lessons that we can all use as we habituate to living in confinement:

> I have survived with my plants, I have my plants, and you may not believe it, but they give me so much strength! I have lemon trees, aloe plants, also guájele, which you may not know, also roses and medicinals. And taking care of my plants gives me so much strength! I am transforming the church into a jungle—I am planting so many plants. I also started embroidering, taking on so many things I've known since childhood. I did not know how to crochet but I learned. I tell you, technology is so amazing! That YouTube! I learned how to crochet earrings thanks to YouTube. And then, every Tuesday I have a video call with many other people who, like me, are living in sanctuary, and each of us talks about what we are doing, how we are passing the time. I also spend time learning from the Sanctuary Movement, learning from their conferences and chats. They teach you all kinds of things, you wouldn't believe how much I've learned. (https://phillycam.org/show/2020/atrevete- mayo-2020) (my translation).

In the universe of Latinx media in the United States, *Atrévete* is groundbreaking for a couple of reasons. First, Latinx media in this country have largely evolved along nationalist lines, so most outlets identify as Mexican-American media, Caribbean-American media (mostly Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Cuban), or South-American media, etc. However, younger Latinx generations connect with cultural codes, media narratives, and music from many different Latin American nations, not just the Mexican or Puerto Rican codes their grandparents left behind. The team of reporters that produce *Atrévete* reflects this trend. Leticia is originally from Mexico, Gabi is Brazilian, Odin, the show's host, is Panamanian, Claudia is from Colombia, and other team members are from Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and Guatemala. *Atrévete's* personality reflects the experiences and nostalgia of many different Latinx communities without privileging one nationality over another.

Atrévete also acknowledges that Latinx communities in the Philadelphia region are neither exclusively Spanish-speaking nor English-speaking. There's a little bit of everything: families that relocated recently from Latin America and feel more comfortable using and consuming Spanish- language media; people who have lived in Philadelphia for many years and easily navigate both English and Spanish media; and younger generations who grew up in the United States with parents and grandparents who only spoke Spanish, but have limited Spanish themselves. The city's Latinx community is essentially bilingual, and media makers attempting to serve this community need to be bilingual too. *Atrévete* takes on this challenge and, as much as possible, they try to do everything bilingually. When resources allow, *Atrévete* subtitles every news story: if the story is in English, it has Spanish subtitles and if the story is in Spanish, it has English subtitles. Some years are better than others resource-wise, so subtitling everything is not always possible. However, the show's understanding of their target audience as essentially bilingual is exceptional in the landscape of Latinx media in the United States.

The PhillyCAM shows *Voices* and *Atrévete* give us a glimpse of what citizen journalism can be: well-trained citizen reporters who are deeply embedded in Philadelphia's diverse communities, covering the ins and outs of their neighborhoods, producing news stories

about the lived experiences of gun violence, poverty, recidivism, neglected public schools, immigration, and the opioid crisis—all the challenges of modern urban life in the U.S. They also cover the many solutions and initiatives being developed, including solutions strongly anchored in the cultural codes and historical experiences of the communities themselves. But, and I want to emphasize this, *Voices* and *Atrévete* are **not only about problems and solutions.** Both news programs profoundly understand that there is much more to vulnerable communities than problems and solutions. There is also joy, celebration, creativity, humor, food, gardens, and creative ways to use and inhabit the streets, city parks, avenues, creeks, and rivers. All of these creative, joyful ways to exist in the city are also covered by *Voices* and *Atrévete*.

If only . . . if only *Voices* and *Atrévete* could compensate their community reporters; if only the University of Pennsylvania's prestigious Annenberg School of Communication would share their facilities and expertise to train PhillyCAM's citizen journalists; if only Temple University's famous Klein College of Media and Communication would figure out how to make professional journalism training available to Claudia and Jordan; if only the Lenfest Foundation would widen its definition of journalism and news-making beyond what professional reporters do in traditional newsrooms . . . if only *Voices* and *Atrévete* had the resources and training necessary to produce journalism, our city could count on two teams of reporters producing high quality information about our communities every day. Year after year, traditional newsrooms in the city struggle with a lack of diversity while PhillyCAM's teams of newsmakers are intergenerational and include people of all ethnicities, sexualities, and socio-economic classes. The teams of reporters on both *Voices* and *Atrévete* are comprised predominately of people of color. More importantly, these reporters are embedded in the communities they cover; they understand the lived experiences of each community. They know each alley, place of worship, community initiative, and accent. They know, for example, that if a global pandemic strikes and everyone is forced to stay home, there is a woman who has been living inside a local church for twenty-six months and has many lessons to share with the rest of us.

With the proper training and compensation, these community reporters could transform their profound understanding of their communities into news stories for our public spheres. They could provide the oxygen that our social fabric so desperately needs to make this a believable democratic city. I look outside my window and it's like a Dionysian banquet! Spring weather and the absence of human activity have turned my East Mt. Airy neighborhood into a lush forest full of birds, where groundhogs and foxes take over public spaces. I have to make an effort to remember that, even before the COVID-19 catastrophe hit us, Philadelphia was the poorest large city in the U.S. If the Voices and Atrévete teams were struggling before the pandemic, I am afraid of what will happen next.

The End

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