



**CODMAN ACADEMY**  
Charter Public School

*To Learn, to Lead and to Serve*

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Dear friends,

This year the students in my 10th grade Humanities class at Codman Academy Charter School in Boston are engaging in an intensive “Expedition” on Contemporary World Injustices and the Search for Justice. In the following letter I will first explain the basic elements of the Expedition and then discuss the process through which students will gather Oral Histories.

The Oral History component of the project is the area in which *we will need the most help*—this letter is primarily geared towards people who are willing to share with us their stories as they relate to the World Injustices that our class is investigating. **If you are open to and interested in telling your story as an Oral History Subject, please let me know by emailing or calling as soon as possible. If you know someone who might want to be involved in this opportunity, please pass this message along.**

Demographically, my students are all between 15 and 18 years old. They are primarily of African American, African, Haitian, or Latino descent. All of them currently live in Boston, MA.

### **The Project:**

Students will be working in teams to investigate a series of World Injustices. The 6 Injustices we are focusing on are:

- The War in Iraq (2003-present)
- Child Soldiers
- AIDS in Africa
- Sexual Violence against Women in War
- South African Apartheid
- Injustice in Haiti (1956-present)

Student work will be grounded in extensive historical research and then will involve recording Oral Histories of people who have some sort of direct personal involvement in or knowledge of the Injustices in question.

Students will also be investigating their own experiences of and ideas about injustice and justice through letter writing and reflection. Based on their research, oral histories, and personal reflections, students will be writing and producing a theatre performance piece which will show at the Huntington Theatre on May 27, 2005. In addition, students will compile and present their work through a class website devoted to educating people about Contemporary World Injustices and the Search for Justice. (Note: All Oral Histories, if subjects so desire, will be posted anonymously.) It’s a very exciting, if slightly over-zealous, project!

### **The Oral History Process:**

#### *Step 1: Pairing Students and Oral History Subjects*

My hope is that by the end of February each of my 28 students will be paired with an Oral History Subject who has knowledge—serious experiential and personal knowledge—of the Injustice in

question. (Each of the above Injustice Areas will be covered by 4-5 students.) So, for example, someone who lived in South Africa when Apartheid was rampant would be perfect. Or a recent Haitian immigrant who left because of the chaos currently reigning in parts of Haiti. Or a doctor or relief worker who has worked with patients in Africa who are struggling with AIDS. The people don't have to live in the Boston area, but that would be ideal. I will do most of the work locating Oral History subjects, although in some cases students will participate in the process.

### Step 2: The Pre-Interview and Scheduling process

After students have done preliminary research in their Topic Area, they will contact their Oral History Subject. The purpose of this contact (via email or phone) will be twofold:

- A: To ask some preliminary questions that will allow the student to prepare more deeply for the actual Oral History Interview Session
- B: To schedule the Oral History Interview Session. These Interviews will mostly take place during March (ideally during school hours at Codman Academy though potentially elsewhere as needed.)

### Step 3: The Oral History Interview

Students and Oral History Subjects will meet in person and engage in an Oral History Interview for approximately 1-2 hours.

### Step 4: Documentation and Clarification

Students will work to document their Oral Histories. In most cases this documentation will not involve exact transcriptions; students will instead work to highlight their deepest impressions and insights from the Oral History Interview using pieces of their Oral History Subject's story. Students will communicate (via phone or email) with their Oral History Subject to clarify certain points and get feedback on their work. At the end of this process, if the Oral History subject has agreed, the Oral History documentation will be posted on our class Injustice and Justice Website (with anonymity as an option).

### Step 5: Huntington Theatre Performance (May 27, 2005)

Students will use their research, personal stories, and Oral Histories in order to write and produce a full-length Performance Piece. All Oral History Subjects will be invited to attend the Performance, which will take place at the Huntington Theatre in Boston on May 27, 2005.

### Why be an Oral History Subject?

Oral History subjects will be able to share their stories...this alone can be a profound opportunity for reflection and openness. But more importantly, by sharing their stories they will be educating my students and, hopefully, a broader audience (via our Performance and Website). My students have each undergone deep experiences of justice and injustice in their own lives but seldom, I think, feel connected to a larger global community of human beings who have struggled with such challenges. The type of learning that this project will generate is invaluable and will stay with students for their entire lives. My hope is that it guides them not only towards mastery of crucial academic skills but also towards empathy and a commitment to fight for justice in their lives and in our world.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this and consider helping us with our project. I look forward to hearing back from you. You can contact me at [aschildkrout@codmanacademy.org](mailto:aschildkrout@codmanacademy.org) or 617-320-6390. Please feel free to send this letter along to others who might be able to help.

Sincerely,

Aaron Schildkrout  
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