

Before the beginning: How our collaboration came to be

The digital storytelling project was built on an existing partnership. One of the co-authors, Urmitapa, has been involved in youth PAR in collaboration with Lowell Community Health Center's Teen BLOCK since 2013. [Teen BLOCK](#) is a youth-serving community-based organization that provides a range of afterschool programming in Lowell, MA. It is a primary partner (along with [YWCA of Lowell](#)) of Youth Reaching Out (YRO), a youth civic and community engagement afterschool program that focuses on violence prevention through strategic activities and meaningful dialogue. In the fall of 2017, Urmitapa reached out to Eric Johnson, the violence prevention coordinator of Teen BLOCK who also co-coordinated the YRO program at the time, to explore a possible collaboration on a digital storytelling project. Keen on the idea, the YRO coordinators (Eric Johnson and Andre Chandonnet) invited Urmitapa and her team to facilitate a digital storytelling project as part of the afterschool program. Given Jenna's interest and expertise in (youth) counternarratives and visual rhetoric, she came on board and along with Urmitapa co-facilitated the project. Jenna and Urmitapa's interests and expertise both converge and complement each other, thus representing possibilities for a generative collaboration.