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Empowerment through journalism: social change through youth media production in northeast Brazil

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Journalism is a process in which people can begin to understand their realities and can be used as a powerful force in democratic societies for or against change. Specifically, youth journalism engages students in identifying themes that elicit social and emotional involvement and a high level of motivation to participate. This thesis intends to explore the question of how journalism can be used as a tool of empowerment in building the capacity of youth to become aware of their own realities and communicate these realities to others through a newspaper. I also explore how the production is linked to social justice by analyzing how it allows the youth of Daruê Malungo, a Center for Arts and Education, in Recife, Brazil to examine visible and invisible systems shaping their interactions and identities. My methodology for this research included teaching a journalism class using Paulo Freire's theory in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed and the development of a newspaper made by the students. I argue that the newspaper by the students at Daruê Malungo allowed them to navigate experiences of difference in terms of race, class, privilege, and oppression. Their production was linked to social justice because it was cry, "um lamento" as the students decided to name their newspaper, for social action in terms of the racial prejudice that still surrounds them, the violence and drug problems in their community, the lack of education they receive, the pollution and abuse of the environment, and an explanation of how they express themselves through their culture. This journalism production created a space for youth development and empowerment, in which students said they weren't afraid to be silent anymore: they were given the opportunity to tell their community, their country and the world what was important to them and why they wanted change.