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# THE NEW COMMONS PROJECT

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## INTERVIEW/AUTOBIOGRAPHY ASSIGNMENT

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### OVERVIEW

Solange's *A Seat at the Table* evocatively blends personal, family history with broader historical events and discussions. In this project, you will create an autobiographical project that interweaves historical events or currents with the personal accounts of your parents, grandparents, and/or other family members or mentors within this generational frame. You are welcome to follow Solange's approach, interspersing interviews with musical tracks. The music, in this case, need not be an original composition, but should build on, nuance, complement or complicate the interview selections. Conversely, you may deviate from Solange's approach by creating a visual element (a documentary, a digital map, or different art project) that similarly contributes to our interpretation of the interview selections. Regardless of the form your autobiography assignment takes, audience engagement with the final product should last 15-30 minutes. In the end, you will also submit a brief rationale that explains the relationship between the personal experience(s) your project features and a larger societal issue

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1) Compose a creative work that comments on the ties between personal, familial, and cultural memory or other aspects of local/national history
- 2) Build on your understanding of Solange's work by reflecting on your own experience in a creative way
- 3) Develop interview skills, as well as proficiency in the genre standard of your choice (documentary work, sound editing, etc.)

### RATIONALE

One of the reasons *A Seat at the Table* was so well received is its vulnerability, which is in part achieved through its frequent interview intermissions. In this project, you will consider how to make compositional choices in a musical, visual, or other artistic project that communicate the act of processing and responding to personal/historical memory.

### REQUIRED ELEMENTS

- 1) Interview at least two people of your parents' or grandparents' generation with whom you feel a personal connection or whom you see as mentors. They may or may not be

family, and family may be broadly understood, in any case. Each interview should be at least one hour long.

- 2) Use the interview to craft an autobiographical creative work in your chosen genre, resulting in a 15-30 minute product.
- 3) The essay (one page) should explicitly link your creative work to a societal issue.
- 4) You will each submit a completed version of the self-assessment document at the end of the project.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTES

Despite using interviews of people who are not yourself as a point of departure, I refer to this as an autobiography project because the interpretation and organization of the interviews will illustrate your own response to a personal matter and the historical circumstances by which it arose. The musical, visual, etc. accompaniment to the interviews should shed light on how these stories impact or influence you in present-day life.

One of the ways in which Solange elevates the intimacy of her album is by situating the project in a meaningful location (specifically, her ancestral town). I encourage you to consider finding a meaningful place or series of places to contextualize your project.