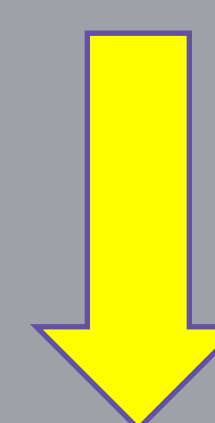




Our roads can build and destroy, create and drain. The land surrounding our roads can offer stories of community, insights into belonging, legacies of opportunity gained and lost, chronicles of abuse of power and misuse of energy, and ledgers accounting for trade, ownership, and lingering debts. No road and its surrounding lands or people better represent these enduring narratives than Route 66.

Scan here to go directly to the StoryMap, bibliography, and Route 66 Learning Guide



Reimagining the Mother Road: Social Justice Work in Challenging Contexts

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INTRODUCTION

Using the well-known Route 66 interstate highway, our StoryMap team created an interactive, multimedia mentor text for public school teachers interested in creating learning that produces place-based projects.

Teachers interested in **equity and justice for their marginalized students** can find inspiration for similar projects of place-conscious teaching.

This project drew upon the collective wisdom, suppressed narratives, and current contexts of indigenous communities and communities of color in Texas and New Mexico.

This research was guided by the question: **How do you teach about communities in times and places where the histories and lived experiences of marginalized groups are restricted, suppressed, or censored?**



Image Credit: Reed Indian Pictures, Baranov Emerson. Used with permission.

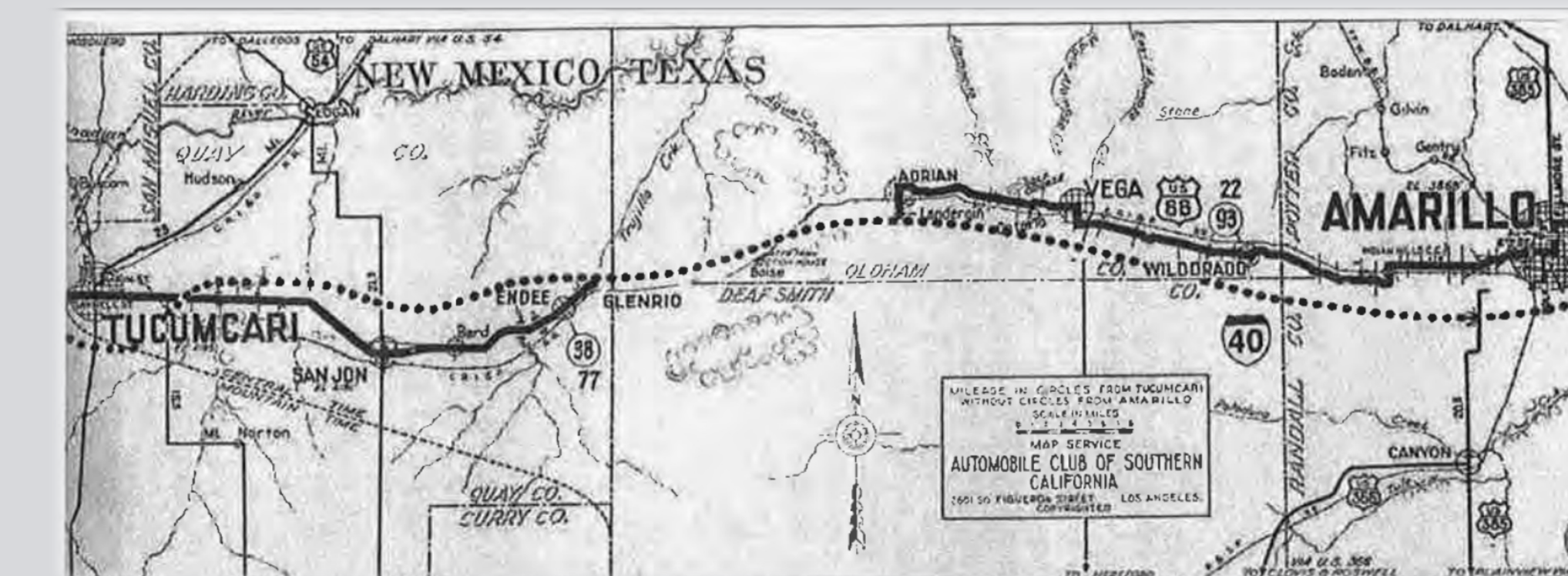
METHODOLOGY

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) through narrative and geographic inquiry frameworks (Jull, Giles & Graham, 2017; Sheppard & McMaster, 2004; and Kim, 2016). The literature reflects a lack of CBPR, narrative and geographic inquiry in the Texas panhandle and further along the southwestern stretch of Route 66.

These frameworks center the inhabitants of each place as those who co-create the research questions and who can "create social change that can be applied to and potentially transform the community" (McCracken, 2019, 2020). By design, the project is conceived as a site-specific, "living textbook" for each of its communities.

RESULTS

The StoryMap process allowed the publication of an accessible, iterative, place-based, and culturally relevant multimedia text co-created by the people in communities not well-represented in literature. The intersectional themes of race, mobility, economics, climate, and energy along the Southwestern leg of Route 66 created a cohesive digital narrative appropriate for upper elementary and secondary students.



Credit: City of Amarillo Planning Department, U.S. 66, Map from Travel Guide Along Route 66, 1965. Monica Penick and Gregory Smith.



Source: H. Abert, New Mexico History Museum, 2018. Retrieved from the Library of Congress Archives

DISCUSSION

This multimedia presentation highlights emergent, action-oriented work. It creates and supports an intentional disposition "to see the invisible structures, policies, and behaviors that sustain unequal outcomes and interrupt the ways of working that serve, implicitly or explicitly, to perpetuate gaps in opportunity for vulnerable communities" (Cheatham, et al., 2020).

Localized, hidden histories made visible help to "disrupt patterns of inequity...[in] a community's history of oppression [and] helps highlight the historic wounds that need healing, wounds that continue to hurt" (DeWolf and Geddes, 2019). Along these lines, those who research their communities become architects of local historicity built among a place's myths, legends, and flattering fictions.



Photo credit: Amarillo Globe-News

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Our StoryMap engaged in wayfinding through ecological, political, economic, and societal orientations. The project's purpose is one of social innovation for sustainability and embedded equity grounded in the immediate locale to find "existing capacities that can be turned to one's purpose, or to try to create them from scratch" (Moore, 2013).

The purpose of the Route 66 StoryMap inquiry process is to serve as a model for teachers and communities interested in creating similar digital narratives that dignify the lived experiences of its people. Further research activity is needed to extend the narratives into topics of sustainability and other student-led explorations.