

Vocal Advocacy: A Case Study at the First Black College Regarding Students Experiencing an Empowerment Workshop

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Abstract : African Americans utilizing the art of vocal expressions, particularly for self-expression, has been a historical avenue of advocating for social justice and human rights. Vocal expressions can take many forms, such as singing, poetry, storytelling, and acting. Many well-known artists, politicians, leaders, and teachers used their voices to promote the causes and concerns of the African American community as well as the expression of their own experiences of being 'black' in America. The purpose of this project was to evaluate the perceptions of African American students in utilizing their voices for self-awareness, interview skills, and social change after attending a three-part workshop on vocal advocacy. This research utilized the framework of black feminism to understand empowerment in advocacy and self-expression. Students participated in learning about the power of their voices, and what purpose presence, and passion they discovered through the Immersive Voice workshop. There were three areas covered in the workshop. The first area was the power of the voice, the second area was the application of vocal passion, and the third area was applying the vocal power to express personal interest, interests of advocating for others, and confidence and speaking to others to further careers, i.e., using vocal power for job interviewing skills. The students were instructed to prepare for the workshops by completing a pre-workshop open-ended survey. There were a total of 15 students that participated. After the workshop ended, the students were instructed to complete a post-workshop survey. The surveys were assessed by evaluating both themes and codes from student's written feedback. From the pre-workshop survey, students were given a survey for them to provide feedback regarding the power of voice prior to participating in the workshops. From the student's responses, the theme (advocating for self and others) emerged as it related to student's feedback on what it means to advocate. There were three codes that led to the theme, having knowledge about advocating for self and others, gaining knowledge to advocate for self and others, and using that knowledge to advocate for self and others. After the students completed participation in the workshops, a post workshop- survey was given to the students. Students' feedback was assessed, and the same theme emerged, 'advocating for self and others.' The codes related to the theme, however, were different and included using vocal power (a term students learned during the workshop) to represent self, represent others, and obtain a job/career. In conclusion, the results of the survey showed that students still perceived advocating as speaking up for themselves and other people. After the workshop, students still continued to associate advocacy with helping themselves and helping others but were able to be more specific about how the sound of their voice could help in advocating, and how they could use their voice to represent themselves in getting a job or starting a career.

Keywords : advocacy, command, self-expression, voice

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