

2017

The Divide - Sylvia Ryerson biographical introduction

Sally Brown

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SYLVIA BIO

Sylvia Ryerson is a radio producer, sound artist and journalist based in Brooklyn, NY. For nearly a decade her work, rooted at the intersection of scholarship, activism and art, has probed the overlapping crises of mass incarceration, rural poverty, and environmental destruction. Her work has been featured on Here and Now, The Takeaway, The Marshall Project, Transom.org, The Third Coast Festival and the BBC. After graduating from Wesleyan University, Sylvia moved to Eastern Kentucky to work at Appalshop, the renowned documentary arts center in the heart of the Central Appalachian Mountains. Sylvia served as a reporter and Director of Public Affairs for Appalshop's community radio station WMMT-FM, and led the production of Calls from Home, a nationally recognized radio program that sends phone messages from family members to their loved ones incarcerated in rural Appalachia.

In 2015, Sylvia created Restorative Radio, a participatory audio documentary project. She works with families that have loved ones incarcerated to create "audio postcards" from home. She then works with radio stations to broadcast the postcards so their loved ones in prison—as well as the general listening audience—can hear them. The project aims to transcend prison walls and change public perceptions of who is behind them, creating a pathway towards healing for individuals, families, communities and a nation profoundly affected by mass incarceration.

At the end of her talk tonight, Sylvia will be joined by photographer and WVU Multimedia Producer Raymond Thompson, with whom she collaborated in 2015, to document a van trip of families traveling to visit their loved ones incarcerated far from home, in the mountains of Central Appalachia.

Raymond Bio (not sure if you want to include or not)

Raymond is a freelance photographer and multimedia producer based in **Morgantown, WV**. He currently works as a Multimedia Producer at West Virginia University. He received his Masters degree from the University of Texas at Austin in journalism and graduated from the University of Mary Washington with a BA in American Studies. He has worked as a freelance photographer for the New York Times and the Associated Press. Thompson's work has been featured in WBEZ, Chicago Public Radio, NBC News and The New York Times. He has won several awards including the 2012 Alexia Foundation Grant Award of Excellence and the 2011 Carnegie-Knight Fellowship.

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Who may be there to meet:

Chair of English Brian Ballentine, <https://english.wvu.edu/faculty-and-staff/faculty-directory/brian-ballentine>



Chair of Sociology and Anthropology (Lynn Crossman)

<https://soca.wvu.edu/faculty-and-staff/faculty-directory/lynne-cossman>



Dean of Reed (Maryanne Reed) (you know)
Raymond Thompson (the artist, you know)
Dean of Law (Gregory Bowman) (you know)

Katy Ryan, Professor English/ Director of Appalachian Book Project
<https://english.wvu.edu/faculty-and-staff/faculty-directory/katy-ryan>



Valerie Surrent, grad assistant in English/Appalachian Book Project (no pic)

Jessica Hought, Law Library (you know)

Valena Beety, professor of Law and director of the WV Innocence Project
<https://www.law.wvu.edu/faculty-staff/full-time-faculty/valena-elizabeth-beety>



James Nolan, Professor of sociology

<https://soca.wvu.edu/faculty-and-staff/faculty-directory/james-nolan>



Alison Bass, professor of journalism/media

<https://reedcollegeofmedia.wvu.edu/faculty-staff/faculty/alison-bass>



Joel Beeson, professor of journalism/media

<https://reedcollegeofmedia.wvu.edu/faculty-staff/faculty/joel-william-beeson>



Rodney Pyles, House of Delegates for Mon county (worked at library for 14 years?)

<http://www.legis.state.wv.us/house/lawmaker.cfm?member=Delegate%20Pyles>

