

A man with dark hair and a goatee is sitting cross-legged on a colorful, patterned blanket. He is wearing a light green button-down shirt over a white t-shirt and dark pants. He is positioned in the center of a tent-like structure with a blue top and red, patterned sides. The background is dark, and the overall lighting is warm and focused on the man.

YOSIMAR REYES

TEACHES STORYTELLING AS TRUTH, JOY & CREATIVE RESISTANCE

► This session explores how storytelling becomes a practice of self-definition, healing, and creative resistance. Yosimar reminds us that art can be an act of honoring where we come from while also imagining all that we can become.

STORY LAB

FINDING YOUR VOICE



YOUR TEACHER Yosimar Reyes is a poet and activist. He is a queer undocumented immigrant who was born in Guerrero, Mexico, and raised in East San Jose, California. Reyes has been described as “a voice that shines light on the issues affecting queer immigrants in the U.S. and throughout the world.”

► WHY THIS MATTERS

Yosimar Reyes grew up surrounded by stories. Undocumented day laborers gathered in his grandmother’s kitchen to eat, crack jokes, and remember home. Those conversations became his first education in storytelling. **As a poet and performer, he learned that storytelling can shine light on truth-telling.**

► YOSIMAR SHARES:

“I grew up in East San Jose surrounded by immigrants. My grandmother recycled bottles, fed day laborers, and told stories around the table. That’s where I learned what it means to belong.”

► WATCH AND REFLECT



VIDEO 1 : FINDING YOUR VOICE

Key Takeaway:

Storytelling begins in observation. When you listen deeply to your people, your place, and your past, you find the raw material of truth — and from that truth comes your voice.

Reflection Prompts:

What’s the first story you remember hearing about your family or community?

What everyday details (sounds, smells, conversations) shaped how you see yourself?

WRITE YOURSELF IN

► WHY THIS MATTERS

Yosimar reminds us that the most powerful stories often come from trusting our instincts and honoring our own experiences. Growing up undocumented, he realized that most stories about people like him were told by others—so he began writing from what he knew: the humor, contradictions, and small, beautiful moments of everyday immigrant life. His approach invites us to let the story flow and edit later, to embrace our bilingual and bicultural authenticity, and to write with intention about the message we want to share. He encourages us to think of the people who believed in us and to write in a way that reaches them.

To write yourself in is to take up space. It's to put language where silence once was, and to give your audience a reason to see your story (and theirs) as part of the larger American story.

► YOSIMAR SHARES:

*“There’s something really beautiful and magical about being ordinary. I think being ordinary is our connective bond. **Everybody is looking for a big story, but there’s something really beautiful about everyday people who are surviving.**”*

► WATCH AND REFLECT



VIDEO 2 : WRITING YOURSELF IN

Key Takeaway:

Writing yourself in means valuing the ordinary. When you write what you know—your people, your rhythm, your truth—you transform the everyday into art and make the invisible visible.

Reflection Prompts:

Who are the everyday people whose lives or lessons shaped your worldview?

Where do you find beauty or humor in your life?

Reflection Prompts:

How can you honor your ordinariness as part of your extraordinary creative voice?

Creative Exercise:

Choose one moment from your life—a meal, a bus ride, a phone call—and write a one-paragraph reflection or short poem about it. Focus on texture: sounds, colors, sensations, dialogue.

STORYTELLING AS RESISTANCE

► WHY THIS MATTERS

At a time when immigrant stories are often reduced to trauma or policy, Yosimar reminds us that resistance begins with care for self, family, and community. As he shares, being a storyteller means shaping your own narrative, one that celebrates both grief and laughter, the mundane and the magnificent.

Telling your story, then, is an act of gratitude. It's a way to ground yourself in community, to make space for those who see themselves in your words, and to honor the people who made your journey possible.

► YOSIMAR SHARES:

"One of the beautiful things about being a storyteller is that you are the master of your own narrative... The purpose of this work isn't to convince people that I'm human. It's to remind others like me that we build cities, that we contribute, that we matter."

► WATCH AND REFLECT



VIDEO 3 : RESISTANCE AS STORYTELLING

Key Takeaway:

Personal storytelling is an act of reclamation. When you tell your story on your own terms, you reclaim authorship, protect the truth, and build morale within your community.

Reflection Prompts:

What spaces could your story open for others?

Who is your storytelling for and how do you hope they'll feel after hearing it?

YOUR TURN : FROM STORY TO LEGACY

► REFLECT

Storytelling is collective. Yosimar views his work as part of a larger chorus of immigrant creators, mentors, and friends who are building a record of joy, grief, and imagination for future generations.

He reminds us that resistance is about sustaining ourselves and each other through creativity, rest, and gratitude.

► YOSIMAR SHARES

"We can't do this alone... Life is joy and grief. We tell stories not to activate change, but to remind people that they matter, that their lives are worth living."

► KEY QUESTION

How can your storytelling build empathy and collective care while holding both the fear of being erased and the joy of existing, so that the act of telling becomes a way of protecting, not performing, your community?

► FINAL CREATIVE CHALLENGE

1. Think of a moment in your life that held both fear and joy—where survival met celebration.
2. Create a short piece (such as a poem, letter, video, or photo series) that holds both emotions without trying to resolve them.
3. Ask yourself: What can this story teach others about what it means to live fully, even when the world says you shouldn't?

Our consulting program helps storytellers, filmmakers, and producers tell nuanced, humanized immigration stories, from script development to production across scripted and unscripted content. With experience on over 100 TV series and films across 23 networks and studios, we offer tailored services including script review, research, writers' room visits, and legal consultation to fit your project's needs. **For more information, send us an email at ent@defineamerican.com.**