

# COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOP CASE STUDY

## IMPROVING MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF FOSTER CARE

### OVERVIEW

The Center for Scholars & Storytellers (CSS) specializes in putting together in-person collaborative workshops that bring together storytellers, scholars and community stakeholders for a day of engagement, listening, sharing and learning on a variety of topics affecting youth development. Because of our industry and academic connections, resources, and expertise, CSS is able to reach key influencers in these workshops. Based on takeaways from these workshops, CSS develops research agendas, actionable tools and/or programs designed to improve youth outcomes in particular areas. The example presented here showcases the workshop process and outcomes that CSS achieved in the area of foster care representation.



### FUNDING & GOALS

The Society for Research in Child Development and UCLA funded two CSS workshops to discuss priority issues for youth. With a seed grant from the UCLA Pritzker Center for Strengthening Children and Families, CSS was able to make one of these priority issues foster care. The goal was to brainstorm with an interdisciplinary group on how to use the power and scale of entertainment media to:

- De-stigmatize what it means to be a foster child through positive media portrayals of those in the foster care community.
- Educate the public around issues facing young people in foster care, to increase awareness, acceptance, and positive outreach.



### WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHT:

*"As a result of your sessions and our conversation, we will be doing something for Foster Care Week in May."*

Mac Malik | Content Strategy and Programming Manager | YouTube

## DELIVERABLES

CSS followed up by engaging with key partners to create programs and tools to implement ideas from the workshop. We developed:

- A series of blogs on the CSS website presenting multiple perspectives of the foster care experience, and that include “actionable insights” to guide content creators in shaping accurate and positive onscreen portrayals of foster care.
- A think tank, co-hosted with an animation studio, focusing on portrayals of economic diversity and foster care in children’s television.
- A connection between our funder and the producer of the HBO film *Foster* who hosted a panel discussion and screening of the documentary.
- A Livestream conversation at the UCLA Film School between a respected scholar and a Hollywood storyteller on the topic of foster care (May 2020).
- A [video](#) with Amy Poehler’s *Smart Girls* about the need for and benefits of accurate onscreen portrayals of foster care. It has been viewed over 80,000 times on Instagram alone.



## ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES:



The #1 kids app reaching over 26 million users, agreed to air videos broadening the identities of those seen in foster care during Foster Care Month (May) 2020. The host is Marcus Scribner of *Blackish* and a featured guest is Bobby Cagle director of the largest child welfare agency in the United States.



A writer who came to one of our workshops integrated a refugee story into her show on Netflix.



An Apple TV writer entered into consultations with our funder to develop a foster care show.

"On our show, TOTS, we pride ourselves in showcasing the love of all kinds of families. A catchphrase on our show is Families come in all shapes and sizes! Still, dramatizing the issues surrounding foster families seemed too difficult a task. However after attending the CSS workshop, we went from saying, we can't do a show about foster families, to how can we do a show about foster families? Knowing we had the resources at CSS to help us navigate the terrain allowed us to take a chance, an episode around foster families has now become a priority!"

Guy Toubes | Story Editor | Disney Junior's TOTS

