

## Concept -

"Losing My Accent" A commentary about losing one's accent/culture. To explore how coming to America, though being from an Eastern background has gotten lost in translation through the process and almost individual act of becoming Westernized. I want to focus on individuals, myself included, where English was not their first or maybe even second language, but because they have been here so long, (if) they feel like they're losing touch with their own culture, identity, accent and background.

MM comments in blue:

I like the concept but I think it still needs two things: the reason for an average listener to care, and still more focus on what the story arc is.

Here are my guesses to the questions I asked:

-- Who will we hear from? Victoria and foreign students at the college media conference...

-- What are these characters doing? Talking to each other about their accents and how they've changed...

-- What timeframe/locations? Present day Kansas City... with flashbacks to earlier life in other countries.

Takes place on the streets of Kansas City and in the hallways of the conference. Maybe on a campus and a shopping mall...

-- What is the tension? The collision between where one came from and where one is... and the opposing cultural pulls (to keep, to lose, one's accent).

-- Why is this story necessary? America suffers deep cultural divides. (Blue-Red. Rich-Poor. Resident-Immigrant. Etc.) The Obama presidency offers young people a change. That sounds promising... but should that pull us from our "cultural corners?" Can I cling to my cultural identity too? How do I do both?

If these guesses are close to the mark, maybe the focus statement goes "Victoria Phetmisy would happily join the Obama generation -- provided she can hold on to her cultural roots and be accepted in American culture. Victoria fears her fading accent already is a loss of identity."

Trying to nudge this into a fuller plan. Take or leave what you will but keep pressing the idea into more concrete terms.

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## Focus Statement - (Two sentences are ok)

I want to show what it means to be "Westernized" to a non-westerner and to give insight into those individuals and those cultures that get easily lost in the translation between countries, languages, teachings, etc. I also want to be able to show what it feels like to me to have lived in America for so long, that I have lost touch with my own culture and why now in my 20s, I want to reach back to that as though I missed something.

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**Host Intro** - An accent is a quick way to judge a person's cultural origin. Next Generation Radio's Victoria Phetmisy is a girl who lost her accent and worries that her cultural identity has faded with it.

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## Script -

When you hear me speak, what do you think I look like? White? Blue eyes?

I'm ACTUALLY from Laos.

I was born in the United States but my parents are both Laotian. So I can't help but feel that—hey—I'm Laotian too, so I SHOULD have that accent.

To talk about this, I called the most Laotian person I know.

<PHONE RINGS. MOM: Hello? ME: Hey, Mom. 0:05>

My mom has been here for 22 years, but our different accents can still keep us from understanding each other.

<ME: so do you notice that when I speak and when you speak that our accents are different? MOM: yes, but sometimes I don't understand you. Sometimes you speak English and I don't understand you because you speak too fast." 0:17>

All of my siblings have different accents than my parents, but I seem to be the only one that wants to sound more like her. Even though I don't know anything about how her accent affects her life.

<ME: Do you think people treat you differently because you have an accent when you speak English? MOM: Yes. ME: Tell me how, how do you think they treat you different. MOM: They treat like they don't want to speak with me or sometime they just look at me maybe they don't understand. They don't want to try to understand me, you know? They not nice. ME: Yeah. MOM: Why you cry ma'noy? ME: It just makes me sad, that like you have to go through that and I didn't because I can speak in a really good English accent. 0:50>

<FADE INTO DON BOSCO CLASSROOM AMBI>

In Kansas City, Missouri, you might think everyone sounds like me, but there's a school called the Don Bosco Development center where that's definitely not the case.

<MONTAGE : "My name is Mirella...We're from China" 0:16>

I came here because I realized I wanted to hear from other people who deal with an accent in their every day lives.

That last person you heard, Leann Murray, from China—reminded me so much of my mom.

<LEANN: culture...more American!>

Her accent is pretty thick, I could barely understand her. But she says she identifies more with American culture than her own. To her, the accent doesn't make a difference.

David Holesclaw is the Director of Don Bosco, and he says it's not the immigrant that has the problem with their accent:

<DAVID: Americans just simply hear an accent and they just stop there. They just have the perception that that person's English is terrible, I can't understand that person and actually the person is communicating very clearly and very completely. 0:11>

<FADE OUT DON BOSCO AMBI>

And I understand that's probably the issue with my mother. Though her accent gives a lot of frustration to the impatient it's not something she finds sad for herself. I called my older sister Susan to talk about it, and even she says it doesn't have to be a big deal.

<SUSAN: You know, I really think it's comedic when she speaks and no one understands. I actually think it's funny. I don't think it's embarrassing or anything because that's the way she talks and that's her accent she has. 0:15>

She's got a point. Hearing her talk about it so matter-of-factly already made me feel better.

<ME: Thanks SUSAN: No problem, are you talking to a therapist? ME: A therapist?! WHAT?! 0:07 FADE UNDER>

Ok, ok ok, I get it. My mom and the people at Don Bosco proved to me that I am LUCKY to speak English without an accent. It doesn't have to stand for more than I what want it to.

For Next Generation Radio, I'm Victoria Phetmisy in Kansas City.

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## Visuals

First of all, let's talk about equipment.

I will have a professional Canon kit available for you to use.

I will check out the equipment to you under my supervision. In other words, If you're going out to shoot I will go with you.

The reason: The equipment belongs to my company and I have to make sure it's used properly and doesn't get damaged.

Here's the equipment list:

- 1 Canon Mark II digital camera (top of the line)
- 1 17-35 mm lens (for wide angle photography)
- 1 70-200 mm lens (for tighter pictures)
- 1 Mark II dedicated flash.

I will have additional accessories for us to play with.

Let's talk aesthetics:

Think of the visuals the same way you think about sound. Pay attention to details and diversify your presentation.

Shoot wide to establish a sense of place

Shoot tight (faces, hands, details in the way a person dresses)

Think about motion and action (Person has to be doing something!)

Think light and composition (set up your photo shoots early in the day and late in the afternoon for better light)

Shoot low, shoot high, go beyond the obvious. Kneel, stand on a chair, put your camera on the ground. Look for a high-overhead positions.

Patience: sometimes you have to wait to capture the right moment. Have an idea what you want to say with your photograph, wait for that relationship and snap the picture.

Think of pictures the same way a painter thinks of a canvas. Every part of the picture has to have a reason why it's there. If there are distracting elements in the background eliminate

them by moving around. Look through the camera and dissect the image in quadrants, if something doesn't belong, eliminate it.

The ultimate Multimedia presentation will have 2 minutes of sound Attached to 20 images (This is a lot you will have to do a lot of shooting). The images will run as a slide show as the sound is narrated.

We will use the software SoundSlides to accomplish this.

Here are a couple of examples of some recent work I've produced (To give you an Idea what we are going after) :

One on San Francisco's cable cars:

[http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/\\_travel/cable\\_cars/](http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/_travel/cable_cars/)

One on the endangered California Condor, threatened by a wildfire:

[http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/\\_national/condors\\_wildfire/](http://hosted.ap.org/specials/interactives/_national/condors_wildfire/)

Since you are on the radio field, your sound will be crisper with smoother transitions.

My suggestion is to dedicate on day of the project just to make pictures. After you have gathered and edited your sound.

Hope this helps,

Marcio Sanchez.