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Unpacking Silence: Exploring Marginalized Voices Through Student Created Zines

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Zines are short for magazine and are self-published with a motivation to share personal narratives and experiences in short print runs. Zines are honest reflections of the oppressed, marginalized, and silenced and shed light on issues and research not often found in typical library resources and mainstream media.

Students in several classes at Simmons College (LIS 407 - Information Sources and Services and SOCI 249 - Inequalities) were asked to read and create zines. In LIS 407, zines were required readings for the course, highlighting issues within the field of librarianship that are often overlooked or disregarded. Because of these readings, Miranda was inspired to create her own zines which dealt with personal narratives and lived experiences. Des was introduced to zines last year and has since taken on the role of Zine Intern at Beatley Library assigning subject headings that genuinely reflect the marginalized communities found within the zines.

In Sociology 249, students were required to create a group zine that discussed some aspect of social inequality. Students were tasked with weaving research and statistics into their zines with a variety of creative methods to choose from such as comics, illustrations, cut-and-paste, and personal narratives. Students later presented their zines to the class and submitted the originals to Dawn Stahura to become part of the Beatley Library’s Social Justice Zine Collection. Mikayla not only created a group zine but was the TA for the course.

The purpose of incorporating zines into the classroom is to give students the power to explore and critique issues affecting their daily lives. By creating zines, students became cultural producers of information instead of passively consuming information. Upon reflection, students and faculty have noticed the difference zine creation has made in the understanding of such difficult topics as race, gender, and ableism, opening up the class dialogue to more robust, inclusive classroom space.