

## TV Program Production

Here's an exercise that shows how memory, here-and-now observation, and research can join forces to capture a special place on the page or in your video, or on your website. It works best if you do the four parts in sequence.

1) Think of a place that interests you and write about it-first from memory, focusing on what makes this place vivid for you. Take 3-4 minutes max.

The faces of humanity-so many stories, so many lives literally rubbing elbows. And the pace-hurting in darkness, bumping, lurching, traveling at lightening speed. My body alive underground.

2) Second, go to that place and record what you see. Capture as many details as Sondra did. Sondra chose the subway:

Kids, backpacks, CD players, florescent lights, man asleep, mouth open; girl, chewing on a yellow pencil, reading Tolstoy; man with a cane, the *Wall Street Journal* under his arm; teens, huddled together at the end of the car, their hands all over each other; a kid, tugging at his mom; she rolls her eyes

3) Now, look up factual information about that place-Sondra found hers on the website of the Metropolitan Transit Authority:

The New York City subway system officially opened on Thursday, October 27, 1904 ... has 468 stations serving 24 routes-more than any other system in the world. Two hundred seventy-seven of the stations are located underground. There are 31,180 turnstiles; 734 token booths; 161 escalators.... Each day, more than six million people use New York City Transit-almost 2 billion customers annually

4) Finally, start again, using at least one line, image or phrase from A, B, and C and add a title-as Sondra did in the following vignette. Sondra chose the subway:

Where are they all going? Who is in love? Who just had a fight with a boss? The girl reading Tolstoy; the man with the *Wall Street Journal* tucked elegantly under his arm; the mom who wishes he would stop whining-who are they? The lovers in the corner can't take their hands off each other. The high school kids with their bulging backpacks and CD players move their hips in time to the music, oblivious, caught in the spell of their own private worlds. So too is the heavysset man across from me, dozing, his mouth ajar. I sit here and marvel that we are a fraction of the six million people who use the subways each day, breathing the same air, tucked away in a gray steel compartment, traveling at lightning speed through the bowels of Manhattan.

FROM: Writing True: The Art and Craft of Creative Nonfiction, by Mimi Schwartz and Sondra Perl