

**fig&sass**

story | culture | strategy

**THE POWER OF STORY**  
May 16th, 2023



**YOUTH CALIFORNIA**

## Welcome and Check Ins

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Please drop into the chat and share:

- Name
- Organization and your role
- How are you today?
- What was your favorite story as a child?



# Welcome

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Michaela



Meredith



# Communications Series with Fig + Sass

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## 90 Minute Training Webinars

**Communicate the Change**  
*January*

**Messages That Move**  
*February*

**Working with Media**  
*March*

**Digital Engagement**  
*April*

**The Power of Story**  
*Today*

## 60 Minute Technical Assistance Workshops

- Small group, hands-on workshop that customize webinar learnings for your organization + context
- Fig + Sass coaching and peer workshopping of your work-in-progress
- Offered at multiple times following each webinar



# Today's Agenda

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- Welcome & Introductions
- Review: Where Stories Fit into Strategy
- Why Stories Matter
- What is a Story?
- Strategic Storytelling
- Activity: What story does your audience need?
- Ethical Storytelling
- Activity: Story Time!
- Discussion and Closing



# Review: Strategic Communications

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## Start with your Goal



- What do you want to achieve?
- The SMARTer the better:
  - Specific
  - Measurable
  - Achievable
  - Relevant
  - Time-bound

## Determine your Audience



- Who are the specific people without whom you cannot achieve your goal?

## Target your Audience



- What do they care about?
- What could be their blocks?
- Who influences them?
- Where do they get their information?
- Who will they identify with?
- What frameworks do they have?
- What are they feeling when they interact with your content?
- What do they need to feel to take the action you need?



# Review: Strategic Communications

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## Target your Audience



## Stories!



- What do they care about?
- What could be their blocks?
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- What frameworks do they have?
- What are they feeling when they interact with your content?
- What do they need to feel to take the action you need?

- In Materials
- On Website
- In Email
- On Social Media
- Within Messaging
- To the Media
- To build team culture
- To onboard staff
- As a programmatic tool
- EVERYWHERE!



Review: What does your story need to achieve for your audience?

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**ACTIVATE**

**Objective:**

**Activate target audiences who are already supportive.**

**PERSUADE**

**Objective:**

**Persuade target audiences who are conflicted.**

**NEUTRALIZE**

**Objective:**

**Neutralize those who will never be supportive today.**





# Review: Strategic Storytelling- EXAMPLE

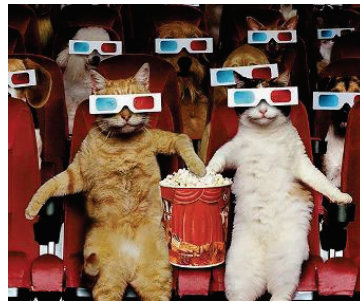
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Start with your Goal



Close California's state-run youth prisons

Determine your Audience



Persuade:

- DJJ
- Governor
- Elected officials

Activate:

- Families of incarcerated youth
- Incarcerated Youth
- Allies and advocates

Target your Audience



- Stories from currently and formerly incarcerated youth
- Stories from family members
- Stories of people who have worked in youth prisons
- Stories from experts on health and justice



## Why Stories?

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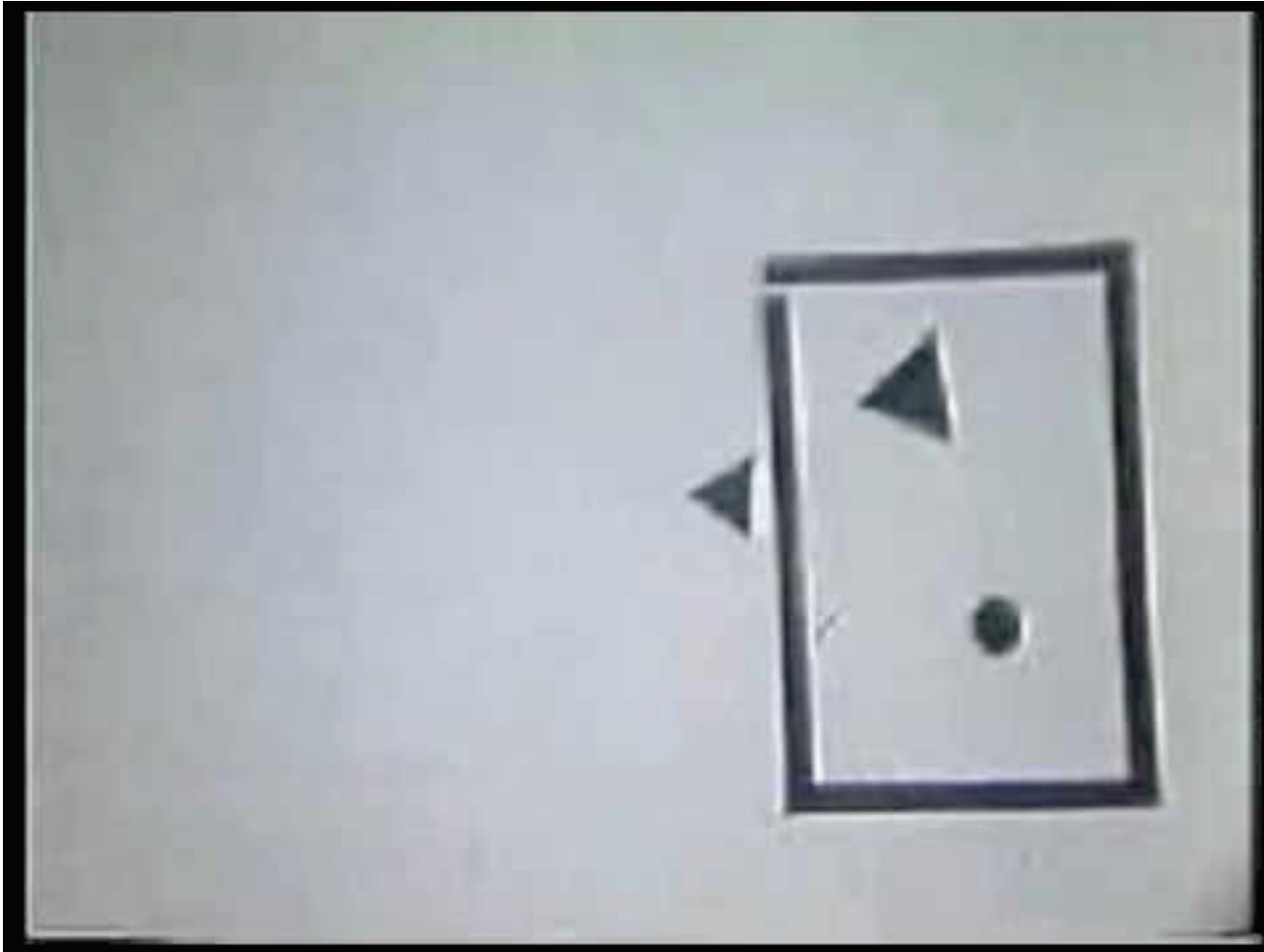
**THERE HAVE BEEN  
GREAT SOCIETIES THAT  
DID NOT USE THE WHEEL,  
BUT THERE HAVE BEEN NO  
SOCIETIES THAT DID NOT  
TELL STORIES.**

URSULA K. LEGUIN



# Why Stories?

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# Why Stories?

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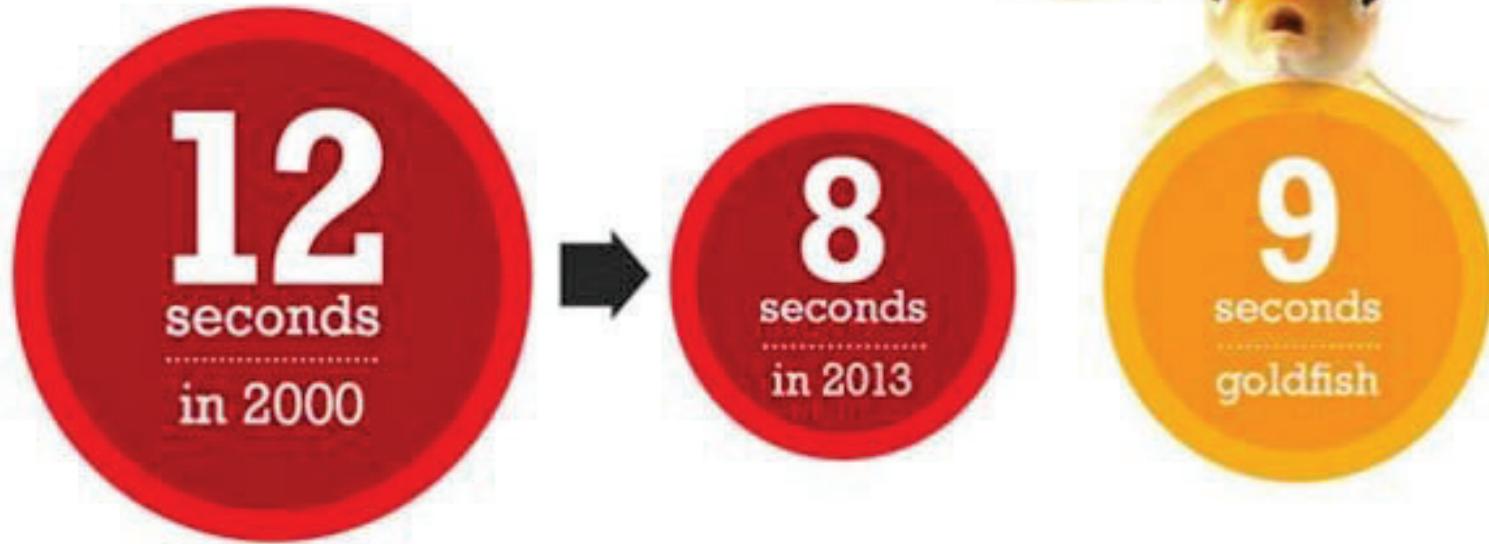
**"I've learned that people will forget  
what you said,  
people will forget  
what you did,  
but people will never forget  
how you made them feel."  
-Maya Angelou**



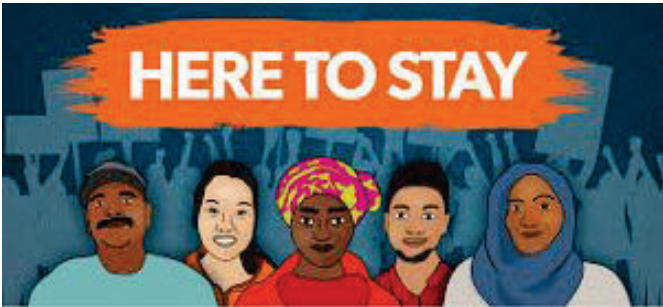
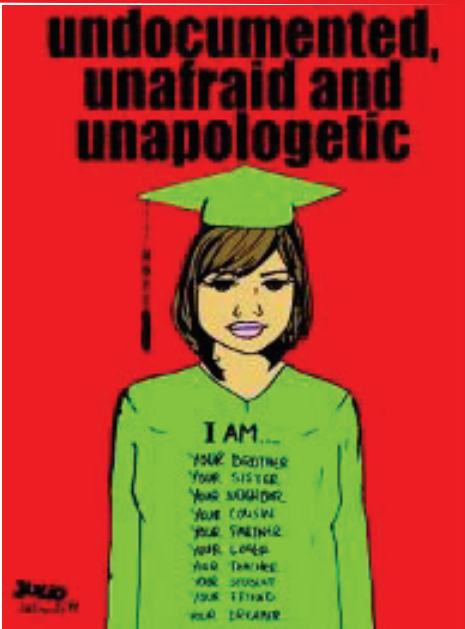
# Why Stories?

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The average human  
**attention span**

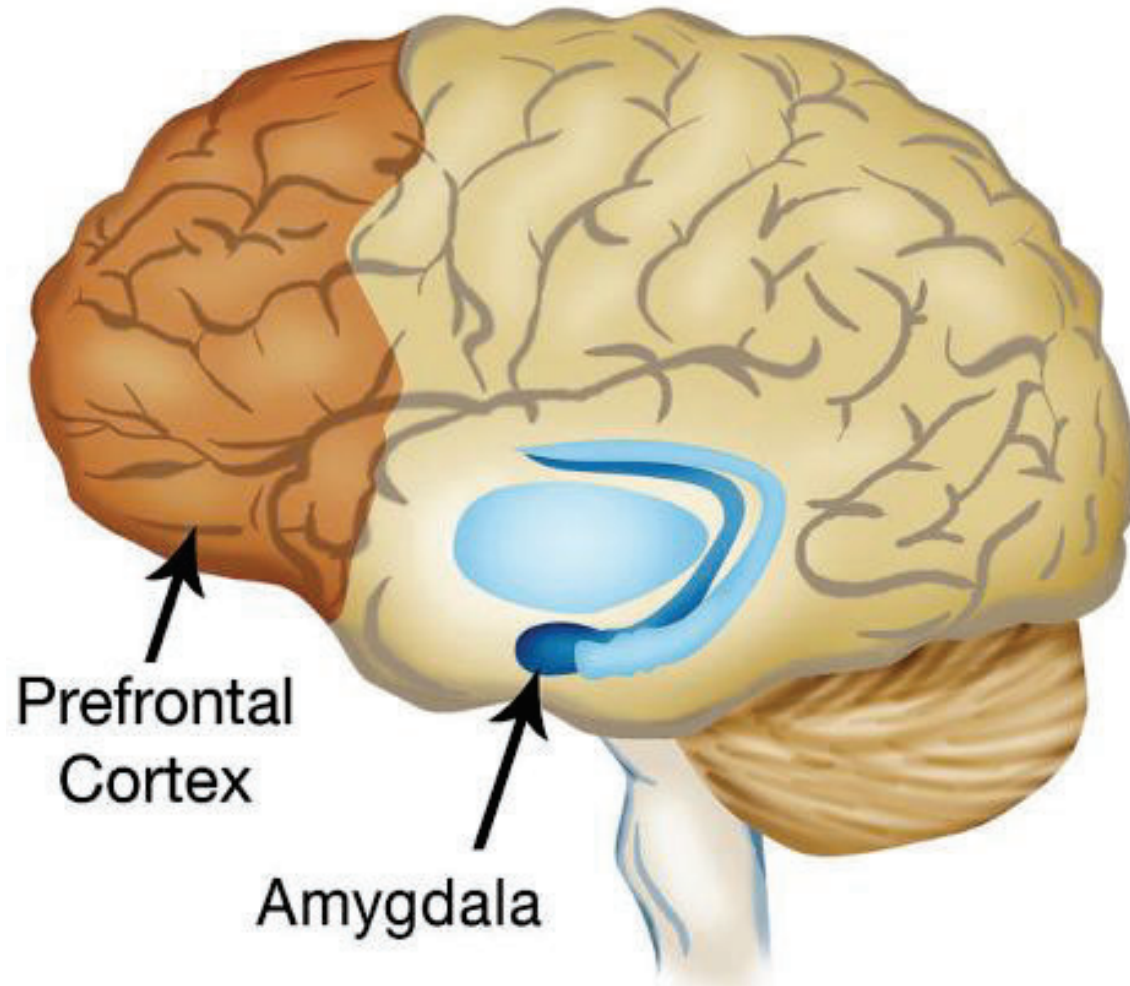


# Why Stories? Stories Make Social Change



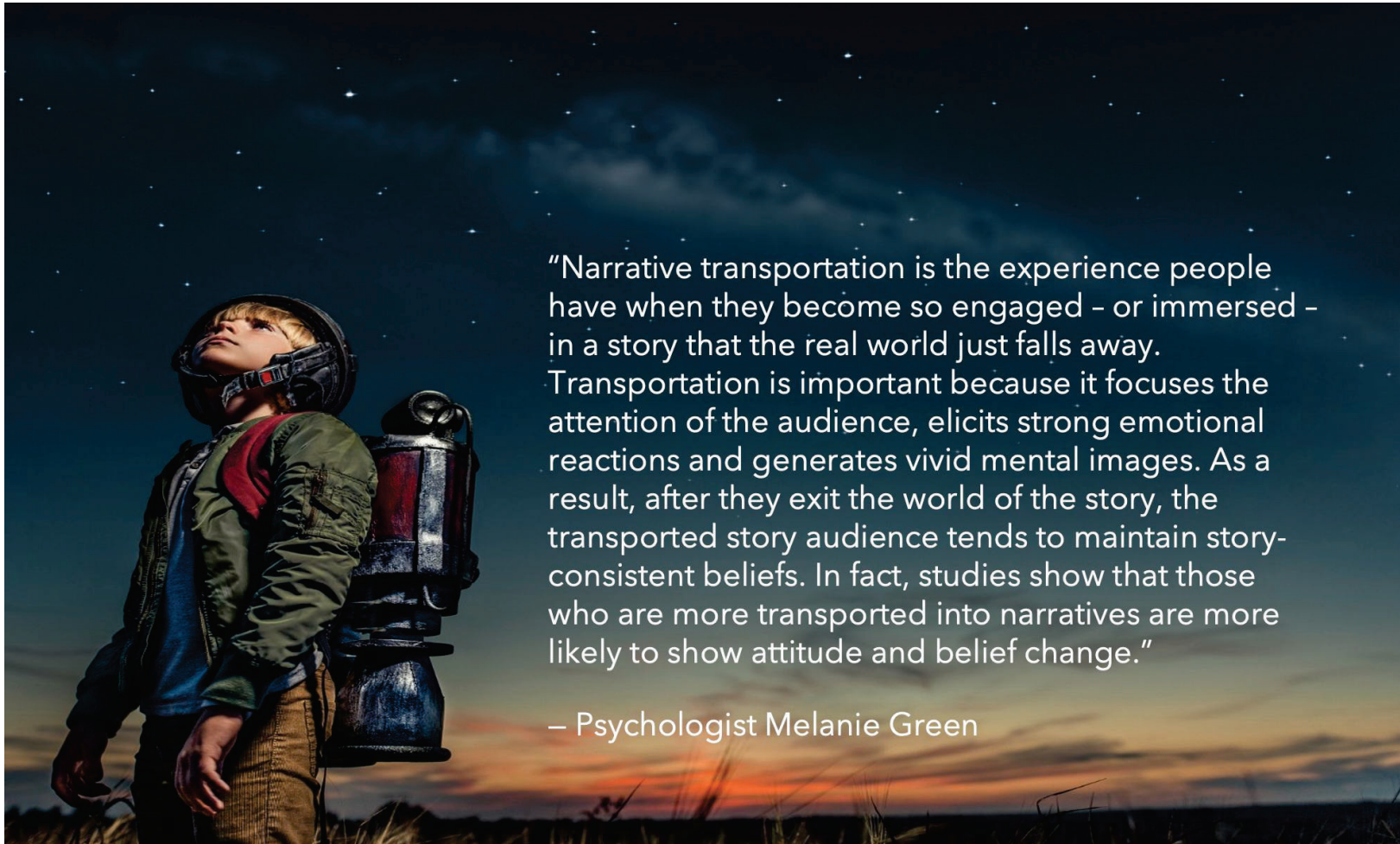
# Why Stories? Storytelling is Scientific

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# Why Stories? Storytelling is Scientific

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"Narrative transportation is the experience people have when they become so engaged - or immersed - in a story that the real world just falls away. Transportation is important because it focuses the attention of the audience, elicits strong emotional reactions and generates vivid mental images. As a result, after they exit the world of the story, the transported story audience tends to maintain story-consistent beliefs. In fact, studies show that those who are more transported into narratives are more likely to show attitude and belief change."

– Psychologist Melanie Green





# Why Stories? Storytelling for Impact

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"Stories have a unique power to persuade and motivate, because they appeal to our emotions and capacity for empathy."

-- Jeremy Hsu, *Scientific American*



# What's a Story?

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# What's a Story? Three Core Elements

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**Characters**



**Challenge Aka  
the Action**



**Change**



# What's a Story? Characters

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## What job do you need your character to do for you?



- Facilitate identification or affinity
  - As a pathway to empathy
- Disrupt flawed mental templates
  - As a pathway to identification and/or empathy
- Serve as a moral authority
  - To align with people values and identity
- Whose story will feel authentic?
- What does your audience need to know about your character to understand their story?



## What's a Story? Challenge aka the Action

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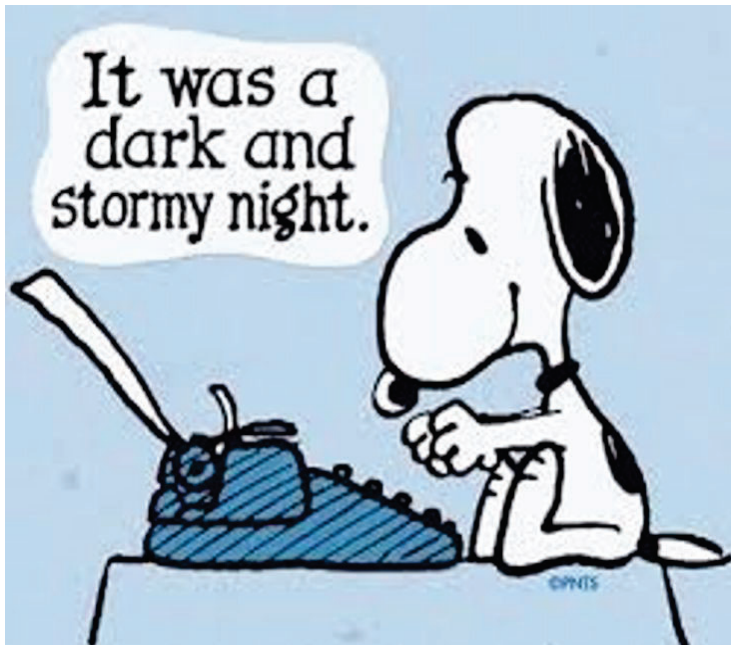
- What happens to this person?
- What details can you include that help your audience be transported into the character's experience?
- Will your audience be able to relate to or connect to this person's experience?



# What's a Story? Challenge aka the Action

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## Show vs Tell the Action



- Chronology brings audiences along
- Details, dialogue, and vivid descriptions:
  - Increases narrative transport
  - Increases likelihood of persuasion, activation, neutralization



# What's a Story?

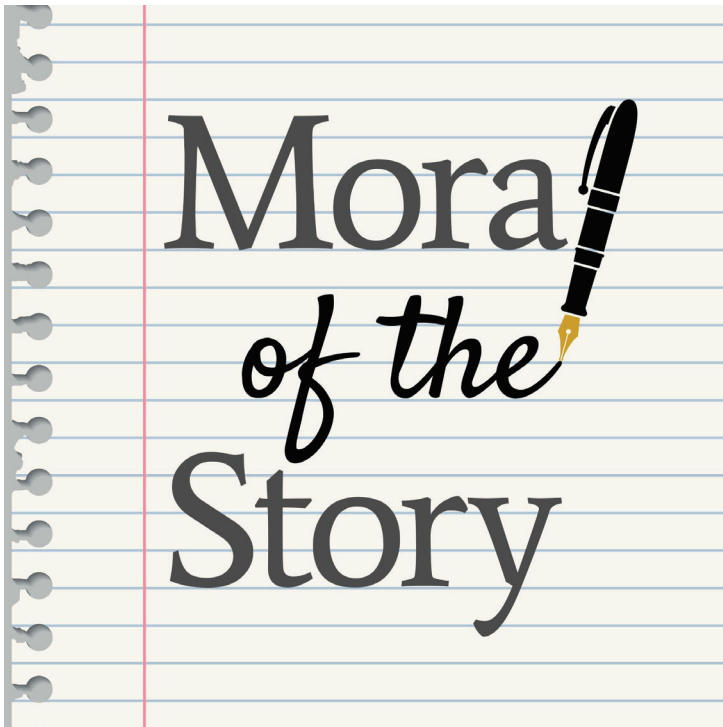
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<b><i>Details that show . . .</i></b>	<b><i>Details that tell . . .</i></b>
 Sights	 Facts
 Sounds	 Statistics
 Smells	 Examples
 Tastes	 Definitions
 Textures	 Reasons
 Dialogue	 Comparisons



## What's a Story? Change

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- How has the character/s changed as a result of the journey?
- What is the “moral of the story?”
- How can the world be a better place if we learn from their story?





# What's a Story?

How did you get there?  
Hint: It was hard.  
Or at least interesting.

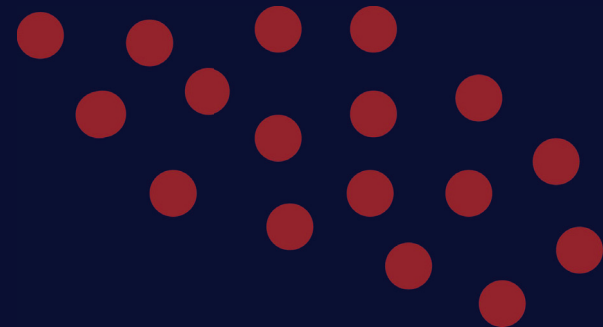


## Storytelling Tip - Simplify and Focus

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**What story do you  
need to tell?**



What does your story need to achieve for your audience?

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**Objective:**

**Neutralize those who will never be supportive today.**



# What does your story need to achieve for your audience?

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- Foster empathy
- Foster a sense of identification
- Normalize what your audience is feeling
- Be a moral authority or voice of reason
- Show them the change you want them to make
- Motivate them to take a specific action
- Understand your vision
- Believe in what's possible



# Strategic Kinds of Stories - “Why” Stories

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Since 2011, George has been a proud resident of the Essex. Originally from Memphis, music and faith have always been a big part of George's life. Both of his parents played piano and sang in church. For as long as he can remember, he's enjoyed singing gospel and doo wop for fun.

## MAKING A MOVE

When he first moved to San Francisco, George didn't have a permanent place to stay and before long experienced homelessness. He first found shelter at St. Vincent's until he moved into transitional housing for several months. After working with a case manager, he was able to move into his home at the Essex. Here he found much needed stability and was able to become more independent. Always grounded in his faith, George connected with fellow residents and created a new-found sense of community. ***“Everyone goes through trials and tribulations in life, you have your ups and downs - which is why it's good to keep your faith and hold on; that's very important.”***

## REKINDLING HIS PASSION

Since moving George has been able to rekindle his passion for music and worked with Resident Services to get space in the Essex community room to practice. Now he has his own equipment to practice privately within the comfort of his home, and since his place is a corner unit of the Essex, he can practice without disturbing his neighbors.

## THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

George is grateful to call Essex his home and end his experience with homelessness, but now he is ready to venture out on his own and looks forward to his next step—moving into a permanent home where he can entertain friends and make beautiful music. Living at the Essex has stabilized his life to a point where he feels ready to move and is currently working with Resident Services staff member Casey to get a voucher to move into his own apartment.



George gets ready for A Night with the Stars

George has had diverse experiences singing; from performing at birthday parties and weddings, to City Hall and clubs throughout the Bay Area. One special experience was a gig for a music video specifically about homeless. R&B, gospel, and country and western are a few of his favorite musical genres, honoring his Memphis roots. He even dreams of someday having a record deal, proving that when you have a place to call home, anything is possible.



“

Your home is your castle. Home is everything. To have a roof over your head, clothes on your back, shoes on your feet, and food on your table is everything.

”



# Strategic Kinds of Stories - Model the Journey

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## President Barack Obama's shifting stance on gay marriage

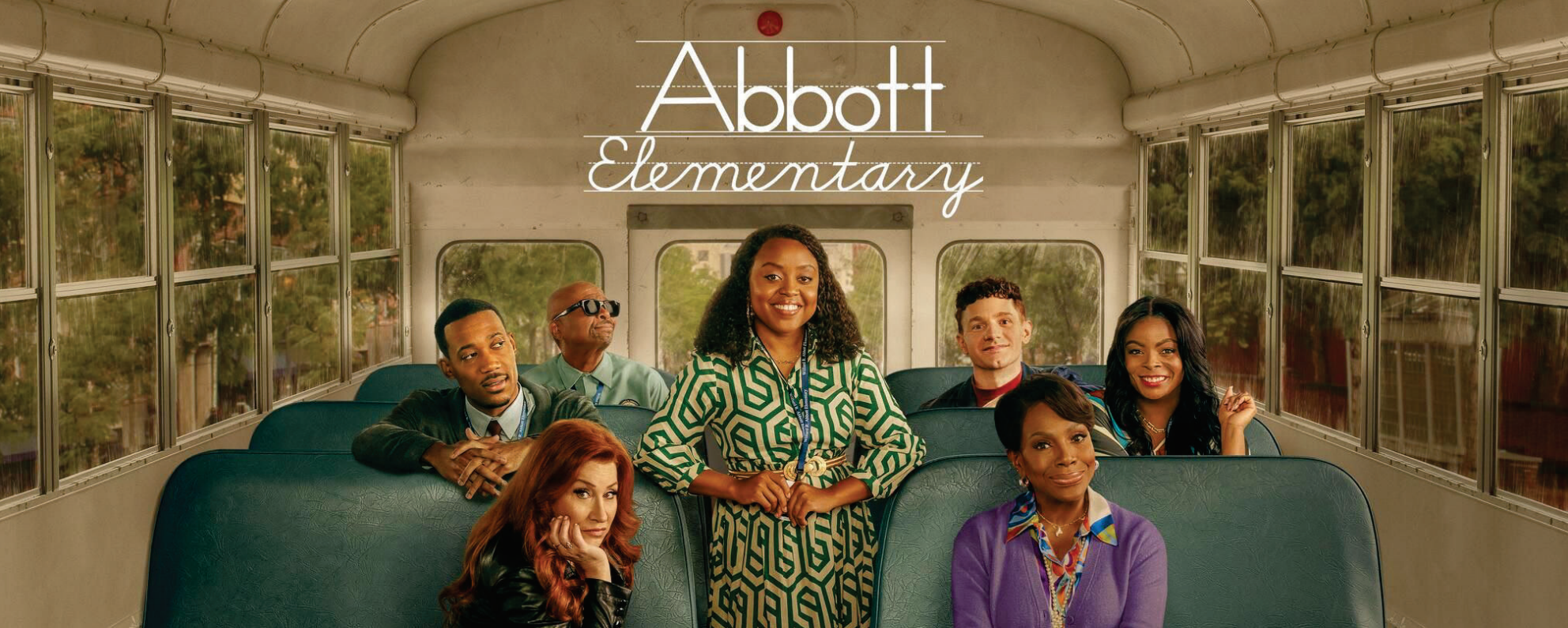
ABC broke into its daytime lineup May 9, 2012, to announce a historic shift: the president of the United States declaring his personal support for gay marriage.

"I've been going through an evolution on this issue," President Barack Obama [told ABC News](#).



# Strategic Kinds of Stories - Humanize and Normalize

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# Strategic Kinds of Stories - Let them see what you see

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cal4justice 50 of our CFJ youth leaders and staff gathered from all around the state to learn, laugh and grow connections last weekend. SLR '23 is one for the books! How's your April going?

1w



## Strategic Kinds of Stories - Show them What's Possible

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We invite you to join us in rewriting the future for our City. The legacy you leave might be the new supportive housing development you help bring to life by saying yes to building in your backyard. It might be the resident you inspire to go back to school after volunteering in one of our buildings. It might be the partnership you help us build with your company, or the donation that pays for a life-saving counseling session for a resident who is struggling to make it through the week. No matter your impact, when we finally achieve that future for San Francisco we all envision, you can say you were part of getting there.

Thank you for being part of that brighter future.



## Activity: What story does your audience need?

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**Goal:** Recruit 40 new participants for youth tech training program

**Audience:** Youth in SF ages 15-20 and their parents

### Why is this a strategic story to tell?



"Dev/Mission really did everything to make me feel like I belong here. As a first-gen college student and an immigrant, it has been difficult for me to find people to have meaningful conversations about my career. Thankfully, Dev/Mission has a mentor-matching program. I was able to connect with a mentor to discuss any questions I have. Dev/Mission is an one of its kind of program that not only teaches in-demand skills but also focuses on creating a community and support system."

Josephine - Fall 2021



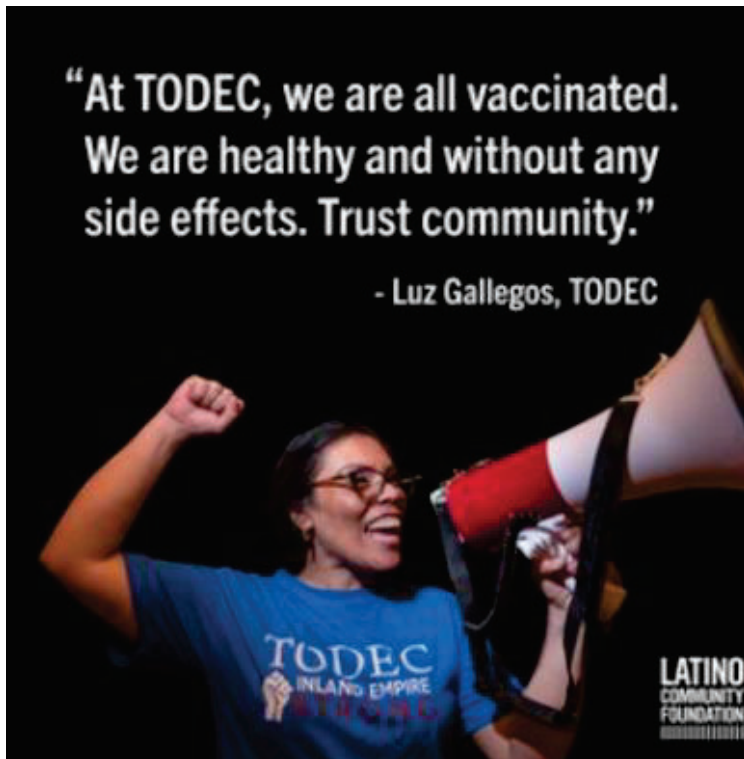
# Activity: What story does your audience need?

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**Goal:** Increase vaccination rates among Latinos in the Inland Empire

**Audience:** Latino families, parents, young adults, farmworkers

## Why is this a strategic story to tell?



Thermal, Calif. – March 22, 2021



As Luz Gallegos hosted a workshop March 18 informing agricultural workers about the COVID-19 vaccine, she held up two photos — one of her late uncle, a missionary Catholic priest, and the other of the Rev. Francisco Valdovinos, a beloved local pastor many knew personally. Both men died of COVID-19.

These workshops aim to not only combat vaccine inequities, but also potential misinformation and mistrust among the immigrant community about the shot. In talking about her uncle, Jose Luis Gonzalez, Gallegos wanted to highlight how the virus has impacted her own family, and by naming Valdovinos, she knew she'd be reaching the masses.

Holding Valdovinos' photo, Gallegos asked: "Do you all know father Valdovinos?"

"Yes," many said, and nodded.

"Maybe we don't have a family member or friend (who passed from COVID-19), but we all know our priest," said Gallegos, executive director of TODEC Legal Center, an immigrant rights organization. "As soon as COVID struck, he started organizing out of his church."

Valdovinos' passing has helped ignite a consciousness around public health and COVID-19 prevention among farmworkers and other residents across Southern California's Inland Empire region and the eastern Coachella Valley.



## Activity: What story does your audience need?

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**Goal:** Expand perception of who transgender people are to increase familiarity and acceptance of transgender individuals

**Audience:** Hispanic parents, middle-aged conservative Hispanic voters

### Why is this a strategic story to tell?



# Ethical Storytelling

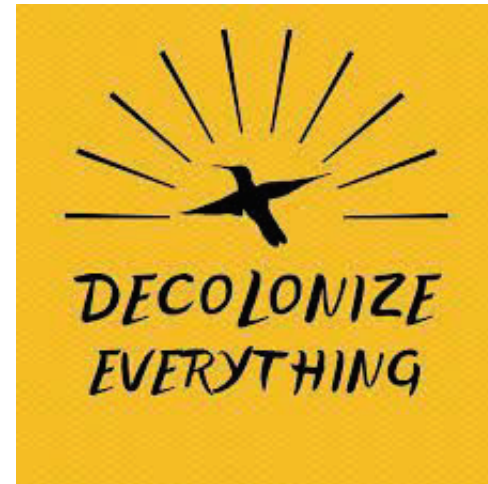
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# What is Decolonized and Ethical Storytelling?

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- Ethical-decolonized storytelling believes that **storytelling is a human craft that belongs to all of us.**
- Ethical-decolonized storytelling interrupts the ways stories have been used to oppress different communities.
- Ethical-decolonized storytelling is **responsible to the storyteller** or the person whose story we are telling.
- Ethical-decolonized storytelling uses stories to **empower** people and **bring communities together.**
- Ethical-decolonized storytelling challenges the limited and negative stories that get told about people of color, gender-queer/trans people, and women.



resonance  
&

# Decolonized and Ethical Storytelling - Key Principles

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- Process matters as much as product
- Do no harm
- Consent matters
- Be real about potential risks
- Sync your strategy with your organizational values
- Stories change as people change
- Recognize the need for diverse and multiple storytellers





# Decolonized and Ethical Storytelling- Empower Storytellers

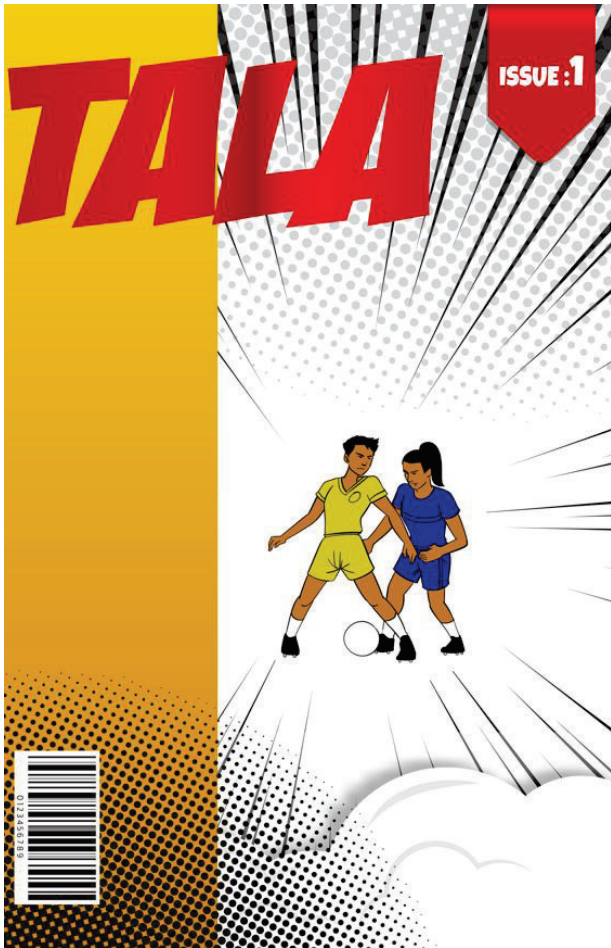
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- Emphasize each person's agency and prepare them for potential risk
- Compensate them for telling their story
- Make it easy
  - Use simple prompts
  - Orient folks to key messages or talking points
- Provide training and frequent, supportive spaces for practice
- Celebrate stories and storytellers
- Ask for permission, every time



# Decolonized and Ethical Storytelling- Creative Approaches

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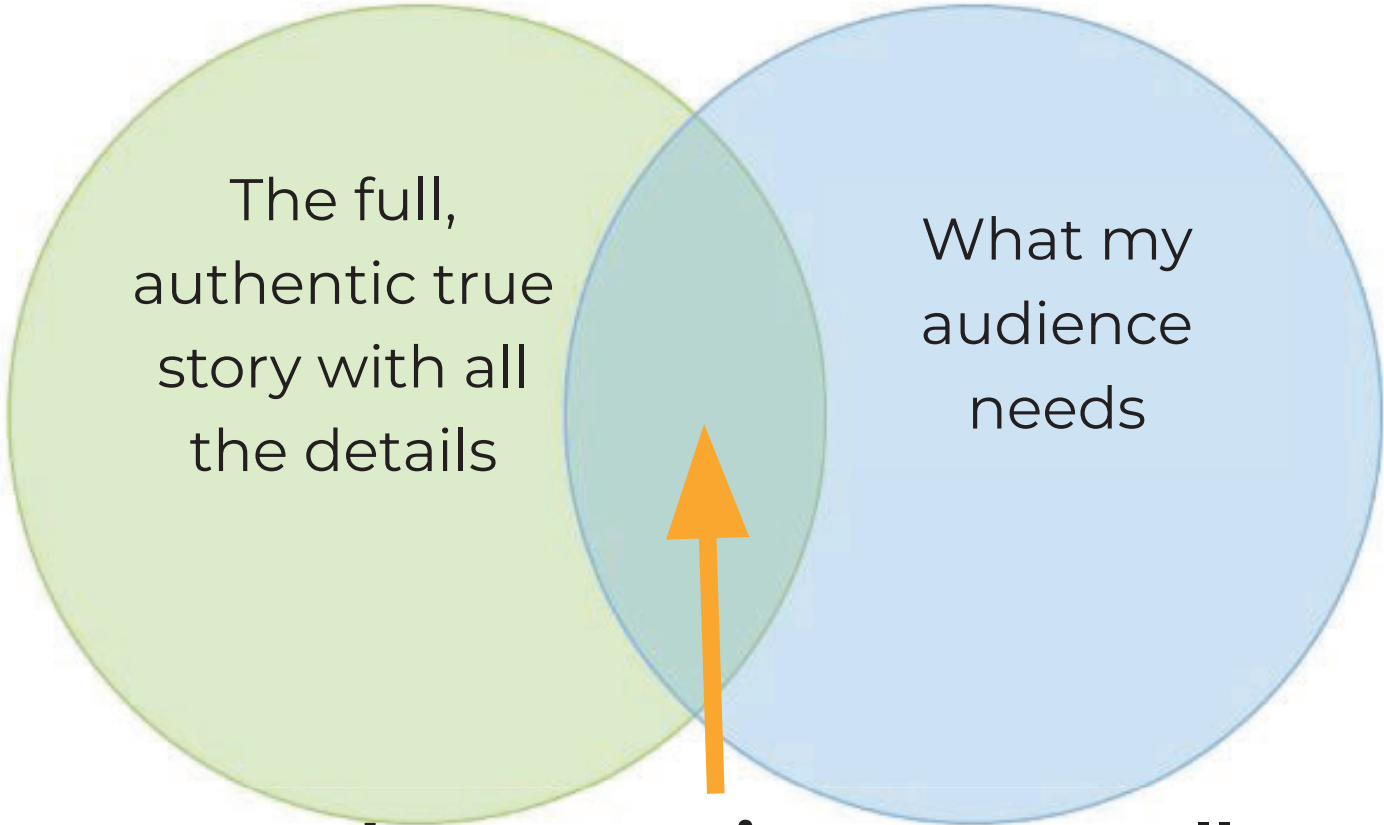


- Second person stories
  - Imagine that you...
  - How would you feel...
- Hybrid stories
- Change names or use initials
- Alternate mediums
- Spoken word, short stories, poetry, art
- Opt-in speaker's bureau
- *Other ideas?*



# Decolonized and Ethical Storytelling- Curation

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**The strategic story to tell**



# Activity: Story Time

Story Idea	Purpose	Character	Setting the Scene	Challenge aka the Action	Change
<p><i>Example: A little girl in a red cape goes on an adventure in the woods.</i></p>	<p><i>Example: Persuade: help children, with a sense of adventure understand why they shouldn't trust strangers.</i></p>	<p><i>Example: A village girl people call Little Red Riding Hood.</i></p>	<p><i>Example: Paint a picture of who the girl is and why she is going into the woods, ie to visit her sick grandmother</i></p>	<p><i>Example: She meets a strange wolf in the woods and tells him where she is going. She stops to smell flowers along the way. When she gets to grandmother's house she doesn't realize the wolf is in disguise and eats her. She and Granny get saved by a lumberjack who hears their cries.</i></p>	<p><i>Example: Audiences identify with Little Red's spirit of adventure and the idea of visiting Granny but she also knows to be more careful around strangers.</i></p>



## Activity: Story Time

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- Join a small group breakout of 2 or 3 people
- Think about one of your goals and audiences and brainstorm a story that might be strategic to engage this audience (5-6 min)
- Each of you has three minutes to tell your strategic story and receive feedback
  - What stood out to you from the story you heard?



# Discussion

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Quick Poll: Future Support

## Next Steps & Closing

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### Final Workshops This Week

- Develop your storytelling strategy
- Workshop story ideas
- Explore your questions

Stay in touch!

[merefenton@gmail.com](mailto:merefenton@gmail.com)

[michaela.leslie.rule@gmail.com](mailto:michaela.leslie.rule@gmail.com)





**THANK  
YOU!**

Michaela Leslie- Rule - [michaela.leslie.rule@gmail.com](mailto:michaela.leslie.rule@gmail.com)

Meredith Fenton - [merefenton@gmail.com](mailto:merefenton@gmail.com)

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