



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

StoryMasters Presents a Bouquet of Stories on Mother's Day

by Margaret Mitchell

On May 9, Mother's Day, StoryMasters and friends gathered for a pleasant afternoon of stories and presentations about storytelling. Below is a summary:

Miyo Yamauchi: *Rabbit Hole Episode - Identity Crisis*

What happens when you're cut off from the world and social interaction for a little too long? In her story, Miyo took the audience on a wild ride as she described the aftermath of recent dental surgery that involved a tooth extraction and bone graft. The surgery left her face so bruised and swollen, she was nearly unrecognizable. As she healed alone, she obsessively googled answers to the many questions that were not answered in the pre-op instructions that had been given to her. With considerable humor, Miyo described popping down many rabbit holes and asking some serious questions: What makes me, me? Am I my face? A delightful and thoughtful story!

Ashton Cynthia Clarke: *Little Girl's Hair*

This tale revolved around a series of scenes about Black hair care. As an eight-year-old child, Ashton enjoyed the "yummy" feel of her mother's hands lovingly combing her "puffy, woolly" hair. One day, when her hair was done, she was hurt to learn that her two little white friends—Jane and Linda—had gone off to play without her because Jane's mother told them it would take too long for Ashton's mother to "comb her nappy hair and put grease in it." The friends grew apart, but Jane found Ashton many years later on Facebook. Through a series of DMs, Ashton and Jane, now women in their 60s, began the process of understanding and resolving racial issues that broke them apart as children. In the same way that the teller described gently parting, combing, oiling and rolling the hair of her 90-year-old aunt, this story was told with utmost thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and love.

Camille Miller: *I Can Go on Singing*

In this story, Camille gave a touching tribute to her brother, Eric—ten years her senior, player of chess and tennis, and a dedicated fan of Judy Garland. In a lovely *a capella* voice, Camille sang Judy Garland hits to relate Eric's story as a loving brother who taught her to read before she entered kindergarten, a gay man who went to college at UC Berkeley, found love, and ultimately succumbed to AIDS at an early age. From "Clang, Clang, Clang Goes the Trolley," through "Me and My Shadow," and "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," Camille held the audience in the palm of her hand as she completed a portrait in song. This touchingly beautiful story brought tears to the eyes of many in the audience.

Mallery McMurtrey: *An Instrumental Voice*

Mallery gave a valuable lesson on vocal variety—and used a lively, well-modulated voice to make her point! Her presentation focused on the effect the nervous system has on your voice. When you're nervous, your body releases hormones that send you into flight, fright or freeze mode and can cause shaking, sweaty palms, dry mouth and other undesirable effects. To calm these involuntary responses, she offered the following tips: (1) Practice what you're going to say out loud, and say it in different voices. This will help you remember your talk better. (2) Prepare to speak by using techniques such as deep breathing, visualizing success, singing, hydrating, and practicing tongue twisters. (3) Remember to pause when speaking, to give emphasis to what you're saying.

Hiba Hamdan: *The Oldest (Written) Story in the World*

Stories have been told from the time humans existed. But what was the earliest written story? In a fascinating presentation, Hiba explained she became interested in storytelling in 2006. That year, she read in the Toastmasters Storytelling manual that the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is likely the oldest written story. Archaeological evidence indicates it was written by an unknown Babylonian poet on 11 double-sided stone tablets about 3,000 years ago. It tells the story of Gilgamesh, a king who reigned over Mesopotamia (Sumeria, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Assyria and Babylon) about 4,900 years ago. Versions of some of the stories in the epic, such as The Flood, appear in later stories in the Bible. Written thousands of years before Christ, the epic also deals with the topic of eternal life. When Gilgamesh returns to the city of Uruk, he says, "Here we are. This is the way to become eternal, by serving our community." What a satisfying way to cap off an afternoon of storytelling for storytellers!

Others who contributed to the afternoon's program included: **Tina Tomiyama**, Toastmaster and Wordmaster/Grammarians; **Margaret Mitchell**, General Evaluator; **Catherine Magruder**, Timer; **Aprille Isham**, Videographer; and **Lee Amatangelo**, **Cynthia Moore**, **Lin Van Gelder**, **Harold Gee**, and **Jill Vanderweit**, Evaluators.

Next meeting is June 13. ([GUESTS](#), [RSVP FROM HERE](#))

UPCOMING STORYTELLING EVENTS

Many interesting storytelling concerts and workshops are coming up. Check them out!

May 19 SAC Story Swap Genre Storytelling Series — Legends: Urban & Traditional

<https://thestorymasters.org/events/sac-story-swap-genre-storytelling-series-historical-stories/>
7:00 PM PDT / 10:00 PM EDT / Zoom

Our fun participation in SAC Story Swap Genre Storytelling continues! This month, **Camille Miller** will tell a story for the theme, *Legends: Urban & Traditional!*



May 23 StoryMasters Presents The Storytelling Café

<https://thestorymasters.org/events/storymasters-storytelling-cafe-202105/>

3:00 PM PDT / 6:00 PM EDT / Zoom

If you missed it last month, join us for the fun on 5/23! Our first Café was a delight!

You're welcome to share any work-in-progress, finished material, or mumbled thoughts as you wish. First come, first served. Don't miss this opportunity! RSVP required.

Contact: Mallery McMurtrey (mallery@thestorymasters.org)



May 23 Strong Words ~ Voice of the City #74

<https://thestorymasters.org/events/strong-words-20210523/>

7:00 PM PDT / St. Francis Center (3621 Brunswick Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90039)

If you live in LA, craving for a in-person live show, this is the event you shouldn't miss. L.A.'s magical storytelling show, **STRONG WORDS**, returns to our beautiful enclosed courtyard in Atwater Village for a night of stories and art under the stars. And **Miyo Yamauchi** will be back on the live stage!

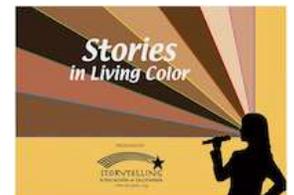


May 25 Stories in Living Color ~ Belonging – Asian American Stories

<https://thestorymasters.org/events/artists-standing-strong-together-a-climate-conversation/>

6:00 PM PDT / 9:00 PM EDT

The Stories in Living Color Project (storysaac.org) is holding a special storytelling event featuring Asian American stories. Providing this opportunity to hear these stories is timely, given the recent increase in hate crimes towards our Asian and Asian American brothers and sisters.



May 26 Artists Standing Strong Together: A Climate Conversation

<https://thestorymasters.org/events/artists-standing-strong-together-a-climate-conversation/>

5:00 PM PDT / 8:00 PM EDT

See a special Project Drawdown video and hear from their Manager of Storytelling and Engagement Matt Scott. We will also hear storytellers Timothy Van Egmond and Sheila Arnold. Moderator Fran Stallings leads the monthly conversations, ensuring they are engaging, educational and entertaining, and Judith Black, storyteller activist, is a constant conversation advisor.

Check out more events at: <https://thestorymasters.org/events/>

Disclaimer: Events are posted as a service to our members, friends and the storytelling community. Posting is not an endorsement.

MEMBER'S SPOTLIGHT IN THE PAST EVENTS

SAC Story Swap Genre Storytelling Series — Historical Stories

Pieter Severynen, an arborist, entertained the audience with his beautiful story titled "Füssen and the Lute" on April 21.

Watch Pieter's story here: https://youtu.be/-_K8Bv7Uslc



Toastmasters: District 50 Division Southern International Speech Contest

On April 22, Camille Miller inspired the audience with our favorite story, "Big Mama," and took the second place at the Division Southern International Contest.

Congratulations, Camille!

My Place Cafe Storytelling

Ashton Cynthia Clarke appeared at My Place Cafe on April 22. Her beautifully crafted story provoked all kinds of feelings, including love.

Watch Ashton's story here: <https://youtu.be/uaCSWlvwyiU?t=1467>



Toastmasters: District 1 Division F Humorous Speech Contest

Bharat Sangekar did it again! He won the Division F Humorous Speech contest!

Back story: Because he had to get up at 3:30 AM (his time), Miyo created a meticulous conspiracy plan and proposed it to him so that he could get extra sleep. Instead, corporate dog that he is, Bharat worked all night, competed against fierce competition, and swiped first place after his sleepless night. Nobody knows how he does it, but he can pull an all nighter and still be funny! Congrats, Bharat!



And guess who the Division F Humorous Speech Contest Toastmaster was: our own **Margaret Mitchell!**

Look at her beautiful smile and gorgeous outfit! Her vibrant energy brightened up the Zoom room and made us all smile as soon as she appeared on the screen. Oh, she was so charming and professional!

Thank you for supporting Bharat and Margaret: Aprille Isham, Cynthia Moore, Harold Gee, Jacki Williams-Jones, Mallery McMurtrey, Miyo Yamauchi, and Tina Tomiyama

Toastmasters: District 73 and District 1 Conferences



Bharat Sangekar finished a Toastmasters District contest marathon over the weekend.

Saturday morning (Friday evening for us), he competed in the District 73 International Speech Contest in Australia and won the first place with a dynamic yet heartwarming and beautiful story titled "Home."

Before having time to breathe, the District 1 Humorous Speech Contest knocked on his door at dawn on Sunday (Saturday morning for us). Regardless of a sleepless night, Bharat gave a

stellar performance and grabbed second place with "Corporate Dog".

Bharat, we're looking forward to cheering you on at the International Convention again!



Bonus News

Our own **Cynthia Moore** was elected to the role of Division A Director for 2021-2022.

StoryMasters' friends — **Suraj Chugani** won the District 1 Humorous Speech Contest, and **Ricky LaCorte** won the District 1 International Speech Contest.

Congratulations everybody! Thank you for sharing your talents with us, supporting each other, and making us all proud!

STORYTELLING STUB

Are All Stories Effective?

Storytelling is a big thing nowadays. Companies are incorporating stories to promote their brands. Researchers use stories to tell us their findings. Activists tell stories to change people's minds. But are all stories effective?

A new Johns Hopkins University study finds stories to be significantly more motivating than scientific fact—at least for some people. Their study showed that response can vary depending on political affiliation. But let's put politics aside and take a deeper look here. We can't ignore the fact that liberals tend to be more interested in climate change than conservatives. When those who are already interested in a subject hear a story, their brains are more likely to relate to the story and they feel urged to take action. But for those who don't believe or are doubtful, a story can cause the opposite effect.

Telling a story that provokes emotions can be tricky. Shocking stories can get people's attention for sure, but when stories are too sad, horrific, or devastating—if they are shoved down our throats, they may backfire. In 2015, Nationwide released an ad during the Super Bowl to promote conversations about child safety and preventable injuries in the home. The ad was poorly received by viewers, who called it depressing and insensitive. A few months later, the CMO of Nationwide resigned from his position.

But don't get the wrong idea. I'm not discouraging the use of stories. Stories definitely have the power to change people's mind. In 2014, Tony Miranda was brought in as the new police chief in Irwindale, California. Irwindale is a small town where everybody knows everybody. The city was known, too, for its police department, which garnered most of the news. News at 6, news at 5, news at 11—all negative. Miranda needed to fix the corrupt police department, or the city would lose its health insurance. But people hated his guts and tried to get him fired. When they were about to call for a vote of no confidence, Miranda told a story about another small city losing its entire police department because they ignored the warnings and didn't fix the system. His story changed people's minds and attitudes so that they were able to fix the system. Eighteen months later, the insurance authority removed the warning. In the end, the city was able to keep its insurance coverage.

Be mindful about who your audience is. Craft a story and/or use scientific facts depending on the audience. With the right content and right delivery, your message can reach them.

Reference:

- [What Spurs People to Save the Planet? Stories or Facts?](#)
- [Emotional Advertising: How Brands Use Feelings to Get People to Buy](#)
- [Bad Cops Are Expensive](#)

EDITOR'S NOTE

Slowing down can be the best way to speed things up

The other day, I got the second dose of the vaccine. I didn't know what kind of side effects I would get, so I blocked two whole days off just to be safe. I got only fever, so I worked during the day. As a programmer, I can write code even when I'm in bed. But when I was done with work for the day, I felt lost. I didn't know what to do with my evening calendar being completely blank. No meetings? No workshops? What should I do?

The more keys you have, the more complicated your life can be.

The statement was meant for keys...literally, but I think we can apply the statement to our lives in general. In the past few years, I've gotten more keys to different doors — storytelling shows, workshops, writing groups, Toastmasters events, and more. Everything was just fun in the beginning, but then I started getting more keys than I could even hold. Sometimes I have three meetings after work...back to back, which is not good because I don't have time to digest and absorb what I saw, heard, and learned. Now, I can't even remember my schedule anymore.

After lying down and staring at the blank calendar for two hours, my brain started spinning again. Then, new ideas started flowing in. Ideas for the stories I've been working on, the upcoming workshops, and storytelling shows. They kept coming. It made me realize how busy I had been. Holding too many keys has been blocking my creativity and sapping the quality of my products.

Feeling your creativity is on halt? When you do, hit the break! Sometimes, a little break will speed things up.

— Miyo Yamauchi