



# DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

## A Buoyant Sunday Afternoon

What? What Super Bowl? Who watches it when we have stories? In the Sunday afternoon, StoryMasters enjoyed a tall tale, love story, inspiring story, and memoir. What a collection of stories!

### Camille Miller – *The Bear Necessities*

We don't know how **Camille Miller** comes up with one fictional story after another, but she did it again! She shared a funny tall tale in preparation for a speech contest. Since it's a contest speech, we don't want to ruin the surprise before she speaks at the Area F1 contest on Friday, February 17. Check out our upcoming event section and make sure to come and support her!

### Cynthia Moore – *Happy 90th Birthday*

2023 is a special year for **Cynthia Moore** as her mother will be 90 years old. Back in the days, her mother was the prettiest woman in their neighborhood. Short black hair, slender long legs, and small butt and breasts caught everybody's attention, but what they most admired was not her silhouette or proper manner, but her brains. In those days, there were not many Black women working as legal secretaries in Beverly Hills. After she left the law firm, she started her own paralegal firm. She was a hard worker and didn't stop working until the pandemic. Now, she enjoys her life. Every day is a better day than the last, for her. In a few weeks, she'll have her best day, celebrating her 90th birthday with Cynthia.

### Lee Amatangelo – *Ronny B. Good*

There were two unwritten rules in Redondo Beach when **Lee Amatangelo** was a kid. First, every able-bodied kid played baseball regardless of gender or size. If you had a pulse, you played. Second, every kid avoided the Bradley house at all costs because there was a six-foot-two, 220-pound, twelve-year-old kid there who owned a psycho dog. Lee's story was also a contest speech, so we won't reveal too much, but we can tell you that it's a beautiful story with humor and clever rhymes that you don't want to miss! Come this Friday and listen to his story!

### Tina Tomiyama – *A Resilient Woman*

Memoir is new to **Tina Tomiyama**. A memoir is a type of personal story, but the storyteller is just a side character. The hero, the main character, is someone who mattered to the storyteller, someone unforgettable. The main character in "*A Resilient Woman*" was her former boss, Hiroko. Hiroko was a wonderful boss everybody admired. She praised her staff, fed them, and protected them. Her legendary green chili salsa, a mixture of chopped jalapeños, green onions, cucumber, cilantro, and lime, was a treat Tina craved. Unfortunately, the story didn't have a happy ending. Hiroko vanished after her estranged alcoholic husband threatened to kill her. Tina still misses Hiroko, saying "She was like her salsa: tasty, spicy-cool, leaving us wanting more."

Meeting functionaries included Toastmaster **Catherine Magruder**, General Evaluator/Timer/Videographer **Miyo Yamauchi**, Wordmaster/Grammarian **Ashton Cynthia Clarke**, and Evaluators **Kathy Garr**, **Anna Ziss-Patton**, **Hiba Hamdan**, **Margaret Mitchell**.

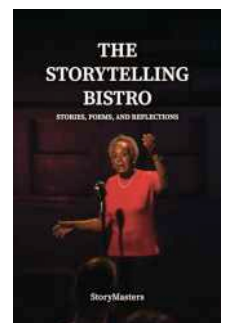
Next meeting is March 12, 2023. (GUESTS, [RSVP FROM HERE](#))

## STORYMASTERS NEWS

### The Storytelling Bistro Is Out!

Have you checked our book, [The Storytelling Bistro: Stories, Poems, and Reflections](#)?

Fifteen diverse StoryMasters offer true personal stories, fanciful fiction, poems, and thoughts in this captivating collection of short works, perfectly sized for tossing into your bag to read at the beach, park, waiting in a business lobby, or enjoying a few quiet moments at home. We hope you enjoy these stories as much as we do! Copies are available on Amazon: <https://a.co/d/7XPoTcT>



## UPCOMING STORYTELLING EVENTS

Many enchanting storytelling events keep coming up. Check them out on [our event page!](#)

**Feb 17** Tell Me A Story

<https://thestorymasters.org/event/tmas-20230217/>

2:00 PM PT

Category: Storytelling Concert

Location: Baldwin Hills

Branch Library

Cost: Free

A concert of stories celebrating the lives and memories of the participants, presented in honor of Black History Month.

**Tina Tomiyama** and **Barbara H. Clark** will be telling their personal stories.

**Feb 17** District 1 Toastmasters Area F1 Tall Tales & International Speech Contests

<https://district1toastmasters.org/events/area-f1-tall-tales-international-speech-contest/>

7:00 PM PT

Category: Speech Contest

Location: Online

Cost: Free

Support StoryMasters' representatives!

**Camille Miller** for the Tall Tales Contest

**Lee Amatangelo** for the International Speech Contest

**Feb 18** Tell It! ~ Secrets and Lies

<https://bpt.me/5708295>

7:30 PM PT

Category: Storytelling Concert

Location: The Young Actor

Workspace

Cost: Donation

An evening of stories about the things we keep hidden. Our wonderful cast of storytellers will entertain you with true tales that are funny, poignant, and surprising.

Produced and hosted by Pablo Marz.

**Feb 19** Artists Standing Strong Together (ASST): Sacred Storytelling

<https://www.artistsstandingstrongtogether.net/event-details/sacred-storytelling-2>

1:00 PM PT / 4:00 PM ET

Category: Storytelling Concert

Location: Online

Cost: Donation

Sacred Storytelling hosted by ASST is one of the most beloved of the four free monthly programs that ASST offers. This program is free to all; however, registration is required.

**Ashton Cynthia Clarke** will be hosting!

**Feb 20** RISK!

<https://new.hotelcafe.com/event/risk-with-david-crabb-12/>

7:00 PM PT

Category: Storytelling Concert

Location: The Hotel Cafe (LA)

Cost: \$15-20

RISK! is the show where people tell true stories they never thought they'd dare to share. The monthly RISK! live show in LA is hosted by celebrated storyteller and author, David Crabb.

**Mar 4** How To Be Japanese: Your Normal Is Not My Normal

<https://miyo.net/solo>

8:00 PM PT

Category: Solo show

Location: The Fanatic Salon Theater (LA)

Cost: \$15-20

She's baaaack! By popular demand, Miyo's hilarious solo show, "How To Be Japanese: Your Normal Is Not My Normal" is coming back to the Fanatic Salon Theater on March 4.

Get your tickets today!



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.*

PAST EVENT

# The Book Launch Bash Was a Blast!

We did it! We published our first book, "The Storytelling Bistro," at the end of 2022. It wasn't easy...to be quite honest. Some people say that publishing a book is like bearing a child, but it took ages for us to make it happen. There were unexpected challenges along the way. The pandemic didn't help the situation, either, but we were patient. We were resilient. We were persistent. Now the book is out and it was time to celebrate!

So...we decided to host not one but *two* book launch events, an online and an in-person event. What can we say? We love going over the top! The event committee was co-chaired by Jill Vanderweit and Jon White. Tina Tomiyama, Margaret Mitchell, Ashton Cynthia Clarke, and Miyo Yamauchi joined the team. It was a BASH!



Double emcees; Tina Tomiyama and Jon White



Q&A segment: Kathy Garr, Jiro and Tina Tomiyama, Anna Ziss, Ashton Cynthia Clarke, Jill Vanderweit, Miyo Yamauchi (L-R)

Thanks to “double J’s” leadership and everybody’s participation, our first online book launch party was quite successful. We had dozens of attendees and the Q&A segment carried intriguing conversations. So when it came to the in-person event, everybody got even more excited. The eminent storyteller, Barbara H. Clark, who is a mentor to many of the authors, generously offered the Institute of Musical Arts for the in-person event. Jill, who resides on the east coast, flew to LA. Every day, the excitement built up.

For some of us, it was our first time to see each other in person after the pandemic, so it was like a mini reunion. The Saturday afternoon was truly a special moment. Sharing the same space in-person, we felt that we’d regained something we’d lost.



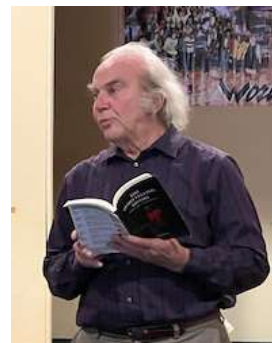
Institute of Musical Arts



Barbara H. Clark



Kathy Garr, Jill Vanderweit, Ashton Cynthia Clarke



Pieter Severynen

StoryMasters and friends, we are grateful to each one of you! Thank you for your continuous support and dedication. StoryMasters exists because of you.

Complete list of authors: Anna Ziss, Ashton Cynthia Clarke, Bharat Sangekar, Camille Miller, Jill Vanderweit, Jiro Tomiyama, Jon White, Kathy Garr, Lee Amatangelo, Lin Van Gelder, Margaret Mitchell, Pieter Severynen, Tina Tomiyama, Miyo Yamauchi, William Valdez



Tina & Jiro Tomiyama, Anna Ziss



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

## Eliminate Negative Words

Somebody was talking about ableism the other day. Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. As an example, she picked *crazy* and *insane* and said, "When we can describe the characteristic with alternative words, why do we need to use these negative words?"

I've never thought that *crazy* and *insane* could be offensive words, but I see her point. Also, it's a good exercise when you craft a story. So let's do this!

For a situation, we can use "out of control," "impossible," "preposterous," "no way."

For a person, "Is s/he serious?"

What else can we say?

When I was invited to a storytelling show the other day, I replaced words carefully and tried to see if the audience's reaction would be different. Surprisingly or not, the reaction was the same, but when I said "I go cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs," the audience went wild.

Give it some extra thought the next time you craft a story. You may come up with a better phrase!

Related articles:

- [Why You Need to Stop Using These Words and Phrases](#)
- [Ableism: Language and Microaggressions](#)
- [The harmful ableist language you unknowingly use](#)

## EDITOR'S NOTE

## Do you feel empathy for AI?

"Alexa, how many more days until the new year?" my mother asked the voice-controlled virtual assistant.

"You have 8 days until the new year."

My brother got Alexa for our mother, who lives in a care facility, so that she can turn on and off the TV and light even when she's not feeling well. When I saw her using it, I smiled and asked her if she liked it.

"NO! I feel bad about ignoring her, so I have to ask her silly questions from time to time."

Huh, that's interesting, I thought. She used to own talking dolls. They had an inner clock programmed, so they got up in the morning and slept at night. If they stayed up late, they slept in. They talked, sang, and entertained her. She took a very good care of them. When my nephews were small, she hated having them over because they handled the dolls roughly. (You know how boys can be.) There is a study that humans feel empathy for robots. Although the majority know robots don't feel pain, EEG (electroencephalography) brain scans show otherwise. Alexa doesn't have a face or body, but my mother still feels sympathetic toward it. Maybe because it has a name?

Lately, ChatGPT is a hot topic. Some submissions have been rejected because they "sounded" like something ChatGPT generated. (How did they determine? ChatGPT is like a chameleon. They can switch their writing styles from left to right.) Some schools let ChatGPT write an essay and ask students to critique it (oh, I like the approach!). Everybody is trying to figure out how to deal with it.

Me? I'm neutral. I don't particularly like or hate it. I may not ask it for facts and researches, but I don't mind collaborating with it for brainstorming. It may give me new ideas or different perspectives. Probably in the future, there are people who "fall in love" with it and want to get married. Wait! If it happens, does it mean AI is polygamous? Or is it considered that they have gazillions of siblings? Should I ask ChatGPT? What crazy thoughts...

After answering my mother's question, Alexa kindly offered,

"Now, would you like to play a game with me?"

"NO! I don't want to play with you! Don't even try it!"

Well, my mother doesn't want to ignore it, but she has no problem with turning it down fast. I guess she has complicated empathy for Alexa.

What's your empathy level for AI?

— Miyo Yamauchi

