



DISTRICT ONE StoryMasters

Stories at The StoryMasters Club's Program

Stories on January 14, 2024

Miyo Yamauchi	Prayer
Pieter Severynen	Keep Permafrost Frozen, Repopulate Mammoth Steppe, Save Earth
Margaret Mitchell	Born with a Caul



Our next program is Sunday, February 11, 2023 @ 3-5pm. [Please RSVP](#) and join us!
(Members do not need to RSVP)

STORYTELLING STUB

“OUCH,” It’s Not Funny!

When telling your story, would your goal be to get higher social media statistics? —Or would it be to inspire your audience and make a difference in their lives?

If it’s the former, it’s easy! Your recorded speech will get a huge number of views and "likes" if you talk about your dog or cat; if you refer to a big scandal (or create one!); or if you mention Taylor Swift. She seems to have the power to create earthquakes! But if you aspire to inspire your audience, you’ll need to avoid the “OUCH” Factor. Here are a few ideas for you to consider when telling your wonderful story, whether it’s sad, humorous, or simply informative.

1. Do Not Offend

When speaking publicly to a mixed audience, avoid mentioning any statements that can offend, in any way, any member of your audience. In general, it’s better to avoid addressing sensitive topics like politics or religion. Jokes that put down people of different races, colors, religions, or nationalities may not be well received by some of your audience members.

Racist jokes are not funny!

Some Hollywood movies make racist jokes about Arabs, describing them as “idiots running behind their camels”. Many Hollywood producers are ignorant of the fact that their ancestors learned about science, math, and architecture from the Sumerians, Assyrians, and Babylonians (Iraq and Syria), and they learned the alphabet from the Phoenicians (Lebanon).

P.S. Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon are now considered Arab countries because they decided to adopt Arabic as their official language (a modern version of the old Assyrian, Syriac, and Aramaic languages).

2. Do Not Upset

When telling your story, avoid making upsetting comments, or whining about your circumstances or about other people. Having

too much negativity in your story is anti-motivational! If you'd like to have your audience members line up to hear your next speech, your story will need to have either a happy ending, or a positive lesson-learned that would help your audience members overcome their own tough times. They look up to you for inspiration and for their own validation; not yours.

Your audience is not your therapist!

In the 2007 standup comedy show titled "America's Mexican", actor George Lopez joked about an incident at Taco Bell where tainted green onions caused e-coli food poisoning. He said, "If they keep saying we (Mexicans) are lazy, and they don't want us in the US, and we're depleting the system; here's what will happen..." And he simulated rubbing a bunch of green onions between his legs, against his buttocks, as if this would be what Mexicans would do to your restaurant food, if you insult them. Seeing this did upset me. I thought it was disrespectful to Mexicans, and it wasn't funny. This ugly image painted by Lopez is hard to erase from people's minds.

3. Do Not Curse

Curse words do not add any value to your speech. Even if people laugh at the moment, these bad words leave a lasting negative impression in their subconscious mind.

If you'd like to express being upset at something, be creative and invent new words, or use words from foreign languages, which would evoke good humor.

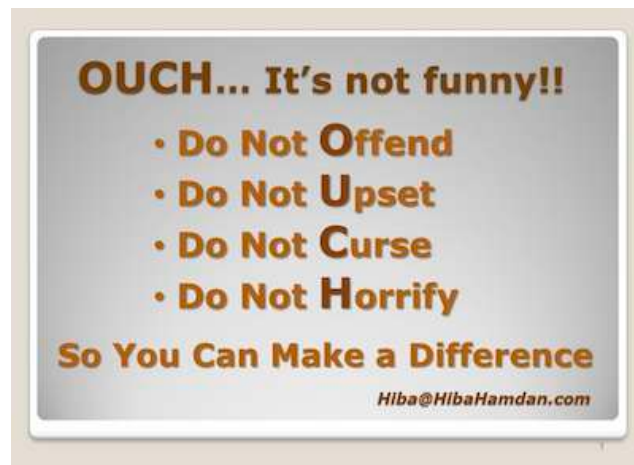
Cursing does not make any positive impact in your audience members' lives.

4. Do Not Horrify

Even if you lived throughout horrific situations, you don't need to describe all the tiny details to your audience members. A general statement would give them enough to imagine the worst, based on their own experiences or based on violent movies they have seen.

Horrific images will stop your audience members from being in your audience.

Having grown up during the civil war in Lebanon, I was actively involved with the Red Cross and field hospitals. During that difficult time, I did see more than my share of horrible injuries and pain. I don't wish for anyone else to see these, not even in the images they may create in their own minds if they hear me tell the details.



Hiba Hamdan grew up in Lebanon during the civil war there (1975-1990). As a young electrical engineer, she moved to North America, where she had an exciting 20-year career journey in the Airlines and Telecommunication industries. While still in the technical field, Hiba discovered the magic of storytelling and motivational speaking when she joined Toastmasters International in 2006. Inspired by her mentors, she got certified as a speaking coach in 2011, and became a Board member of the National Speakers Association/NSA Academy in Los Angeles. In 2015, Hiba moved with her husband to Santa Barbara, where she learned TV Production. Since 2018, Hiba has enjoyed working as a professional speaker and a speaking coach, as well as hosting interviews for her local TV series, "Wisdom of our City".

STORYMASTERS BOOK

The Storytelling Bistro

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!](#)

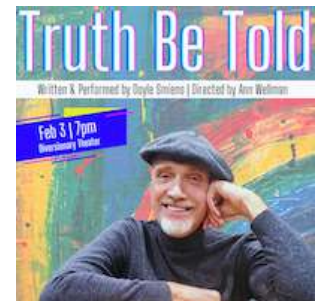
Feb 3

Truth Be Told

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/truth-be-told-san-diego-tickets-806708114687>

7:00 PM PT – 9:00 PM PT
 Category: Solo show
 Location: Diversionary Theatre
 Cost: \$15

A solo show written and performed by **Doyle Smiens** and directed by Ann Van Wellman. A true coming-out story about overcoming rejection, disappointment and fear on his journey to finding his authentic self.



Feb 17

"Our School's Final Bell" by Women's Voices

<https://ourschoolsfinalbell.eventbrite.com>

2:00 PM PT
 Category: Storytelling Concert
 Location: Institute of Musical Arts
 Cost: Free

The Institute of Musical Arts welcomes back the thirteenth installment of our WOMEN'S VOICES Storytelling Concert Series, with their performance, "Our School's Final Bell".



Feb 18

BackStory: Madam Butterfly

<https://thevictorytheatrecenter.org/tickets-events/backstory>

7:00 PM PT
 Category: Storytelling Concert
 Location: Victory Theater
 Cost: \$10

Using the title of a classic stage play or movie as inspiration, storytellers and poets write poems and stories to be read aloud. Writers may pen a personal story inspired by the themes of the play.

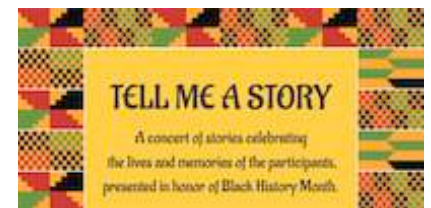


Feb 23

Tell Me A Story

2:00 PM PT
 Category: Storytelling Concert
 Location: Baldwin Hills Regional Branch Library
 Cost: Free

A concert of stories celebrating the lives and memories of the participants, presented in honor of Black History Month.
 For information call 323-733-1196



Feb 21

Strong Words Workshop

<https://strongwordslive.com/storytelling-classes/>

Apr 3

6:00 PM PT – 8:00 PM PT
 Category: Storytelling Workshop
 Location: Online
 Cost: \$240

Want to learn the art of storytelling?
 Strong Words' producers, Marlene Nichols and Larry Dean Harris will host 7 sessions (all on zoom, so no driving!). They'll coax your story from the kernel of an idea into a full-fledged ready-to-hit-the-stage polished gem. Along the way, you'll learn, laugh and love every minute within our tight-knit community of only 10 students.

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

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What Makes You?

“I knew that was his work!”

My friend exclaimed. A fighting scene in a trailer of the movie, “[Rebel Moon](#),” reminded him of another movie. After a quick search, he affirmed that it was the same director, [Zack Snyder](#). The unmistakable dark style, defined by unique beats, angles, and lighting, resonated—a cinematic essence reminiscent of revitalized comic books on the big screen. I thought it was cool to have such a distinctive stamp that people can recognize.

[Recent findings](#) from the University of Edinburgh and the University of Leeds reveal the individual uniqueness of our tongues through AI and 3D imaging. While I was aware of cultural differences in taste buds, it’s fascinating that even a single bud can be so distinctive. They could be identified with an accuracy of 48 per cent. Just a single bud. Can you believe that? Much like identifying a filmmaker through their cinematic choices, having a distinguished style—whether in taste or aesthetics—adds a unique charm.

Scrolling through Instagram, I often find myself predicting the authors of posts solely based on their characteristic camera angles and colors—a testament to the power of personal style.

Now, I ponder, what defines me? I’m uncertain if others recognize me by my storytelling style. While I have favorite storytellers, discerning their unique styles poses a challenge.

In your pursuits, what makes you?

EDITOR’S NOTE

The Value in Your Tale

At the beginning of last year, I attended the Moth for the first time in years. I decided to throw my name into the hat, got unexpectedly called to the stage, and ended up winning the Moth StorySLAM. While it was a delightful and surprising victory, I couldn’t help but find the whole experience a bit amusing.

I used to value competitions. Every time I fell short of securing first place in Toastmasters’ speech contests, I would introspect and question what might have gone wrong. On one occasion, a friend asserted that individuals with accents would never reach the finals. To either validate or disprove her point, I encountered multiple instances where people attributed my lack of victory to my accent. Despite this discouragement, I persisted, making repeated attempts. Given that English is not my mother tongue, winning a competition held significant weight for me as it appeared to serve as validation for my English-speaking skills. Admittedly, there might be some truth to this belief. If a considerable number of individuals, particularly judges, subscribe to this notion, it would seemingly diminish my chances of winning. I eventually stopped competing not out of surrender but to preserve my unique style, unwilling to conform just to win.

Then, I was once talking with the judges after the Moth GrandSLAM, asking how they scored them. One judge shared a personal insight, stating, “At the end of the day, after work, I didn’t want to hear a sad or gut-wrenching story. I wanted to hear a light-hearted, funny one.”

This experience highlighted the inherent subjectivity in judging. While certain judges may have undergone training to evaluate performances objectively, everyone brings their own set of feelings and preferences to the table. The mental state of judges at any given moment remains unknown – they might harbor a dislike for a particular topic, view it favorably due to a personal connection with the storyteller, or simply experience a momentary zone-out after a long day. The intricacies of these individual perspectives add layers of complexity to the judging process.

Recently, at another Moth StorySLAM, I once again threw my name into the hat, got called to the stage, but this time received the lowest score. It would be a lie if I say I didn’t get disappointed at all, but I knew the value of my story beyond the judges’ taste for the evening.

After I left a venue, a stranger tapped my shoulder on the street.

“The judges did a lousy job tonight. Your story was incredible. It taught us important history lesson. It was funny and poignant. Very powerful. It was a winning story for me.”

Others in agreement nodded. In the end, as long as my story resonates with someone in the audience, that’s what truly matters.

— Miyo Yamauchi

