

# Hone Your Story Workshop

Presented by:

UCLA Staff Assembly and Semel Healthy Campus Initiatives Center



# Agenda

Welcome, Introduction, and context setting  
(10 minutes)

- Why we tell stories

- Benefits of storytelling

- What makes a story impactful

Small group brainstorming activity  
(15 minutes)

Small group writing activity (20 minutes)

Conclusion and Next Steps (10 minutes)

- Preparing to Share Your Story



# Community Agreements

- **Speak from your own experience.**
- **Listen generously.**
- **Disagree with respect.** Debate the concepts, not the person.
- **Be open to challenges** as an opportunity to learn something new.
- **Respect confidentiality.**
- **Reflect on intention;** prioritize and address impact.

## Key Takeaways from *The Danger of a Single Story*

- Adichie’s “The Danger of a Single Story” examines the consequences of presenting a one-sided view or “single story” about someone or a group.
- While this oversimplification can originate from misunderstandings, stories can also have a malicious intent to suppress others.
- Amplifying stories that highlight a multitude of experiences and show individuals as multi-dimensional works to combat the danger of single stories.

**To Teach**

**To Remember**

**To Inspire**

# **Why We Tell Stories**

**To Connect**

**To Inform**

**To Learn**

**Why am I compelled to write?** Because the writing saves me from this complacency I fear. Because I have no choice. Because I must keep the spirit of my revolt and myself alive. Because the world I create in the writing compensates for what the real world does not give me. By writing I put order in the world, give it a handle so I can grasp it. I write because life does not appease my appetites and hunger. I write to record what others erase when I speak, to rewrite the stories others have miswritten about me, about you.

- Gloria Anzaldúa

“Speaking In Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers”

# THE BENEFITS OF STORYTELLING

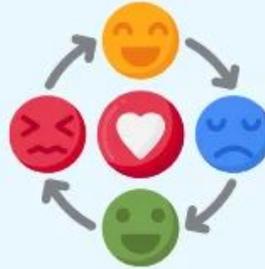
**HUMAN  
CONNECTION**



**AIDS IN  
MEMORY  
AND  
RETENTION**



**INCREASES  
EMOTIONAL  
ENGAGEMENT**



**INFLUENCE  
&  
PERSUADE**



**TRANSCEND  
BARRIERS  
AMONG  
PEOPLE**



# What Makes a Story Impactful

## What makes a story interesting?

- Compelling characters
- Strong narrative structure
- A fresh hook
- Interesting themes
- Emotional connection

## What makes a story relevant?

- Timeliness
- Human-interest angle
- Significance
- Connects to a larger dialogue
- Something unusual

# **Brainstorming Activity**

## Brainstorming Activity - The Story of Your Name (4 min)

- Let's write a reflection on our name, or names, and its relationship to who we are as people.
- We can consider the significance of the name, where the name comes from, or what particular meaning the name has for you.
- For some, our name story may require us to explore and disclose personal information that we may not be ready to share in a community setting. For others, their family name may be triggering as it relates to a part of their identity that is associated with uncomfortable feelings.

**Ti**

**TIMELINESS**

Ties in with something that's happening now

**Te**

**TENSION**

Highlights controversy clashing interests or crucial issues

**Su**

**SURPRISE**

Showcases strange bedfellows or other unusual circumstance

**Ch**

**CHANGE**

Shares a twist on an old story or response to a current affair

**Pe**

**PERSONAL**

Connects to people's lives or involves large numbers of people

**Pr**

**PROMINENCE**

Draws upon a source that is well-known or credible

**Px**

**PROXIMITY**

Appeals to a specific community with shared interests

## Elements of a Good Story

Pair & Share  
(5 mins)

# **Writing Activity**

# Writing Activity

Look back at your brainstorming:

- What themes do you see? What values come through in your experiences? (2 min)
- Note three or more experiences as most impactful for shaping your understanding of naming's power. Is there a central conflict across them? (4 min)

Draft a story that reflects the importance of naming to you. Draw from your experience to provide key events that impacted your personal understanding of naming. Consider the order of information—what do you want to reveal, and when? What themes or values are emphasized by these events?

(9 min)

## Writing Activity, Continued

Share your story draft or outline in groups:

- Share the themes you pick up from your peer's story.
- Share any personal connections you can make to the events of the story.
- Ask any clarifying questions about the plot.

(5 min)



# FIVE ELEMENTS OF A **GOOD STORY**



## **Setting**

A time, place, and environment in which the characters and events of the story are based.



## **Plot**

A sequence of events in your story - a cause-and-effect chain of events that has a beginning point, climax, and resolution.



## **Theme**

The central moral message, belief or idea the storyteller wants the audience to take away from the story.



## **Characters**

The people, animals, or figures who appear in your story - who performs the actions and who the audience connects to.



## **Conflict**

The issue that motivates the characters and drives the plot - obstacles or hardships the characters must overcome.



# Concluding Thoughts and Next Steps

## Homework

Revise and Practice your Story  
Reading aloud and time yourself

## Share your Story at Story Hour

Send a recording by March 31

Or

Share your story LIVE on April 1

# Story Hour

Wednesday, April 1

Noon-1 p.m.

Zoom

Share the story you developed during this session next week  
during a dedicated Story Hour.

Not ready to share? Join us to be an audience and cheer on your colleagues!