

STORY MOVEMENTS

ILLUMINATING THE ROLE OF NARRATIVE

IN CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

2019 CONVENING REPORT



CMSI |  SCHOOL of COMMUNICATION
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MacArthur
Foundation

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The Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI) at American University's School of Communication in Washington, D.C., is an innovation lab and research center that creates, studies and showcases media for social impact. Focusing on independent, documentary, entertainment, and public media, the Center bridges boundaries between scholars, producers and communication practitioners across media production, media impact and effects, public policy and audience engagement. The Center produces resources for the field and academic research; convenes conferences and events; and works collaboratively to understand and design media that matter. Cmsimpact.org



INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade alone, new technologies, digitally-activated social movements, and social media platforms have simultaneously expanded opportunities for democratic communication and thrown U.S. democracy in a tailspin. And, at the same time, for media makers representing traditionally marginalized communities, it has become painfully clear that having a seat at the table is not necessarily the same as accessing the power needed to be heard, seen, or to bring about significant change within this environment.

It is against this backdrop that the influence of storytellers and civic engagement has become as urgent as ever, and understanding the science and art of narrative strategies that reflect justice and dignity is crucial. Media makers -- particularly independent ones -- have long harnessed the power of media and storytelling during other meaningful junctures. But in the participatory networked media era, gatekeepers have changed,

and marginalized voices find themselves with new opportunities to represent their perspectives and realities in cultural spaces. This revolutionary moment in media matters -- and so, too, does enabling the storytellers, creating networks of professionals working at the intersection of justice and story, and chronicling their efforts.

At the Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI), we believe that the power of intimate storytelling -- across genres and media platforms -- lies at the core of successful efforts to expand equity and create a more just world, given the profound role of narrative in creating empathy and human connection, and even spurring action. We believe in stories that challenge and counter damaging negative portrayals of people and ideas -- and the individual artists and thinkers who create and share them with the world. And we believe in **civic practice** -- that is, the physical and online work of organizing and encouraging public engagement with an eye toward social progress -- that takes place alongside these stories.

We also believe that the many examples of this work, created collaboratively by many different types of makers, thinkers, strategists and thought-leaders, should be curated, catalogued, analyzed, synthesized and shared with those who aspire to understand story-led social change.

As part of that effort, CMSI convened a catalytic two-day conference in March 2019, in an effort to examine the platforms and genres of civic media storytelling through the lens of social justice and social inequality, and to chronicle these efforts and voices of civic storytelling in a systematic way.



Caty Borum Chattoo, Executive Director of CMSI, welcomes the participants.

WHAT IS STORY MOVEMENTS?

From documentary film and investigative journalism to virtual reality and community-shaped storytelling activism, the convening examines and captures the current and future-looking moment in story-led demands for social change. Through panels and discussions, the convening looks through the lens of contemporary themes of social inequality and injustice to ask and answer:

- *What works?*
- *And how can genres of civic, justice-oriented storytelling work with one another?*

The convening responds to the vitality of the moment in civic media platforms and stories, as well as the urgency of social justice and inequality -- from racial injustice to gender-based violence to poverty and more. Story Movements, which had its inaugural convening in 2016, was created as a way to dig deeper into new and evolving practices that help illuminate the ways in which storytelling connects with social change, while also embracing the progression of the participatory digital era and its myriad of lessons.

“This is a gathering designed for you – a mix of media makers, social-change strategists, issue experts, scholars, social justice leaders

and organizers, communication professionals, students, and, above all, believers in the power of media and storytelling to repair the world,” said Caty Borum Chattoo, director of CMSI, in her opening remarks for the event.

The convening hosted a wide spectrum of social justice-oriented media makers -- including documentary film, and journalists to podcasters, and movement communicators, and comedians, and community organizers, and technologists -- who were all using the power of media to shift and shape culture and policy and hold power to account.

“Most conferences are focused on the challenges of this new [digital] ecosystem,” said Jennifer Humke, senior program officer at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, who directs the Participatory Civic Storytelling program, that supports Story Movements. “But I think it’s just as important to bring like-minded people together to say: ‘how can we take advantage of opportunities afforded by these new forms of media making and distribution to create a more pluralistic and inclusive democracy?’ And I think that is what sets this conference apart.”

The convening included two days of individual talks and presentations from makers and experts, along with both formal and informal spaces for



Forging connections: Courtney D. Cogburn speaks to Beth Basta and Jennifer Humke from the MacArthur Foundation.

participant discussion on key themes of interest, breakout fishbowls and full room discussions centered around envisioning future challenges and opportunities for the field, and informal opportunities for participants to showcase their work and network with other organizations.

“It is intentionally generative,” said Humke. “Where together we can imagine and work toward building a better society.”

This report provides highlights from the convening, along with summaries of the sessions and individual presentations, profiles of the featured speakers, and results from a post-conference survey.

Story Movements is an effort to examine the platforms and genres of civic media storytelling through the lens of social justice and social inequality, and to chronicle these efforts and voices of civic storytelling in a systematic way.



A FRAMEWORK OF EMERGENT THEMES

Over the two days of the convening, and across Story Movement's profiled projects, conversations and creative visioning sessions, three beliefs emerged:

- 1 If you do not change the rules of engagement in how you show up, it can't lead to social change. Many of the speakers emphasized the importance of thinking about SYSTEMS, as part of engaging with the long game of social progress and equity.**
- 2 Justice is what love looks like in public. Throughout the convening there was an emphasis on the core PASSION of love - and anger - that must live authentically in social justice efforts.**
- 3 With great power comes great responsibility. One of the shared messages shared across the sessions and presentations was a recognition and emphasis of the POWER of the individuals and institutions who believe that change is possible, and who actively seek - through their imaginations and the instruments of their brains and spirits and talents - to change the world.**

These guiding beliefs emerged alongside shared commitments by individuals and organizations toward ensuring that people from traditionally marginalized communities get access to tell their own stories; empowering people to create new, authentic narratives that are capable of shaping power, culture and the institutions that govern everyone; re-writing the origin stories of the country; making visible historically marginalized people that have long been ignored or misrepresented; using storytelling to imagine and create a better world. Each of the sessions and presentations, introduced in Section 3, touch on each of these driving motivations and can be found within the following five themes, each of which emerged from the words of participants:

- 1. Understanding Medium Specificity and Power**
- 2. Dismantling Stereotypes and Representation**
- 3. Creating More Authentic Narratives**
- 4. Influencing What Happens When the Lights Come Up**
- 5. Considering Power in Telling Stories**



THE SESSIONS

A. ENGAGING MEDIUM SPECIFICITY & POWER

SESSION ONE: Civic Storytelling & Media Platforms

The participants of this session, representing a cross-section of academics, grassroots and national-level organizers, and media makers, explored the importance of medium specificity and power in their work through an engagement with the following questions:

- *Why and how are platforms in the converged media empowering civic storytelling and community activism?*
- *What media platforms are promising current and future tools, and how are you using them?*



Prentiss Haney, Executive Director of the Ohio Student Association (OSA), shares stories of how the Midwest Culture Lab centers and supports artists as a way of building progressive narratives and political power through culture.





Annenberg Innovation Lab

COLIN MACLAY

Colin Maclay, a Research Professor of Communication and executive director of the Annenberg Innovation Lab at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California, spoke about the transformative role that storytelling plays in the census today, the historical inequities that have long hidden in the census, and the urgent importance of taking it seriously now. “The census needs a story,” said Maclay. “The census offers tremendous power for our communities for our economy, for our democracy. And left unaided I’m afraid that not great things are going to happen.” At USC’s Annenberg Innovation Lab, Maclay and his team are working to create compelling messages and stories that spread Census awareness and inoculate against disinformation.

“The census needs a story...The Census offers tremendous power.”



1,000 Cut Journey

COURTNEY COGBURN

Courtney Cogburn, Assistant Professor of Social Work at Columbia University and faculty of the Columbia Population Research Center, spoke about the virtual reality project ‘1,000 Cut Journey’. Cogburn, the project’s lead curator, described the working premise of the work as being: Can an immersive virtual experience of racism improve understanding of the realities of racism? Cogburn described how the project’s approach houses a transdisciplinary process that is both data driven and narrative-based -- it wasn’t just about VR, she said, it was about getting the narrative right. “We believe that achieving racial justice requires that we understand racism,” said Cogburn. “Not an understanding that emerges from intellectual exercise or even in the consumption of production of science - but rather a visceral understanding that connects to spirit and body as much as reason.”

“If we are going to solve the problem (of racism), we have to understand the problem.”



Midwest Culture Lab

PRENTISS HANEY

Prentiss Haney, Executive Director of the Ohio Student Association (OSA), a multiracial student power organization building a political and cultural bloc of young people to move a progressive public policy agenda, spoke about the Midwest Culture Lab, which he described as a celebration of midwest culture aimed at building progressive narratives and political power through culture. “We built this thing because we believe that centering artists as a political strategy is a strategy that has been deeply underappreciated and mostly untested,” said Haney. By building the narratives and cultural power that is needed for young people of color living in the Midwest, Haney spoke about how the Midwest Culture Lab is supporting black and brown artists in overcoming the stories of isolation that have long bombarded young people of color, telling them that they are isolated or don’t belong. By empowering and supporting artists of color, Haney said, “we are creating a marketplace for artists and their stories to set the new status quo.”

“These artists are modeling the engagement we want to see in politics.”



DoSomething.org

BEN KASSOY

Ben Kassoy, who oversees the branding, content, and storytelling of global campaigns for DoSomething.org, the largest not-for-profit exclusively for young people and social change, spoke about the lessons learned from the organization’s history of large-scale social change and volunteer campaigns, along with the institutional blind-spot that they learned they had in 2016. That blind spot, he said, was civic action. After the 2016 presidential election, Kassoy said that two-thirds of its survey members told them that civic action was just as important to them as social action. In response, dosomething.org dedicated focus to voter registration, along with better understanding the drivers of voter suppression for young people living across the country. Kassoy shared the results of research they have done since then and how they are working to support young people in overcoming those driving barriers.

“Civic action is just as important as social action to young people.”



Science of Stories

ANNIE NIEMAND

Annie Neimand, Director of Research for the Center for Public Interest Communications at the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, spoke about the work her Center is doing to help build communications strategies that create social change. “Storytelling is the most powerful tool we have for driving social change,” said Niemand at the opening of her presentation. Covering a wide scope of science and research into storytelling, Niemand shared her Center’s research on what can make one story more persuasive than another story, along with a set of seven guiding principles -- structure, emotion, deceptive cadence, narrative, transportation, and empty + full spaces -- through which she said stories can be leveraged for movement work.

“Storytelling is the most powerful force we have for social change.”



DISCUSSION FACILITATOR:

BENJAMIN STOKES, FACULTY FELLOW, CMSI

Benjamin Stokes is a civic media scholar and game designer. He is an Assistant Professor in the School of Communication, and at the AU Game Lab.

B. DISMANTLING STEREOTYPES AND REPRESENTATION

SESSION TWO: Changing Images & Empowering Storytellers

This session engaged in discussions around representation of marginalized communities and the urgent importance of storytelling and narrative change work today, through moving personal stories, research, and perspectives shared by the speakers and an engagement with questions that included:

- *Why and how do images in the popular imagination matter for social justice?*
- *How do we change them?*



Julie Lozano, a young artist at the Ghetto Film School in New York City, introduces her first-person narrative film, a moving short film about a story she heard growing up.



Nancy Schwartzman, a documentary film director, producer, and media strategist, speaks about using storytelling and technology to create safer communities for women and girls.



Ghetto Film School

SHARESE BULLOCK BAILEY,
WITH RICK LITVIN AND JULIE LOZANO

Sharese Bullock-Bailey, Chief Strategy and Partnership Officer at Ghetto Film School, spoke about how the program works with young people -- 14 to 18 years old -- to share their stories with the world and create great art. Sharese also spoke about how storytelling can be used to change the world.

“There is so much involved in living the life of an artist and an activist.”

“What we know is that if we pull our best resources forward and put it into our young artists we get the best results,” said Bullock Bailey, just before introducing Julie Lozano, a young artist at the Ghetto Film School. Lozano shared her first person narrative film, a moving short film about a story she heard growing up.



IllumiNative

CRYSTAL ECHO HAWK

Crystal Echo Hawk, President and CEO of Echo Hawk Consulting (EHC) and founder and CEO of IllumiNative, an organization which helps amplify Indigenous voices and create opportunities for impact, began by recognizing and honoring the original indigenous people of the land where the conference was based. Crystal spoke about the origin story of IllumiNative and the importance of narrative change work and data-driven storytelling in creating significant change. “We are very much invisible in the data,” she said. “When we talk about telling stories, and telling stories through data, it’s usually only black, white, and latino. We are not in there. So we knew data was an important starting point for us to really map what are the dominant narratives in this country about Native peoples, where do they come from, and how do people think of us, in order to move a strategy forward so that people can see us for who we are.” Crystal discussed the ways in which invisibility can be a form of bias and discrimination, along with the powerful findings and work her organization is producing to dismantle destructive stereotypes and narratives and create positive change for indigenous communities.

“Invisibility is a modern form of bias.”



Gender, Technology, & Storytelling

NANCY SCHWARTZMAN

Nancy Schwartzman, a documentary film director, producer, and media strategist who uses storytelling and technology to create safer communities for women and girls, spoke about her feature documentary, *Roll Red Roll*, and the award-winning mobile app, Circle of 6, that she created to reduce sexual violence among America's youth and college students. Nancy spoke about the issues that motivated these projects and her strategy for using storytelling and technology to change harmful behaviours and attitudes.

"It's a really dangerous environment to not give young people information about sexuality."



Pillars Fund

KASHIF SHAIKH

Kashif Shaikh is Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Pillars Fund, an organization that directs resources into civic leaders by investing in and amplifying the talents, narratives, and leadership of American Muslims. Kashif spoke about how the Pillars Fund is empowering American Muslim communities and what motivates his work. Kashif spoke about the origin story behind the organization and the harmful tropes about American Muslims that were circulating through the United States at the time of its creation. Kashif emphasized that many young American Muslims want to go beyond constantly saying who they aren't; they want to tell stories of who they are.

"Young people are no longer interested in telling people what they are not. How do we tell the stories of who we are?"



Define American

ELIZABETH GRIZZLE VOORHEES

Elizabeth Grizzle Voorhees, Managing Director of Creative Initiatives at Define American, a media and culture change organization that uses powerful narrative to shift the conversation about immigrants, identity, and citizenship in a changing America, spoke about the organization's narrative change work in Hollywood and the entertainment media space. "We believe that you cannot improve the politics of immigration, until you improve the culture through which immigrants are seen," she said. In pursuit of changing that culture, Elizabeth spoke about the strategies that Define American is using to both better understand and change the dominant portrayals of immigrants in television and popular culture.

We think that comedy can reach someone who isn't willing to hear a story in another medium.



MODERATOR:
LEENA JAYASWAL, FACULTY FELLOW, CMSI

Leena Jayaswal is a documentary filmmaker, award-winning photographer and Professor in the School of Communication at American University in Washington DC, where she is the Director of the Photography concentration.

C. CREATING MORE AUTHENTIC NARRATIVES

SESSION THREE: Hollywood Influence & Narrative Change

The cross-section of media-making speakers in this session explored the profound influence of Hollywood and big business entertainment media narratives, both in the short term and over time. The role that narrative change and storytelling can play in creating accurate and authentic portrayals, particularly images of traditionally marginalized communities that have been historically underserved in the media mainstay. Some of the session's guiding questions included:

- *Why and how do Hollywood narratives about social issues and communities matter?*
- *How is the portrait changing?*



Bridgit Antoinette Evans, executive director of the Pop Culture Collaborative, speaks during the panel session after her presentation on the power of storytelling in shaping narratives and culture.



Erica Johnson, a graduate student at American University, engages with the panel during the Q/A portion of the session.



“This is life and death for many of us.”

Color of Change

RASHID SHABAZZ

Rashid Shabazz, the Chief Marketing and Storytelling Officer at Color Of Change, the nation’s largest online racial justice organization, spoke about the group’s *Hollywood Culture Project*, an initiative dedicated to creating more accurate and authentic portrayals of Black people in movies and television. Rashid began by sharing the origin story of Color Of Change, born 14 years ago due to the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina. He spoke about his personal reaction to the slow response of the government, and the portrayals of black people that the media was circulating at the time. “The media story was not one of empathy, but one of further dehumanization of black people. So Color of Change was born in a moment, in response to building the political infrastructure to channel the power of Black people to hold accountable those decision makers -- whether government, media or corporations -- whoever they are, who are not nervous about disappointing our community.” Rashid spoke about the historical legacy of stories being used to suppress Black people in the United States, and how Color Of Change is using storytelling to empower instead -- including how they identify and recognize the stereotypes that still exist within the media and the narrative change goals that Color Of Change employs to overcome them.



Pop Culture Collaborative

BRIDGIT ANTOINETTE EVANS

Bridgit Antoinette Evans, Executive Director of the Pop Culture Collaborative, a philanthropic resource and funder learning community, spoke about the ocean of culture, stories, and narratives that surround people’s daily life, and influence the reality of life and how people are oriented to the World. She shared how the Pop Culture Collaborative is using grantmaking, convening, narrative strategy, and research to transform the narrative landscape around people of color, immigrants, refugees, Muslims, and Native people—especially those who are women, queer, transgender, and/or disabled. Bridgit spoke of the role that intentional narrative system work has historically played in moments of culture change, and how Pop Culture Collaborative is working to support coordinated narratives that can transform the narrative environments we all live in, and build a more inclusive and pluralistic society. “We need pop culture stories to unlock the imagination of what the future looks like,” she said.

“If we hope to create the just, pluralistic world we all want, we must commit to work together to shift the big narrative ocean we are all swimming in.”



Caring Across Generations

ISHITA SRIVASTAVA

Ishita Srivastava, Director of Culture Change at Caring Across Generations, a movement of all ages and backgrounds to transform caregiving and the images of caregiving and caregivers, an often invisible body of work and workers, spoke about how she is using storytelling to help people think of caregiving as a collective, social issue. “While most of us have a moving or emotional story of when we cared for someone we loved, or someone cared for us,” she said. “As a society we actually think of these caregiving experiences as our personal, private, individual burdens to bear. And we don’t really think of this as an urgent social issue that needs a collective solution.” Ishita shared how Caring Across Generations centers caregivers in their storytelling, influences mass media and Hollywood narratives, and uses a set of integrated strategies - at national and state levels - to help shift norms and attitudes around caregiving at the individual and mass scale level.

“Culture change strategy is built into the work from the beginning.”



Peabody Awards

JEFFREY JONES

Jeffrey Jones, Executive Director of the George Foster Peabody Awards, director of the Peabody Media Center, and Lambdin Kay Chair for the Peabodys at the University of Georgia, spoke about how the Peabody Awards lift up and honor the most important stories that matter across entertainment, journalism, documentaries and children’s programming. Jeffrey shared research on the most awarded social themes over the last decade - including race and criminal justice reform, mass incarceration, and police brutality - and how the Peabody awards help more people to see these powerful stories, supports scholarship around narrative change, and supports the Arts in changing society. He then discussed some of the theoretical and narrative change principles that illustrate the power that stories have to change the world and improve how people relate to the world and each other. Jeffrey concluded by encouraging the room of storytellers to “keep telling your stories, they do add up, they will make a difference - flip the script!”

“These stories add up, and maybe the sum is greater than the sum of the parts.”



MODERATOR:
CATY BORUM CHATTOO

Caty Borum Chattoo is Director of the Center for Media & Social Impact at American University and Assistant Professor in the School of Communication. She is an award-winning communication strategist documentary film/TV producer, and scholar working at the intersection of social-change communication, research, documentary and entertainment storytelling.

D. INFLUENCING WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE LIGHTS COME UP

SESSION FOUR: Stories Powering Civic Practice, Part 1

This session explored how films and stories are powering civic practice, including how nonfiction storytelling fuels activism and public engagement and dialogue on the issues that matter. Guiding questions for this session included:

- *Why and how do nonfiction stories power civic practice while illuminating untold stories?*
- *What is the role of collaboration and partnerships?*



Molly Murphy, who co-directs Working Films, speaks during a panel session following her presentation on storytelling for social change and how her organization engages leaders and communities who are directly impacted by the issues of their films.



Ellen Friedman, Compton Foundation, engaging with the panel during the Q&A session.



JustFilms CARA MERTES

Cara Mertes, Director of JustFilms, the Ford Foundation's documentary initiative, spoke about how she is designing and overseeing an integrated social justice moving-image strategy working across all of Ford's offices and strategies, globally and across the United States. Cara highlighted the work of JustFilms, and offered a vision of how to tackle problems of the times through storytelling. She also spoke about how artists can be leaders within communities by imagining and thereby creating better worlds. "We see beyond the horizon to a future that isn't here yet, but is still in some way knowable because we help to create it through our imaginations and our stories," she said. "We are working on paradigm shifts, not tinkering and making the status quo more palatable."

"We are working on paradigm shifts, not tinkering and making the status quo more palatable."



Working Films MOLLY MURPHY

Molly Murphy, who Co-Directs Working Films, a nonprofit that uses documentary film to advance social justice and environmental protection, spoke about how her organization listens to and engages leaders who are directly impacted by the issues of their films, and are guided by a ground-up approach to change. "Our bottom line has always been about 'what happens when the light comes up,'" she said. "Our job is to make sure audiences have something meaningful to do when they are moved by a film."

"We always say that we work in documentary because we can't make this stuff up."

Molly showcased the kinds of films, forms of community engagement, and issues they have supported, and described their work as being about identifying the "right media, at the right moment, to move the dial toward progress."



Dark Money

KIMBERLY REED

Kimberly Reed, a documentary filmmaker, spoke about her most recent, award-winning film, *Dark Money*, focusing on secret money in politics. She shared her experience in making the film and how she tried to humanize the complicated laws and regulations undergirding dark money by rooting its story in the human experience, along with how her team approached their multi-year outreach strategy for the film. Kimberly said they had a theory that if they could compel people to “follow the money” in the film, then they would be inspired to continue following the money on their way out of the theater. As part of this strategy, she shared examples of the open-source software and tools they are developing for deeper engagement by interested communities, along with the support they are providing for investigative journalism.

“Watchdog journalism is really, really important.”



Peace is Loud

JAMIE DOBIE

Jamie Dobie, Executive Director of Peace is Loud, a nonprofit founded by filmmaker Abigail Disney, spoke about how her organization is using the power of storytelling to advance social movement building, with a focus on supporting women who are leading their communities in confronting violence. Jamie started by sharing a revealing example of engagement work they have done with journalists to help them identify ways of reporting on conflict while valuing the perspective of women - such as seeing women as leaders, not just victims. She then shared valuable tactical lessons she has learned over the years in using storytelling for social change, including tips on defining impact; differentiating between goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics; and having an exit strategy.

“We see our films as stories to advance movement work.”



MODERATOR: **PATRICIA AUFDERHEIDE, FOUNDER, CMSI**

Patricia Aufderheide is University Professor of Communication Studies in the School of Communication at American University in Washington, D.C. She founded the School's Center for Media & Social Impact (as the Center for Social Media), where she continues as a Senior Research Fellow.

E. CONSIDERING POWER IN TELLING STORIES

SESSION FIVE: Stories Powering Civic Practice, Part 2

This session continued the conversation about how nonfiction storytelling is powering civic practice, improving historical understanding, and inspiring community dialogue, with a final round of dynamic filmmakers and leaders in the field engaging with questions that included:

- *Why and how do nonfiction stories power civic practice while illuminating untold stories?*
- *What is the role of collaboration and partnerships?*



Brenda Coughlin, Director of Producing and Impact Strategy for the Sundance Institute, shares some of the inspiring projects, reports, public engagements, and films the Institute is producing.



Sonya Childress, Director of Partnerships and Engagement for Firelight Media, shares her perspective on historical documentaries and why they are so important at this moment.



Sundance Institute

BRENDA COUGHLIN

Brenda Coughlin, Director of Producing and Impact Strategy for the Sundance Institute, shared some of the inspiring projects, reports, public engagements, and films the Institute is producing and supporting. Brenda shared some of her experiences driving the Institute’s cross-disciplinary and artist-forward impact strategy, and how they are focusing on the production of compelling work across documentary, fiction, and emerging media, as well as Sundance’s engagement program and advocacy for independent art and media. She shared how the guiding principles of independence, inclusion, and inter-dependence motivate much of the work they do, including their commitment to supporting creative richness and positive impact for marginalized communities, along with how “listening to artists” and the mediums they prefer is leading them to support a widening scope of approaches and platforms to storytelling.

“We listen to artists.”



Tre Maison Dasan

DENALI TILLER

Denali Tiller, an artist and award-winning filmmaker working in non-fiction forms, spoke about her work directing and producing *Tre Maison Dasan*, a feature length documentary about three boys who each have a parent in prison. She spoke about the participatory spirit and collaborative approach she took to the making of the film, and how filmmaking can be a process of civic engagement in itself. Denali spoke about the responsibility she felt in making the film, and how her identify intersected with that process.

“How do we think about the filmmaking as a process of civic engagement in itself?”

“The great challenge and great joy for me was figuring out how to dismantle and erase the power dynamics of making a film like this,” she said. “And not making a film about children with incarcerated parents, but making a film with them. And allow my process in that to be one of learning and one of listening, and letting the boys lead me in that process.” Denali closed by describing the civic engagement efforts she is engaged with now that the film is being screened in communities and classrooms across the country.



Firelight Media

SONYA CHILDRESS

Sonya Childress, Director of Partnerships and Engagement for Firelight Media, highlighted some of the critical work that they are supporting and shared her perspective on historical documentaries and why they are so important at this moment. Sonya described why Firelight Media, an organization born in 2000 to address the deficit of nonfiction films made by and about diverse communities, particularly people of color, believes so strongly in supporting historical films and why having a grounding and understanding of history is a vital part of being able to make history. With examples of recent films and community engagements they've supported, she discussed how storytelling can support social movements and strategically connect with contemporary organizers on-the-ground. "Ultimately we do what we do because we believe there is power when we tell our own stories," she said. "And that those closest to the experience should have access to the tools to interpret that experience."

"These films demystify how social change happens through collective organizing."



MODERATOR:
CATY BORUM CHATTOO



SPEAKERS



ANNE NEIMAND
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH,
CENTER FOR PUBLIC
INTEREST COMMUNICATIONS



BEN KASSOY
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF,
DOSOMETHING.ORG



BRENDA COUGHLIN
DIRECTOR OF PRODUCING
AND IMPACT STRATEGY,
SUNDANCE INSTITUTE



**BRIDGIT
ANTOINETTE EVANS**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, POP
CULTURE COLLABORATIVE



CARA MERTES
DIRECTOR,
JUSTFILMS



COLIN M. MACLAY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
ANNENBERG INNOVATION
LAB



**COURTNEY D.
COGBURN**
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK,
FACULTY, COLUMBIA
POPULATION RESEARCH
CENTER



**CRYSTAL ECHO
HAWK (PAWNEE)**
PRESIDENT AND CEO,
ECHO HAWK, CONSULTING
(EHC), FOUNDER AND CEO,
ILLUMINATIVE



DENALI TILLER
DIRECTOR,
TRE MAISON DASAN



**ELIZABETH GRIZZLE
VOORHEES**
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
CREATIVE INITIATIVES,
DEFINE AMERICAN



ISHITA SRIVASTAVA
DIRECTOR OF CULTURE
CHANGE, CARING ACROSS
GENERATIONS



JAMIE DOBIE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PEACE IS LOUD



JEFFREY JONES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
GEORGE FOSTER
PEABODY AWARDS,
DIRECTOR, PEABODY MEDIA
CENTER



KASHIF SHAIKH
CO-FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR,
PILLARS FUND



KIMBERLY REED
DIRECTOR,
DARK MONEY



MOLLY MURPHY
CO-DIRECTOR,
WORKING FILMS



**NANCY
SHWARTZMAN**
TECH FOUNDER, CIRCLE OF 6,
DIRECTOR, ROLL RED ROLL



PRENTISS HANEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OHIO
STUDENT ASSOCIATION
(OSA), POLITICAL DIRECTOR,
MIDWEST CULTURE LAB



RASHID SHABAZZ
CHIEF MARKETING AND
STORYTELLING OFFICER,
COLOR OF CHANGE



**SHARESE BULLOCK-
BAILEY**
CHIEF STRATEGY AND
PARTNERSHIP OFFICER,
GHETTO FILM SCHOOL



SONYA CHILDRESS
DIRECTOR OF PARTNERSHIPS
AND ENGAGEMENT,
FIRELIGHT MEDIA

Moderators



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CATY BORUM CHATTOO
DIRECTOR



VARSHA RAMANI
PROGRAM MANAGER



DAVID CONRAD
POST DOCTORAL FELLOW



FEEDBACK FROM THE STORY MOVEMENTS COMMUNITY

“The conference was both inspiring and instructive. I really appreciated the quality of the panels and the general ambience of warmth and engagement. Bravo!”

RICHARD LITVIN,
NYU TISCH SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

“It was truly an honor and pleasure to be part of such an amazing gathering. I am looking forward to being in community and partnership in the future...”

RASHID SHABAZZ,
COLOR OF CHANGE

“Thank you for the opportunity to learn from incredible thinkers and share our ideas.”

ANNIE NEIMAND,
CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEREST COMMUNICATIONS

“I got so much out of it, and even walked away with some concrete funding opportunities for Peace is Loud, which is something I was not expecting.”

JAMIE DOBIE,
PEACE IS LOUD

“What a great melding of minds across sectors ... I felt like I had the chance to really catch up with colleagues that I had missed in the whirlwind of Sundance, IDFA and Getting Real, and got to connect with new colleagues. It was a pleasure.”

SONYA CHILDRESS, FIRELIGHT MEDIA

“Congratulations on another thoughtfully curated edition of Story Movements. I truly appreciated the roster of people and panels you compiled -- and the many ideas and conversations it sparked. Bravi!”

JILL MOSEBACH,
TRIBECA FILM INSTITUTE

“I just wanted to thank you for putting together such an extraordinary convening. I left incredibly inspired, with a lot of great new relationships and plans to collaborate.”

JESSICA BLANK
INDUSTRY PARTICIPANT

“Thank you so much for including DoSomething in Story Movements, and congratulations on such an inspiring, productive, and well-run conference. Everyone who spoke and everyone I met was positively amazing, and I know I’ll be collaborating with many of them in the future.”

BEN KASSOY,
DOSOMETHING.ORG

“Congratulations on a beautiful conference - we all felt a great sense of community and connection.”

SHARESE BULLOCK-BAILEY,
GHETTO FILM SCHOOL

“Sitting in the audience as an ER nurse, many of the scenarios and examples being discussed seemed relevant to my corner of interest as well... And so I begin, small for the moment. But I am starting to interview nurses and share excerpts on Instagram (@ourvoicenurses)... and I am inspired to continue work in this direction to share the voice of nurses and all they have to offer in the desperate battle to improve healthcare... If I am going to bear witness to the community at Story Movements working tirelessly for a better world, I cannot sit idle on the sidelines. I must work to make my corner of the world a little better too.”

BRITTANY NEAL DINATALE, @RNINDC

“Thank you, thank you, thank you for a truly incredible event. Honestly, I think it was one of the more impactful conferences I’ve attended... I loved hearing from each presenter and it gave so much context to the panels afterward. Thank you for modeling a different way to engage in conversations around culture change!”

ELIZABETH VOORHEES,
DEFINE AMERICAN

“This weekend was fantastic -- we cannot thank you enough for all your efforts to build a meaningful and comfortable gathering for us all!”

YASMIN HAMIDI,
COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIST

“What a great event; congrats and thanks for including me. I learned so much and it was so well-curated and attended.”

NANCY SCHWARTZMAN,
ROLL RED ROLL



Feedback from Twitter

Chelsea L. Horne @CL_Horne · Mar 2
 "Watch history, make history." — @SonyaChildress with an inspiring call to action at #StoryMovements

Sam J. Ssemaganda @samwhereinafric · Mar 1
 Glad to make it here. May these stories begin. #StoryMovements @CMSImpact

Amy Lynn Smith @alswrite · Mar 2
 Yes, yes, yes! #StoryMovements

Karen Ruckman @ruckmanphoto
 "What if society treated #artists as leaders in communities?"
 @FordFoundation JustFilms, Cara Mertes @CMSImpact #StoryMovements

p.h. balanced films @phbalancedfilms · Mar 2
 This thread ❤️

Required reading for filmmakers and storytellers in the advocacy space:

#StoryMovements

Peace is Loud @peaceisloud
 Lesson 1: Define impact & understand the story you have.
 Be honest w/ yourself when considering the value add of your film to the ecosystem of advocacy that it exists...
 Show this thread

leah clapman @lclap · Mar 1
 Love this conversation of format and intention. For students who want to learn and use the tools of video journalism check out @reportinglabs camera and audio tutorials + pitch sheets and journalism practice /values.
Studentreportinglabs.org #storymovements

Ann Christiano @aechristiano · Mar 1
 So. Ready. #storymovements

Kirsten @hellookirsten · Mar 2
 "The rising tide raises all boats"
 -@_kimreed #storymovements @CMSImpact

AU SOC @AU_SOC · Mar 1
 Great first day for #StoryMovements

Diana Urdaneta @DianaUrdaneta · Mar 2
 Enjoying and learning at the #StoryMovements event @AmericanU Great event!

(((Danny))) @dannyturkel · Mar 1
 "Black People and Black Power are necessary for progressive political change in this country." - @rshabazz @ColorOfChange #StoryMovements

Feedback from Instagram

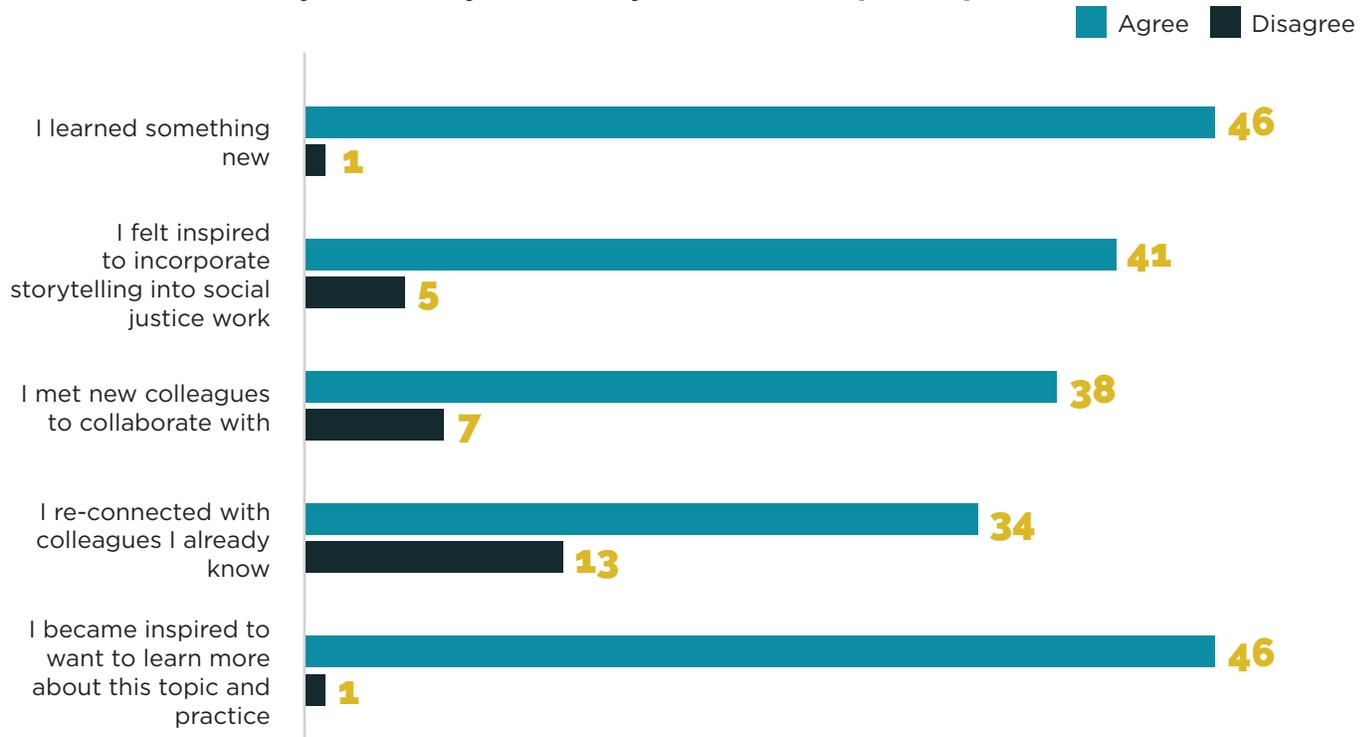


Survey Results

What were the top three reasons people chose to attend?



What were the key takeaways for Story Movements participants?



Likely to attend Story Movements again?



Credits

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DEAN JEFFREY RUTENBECK

STORY MOVEMENTS

ILLUMINATING THE ROLE OF NARRATIVE

IN CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

2019 CONVENING REPORT



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