

Be a

Storyteller

A guide to changing our world with stories.

Storytelling is not a tool or a tactic.

**It's a way of looking at and
understanding our world.**

**Storytelling is how we all make
meaning.**



Being a storyteller is being human.



Science: Our memories are stories.



- Humans base their decisions on stories.
- Storytelling can literally rewire our brains and reshape memories.
- Authentic, well-crafted stories have the power to change how people think and feel.

No such thing as “purely rational decisions”

- Virtually all thought and decision-making is unconscious.
- Even our most logical choices are tied to emotion.
- A new story can literally reshape memory and change how we feel. Facts and logic cannot.



What's a story?

A story is a kind of journey:

- **MOVEMENT** — Beginning, middle and end.
- **CHARACTERS** — With whom the audience can identify.
- **ACTION** — Change happens, creating a storyline or plot the audience can identify.
- **OUTCOME** — Characters overcome obstacles to win something of value.



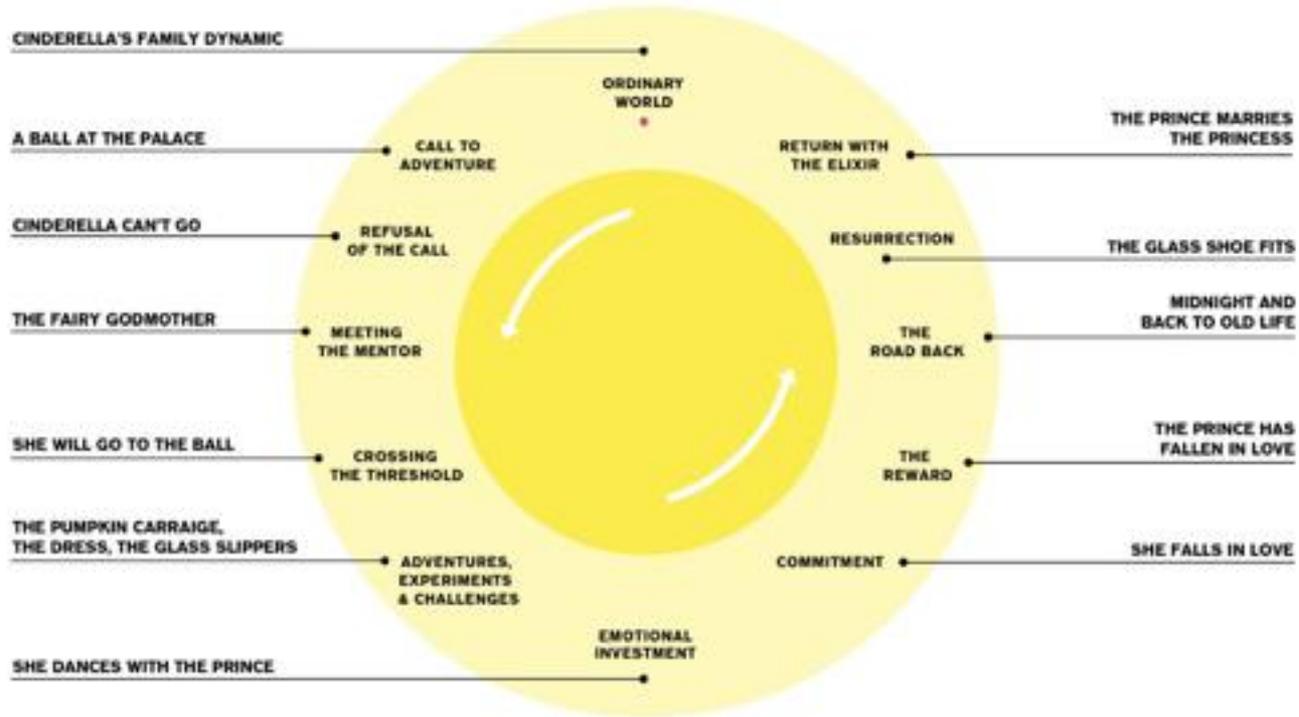
Folk Tales

Cinderella



Photo credit: New York Theater Ballet, 2015

Cinderella's Hero's Journey



A portrait of Ebony Ava Harper, a woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a dark top. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting with a plant and a lamp.

EBONY AVA HARPER

**DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR TRANS
LIBERATION AND ADVANCEMENT**

As a kid in South Central Los Angeles,

STRONGERCALIFORNIA.ORG



Dudley Dudley
Fmr. Governor's Councilor
Durham, New Hampshire

The hero's journey for social change

Ebony Harper Story	Stages of the Journey	Dudley Dudley Story
Growing up as a “very feminine boy” and being abused and isolated.	ORDINARY WORLD: The problems we face right now	World’s richest man wants to destroy nearby seacoast to make money.
	FINDING MENTOR Finding help	Organizing with her neighbors to resist.
Transcending her life as a sex worker and a homeless woman.	ADVENTURES, EXPERIMENTS, CHALLENGES Overcoming obstacles	Winning the fight to block the oil refinery.
Becoming an advocate for building safe communities.	RESURRECTION Winning	Saving the coast.
Nobody is free unless everybody is free.	RETURN WITH ANSWER The moral	We can save the country the same way we saved the New Hampshire coast.

Where to find the stories you need

There's only one source...

A diverse group of people, including men and women of various ethnicities and ages, are laughing and smiling together. They are dressed in casual, modern clothing. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The overall mood is joyful and positive.

PEOPLE!

STORIES COME FROM...

- The people you serve
 - The people you work with
 - The people who have won similar fights for justice
 - The people for whom you are organizing and working
 - **THE PEOPLE YOU WANT TO REACH!**
-
- And from **YOU**...

**How to find the
stories you need**

LISTEN

- LISTEN TO THE STORIES you tell yourself and others.
- LISTEN TO THE STORIES people tell you.
- LISTEN TO THE WORDS that are used.
- LOOK AT THE IMAGES people select to represent their feelings.
- UNDERSTAND THEIR METAPHORS for the workings of the world.

LISTENING

DO NOT

- Rely primarily on traditional research—polls and focus groups.

DO

- Conduct in-depth interviews (IDIs)
- Audit pop culture: movies, TV, music, books, magazines, art...
- Engage an agency or expert using metaphor elicitation technique.

**NOW,
TELL YOUR
STORY!**



We're going to split into groups of four and each of you will tell your group a two-minute (or so) story of how you came to your work for social justice. You've told this story before because many people ask, "How did you choose your work?" (*Even though, maybe, it chose you!*)

THIS TIME

- Think about the story elements we've covered. Think about the journey.
- Think about your feelings, not just the facts.
- Think about what you saw in your world that made you feel this would be your path.
- Who got you started and made you feel you could actually make change in the world?
- What obstacles did you face and what moved you to keep going and overcome them?

When we come back, a few of you will be asked to tell your stories to everyone. Be ready!