



# Applying Storytelling in Social Justice Movements

---

*"...to try to be a writer (which involves, after all, disturbing the peace) was political, whether one like it or not; because if one is doing anything at all, one is trying to change the consciousness of other people. You're trying also to change your own consciousness. You have to use your own consciousness, you have to trust it to the extent--enough to begin to talk; and you talk with the intention of beginning a ferment, beginning a disturbance in someone else's mind so that he sees the situation." -James Baldwin*

---

## Course Description

- How can stories empower communities?
- How can social justice movements benefit from storytelling?
- What stories are politically useful?

The Applying Storytelling in Social Justice Movements is geared toward working professionals, activists, organizers, and students alike as a tool of empowerment. This 6 week course combines common principles of storytelling with the goals of social justice movements and campaigns. We will explore some of the aforementioned questions, while creating our own stories. Each week will focus on the long term value of storytelling.

### Key elements in storytelling for social justice campaigns include:

- Value based storytelling
- Framing the narrative
- Principles guided by emotion (I.E. Rosa Parks, Red Bike & Green, Black Brunch)
- Articulating your/an experience through a recognizable narrative

\*\* Please note this course can be expanded or condensed to fit the needs of the organization.

## Course Objectives

- Motivate participants to use story based strategy to craft social justice campaigns
- Craft a story from beginning to end
- Focus stories elements of humor, satire, empathy, or irony to best fit campaign
- Foster writing and storytelling development

**The social justice storytelling workshop is a great way to have activists and educators alike benefit from both theory and practice.**

## Course Outline

### Week 1

Introduction to Applying Storytelling in Social Justice Movements

Introduce Concepts: Narrative, Libidinal Economy, Point of Intervention (production, consumption, description, decision) and story based strategy. This week will focus on introducing concepts as well as give examples of story based strategies in winning campaigns. (I.E. Rosa Parks, MLK & Selma)

Objective: Understanding concepts. Identifying story based strategies.

### Week 2

The Art of Storytelling: Framing the Narrative

This week will focus on framing the narrative. We will focus on challenging underlying assumptions in the dominant narrative. Examples of how campaigns, memes, origin stories, protests, and/or direct action have been framed.

Objective: Identify the concept of framing the narrative. Students will be able to recognize dominant narratives, examples of story based campaigns, and how to drive a point home.

### Week 3

The Art of Storytelling Pt. 2: Values based storytelling

Objective: Students will be able to recognize their own story in relationship to the dominant narrative. They will also be able to identify what works about certain campaigns.

### Week 4

Articulating your/an experience through a recognizable narrative

This week students will focus on creating their own campaign by identifying the conflict, characters, imagery, foreshadowing, assumptions, and points of intervention. In small groups students begin to frame their

campaign based on the issue of their choice. (I.E. Racismstillexists.tumblr.com & Stop Telling Women to Smile)

Objective: Choosing one campaign to create a story about. Get 1 on 1 help with developing the storyline from the instructor.

## **Week 5**

Write. Rewrite. Write. Rewrite.

This week will focus on key elements of storytelling in general. Students will write a story using basic principles discussed in previous weeks. Basic storytelling requires developing characters, a storyline, a conflict and underlying assumptions. We will discuss how storytelling relates to long term campaign goals that seek structural change.

Readings: Laymon, Kiese. How To Slowly Kill Yourself in America

Objective: Students will be able to identify a great story. From the first sentence to the discuss gender roles in our society. Write and illustrate a 1 page comic based on gender.

## **Week 6**

I've Got a Story To Tell

This last week will focus on telling your story in public; one on one meetings, speeches, radio/tv/online article interviews, developing an online narrative, or telling your story to traditional media outlets.

Objective: Media training that allows students to practice interview techniques.

## **Bio**

The *Applying Storytelling in Social Justice Movement* programs' initial curriculum and program will be conducted by Juliana "Jewels" Smith. Smith is an educator, writer, organizer, and entrepreneur. She is also the creator and author of [\(H\)afrocentric](#), a comic book featuring four disgruntled undergrads of color and their adventures at Ronald Reagan University. As the co-founder of Red Bike and Green and Clitoral Mass, she is passionate about working with communities of color to facilitate political dialogue through storytelling.

For full bio, click [here](#)!

## **Targets**

Qualitative: Empower students to use strategies from the course in their own campaigns.

Quantitative: 10-30 students. 6 weeks.

## The Concept/Theory of Change:

The *Applying Storytelling in Social Justice Movements* is an attempt to take storytelling out of the function of entertainment. In creating a program that makes social justice and storytelling a top priority, I am engaging what scholar Frank Wilderson calls the *libidinal economy*. The libidinal economy is the system of exchange and valuation for fantasies, desires, fears, aversions and enjoyment. As such, storytelling has the potential to define or largely contribute to the economy of our fears, desires, attraction, affection, and alliance. In this course, I want students to analyze social and political phenomena via current and past campaigns. Students should come away knowing they have the power to change conversations in tangible ways.

Juliana “Jewels” Smith

[about.me/jewels.smith](http://about.me/jewels.smith)

510.992.3489

[hafrocentric@gmail.com](mailto:hafrocentric@gmail.com)

@hafrocentric

