

The Power of Our Story

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Abstract

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Article

I recently had a conversation with a friend of mine, someone that I've known for over 5 years. Due to the inherent rapid socialization many members of the transgender community experience in the transition process, 5 years seems like a life time. I respect and admire the recent commitment to advocacy work by her spouse and her on behalf of the trans community. She said what she loved the most was speaking to others. As I talked with her, I shared my experiences and lessons learned from doing such outreach work. I could help but feel complete, whole. With that simply sharing, my friend may find her way.

To paraphrase a book I read frequently "Upon advocacy for the trans community itself, we surely have no monopoly."

The most important part of this for me had been the telling of my story. I believe it is the essential ingredient in fostering understanding that I am a human being with the same feelings and emotions and needs for my basic human rights as they are, and how the listener can participate for the good of all of the transgender community.

The process of empathy building through shared experience, for me, is no different than any successful marketing plan or sales pitch for that matter, with of course, the exception for profit motive. The first part is to build an emotional imagine in the mind of the reader by describing my experiences in terms of how it made me feel. This gives the listener the chance to relate to me through sometimes completely different events, but which share the same fears, injures, joys or love.

Once I have captured the listener's attention and tied them emotionally to the story, I can be successful in placing them in this picture, one painted with words. It allows them to experience through empathy, the trials and struggles I have stated. Will they know what it is like to be transgender? No, they probably will not without being gender variant themselves. However they can feel empowered to embrace me, my needs as a member of the transgender community and the call to action I present to them.

I speak of this in the first person because it is my perspective borne by the events of my life. Everyone's story is different which is why it's important to connect to my audience with shared

emotions through different experience. Yet success is measured in crossing over from apathy to action.

If you wish to learn more about how to share your story, or what you can do for TransEquality contact us at TransMaryland, at 443-TMD 8001

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