

Event: Next Mile Project Lunch + Learn

Topic: The Power of Stories

Date: March 25, 2014

Discussion Facilitator: Pam Boll, Award Winning Artist and Filmmaker

Pamela started the lunch + learn with an activity. She asked everyone to get into groups of two and tell the story of what brought them to the Next Mile Project today. She said no matter what angle we take or what story we begin to tell, make sure it includes humor and sincerity.

Lessons learned from the activity:

- There's a difference between telling what happened and telling a story
- The person telling the story has to be willing to include his or her own self in it, the person has to be invested
- Storytelling should never be objective! There has to be a solid sense that what you personally are doing in the story matters
- It's not so easy to open up to others because telling somebody something personal leaves you vulnerable

A major theme in Pam's presentation was having care and curiosity in storytelling. She said that genuine care and curiosity when finding a story, leads to a tale that will grab the attention of any reader or viewer because people respond to heartfelt stories. "You have to care in order to make other people care," Pam explained.

Pam said you have to follow what matters to you in storytelling. She said to try not to think about telling a story to get funders and instead, follow your heart and share what is important to you. There always has to be a heartfelt investment, and you have to be willing to share it. Pam also said as humans we don't like to see ugliness, we're much more compelled by beauty. To show suffering is important, but to show it graphically is not so important. For example in Pam's award winning film *Born into Brothels*, the children talked about their mothers being sold, but the film did not show them watching it happen instead, it showed the beauty in the children and their stories of perseverance.

Summary: *What makes for a good story? According to Pam*

- Finding someone who's gone through something they couldn't turn their back on, even though they may have wanted to
- Finding something hard, it's the only place a story starts from
- Gaining trust from the person telling you their story, no one will open up to you if they don't trust you
- Highlighting the funny and the hard in the same story, engage the audience with more than one emotion

"Storytelling matters because there is a listener. In order to be a good storyteller you have to be a good listener yourself."