

## **PUBLIC NARRATIVE WRITING GUIDE**

We all have a story! What is yours and how has it shaped who you are in the world?

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### **Development of Public Narrative: The story of I, Us, and Now**

What makes you tick? What makes others around you fired up? What are our experiences? Why are we who we are or what influences the way we think about ourselves in the world today? What do we want our life legacy to be? How does that relate to this work and the community? Why is it urgent now?

**A public narrative will take an audience our I (our experiences that shape us) to our Us (the experiences have then connected us to a larger action/purpose/cause/community/collective) to our Now (our call to action, our sense of urgency, our one liner to the world).**

### **Public Narratives, Leadership, and Grassroots Organizing**

Our stories matter. Experiences help to shape the individuals that we are today; how we see the world, how we think, act, respond to others, and perhaps who we work with, socialize with, and what paths we choose to take in life. As we develop our stories and share them with others, often times, we find that those around us can relate in some way or have similar experiences, or connect to deeper on some level. Stories can shape our understanding of one another's values and aspirations, ideas and visions for the now and the future.

These **public narratives** are incorporated into the activities exercised at our Wilderness Advocacy Training to enable participants to do just that; dig deeply into themselves, to explore what they care about, why they care about that and how they can take action towards it. Our leaders begin to deepen their purposes and passions and will learn how to inspire others to feel inspired through the sharing of these stories.

**How do we write these things?** Public narratives enable us to define **our I selves**, an experience that we hold deep, that defines a moment in our lives that has shaped our thoughts, values, or passions. The story then moves into **the us in our communities**, how these passions connect us to our communities, the larger picture, the collective movement. Finally, the narratives end with the **urgency of now**, the importance of our work in terms of movement and action.

**The public narrative is a work in progress.** It is ever changing as we are. We have many messages and stories. Our narratives shared will be influenced by our audience and our call to action and will vary depending on who and what we are speaking to. They are vulnerable. They are truth. They are powerful. They can help shape our recruitment of new members, deepen relationships with current members, connect deeply with partners and collaborators, and remind us WHY IN THE WORLD WE DO WE WHAT WE DO EVEN WHEN IT'S HARD AND FEELS UNREWARDING.

**Marshall Ganz**, senior lecturer at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, activist, and organizer, has written quite a bit on this topic and provides resources on the importance of identifying our stories and how to use them as we deepen relationships with those around us. Marshall Ganz explains this in his essay, "Why Stories Matter," as he writes, "We start with the skill of relationship-building, the story of self. Then we develop the skill of motivation or the story of us. Third, the skill of strategizing, the story of now. And fourth, the skill of action" (Ganz, 2009).

*\*The article, "Why Stories Matter" will be included in your folders at Boot Camp and is also attached to this email. For a full pdf worksheet on public narratives, google "Telling Your Public Story: Self, Us, Now"*

*by Marshall Ganz*