

stories for **choice**



VIEWING AND POST-SHOW DISCUSSION GUIDE

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1 Getting Started

Get prepared.

- 1 What is your organization or group's goal for hosting the event? Get clear about your goals so you can communicate them to your group.
- 2 Make a viewing plan. Will your group watch together in person or will your community all tune in online and gather at another time, either virtually or in-person, to discuss the event and participate in follow-up exercises? There is no right answer, just plan ahead and let your audience know what they can expect and how you will engage.
- 3 Read through the entire guide. Become familiar with TMI Project and *Stories for Choice*. Identify obstacles you or your group might have in watching and discussing these stories. Get well versed in ways to facilitate dialogue to inspire brave communication. Choose the follow-up exercises you will partake in.



2 TMI Project's Mission, Vision and History



TMI Project's mission is to help craft and amplify radically true stories to ignite human connection, challenge the status quo, and inspire both storytellers and listeners to take action for positive social change.

We do this by:

- Teaching true storytelling workshops which culminate in live performances and digital content that focus on the “too much information” parts of a story typically left out because of shame, stigma, fear, or cultural expectation.
- Centering around four social justice initiatives: Anti-Racism, Gender Equality, LGBTQIA+ Rights, and Mental Health Awareness.
- Partnering with schools, nonprofits, small businesses, and corporations to work with directly impacted folks, students, emerging and veteran activists, and leaders.
- Shining the spotlight on the stories that may not be featured in mainstream media or recognized in history books but have the power to change the world.

Since 2010, TMI Project has led more than 100 true storytelling workshops and staged live storytelling performances by nearly 2,000 storytellers, which have been presented to audiences of nearly 200,000 people in schools, colleges, prisons, mental health clinics, theaters, community centers, the United Nations and online.

To learn more, visit tmiproject.org

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3 About Stories for Choice

Stories for Choice uses radically true stories that include the TMI parts we usually keep to ourselves because of fear, shame, stigma, or cultural expectation — to ignite human connection, challenge the status quo, and inspire storytellers and listeners alike to take action for true reproductive justice.

Currently, *Roe v. Wade*, the Constitutional right to access safe, legal abortion, is at risk like never before. With new laws in Texas, and the current case before the Supreme Court challenging a Mississippi law, our reproductive freedoms are at risk like never before. Yet, nearly 2/3 of Americans do not want to see *Roe v. Wade* overturned*.

That said, choice is not just about abortion and/rights; it's about comprehensive, safe, accessible reproductive healthcare for all who need/want it, to make whatever choice they choose.

* [Supreme Court Polling *Roe v. Wade*, CNN, 2021](#)

4 Creating a Safer Space for Braver Communication

We know that safe spaces don't actually exist. What is safe for one person can feel threatening to another. However, we also know that we can be mindful about each unique person and put guidelines in place to help facilitate a safer feeling in the room and foster open, honest and brave communication.

Suggestions:

- Acknowledge safe spaces don't actually exist and let the group know you will work together to create a safer space. Set the intention to create a space that will inspire people to be brave and compassionate in their communication.
- Establish the space to be a place where people will be listened to powerfully. Ask that one person talk at a time being mindful not to interrupt or talk over each other.
- Save eating, imbibing and socializing for after the discussion is complete. Focus on each other and what is being said.
- Have everyone agree and commit with a raised hand that what is said in the room stays in the room!
- Customize your space. Ask your group what else they need to feel safe and add it to the list.



5 Seven Strategies to Consider for Inclusive Dialogue

Every group will have unique needs. These are simply suggestions. Read through and see if any of these strategies will benefit the group you are hosting.

- 1** Progressive Stacking—an effort to foreground voices that are typically silenced in dominant culture. Members of any marginalized group are given priority on the list of people who want to speak—the stack.
- 2** Stepping up and stepping back. Simply put, this entails being mindful of how much time we each take up and a collective commitment to making space for as many voices as possible.
- 3** The Humanity Clause (known in some circles as The Ouch and Oops). Everyone engaged in this conversation is human and likely going to make mistakes. Know it’s okay to make mistakes but also take time to acknowledge if a mistake hurt someone else. Resist being defensive and make an effort to understand another’s point of view and offer a sincere apology.
- 4** Speak from your own experience. Use “I” language.
- 5** Consider who is in the room. Disagreement is a natural part of this dialogue. Being in agreement is not necessarily a sign of success. It might mean your room is not diverse enough.
- 6** Know you are participating in an open-ended conversation. Do not expect it to conclude with a sense of closure.
- 7** Learn to listen and listen to learn.

6 Storytellers



Eugenia Cabrera

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

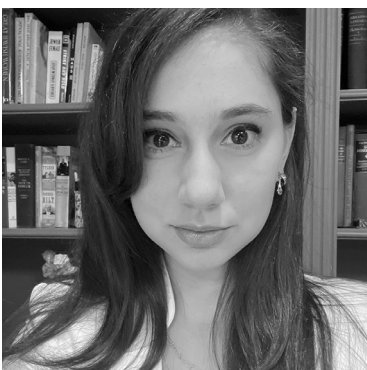
Eugenia does not want children and feels guilt and shame as she challenges a woman's role in her Ecuadorian town and society at-large. Through perseverance, she comes to terms with this truth about herself, makes an undeniable connection between her mind, body, and spirit, and ultimately finds power in honoring herself.



Marissa Davis

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

At Marissa's first gynecologist appointment, she believes it's in her best interest to tell her doctor the truth about her sexuality and her history. Unfortunately, it's one of many experiences when coming out to a healthcare provider backfires.



Leah Garden

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

Leah is a young woman who struggles to advocate for herself and find a solution for the debilitating pain she experiences each month during her menstrual cycle. After a life-changing loss, she becomes capable of speaking up, not just for herself but for others as well.



Cameran Hebb

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

Young, sexually inexperienced Cameran is up for an adventure when she meets the man she dubs *The James Dean of Queens*. She quickly learns that looks can be deceiving when this rebel without a cause challenges her to find her voice; but when she finally does, it's a battle cry.



Marie Holmes

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

After a difficult fertilization journey, Marie and her wife find out Marie is pregnant with twins. They set out to find a doctor who will perform a selective reduction to ensure she has a safe pregnancy and one healthy baby.



Kindra

Pronoun: She/They

Kindra grows up in a Mormon community where curious girls like her are shamed into obedience, and she's raised to be adamantly pro-life. In her early twenties, a class at the community college she's attending opens the door to a whole new world where she begins to reclaim her personal power and becomes "dangerously" pro-choice.



Maureen Paul

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

Maureen comes from a strict family. She becomes pregnant as a teen pre-Roe v. Wade and is forced to go through with an unwanted pregnancy. The experience is so life-changing, it inspires her to dedicate her entire career to reproductive justice.



Shernā Ann Phillips, PhD

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

In her twenties, Dr. Nae plans every aspect of her life, collecting degrees and dream jobs. She never imagines that her journey to conceive a child will reroute her life in a completely unexpected direction.



Tahyira Savanna

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

Tahyira is a young Black woman navigating her education at a predominantly white college. At 20, she becomes pregnant and quickly learns how to navigate a nearly all-white healthcare system. She's adamantly pro-choice and knows she's not ready to be a mother, so what's the problem? The situation is challenging and sometimes painful but making decisions for herself makes her feel like a grown-up for the first time.



Natalie Speakman

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

Natalie decides adoption is the best option for her unplanned pregnancy. After a stillbirth, she grapples with the grief she feels over the loss of a baby she had already planned to give away.

7 Discussion Questions and Writing Prompts

Questions:

- 1 After Viewing *Stories for Choice*, what are you feeling?
- 2 Which storytellers stood out and why?
- 3 Did any of the stories surprise you? How and why?
- 4 Has your understanding of reproductive justice in America shifted or broadened from listening? If so, how?
- 5 Do you feel inspired to take action or do something differently? If so, what action would you like to take or how do you hope to change?

Writing Prompts

Write a true story about:

- 1 A time someone else made a decision that impacted you and/or your body.
- 2 A time you were able to advocate for your own reproductive health needs.
- 3 A love letter to your body.

8

Stories for Choice Workshop Leaders



Hayley Downs

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

“When I first heard the words ‘TMI Project’ I thought, ‘What is that? I want to do that!’ I knew that any group that valued ‘too much information’ enough to make it a ‘project’ of it were people that I had to know.”

In addition to leading TMI Project workshops, Hayley is a writer, podcast producer, and documentary filmmaker. She produced, edited, and co-wrote seasons one and two of the TMI Project Podcast. She produced the documentary film, *Hidden Battles*, which was directed by Victoria Mills, about the psychological effects of killing on soldiers. She also produced and broadcast edited *Naturally Obsessed: the Making of a Scientist*, a film about laboratory research by Richard and Carole Rifkind. Her angst-filled teen journal was included in *Mortified: Real Words, Real People, Real Pathetic*, published by Simon Spotlight Entertainment. *Naturally Obsessed* premiered on WNYC/Thirteen and is distributed by PBS International. Her installations and experimental films: *Move*, *Coleslaw Wrestling* and *Boar Hog*, exploring multi-generational Florida folk culture, have shown at underground film festivals including NY, Chicago and SF, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Miami and Art Basel. She lives in Kingston, New York with her husband and a small brood of furless beasts.



Dara Lurie

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

“I jumped at the opportunity to participate as a storyteller in TMI Project’s first workshop and performance of #BlackStoriesMatter in early 2017 and, later that year, as a TMI Project teacher-trainee. I can’t think of more important work than helping people tell their true stories. If you think it’s simple, you should try it sometime.”

In addition to leading TMI Project workshops, Dara is an author and manuscript coach. She received a B.A. in Film & Theater from Vassar College and M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Hunter College. Dara grew up on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and migrated in the early 1980s to West Berlin, Germany, where she tended bar, wrote and performed in the theater while living in different communities of squatters, Green Party activists, journalists, teachers, and social workers. Her first book, *Great Space of Desire: Writing for Personal Evolution*, is a memoir and creative guide for writers wishing to tell their own stories.



Perla Ayora

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

“We immigrants have stories that have been quiet for a long time and now there is finally a safe space where they can be heard. An immigrant has a lot to say about discrimination and culture but also about values, family, learning and justice. Writing your story brings you closer to freedom.”

“Nosotros los inmigrantes tenemos historias que han sido calladas por mucho tiempo y ahora por fin hay un espacio seguro donde pueden ser escuchadas. Un inmigrante tiene mucho que decir sobre discriminación y cultura pero también sobre valor, familia, aprendizaje y justicia. Escribir tu historia te acerca a la libertad.”

Perla is a stand-up comedian who enjoys writing songs, poems, essays, and... jokes. Her creativity and love of expression helps to elevate the many diverse voices of Radio Kingston by broadcasting their shows live from various locations throughout Kingston. She is a radio host and the co-producer of “Tokens Inc”. A dark comedy web series about tokenism. Originally from Yucatan, Mexico, Perla was drawn to Kingston for its lively art, music, and comedy scene – but loves that she can also chill at a BBQ or a taquiza with her neighbors.



Raine Grayson

Pronoun: He/Him/His

“TMI Project does the exact kind of work that the world needs. From the moment I learned about them I wanted to contribute to the way they spread outstanding courage, community, and kindness. TMI Project makes the world a more honest, open place and I am honored to be given the chance to help foster and facilitate their mission.”

Raine Grayson is a multi-genre writer whose work focuses on exploring and uplifting the LGBTQIA+ community. He specializes in social action theatre and also dabbles in academic essays and creative non-fiction. He founded “Queeries Blog” – a space for queer artists to publish their work freely. He’s worked with The TMI Project before in conjunction with the Trevor Project for “Life Lines: Queer Stories Of Survival”. He’s spoken his suicide survival story on nationally streaming platforms for Trevor Live in support of their suicide prevention chat line. His nonfiction work can be found featured at Queeries Blog, Go Magazine, The Paragon Press, Weasel Press, and soon So Say We All’s magazine “The Whole Alphabet”. His playwriting has been featured by The Playwriting Collective, The Tank, NY Madness, KIT Theatre, The Rosendale Theatre, and Virtual Theatre Collaboration. He is a recipient of the SUNY Thayer Fellowship and Patricia Kerr Ross Award for his playwriting, as well as being recognized as a runner-up for the The Playwriting Collective’s Ball Grant. If you’d like to queer up your timeline, find him on social media @rainerpism.



Special Guest

Elizabeth Lorde-Rollins, MD.

Pronoun: She/Her/Hers

Elizabeth Lorde-Rollins, M.D., M.Sc. was born and raised in New York City. She has been a baker, a bike messenger, and an elementary school teacher, but her greatest love is practicing medicine. While practicing and teaching Adolescent Gynecology at the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center (2004-2012), Dr. Lorde-Rollins also conducted clinical research on projects studying the vaginal microbiome and human papillomavirus. She has taught Health and Human Rights at Mount Sinai Medical School and Creative Writing at Hunter College. Currently, Dr. Lorde-Rollins is completing a Masters Degree in Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine at the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine and practices Obstetrics and Gynecology in New York and New Jersey. She lives in Staatsburg, NY with her partner Judy Boals and their son, Matthew Boals.

9 Suggestions for Action



Listen to *The TMI Project Podcast, Season 3: Stories for Choice* (out in March of 2022), available wherever you get your podcasts



Read The [Reproductive Justice Starter Kit](#): “five books that illustrate and analyze the interlocking methods of social control, stigmatization, and oppression that necessitate and inform the fight for reproductive justice for all.”



Take Action Check out this list from The ALCU: [Keep Marching, What You Can Do To Protect Reproductive Freedom](#)

Explore

reproductive justice through a storytelling lens.

Book TMI Project for a true storytelling workshop or performance. All programming is available online.

10 Resources

[National Network of Abortion Funds](#)

[Advocacy Organizations](#)

[National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice](#)

[In Our Own Voice: National Black Women’s Reproductive Justice Agenda](#)

[Sister Song](#)

[Thank God For Abortion](#)

[The Task Force](#)

[Queering Reproductive Justice: A Toolkit](#)

[BansOffOurBodies.org](#)

[AbortionFinder.org](#)

[C3 abortion access website](#)

[Abortion access tool](#)

[plannedparenthood.org/health-center](#)

11

Credits



**TMI Project Co-founder
and Executive Director:**
Eva Tenuto



TMI Project Co-founder:
Julie Novak



**Operations and
Programs Manager:**
Blake Pfeil



Administrative Assistant:
Elijah Jackson



**Marketing and Digital
Coordinator:**
Laura Ruocco

Funders

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Partner with us to guarantee the future of this vital program; visit tmiproject.org/donate to support *Stories for Choice*.



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Don't Forget!

Ask your party guests to “like”
@TMIPProject on Instagram,
Facebook, and Twitter

Take photos of your viewing
party and post them to social.
Don't forget to use the hashtag
#storiesforchoice!

Continue the conversation with
your guests after the Q & A using
the tips found in the Viewing and
Post Show Discussion Guide.

***Together, we are changing the world,
one radically true story at a time.***

**STORY
TELLING**
IS **SOCIAL
JUSTICE.**