

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Michael Brown The Power of Story

Michael Brown · Wednesday, January 29th, 2014

Through Story, We Achieve Better Understanding and Healing

Telling a story is an action with powerful consequences. It changes us, and alters our relationship with the world around us.

Everything that matters is a story. Those who can tell stories will thrive. Story is the way to express the huge feelings that we hold in our hearts, the feelings that we desperately need to understand. The most extreme example I can think of is that twenty or more veterans decide to kill themselves every day – almost one every hour. If someone listened to them, if they could tell their stories and if they thought someone was paying attention this would not be the case. Once they discover and embrace storytelling, many, probably most would work through the pain and soon discover that they have the ability to take charge of their own future.



Movie poster for *High Ground*

Storytelling has been radically democratized. We can even make movies with our phones and share them with the world in minutes. This is a huge cultural shift from just a few years ago when, to make a film, it took many thousands of dollars of equipment and serious technical expertise.

Most people don't yet know how easy it really is to make a short film. Most also don't believe that they could. Then the layers go deeper... How would one express a deeply buried pain through story? What is a metaphor? What are the secrets of the film vernacular that allow us to tap into the magic of story?

Joseph Campbell deconstructed the classic story for us in his book "The Hero With a Thousand Faces." The world is dying and we need a hero to accept the call and take action. The hero must make a journey to know the source of the world's doom and then find a way to defeat the foe and avoid the doom. Not only does the hero need to defeat the foe, she or he needs to gain the wisdom to defeat the foe as many times as it takes. The final and most important stage is when the hero shares this wisdom with the tribe.

At [Serac Adventure Films](#), we made a documentary about veterans coming home from war called *High Ground*. The film takes us on a journey to the top of a Himalayan Peak alongside eleven wounded Iraq and Afghanistan vets. What makes it meaningful is that we peel back the layers of their lives from before they enlisted, till they were injured and all the way to the side of a mountain. From telling this story has grown the idea that veterans could tell their own stories even

better and to greater effect. Now it is our mission to help people in need to learn the skills required to make films. By enabling the power of story, we enable the power of understanding and the ability to heal.

Top image: Photo of Michael Brown by Didrick Johnck

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