



# 2023 Healthy Living Conference - City of Hope

## Advocacy Through Storytelling: Empowering Communities to Shift the Narratives

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#### SUMMARY

Advocacy through storytelling is a program that focuses on story telling as a means of influencing community change. Oftentimes marginalized communities data and overall narratives are utilized to paint a picture in which members of the community are viewed as victims or at worst perceived as the cause of their own challenges.

The belief is that if we provide the community with the skills and tools to authentically share their story, through engaging story telling highlighting their perspectives and challenges then we can create a message that is rooted in their truth, showcases their own resiliency and removes any stigmas associated with sharing the vulnerable parts of their journey.

*"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside of you."* Maya Angelou

#### NOTABLE FACTS

- **Target community:** focused in the Antelope Valley- Spa 1. A region under-resourced and grouped into the greater LA County narrative.
- Classes were held for **10 weeks**.
- **Participants received training on systems change and how systems impacts BIPOC communities** .
- Focused on creating digital assets that will be used as advocacy tools to shift community narrative, raise awareness of specific challenge in the region and activate a call to action.
- Issues that were addressed, mental health, homelessness, and overall access to quality health services.
- This program will expand into a documentary covering the Antelope Valley Community.

#### WHAT DID WE DO?

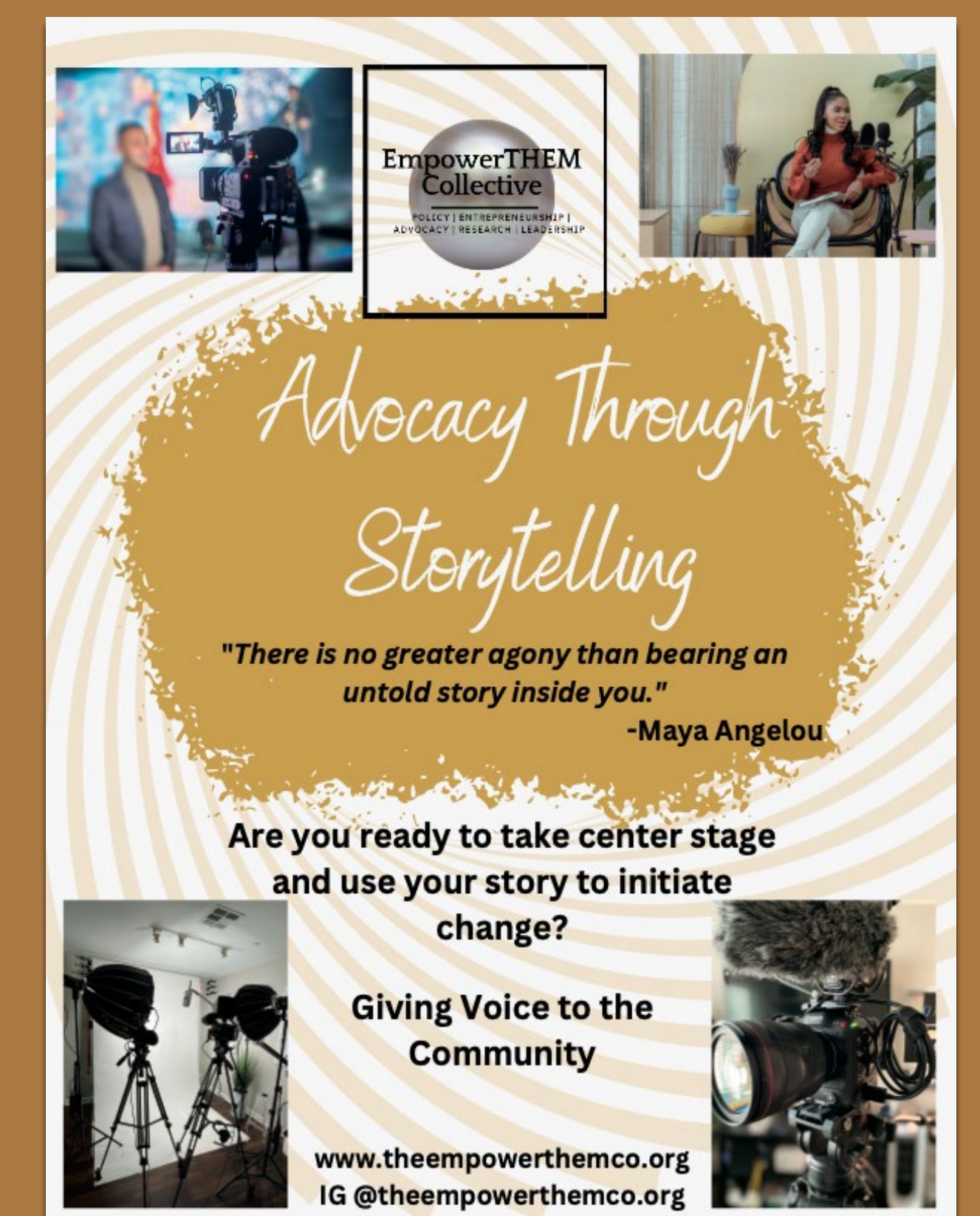
1. Created a culturally congruent storytelling and systems change training program, utilizing practical training techniques to improve user understanding and application of the material.
2. Provide 4 cohorts of storytelling and systems change training, combined participants 32
3. Through the training participants identified which domain they wanted to utilize their stories to influence change.
4. Participants created power statements and calls to actions relating to their specific domain of change.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation

1. We utilized pre and post surveys to tracks participants understanding of the elements of telling effective stories, how systems impacts BIPOC communities and practical call to actions to initiate a cascade of systems improvements.
2. We assessed participants previous community leadership[ and advocacy experience, and monitor participants readiness to serve in community leadership and advocacy roles once they completed their training.
3. Participants were invited to film their stories and testimonials from the training and receive additional support to move from training to active advocacy.
4. During the 10 weeks, participants received one-on-one coaching that allowed for addressing any specific concerns, messaging refinement, but more importantly processing their own feelings associated with sharing vulnerable parts of their story, and sharing their story in a way that allows them to retain their dignity.

#### Outcomes

- Five participants filmed advocacy digital assets for use in various community engagement and outreach events
- Six participants increased their participation in coalition initiatives in the domains, of homeless services, mental health and health services
- One participant accepted a community leadership role in a health initiative
- The collective training participants have identified future programmatic and policy solutions to improve community outcomes.



**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** We would like to thank The Alliance and Antelope Valley African American Infant and Maternal Mortality Initiative for partnering with The EmpowerTHEM Collective to reach community members who had impactful stories.

#### FINAL THOUGHTS

For BIPOC Communities oral story telling is a cornerstone of many cultures.

Supporting these communities to utilize their natural ancestral tools to share their story improves their overall wellbeing and removes barriers that prevent them from engaging in systems change that improves their communities outcomes.