

IMPACT.ED PRESENTS

NOVEMBER 2020

# SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION ACROSS CONTEXTS



Impact.Ed

Shift the Equilibrium Towards a Just Society

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# CONNECTION AS IMPACT

In the midst of a tumultuous political climate, with both systemic racism and COVID-19 continuing to ravage our country and our people, **we write this paper.**

In what is potentially one of the most harrowing times we will ever face in our lifetime, **we come together.**

Emotions are running high and people are scared for what is coming next, and **we continue to focus on what matters.**

We believe that the time is now for us to come together as a collective, to share and learn from one another in order **to create long-lasting systemic change in our communities.**

We believe bringing together people from diverse backgrounds who see themselves as changemakers will create **ripples of impact that will reverberate across our nation.**

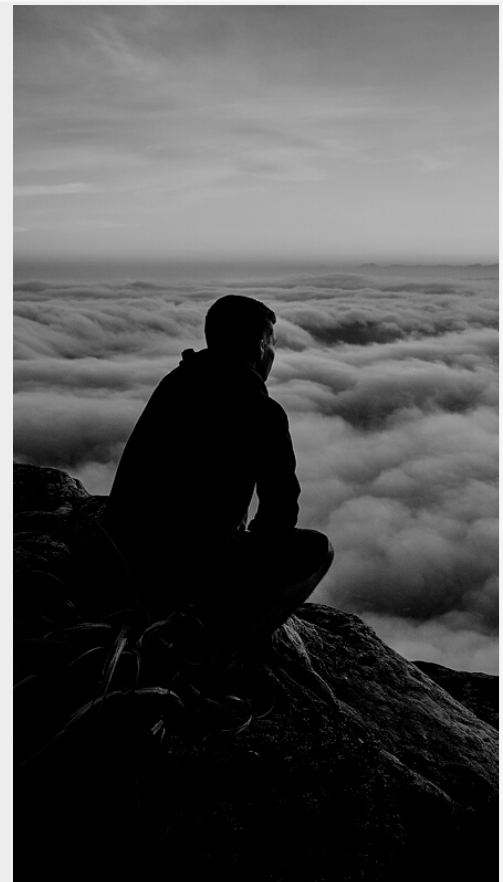
We believe it is through connection and investment in our youth that that change will come. We believe **empowering our youngest learners to think and be social entrepreneurs is critical.**

It is in that spirit we bring to you our second Impact Paper. We hope it brings you inspiration and comfort that there is change happening for the better, even in small ways.

## WITH GRATITUDE

This paper would not be possible without the 60+ members of our Impact.Ed community who believe in the power of social entrepreneurship education. It is because of you, the ideas you bring to sharpen us, the work you do in your communities and the words you've shared in our Connection Circles over the years that have given us confidence to continue this work.

We hope you see a bit of yourself in this paper, because it's here if you search.



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# STORYTELLING AS A KEY SKILL

HOW FAIRY TALES UNLOCK OUR PATHS TO SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

By Sara Mierke



In fifth grade I won a literary prize. Okay, so it was just a giant Hershey's candy bar for an in-class competition, but I was excited to be recognized by my teacher, Mrs. Krogness, whom I adored. And I was proud of the story I had written about "How the Zebra Got its Stripes." I loved that story and I loved writing it. Only recently has storytelling reemerged in my life; and I'm experiencing the transformative power of the story as an adult learner and entrepreneur as life-giving - and fun - in these uncertain times.

Sometime between 5th grade and now storytelling lost its charm for me and started to feel uncomfortable, not in my wheelhouse.

In fact, it kind of scares me. Whether it's recounting to friends an experience I've had, posting on social media, or writing about the venture I'm launching, telling a story can feel hard and awkward. My internal critic steps in: Is this boring? Do I sound smart enough? Why would anyone really care about what I'm saying (or writing about)? I just feel so exposed and self-conscious.

Once I decided to launch my own venture and joined several communities of practice to support that work, I found myself writing and telling stories about myself (real and mythical), potential customers, my venture, and even inanimate objects (like a lichen-covered birch branch I found on a hike this summer).



## STORYTELLING AS A KEY SKILL CONT'D

In spite of this recent practice, when our Impact Circle was recently tasked with writing and sharing our social entrepreneurship stories using a fairy tale format, I was still a little apprehensive. The purpose of the exercise was for each of us to explore our entrepreneurial journey, untangling what has, and might continue to be, holding us back, and celebrate a moment or decision that propelled us towards a fuller realization of our goals (or truer selves, depending on how deep you really wanted to go). It was also a way for us to get to know each other better and build on our growing sense of community. To this process, the fairy tale format lent an air of levity -- and demanded brevity -- both of which can get lost in the adult world of work and the stress of entrepreneurship. And while my fairy tale would not have brought home the candy bar prize, I really enjoyed the process.

Entrepreneurship itself has become something of a fairy tale, with the entrepreneur taking on mythic qualities. Sometimes it's a cautionary tale but more often the arc of the entrepreneur's story follows a clear path: have an idea, work really hard, exit with a fortune (before their 35th birthday). In social entrepreneurship we know the problems we're trying to solve don't get solved with a single "great idea" and certainly don't go away upon an "exit". What's more, typically we're not in it for the fortune or the fame (although there is the issue of the Heropreneur). How we tell the story of our entrepreneurial journey is important.



WE USED THIS FRAME TO TELL OUR STORIES:

[ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS \_\_\_\_\_.  
EVERY DAY \_\_\_\_\_. ONE DAY \_\_\_\_\_.  
BECAUSE OF THAT \_\_\_\_\_.  
UNTIL FINALLY \_\_\_\_\_.]

Once upon a time there was a girl who loved to explore. At a young age she recognized that there was a world beyond where she had grown up. Sara struck out into that world to find wonder in new places, growth in challenges, and purpose in connecting with others whose lives were different than her own.

Everyday she sought experiences that spoke to how she learned best, exploring the world in ways that were immediate and unfiltered. Those many and varied experiences, in places near and far, led her to see that people everywhere seek to define the future of their own communities, that schools are core to communities everywhere, and that learners, like her, learn best by doing. But she also saw that schools do not always fulfill their promises to communities or to learners; and that vibrant, just communities require schools to do their part. One day, when life was at a crossroads - as it can be from time to time if you let it - Sara felt stuck and uncertain. Because of that, she realized that things might not fall into place in ways they had before.

Because of that she understood that it was time to consider a new way forward. She started to wonder if she could help schools become better neighbors.

Until finally, Sara turned her belief in school-community mutuality into a venture that brings together the power of community development, the impact of experiential education, and the lens of social justice to transform the role schools play in their communities.



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## STORYTELLING AS A KEY SKILL CONT'D

Entrepreneurs love to tell stories and entrepreneurship education puts a premium on storytelling as a core skill - and a competitive advantage for a company or venture. For kids, like my 5th grade self, telling or writing stories may come easily as long as their schooling fosters their instinct to create stories. African Leadership Academy, for example, builds on that natural storytelling propensity in children for its high school age students, as well as the vibrant oral history and storytelling traditions from across the continent. This is woven into its Entrepreneurial Leadership curriculum and campus life through *My Story*, an informal initiative that encourages students and adults to share a story of their journey, typically in person during a weekly assembly and now virtually.

The regular telling of and listening to *My Stories* is a powerful builder of both individual skills and collective community. Individuals courageously telling their stories in front of an audience are at once vulnerable and strong. The shared experience of listening, responding (at ALA there is always a response: supportive, rousing, tearful) and then reflecting, reinforces the Academy's values and acts like mortar between the foundational blocks of the school community.



## ENTREPRENEURS LOVE TO TELL STORIES & ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION PUTS A PREMIUM ON STORYTELLING AS A CORE SKILL AND A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE.

I considered sharing a *My Story* while I was at ALA. I even started a draft. But that fear and imposter's voice - and a crazy travel schedule - got the better of me so I didn't do it. For some adults the specter of the blank page and the gazing audience can be debilitating, while for others it is a life line. My recent fairy tale (included here) was another practice run at regaining the whimsical "beginner's mindset" encapsulated in the old Xerox copy of my stripey zebra tale. It was also a practice run at refining the actual skills needed to tell a compelling story as I build a venture for impact. My social entrepreneurship journey is not likely to be a fairy tale; but I'll take the fairy tale along with me.

With all good stories there are lessons to be learned. Here are a few lessons we came away with from our fairy tale exercise for you to keep in mind as you pursue your social entrepreneurship story:

- Storytelling should be fun and uninhibited (try free writing)
- It's also a skill, so get practicing
- Find a format that speaks to you and a style that is uniquely you
- Storytelling is essential to community-building (the social in social entrepreneurship)
- The story is really never over... be open to the unfolding of yourself and your venture

# WHEN EQUITY REQUIRES SACRIFICE

By Kenneth Walk

I sometimes wonder why people in power choose to solve other people's problems without checking with the other people. Too often, the people chosen to solve America's problems don't understand their roots or the communities that they impact. They are disconnected because of their geography and wealth. While they have good intentions, their work hinders progress by siphoning funds away from those who can better effect change. This creates a funding disparity that significantly impacts the women and people of color affected by these problems and who are working to solve them.

- Only 1% of Venture Capital backed founders between 2013 and 2018 were black.
- In 2018, female founders raised just 2.3% of the total venture capital funding invested.
- \$900 billion in philanthropic assets in the United States, with only approximately 8% of grants from foundations go to communities of color.

In *Decolonizing Wealth*, Edgar Villanueva coined the term Colonizer Virus as an infection that creates funding disparities. He explains how it was made by the initial conquest and abuse of people, infects all of America's institutions, and exists to divide, control, and exploit. He believes that to create balance and equity in our society, especially in funding, money needs to be used as a medicine to heal and repair past and present inequities. However, we must also acknowledge that for wealth and opportunity in America to be balanced and equal, those who control wealth need to be willing to sacrifice some of their control. For those who control wealth to choose to relinquish some control, they will need to value the community over the accumulation of wealth, especially when this wealth stems from the exploits and theft of the Colonizer Virus.

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Once upon a time, there was an African American teacher who worked in urban schools. Every day he was saddened by the hardships that his students of color faced. From police brutality to generational poverty, his students felt like their lives did not matter in our society.

One day, he decided to become an attorney to help create laws to protect and uplift his students. But his journey was challenging because he saw how wealthy and powerful institutions dominated the courtrooms and governments that made our laws.

Because of that, he felt like his work did not matter. Because of that, he moved back and forth from schools to law firms and back again to find a way to make a real difference. Until finally, he realized that he needed to find a third way.

So, he set out to develop an enterprise that would use social innovation to empower his students and their families to change their lives and communities. A venture that gave them the resources, tools, and knowledge they need to organize, build capacity, and shape our laws.

## WHEN EQUITY REQUIRES SACRIFICE CONT'D

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, a man was robbed, beaten, and left for dead. As he lay there, a priest and a Levite ignored and walked past him. It could have been because they were busy or because the man made them uncomfortable; either way, they did not value helping the broken man. Then, the good Samaritan saw the man and took mercy on him. He sacrificed his time by bandaging and pouring oil and wine on the man's wounds; he sacrificed his comfort by giving the man his donkey; he sacrificed his wealth by putting the man in an inn and paying his expenses. While he received no monetary gain by helping, he valued restoring the man to his former state because he saw the man as his neighbor, or, as Edgar Villanueva would describe, as a member of his group.

**PEOPLE WHO SACRIFICE THEIR TIME BY HELPING TO HEAL THE WOUNDS CAUSED BY THE COLONIZER VIRUS; SACRIFICE THEIR COMFORT BY HELPING TO EMPOWER OTHERS TO LEAD AND OWN INSTITUTIONS OF CONTROL; SACRIFICE THEIR WEALTH BY FUNDING CAUSES THAT BENEFIT OTHER MORE THAN THEMSELVES.**

Many people in America have been historically robbed, beaten, and left for dead. There are also many priests and Levites who are disconnected from their plight. To achieve balance and equity in our country, we need more good Samaritans. People who sacrifice their time, comfort, and wealth to help those who have been historically robbed of wealth and opportunities, because we all are part of the same group. Due to the disparities in funding caused by the Colonizer Virus, women and people of color who have the experience to solve society's problems have been robbed of opportunities and wealth. We need those who control wealth to be modern good Samaritans. People who sacrifice their time by helping to heal the wounds caused by the Colonizer Virus; sacrifice their comfort by helping to empower others to lead and own institutions of control; sacrifice their wealth by funding causes that benefit others more than themselves. By doing this, we can be cured of the Colonizer Virus, heal past and present harms, and help to create a more balanced and equal America.





# THE SEEDS AND ROOTS OF CONNECTION

By Drea Gallaga

This fall, at the school where I teach, we've been discussing and practicing civil discourse skills with our students. To counter the divisive time we're living in, we've asked our students to practice conversations about topics such as race and politics that are traditionally called "difficult," but which we're working to norm calling "unpracticed."

The two most important guidelines for these conversations have been "put relationships first" and "practice radical empathy." With these principles, we have fundamentally held community as our highest value. Why? What is it about a culture of connection that allows us to change? Why should social entrepreneurship education in particular be concerned with lifting up connection and community as guiding, fundamental principles?

Building a relationship-based community requires that we see each other as members of the same group, bound by threads connecting our hearts and minds. When your thread is pulled, it tugs at mine. Even when we have different experiences and perspectives, and even when we can't actually see the connection, we are still inextricably tied together. Understanding that we are truly interconnected is not an intellectual exercise: this understanding calls me to see and appreciate how you and I are different, and it allows me to be seen by you in turn; it demands that we recognize each other's pain, practice compassion, and then, take action.

Becoming an expert in empathy and relationship-building is a life-long journey, and I know the work we've done this fall is only one step. But I also know that learning how to build a connected community will allow my students to do authentic and impactful work in the world through social entrepreneurship, service, and community engagement--and that this will reach into their daily lives too. As we learn to be changemakers, our search for vital, lasting, equity-centered change can sprout from our interconnectedness. In this way, we can all co-create the world we want to live in.

**BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP-BASED  
COMMUNITY REQUIRES THAT WE SEE EACH  
OTHER AS MEMBERS OF THE SAME GROUP,  
BOUND BY THREADS CONNECTING OUR  
HEARTS AND MINDS.**

Once upon a time there was a humble weaver. Every day, she fingered warp and weft, wrapping strand around strand, making structures where there had been only threads, focused solely on this work.

One day, she saw the selvages were rough, were uneven, the edges drew her in, she loved those raw, uncertain margins, knowing they were evidence of her work and the work of those who spun the thread.

Because of that, she paused. And she looked beyond the fabric in front of her to see those to whom the garment would be gifted, and she dreamed of what it would take for them to love the whole as she did, the warp and weft and the selvages. Because of that, she said to the spinners, what is your story? And they brought her the greatest diversity of thread, an ecosystem of fibers: thick, rough, smooth, bulky, wooden, soft, silver, rainbow, and she took those and wove and wove until her fingers were raw and the garment flowed with stories.

Until finally, she learned enough to pause again and say, Once upon a time there was an artist, a crafter, a weaver of practicality and of beauty, in the margins and the whole.

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# ABOUT IMPACT CIRCLES



## WHAT EXACTLY ARE IMPACT CIRCLES AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

Impact Circles are small groups of social entrepreneurship educators and social impact leaders who believe that this work is hard and requires a networked approach.

The goal is to create a community, build creative confidence and tease out the great work that is happening across our country.

What is unique about these circles, is that they are meant to fuel the inner spirit of each participant, while at the same time challenging each person to share their voices more widely for others to hear.

This is why we created the Impact Paper: **To amplify the bright spots in social entrepreneurship education and create a powerful network of changemakers.**

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# HOW IMPACT CIRCLES WORK

Impact Circles are six to eight weeks long, **intimate learning groups** focused on learning and sharing the hardships and successes of leading social entrepreneurship education.

Our purpose is to **expand the community of social entrepreneurship educators** in an effort to **amplify the bright spots** of what is working well, and **use the collective genius to do even better**, more meaningful work to impact our individual communities of learners. It is just as much about **radical innovation as it is about radical introspection**.

We meet virtually for one hour per week synchronously via Zoom. Additionally, our team provides asynchronous discussion prompts and exercises meant to extend the learning. **Over time, the group becomes a close knit community** that regularly shares resources and collaborates on projects.

We use National School Reform discussion protocols, examples and resources from our own individual practices and online collaborative tools such as Slack, Mural and Flipgrid to create our learning environment. **Ultimately, though, it is about the connections forged and ideas shared that fuel the Impact Circles.**

## OUR GOALS AND STRUCTURE

Our leadership team created a learning arc that we hope strikes the right balance between **surfacing the expertise of the group and advancing each individual's practice**. Our hope is that each individual feels uncomfortable, challenged and valued.

We meet virtually for one hour per week synchronously via Zoom. Additionally, our team provides asynchronous discussion prompts and exercises meant to extend the learning. Over time, the group becomes a close knit community that regularly shares resources and collaborates on projects via our Slack Community Channel.





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# JOIN OUR COMMUNITY

PLANTS NEED THE SOIL, WIND, RAIN, AND SUN TO GROW. THEY NEED THINGS WE CAN'T EVEN SEE, LIKE FUNGI AND OTHER MICROORGANISMS.

SO TOO, WE NEED THE COMMUNITY AROUND US, THE UNIVERSE OF PEOPLE WHO LIFT US UP AND WHO NURTURE US IN ORDER TO THRIVE AND GROW. IN THIS TYPE OF COMMUNITY, WE ARE PART OF A SYSTEM, WHICH MEANS WE TEND TO ALL ITS PARTS.

CLICK THE LINK  
BELOW



JOIN US

IMPACT CIRCLES  
HOSTED VIRTUALLY BY THE IMPACT.ED TEAM

2020 | [WWW.SOCENT.EDUCATION](http://WWW.SOCENT.EDUCATION)

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# CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

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These three humans have been part of our community for sometime now, but these last six weeks joining forces with them has been a treat. Each of them showed up every week ready to work. They were introspective, thoughtful and open-minded, and our team learned so much alongside these thoughtful partners.

Their dedication to producing content that would be both cathartic for them and helpful to the community at large is what made this project such a success.

**Sara** is the Founder of AnchorEd, an organization that works with independent schools to facilitate equity-based, strategic local impact and transformation learning in resilient communities.

**Kenneth** is an attorney, consultant, and speaker, actively working to lift up and empower marginalized communities. His work in education law and management is meant to ensure equity for all students and families..

**Drea** is the Director of The Live+Serve Lab, a makerspace, a laboratory, and a hub for hands-on service. It is not only a project space for smaller ideas and short-term solutions, but also an incubator for big and complex thinking about tackling pressing problems.

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# IMPACT.ED LEADERSHIP TEAM

THE EDITORS, PROJECT MANAGERS AND THOSE THAT STOKED THE IMAGINATIONS OF THE WHOLE TEAM



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*Thank you for reading!*

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## **IMPACT PAPER #2**

**DESIGNED TO GENERATE SYSTEMIC CHANGE  
BY AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF  
CHANGEMAKERS AND CONNECTING THOSE  
WHO ARE WORKING TO CREATE EQUITABLE  
COMMUNITIES**