

Shared Narratives: The “Voice” of Personal and Social Identity – Are we Listening?

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This discussion will examine how marginalized and subjugated individuals share narratives through the “voice” of personal and social identity. The question: “Are we listening?” inquires as to how our perception of others may alter the articulation and expression of their human experience. As we listen to the shared narratives of others, we often deconstruct their stories based upon our own perception of meaning. When we reflect upon these experiences, we often times reconstruct these stories based upon our own reality. Viewing the story of another through a different lens, leaves that person with the responsibility of having to explain misperceptions or misinterpretations imposed upon them through the editing of social difference. Hence, either the person feels their story has no substantive value or it is unimportant. As a result, feelings of shame and humiliation become embedded in how individuals see themselves and how they feel their story is now perceived by others.

It is important to refrain from silencing the voice of others by imposing our perception of their lived experiences. Instead we must learn ways of validating the experiences by being fully present as we listen. When we, through our own views, become insensitive to “voice” of others, we can often create *silent* mechanisms of social violence as human expression has now been altered. Being emotionally absent from the expression of others can create a veil of humiliation which looms over ones right to define their social identity and expression of “sense of self.”