

Tell stories to change the world

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Change isn't just about policy – it's about narrative. In this video, I explain the storytelling method that can transform public opinion and reshape our politics. Drawing on a centuries-old narrative structure – and even Jane Austen – I show how we can tell stories that move people, overcome political obstacles, and demand real solutions to problems like inequality, poverty and the climate crisis.

You don't have to be an expert – you just have to care. Start telling your story. It's how we win.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvnCG1uilyY&si=hQQmYx9C_MVpoX44

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=bzyd3-191e8b4-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

People often ask me how can we create the change that I often talk about on this channel and which other people talk about in the whole of the movement for social justice in the UK. And my answer is very simple, and it's very straightforward.

It is that everyone can be a storyteller for change, and it's not hard to work out how we

can do that if we understand that every political story, in fact, just about every story ever told, is made up of five parts.

In the first instance, there's a problem.

Then we can name somebody who has a desire to solve it.

But, and this is where the tension comes into the story, there is an obstacle to progress, and so, fourthly, we have to identify a potential solution to the problem before, at the end, we get to a better future.

This is how all narratives are built. Understand that, and we can do some essential things that will create change in our society.

We can do storytelling, political storytelling, to create social change by building narratives about inequality. And that's the key point I'm making in this video.

Every story, as I said, starts with a problem. So we can begin by talking about the problems that we can name in our society. It might be poverty. It could be inequality, or it could be climate breakdown, or whatever else that you are concerned about.

You don't need to be an expert to notice that things aren't working in this country. You just need to open your eyes and walk about, and the glaringly obvious will hit you. And what you need to do is talk about it.

Then you become something which is quite critical. You become the person who wants to create change because, without a desire for something to be better, there is no momentum for that change to happen.

Campaigners, activists, and ordinary people, and you might be one of those, and I reckon I am, are the agents of change in our society. If you care, you are part of the story of change that we want.

Then, and it's always true, if something is wrong and it isn't being put right, it's because there is an obstacle in the way of progress. Real change is never easy for that reason. The obstacle might be political, or it might be indifference. It could be vested interests. It might be fear, and right now, for example, Labour's refusal to tax wealth is an example of such a block.

You could call that obstacle technical.

You could call it dogmatic.

Whichever one it is, it's real. And that's when we need to work out how we can find a way forward. This is the fourth stage of the process, and the power of a good story lies in its ability to show that change is possible.

We could have a better policy. We could have a fairer tax system. We could do real redistribution of income and wealth in the UK. Of course, you could swap those lines for others if you have another concern. But the point is, you've got to be able to imagine a way forward to solve the problem that your story is addressing.

The plot twist is to show that this change is possible, and that you believe that the resistance to change can be overcome, if only by telling the story time after time, after time.

And you tell the story because you describe the possibility that there can be and will be a better ending if only people will listen to you.

We could have fairer budgets in this country.

We could have greater equality as a result of improved ways in which the government could tax, and the ways in which the government could spend.

We could have stronger communities.

We could have sustainable growth.

We could even have hope.

We write the ending by acting and telling the tale. And this is true of every story you've just about ever heard.

Let me give you an example from literature. You might know the story of Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen, written over 200 years ago. It fits exactly into this pattern.

The problem was pride. The clue was in the title of the novel. Who had the pride? Elizabeth Bennett did. She was too proud to fall in love.

Who had the desire to change things? Mr. Darcy did. He was in love.

What was the obstacle? It was a misunderstanding between them. She was proud, and he was prejudiced against her position in life. She was too lowly, he thought, to marry her in the first instance.

How was the obstacle cleared to provide a solution to progress? There was an honest confession and declaration of love.

And was there a happy ending? You bet there was. There was a marriage.

But that fits exactly into the narrative that I've just explained, and we can do this with political storytelling, too.

Let's just use the problem of wealth inequality.

That is the problem, the desire is on the part of you, I hope, and it is on the part of me, to create redistribution of income and wealth.

The obstacle is Labour's refusal to deliver that.

The solution is to show that we can design a better tax system. I've done that in the [Taxing Wealth Report](#). You can find a link to that below this video.

We can change the way in which we tax the wealthy to overcome the problems of wealth and income inequality and to meet Labour's objections.

And the ending is a better economy for the sake of everyone, including, and I make the point very clearly, the wealthy, because their well-being is dependent upon everybody else's ability to survive in the economy in which they also live.

You don't need to be an expert to tell that story. Sure, you need to get your head around some aspects of the story, and you may need to understand some bits of the process of design that I and others have gone through to suggest alternatives.

But the fact is, once you've done that, and it's not terribly difficult, you can then tell the story.

You can become the proponent of change. And the more times you tell the story, the more times it is repeated, the more often it is heard, the more likely it is to succeed.

You can have a role in the process of change, in other words. Your role is to be the storyteller.

You can see what is wrong.

You can have the desire to make a change.

You can work out, or you can use the work of others to see what obstacles need to be overcome.

But most of all, you can say that a better outcome is possible, and we can have it.

And that is how change happens, and that is how we win.

Stories change minds and shape politics.

Share them in your workplace online and with friends. The story of inequality can have a better ending, but only if we tell it.