

"Silence Speaks" Digital Storytelling in South Africa: The Men as Partners Experience

by Amy Hill

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BERKELEY, Calif., USA -- Academic research and intuitive wisdom make it clear that long-term healing from violence depends on opportunities for survivors to tell their stories. Six years ago, the Center for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, Calif., and I co-founded Silence Speaks. The project supports survivors and witnesses of violence in a process of personal and social transformation, using creative autobiographical writing, art therapy, and media production. After sharing stories orally in small groups (typically eight to 10 people in each workshop), participants learn to make short digital videos. The finished pieces are typically three to five minutes in length, and include personal photos, original artwork, music, and, most importantly, heartfelt first-person narration. Themes include survival, courage, healing, forgiveness, and the power of people engaged in committed community action against abuse. Nearly 100 people have participated in these three- to four-day workshops arranged in close partnership with grassroots groups and non-profit organizations.

In the fall of 2004, an old friend from across the world wrote to ask, "What would it take to do digital storytelling in South Africa?" Initially, **[SNIP – End of preview.]**