



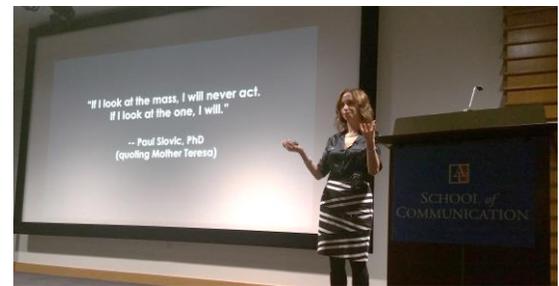
Social Marketing Event about storytelling held at American University

Written by: Taylor Battle, American University, Strategic Communication Graduate Student, Class of 2017
Photo credit: Bryana Braxton, American University, Public Relations & Strategic Communications, Class of 2017

The evening of February 21, 2017, marked the second social marketing event at American University (AU) in partnership with the Social Marketing Association of North America.

Thirty minutes prior to the start of the event, students, staff and social marketers gathered outside the Malsi-Doyle Michael Forman Theater in the School of Communication, for an opportunity to network. At the conclusion of the networking session, attendees made their way into the theater.

Hosted by AU's School of Communication and AU's Kogod School of Business, the free event featured Caty Borum Chattoo. Director of the Center for Media and Social Impact, and Executive in Residence at AU, Chattoo spoke about the role and importance of powerful, emotional media stories that spark empathy and human connection.



Chattoo shared some of her personal anecdotes about the power and influence of storytelling.

“Social change is really a change that happens in our hearts and spirits,” quoted Chattoo. She explained that one of the most important ways to make people change is to make them feel something. “If you don’t make people feel something, they won’t change.”

Highlighting a number of images that have propelled changed, one of the most powerful examples she shared were three different images depicting the Syrian refugee crisis, one of the worst humanitarian crises that the world has ever faced. The three images showed each of the following:

1. A person
2. Sheer devastation of a problem
3. Data

Though all three images showed the Syrian refugee crisis, only one of those stories led to something actually happening.

The profound image that led people to act was that of a Syrian refugee holding his daughter with writing pens in his hand. He was a professional class working person in Syria before he had to leave due to violence and conflict. The only thing he had left was to sell pens on the street and could not leave his daughter behind. Though this was an image with no story behind it, within 24 hours, \$80,000 was raised to find and help the man and his family. By the end of the week, \$200,000 was raised as he did eventually find work back in Syria, working with a refugee community. As a terribly emotional picture, this image propelled some type of action.

This powerful example provided evidence of the power of storytelling and how one image with no story behind it could influence audiences to take action.

Throughout the presentation, Chattoo provided additional examples of previous research, statistics and facts about narrative and non-fiction storytelling, story structures and the effectiveness of storytelling and social change. The presentation ended with Chattoo answering questions from the audience. For more information about the Center for Media and Social Impact visit - <http://cmsimpact.org/>.