

## **Black Voices on Story Telling** [\(PDF version\)](#)

“The classroom was a jail of other people’s interests. The library was open, unending, free.”

— Ta-Nehisi Coates, American writer, journalist, and educator

---

“You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, who had ever been alive.”

— James Baldwin, American novelist, essayist, playwright, poet, and social critic

---

“I’ve always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.”

— Chimanda Ngozi Adichie, Nigerian novelist, nonfiction and short story writer

---

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

— Maya Angelou, American poet, memoirist and civil rights activist

---

“If I didn’t define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive.” — Audre Lorde, American writer, feminist, and civil rights activist

---

“Popular films are so powerful and compelling that it’s often easier to accept their versions of history than the much more complicated true stories.”

— Melissa Harris-Perry, writer, professor and political commentator

---

“Black history isn’t a separate history. This is all of our history, this is American history, and we need to understand that. It has such an impact on kids and their values and how they view black people.”

— Karyn Parsons, actress

---

“We should emphasize not Negro history, but the Negro in history. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race hate, and religious prejudice.” — Carter Woodson, historian, journalist, founder of Association for the Study of African American Life and History

---

“I am America. I am the part you won’t recognize. But get used to me. Black confident, cocky; my name, not yours; my religion, not yours, my goals, my own; get used to me.”

— Muhammad Ali, boxer and activist

---

“For I am my mother’s daughter, and the drums of Africa still beat in my heart.”

— Mary McLeod Bethune, educator, stateswoman, humanitarian and civil rights activist

---

“Never be limited by other people’s limited imaginations.”

— Dr. Mae Jemison, first African-American female astronaut

---

“Defining myself, as opposed to being defined by others, is one of the most difficult challenges I face.”

— Carol Moseley-Braun, politician and lawyer