



# 5 Ways to Use Storytelling to Drive Social Change

The documentary *Three (Extra)Ordinary Women* (3EW) offers a transformative story about three women who rise above systemic racism, gender inequality, abuse, and personal hardships. Their journey—both physical and metaphorical—toward the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro represents more than an individual achievement; it's a powerful message of resilience, empowerment, and the pursuit of justice. By using these themes, organizations can harness storytelling to fuel social change.

Here's a guide for organizations on how to use storytelling to inspire action, empower individuals, and drive social change through the elements of 3EW and its key themes.

## 1. Share Diverse Stories of Resilience and Leadership

In *Three (Extra)Ordinary Women*, the stories of Pearlette, Tammy, and Terry highlight the power of leadership in the face of adversity. These women emerged as leaders not because they were born into privilege, but because they fought against all odds—surviving abuse, poverty, and systemic oppression. Their ability to overcome life's challenges speaks to the innate leadership within all people, especially girls and women.

**Action Tip:** Showcase the leadership of individuals who have navigated difficult circumstances and emerged stronger. Create platforms where these individuals may center themselves as the hero of their own lived experiences and share their leadership journey of resilience, determination, and service to their communities. This will help shift the narrative around marginalized groups, portraying them not as victims, but as active agents of change.

### **Theme Integration: Leadership**

Highlight how leadership can be cultivated in difficult situations, empowering others to follow their own paths to success and community service.

## 2. Use the Metaphor of Climbing “Kili” to Illustrate Personal Growth

The climb up Mount Kilimanjaro serves as a powerful metaphor for overcoming life’s challenges. Just as climbing the highest free-standing mountain in Africa requires intense physical and mental fortitude, so too does the journey of overcoming oppression and personal adversity. The film shows how the women used their collective strength, intuition, and willpower to prepare for and succeed in their climb.

**Action Tip:** Use this metaphor in storytelling to illustrate the journey of personal growth, emphasizing that, while the path may be difficult, it’s achievable with perseverance and self-belief. Connect this narrative to tangible steps each person can take in their own lives to challenge obstacles (e.g., self-limiting beliefs, poverty, trauma) and realize their potential.

### **Theme Integration: Intuition, Wellness**

Empower individuals to trust their inner strength and instincts, highlighting the importance of mental and physical wellness as tools for overcoming adversity.

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## 3. Amplify the Power of Communication and Advocacy

Throughout the film, the women demonstrate how communication and advocacy can be used to drive social change. As they prepare for and ascent up the mountain, they communicate their personal stories, struggles, and dreams. Their goal is to change the mainstream narrative, proving that women—especially women of color—can achieve anything. The documentary is not just about their journey; it’s about amplifying their voices and advocating for gender equality and human rights.

**Action Tip:** Create campaigns that encourage individuals to share their own stories and advocate for the causes they are passionate about. Use storytelling to mobilize people around issues like gender equality, racial justice, and human rights. Develop content that encourages people to amplify marginalized voices in their communities and work together for collective change.

### **Theme Integration: Communication, Advocacy**

Leverage storytelling to not only raise awareness but also call for action, encouraging others to advocate for justice and equality in their own spheres of influence.

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## 4. Showcase the Intersection of Identity and Social Justice

The film beautifully showcases the diversity of experience among the three women—each from different ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic statuses, and geographic locations. However, they share a common bond through their shared struggles with systemic racism, gender inequality, and disenfranchisement. This intersection of personal identity and larger social justice issues forms the backbone of their story.

**Action Tip:** Encourage organizations to use stories that show how different forms of oppression intersect in individuals' lives. This can help organizations address multiple social issues—such as racial, gender, and class inequality—through a single narrative. Create campaigns that highlight the voices of women of color, as they often face unique struggles that must be acknowledged and addressed for social change to occur.

### **Theme Integration: Human Rights**

Storytelling that highlights intersectional identities can drive home the importance of acknowledging multiple layers of discrimination, advocating for a more inclusive approach to human rights and equality.

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## **5. Inspire Through Wellness, Self-Care, and Collective Healing**

The women in *Three (Extra)Ordinary Women* not only tackle physical challenges but also engage in emotional and mental healing as they reflect on their past traumas. Their ability to prioritize wellness—both individually and as a group—shows how crucial self-care and community support are in the journey toward empowerment.

**Action Tip:** Promote the idea of wellness as both an individual and collective responsibility. Use storytelling to highlight how people can care for their physical, emotional, and mental health as they work toward social change. Encourage organizations to focus on holistic well-being, ensuring that people are nurtured as they engage in advocacy and activism. Create activities that connect individuals to nature (e.g., take nature walks, hiking, etc.).

### **Theme Integration: Wellness**

Incorporate wellness into social change initiatives by showing how emotional healing, self-care, and community support are integral to resilience. This approach will create a healthier, more sustainable movement for change.

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## **Conclusion: Using Storytelling to Drive Lasting Change**

By integrating the elements from *Three (Extra)Ordinary Women*, organizations can create powerful, transformative storytelling campaigns that inspire individuals to take action. Through shared resilience, strong leadership, the power of communication, and advocacy for human rights, organizations can catalyze social change. The film offers a blueprint for how storytelling can inspire people to rise above oppression, embrace their power, and change the world, one story at a time.

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Through these five storytelling techniques, organizations can drive the conversation forward, empower girls, women, and communities, and transform society. By weaving themes of leadership, advocacy, wellness, intuition, communication, and human rights, you can create a powerful narrative that not only educates but also activates individuals to create the change they wish to see in the world.