

Thinking Out Loud Interview Transcripts

The Making of "The Blame Game"

Sarah Freyermuth

So Sarah, welcome. Do you remember when you first learned about the Making Waves program?

I remember Ms. Weaver came and talked to our group about it and I just remember thinking how cool of an idea it was because I'm a really big proponent of that telling stories is the best way to share your experiences because that's kind of – no human being has the same experience as another human being, so the best way for people to understand each other is through storytelling and through hearing each others experiences. And I just really value that kind of storytelling aspect. So when she told me I thought this was really a good idea. And I knew myself and I knew all the other girls in the group and I knew that all of us had something that we could share that wasn't always talked about but that a lot of people could relate to.

Your story tackled some difficult subject matter. Will you talk about the story that you told and how you decided to tell that story?

I decided to talk about my struggle with anorexia, and the reason I decided to talk about that was twofold. So one was, I, talking about what I've been through, and what I'm still kind of going through, helps me to deal with it and to process it. Because I think one of the hardest things for me especially going through anorexia is really misunderstood. And so talking about it can help other people understand it, and so then I don't feel as alienated from everyone else. And then, on top of that, I really wanted to share the experience with other people for a couple reasons. One, because there are so many people that are going through anorexia or eating disorders worldwide, and again like I said, it's such an alienating disease. And the problem is that so many people that go through it kind of feel shamed into not talking about it. So even if me telling my story doesn't make them want to talk about it, that's OK, but if it makes them feel like, "Oh, hey, she doesn't feel ashamed of talking about it, I shouldn't feel ashamed of talking about mine, there's nothing to be ashamed of," then it will have accomplished its goals.

Is there anything else you want to share?

I think one of the things that Ms. Weaver talked about that I completely agree with is the fact that storytelling and vulnerability really creates a strong community of people that you can talk to about your problems. This was a really good opportunity for me because it put me in group of people who didn't judge what I was going through and who could understand some of the things I was going through and who I could just talk to and I could listen to and I felt community with

and that is really, really underrated, and that's something that isn't focused on in school at all. I mean we learn all about how algebra is going to be important for the rest of our lives, and how, like, the War of 1812 was really important, and all this stuff, and it's not that it's not important, but at the same time you have to be able, like – community and people are two things that you're going to be dealing with for the rest of your life. And if you want to survive your life with any amount of sanity at all you need to have a good community and a good group of people that you can rely on, and that's just something that isn't focused on in school. And that's something that this project kind of taught me and I think needs to be talked about more in school.

The Making of Encouraging Women in STEM

Clarissa Curry

What do you remember thinking when you first heard about Making Waves?

When Ms. Weaver introduced it I had just finished writing a paper on women in STEM for a publication that we put out at RBHS, and I thought that it would be a really great project to transition - I'm good friends with Michele Yang, who also did a project, and we had talked about doing an action project or possibly working together on a project related to women in STEM and so I thought that this was the perfect opportunity to make that a reality.

Tell me more about the content you chose and why it's important to you.

In the fall I plan to double major in electrical and biomedical engineering. And electrical engineering, despite having one of the lowest wage gaps in the United States, also has one of the lowest percentages of women. And, you know, I'm not necessarily worried about working with men, but I think it's something that needs to be discussed because there's no reason that there shouldn't be more women. Women aren't incapable of doing the math or the science or the engineering that's behind the field. So, why are there less women? It's something I'm really passionate about.

Tell me about your process in reporting this story.

Coincidentally, my dad actually has a female graduate student right now, and the company I'm working at has one female employee, and I don't know how it worked out so perfectly that those are the people who were in my life at the time I was working on this story, but I found both of their stories really inspiring. And so, I tried to shape my story around both my experience and what I thought their experiences were and what I thought it would be helpful to tell other people about, because I know it's not something that is widely talked about is the disparity of women in engineering and the physical sciences, so I kind of used them as models.

Anything else you would like to share?

This isn't necessarily related to my story, but as we were working on our stories we would meet every week. And despite the fact that I was already close friends with many of the people there, I felt like I became closer to them and more connected to them because typically, I'm a very chatty person, but I talk about superficial things and I'm kind of reserved emotionally. And so it was nice to have a space where you could just like honestly talk about stories that were meaningful to you, or even things that weren't necessarily meaningful but held some significance.

For example, I was taking an electronics class that was focused on robotics and electrical engineering, and it was my last class of the day every day, and then I would come straight from that to Making Waves, and I was the only girl in that class, and then, we're all young ladies in Making Waves, and so it was a very different dynamic and I would change the way that I expressed myself, like what things I talked about and also the voice I used and the style of my voice. And so it was very interesting how that played into the story and how that played into what I shared with Making Waves. And I felt like I was a lot less reserved coming from class where I had to make sure that I wasn't saying anything that might be construed as offensive or like inappropriate for the setting because I was the only female there.

The Making of "The Gender Leadership Gap"

Delaney Tevis

What was your first reaction to Making Waves?

Ms. Weaver approached me and the other reporters, and she proposed the project and I had just recorded a This I Believe essay at KBIA and it was a really interesting experience and it had me intrigued about radio, of course that was a very different project than this was, but it really sparked my interest in what storytelling and radio could do, and so I was really excited to start the project.

Tell me about your content. How did you choose it?

I think a problem for me was picking what I wanted to talk about because I am passionate about a lot of things in terms of social justice and things that I wish people talked about more. I started out with this broad idea of feminism, and I conducted several interviews all centered around feminism as a whole but I didn't - the more we talked, the more I realized that it wouldn't really come together as a story - it was too broad, and too kind of all over the place. And so we continued to brainstorm, and then I realized more specifically within the umbrella of feminism was the lack of women in professional leadership positions. And so I did a lot of research on

that. It's really frustrating because we [women] are putting in the work, and we have the data that shows it, yet somehow women still aren't getting the top positions. So I zoned in and I was like, "This is the story I want to do." And I started brainstorming about who I wanted to interview, and it all came together. I'm really happy with the way it turned out.

Tell me about your process.

I think during writing the story one of the things that I struggled with was making it not abrasive. I didn't want my story to sound like it was the image of what a bra-burning feminist looks like, or things like that. I wanted it to be based on the facts, and things that you can't dispute or you can't attribute to that being just an angry woman. And so I wanted my story to have credibility all on its own, and so that was something that I definitely had to keep in mind when I was writing it so I did sound put together and educated and knowledgeable about what I was talking about, and not just basing it on things that weren't statistical.

What have you learned about the value of storytelling?

I think stories are one of the most compelling forms of media that there is because it really allows you to be empathetic and understand people in a way that, you know, other forms of media can't. And that's something I've learned with this project and with the research team with Ms. Weaver, and I just love the way that stories and sharing honestly and vulnerably can really connect people and form a community. And I'm really, I just, I really love storytelling. Whether it's on the radio where other people can hear or just in your day to day life talking to your friends and your family, I think that we need, as a whole, to be more open and to tell each other more things that are hard for us to talk about. But because we are being honest and people will see that and feel connected to us and understand our strength and our courage to share those things that are hard for us to talk about. And I think storytelling is a great way to do that.

Anything else you'd like to share?

It's been a lot of fun. I guess I didn't really know what to expect going into it, but I definitely learned a lot and I started listening to the radio more! And podcasts. Podcasts are great.