

Audio Transcript: Blanche's Story

3, 2, 1, welcome to Ex Fabula! True, Personal Stories. Ex Fabula! Story, Stage, You.

Ex Fabula is a Milwaukee non-profit committed to strengthening community bonds through the art of storytelling.

Ex Fabula Fellows are community members who use personal stories to inspire community led dialogue around some of the most pressing issues in the greater Milwaukee area like segregation, and economic and racial inequality.

Ex Fabula Fellow, Blanche Brown, shared a story at "Translator" in March of 2016.

What you gotta know about me, when you meet me, is that, initially, in the conversation I'm gonna give you a hug somehow, I really love helping people, that's just who I am. It really is a spiritual gift I believe. And I'm also an artist, so, I really believe in the power of art to heal, so much so that I am pursuing a path on going to be an art therapist. As part of my ongoing experience with this I took a job as a staff therapist working with autistic children, and I have to tell you I was really excited because I know that this is the field that I am gonna to be going into, and to get that experience was really great.

My job really entails working one on one with a child in their home, ok, and I work on a team with other therapists, that, our job is to apply very intensive therapy to the child about thirty to forty hours a week. We have permission to go into the home, and work with a child, and normally what we do is we tell the parents "ok, we need to have a room set aside that we can work with a child so that we don't have any distractions." Ok, so, on a typical day I work with Daniel, that's his name, Daniel, and our day may be where I would work with him with programs for a while and then we take breaks, and during these breaks is where we get a chance to get to know each other and start building rapport. And when we're playing on the floor, I'm rolling around with him, we're playing games, we eat snacks, we giggle, I mean, you really have to be able to tap into your inner child, in this position. You can't be acting like your up; you have to really get down with that child if you want to get to know them. And that was all me cause I'm like that anyway. So, I was really, really excited, and also as a part of the therapy and his programing, senior staff will often, on occasion, come into the home and observe how we're responding, and how we're interacting with the client. So from time to time, I would have someone drop in and they would look and see how I was interacting with Daniel.

Things were going fine. I was so excited with this first assignment. I was looking just forward to getting to know Daniel more as we work with him. About, I'd say, three weeks into the assignment, I got a call from my manager, and she said, "Blanche, I have some bad news. Daniel's parents called, and they requested that you be taken off the team." I was like, "what?" I couldn't believe it I was so shocked. The first thing that came in my mind and the first thing I said was "What did I do wrong?" I mean, we're talking about me leaving corporate to do something I really really love, that I believe in all my heart will help others, and for me to be able to work with autistic children is something that I really love and look forward to. And, you know, I was really shocked.

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Well my manager, she assured me that everything was okay, not to worry, and that they would find me another position, another assignment pretty soon. Well, self doubt began to affect me and I was thinking to myself, you know I cannot believe this, this is something that I look forward to, and, you know, I couldn't help but thinking, needless to say, that I had failed somehow.

So, a few weeks later, I got a call saying that I had been placed on another assignment. And I was really excited I was like, wow this is great, I get another opportunity, starting over, I was really optimistic, man this is great you know, I get a chance to work now with Anthony. Anthony. So we start into the assignment with his programs, and I'm working with him, getting established with him, getting to know him, and we're working around fine and everything, and about a month into the assignment, I got a call from my manager. Imagine my horror, when she told me that Anthony's parents requested that I be taken off of the team.

My manager was very apologetic, and she said to me "Blanche, I don't know, I cant explain why this is happening to you, because the senior staff is reporting that you are doing an excellent job. They observe you in the home and they would tell me if you were doing something wrong, and they're reporting that you ae doing an excellent job. And thoughts in my mind came back to the first assignment that I was dropped from, and I was just thinking I said, "is it my ethnic clothing? Is it my dreads? You know I had a time, what's going on? And as the conversation kept going, more and more it kept coming into my mind; the only reason I was taken off that assignment was because I was black. That's it! I asked my manager, I said, "well if I'm getting all these great reviews about my performance, what do you think is the reason I got taken off the assignment?" And she said, without a bat of her eye, "Blanche, I think its because of racism." So that's it. I said to her "wow I'm glad you said it because I was thinking it." And her response was "oh, I know I am so sorry, but, unfortunately, we can't do anything about it because they are the client and our customer." I thought to myself, oh that's it? That's it? The company isn't gonna stand up for me, and I'm feeling left oppressed, and I don't know what's gonna happen now. Now I'm in a no one win situation, I don't know what's gonna happen, I don't know what my future holds, I don't know what's gonna happen on the next assignment. I don't know if I even want to get another one because I feel like what's gonna happen next.

This story does not have a happy ending. Ok, so my thought is why do I even want to bother taking another assignment? Thank you.

The 2015 to 2016 Ex Fabula Fellowship was supported in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities council and the Wisconsin arts board.