



In the PINES
By T. Lee Brown

Whose truth?

After I used the term “my truth” in a column, a reader sent thoughtful feedback:

“I’ve heard this in the news and on TV ads in various forms — their truth, my truth, her truth, etc.,” Lisa wrote in an email. “I’m being honest here that my first emotional response is kinda angry... I’m wondering if you can educate an older, maybe more traditional lady like me on what the younger folk mean when they use ‘my truth.’”

Since she also wrote, “I absolutely loved your column today! Well said!” she totally had my attention. (Insert smiley emoji here.)

It seems to me the term “my truth” describes someone’s personal story and the feelings they have about that story, in a situation where the story is unwelcome or socially out-of-bounds — where stories similar to it have been ignored, suppressed, and repressed for years, sometimes millennia.

It comes out when people like the storyteller—who share a certain gender, race, ability, or some other characteristic—haven’t had much leverage in society. Real risk is required, in addition to vulnerable self-revelation. A more powerful person could express themselves without worrying that they’d lose their job, lower their social status, or inspire violence against their person.

“I have a story, I have feelings, and I’m scared of expressing them—but I’m gonna do it because I’m tired of people like me hiding in the closet!” When you get to that sensation, you’re getting to my-truth territory, particularly if the storyteller comes from a group of people who’ve been trapped in closets, corsets, or ghettos for centuries.

Imagine a woman in the early 1960s revealing that she can’t stand being confined to a homemaking role and subservient to her husband. She might find her family shunned from local activities, the kids not invited

to birthday parties, their dad hassled at work. Similar snubs still happen today. And studies show that women who express their feelings and opinions are routinely perceived as shrewish, denied promotions at work, lose elections to men. The message is pretty clear: shut up, ladies.

My original column mentioned a male executive at a business dinner, discussing female employees and saying dismissively, “Too bad about the hormones.” The industry in question was the dude-dominated world of heavy equipment, and gathered around our table at the steakhouse were several white men in positions of power, plus me.

Would that executive’s comment count as a my-truth? After all, he was airing what he truly felt. I’m gonna say: Nope. He spent his life being able to say stuff like

that without repercussion.

As a white, cisgendered, male colleague of mine mentioned recently, many men may feel *under attack* when their society starts changing and they’re asked to think about what they say. As a white woman who’s spent decades slowly getting a clue as to how much privilege comes with my skin color, I acknowledge their discomfort. “Whoa, I used to be able to say whatever I wanted, and now I can’t do it without getting pushback,” might sometimes count as a my-truth.

If our steakhouse table had included Becky — the only parts-woman I ever saw in anybody’s shop or warehouse — talking about the harassment she suffered in her job for decades, that’d qualify as more than the average story or opinion. She’d be telling her truth.

The lone female diner

who actually was at that steakhouse did not express her truth, as described in my previous column. Writing to you here in *The Nugget* about my shame and frustration, years later? That’s my truth.

I’ve followed many others’ truths in these pages: local folks dying of cancer, nurturing their beehives and Scottie dogs, surviving assault and transforming their trauma. The willingness to share each other’s intimate, meaningful stories is something I enjoy and respect about *The Nugget* and our community.

Is there any risk involved? Sure. I’ve been subjected to gossip, scorn, and petty sabotage because of what I write here; I’ve heard such talk about other columnists, too. One friend of the liberal-progressive persuasion said, “I’m worried that people are using you as a scapegoat.”

Well, that’s how it goes.

If I tell my truth, I have to accept the consequences of not shutting the heck up like a good girl.

The phrase itself, “my truth,” has garnered a smarmy, trendy feel. Lisa’s response to it is understandable. After typing it so many times for this column, I may retire it from my vocabulary for good.

But I do think the term is struggling to express something important: The truth isn’t a tall, unassailable tower. It’s more like a swooping flock of birds, swirling and hunting and migrating, separating and coming together again.

Our perspectives on reality are formed by our families, personal experiences, belief systems, and the media we consume. If our flock is to share a collective truth, perhaps we must first bear witness to the individual songs of birds long silenced.



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“Adventure on Wonderland” — Rainier National Park

Complimentary print of Dan’s newest painting to the first 150 people.

Dan Rickards will be at the gallery on Saturday at 10 a.m. to individually sign each print until they have all been given away. *Limit one per family, please.*

Clearwater Gallery will be offering special framing package pricing and a limited giclée edition on canvas in conjunction with the new release. We look forward to seeing you.

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