

My Storytelling Path
Carolina A. Quiroga H.

My love for stories began early on in life. My mother says she lost me in the supermarket when I was three years old. Frantically she looked for me to no avail. The security guard assured her that no little girl had walked out the doors, not on his watch! This was a parent's worst nightmare. After a while, my mother spied two plumb little legs stretching out from a clothing rack full of dresses. Those were her daughter's legs! With mixed emotions and relief, my mom walked toward the dresses that served as curtains.

As she approached, she heard a little voice that seemed to be engaged in a conversation. My mom wondered, who is my daughter talking to? As she uncovered what was behind, to her surprise, I was reading a children's book aloud. I was enthralled by it...perhaps because it was upside down!

Since then, my favorite gifts were books, and my mom knew how to surprise me. She thought it was the best way to keep me from sneaking around! And it worked!

Despite my fascination for stories, I did not study literature at first. Instead, I graduated in Industrial Engineering. But the stories were more powerful. I started to reroute my path toward what brought me the most happiness. Two years later, I graduated in Journalism and Communications. However, it was unsafe to practice journalism in Colombia. So, I took an alternate path. There were other ways to tell stories. I worked as a graphic designer while I took storytelling workshops and listened to many storytellers.

Over time, I work organizing and promoting cultural events. And it was my work with artists, and my studies inspired me to resume my passion for storytelling as an art form. As I watched artists elevate the audience's mood, I realized magic exists.

When I turned 30. After a long soul search, I realized that if I was going to embrace my love for stories, I had to take the Hero's Journey. After much research, I came close to giving up. I had found some studies in Mythology, which were fascinating, but I could not afford them. I was more inclined to grab a backpack and tour the world. But after a conversation with a friend, my life changed.

He knew I love stories and pointed out that there was a Storytelling master's degree in the US. I thought that was not possible! No one studies to tell stories in front of people. You just do it! Still, I did the search, thinking that I would prove him wrong, but to my surprise, he was right.

On January 6, 2012, I arrived in Johnson City, TN, unsure what I was getting myself into. While away from my family and friends, winter became my archenemy, and English the most formidable challenge. But like in any hero's journey, two years later, I graduated with a master's degree in Storytelling from East Tennessee State University.

Since then, I have performed in countless US libraries, schools, and festivals, including the National Storytelling Festival (2019) and the Timpanogos Storytelling Festival (2021). And I am living my dream!

But how did I end up mainly telling stories from Latin America and Spain? After hearing a couple of times that Colombia (spelled with two O's) was in Mexico or Africa, I concluded that something needed to be done.

I made it my mission to contribute to appreciating our diverse cultures through storytelling. To this day, I have performed shows that breathe the fascinating folklore, mysteries, and histories of Latino descendants that span from the southwest of the US to La Patagonia.

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2020-2022 TEXAS COMMISSION ON THE ARTS TOURING ARTIST

2016 J.J. RENEUX EMERGING ARTIST GRANT RECIPIENT

2013-2014 OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE, ETSU STORYTELLING PROGRAM

EDUCATION

MA in Reading with a concentration in Storytelling , <i>East Tennessee State University, Johnson, City, TN</i>	2012-2013
Accreditation: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools	
MA in Cultural Management , <i>Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain</i>	2010-2012
Accreditation: Spanish National Evaluation Agency of Quality and Accreditation	
BA in Social Communications and Journalism , <i>Universidad Autónoma de Occidente, Cali, Colombia</i>	2002-2008
Accreditation: Colombian Ministry of Education	
BA in Industrial Engineering , <i>Universidad Pontificia Javeriana Cali, Colombia</i>	1997 - 2004
Accreditation: Colombian Ministry of Education	

Bilingual Storyteller Performer, Workshop Presenter since 2015 – current

- ✓ (2021) Featured teller at the **Timpanogos Storytelling Festival**, Lindon, Utah.
- ✓ (2020-2021) Performed numerous virtual storytelling shows in the US and Scotland, as well as virtual workshops.
- ✓ (2015-2020) Performed over 200 library, school, and festivals' performances and workshops across the US.
- ✓ Featured teller at the **National Storytelling Festival**, Jonesborough, (2019-TN), **Weber Storytelling Festival**, Ogden (Utah 2018), and **32nd Texas Storytelling Festival** (Denton, TX, 2017).
- ✓ (2018) **Teller in Residence at the International Storytelling Center**, Jonesborough, TN.
- ✓ Trained students in the art of storytelling, resulting in different performances.
- ✓ Find more at <https://www.carolinastoryteller.com/venues>

Tres Cuentos Literary Podcast Host and Producer 2018 - 2022

- ✓ (2020) Selected by the Google Podcast Creator Program to participate in their Podcast training program.
- ✓ (2019-21) Mentioned by Oprahmag.com as one of the "*Best Spanish and Latino Podcast for learning and laughing.*"
- ✓ (2019) Recipient of the NALAC Grant Fund for the Arts Program.
- ✓ (2019) Recipient of the Alternate Roots Grant for Project Development.

Teacher-Artist, WOLF TRAP Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts, San Antonio (2016-2021)

- ✓ Created storytelling curriculums for PreK teachers.

Event Producer, Storytelling Events in the US (2015-2017)

- ✓ (2017) Producer of *Día de los Niños y Niñas: Stories from Around the World* at the Mexican Cultural Institute, SA, TX.
- ✓ (2016) Co-Producer of Story Tellebration, Mission Branch Library, SA, TX.
- ✓ (2016) Recipient of a Start Place Grant by the City of San Antonio to produce a collaborative storytelling show "Curanderiano: Tales of Healing."

- ✓ (2015) Recipient of a Start Place Grant by the City of San Antonio to produce a Día de los Muertos storytelling show.

Interpreter and Translator, Head Start, Kingsport, TN, March 2014 – September 2014

- ✓ Served as interpreter and translator for seven school classes, and as a liaison between families and teachers.
- ✓ Facilitated enrollment and registration of Hispanic students.

Program Coordinator, Migrant Student Leadership Conference, Johnson City, TN, May – August 2014

- ✓ Planned, scheduled, and coordinated logistics of the summer conference in 2013 and 2014.
- ✓ Gathered qualitative and quantitative data demonstrating conference's (MSLC) impact on migrant students.
- ✓ Designed evaluations and surveys to assess MSLC 2014 goals and wrote proposal based on results for MSLC 2015.

Office and Project Manager, ETSU's Language and Culture Resource Center, Johnson City, TN, Jan. 2012- Dec. 2013

- ✓ Provided managerial and administrative support to the Center's Director by coordinating the staff.
- ✓ Co-coordinated and managed the university's *Hispanic Student Day* in 2012 and 2013.
- ✓ Managed communication's strategies and public affairs for the *Corazón Latino Festival* (2,500 patrons).
- ✓ Produced, edited, and translated educational videos and audios for the XCELL Mentor Program for Latinos.
- ✓ Maintained the Center's website, Facebook and YouTube channel.
- ✓ Translated documents, conducted focus groups for academic research and served as interpreter.
- ✓ Taught and served as volunteer for a family engagement program for 20 English language learners in Fall 2012.

Resident Director RD (2013-2014) and Resident Advisor RA (2012) ETSU's TRIO Programs, Johnson City, TN

- ✓ Coordinated the residential component of a summer program, including supervision of 15 RAs and 150 students.
- ✓ Enhanced leadership, organizational, problem-solving and communication skills in a safe educational environment.
- ✓ Assisted the professional staff in orienting summer staff, students, and parents to program policies and goals.
- ✓ Designed, implemented, and taught Storytelling, Graphic Design, Spanish, and Academic Planning courses.

Communications Coordinator, Universidad Javeriana, Center for Cultural Expresión, Cali, Colombia, 2010-2011

- ✓ Planned, coordinated, and executed marketing strategies for the *International Choir Festival* in 2010 and 2011.
- ✓ Designed marketing strategies for artistic, social, and cultural events to improve and promote cultural understanding.
- ✓ Oversaw and edited the Center's publicity material and coordinated a team of designers, video producers and photographers.
- ✓ Represented the Center in all the public affairs with regional media, including radio, television, and newspapers.
- ✓ Contributed to planning the Center's goals for 2011 and 2012 and managed the communication's budget.

Webmaster and Graphic Designer, Universidad San Buenaventura, Cali, Colombia, 2008-2010

- ✓ University's website content designer.
- ✓ Designed marketing materials to promote events among the university's community.

Assistant, Academic Development Center at Universidad Autónoma de Occidente, Cali, Colombia, 2005 –2006

- ✓ Planned and coordinated teacher's academic training and conferences.
- ✓ Managed logistics and communications of the *Semana Científico Cultural 2005* and *Semana Autónoma 2006*.