

Storyscope Story Circles Event  
“People’s State of the Union”  
January 2017  
The Empty Space, Arizona State University, Tempe AZ

Personal story from participant Laura Crawford, responding to the prompt “I didn’t feel I belonged in America when…”

I used to feel like I *did* belong. I had a good education, a supportive loving family, good jobs, I’m a lawyer. When I was ten years old I stayed home from school sick and I watched “To Kill A Mockingbird” on a little old black & white TV, and I thought “When I grow up, I’m going to be just like Atticus.” I’ve had a disability since birth but there was nothing in my repertoire that said I couldn’t do that.

Then, I saw Donald Trump making fun of a WSJ journalist who has a disability, and he was jerking his arms and he was jerking his legs and he said in a really disparaging way, “Oh, man, you should see that guy.” He said it with no compassion, like the journalist was *less than*. Then his quote unquote apology made it worse. He tried to backtrack and say he wasn’t really imitating that man because all his movements were a lot more exaggerated. That’s the quintessential apology from the man who never apologizes.

And in that moment I clearly felt like I did not belong. And the strange coincidence is that my disability is very rare and I found that the WSJ journalist -- also educated, also with a good job and a lot to offer living in America, has my same rare disability. Arthrogyrosis multiplex congenita. Most of my friends do not even know the name of my disability because it’s not the dominant force in my life. It’s a challenge you learn to navigate, but it’s not my essence.

But in that moment Mr. Trump objectified that journalist and objectified me. So it became deeply personal for me. And you know what, this is the sad part, because it was ... deeply personal. And I felt for all the people for whom his comments and exclusions are personal. It’s not just rhetoric when you don’t feel like you belong.