You’ve probably heard the saying: “Don’t think of a white elephant.” This coy phrase is often used to demonstrate how the human mind can’t resist the power of suggestion; we all immediately think of a white elephant. But stop and think about this for a moment: what if you did not actually know what an elephant was?

Unbelievably, in many societies around the world, women and girls are unable to think about pursuing their dreams, exploring their creative talents, or even enjoying basic social parity with men and boys. Why? Because these women and girls actually do not know such paths exist. They have never seen girls accepted into schools without prejudice, they have never seen a woman as an entrepreneur, and they may have never seen their mothers treated as a respected member of the household.

Population Media Center:
Using Fiction to Create More Sustainable Realities
Joe Bish

The following essay was adapted from PMC’s annual campaign mini-site.
Population Media Center’s entertaining shows – radio, TV, and internet – use the power of fiction to introduce new ideas to eager audiences all around the world. By carefully role-modeling new social dynamics, PMC’s entertaining stories engage audiences on their own terms: culturally authentic characters speak in local dialects, moving through scenes, settings and day-to-day activities that are familiar, believable, and engaging. But, beyond action-packed, emotive drama, our stories introduce new, potentially revolutionary ideas to audience members about what is possible in real-life.

For example, when a beloved female character is shown breaking the local glass ceiling, perhaps attaining a professional position as a doctor, lawyer, or teacher, it’s likely the audience will have never “seen” such a thing in their real-life before. Thanks to PMC’s shows, instead of remaining inconceivable, these liberating notions are now squarely within the realm of the possible. Once you know what a white elephant is, you’ll always remember. In other words, doors have been opened, lights have come on, and the seeds of change have been planted.

Moreover, as people watch our suspenseful stories unfold from episode to episode – emotionally riding along with key-characters who are navigating the challenges of implementing new knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors – the audience gains a vicarious experience of self-efficacy on implementing change in challenging circumstances. They see the difficult conversations and experiences that come with change and they now have a sense of how to move through them successfully. They can then turn around and use this confidence to implement similar changes in their real-life. What was once merely fiction turns into a progressive new reality.

Video:

Help Her See It

PMC’s organizational vision is “a sustainable planet with equal rights for all,” and we have dedicated ourselves to making progress on the interconnected issues of the full rights of women and girls, population, and the environment. Learn more at:
https://www.populationmedia.org/getreel/

The MAHB Blog is a venture of the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere. Questions should be directed to joan@mahbonline.org

MAHB Blog: https://mahb.stanford.edu/blog/help-her-see-it-pmc/