KEYNOTE · FIRESIDE CHAT · CAMPUS & COMMUNITY TALK

Walk in Their Shoes

What Living as a Man Taught Me About Stereotypes, Empathy, Courage and Community

A talk by Helie Lee, author of *Macho Like Me: A Woman's Detour into Manhood* (February 14, 2027)

The talk

Bestselling author Helie Lee once cut her hair, bound her chest, and lived full-time as "Harry" for six and a half months to better understand men. She set out to prove that men had it better. What she found instead was a whole set of unwritten "Guy Rules," quiet struggles, and a new respect for people she had judged from the outside.

First, the story, with real footage. Helie opens by telling the story of her experiment, from the day she first walked out the door as Harry to the moment she gave him up. Her story is accompanied by short video clips filmed during those six and a half months, so audiences see the real Harry: the disguise, the people she met, and the moments that changed her.

Then, what it taught her. From there, Helie draws on her new memoir and her life growing up Korean American between two cultures to share how stepping into someone else's shoes can change the way we see ourselves and each other.

Stereotyping: seeing past the labels

- How her own assumptions about men fell apart once she lived on the other side.
- How appearance shapes the way we are judged — as women, as men, and as Asian Americans.
- The boxes people get put in, from "real men don't cry" to the quiet, passive "model minority," and how to step out of them.

Empathy: walking in someone else's shoes

- Why putting yourself in another person's shoes changes you.
- Listening before judging: her friendship with David Hyun, the 83-year-old architect behind Little Tokyo's Japanese Village Plaza, who saw through her disguise and opened his heart to her.
- Empathy as a skill we can practice, not just a feeling.

Becoming your best self: the courage to stretch

- When you're brave enough to take risks and stretch, you can't help being changed.
- Taking big risks, from helping rescue nine relatives from North Korea to a six-and-a-half-month experiment.
- Finding your voice when you were raised to stay quiet, and stepping outside your comfort zone with curiosity instead of fear.

Community: building bridges

- Growing up between two cultures and navigating immigrant family expectations.
- How sharing our stories builds bridges across gender, generations and cultures.
- Understanding the men in our lives and the boys we are raising, so families and communities grow stronger.

Audiences will leave with

- A fresh way to recognize and question their own assumptions.
- Practical ways to build empathy at work and at home.
- The courage to take risks, stretch, and become the best version of themselves.

Format

45–60 minutes plus Q&A, in person or by Zoom: Helie's story of the experiment told with real video clips, followed by the lessons it taught her, then Q&A. Available as a keynote, a talk or a fireside chat, and can be tailored to your audience. Book signing available at in-person events.

About Helie Lee

Helie Lee is the author of the bestseller *Still Life with Rice* and *In the Absence of Sun*, memoirs about her family's journey through war-torn Korea and her mission to rescue nine relatives from North Korea. She has been featured on *Oprah*, *Nightline*, CNN, NPR and the *Today* show, and has been invited to speak at colleges, high schools and the U.S. Senate. She co-founded the Korean Academy for Educators, and *Macho Like Me* began as her one-woman show, praised by the *L.A. Times*, *LA Weekly* and *Backstage*. She lives in Los Angeles.

Booking: helielee@gmail.com | 310-995-5600 | helielee.com | Headshot, bio and press release: helielee.com/#kit