



HousingNow! Retreat
Narrative Training

November 10, 2021

Welcome & What to Expect Today

- Joy & Radical Imagination
- What we've learned/know + What we can deploy today
- Making Your Case
- Toolbox vs. Checklist

The goal of this session is to share some ways of intensifying your messages and offer suggestions for how to connect to a housing for all message. Today will support you as continue to build your housing justice narrative toolbox—you can add new tools, sharpen tools, learn new uses for old tools, and exchange tools when they lose value or your needs change.

About Us

Vanice Dunn, Vice President of Communications at PolicyLink

- My loves:
 - All things comms -- brand, narrative, and communications strategy
 - Honesty, Curiosity, Imagination, Liberation
 - Working toward a future where we're all free. Not conditionally free, but fully free.

Laura Hughes, Director of Narrative Strategy at PolicyLink

- My loves:
 - All things brain science, narrative, and relationship mapping and strategy
 - Gratitude, Curiosity, Joy
 - Warriors sitting with warriors. Writing new rules.

Chat Check-In

In the chat, please share:

- One thing you love or value.
- One thing you hope to get out of this session.

Housing Justice Narrative

Harness the power of narrative to understand, interrogate, and shift power and political will.

PHOTOGRAPHING
Power



What We Know

Deeply inequitable housing system, generations in the making.

- Declining homeownership and wealth building for BIPOC communities
- Increase in housing cost burden
- Rise in evictions and instability, especially in BIPOC communities

These are not system failures, but rather symptoms of the system working as designed. But we know America is ready for a conversation on housing.

- 8 in 10 people polled get that housing is a huge challenge for too many of us, and believe that housing is a basic need for people to thrive
- Most people see a role for the government to address the housing crisis

And there's growing momentum to transform the systems and policies shaping housing.

- New political leadership in cities has led to billions in new affordable housing investment
- Tenant organizing groups have grown in number and strength
- Corporate actors are being made to realize they need to step up and act, with new investments in affordable housing and tenant organizing

Narratives Defined

...the stories we rely on to make sense of the world (Barrows, 2021).

...a Big Story, rooted in shared values and common themes, that influences how audiences process information and make decisions (Opportunity Agenda, Shifting the Narrative, 2021).

HOUSING
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Housing Justice Narrative: Research

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Collaboration supported by Funders for Housing and Opportunity intended to develop **messaging tools and a narrative strategy that centers on race in order to advance housing justice campaigns**

Draws on learnings and methodology of Race-Class Narrative Project

Included three phases:

1. Language analysis of housing discourse in early 2019
2. In-person focus groups in February 2020 (qualitative)
3. Online Dial Survey in April 2020 (quantitative)

Housing Justice Narrative: Research Goal

...excite Base and move Persuadables and ignore, if not
upset, the Opposition.

Housing Justice Narrative: Four Keys to Intensity

1. Center **race** in messaging & narrative.
2. Use tested, **values based** messages to break through the dominant “housing as commodity” frame
3. Leading with **lived experience** moves people, perspectives
4. Engage base and persuadables in **solution oriented** campaigns

Top Value Based Messages

All children deserve a roof over their head and a safe place to live

We need policies that ensure housing is within reach for everyone

Every person deserves the right to a safe, secure, and affordable place to live no matter what we look like or where we come from.

Without a job you are likely to struggle holding down housing

HOUSING Power

A woman with her hair styled in a bun, wearing glasses and a bright red jacket over a black top, is speaking. She has large hoop earrings and is gesturing with her hands. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

yet incredibly expensive degrees that we kind of don't really use

California Landscape

- Depth & Commitment
- Cross Coalition Conversation
- Big(ger) Tent

- ❖ Blueprint for Belonging
- ❖ Million Voters Project
- ❖ Housing CA: Homeless Action Narrative Campaign
- ❖ Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
- ❖ TheCaseMade
- ❖ Shift the Bay
- ❖ United Way--Greater Los Angeles
- ❖ Polaris Project

The Power to Frame

Narrative is how we make sense of the world around us. Leveraging the power of narrative, we have the ability to foster belonging and ultimately shift and build power.



To refuse to participate in the shaping of our future is to give it up. Do not be misled into passivity either by false security (they don't mean me) or by despair (there's nothing we can do). Each of us must find our work and do it.

- Audre Lorde

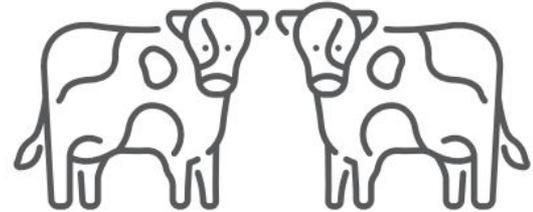
The Power to Frame

Through an intersectional lens, Kimberlé Crenshaw, who developed the theory of intersectionality, used an image of cows in a field to show how the framing of an issue determines possible solutions.

“The cows are sick. Who is responsible?” she asked people.

“Do the cows need to exercise more, change their behavior?”

Who is responsible for the sick cows?



Credit to Open Society Foundations: [Building Narrative Power for Racial Justice and Health Equity](#)

The Power to Frame

She then **widened the frame** from the cows to show a factory belching smoke, just behind the field. When we expand the frame, we change the narrative. In the first image, the limited frame perpetuated the narrative of **individual responsibility** which places blame on people for their own problems when the problems are **systemic and structural**.



The Power to Frame

- Using the cows as an analogy to approaches rooted in individualism: **regardless of behavior, one cannot responsibly or behave their way out of a toxic environment.**
- Those working toward equity have to learn to **detect, disrupt, and open up new, different narratives:** “Our desire isn’t enough when the dominant narratives **don’t give us the info we need to understand the scope of the problem...**the narratives we have access to don’t fully tell our stories.”

SYSTEMS CHANGE

Asset-Framing

- **Asset-Framing** ([Trabian Shorters, BMe, Chronicle of Philanthropy](#)): The shift to narratives that define people by their aspirations and contributions.
 - History of deficit and despair to win funding, incite action, and gain sympathy. Example: “at-risk, low-income, high-poverty, disadvantaged”
 - While inequities are accurate, these frames associate the problem with those experiencing it. This let’s the systemic actors off the hook and blames individuals, creating long-term stigma.
 - For example, because of dominant narratives, we’ve been led to disassociate Black people with patriotism, high rates of military enrollment--an indicator many would associate with patriotism.
- “At-risk youth” versus “A student striving to overcome a threatening environment to graduate.”

Breakout Groups: Asset-Framing

- Breakout Prompts (4 minutes):
 - What are some of the first things that come to mind when you think of renters? What narratives do you hold, do you see portrayed in media, do you hear people around you saying about renters?
 - What do you actually experience? What descriptors or frames are more accurate to describe renters?



As a homeowner, I hate to see renters who come into the community,

Most Critical Aspect of Case-Making: Vision

**A compelling vision will get you everywhere.
People are most likely to follow you on your journey
when you paint a clear picture.**

***“In a world of possibility for us all, our personal visions help lay the
groundwork for political action.”***

– Audre Lorde

Case-Making Basics: Vision, Barrier, Pathway

- **Articulate a clear, compelling vision.**
 - Paint a bold, *irresistible* picture of possibility. If you aren't inspired, others likely aren't.
- **Name the barrier/threat to your vision.**
 - Identify scale and impact of the problem, but don't focus only on the problem.
- **Illuminate a clear path forward.**
 - How do we get from here to your vision? Aspirational, yet attainable.

Make it Matter

- Know your audience. What do they value? What is important to them.
- Make clear why they should care. Why does this matter to them? Why now?
- Be memorable.
 - You don't have to do a song and dance--unless you want to--but you want people to remember the brilliance you shared. Having clear, consistent key messages helps.

Tips

- There is no magic formula, keep it simple. Use what you already know, leverage skills from your day to day.
 - *Example: How do you go about convincing someone to order from the restaurant you're craving?*
- Messenger matters. Let folks know who you are and why you're particularly suited to propose the solution. Make clear why they should trust or believe you.
- Use stories to humanize data; rapid fire facts make it tougher for audiences to make meaning.
 - *Example: There are only 5 parks in our city and only 15% of residents have access. - vs. - Families in the Richmond neighborhood have to travel one hour by bus, each way, just to reach their closest local park to have outdoor playtime with their children.*

Tricks—Behavioral Principles

- Bring your story home.
- Make it easy (for the lazy brain).
- Nudge towards outcomes.
- Address perceived loss.
- What's in it for me?
- Be consistent
- Dream vs. Plan
- Visualize numbers

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black and white outfit with a white collar and a white sash, is performing on stage. She is holding a microphone to her mouth and has her right arm raised. The background is a light blue, textured wall. In the foreground, the hands of an audience are visible, some raised. A semi-transparent black box with the word "Winning" in white text is overlaid on the bottom center of the image.

Winning

St. Paul Rent Stabilization Campaign



Lived Experience & Centering Race

[Homepage](#)[Who We Are](#)[Keep St. Paul H](#)

[Home](#) » [Stories](#) » [Jamila Mame: Why I'll vote 'yes' to limit the rate of rent increases in St. Paul](#)

Jamila Mame: Why I'll vote 'yes' to limit the rate of rent increases in St. Paul



by Hens Admin

16sc

on August 27, 2021

[Printed 8/27/2021 in the Pioneer Press](#)

When I was in 6th grade, I thought I'd finally made it. My family had settled into a modest apartment that we loved anyway, my favorite teacher was inspiring me to dig deeper and imagine bigger, and I was just starting to feel that sense of belonging at school that every 12-year-old kid fervently dreams of.

When that dream was snatched away, yet again, by yet another landlord spiking the cost of my family's home, the crushing disappointment felt all too familiar. Profit-mongering landlords pushed our family out of our home six times in less than six years. Each time, my siblings and I were forced to start over — again and again and again.



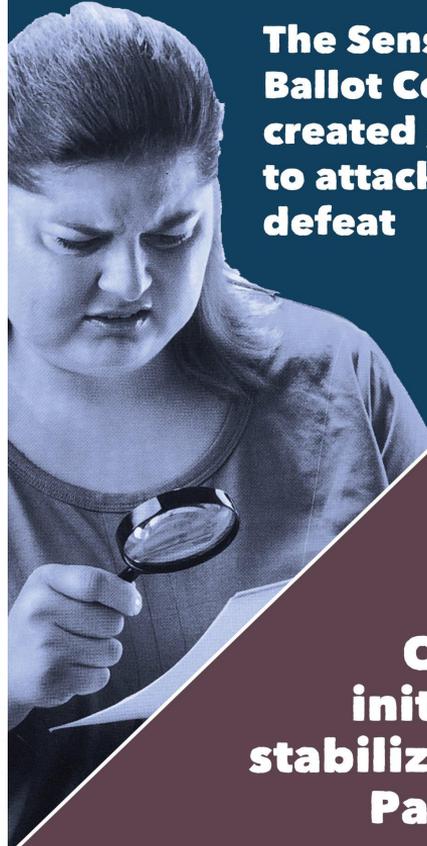
Name the Villain & Tactics

St. Paulites know that everyone deserves a home they can rely on



That's why the landlord lobby is trying to BUY YOUR VOTE in this election

The Sensible Housing Ballot Committee was created specifically to attack and defeat



OUR community-led initiatives to pass rent stabilization policies in St. Paul and Minneapolis

Big landlord and real estate interests know they need to divide and confuse us, so they've raised nearly \$4 million to try to buy this election



nearly 20x
what Keep St. Paul Home has raised to organize thousands of residents to put rent stabilization on the ballot and educate voters citywide



That's enough to

Pay the median rent for a two-bedroom apartment for 3,137 families in St. Paul

Pay the annual income of 160 minimum wage workers in St. Paul

Give \$270 to every cost-burdened BIPOC renter household in St. Paul

Fund all three years of the Families First Housing Pilot Program, which supports 250 low-income families with students in St. Paul Public Schools

OR... Wage a wildly expensive misinformation and intimidation campaign to protect predatory practices and unlimited profits for landlords

\$3.9 million

That's enough to

Pay **living wages to local residents** to canvas and help lead the coalition; organize dozens of **volunteers**, print **information** and talk to thousands of residents in multiple languages



Organized people can beat organized money - and that's how we're going to win!

←  **VOTE YES on STP Question 1**  **Follow**
1,097 Tweets

  **VOTE YES on STP Question 1**  Retweeted



Community Change Action @CommChangeAct · Nov 3

ENORMOUS win out of St. Paul last night. Proving w grit, light, and love what organizing can deliver. @HENStp

 **b** @brwnandmad · Nov 3

WE PASSED RENT STABILIZATION WE WON WE WON WE WON



TY QUESTION 1 (St. Paul)

[de Question](#)

i precincts in contest. 93 of 95 precincts reported in County.

Party	Candidate	Totals	Pct
NP	YES	30,807	52.83
NP	NO	27,505	47.17

ITY QUESTION 1 (St. Paul)

Whether to adopt a Residential Rent Stabilization Ordinance
ould the City adopt the proposed Ordinance limiting rent increases
he Ordinance limits residential rent increases to no more than 3% in
2-month period, regardless of whether there is a change of
ccupancy. The Ordinance also directs the City to create a process for
ndlords to request an exception to the 3% limit based on the right to
reasonable return on investment. A "yes" vote is a vote in favor of
miting rent increases. A "no" vote is a vote against limiting rent
creases.

 1

 5

 21



Closing Commitment to Self

Take a moment to write down at least one thing you plan to commit to in the next 30 days. No need to share it in the chat, this is for you!

Additional Resources

- [Racial Equity Here Communications Guide](#)
- [Building Narrative Power for Racial Justice and Health Equity](#)
- [Opportunity Agenda - Communications Toolkit](#)
- [Opportunity Agenda - Telling a New Story](#)
- [Trabian Shorters](#)

Thank You

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<https://housingnarrative.org>

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