# Seize the Narrative

## A Housing Justice Narrative Playbook for the Bay Area

Appendix 1

# Our Journey to Shift the Narrative

## Phase I

### Discovery & Landscape Analysis

- **Convene a Collaborative Table:** Convene a collaborative table comprised of Bay area organizations working on housing justice to identify opportunities for short-term/long-term collaboration around narrative shift
- **Convene Narrative Experts as Advisors:** Work with narrative experts from the Bay & across the country to share best practices in narrative change, host workshops, & help us assess opportunities.
- **Assessing our Lay of the Land:** Surveys, facilitated table conversations, and one-on-ones
- **Deploying Best Practice:** Workshops & breakout sessions to identify how best practice guidance works in the Bay area & tap our coalition's expertise on opportunities, challenges, and ideas.

## Phase II

### Empirical Research Program

- **Literature Review of Polling Data in the Bay Area & our coalition feedb**
- **Qualitative Research: Community Voice Sessions** (TheCaseMade)
- **Quantitative Research: Polling & Values Mapping** (EMC Research)
- **Coordination On Narrative Research:** As our Bay Area Shifting the Narrative project began, several other narrative shift research projects got underway. We've embraced the opportunity to coordinate closely with several of these projects, seeking to incorporate findings, leverage ideas, and identify value-add to our movement.

## Phase III

### Implementation & Recommendations

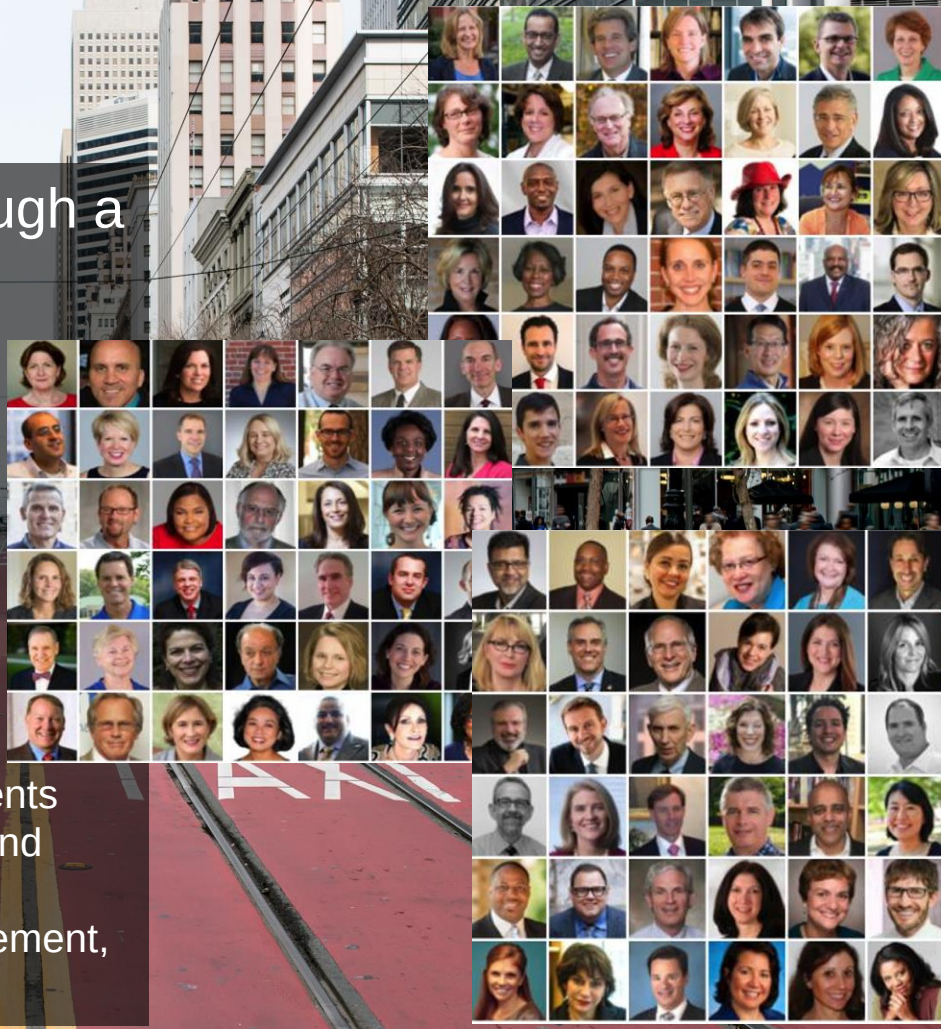
- **Share the Playbook & Embed Our Findings:** Extend the reach of our narrative work & support implementation
- **Support our Table & Networks with Consistent Content:** Provide message guides, toolkits and online resources to support housing justice work in our region.
- **Promote Creative, Innovative Ways to Amplify Housing Justice Narratives Into Public Discourse:** Implement a strategy to effectively engage media, influencers, and artists to reflect housing justice narratives.
- **New Research/Evaluation:** Use state-of-the-art research methods to better understand how to shape this new environment around racial equity.

# Ultimately, the CaseMaking Research Was About Listening to People in the Bay Area Talk About What's Important to Them!

# Participants of the Community Voice Sessions

100+ participants were recruited through a professional recruiting firm to provide diversity on several dimensions:

- Ages: 20 to 74
- Household Income: $35K to $250K+
- Racial/Ethnic Diversity
- Education: high school to post-grad
- Occupational mix
- Mix of renters and owners
- Mix of progressives and conservatives
- Mix of couples, singles, families, and single parents
- Range of housing situations, housing histories and perspectives
- Diversity of political affiliation, community involvement,
- All registered voters



# What Are We Listening for?

## Getting Clear About The Challenges & The Traps

**We're not really listening for opinions…**
**We're listening for what's driving those opinions…**

- Backfires
- Backpacks
- Bedtime Stories
- Dominant Narratives
- Negative Disruptors

# What Are We Listening for?

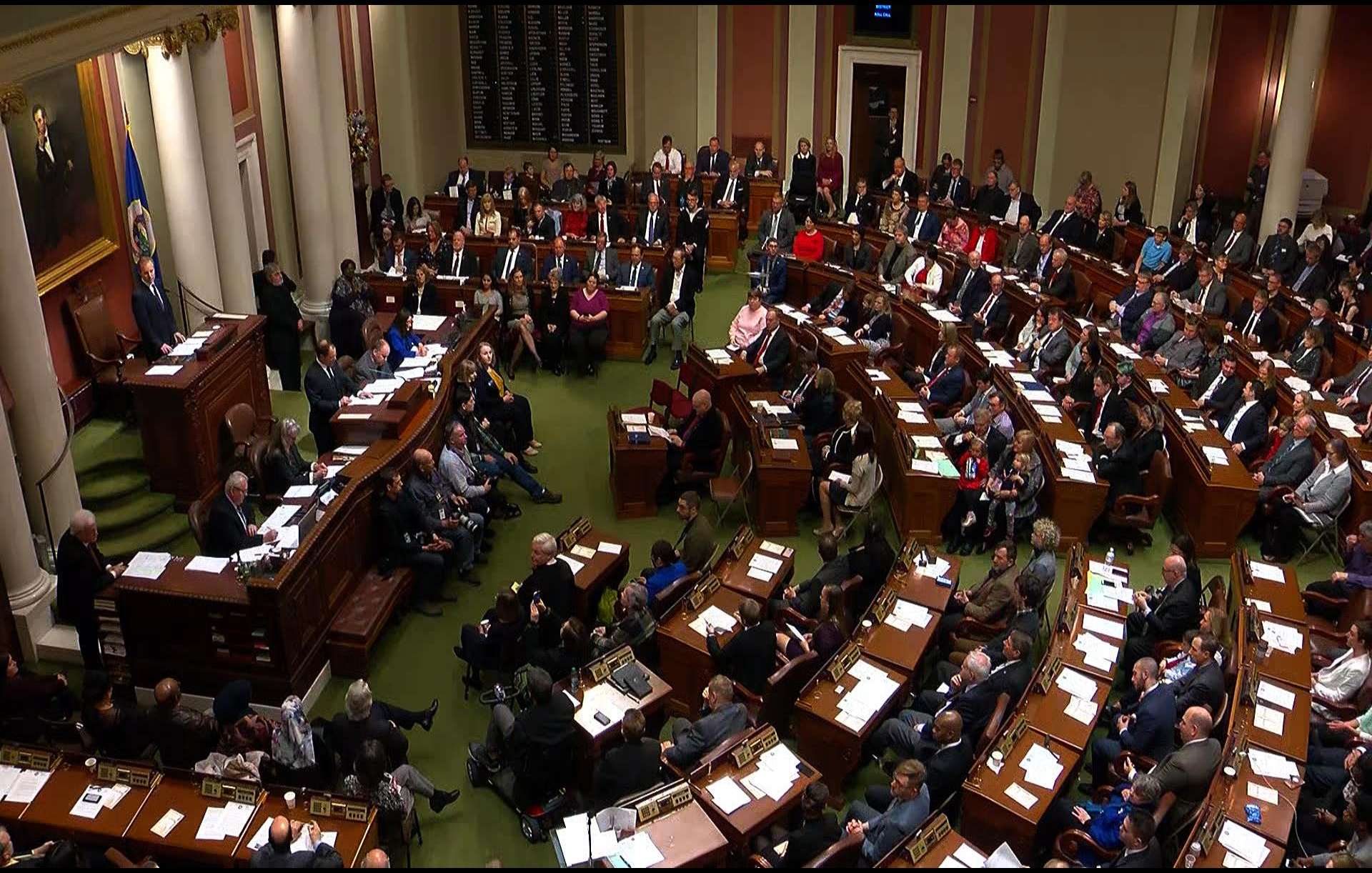
## Getting Clear About The Affective Signals in Our Focus Groups

**We're not really listening for opinions…**
**We're listening for what's driving those opinions…**

- **Who/What Organically Shows Up As Topics/Speakers in the Conversation**
- **Cognitive Pathways and Dissonance**
- **Expressed or Implied Values**
- **Salience and Affective Response of Key Issues *(hang time, disruptors)***
- **Power Dynamics in the Room *(who speaks and can speak to these issues)***
- **Intensity of the Conversation Around Topics *(lots of nodding, agreement, dissension, disengagement, etc.)***

# Community Voice Sessions

## Our Initial Exercise



# Community Voice Sessions

## Surprising Findings

How Bad Is It? The Conversation is Viral, but It's Stuck in the Wrong Place. People Resigned to the High Cost of Housing.

Negative Disruptors:

- Drugs, Crime and Homelessness
- High Wages and Compensation
- Traffic Congestions

Loss Aversion: NOT TALENT RETENTION!

- Children moving away
- Losing the unique "mom and pop" stores that dot the landscape of region and make it an exciting place to live
- Their frustration with falling behind economically

If the Problem is Structural and Systemic, the Solutions Must Be ____? Individualized Solutions?

Affordable Housing is About Me When I _____ (insert life course event – retire, get married, having a new baby, thinking about getting to a new job, etc.)

Developers and Big Employers (Especially Tech) Was Named as Having Helped Create The Housing Problem But There Was No Expectation That They Help Solve It

Displacement of the Problem to Government (Which Was Seen as Flush With Cash)

- In a Country Where Money Solves Everything, Why Can't Our Tax Dollars Buy Us Out of This Mess!
- Don't Balance the Housing Crisis on My Back
- Who Exactly Can We Hold Accountable When the Problems Aren't Getting Better?
- For Goodness Sake, Just Enforce the Policies We Have On the Books Already!

Less Stigma of Affordable Housing But No Sense That It Will Impact Them

We're Waiting for the Tech Bubble to Burst and the Economy to Sink, to Fix This Mess!

# Community Voice Sessions

## Surprising Findings – Renters and Homeowners

- When in Renter-only Groups, Renters Were Vocal about Their Shared Experiences, Some Shared their Shame in Being Unable to Buy a Home, and What Policies or other Solutions They Needed for Greater Housing Stability. But They Couldn't Get There with Homeowners in the Room.
- Renters Were Less Stigmatizing and More Empathetic, But Muted in the Face of Homeowners and Felt the Need to Rationale Renting
- Homeowners Who Were Landlords Talked Openly About Their Angst At Prioritizing Their Own Personal interests
- Homeowners Much More Sympathetic To Renters, When They Were Asked First to Think About Their Own Challenges with Affording Home Repairs
- Juggling Multiple Jobs, Side Jobs and Hustles, Doesn't Leave Much Time for the High-Minded Work of Activism and Advocacy.
- Resistance = Staying! For Renters Who Had Decided to Stay, Their Resistance Was Not Defined by Their Advocacy or Collective Action with Other Renters. It Was in the Defiant Act of Fighting to Stay in the Bay Area, Despite the High Economic and Personal Costs of Doing So.
- What Would a Renter Movement Look Like? In Absence of a Visible Renter Movement, Participants Were Limited in Their Ability to Envision It.

# Community Voice Sessions

## Hear Some of the Conversation

# COUNTER

## DECREASE THE IMPACT OF MISINFORMATION AND UNPRODUCTIVE NARRATIVES BY UNDERMINING THEIR LOGIC, LEGITIMACY, OR VERACITY

### SAMPLE LANGUAGE

- *You shouldn't have to be "lucky" to find a decent place to live in our region. Seniors shouldn't have to be "lucky" that they bought their homes early enough to benefit from their investments nor should seniors who are renters have to move away, simply because few options exist for them to stay in the region. Millennials who work in our region shouldn't have to be "lucky" to find an affordable rental or be forced to leave the Bay Area when they are ready to own a home simply because, so few options exist for them here. Families shouldn't be crammed into studios made for students or single adults, simply because they were not "lucky enough" to find rental homes that meets their needs.* ***When we make better housing policies and our housing system operates better, we don't leave the survival of so many people to chance or "luck". Our systems should help us plan for and provide the critical things that people actually need to live, work and thrive here.***

- ***We also have a long track record of preserving existing homes and working to keep them affordable.*** *In a typical year, around 20 percent of all new rental homes built in the region receive some sort of assistance to make them affordable. With even more focused effort and support, we could improve and scale up the assistance available to people across the Bay Area. In our region, we've made great strides in preventing families and individuals from losing their homes—and, our goal has been to quickly reconnect people to stable homes, if they do lose their homes. A regional plan, launched in 2019, to expand the diversity, availability and accessibility of homes in our region would help put our region back on its feet.* ***If the recommendations and asks of each community across our region are achieved, we could see up to a 50 percent reduction in families experiencing homelessness and the near elimination of veteran homelessness. That's not all that is possible. We can do so much more, but we need your help to do it.*** ***[Note: The data shown here are meant as exemplars of language. Actual data reflecting Bay Area trends is needed here.]***

# Making the Case for Housing Justice

## Strategy At A Glance

A Narrative Strategy that is robust allows us to differentiate between stories that help people connect to housing justice and those that detract from it. In this playbook, we first breakdown parts of the housing justice narrative, so that we can be strategic in our narrative building. Then, we put the pieces back together in a few examples that can shape stronger narratives. Not all of these elements are in every message, so we also provide a template for how these pieces are most usefully assembled for different audiences.

**NAME THE POWER OF THIS MOMENT** NAME THE MOMENT AND HELP PEOPLE EMBRACE THE URGENCY FOR BOLD DECISIVE ACTION

**AMPLIFY** REINFORCE VALUES THAT HAVE A DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO CONNECT PEOPLE TO HOUSING JUSTICE

**ATTACH** ASSOCIATE HOUSING WITH NARRATIVES IN OTHER SECTORS THAT EXPAND OUR COALITION

**REFRAME** REMINDING PEOPLE OF WHAT THEY HAVE AT STAKE AND WHAT THEY LOSE IF THEY FAIL TO JOIN OUR HOUSING JUSTICE MOVEMENT

**CENTER EQUITY & SYSTEM CHANGE** CENTER EQUITY IN ALL MESSAGING AND SOCIALIZE NEW NARRATIVES THAT POSITION EQUITY AS THE PATHWAY TO JUSTICE AND LIBERATION AS END GOALS

**COUNTER** DECREASE THE IMPACT OF MISINFORMATION AND UNPRODUCTIVE NARRATIVES BY UNDERMINING THEIR LOGIC, LEGITIMACY, OR VERACITY

**PIVOT & AVOID** REFUSE TO ENGAGE OR TRIGGER COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE NARRATIVES AND PRACTICE CONSISTENT WAYS TO PIVOT AROUND UNPRODUCTIVE NEGATIVE DISRUPTORS.

**MOBILIZE** CALL TOGETHER A BROAD-BASED COALITION IN SUPPORT OF RENTER STABILITY POLICIES

**YOUR ASK AND CALL-TO-ACTION** BE EXPLICIT ABOUT WHAT YOU NEED PEOPLE TO DO

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THE CaseMade