

The background is a photograph of a protest. A man in the foreground is shouting into a megaphone. He is wearing a black t-shirt with the text '#BLACKLIVESMATTER' repeated in yellow. Behind him, a crowd of people is visible, many wearing similar black t-shirts. Several red flags are being held up in the background. A sign with a globe and the text 'TO BE SURVIVE' is also visible. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay.

Shifting the Narrative: Moving From Messaging Research To Crafting Narratives

September, 2020

WHAT WE KNOW



1. Who our audiences are
2. What messages move them
3. What messages to avoid

VALUES and VISION don't change.

We want consistent messaging over time and space.

MOMENT, ACTION, THREAT, and OPPORTUNITY do change.

We want to listen, evolve, and customize our messaging to
make the biggest impact.



Opportunity

People want to imagine a better future.

We present a positive vision for how the Bay Area can be better, healthier, more just.

Threat and loss aversion

People are afraid that things will get worse, and especially worried to lose what they already have.

We can show that housing justice can resolve threats to personal circumstances and shared values.

Values and Vision



- A decent place to live is a **basic human right**.
 - **Opportunity:** We can live in a healthy, stable community where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.
 - **Threat:** The housing crisis puts pressure on our community — it affects schools, healthcare, and the economy. Can we think of ourselves as good people if we don't work for housing justice?
- Our community thrives because it is **diverse**.
 - **Opportunity:** We can build a Bay Area that encourages diversity and fosters healthier, thriving communities.
 - **Threat:** Rising housing costs have an especially hard impact on people of color and those working lower-paid jobs. They threaten the diversity that makes the Bay Area such a special place.

Values and Vision



- **Our children** deserve a future in our community.
 - **Opportunity:** Acting on housing justice now will create the same opportunities for prosperity that previous generations enjoyed. They deserve that.
 - **Threat:** If we don't act now for housing justice, our children will be forced out of the communities they know. We owe them better.
- Housing means **possibility**.
 - **Opportunity:** A Bay Area with housing justice is a place where anyone can pursue their dreams, where your neighborhood can be a thriving community, where people can build the businesses, families, and relationships they choose.
 - **Threat:** Without access to stable housing, more people will be forced out, we will lose the connections that tie us together, the Bay Area becomes a more narrow, cut-off place.

AUDIENCES

Different goals for different folks



BASE Turn values into action. Move housing justice up the list of priorities, in part by tying to other values. Emphasize urgency. Make progress feel achievable.

PERSUADABLES Move from “affordable housing” to a vision for a just, vibrant, thriving community for all. Show personal benefits.

CONTRARIANS Shift inertia (the current system is good, or works for me) to loss aversion (the current system is unsustainable, and needs to change).

What the base should hear



- You are not alone. There is a movement of your friends, family, and neighbors who believe housing justice. Together, we can build the Bay Area we dream of.
- These are your core values. The fight for housing justice is not (only, primarily) a political fight. It is about your heartfelt commitment to equality and diversity. It is about racial justice. It is about runaway inequality that drags low-income workers down.
- This is what you are owed. You work hard, you care for yourself and your loved ones, and you *deserve* a more just, thriving community.
- This is for everyone. The progress we make for housing justice will communities of color, those working lower-wage jobs, the next generation.
- Your action is needed. Making change means getting involved, showing up, and talking to the people you have influence over (which might mean family, friends, coworkers, lawmakers, etc.).

What persuadable and bystanders should hear



- Your neighborhood can be better. More diverse, more just, more liveable. A better place for schools and local businesses. A place where you can stay for the long term, where your kids can stay.
- Don't be left behind. There is a movement happening for justice. You want to be on the right side of that personally. And you want the Bay Area/your community to have that better future.
- This is what you are owed. You work hard, you care for yourself and your loved ones, and you *deserve* a more just, thriving community.
- This is for everyone. The progress we make for housing justice will communities of color, those working lower-wage jobs, the next generation.
- A better system is needed. Maybe you're one of the lucky ones, maybe not. But no matter your experience, the impacts of worsening injustice will affect your opportunities, your community, and the things you care about. You don't need better personal choices, you need a better system.

What contrarians should hear



- Housing policy can help control costs for everyone. Unless we take action, neighborhoods, businesses, and current Bay Area residents will pay the price.
- Our children deserve better. Let's make sure they have opportunities to follow their dreams, to build the lives we want for them, and to stay in the communities they love.
- This is what you are owed. You work hard, you care for yourself and your loved ones, and you *deserve* a more just, thriving community.
- A better system is needed. Maybe you're one of the lucky ones, maybe not. But no matter your experience, the impacts of worsening injustice will affect your opportunities, your community, and the things you care about. You don't need better personal choices, you need a better system.

What to avoid (unless you *really* know your audience)



- Divisive categories: homeowners, landlords, renters, the unhoused.
- Let's make room for everyone. (as opposed to "make the Bay Area a place where anyone can thrive").
- Housing justice will fix or address past inequities. Keep the focus on current needs and a better future. Making up for past inequities had limited appeal in the research; we are better off focusing on the fight for racial justice today.
- Do not contradict the belief in homeownership.

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE CREATIVE

“GOOD” CREATIVE IS SIMPLY THIS: IT IS CREATIVE THAT WORKS

Our goal is not fancy creative, or fun creative, or surprising creative, or beautiful creative (though those can all be part of our repertoire).*

Our goal is *effective* creative.
Effective creative gets a person to do a thing.

* Okay, this might matter more for you arts groups.
See “Authenticity” in a few slides.

UNIRA: The 5 elements of effective creative



URGENCY Why is *right now* the moment to take action?

NEED Who needs help? What needs to be changed? What problem needs solving?

IMPACT How will my action affect the situation or contribute to change?

RELEVANCE Why should the audience care?

AUTHENTICITY Why is the speaker someone who the audience should listen to?

Urgency

- Not just “why does this matter?” but “why does this matter *now*?”
- Urgent creative exists at a moment in time.
- Urgency is about change: the boulder, the rocket, or the fire.
- Urgency can be explicit or implicit.



Need

- Who is affected?
- What happens if we act? What happens if we *don't*?
- Why is it important?
- Communicate need without exploiting or othering.



Impact

- Directly connected to the need.
- Not about the organization.
- Feasible and plausible.
- A single, direct ask.
- Tied to the **values** and **vision**.



Relevance

- Partly tactical: personalization, targeting, conditional content.
- Your audience may also be your subject.
- Understand and value your audience:
 - Demographics
 - Relationship to your cause/org
 - Cultural consumption
 - Emotional state
 - Timeliness



Authenticity

- This is who *you* are, as the speaker.
- Can be the specific person, or the organization.
- Must be earned over time, and renewed constantly.
- When everything else fails (or is maxed out) authenticity wins.



Visualizing effective creative



Urgency Need Impact Authenticity Relevance

THIS IS OUR TIME. Hundreds of us rallied in downtown Detroit with one message: this year, we WILL win \$15/hr, we WILL win #UnionsForAll, and we WILL shift power in this country away from corporations and into the hands of working people.

Tomorrow's primary is the first step. Can you take a minute to find your polling location? -Jamika w/FF15

Visualizing effective creative



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Urgency *Need* *Impact* *Authenticity* *Relevance*

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Effective creative in action




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Limpiadoras de casas de Seattle: ¡Ustedes merecen beneficios en su lugar de trabajo!

Responde a una corta encuesta sobre qué beneficios necesitas y participa en el sorteo de una tarjeta de regalo de \$100.

[See Translation](#)



Limpiadoras de casas de Seattle...

Dinos: ¿Qué beneficios necesitas?

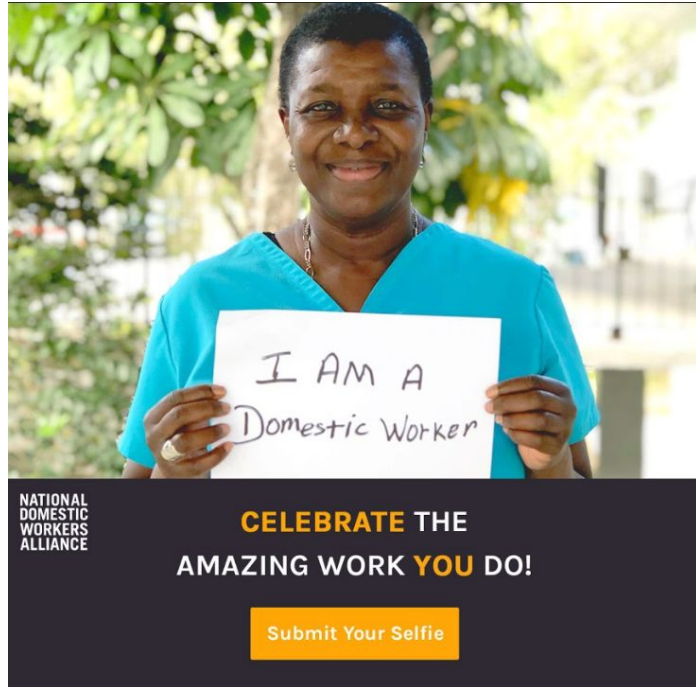
[Toma nuestra breve encuesta!](#)

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Trabajadoras de la Limpieza de Casas de Seattle: ¿Qué beneficios...

[LEARN MORE](#)

Effective creative in action



The three questions



For every piece of messaging

1. What do you want your audience to *feel*?
2. What do you want your audience to *know*?
3. What do you want your audience to *do*?

