



YOUR STORY, YOUR POWER, YOUR ADVOCACY

How Strong Stories Move People to Action
NLIHC
2024

HOUSING
NARRATIVE
LAB 

**STORIES ARE OUR
SINGLE MOST
POWERFUL TOOL**





WHY?

**It is human: Stories are the way
humans communicate**



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Create connection and brings people into your journey



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It is a way to build trust understanding and relationship with your audience



WHY?

It is human: Stories are the way humans communicate

Create connection and brings people into your journey

It is a way to build trust, understanding and relationship with your audience

People take action based on how they feel
(The Heart part of Hearts and Minds)

**“ People will forget
what you said, people
will forget what you
did, but people will
never forget how
you made
them feel.”**

MAYA ANGELOU





FROM FEELING TO ACTION: PEOPLE ACT BASED ON HOW THEY FEEL

Emotions that can move people to action:

Pride

(Paternal) Love

Hope

Awe

Humor

Empowerment



FROM FEELING TO ACTION: PEOPLE ACT BASED ON HOW THEY FEEL

Emotions that can move people to action:

Pride

(Paternal) Love

Hope

Awe

Humor

Empowerment

Emotions to use sparingly:

Anger

Fear

Sadness

STORY OF SELF IN THREE PARTS

Story of YOU

- > Why you do what you do
- > What are your values/experiences that make you a leader on this issue



STORY OF SELF IN THREE PARTS

Story of YOU

Story of US OUR COMMUNITY / ORGANIZATION

- > Create unity
- > Show we are in this together
- > Our issue matters to all of us and when one benefits, we all benefit



STORY OF SELF IN THREE PARTS

Story of YOU

Story of US
OUR COMMUNITY / ORGANIZATION

Story of ACTION

- > Give people something to do
- > What is your call to action:
Join us, vote, support our
work.





THE HOW

TURNING A MOMENT INTO A STORY

Choose your focus

- > Depends on your outcome
- > Mobilize: Tell the story of what first moved you to act/organize/recognize your power.
- > Persuade: Tell a story about something people can identify with - the value of a home, love, security.

A hand holding a pen over a document, with decorative dot patterns in the background. The dots are arranged in concentric circles and are colored in shades of orange and yellow.

THE HOW

TURNING A MOMENT INTO A STORY

Choose your focus

Start with the value

What is the feeling, idea or aspiration that brings people together?



THE HOW

TURNING A MOMENT INTO A STORY

Choose your focus

Start with the value

Describe what you had to overcome

- > It could be an internal challenge or external one.
- > You DO NOT have to feel as if you have to bare all your misfortunes.



THE HOW

TURNING A MOMENT INTO A STORY

Choose your focus

Start with the value

Describe what you had to overcome

Show the climax

Often a choice you made - Was the choice clear? How did the choice make you feel?



THE HOW

TURNING A MOMENT INTO A STORY

Choose your focus

Start with the value

Describe what you had to
overcome

Show the climax

Describe the resolution

What was the outcome?



THE HOW

TURNING A MOMENT INTO A STORY

Choose your focus

Start with the value

Describe what you had to overcome

GO ON OFFENSE

Describe the resolution

Call to Action

Tie the resolution to the call to action or the reason you are giving your story of self. THIS IS THE POLICY ASK

BUILDING A STORY OF SELF

VALUE

As a mom, I want my children to grow up feeling safe and secure, knowing they will always have all the love in the world, a safe home to rest and all the food they need to grow up healthy and strong. I know how much that means because when I was almost homeless with my children.

CHALLENGE

After my divorce, I was a single mom paying all the bills alone, \$2,000 a month in rent, plus food, utilities, car payments, insurance and gas, orthodontic bills for my middle schooler and occupational therapy for a pre-schooler with sensory issues. It was so tight, I had to juggle so much to pay my bills - and sometimes I was late to pay them. My wallet couldn't handle one more thing.

BUILDING A STORY OF SELF

CLIMAX

And then, it came. The landlord raised our rent by \$500 a month. He said it was to make upgrades in the building, but I couldn't pay that kind of increase. We were going to have to leave but I couldn't find another place I could afford that was safe or wasn't falling apart.

OUTCOME

I was going to have to tell my kids we would have to go to a motel. But a group of tenant organizers joined us when they heard what the landlord was doing and it turned out, the landlord, a big corporation, was rent-gouging. They did it because they thought they could in a building full of single moms, working class families and seniors. Thankfully, we protested and organized to stop them and eventually they made reasonable increases.

BUILDING A STORY OF SELF

CALL TO ACTION

So many of us in your district are struggling to make ends meet. That's why we need you to join us. You can support bills before you that would expand rental assistance for families and individuals so they can have safe quality housing they can afford, prevent evictions and homelessness and protect tenants rights so we can address the power imbalance between renters and landlords. These steps can help each of us thrive and when we do, we strengthen the community we all love.

BUILDING A STORY OF SELF

VALUE

I want to live in a community where my husband, my son and I are stable and safe. I want to live in a community where my husband and I can find jobs that pay us enough so we don't have to worry about our basic needs, especially a stable home. I want my son to feel safe and rested so he can get up in the mornings with energy to do well in school so he can have a better life than his mom and dad.

CHALLENGE

But that hasn't been easy for us. My job cut my hours and my husband was laid off and couldn't pay the rent after the landlord increased it by \$200/month. He evicted us and we tried to find a place we could afford but the apartments we could afford weren't safe or they were bad for our health. Our son has asthma and the apartments we saw were run down, with mold or peeling paint or serious roach infestation, but that life is not stable for an adult, let alone a 10-year-old.

BUILDING A STORY OF SELF

CLIMAX

We were so overwhelmed with fear and worry, it was hard to figure out what to do. A friend recommended us for an apartment in her complex and said she'd heard from another friend about rental assistance, maybe we could apply? We took our son to the library everyday after school during that time. It was quiet and safe and they had computers.

OUTCOME

We applied online during one of those visits. And then nothing. We were still crashing with different family and friends. Then out of the blue, we got an email that we qualified. All I could do was cry - letting out that fear and hoping this could be the lifeline we needed. The rental assistance was just enough to help us find the stability we needed to find better paying jobs. Our son is back to 100 percent attendance in school. He just had a part in the school play - he could practice in our home now and my husband and I weren't in fight or flight mode so one of us could help him rehearse.

BUILDING A STORY OF SELF

CALL TO ACTION

My family's experience is the experience of so many people in your district, who are just one crisis or trauma away from being on the street. That's why we need you to join us. I need you to choose the highest level of funding possible for housing we can all afford and to keep people like me from falling into homelessness. We know when each of us have a stable, decent home that we can afford, we can find good jobs, our kids do better at school and that strengthens our entire community.

BUILDING A STORY OF SELF

PREPARATION

Who is your audience?

CALL TO ACTION | What do you want them to do after hearing your story?

THEIR VALUES | What do they care about most?

The intersection is your shared values.

YOUR VALUES | What do you care about most?

BUILD YOUR STORY

Choose the part of your story that best achieves the above.
(Story of YOU; Story of US)

FOCUS

Tell the story so the shared value is highlighted.

VALUE

Describe what you had to deal with or overcome.

CHALLENGE

What choice did you make?

CLIMAX

Describe the resolution.

OUTCOME

What is your Call To Action? (Story of ACTION)

ACTION

JOIN US

WHO: Communicators with lived experience, Housing Narrative Lab, National Low Income Housing Coalition

WHAT: The Power of Storytelling: Shaping the Narrative on How to Achieve Housing Justice

WHEN: Wednesday, March 20th from 9:30a-11aM

WHERE: NLIHC 2024 Housing Policy Forum, Hilton Capitol Hill, Washington DC

