MESSAGING THIS MOMENT:
A HANDBOOK FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATORS
CENTER for COMMUNITY CHANGE
A GREAT MESSAGE DOESN'T SAY WHAT'S ALREADY POPULAR; A GREAT MESSAGE MAKES POPULAR WHAT NEEDS TO BE SAID.

This handbook is the culmination of a set of trainings, technical support and coaching for a talented array of communications professionals across the progressive landscape. All of this work was made possible thanks to the generous support of Open Society Foundations’ Racial Justice portfolio. Over 100 participants helped shape these events, ensure representation from across a spectrum of issues, identities and geographies, and embrace the spirit of doing things differently and doing different things. We wish to acknowledge the particular contributions of Tarah Walsh, Jeffrey Parcher, Marisol Bello, Donna De La Cruz and Peter Woiwode at Center for Community Change. Joseph Reid of ASO Communications was instrumental to pulling off these events. At Open Society Foundations, particular gratitude to Alvin Starks, Leslie Gross-Davis, Andrew Maisel and Ken Zimmerman. The Ford Foundation hosted our first event thanks to Laine Romero-Alston, Charlene Caronan and Elizabeth Wann. Jonathan Heller and Dorian Warren helped launch and frame our efforts. Finally, Shanelle Matthews and the Radical Communicators Network she launched made it possible to reach an impressive array of communications practitioners and provide expert coaching for exercises during the events.

Any errors or omissions in this work are, of course, the fault of the author.
Dear Reader,

The rise of Trumpism has challenged every single aspect of being for progressives and our organizations. It is, as many of us have been saying, an existential threat to everything we care about: economic justice, racial and gender equality, a livable planet and global peace. The message and narrative challenges of the moment are critical and foreboding along at least two major fronts.

1) We desperately need to develop a broader, more inclusive narrative that mobilizes our base and persuades many more winnable people in the middle. More Americans need to see themselves in a story that leads with progressive values and sets the stage for bold policy change. We know this story must be built in an organic way around real lived experiences that embraces all of our many identities, especially those deliberately denied respect and freedom to thrive.

2) We must expose Trumpism and the conservative doctrine of by and for the wealthy. A narrative populism built exclusively on resentment and anger that scapegoats the most vulnerable people in America puts everything we are and believe at risk. Theirs is an attack on people of color through the structural violence of vile policies of detention, racial profiling and deportation, while at the same time erecting ever higher barriers to well-being for all but the wealthiest and most well-connected.

In response to these twin challenges, I am proud that the Center for Community Change has partnered with Anat Shenker-Osorio, America’s most provocative and paradigm-challenging messaging expert. Her groundbreaking work brings immediate assistance to grassroots groups that are on the front lines of building immediate resistance, opposition and power for the comeback of a progressive vision for America.

Besides this handbook, we’ve been able to reach hundreds of grassroots organizers through our Messaging This Moment convenings, webinars, message memos and ongoing coaching session with key leaders.

We hope you find these materials inspiring and helpful, and we look forward to partnering with each and every one of you as we work together to bend the arc of history back toward justice.

In solidarity,

Dorian Warren

Vice President, Center for Community Change
President, Center for Community Change Action
LEAD WITH SHARED VALUES, NOT PROBLEMS

Right now, most progressive messaging follows a familiar order: lead with problems, move to solution, end with a call to action. Americans got 99 problems and they don’t want yours. The desire to sound the alarm about the egregious, systematic and growing harms to our communities is understandable. But that doesn’t make it compelling. The problem with problems is that people don’t want more of them.

Instead of leading off with problems, narratives that first link to shared values have proven much more effective at shifting opinions toward progressive policy solutions.

Leading with values also reminds us that we need to challenge our entrenched beliefs about what we can and can’t say in service of a progressive agenda. For too long the right has succeeded in mobilizing what they came to label “values voters” using cuddly words like “family” to cloak their anti-woman, anti-LGBT agenda. This has been so effective that progressives routinely reject messaging around family and freedom as somehow inherently conservative.

We need to confront those fears with the truth.

Conservatives get crushed in values centered debates.

Marriage equality won out precisely because LGBT people made the debate about values of commitment and family. When they stopped talking “rights” and started talking “love,” the tide turned. The immigrant rights movement made headway when they made the debate about families, the American Dream, and the freedom to be who you are and go where you need to go.

Our research shows family is the perfect values lens for talking about the rules that govern our economy and our nation. If you ask Americans (and we did!) why they work and what they want for their families, you will hear a laundry list of progressive ideals: secure retirement for the elderly, brighter futures for their kids, putting dinner on the table and being home in time to eat it.

While family tested most strongly, we found progressives do better when we lean into a number of values including community, fairness and freedom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMBRACE</th>
<th>REPLACE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most of us seek to treat others the way we want to be treated</td>
<td>Our treatment of undocumented immigrants and refugees is horrendous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America is a nation founded on an ideal – that all are created equal</td>
<td>The criminal justice system imprisons African Americans and Latinos at alarming rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Today, as always, people move to make life better for themselves and their families</td>
<td>Our broken immigration system tears families apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No matter our differences, most of us want pretty similar things</td>
<td>The gap between rich and poor in this country is at historic levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In America, we value our freedom</td>
<td>Corporate special interests are engaging in a war on workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of us believe family comes first</td>
<td>America is the only nation in the world without paid parental leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You wouldn’t know it from politicians, but Americans stand largely united</td>
<td>X is an incredibly polarizing and contentious issue with a well-funded opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our country’s strength is grounded in our ability to work together</td>
<td>Hate crimes are at historic levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All work has value and all working people have rights</td>
<td>There’s a war on workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementing solutions</td>
<td>Solving problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BRING PEOPLE INTO THE FRAME — OFFER CLEAR VILLAINS AND HEROES

While leading with problems is ill advised, it is important to convey what’s at stake in our fights. Introducing the problem after you’ve set out the shared value helps generate cognitive dissonance in your audiences. Re-ordering when we introduce the problem is only part of the issue. We must also pay attention to how we describe it.

Unfortunately, we tend to make existing and impending problems seem to have no clear origin. “Systemic inequalities” don’t create themselves; “the gap” didn’t widen of its own accord. Lawmakers implement policies and can choose to do otherwise. Similarly, we find a tendency to talk about people “losing their coverage” or “wages falling.” People “lose” their keys and wallets. Politicians take or confiscate health insurance. Corporate CEOs hold or force wages down.

Motives matter. It’s no coincidence that massive giveaways to corporations and the wealthiest are part of the same budget that includes taking medicine, education and utilities away from struggling Americans.

Wherever possible, describe who is behind the problems you catalogue. And, when this isn’t obvious, use verbs like choose or decide, eliminate or confiscate, to characterize what lawmakers have done or seek to do.

On the flip side, it’s also critical to demonstrate the actions of the people for whom we advocate. We tend to leave them out of view or relegate them to the object, not subject, position.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMBRACE</th>
<th>REPLACE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEOs decided to pay people less</td>
<td>Jobs/homes were lost</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lawmakers took our coverage</td>
<td>People will lose coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians put up barriers to</td>
<td>The income/wealth gap has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prosperity for communities of</td>
<td>widened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>color</td>
<td>Health disparities are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawmakers refused funds for</td>
<td>increasing</td>
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<tr>
<td>health and nutrition for</td>
<td>The achievement gap is</td>
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<tr>
<td>Americans struggling to make</td>
<td>growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ends meet</td>
<td>The unemployment rate rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEOs fired more people</td>
<td>Conditions persist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay taken from women/POC</td>
<td>[Name of group] has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrier to well being</td>
<td>experienced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal pay for equal work</td>
<td>[Name of group] continues to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greedy few rigged the game</td>
<td>face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporations/CEOs take from</td>
<td>Systemic inequities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too much wealth in too few</td>
<td>[Economic] inequality</td>
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<tr>
<td>hands</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Our economic rules favor the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rich at the expense of the rest</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A powerful few get rich off</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the profit we produce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[People] coming together in</td>
<td>Collective action,</td>
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<tr>
<td>union</td>
<td>collective bargaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[People] negotiating collectively</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Join together in union</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corporations have held down</td>
<td>Many jobs offer workers so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wages so much that many full</td>
<td>little in hours and salaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time employees qualify</td>
<td>they are eligible for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for [name of program]</td>
<td>[name of program]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X are paid less than Y</td>
<td>X earn less than Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage to the climate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawmakers’ decisions to</td>
<td>The climate is changing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pollute our air and water</td>
<td>Sea levels are rising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporations make profits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>off damaging our climate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People/Americans struggling</td>
<td>Poor, working poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to make ends meet</td>
<td>Marginalized, underserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People/Americans working to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provide for family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions of working people</td>
<td>Labor unions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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EMBRACE

- CEOs decided to pay people less
- Lawmakers took our coverage
- Politicians put up barriers to prosperity for communities of color
- Lawmakers refused funds for health and nutrition for Americans struggling to make ends meet
- CEOs fired more people
- Pay taken from women/POC
- Barrier to well being
- Equal pay for equal work
- Greedy few rigged the game
- Corporations/CEOs take from working people
- Too much wealth in too few hands
- Our economic rules favor the rich at the expense of the rest
- A powerful few get rich off the profit we produce
- [People] coming together in union
- [People] negotiating collectively
- Join together in union
- Corporations have held down wages so much that many full time employees qualify for [name of program]
- X are paid less than Y
- Damage to the climate
- Lawmakers’ decisions to pollute our air and water
- Corporations make profits off damaging our climate
- People/Americans struggling to make ends meet
- People/Americans working to provide for family
- Unions of working people

REPLACE

- Jobs/homes were lost
- People will lose coverage
- The income/wealth gap has widened
- Health disparities are increasing
- The achievement gap is growing
- The unemployment rate rose
- Conditions persist
- [Name of group] has experienced
- [Name of group] continues to face
- Systemic inequities
- [Economic] inequality
- Collective action, collective bargaining
- Many jobs offer workers so little in hours and salaries they are eligible for [name of program]
- X earn less than Y
- The climate is changing
- Sea levels are rising
- Poor, working poor
- Marginalized, underserved
- Labor unions
Once we’ve named our shared value and described the problem we’re tackling with clear agents named, we can move toward our solutions. When it comes to describing our policy objectives, we tend to employ the language of “fixing” or “reforming,” “improving” or “mitigating.” Amelioration of harm, or describing a policy as reducing some recognized bad thing, may feel accurate. But it suppresses motivation and long-term engagement. Instead, describing the good thing your policy, campaign or movement exists to create helps sustain the will to fight among your base and engender interest among skeptics. This also means we must be for something desirable rather than merely against something deplorable. Calling out some tax evasion scheme disguised as a childcare plan or a maternal leave crumb as inherently sexist and inadequate doesn’t work unless we have some attractive, fleshed out alternative to name in its place. A “no” without a “yes” leads listeners to think we’re just playing politics as usual. It sounds like we’re just denouncing whatever the other side puts out to defeat them, not making a sincere attempt to see good policy become law.

**EMBRACE**

- Create an immigration process
- Paid enough to provide for family, able to set kids off to a bright future
- People who work for a living, ought to earn a living (with time for a life)
- Set standards
- Change the rules
- Create stable workplaces
- Earn a good living and have a good life
- Being there and providing for those you love isn’t negotiable
- Create safe and healthy communities
- Protect our children’s health

**REPLACE**

- Fix our broken immigration system
- Improve wages and working conditions
- Better wages and benefits
- Increase access to paid family leave and dependable scheduling
- Stop/mitigate/slow down climate change

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**Martin Luther King Had a Dream, Not a Complaint.**
FOCUS ON OUTCOMES, NOT PROCESS

Currently, advocates tend to describe concerns by naming processes. For example, characterizing the decimation of Medicaid as “moving to block grants for states,” brings the means front and center and sends the ends into the shadows. At the same time, we tend to label our desired solutions in terms of policy, not outcomes. For example, “minimum wage increase” and “paid family leave” instead of “people are paid enough to make ends meet” and “you’re at your new baby’s side,” respectively.

In health care, altering eligibility, cutting benefits and complicating enrollment all create or prolong illness in people. But instead of describing the all-too-common lived experiences of having an illness or watching a loved one suffer, we focus on the paperwork and procedures. Again, the concern in lived experience terms isn’t eligibility and benefits, it’s seeing a doctor, getting treatment, affording medicines and so on.

Further, we tend to shield humans from view, calling them “beneficiaries,” “enrollees,” “eligible individuals” or “applicants.” These are labels our audiences don’t apply to themselves or anyone they love. This applies even to the common term “worker,” which has proven in numerous tests to fall flat and diminish interest in policies like paid sick days and paid leave time. “Working people” is not only much stronger, it actually beats “middle class” as an effective label.

Any policy is only as good as what it allows you to do – prevent incurable diseases in your baby, have a little extra for savings, spend time with your family and so on. These are the terms and experiences that make things human issues, not policy debates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMBRACE</th>
<th>REPLACE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food, housing, medical care</td>
<td>Safety net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make ends meet, retire in dignity, prevent and treat illness</td>
<td>Entitlements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid time to care [for loved ones]</td>
<td>Paid family and medical leave, paid parental leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being there for family isn’t negotiable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time caring for family</td>
<td>Days off, time off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The rules about X</td>
<td>X policy/policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the rules about work and wages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate the barriers to wellbeing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to prosperity for [name of group], obstacles to wellbeing for [X]</td>
<td>Gap between rich and poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Name of program] ensures that working people struggling to make ends meet can feed their families</td>
<td>[Name of program] is a key work support program that helps those in low paying jobs get by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers, children, friends, neighbors, teenagers, etc.</td>
<td>Eligible individuals, recipients, enrollees, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove people from care, deny people care, force people into debt for care</td>
<td>Block grants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care, treatment, prevention, medicine, getting and staying well</td>
<td>Coverage, access to coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strep throat, cancer, broken arm, etc.</td>
<td>Medical/health conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurt Americans, hurt people</td>
<td>Hurt the economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair return on work People who work for a living, ought to earn a living</td>
<td>Raise wages, living wage, adequate wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class sizes that enable one on one interaction</td>
<td>Invest in classroom priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up-to-date materials and resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Describe what you seek, not what you oppose

With a non-stop stream of vile rhetoric and rules coming our way, it’s tempting to rebut, refute and rail against what our opponents are peddling. But repeating what our opposition says, even in order to counter it, simply lends them more airtime. It’s also another form of leading with problems, not shared values.

Our opponents make frequent outlandish claims about our communities and their own actions. It can be tempting to engage in rebuttal – to assure audiences that “immigrants are not a security threat” and that Trump’s childcare plan “won’t help working families.” But this simply has us repeating their words and unwittingly lending credibility to them.

As much as we wish otherwise, negating a claim actually brings it top of mind. People latch onto the most tangible element of a sentence – usually the noun. In contrast, words like “don’t” and “not” are intangible.

In fact, decades of research demonstrate that attempts to refute false information can actually strengthen people’s belief in the claims. Testing shows that people remember the assertion and forget that it’s a lie.

Further, people accept arguments that reinforce what they already believe and reject those that don’t. This is known as “confirmation bias.” And, in fact, there can be a “backfire effect,” where people become more convinced of their position if it’s challenged.

People are more likely to believe refutations if they are presented unemotionally, such as in graphs. Experiments in different domains reveal that factual presentation is even more effective when accompanied by “affirmation” that has people recall an experience that made them feel good about themselves. (Note that this is in a one-on-one conversation, not broadcast messaging, setting.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMBRACE</th>
<th>REPLACE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We support X plan that makes childcare affordable so any working parent can have their kid in great care. Anything else falls short</td>
<td>This is not an adequate child care plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrants contribute to our culture and community and we’re all the better for having them here</td>
<td>Immigrants are not “criminal aliens” Being undocumented is not a crime No human is illegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant Americans move here for the promise of freedom and opportunity in this country</td>
<td>America is supposed to be the land of the free and the home of the brave. That’s a good thing; so let’s make it that way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America is supposed to be the land of the free and the home of the brave. That’s a good thing; so let’s make it that way</td>
<td>The vast majority of Muslims pose no threat to our security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim Americans are our neighbors and our coworkers; they are the kids in our schools and the parents in our parks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America was founded on freedom of religion. We don’t exclude people based on whether or how they pray</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without [program], people cannot work, let alone prosper; without food, children cannot learn, let alone thrive. [Program] is all that separates many Americans from frequent hunger and childhood malnutrition</td>
<td>[Program] doesn’t discourage work People don’t stop working on [program]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At this critical time, politicians need to focus on the things that matter – good paying jobs, vibrant communities and livable neighborhoods – not go acting as the body policy on our friends and neighbors</td>
<td>There are many things that threaten our children, but transgender people using the restroom in peace isn’t one of them A bathroom is not where women and children are at risk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCE PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES AND HARMs AFTER SHARED VALUE

Because we’re generally fighting for particular communities who bear the brunt of state and corporate cruelty, we naturally want to begin by highlighting these concerns. Leading with what differentiates us, however, diminishes our reach to persuadable audiences. And it often takes the form of leading with the problem, as described above.

We must openly name the race, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity issues our opponents dismissively label “identity politics.” In message testing, it has proven most effective to do this after we name a shared value first. By framing the harm we describe as an attack not only on some group but also on the shared value established at the outset, it provides us the moral high ground and increases the size of our pool of supporters.

In addition to simply referencing the groups subjected to human rights abuses, certain vetted phrases have proven useful at moving persuadable audiences toward our solutions.

EMBRACE

- Everyone means everyone, no exceptions
- Politicians/CEOs choose to do X, especially in communities of color
- No matter what you look like or where you come from
- The places that need it most
- The communities longest denied
- No matter your zip code

“IF YOU WANT TO BUILD A SHIP, DON’T DRUM UP PEOPLE TO COLLECT WOOD AND DON’T ASSIGN THEM TASKS AND WORK, BUT RATHER TEACH THEM TO LONG FOR THE ENDLESS IMMENSITY OF THE SEA.” – ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY
ALIENATING THE OPPOSITION, WITHOUT PROVOKING BACKLASH FROM THEM, IS NOT MERELY ACCEPTABLE — IT IS NECESSARY

Too often, politicians and advocates craft and test for language in order to please the greatest number of people, no matter their ideology. This has left us, at best, unable to fire up the people who we need to act as the vanguards of change and, at worst, outright disempowers them. Milquetoast messaging doesn’t piss anyone off. But it also doesn’t ignite anyone’s passion, and it fails to differentiate our beliefs from those of our opposition.

Liberating ourselves from finding messages our opponents tolerate means we hit upon words our base actually feels inspired to repeat. All while we grab and keep the large segment of our audience who toggle between our worldview and the toxic lure of fear of others, free market worship and rugged individualism.

By using messages that engage our base, persuade the middle and alienate the opposition, we achieve multiple things.

First, we empower our choir to want to convince the congregation.

Second, we argue on our terms — not those of our opposition. If our committed opposition registers disapproval at our words, we can rest assured we’re advancing our ideas, not merely saying something blandly inoffensive.

And, finally, we can make our opponents appear like the outliers they are: out of touch with what the vast majority, believe and desire.

Of course, it’s also key not to provoke such backlash that we energize otherwise apathetic opponents into engaging politically. There is a difference between turning our staunch detractors off and firing them up. However, let’s also face facts. Even the most benign messages from certain messengers heat up our opponents. This means we must double down on uplifting our base to persuade the middle.

In research, we’ve seen phrases like “every working parent should be paid enough to set their kids off for a bright future,” “immigrant Americans moved here for the promise of freedom and opportunity in this country” and “a greedy few rigged the game in their favor, now too many jobs don’t pay enough for our needs, let alone enable our wants” make around 15 percent of U.S. voters scurry. And to them we say, good riddance. We want to engage in debate on these terms — especially since we know the vast majority of Americans not only feel comfortable but actively embrace our views here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>EMBRACE</strong></th>
<th><strong>REPLACE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Do right by kids  
All children have rights | Invest in kids |
| Good for America/our nation/X city/X state | Good for our economy |
| Education allows children to pursue their dreams | Education allows children to achieve economic stability |
| Place clean air and water for all ahead of corporate profits for the few | Act to mitigate climate change |
| Every American ought to be paid enough to set their kid off to a great future | Improving wages will grow our economy |
| America isn’t working for all, especially African American and Latino communities | We must make strides toward a more inclusive society |
| When somebody can hold down your wages, no matter their profits or your accomplishments, there’s no freedom in that | Grow our middle class |
| Immigrant Americans contribute to our culture and community and we’re all the better for having them here | We need immigration reform that’s tough, fair and practical. We need to secure our border, crack down on illegal employers and turn productive taxpaying immigrants into American citizens |
| Immigrant Americans move here for the promise of freedom and opportunity in this country. And we think moving is one of the best and the hardest things you can do | |
| America’s supposed to be the land of the free and the home of the brave, so let’s make it that way | |

**THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD IS WHERE YOU GET RUN OVER.**
GET LESS MODEST!

Since we frequently work in coalition, our victories are always partial and we never stop fighting for freedom for all people, we tend to couch our endeavors and achievements with hedge phrases. These additional words, like “seek to” or “strive to” or “work to,” dull the impact of our desires and accomplishments. They leave audiences wondering, do we actually do anything or do we simply try very hard?

Fortunately, of all our common messaging missteps, this one is by far the easiest to correct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMBRACE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We achieve…</td>
<td>We work to achieve…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We create…</td>
<td>We strive to create…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our campaign challenges…</td>
<td>Our campaigns seeks to challenge…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our coalition builds…</td>
<td>Our coalition is dedicated to building…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SAMPLE NARRATIVES

Effective narratives lead with **shared values** then introduce **the problem** and offer **solutions**.
ON CHILDCARE

Sample Narrative 1: People Who Work

People who work hard deserve to make more than a decent living; we deserve to have a decent life.

This means ensuring all children are cared for in a great place that doesn’t break the bank. That’s why we support X plan that makes childcare affordable so any working parent can have their kids in great care.

Trump’s childcare plan is a tax cut for his wealthy friends with the chance to set up a savings account for care. If Americans had savings, we wouldn’t be choosing between the care our kids need and the rent.

All of us need quality, affordable childcare – that is what the X plan delivers.

Everyone means everyone, no exceptions.

Sample Narrative 2: All Children Have Rights

Parents want the very best for their kids – and our leaders ought to want the very same. That means childcare you can trust, no matter your income level and the right to care for your loved ones while still making ends meet.

That’s why we’re endorsing the X childcare plan, which provides support to make great care affordable no matter your income.

Meanwhile, Trump’s plan is another kickback for the already wealthy, while people who work for a living are left scrambling.

All children have rights, not just those whose parents happen to be wealthy and well connected.

Sample Narrative 3: Family Comes First

Most of us believe that family comes first.

That’s why we support the X childcare plan.

Every parent wants to know their kids are in great hands without having to fear they can’t make rent.

And that’s what the X plan does – makes quality care affordable to working parents.

The scheme Trump proposes is a tax break for his fellow millionaires without real support for parents struggling to make ends meet.

If politicians want to talk family values, it’s time they start valuing families

And that starts with the X childcare plan.
ON IMMIGRATION

Sample Narrative 1: Nation of Values
America is a nation of values, founded on the ideal that all are created equal.
Any order that violates every person’s right to due process and equal treatment violates our Constitution and cannot stand.
Everyone means everyone, no exceptions.
This is why we must [call to action].

Sample Narrative 2: People Move
People move to make life better for themselves and their families. Immigrant Americans moved here for the promise of freedom and opportunity.
Any order that violates a person’s right to remain in and contribute to our communities damages the freedom we cherish.
That’s why we’re [solution/call to action].

Sample Narrative 3: We Belong Together
Most of us believe that family comes first.
But today, certain lawmakers want to forcibly separate mothers from children, husbands from wives, and sisters from brothers. Anything that tears apart our families threatens our nation.
In opposing this new executive order, we affirm our belief that having “family values” means valuing families by keeping them together and honoring the contributions immigrant Americans make to our country and communities.
That’s why American families are [solution/call to action].

ON HEALTH CARE, MEDICAID, MEDICARE

Sample Narrative 1: Family
In America, family should come first. And whether it’s for a newborn you swear already smiles, your elderly mom or your spouse nursing an injury, taking care of family in sickness and health isn’t negotiable.
But corporate billionaires have taken over our government. They are using their power to rig the rules so they can take even more of the wealth we produce. With one hand they are helping themselves to massive revenue handouts. With the other hand they are taking medicine away from people struggling to make ends meet.
That’s why we’re [solution/call to action].

Sample Narrative 2: Health
No matter our differences, most of us want pretty similar things – to go through our lives in good health and to get quick, effective, compassionate care if we’re ever sick or injured.
But today, conservative politicians want to block people struggling to make ends meet from the most cost effective, life saving medical care [insert # of Americans on Medicaid] count on to get and stay well.
That’s why we’re [solution/call to action].
Sample Narrative 3: Humanity

Whether it’s routine like strep throat or scary like cancer, illness reminds us that at our core, we’re all human. Everyone wants proven treatments without fearing we’ll go bankrupt to get them.

But today, certain lawmakers are threatening [insert estimated # of Americans who will get kicked off] with choosing between life saving health care or putting food on the table for family. Without Medicaid, people struggling to make ends meet can’t take their babies for routine checkups, get treatment for serious diseases or get the pills they need to stay healthy and make it to work everyday.

That’s why we’re [solution/call to action].

Sample Narrative 4: Fairness

We say America was founded on the idea that people are created equal. That’s why access to the medicines we need to live healthier should be equally available to all; getting sick and needing care doesn’t depend on what’s in your wallet. No one should go into debt to get well.

But today, the GOP wants to pick who gets to live long and in good health and who will struggle to get care for themselves or their family. They see a life in California, a prosperous state that pledges to look after all of its residents, as worth more than one in Mississippi, where state lawmakers are eager to block people from the care that they need.

That’s why we’re [solution/call to action].

Sample Narrative 5: Unity

Politicians may not get it but Americans stand largely united: We work hard for our families, look out for our friends, and want our neighbors to enjoy healthy and prosperous lives.

But today, a small group of lawmakers want to take away the preventative care, treatment and medicines of our fellow Americans. They are targeting our friends, family members and neighbors who have the absolute least right now – in order to award revenue giveaways to a handful of their biggest donors.

That’s why we’re [solution/call to action].

ON GENDER NON-BINARY AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

Sample Narrative 1: Equality

No matter our differences, most of us want pretty similar things – to get through the workday and have time with family and friends.

But for some people, the most basic things – like using public bathrooms – have been turned into a daily struggle because they don’t look or feel like a generic ideal “man” or “woman.”

All of us need a secure, clean and comfortable place to go to the bathroom – no matter what we look like or how we identify.

Sample Narrative 2: Live and Let Live

Most of us have too much going on in our own lives to have time to worry about what other people have going on in theirs.

But in some states, certain politicians want to police the most basic things – like using public bathrooms.

People are best suited to determine for themselves where they should go when they gotta go.

At this critical time, politicians need to focus on the things that matter – good paying jobs, vibrant communities and livable neighborhoods – not go acting as the body policy on our friends and neighbors.
1. EQUALITY TEXAS WEBSITE

In Texas we embrace hard work, the belief in opportunity for all, and treating others like we want to be treated.

Discrimination toward anyone, including gay and trans-gender people is out of line with values Texans hold dear.

All Texans should have the rights to provide for themselves and their families, to live in a safe place and to access public spaces, safely and without fear of losing these rights because of who they are or whom they love.

Though we believe that everyone should be treated equally, our laws do not always reflect that belief.

SOURCE:
Issues section of Equality Texas website: Ending Discrimination
https://www.equalitytexas.org/our-issues/ending-discrimination

EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE NARRATIVES IN USE

- Begins in shared value, evokes the Golden Rule.
- Names the problem actively.
- Frames the problem in opposition to the shared value, not simply harmful to certain individuals.
- Says what they’re for, not just what they’re against.
- Returns to a shared value.
2. EXCERPT FROM DORIAN WARREN INTERVIEW ON FOX NEWS ABOUT MAY DAY PROTESTS FOR IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

[Host] Dorian, very good to have you. If you’re going to summarize the protesting, what is it?

[DORIAN] It’s this administration, the Trump administration, deportation policies and machine. We’re saying no to separating families, no to a border wall and no to increased enforcement.

⇒ There’s a different path forward and that is comprehensive immigration reform. ⇒ It’s a bipartisan issue. It passed the Senate in 2013. It couldn’t get through this House that is trying to repeal Obamacare. This is a broad group of folks that are saying no to anti-immigrant policies. It’s Facebook and Google, by the way, as well as many other nonimmigrants like myself out here saying no to anti-immigration, separation.

[HOST] When you say anti-immigration, it’s anti-illegal immigration right?

[DORIAN] We want to keep families together. ⇒ There’s a great history in this city of allowing immigrants to come in and contribute to this country and this economy… Again, business is joining with faith leaders and civil rights leaders, and the Sierra Club has joined in, Planned Parenthood have come in to say no to anti-immigration, separation.

3. PETRA FALCON OP-ED IN THE ARIZONA TIMES, MAY 2, 2017

My Turn: The president has proposed huge tax cuts for the rich while cutting critical safety net programs.

We all cross our fingers that we’ll receive a big tax refund this time of year – enough to pay off our credit card bills or finally replace that one appliance that keeps breaking down. ⇒ But if you’re an American billionaire, this year you can look forward to a much bigger ⇒ payout. Over $880 billion, to be exact.

That’s how much President Trump and GOP lawmakers want to strip ⇒ from federal programs in order to give a giant tax cut to the super rich. And it’s why on Tax Day, at the Casa de Primavera Senior Center in Phoenix, I stood alongside other Arizonans who would be affected by these cuts to call out the hypocrisy of this administration’s aim to use our tax dollars not to support those who need it most, but to line the pockets of the richest few. ⇒

Our new president’s policy agenda is out of step with everyday Americans, and his proposed budget would harm seniors, children

⇒ Starts off in common lived experience – awaiting your tax refund to cover common household needs.

⇒ “Payout” as opposed to “tax break” avoids accidentally impugning taxes and thus activating the opposition’s worldview.

⇒ Uses active voice and names culprits – “President Trump and GOP lawmakers want to strip ⇒ from federal programs,” “this administration’s aim to use our tax dollars not to support those who need it most, but to line the pockets of the richest few.”

⇒ Brilliant summation of issue, implies the purpose of taxes without making this conscious.
and families, including immigrant families, who are struggling to make ends meet. ➔ With support from allies in Congress, this administration’s policies would defund many of the programs and services that give a hand up to people who need it, all so they can give a handout to the wealthiest 1 percent. ➔

That is not who we are as a nation. ➔

The new president has thrown his support behind a health care plan that eliminates coverage ➔ for an estimated 24 million people, more than 400,000 of whom live in Arizona. Most of those slated to lose their insurance are covered by Medicaid, which primarily covers families with kids, seniors and those with disabilities. For people who get their insurance through work or the marketplace, premiums and out of pocket costs would skyrocket under the proposed plan, which congressional lawmakers are planning to revive as soon as they return from recess.

The most vulnerable stand to lose
The president’s proposed budget would also drastically reduce or eliminate funding for dozens of programs that working families need to survive – and thrive. ➔ It would cut support for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, better known as SNAP or food stamps, which helps 47 million Americans keep food on their tables. ➔

Two thirds of the households supported by SNAP include children. And it’s not just kids that need to worry about their next meal ➔ under this administration; the proposed budget also slashes funding for Meals on Wheels, which delivers food to needy seniors stuck at home. ➔

These cuts will have real life impact on Arizonans like 55-year-old Jose Perez. At the senior center last week, Perez told his story of being injured at work and having to rely on Medicaid because his employer did not pay workers’ compensation. We also heard from Frances Garcia, who suffered spinal cord and brain injuries in an accident in 2006 and depends on Medicaid and SNAP funded food stamps to get by.

This administration seeks to slash holes in the safety net of programs and services that support millions of Americans. From afterschool programs that keep kids safe to treatment programs that support people fighting the stranglehold of opioid addiction to assistance for families just trying to keep the lights on, programs that entire communities depend on are under threat – all so the richest 1 percent can get a big break on their taxes. Bankrupting programs for the needy to bankroll billionaires is not what America stands for. ➔

Budget should reflect our values, priorities
America was built on the idea that no matter who you are or where you come from, if you work hard you can build a life for yourself and your family. ➔

Makes people agents in their own lives.

Again, avoids impugning taxes by not making what wealthy are doing clearly bad.

Seizes the moral high ground.

Active, instead of the all too common “people will lose coverage.”

Instead of listing off programs, names what programs achieve.

Rooted in lived experience.
Programs like Medicaid and SNAP help us deliver on our nation’s promise to welcome our neighbors and extend a hand when they need it.

That’s why at Promise Arizona, an immigrant rights and civic engagement organization, we are fighting to protect federal funding for these programs; because we want all families, those who were born here generations ago and those who are new to our country, to have what they need to make it in America.

Our leaders in Washington have abandoned the founding promise of our country, instead pursuing an aggressive agenda of greed, personal gain and callous indifference to the suffering of others. As Arizonans and as Americans, we can and must do better.

Senators McCain and Flake, as our voice in the Senate, we look to you to fight for our values when you return to Washington and find bipartisan, common sense solutions to our nation’s problems. Show our national leaders that in Arizona we know what America stands for, and our budget should reflect those priorities.

4. BLACK LIVES MATTER MEMPHIS’ “BAIL MOMMA’S OUT” CAMPAIGN, AS REPORTED IN WREG.COM BY STACY JOHNSON

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – Official Black Lives Matter Memphis launched a new effort to pay bail for black moms in jail by Mother’s Day.

Shay Jones is a member who also knows what it’s like to be a mom behind bars.

“At the time my child was four years old. She had to deal with her mom. I had to go to court five or six times,” she said. Ten years later she’s part of the new campaign to help other moms in a similar situation, who might not have the same resources she had.

“I have had personal experience with it and I do know it creates a hardship to have to come up with $1,000 for something that ultimately was dismissed,” she said. “It’s really about the fact that these people’s freedom has been taken from them because they do not have money.”

Bail is a set amount that’s only supposed to act as insurance for people showing up to court. It does not indicate whether someone is innocent or guilty.

“If you a black mama, you’re in jail, you talking to us, then you’re eligible,” organizer Erica Perry said. Their goal was to raise $35,000 to help as many women as possible get back to their kids. “We’re asking our community members to think how they spend Mother’s Day, how they celebrate and honor the women who they love,” Perry said.

SOURCE: Op-Ed in The Arizona Republic: Petra Falcon, executive director of Promise Arizona on defending the safety net
http://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/2017/05/02/trump-tax-cuts-budget/100650146/
They’re focusing in Shelby County where records show nearly 274 women are in jail waiting for trial. Sixty of those women, or nearly one-fourth, are in for misdemeanor crimes. Those can include driving with a suspended license and truancy.

“[It’s about the fact that] these people’s freedom has been taken from them because they do not have money. I think inherently that’s not what we stand for as a country, as individuals. It’s not moral. And going into Easter weekend, it’s definitely not Christian,” Jones said.

**SOURCE:**
Local TV News Report: Black Lives Matter Memphis profiled on their “Bail Momma’s Out” campaign
Rise Above: Countering Fear-Based Messaging

The past few months have seen an increased volume of rhetoric that manufactures fear toward African Americans, Latinos, Muslims, and immigrants. Our goal in this research was to identify narratives that counter fear-based messaging, move persuadable Americans to embrace diversity as a foundational value, and to explore the particular words and phrases that motivate our target audiences to action.

**Messaging Recommendations**

1. **Link diversity to problem solving, strength, and healthy communities rather than economic competition.** Talk about how we need to take advantage of our source of strength in diversity. Be aspirational, positive, and talk about embracing our differences.

2. **Define opportunity through the means that enable a tangible payoff: pursuing an education and getting a good paying job or career.** Position discrimination as a barrier to opportunity and to those payoffs.

3. **Acknowledge that some people might be uncomfortable with change when asserting the importance of diversity.**

4. **Highlight the importance of getting to know and accepting people from different backgrounds as a solution and a strength.**

5. **When talking about universal values of being American that should apply to all people, explicitly say “no matter what someone looks like/where they come from/what their race is.”**

6. **Talk about our need to hold the wealthiest corporations and individuals accountable for paying their fair share.** People are prone to think in zero sum terms. Repositioning the “haves” as the wealthiest corporations (instead of people receiving government assistance) is more effective than trying to argue we all do better when we all do better.

7. **Talk about shared values of respect, dignity, and everyone’s basic rights.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base (33% of adults)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They strongly embrace diversity, believe it helps us solve problems; believe discrimination towards many groups is a very serious problem; and see a strong role for government in ensuring everyone has opportunity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are more likely to be women, younger, Democratic, and African American.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persuadables (50% of adults)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They have attitudes that overlap with both base and opposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They more closely reflect the demographics of registered voters, but a slightly higher percentage are Latino.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opposition (17% of adults)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are either ambivalent or against diversity; believe government assistance has created a culture of dependency; and believe minorities use racism as an excuse for their own failures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are more likely to be male, older, white, from the South, and Republican.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Methodology**

Focus Groups: Lake Research Partners conducted six focus groups in 2017 in Charlotte, North Carolina on January 23 with white women and mixed gender African Americans, in Phoenix, Arizona on January 25 with white men and mixed gender Latinos, and in Baltimore, Maryland on February 15 with white men and white women. Participants were recruited to be moderate to independent lean-partisan, with a mix of marital status and education level.

National Online Dial Survey: Lake Research Partners designed and administered a survey conducted online from March 1 through 6, 2017. The survey reached a total of 1,000 registered voters nationwide with oversamples of 100 African Americans, 100 Latinos, and 100 Millennials. The margin of error for the nationwide adults sample is +/-3.1%. It is larger for subgroups. The sample of activists was conducted March 2 through 24.
Messaging Do’s and Don’ts

When opponents call it political correctness: Call out manufactured fear as “bait” from “politicians trying to divide us.”

When opponents talk about safety: Talk instead about strength and how fear makes us weaker.

Provide a strong call to action:

✓ Remove the barriers of discrimination that hold people back.

✓ Lean in to ideas that unify us as a diverse people and make us stronger.

✓ Speak out against discrimination and scapegoating when we see it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say</th>
<th>Instead of</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Foundational” values</td>
<td>“Important” values</td>
<td>Implies that other socially desirable ends depend on those values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity helps us “solve problems” or “makes us stronger”</td>
<td>Diversity helps us “compete economically”</td>
<td>Strength and problem solving are broader goals, and they resonate more strongly with our base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need to “heal the wounds” of racism</td>
<td>We need to “interrupt” racism</td>
<td>Framing bigotry as a harm that causes wounds is a stronger call to action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People, no matter where they come from</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>We need to be explicit that we mean everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing hatred by “getting to know each other”</td>
<td>Reducing hatred by “teaching tolerance”</td>
<td>People believe hatred is taught, and people getting to know each other is the best way to undo what has been learned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>People believe that “we” can do something to change racial attitudes, more so than themselves alone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ **DO** link diversity to core values of freedom, opportunity, respect, and dignity.
✓ **DO** talk about the need to embrace or accept people’s differences.
✓ **DO** acknowledge that change can make some people uncomfortable.
✓ **DO** explicitly mention race and racial differences, but do so after leading with a core shared value.
✓ **DO** talk about the barriers of discrimination in the context of age, race, and gender.
Top Messages

Messages were tested for moment-to-moment responses in the online survey. Below are the winning messages that beat the opposition argument and increase people’s willingness to take action. The lines on the graphs are the moment-to-moment reactions to an audio recording of each message by our base, opposition, persuadables, and activists. People dialed positively (above 50) when they had a favorable reaction to the words, and negatively (below 50) when they had an unfavorable reaction. The number in parentheses represents the mean dial rating for that message. Passages in bold were especially effective.

Diversity as Strength
We are stronger when we work together and when we learn from each other’s experiences, united as Americans. When people from different backgrounds join together we all benefit from the diversity of those perspectives. It helps us find new ways to deal with old challenges. But we are not taking full advantage of this source of strength. If we embraced our diversity and valued the views of our fellow Americans, we’d be more likely to find solutions to our problems and better ensure that everyone has the opportunity to pursue their dreams. Whether white, Black, or Latino, whether Christian, Jew, or Muslim, we are all Americans. We need to embrace our different experiences, perspectives, and cultures because united we stand, and divided we fall.

Real America
America is a nation of values, founded on an idea - that all men and women are created equal. And while we all have our circles, whether they are our family, co-workers, or friends on Facebook, how we treat others outside of our circles reflects our commitment to the values that define us as Americans. It’s not about what you look like or where you were born that makes you American - it’s how you live your life and what you do that defines you here in this country. We are better, as people, and as a country, when we welcome our neighbors, care for each other, and help those in need. We are better when we embrace our differences.

Pragmatism
Our country is changing, getting more and more diverse. It might make some of us uncomfortable, but it is our reality, and a constant throughout our history. Politicians play on this fear, trying to divide us. They push unwise and divisive ideas like sending federal troops to police our cities, building a border wall, or singling out Muslim Americans because of their religion. If we take the bait on these, it makes our country weaker, not stronger. Our nation is stronger when every one of us can contribute and share ideas, and when everyone’s basic rights and dignity are respected. We need to embrace ideas that unify us as a diverse people and make our country stronger, and we need to speak out against discrimination and prejudice when we see it.
Rise Above:  
A Leadership and Communications Initiative  
To Uphold An Accurate Story of Us

NCLR launched the Rise Above initiative, joining hands with The Opportunity Agenda and Lake Research Partners, to tap the foundational values enshrined in “We the people, in order to form a more perfect union,” which signal our America is a work in progress that calls for collaboration and agency to ensure our reality matches our ideals.

Issues such as immigration, crime, and the economy have become proxies to stir anxiety over demographic change, divide Americans from one another, and weaken the role of civil society in shaping the direction of the country.

Unchallenged, this toxic narrative can cause irreparable harm to the future cohesion of our society and our ability to come together to solve the problems facing the nation.

This effort is designed to explore and create tools all of us can use to advance a positive vision of our nation’s shared future, a common melody that entices us to rise above fear and differences, and taps the strength of our diversity to foster a collaborative spirit among America’s communities. Rise Above is a concerted effort to help build and take hold an accurate “Story of Us” – of who we are and aspire to be as a country. One that:

• Recognizes the strength in our diversity and accurately sees it as one of our greatest national assets
• Has a place for every one of us, regardless of color, accent, origin or affiliation
• Brings our people together to tackle our challenges and generate real solutions

Together we can build a common melody that elevates the ideal America represents, ignites problem solving, and strengthens the lyrics of the specific issues each of us works on. To build that common melody, we are sharing the results of our research, and tools to apply them to our work.

Changing the toxicity in our environment will take a concerted effort across communities – we look forward to engaging with all those interested in strengthening our civil society to improve these tools, and bring our networks together to help the true American Story of Us take hold.

National Council of La Raza

For more information about the Rise Above Initiative:  
Viviana Lopez Green (vgreen@nclar.org)  
Clarissa Martinez De Castro (cmartinez@nclar.org)
Using Maps to Promote Health Equity

This report is one in a series of papers on best practices for using maps to promote health equity. Commissioned by The Opportunity Agenda, in partnership with the Health Policy Institute at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, this project was made possible by The California Endowment. The complete volume of research and case studies is available on-line at: http://www.opportunityagenda.org/mapping.

Community Mapping for Health Equity Advocacy

Sarah Treuhaft, Senior Associate
PolicyLink
June 2009

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Introduction

The field of community mapping – the use of spatial data by community groups to analyze and communicate about community issues, assets, and strategies for change – has evolved tremendously in the past decade. The democratization of geographic data, the rise of free, online mapping tools, and the development of a strong network of community data intermediaries to support data access and use have all contributed to this expansion. With this extensive information and institutional infrastructure in place, equity advocates have dramatically increased their ability to incorporate data and maps into their activities.

While spatial data and mapping have become more robust, accessible and widespread, the field of public health has increasingly embraced the spatial thinking and analysis these tools can help inform. Many public health researchers have grown dissatisfied with individually-oriented explanatory models for understanding obesity and other critical health issues, and have begun to look more closely at the role of community and environmental factors on individual health and health disparities. Strategies that improve community environments have come to the forefront in discussions about how to reduce health inequities and halt health crises like childhood obesity.

These parallel developments have turned community mapping into a cutting-edge practice for health equity advocates, with much innovation in the field. Communities across the country are using GIS tools to analyze neighborhood environments in relation to health disparities and develop projects and policy campaigns to build healthier neighborhoods. In Chicago, New York, Oakland, Louisville and countless other places, communities are mapping grocery stores and fast food outlets in relation to obesity rates. In Los Angeles, Denver, and elsewhere, park advocates are using GIS to analyze the distribution of parks and play spaces in relation to low-income communities and communities of color. Many communities have used mapping to understand and track environmental risks—from vacant and abandoned properties to air pollution.

This paper focuses on the practice of using mapping for community-driven policy advocacy activities. It describes the relationship between mapping and policy advocacy, with a focus on how mapping is being used to advocate for policy and systems changes that reduce health inequities, and highlights best practices in the use of mapping for policy advocacy drawn from communities across the country.

The case studies and examples presented in this paper were drawn from our experience and knowledge from working in this field for the past ten years, and are not based on exhaustive search or survey of maps used in policy advocacy. In order to learn about the

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approach, mapping activities, and policy advocacy experiences and outcomes of groups involved in the efforts discussed in this paper, interviews were conducted with their leaders.

The paper begins by setting the context for community mapping and policy advocacy, providing a framework for thinking about the stages involved in the policy advocacy process and how mapping can be used to further each stage of the process. The bulk of the paper presents examples of how communities have used maps in their policy advocacy activities. The first two case studies describe how maps were used in equitable development campaigns to win the country’s first community benefits agreement in Los Angeles and to pass a more inclusive zoning policy in Washington DC. The next three case studies focus on examples from the health field that have used mapping to improve food access, park access, and air quality. The conclusion summarizes lessons learned from the case studies about what is needed to effectively use GIS for health equity advocacy.

**Mapping and Policy Advocacy**

Policy advocacy describes the host of activities that individuals and groups engage in with the goal of changing government, institutional or private sector policy. While decision makers often create their own policies, the nonprofit sector has a long history of engaging in the policy process through framing policy issues, conducting policy research, disseminating information, and lobbying politicians to support their causes.

Advocacy is preeminently about persuasion—convincing legislators, city officials, heads of departments, and others with official power to put in place new or improved guidelines for investment and action. Engaging in the policy process involves a variety of steps including: defining a particular policy problem, researching and analyzing the problem and its potential solutions, selecting a campaign strategy, and implementing the campaign.

Once the advocacy strategy has been chosen, moving forward an advocacy campaign involves another set of activities focused on the “inside strategy” of getting decision-makers on board with your proposal and the “outside strategy” of engaging other advocates, the media, residents, etc. in pushing for your proposal. Activities include educating the public about the issues, communicating messages through the media, building or participating in coalitions, grassroots organizing, and directly lobbying policymakers (Figure 1).  

Although nonprofits increasingly engage in the policy process, policy advocacy and mapping remain infrequent activities for nonprofit organizations. A survey conducted by the Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy Project (SNAP) found that advocacy was on the rise among nonprofits: 75 percent of 1,700 nonprofits surveyed engaged in public policy activities such as direct or grassroots lobbying or testifying at a legislative or administrative hearing. However, these nonprofits were engaging with low frequency and faced numerous barriers to more effective participation.\(^5\)

Community mapping can be an extremely useful tool to build the capacity of nonprofits to effectively engage in policy advocacy. Mapping holds vast potential for advocacy because of the power of maps to both analyze and communicate complex information and relationships. Maps can add value at different stages of the policy advocacy process and for particular strategic purposes:

1) **Analyzing and identifying policy issues:** All policy campaigns begin by defining a salient social problem that policy can address. Mapping geographic data can help organizations understand conditions, articulate the nature of the policy problem, and analyze the relationships between different community factors. Some of the most important analytical functions of GIS mapping for policy analysis include:

• Showing concentrations: Maps can be used to quantify the concentration of characteristics that hinder community well-being, such as blighted properties, or document the absence of positive or protective community factors, such as the presence of grocery stores or mainstream financial services.

• Comparing places: One of the most valuable characteristics of GIS for equity analyses is the ease with which comparisons for a given indicator can be made between different geographic areas. Comparing one neighborhood to another, or to the city as a whole, can be extremely useful for illustrating differences that make the case for a particular policy change. The City Project, for example, used the indicator of park acres per thousand residents to compare park access in neighborhoods and council districts across Los Angeles (see Case Study 4). City-region comparisons can also be useful for policy efforts aimed at a regional level.

• Analyzing associations: Maps can also be used to analyze the associations between different community characteristics, such as housing values and vacant properties. Overlaying different variables can help show correlated phenomena and may indicate causal relationships and therefore potential interventions. It is important to add the cautionary note that while associations point to potential causality other methods are needed to prove causation.

2) **Engaging the community in policy research and development:** Mapping is also extremely useful for involving community members in the policy process, and there are many ways to do this. Many community-based organizations engage residents in mapping community assets and deficits. This might be a part of a community planning process where people gather around poster-sized maps to identify neighborhood issues (such as crime hot spots) and plan for how to address them. Or it might involve residents collecting data in the field, either with printed maps and clipboard or with handheld data devices, such as land use or vacancies, for use in a planning process. In the Central Valley, large printed maps served as the basis for community members to identify locations of pesticide drift and community sites (Case Study 5). Mapping can also be used to involve community members after maps have been created. Maps can inform discussions and help working groups track progress. For example, community development groups in Cleveland use maps created by the Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development at Case Western Reserve University to track their efforts to acquire vacant and abandoned properties in their neighborhoods, and the same maps are used to guide community organizing efforts.⁶

3) **Modeling and developing policy solutions:** As an analytical tool, GIS mapping can be used to model neighborhood change based on a set of indicators or to model how new or different policies can produce alternate outcomes. Advocates can use these models to illustrate that change is possible and to argue for why a certain policy solution is feasible and desirable. While this maps are not as commonly used for this purpose as

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for the other mapping purposes described here, illustrating the possibility of change can be extremely useful in policy efforts. The example of Washington DC Inclusionary Zoning (Case Study 2) describes how a coalition of advocates used mapping to show how many new affordable units would have already been created, and where, if an inclusionary housing policy had been in place between 2000 and 2003.

Neighborhood early warning systems are an example of how communities can use spatial modeling to target their efforts. First in Chicago in 1985, and then in Los Angeles in 1995, these systems were initially developed to provide communities with timely data on property conditions to help them intervene early to prevent housing abandonment. The early warning system model can be useful in other issue areas too. The Center for Community Innovation at the University of California, Berkeley is in the process of developing an early warning system to indicate risk of gentrification for Bay Area neighborhoods. The system is being developed through a grant from the regional and state agencies responsible for transportation planning, and the planners engaged in the project hope that the system will be useful in targeting public investments.

4) Communicating the message to build public and political will: At various stages of the policy advocacy process, campaigns need to garner support from different audiences such as community residents, the business community, and policy makers. Maps and other visual representations of data can help communicate the policy problem and potential policy solutions. Well-made maps can convey large quantities of complex information quickly and easily. In Los Angeles, a community coalition used a poster-sized map illustrating development issues in the Figueroa Corridor to build support for its community benefits campaign around the Staples Center complex (Case Study 1). Community groups that have used maps to communicate about their issues often find that maps not only clearly tell their story, but they lend the group a certain level of credibility with policymakers.

Issues in Mapping for Health Equity Advocacy

Health equity is an approach that recognizes that the disparate health outcomes that we see across different population groups based on race and class stem from inequitable economic and social conditions that are systemic and largely the result of public policy choices. Those who adopt this approach to improve health focus on the unequal community environments that shape the life opportunities—and health outcomes—of residents. A conceptual framework that PolicyLink developed for understanding these connectors between community factors and health defines neighborhoods in terms of their overlapping social, economic, physical, and service environments and describes


how qualities of each of these neighborhood environments may protect residents from negative health impacts or expose them to health risks.\(^9\)

In addition to recognizing the social and economic roots of health inequities, the health equity approach also focuses on policy and environmental changes – rather than efforts focused on individuals – as the most important levers to improve health and reduce health disparities. The idea is that such changes will be more effective because they reach more people and permanently change the environments that continually influence people’s choices. They are also a more efficient use of scarce public and philanthropic resources.

Because of the nature of the field, advocating for health equity presents particular opportunities and challenges for community mapping. As an incredibly well-suited tool for analyzing neighborhood environments, GIS presents one of the greatest opportunities to advocates. GIS has the capacity to capture, store, and analyze massive amounts of geographically-referenced data that are useful to the analysis of neighborhood environments. The types of information compatible with GIS that can be useful for understanding neighborhoods include: retail and business datasets that provide information on neighborhood businesses and services; demographic data at the neighborhood scale; parcel data on property conditions, such as vacancy or lead contamination; spatial data on characteristics on the built environment, such as parks and open spaces; and data on the health of individuals living in a certain community. The ability of GIS to process these diverse datasets makes it an extremely useful tool for understanding the community factors that influence health in a given area, and analyzing how environmental and policy changes could make a difference. GIS analyses can be particularly useful in addresses community health concerns through applications like the following:

- **Analyzing neighborhood access to health-promoting land uses such as supermarkets and parks**: Many researchers are using GIS mapping to understand food and physical activity environments. For example, The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene analyzed rates of obesity and diabetes by neighborhood as well as the locations of grocery stores selling affordable, nutritious foods. Based on their findings, the department targeted its “Green Carts” mobile vending program to areas with high rates of diet-related disease that were underserved by fresh food retailers.

- **Targeting services, resources, and efforts to residents most in need**: Analyzing health inequities and the distribution of environmental and community assets and liabilities can help communities identify areas for strategic, targeted intervention. The HOPE Collaborative in Oakland, one of nine food and fitness collaboratives across the country funded by The W.K. Kellogg Foundation and co-convened by the Alameda County Public Health Department and the Alameda County Food Bank, provides a great example of this approach. The Collaborative analyzed health data compiled and mapped by the health department. Based on this

information, they decided how to concentrate their efforts to increase access to healthy food, ensure that neighborhoods provide safe places to play and recreate, and bolster local economies in the neighborhoods where residents suffered the greatest health inequities.

- **Assessing exposure to environmental risk factors:** GIS mapping can be useful in understanding how communities are affected by environmental risk factors. Researchers Manuel Pastor and Rachel Morello-Frosch used GIS mapping to analyze neighborhood exposure to toxic facilities and air pollution in relation to race and income, and to understand who moved into and out of neighborhoods after the siting of a toxic facility.

Mapping for health equity advocacy also presents some particular challenges. These can include issues like following:

- **Data access and quality.** There are limitations with many of the datasets that are most useful to the analysis of health and place. Some of the most relevant data are unavailable due to confidentiality restrictions, others are very costly, inaccurate, or outdated.

  Health data: Because of the confidentiality of individual health data, data from large health surveys or hospitalization records are oftentimes not available at small geographies (such as census tracts) or with geographic identifiers such that the researcher could link the person to their neighborhood. The California Health Interview Survey, for example, provides data at the county level, which is too large for an analysis of neighborhood environments. One must apply to access the data at finer geographic levels.

  Business data: Data on local businesses is important for understanding the neighborhood economic context, but this data is often inaccurate at the neighborhood scale and/or expensive. Health equity researchers will most typically need data for a particular type of business (such as liquor stores) and the data needs to be accurate at the neighborhood level. Assessments have found that typical datasets such as those prepared by Dunn and Bradstreet are highly inaccurate at the neighborhood level.

  Demographic data: Information on neighborhood demographics such as poverty, income, vehicle ownership, and race is at the core of a health equity analysis. The U.S. Census provides the most accurate and consistent information and is available down to the block group level (an area with about 1500 people) for most indicators. But the most recent census data is from ten years ago, and neighborhoods can change a great deal in a decade. Luckily, the 2010 census is approaching to rectify this challenge. Additionally, the American Community Survey will replace the long-form census and hopefully provide more frequent updates of data at the neighborhood level.
• Measuring disparities and access. Beyond the data issues related to health equity analysis, there are methodological challenges with measuring relationships between individuals and their environments. Standards exist for some variables, for many others, there is no consensus about how to measure access and proximity. In addition, the mobility of residents and how it differs across households is a critical variable that is often inadequately captured.

• Proving causality. Lastly, the causal linkages between the associations that GIS analysis can so powerfully illustrate are not easy to prove. While there are clear relationships between certain neighborhood factors and health (for example, the presence of supermarkets in a community and obesity), the pathways by which environmental features like supermarkets, eating and shopping behaviors of residents, and health outcomes are complex.

Case Studies

Case Studies: Using GIS Mapping for Policy Change

The following examples illustrate how maps can fit into different stages of policy research and advocacy. Table 1, below, summarizes the mapping examples with respect to their issue area, type of policy activity, and uses.

Table 1. Examples of Mapping for Policy Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Issue area</th>
<th>Mapping was used to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Organizing for Community Benefits in Los Angeles | Economic Development | o Describe ownership patterns and development opportunities  
|                                            |                       | o Communicate inequities and community needs  
|                                            |                       | o Illustrate campaign victories                                                                                        |
| Establishing an Inclusionary Zoning Policy in Washington DC | Housing | o Illustrate current and planned housing development in the city  
|                                            |                       | o Model how an inclusionary housing policy could lead to the construction of additional affordable units throughout the city  
|                                            |                       | o Communicate the policy problem and IZ solution to residents and policy makers                                                                                        |
| Analyzing Food Deserts and Health in Chicago | Food access           | o Measure neighborhood access to healthy food retailers  
|                                            |                       | o Compare access across neighborhoods according to racial composition  
|                                            |                       | o Document relationship between diet-related health and food access                                                                                        |
| Advocating for Park Equity in Los Angeles  | Park access           | o Measure neighborhood access to parks  
|                                            |                       | o Compare access across neighborhoods according to race/ethnicity, poverty, percent children, and access to a car |
Determine if a neighborhood is above or below the county average
Calculate park acreage per 1,000 residents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Participation GIS to Reduce Pesticide Exposure Among Farmworkers in California’s Central Valley</th>
<th>Environmental health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o Quantify pesticide application in two counties and six study communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Combine community and public data about community conditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Advocate for improved pesticide drift policy and creation of pesticide-free buffers around schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Case Study 1: Organizing for the Country’s First Community Benefits Agreement, Los Angeles**

One of the premiere examples of mapping for policy change comes from an effort to fairly distribute the benefits generated from the construction of the Staples Center Sports Complex in downtown Los Angeles. This effort was spearheaded by Strategic Alliance for a Just Economy (SAJE), an economic justice and popular education center that has been building economic power for working class people in Los Angeles since 1996. SAJE sought to leverage the development to gain jobs and other benefits for local residents. In 2001, the organization spun off a new group, the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice (FCCEJ), devoted entirely to ensuring just development of the 40-block strip, also known as the Figueroa Corridor, where the Staples Center was sited to be built. FCCEJ successfully negotiated the nation’s first comprehensive community benefits agreement. Many factors contributed to the campaign’s success, but FCCEJ’s clear understanding of the complex web of land ownership along the Figueroa Corridor was paramount. The group used mapping to turn their knowledge into action and mobilize grassroots support.

The site of the Staples Center is surrounded by poor and working-class neighborhoods comprised of 200,000 residents that have historically been left out of development decisions in the area. In 1999, the city and private developers announced plans to create a regional sports and entertainment district along the corridor as part of an urban revitalization effort. The development project would be catalyzed by a large subsidy provided by the City of Los Angeles. Recognizing the need to guard against speculation and potential displacement and to ensure that residents benefited from the influx of investment brought by the new complex, residents organized themselves and formed the FCCEJ. Twenty-five diverse organizations and thousands of residents came together to successfully ensure that the billions of dollars being spent on revitalization resulted in tangible benefits for the surrounding community.

Organizers created a poster-sized map of the neighborhoods adjacent to the proposed new development illustrating real estate ownership patterns and development “hot spots.” They used the map to communicate the issues to residents and mobilize grassroots
support for their efforts to secure a contractual agreement with the developers, the Los Angeles L.A. Arena Land Company and Flower Holdings, LLC. In May 2001, the Coalition won an historic Community Benefits Agreement, requiring the inclusion of affordable housing, living wage jobs, local hiring, parks as well as other benefits in the $1 billion, four million square foot LA Sports and Entertainment District project. Key features of the Community Benefits Agreement included:

- Living Wage Jobs: 70% of new jobs will be unionized and/or pay a living wage.
- Local Hiring/Job-Training: 50% of new jobs will be hired locally through a community-run job training and placement center funded with $100,000 in seed money from the developer.
- Affordable Housing: A minimum of 20% of housing units must be affordable to low income people.
- Parks and Recreation: The developer will provide $1 million for parks and recreation facilities within a one-mile radius.
- Environmental Planning: An ongoing Coalition Advisory Committee will address such issues as construction, traffic, pedestrian safety, waste management, air quality and "green" buildings.
- Parking: The developer will help establish preferential parking and pay resident parking costs for 5 years.

Implementation of the agreement is already underway. In 2005, Anschulz Entertainment Group joined forces with the Coalition to ensure that developers were held to the affordability standards outlined in the pact. To date, outcomes include:

- $650,000 in zero-interest loans made to two non-profit housing development corporations.
- The opening of the city’s first poor people's Preferential Parking District, dedicating evening parking to area residents.
- 30 people have already obtained living-wage union jobs through the Figueroa Corridor Community Jobs Program.
- Ground-breaking for a 500 unit student housing complex happened in Spring 2008, generating an obligation for 100 units of housing that is affordable to low-income people.
- Under the leadership of the Environmental Justice Office of Environmental Defense (a founding Coalition member) and Coalition L.A., hundreds of residents participated in a park planning process to guide investment in the area, resulting in a $500,000 commitment for a free family recreation center and an approximate $415,000 commitment to Hope and Peace Park in Pico Union.
Since the Staples Center CBA, the group has continued to use mapping to inform its activities. In 2007, they created a new map, this time in blue, that depicts the coalition’s victories.
Case Study 2: Establishing an Inclusionary Zoning Policy in Washington DC

In 2003, DC ACORN, DC Agenda, the Coalition of Nonprofit Housing, Empower DC, and the AFL-CIO Washington DC Metro Council asked PolicyLink to help them launch an inclusionary zoning campaign in the district. For three years, PolicyLink helped build the capacity of the diverse coalition, which called itself the DC Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning, to move this policy agenda. Mapping was incorporated into the campaign as an important analytical and communications tool that helped the coalition eventually achieve its policy goal.

The need for an inclusionary housing policy in the District emerged over the past five years, as an economic renaissance brought a surge of both public and private investment to the area. Along with this reinvestment came rising housing prices and gentrification pressures. As a result, DC currently faces the challenge of managing growth in a way that spreads opportunity to the city’s lower income residents and disinvested neighborhoods. As in most cities across the country, many District families cannot find affordable housing because their incomes have not kept pace with housing prices. From January 1999–March 2003, the sale price of homes rose four times faster than income, and the price of rentals rose three times faster. A household in DC would need to earn $85,052 to afford the purchase of an average-priced home, and $72,160 to afford an average-priced rental, but the median household income is only $52,300.

Coalition members recognized that sustainable solutions to the city’s housing crunch would require more than increasing the supply of affordable homes. Pricing comprises only part of the picture, as many poor neighborhoods’ locations can constitute isolation from living wage jobs, quality education, adequate health services, and protection from crime. The 2000 Census revealed an increase in high-poverty neighborhoods in the District, partly attributed to lower income residents being displaced from gentrifying neighborhoods into poorer ones with fewer social services.

Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) has the potential to change this dynamic by producing a more equitable distribution of affordable housing units. IZ requires developers to make a percentage of housing units in new residential developments affordable to low- and moderate-income households. In exchange for building these units, they receive non-monetary compensation that reduces their construction costs, such as density bonuses, zoning variances, and/or expedited permits.

The DC IZ campaign included the production of a report, *Expanding Housing Opportunity in Washington DC*, which outlined the policy problem and presented mandatory IZ as the policy solution. As part of the campaign’s strategy, PolicyLink developed a series of maps that analyzed the policy problem and modeled how IZ could result in the production of additional affordable units in neighborhoods throughout the
city. These maps were included in the report and have been used by the campaign coalition to communicate problems and propose solutions to the City Council and other policy makers.

The series of maps included:

- A map that illustrated the distribution of current and planned residential construction in the city, based on data contained in the DC Office of Planning’s Development Activity Database (Figure 3, below). The map showed that development is occurring in most parts of the city, but that almost all of the market rate housing development is occurring west of the Anacostia River, while most of the affordable units are located east of the river in Wards 7 and 8, the poorest communities in the District.

- A map that shows how a mandated IZ policy could help generate additional affordable units and alter the distribution of affordable units in the District (Figure 4, below). Based on current development patterns, an IZ policy that required developers of 10 or more units to make 15 percent of them affordable to low- and moderate-income families would have created 2,336 new affordable units between 2000 and 2003. These units would be built in the same locations where market-rate housing is being built: presumably, in supportive, livable neighborhoods.

The campaign was ultimately successful. In August 2006, the DC Zoning Commission issued an historic ruling establishing a mandatory IZ policy in the nation’s capital. The District’s new IZ policy requires that half of the units be built at 50 percent of the area median income (AMI) and half at 80 percent of the AMI, except for high-rise development in mixed-use commercial zones where all units will be at 80 percent of the AMI. To reach deeper levels of affordability, the housing authority or a third party—which could be a community land trust or another qualified nonprofit organization—can purchase up to 25 percent of inclusionary units for the purpose of renting them to lower-income households.

With the policy passed, the coalition moved into a phase of advocacy focused on implementing IZ. Attention has shifted to the DC Office of Planning, as it develops and implements workable inclusionary-zoning practices in the city.
Figure 3. Neighborhood Poverty and Housing Production in Washington DC, 2000-2003

Case Study 3: Analyzing Food Deserts and Health in Chicago

One of the most productive areas for the use of GIS mapping in public health is in understanding the local “food environment” and its implications for health. Many studies have documented how access to supermarkets and other retailers selling fresh food varies...
across given communities based on neighborhood income or racial composition. Others have examined the mix of food retailers (corner and convenience stores, fast-food restaurants, grocery stores, and so on) in relation to community characteristics. Some of these studies go on to examine the relationship between food access and eating behaviors and/or diet-related health conditions like obesity and diabetes. Such studies, some of which use a participatory “community food assessment” methodology, have been conducted at the community level by local government agencies and private and academic institutions.\(^\text{10}\)

*Examining the Impact of Food Deserts on Public Health in Chicago*, written by Mari Gallagher of Mari Gallagher Research and Consulting in partnership with the LaSalle Bank Corporation, was a breakthrough study and an important precedent for further research. Released in 2006, the study popularized the term “food desert” in the United States. The term was originally coined by a resident of a public-sector housing scheme in Scotland in the early 1990s to describe an area with poor access to fresh foods. Gallagher leveraged her experience in community economic development and grocery retailing to describe the challenge of food access in Chicago’s low-income and minority neighborhoods, using maps to tell a clear and compelling story about Chicago’s uneven retail landscape and its impacts on health.

The analysis was based on three types of information:

- **Retail data**: Food venue data from Reference USA and other sources;
- **Neighborhood data**: Income and racial characteristics from the U.S. Census;
- **Health data**: Body-mass indices from drivers’ license data, death records from the county recorder, and cardiovascular diseases from the city’s Health Department.

The components of the analysis included:

1. Quantifying access to different types of food venues (chain grocers, independent and small grocers, and fast-food restaurants) at the census block level and assessing how access varies based on neighborhood racial composition;
2. Calculating a “food balance score” for every census block. The food balance score is the distance to the nearest grocer divided by the distance to the nearest fast-food venue;
3. Analyzing the relationship between food access and health.

Food access was mapped and analyzed at three different geographies: census tracts, zip codes, and official City of Chicago Community Areas (defined by the city’s Planning Department). The analyses of health variables and food access were conducted on groups of census tracts, zip codes, and community areas segmented by neighborhood racial composition.

The study found that there were major disparities in access to grocery stores according to neighborhood racial composition, as well as statistically significant relationships between food access and health:

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• African American communities face the worst food access challenges in Chicago. All the food desert areas are predominantly African American. Moreover, African Americans have the lowest average access to grocers, while they have equal access to fast-food venues (Figure 5).
• There are three large food deserts—large geographic areas with no or distant grocery stores—in Chicago, containing a total of nearly half a million people (Figure 6).
• Residents of Chicago’s food deserts have worse diet-related health outcomes compared to Chicagoans not living in food-deprived areas (Figures 7 and 8).

Figure 5. Relative distance in Chicago by race

![Figure 5](image1)

Figure 6. Food Deserts in Chicago, 2006

![Figure 6](image2)

*Source: Mari Gallagher Research and Consulting Group, 2006*
In Chicago the report has led to positive efforts to highlight the issue of food deserts and attract grocery stores to food desert areas:

- Immediately after the release of the report, the Chicago Grocery Access Task Force was convened to make recommendations to the city council. The task force comprised five aldermen, Mari Gallagher and another researcher (Daniel Block), two representatives from the grocery industry, and a children’s advocate.\(^{11}\)
- In September 2006 Food 4 Less opened a store in the Englewood food desert, and in summer 2008 Growing Home, a community group that focuses on training homeless and low-income Chicagoans for jobs in urban agriculture and food-based businesses, opened a farmers’ market in the community.
- In February 2006 and again in February 2007, the city and World Business Chicago cosponsored a Chicago Grocery Expo to encourage large and midsize grocery chains to invest in inner-city communities. The exposition introduced grocers to potential sites and provided information about various business assistance and community-development financing programs available to them.
- In 2008 Chicago city planners used a September 2008 updated food desert calculation (including all mainstream grocers that have moved in and out of Chicago since the 2006 study), along with an analysis of public-health impact and market strategy, to prioritize six key sites for grocery stores (Figure 9, below).

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• The city established the Grocery-Anchored Retail Loan Program to help finance grocery-anchored mixed-use retail developments within food deserts. The loans offer below-market interest rates, loan-to-value ratios up to 95 percent of development costs, and potential partial debt forgiveness.\(^\text{12}\)

Since the landmark Chicago study, Gallagher has gone on to map food deserts in Louisville and Detroit. The Detroit analysis found that more than 550,000 Detroit residents live in food deserts where they must travel at least twice as far to reach the closest mainstream grocer as to reach the closest “fringe food” location. The study also highlighted the high proportion of USDA food-stamp retailers that are “fringe outlets,” specializing in alcohol, money orders, cigarettes, lottery tickets, and other nonfood products, and offer few fresh healthy options (Figure 10, below).

These food desert studies have garnered widespread media attention and have popularized the notion of food deserts, moving the issue of food access into local and national policy debates. Over the past several years there have been many local food-access studies conducted by academic researchers, community groups, and public-health officials, many of which borrow from Gallagher’s methodology. In addition, a nationwide study of food deserts is forthcoming. The Chicago food desert study prompted Congressman Bobby Rush, who represents Chicago’s South Side, to propose the inclusion of a national study of the issue in the 2008 Farm Bill. PolicyLink and other groups successfully advocated to keep the provision in the legislation, and this study will be completed by USDA in June or July 2009.

Figure 9. Prioritized Grocery Store Sites in Chicago’s Food Deserts, 2008

Source: Mari Gallagher Research and Consulting Group, 2008

Gallagher does not identify her firm as an advocacy organization but rather as a research institute that provides quantitative and qualitative research to inform private- and public-sector decision-making in realms related to urban development and community health. Gallagher is acutely aware of the power of maps to tell a story about our society, and believes strongly that mapmakers must use the best methods available for ensuring that the picture they present is the most honest and most truthful one that they can create. She also recognizes that maps are most powerful when they are clear and compelling, which requires translating what is learned through cartographic and statistical methods into graphic representations that translate to a broader audience.

**Case Study 4:**

*Advocating for Park Equity in Los Angeles*

Parks and open spaces are important components of healthy, livable neighborhoods. They provide places for kids to play and for adults to recreate, socialize, exercise, and relax, contributing to physical and mental health. As green spaces, they also contribute to the health of the air and water. But many cities lack adequate park and open space facilities, and of these valuable amenities that do exist, most are distributed unevenly across neighborhoods. Too often, low-income neighborhoods and communities of color—home to the same residents that often face health disparities related to obesity and cardiovascular health—lack safe, attractive parks and other neighborhood features that enable and encourage physical activity.

Community mapping can be a powerful tool for understanding how a city and its neighborhoods are served by public amenities and services and planning for future developments and investments. Equity advocates have used GIS mapping to perform sophisticated analyses of neighborhood deficits and assets, and in a number of cities advocates have used GIS to analyze the distribution of parks and park resources. Once the green spaces are included in a GIS database, comparisons can be made to a given standard, between city neighborhoods or between a given neighborhood and the city as a whole.
The work of The City Project, a nonprofit organization that promotes healthy and livable neighborhoods for all in Los Angeles through policy and legal action, exemplifies how mapping and data analysis can make a real difference when it comes to parks in underserved communities. Led by Robert Garcia, a civil rights attorney and indefatigable social justice advocate, The City Project has used GIS mapping to support its work over the past nine years. The group initially adopted the technology to prove their observation that there was inequitable access to green spaces in LA county and back their observation with hard numbers and statistics.

Recognizing that GIS mapping would provide critical data to inform its legal and policy advocacy efforts, but that their own staff did not possess this technical expertise, Garcia reached out to GreenInfo, a Bay Area nonprofit that provides GIS services for other nonprofits. One of the first maps that the group created was a comprehensive examination of green infrastructure in Los Angeles (Heritage Parkscape Map, Figure 11).

With GreenInfo’s assistance, The City Project undertook a comprehensive park equity analysis for Los Angeles county that included the following components:

1. Analysis of park location in relation to neighborhood characteristics including poverty, percentage of youth, race/ethnicity, and access to a car, mapping each variable individually
2. Categorization of each neighborhood (census tract) in relation to the county average for each of the four abovementioned variables
3. Creation of composite measures of disadvantage based on the number of variables for which the neighborhood was above the county average
4. Comparison of park access measures across racial/ethnic groups to assess disproportionate access
5. Calculation of park acres per thousand residents (a widely used standard) for cities and political districts
6. Mapping of child obesity by assembly district
7. Analysis of agency budget and bond allocations for urban parks.

The data used for this analysis included:

- Park data: A layer was created by professor Leo Estrada and Eric Lomeli of UCLA using state and local data
- Neighborhood data: Income and racial characteristics from the US Census
- Health data: Child obesity data for assembly districts from the California Center for Public Health Advocacy

The report Healthy Parks, Schools, and Communities: Mapping Green Access and Equity for the Los Angeles Region presents the mapping and data analysis. Findings included:

- As a whole, Los Angeles County is park poor. 101 of the 131 analyzed communities fall below the national average of 6–10 acres of parks per thousand residents.
- There are wide disparities in park acreage across neighborhood, political, and administrative boundaries in Los Angeles. Some of the healthiest cities have well
over 400 acres per thousand residents, while some impoverished communities had less than one acre per thousand residents.

- The state assembly districts with the highest levels of childhood obesity were also had low park access (Figure 12).
- The distribution of parks and recreation is not random with respect to neighborhood racial composition: communities of color in Los Angeles have worse access to natural public places compared to predominantly-white neighborhoods. Children of color living in poverty with no access to cars have the worst access to parks, and to schools with five acres or more of playing fields, and the highest levels of obesity (Figure 13).

Figure 11. Heritage Parkscape Vision Map, 2004

Source: The City Project, 2004
The report was presented to the full Los Angeles City Council on March 18, 2008 along with a letter outlining ten recommendations for park planning in the city. One of the recommendations was about how to target park funding should be allocated based on need as defined by relative park access (less than 3 acres per thousand residents) and poverty level (100 to 300 percent of poverty).

The City Project has used GIS mapping and data analysis to assess the current state of access to natural places in Los Angeles against its vision for healthy communities, and use objective data on levels of access to advocate for policies that increase equitable access to green infrastructure. Having solid numbers that demonstrate inequitable access has helped the organization talk to officials about the state of park equity in the county and hold them accountable for improving access. The data and maps have served as a critical information base for The City Project’s advocacy and organizing efforts, which include engaging communities, working in coalitions, taking legal action, and informing policymakers. And they have helped the group focus local media attention on the issue of park access.

Source: The City Project, 2006


Campaigns informed by the group’s mapping and data analysis include:

- Creating the Los Angeles State Historic Park (Cornfield) in 2004 by halting plans for a warehouse project and securing $32 million in state funds to bring a new park to a low-income community of color in downtown Los Angeles adjacent to the Los Angeles River.

- Advocating for the inclusion of active playfields in the park plan at Taylor Yard, an abandoned rail yard about two miles north of Cornfield along the river, that was purchased by the state for park development.

- In Baldwin Hills, an historic African-American neighborhood, working with Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles, Community Health Councils, members of the community, and various agencies in order to prevent various proposals for environmentally harmful uses and building a two-square-mile park instead.

- Building a new park in the East Los Angeles community of Ascot Hills on 140 acres of surplus land owned by the City of Los Angeles and managed by the department of water and power.

- With Native American Acjachemen people, protecting the sacred sites of Panhe and San Onofre State Beach for public access and preventing the development of a toll road (Figure 14).

- With allies including the Alianza de los Pueblos del Rio, greening the Los...
Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers and creating a new urban park at Griffith Park.

- Ensuring that over $20 billion in infrastructure bonds for parks and schools are invested in park poor and economically poor communities.

Figure 14. San Onofre State Beach Campaign Map: Green Access, Child Obesity, Youth, Poverty, People of Color by County, 2008

Source: The City Project, 2008

The City Project continues to press for park equity in Los Angeles, and has begun to map park equity throughout the state of California. The San Onofre example above illustrates
the analysis they are conducting at the county level, and they are currently producing maps for all census tracts in the state.

One of the key lessons from the work of The City Project and other groups that use maps to pursue legal strategies is the importance of collecting and analyzing demographic data on race/ethnicity. Disparate impact on protected classes serves as the legal standard for civil rights violations according to Title VI, and while minority status and economic disadvantage are highly correlated, racial and ethnic minorities are protected classes while impoverished is not a protected class.\(^\text{15}\)

**Case Study 5:**

*Public Participation GIS and Pesticide Exposure Among Farm workers in California’s Central Valley*

Exposure to pesticides is an everyday occupational hazard for farm workers active on farms in the United States. Despite the increasing popularity of organic foods, 99.5 percent of farmland is cultivated with conventional techniques,\(^\text{16}\) and nearly 190 million pounds of pesticides were applied to California crops in 2006.\(^\text{17}\) One of the most productive agricultural regions in the country, California’s Central Valley employs many farm workers, the vast majority of whom are Latino immigrants. Farming is one of the most dangerous occupations in the country, and exposure to pesticides and the associated risks of chronic disease are a growing concern at the community level for farm worker and among health professionals.

In 2007 a university-community partnership between the California Center for Rural Policy and the Institute for Spatial Analysis, both at Humboldt State University, Arcata, and Poder Popular, a community-based group established to empower California’s farm worker communities, undertook a year-long participatory research project using public participation geographic information systems (PPGIS) and other methods to understand pesticide drift and farm worker health in two counties in California’s Central Valley. (Note: All maps, reports, and educational materials created for this project can be downloaded at the following website: http://www.peopleplaceandhealth.org/). PPGIS is a process for engaging community residents in the gathering and analysis of geographic data in order to understand local issues and take action. It is a community-based participatory research methods in which residents participate by posing research questions, collecting relevant data, sharing community data they have based on lived experience, and using the results of the study for their own purposes. The value of this approach is that it allows community members to define issues based on their own observations and experiences.\(^\text{18}\)

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15. See the “Mapping Race” section of the website for the Legal Services of Northern California for more information about GIS mapping and race-based advocacy: http://lsnc.net/equity/mapping-race-gis-resources/.
The goals of the project were several: to understand the environmental and social conditions in the study areas; to analyze patterns in land use, pesticide use, illness, and perceptions of health; to integrate the research into Poder Popular’s activities; and to provide the farm worker communities with information to use to improve their own social and environmental contexts.

The mixed-methods approach included a spatial-analysis component and a qualitative component. The mapping part of the project included quantitative data analysis and participatory community mapping sessions. Activities included:

1. Assembling a GIS database with the following data:
   - Pesticide data: from the 2005 Pesticide Use Database from the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR). Data was available for sections of approximately one square mile, so pesticides were mapped in pounds of active ingredient applied per square mile, and total amount in pounds applied per square mile;
   - Land use data: from the Monterey and Tulare County Assessors and the California Department of Conservation;
   - Topographic data: from the 10m National Elevation Dataset;
   - School-location data: from multiple sources;
2. Mapping pesticide application data (total pesticides and individual active ingredients) and prevailing wind data for counties and study communities.
3. Conducting a spatial analysis of the amount of agricultural land located within a quarter-mile buffer zone around schools in the study-area communities.
4. Holding three community mapping sessions (in Salinas, Fresno, and Visalia), in which residents identified various community locations (ethnic neighborhoods, play spaces, health care facilities, churches, parks, schools, housing) and pesticide drift on large printed maps of the study communities. Figure 15, below, illustrates how the participants identified ethnic communities in comparison to the U.S. Census data on race/ethnicity of area residents.

A “pesticide atlas” was created that includes the results of the mapping analysis combined with quotes from interviews.¹⁹

In addition to the spatial analysis, the team also gathered qualitative data on the issues by:

1. Conducting interviews with 16 key informants to understand the network of groups working in the study communities as well as key themes.
2. Convening community meetings at which the pesticide maps were presented to community members in order to ground truth the maps for accuracy and to capture local knowledge about topics.
3. Conducting fieldwork, which included making presentations at public meetings, attending Poder Popular policy meetings and interacting with its leaders, touring study-area towns, and conducting visits to community members’ homes to discuss pesticide drift.
4. Presenting preliminary results at three meetings.
The research surfaced information about the pesticide problem in these areas and the concerns and interests of community members:

- Pesticide exposure is known anecdotally as contributing to ill health: 14 out of the 16 interviewees said they knew someone who had gotten sick because of exposure.
- The average amount of pesticides was between 695 and 993 pounds per square mile in Gonzales, Salinas, Woodlake, and Greenfield, and 1,326 and 1,623 pounds per square mile in Lindsay and Cutler and Orosi, respectively.
- Community members provided data on pesticide drift incidences, block demographics, and sites of community use with more precision than available through public data.
- Pesticide drift around schools, and other sensitive sites like day-care centers, is a major area of concern.
- There is a high level of community interest in designating protective buffer zones around schools.
- Many schools are located at the periphery of the study communities in both counties.
- The amount of agriculturally zoned land that falls within the school buffer zones is relatively small: less than 1 percent of total agricultural land in Tulare County, and approximately 2 percent of agricultural land in its three study communities.
The participatory research project provided community members with critical information to use in their organizing and policy work. Community groups in Monterey and Tulare Counties have been holding trainings, meeting with agricultural commissioners and health officials, and mobilizing community members and victims of pesticide drift to speak to members of the public, as well as with policy-makers and officials involved in pesticide regulation.

In Tulare County Poder Popular and other stakeholders continued an advocacy campaign to create pesticide-free buffer zones around schools. While a 2002 state law (AB 947) gave agricultural commissioners the ability to regulate pesticide use near schools, the law had never been implemented. Community members presented data and documentation of pesticide drift and collected signatures in support of buffers. After years of work they were successful. In January 2008 the Tulare County agricultural commissioner mandated pesticide protection zones for aerial spraying within a quarter mile of schools, residential communities, and sensitive areas such as preschools and farm labor camps.

In Monterey County the data were useful in a successful effort around pesticide drift policies, and advocates were able to secure improvements in the county’s emergency hazardous response plan.
Lessons Learned

The preceding examples of how nonprofit organizations, community groups, and coalitions have undertaken to integrate mapping into their policy research and advocacy activities provide important insights about how mapping can best be used to inform and propel efforts to change policy.

Mapping can be useful at multiple stages of the advocacy process, and different aspects of the policy process require different types of maps. Maps are powerful tools to advance policy campaigns—when they are applied at the right moment. Campaign leaders need to determine whether and how maps can help them during each of the four different stages and aspects of advocacy campaigns:

1) Analyzing and identifying policy issues;
2) Modeling and developing policy solutions;
3) Engaging the community in policy research and development;
4) Communicating the message to build public and political will.

During the research and analysis stage, it can often be useful to generate multiple exploratory maps to interpret phenomena and detect patterns. When exploring different policy options, advocates can employ spatial analysis and mapping to help project future scenarios under given sets of assumptions. If the goal is to use a map to mobilize support for a policy campaign, the key to success is ensuring that the map communicates a clear and compelling story in order to make the case for action while simultaneously maintaining the truth of the data. In the final stages of a campaign, one or a few maps should be used to communicate the primary campaign messages.

Web-based mapping is an incredibly useful tool for advocates, but is probably not sufficient to support advocacy campaigns. Over the past decade Web-based data systems and interactive mapping have proliferated. Given its ability to transmit large quantities of data in record speed, the Internet is an excellent communications and distribution resource. It has played an important role in democratizing data and mapping. Many data intermediaries at the local and national levels have created online “neighborhood information systems” that provide extremely useful information to advocates about neighborhood demographics, housing-market trends, schools, and other community characteristics. Anyone with Internet access can now create maps and access neighborhood data. While this has placed new tools in the hands of advocates and has enhanced data access, there are limitations to the types of analyses that can be performed using Web-GIS as well as to its power to produce presentation-level maps. Internet-based mapping tools can be incredibly useful for exploratory research and the initial stages of policy campaigns, but are likely to be insufficient for the advanced advocacy mapping activities described in these case studies.
There is a continued need for data and mapping intermediaries to help community groups incorporate maps into their work. As William Craig and David Sawicki pointed out more than ten years ago in a seminal article on the democratization of data, community groups do not only need access to the data; they need help making data actionable and applying mapping and data to policy action.20 This is still true today. Intermediaries—organizations that enable nonprofits to more effectively carry out their missions—are key to bridging the gap between potential and reality. In the 1990s a number of local intermediaries emerged with the specific goal of helping community organizations access and use geographic data. Recognizing the potential of data and GIS for community organizations, these intermediaries launched data-gathering efforts, adopted GIS technology, and began building their capacity to use data and mapping to support the advocacy and program activities of community groups. In most of the examples of best practices in this report, the maps that made policy action possible were produced by partnerships between capacity-building/mapping intermediaries and advocacy organizations.

Participatory mapping can capture precise, meaningful, and powerful data, while fostering community engagement in the process. Community residents, by virtue of their everyday presence in their neighborhoods, possess vital information for understanding neighborhood-level phenomena. Participatory mapping processes, such as the farm worker mapping in Central Valley described in this paper can empower communities and arm them with powerful data for advocacy.

Data access and sharing are crucial in enabling advocates to access the data they need, and particularly in linking place and people data, which is critical for health-equity advocacy. One of the biggest challenges in health-equity mapping is accessing health data at a scale that is meaningful for understanding the linkages between people and their environment. Increased sharing of data among government agencies and additional university-community partnerships are needed to link these datasets for such mapping projects.

Additional research is needed on the best measures of access and equity. Surprisingly little empirical analysis has been done to determine the best indicators for measuring access to positive community land uses, such as parks and grocery stores. More research is needed to understand the trade-offs involved in using different measures and to describe the conditions under which certain measures might be chosen over others.

Data on race and ethnicity are essential for understanding patterns and for using maps for legal advocacy purposes. As discussed in the park-equity mapping case study, the collection of race-based data is important for building legal advocacy cases around issues of community disparities.

Blending different datasets and combining maps with qualitative information can help tell stories effectively through maps. Many types of data are available for GIS analyses, and maps are only as strong as the data upon which they are built. In each of the case studies, policy advocates blended several datasets to produce the maps used in the campaign process. While public datasets such as those from the U.S. Census Bureau are the easiest to obtain, the level of analysis required for policy analysis and advocacy usually means enriching census data with administrative datasets, such as housing and school data maintained by city or county government agencies and/or survey data collected by organizations. In some cases, commercially produced data on business locations and spending patterns are used in analyses. The dataset in the Chicago food desert maps illustrates how retail, neighborhood, and health data can be blended to create a powerful dataset for analyzing and mapping food access, diabetes, and obesity.

Lead with the policy goal, not with maps. Each of the case examples reinforces this final recommendation: the policy advocacy process must shape maps; mapmaking technology should not. With GIS quickly becoming a common tool for advocates, it is essential to keep the desired advocacy goal—informulated by the knowledge and wisdom of community groups, residents, and other advocates—at the forefront. These goals can then be translated into data and maps that can be used at different points along the campaign continuum. If the mapmaking process itself leads the development of maps for policy change, there can be no guarantee that advocates’ knowledge will be included in the maps.
Before community activists can tackle issues like income inequality, residential segregation and environmental racism, they first have to identify the extent of the problem they hope to address and the scope of its impact on stakeholders. While the federal government is good at compiling a variety of demographic data for public use, finding the tools to make sense of it requires money, technical expertise and often a little bit of both.

A 38-year-old Philadelphia activist with a background in data visualization wants to bring that power to the people with a free interactive mapping tool that provides unprecedented insight into the racial and socioeconomic composition of the United States.
With the aid of $10,000 in funding from the Sunlight Foundation, approximately 10 GB of data from the 2010 Census and a proficiency in Google Maps, Aaron Kreider spent a year generating millions of high-resolution map tiles to create JusticeMap.org — which enables users to represent race and income data in visually compelling digital maps that can be annotated and exported.

“I’ve zoomed deeper in the data than other people have done before,” said Kreider, explaining that Justice Map is the first tool of its kind to map race and income data down to street level. “There are something like 10 million individual blocks in the United States. I was running my computer through the night.”

Kreider, who studied sociology in graduate school at Notre Dame, says his decision to focus on race and income stems from his background as a web developer for the Energy Justice Network, where he created software that enabled the group to map more than 10,000 power plants and waste facilities across the U.S.
“Often what happens with these kinds of facilities is the location is biased, and they tend to be put into low-income communities and communities of color,” he said. “So coming out of an environmental background I found these variables useful and I decided to make a general tool out of one that was geared for our organization.”

Kreider says he would like to eventually expand the tool to include immigrant status and country of origin. He’d also like to incorporate data from the 2000 Census to add dynamic mapping capabilities that show how neighborhoods change over time.

“Frankly, I ran out of funding,” he said. “I’m hoping to get additional financing.”

Though still in the early stages — Justice Map launched this summer — Kreider says he’s received positive feedback from activists (many of them friends and family) who are eager to incorporate the tool into their own projects.

One local organizer is already using the platform to measure air quality by neighborhood in Louisville, Ky., as part of beta mapping effort there; and Kreider says his brother-in-law is hoping to use Justice Map to help identify sites for new low-income housing to serve Seattle’s Latino community.

Data mapping can go a long way toward helping advocacy organizations assess and share critical information about their constituencies. The German consulting firm Crisscrossed GmbH estimates that 80 percent of data contains geo-referenced information.
In a 2010 resource guide titled “Maps for Advocacy,” the Tactical Tech Collective presents nearly a dozen case studies of organizations around the world that have leveraged mapping technology to advance social change.

“Much work done by advocacy organizations has some ‘spatial’ element to it and includes data that can, when approached creatively, be easier to explore and understand when mapped or displayed visually,” the group notes.

In May, the Citizens Planning Institute (CPI) in Philadelphia hosted a seminar that looked at the importance of data visualization for the development of community empowerment projects.

The CPI was launched in 2010 by Philadelphia’s City Planning Commission with a mission to help citizens “take a more effective and active role in shaping the future of their neighborhoods and of Philadelphia, through a greater understanding of city planning and the steps involved in development projects.”
Sarah Cordivano, project manager at geospatial software provider Azavea and one of several participants in the CPI class, says maps have the power to reveal hidden patterns and relationships in data.

“Geographically visualizing income data can help to reveal areas of disadvantage, which is a great way to identify locations in need of economic development,” she said. “Incorporating this mapped data into grant applications or reports can help to make a strong case for the need for increased activism and resources for community and environmental justice.”

Comparing demographics of people who live near the proposed incinerator in Allentown, Pa. — percent white is only 20.8 percent within 0.5 miles, but grows to 54.9 percent at 5 miles (Source: Justice Map)

Asked what he has learned so far from digging through Justice Map data, Kreider says that perhaps his most revealing discovery is how starkly Americans remain divided by socioeconomics.
“If you look at income across America, pretty much wherever there is a group of rich people, there is a group of poor people right next to them,” he said. “Cities are known for having greater income inequality, but it’s pretty amazing to see how that dynamic extends into small towns as well.”

A map showing the racial composition of Ferguson, Mo., with a detail showing the 2900 block of Canfield Drive, where 18-year-old Mike Brown was shot and killed by police. (Source: Justice Map)

In the future, Kreider envisions his platform being used to power a variety of city planning initiatives — from the placement of public schools to the construction of new transit lines. He says the tool can also provide a powerful platform for journalists for visualizing racial and income inequality in cities like Ferguson, Mo., where black teen Mike Brown was recently shot and killed by a police officer.

“Any social program that is tied to location can benefit from a tool like this,” he said.
Christopher Moraff writes on politics, civil liberties and criminal justice policy for a number of media outlets. He is a reporting fellow at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a frequent contributor to Next City and The Daily Beast.

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