

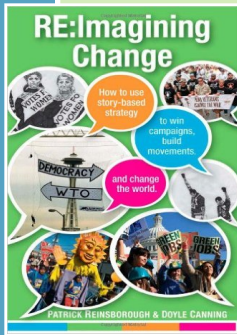


STORY-BASED STRATEGY FOR ACTIVISTS

HOW STORYTELLING CAN CREATE SOCIAL CHANGE

1. RE:IMAGINING CHANGE

Authors Reinsborough and Doyle say the stories we tell each other can lead to social change. They present a “story-based strategy” that can “win campaigns, build movements and change the world.”



2. ACTIVIST INTERESTS?

Grassroots activists with social change goals will benefit from this text that explains how to identify the old stories that are dominant in our culture, tell new stories that offer different perspectives, and that align with people’s values, and create campaigns that have measurable social and political impact.



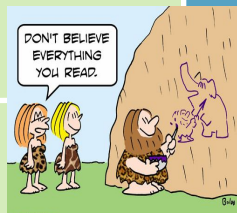
3. TOOLKIT FOR ACTIVISTS

The text provides tactics, tips and tools that activists can use in their social change campaigns, including the three-step story-based strategy, suggested questions, flow charts and templates, exemplars and four case studies.



4. WHY USE STORIES?

“The universe is made up of stories, not atoms.” The authors quote activist Muriel Rukeyser to encapsulate the idea that humans have been telling stories since time began, to connect with each other, and understand our world better.



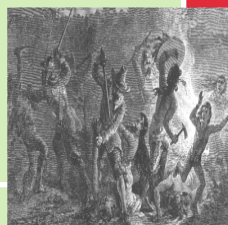
5. NARRATIVE POWER ANALYSIS: Find Your Rosa Parks

Narrative Power Analysis shifts the storytelling from those who have “power-over” people, to those who “power-with” people, to advance a social cause. Rosa Parks was a black seamstress who refused to give up her seat to a white woman while seated in the “coloured” section of a bus in segregated Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. Her actions led to a bus boycott. One year later, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation was unconstitutional.



6. DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

- Whose stories have been ignored or erased?
- Thanksgiving is a celebration of peace. But on that day in 1637, 700 Pequot women and children were slaughtered. Why is this event not part of the story?
- The Thanksgiving story is told by the Pilgrims, not Native Americans. “History is written by the winners.” (Churchill)
- Native American activists mark Thanksgiving as “The National Day of Mourning”, to honour the dead, and publicize the continuing struggle of Indigenous people in America.



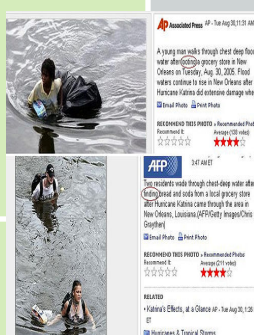
7. MEANING TRUMPS TRUTH

The authors say that change messages should be meaningful, rather than rely too heavily on the truth. They are not suggesting that activists lie, but they do caution messages should not bombard people with the facts. People are won over with emotions, not statistics. The message has to connect with people’s personal values and experiences. The truth alone is ineffectual as a change strategy if people don’t care.



8. WEIGHT OF WORDS

How the public interprets a story can completely change based on the words we choose. The authors cite an example of Hurricane Katrina news coverage that highlighted racism in the media. A news source described white people as “finding” food in a store, and a black man as “looting” food in a store. Changing that one word completely changed the story.



9. BATTLE OF THE STORY

The Battle of the Story describes the tactics to mobilize support and persuade people. Mobilization is easier; you are preaching to the choir. Persuasion is hard. The text suggests “reframing” the issue and cites a campaign to “Sell the World Bank on eBay”. The goal was to highlight the Bank’s dismal progress on ending poverty by putting it on sale to the highest bidder. Bidding began at 30 cents, the average hourly wage of a sweatshop worker in Haiti.



11. GO VIRAL WITH MEMES

A meme can be a symbol like a raised fist, or a slogan like “Hands Up. Don’t Shoot.” This slogan went viral on the Internet after Michael Brown, a young black man from Ferguson, Missouri, was shot dead by a white police officer. The words refer to witness reports that Michael was running away with his hands up when he was shot and killed.



10. POINTS OF INTERVENTION

The Points of Intervention are the places “where action can be taken to interfere with the system in order to change it.” Interventions can happen at the points of production, destruction, consumption, decision, or assumption.



12. CHANGE CHECKLIST

- Identify the old story that needs to change
- Create the new story you want to tell
- Decide how you’re going to tell it. Memes? Public Protest? Both?
- Don’t overload people with facts. Use change messages that connect with people’s values and experiences.
- Gather support, get the story out as widely as you can, and change the world!



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STORIES IN PLAY INITIATIVE

Read More at

<https://storiesinplay.com/>

Annotated Bibliography Entry

<https://storiesinplay.com/2016/04/11/reimagining-change-story-based-strategy/>

Position Paper

<https://storiesinplay.com/2016/04/11/can-stories-change-the-world/>