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To achieve economic justice in this climate, we need broad framing, accessible language and palatable policy solutions that translate into common-sense messages for our campaigns. We created this handbook to help economic justice advocates leverage the power of the media to achieve their goals of a fair and equitable America.

We hope you will benefit from the lessons documented here and incorporate these winning frames and messages into your communications efforts.

WORDS THAT WORK:

MESSAGING FOR **ECONOMIC JUSTICE**



A JOINT PROJECT OF TIDES FOUNDATION & SPIN PROJECT





Economic justice advocates are presented with a range of opportunities in their quest for equality of opportunity—raising the minimum wage, ensuring development that benefits our communities, holding employers and businesses like Wal-Mart to fair standards, and more. This handbook is designed to help advocates communicate these ideas and values to broad audiences in clear terms. Included in these pages are framing tips and message tools to help economic justice advocates leverage these opportunities for positive change in America.

Assembled and edited by Rosi Reyes and the SPIN Project.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

WORDS THAT WORK: MESSAGING FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION	2
PART 1 THE STATE OF PLAY	4
Economic Justice and the American Landscape <i>Based on a report by Bobbi Murray</i>	4
PART 2 CROSS CUTTING FRAMES	6
Framing for a New Economic Vision <i>by Douglas Gould and Company</i>	6
Speaking American about Economic Justice <i>by Susan Strong</i>	9
PART 3 MESSAGE IN ACTION	10
The People Say Make Work Pay! <i>ACORN and allies raise Florida's minimum wage</i>	10
Two (Preemptive) Strikes and You're Out <i>The Santa Fe Living Wage Network defeats attempts to roll back living wage ordinance</i>	12
A Benefit for One is a Benefit For All <i>Community Benefits and the California Partnership for Working Families</i>	14
Bix-Box Battles <i>Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy wages war on Wal-Mart</i>	16
The Fight Against Forever 21 <i>Low-wage Immigrant Workers Organizing for Fairness and Dignity</i>	18
Community Health and Organizational Identity <i>Tenants' and Worker's Support Committee</i>	20
David vs. the Development Goliath <i>Miami Workers Center and the fight against undisciplined development</i>	22
CONCLUSION	24

INTRODUCTION

The SPIN Project and Tides Foundation’s Bridging the Economic Divide Initiative are proud to bring you ***Words that Work: Messaging for Economic Justice.***

As a follow-up to our joint publication *Winning Wages: A Media Kit for Successful Living Wage Strategies*, we have partnered again to highlight some of the most successful economic justice campaigns in the country and share campaign frames and messages in order to further strengthen the communications infrastructure of organizations fighting for a just economy.

We came together to produce this handbook in response to and in support of the rapid developments in economic justice strategies and approaches that advocates are using in communities all over the country. Building on the foundations of living wage successes, many groups are exploring further advancements for workers and their communities. We hope this handbook can help broaden the conversation on economic justice in America—bridging community groups, decision-makers and everyday workers to create new solutions and new strategies.

The media plays an enormous role in shaping the national conversation on economic justice, shaping public opinion—and ultimately helping to decide what policy solutions are adopted. To achieve economic justice in this climate, we need broad framing, accessible language and palatable policy solutions that translate into common-sense messages for our campaigns. We created this handbook to help economic justice advocates leverage the power of the media to achieve their goals of a fair and equitable America. We hope you will benefit from the lessons documented here and incorporate these winning frames and messages into your communications efforts.

About this Handbook

This message handbook begins with an overview of the economic justice landscape, and lays out its victories and challenges. It also examines the frames and messages of several case studies that go beyond living wage strategies to include state minimum wage campaigns, low-wage immigrant worker organizing strategies, community benefits agreements, anti-gentrification campaigns and the growing opposition to the “Wal-Marting” of America.

We’ve also asked economic justice framing experts Douglas Gould and Company to review the case studies and recommend winning frames based on their recent research on communicating with the public about low-wage workers and low-income families. In addition, Susan Strong of the Metaphor Project offers tips on how to use the traditional American story and its familiar images and metaphors to convey our values and aspirations as a fair nation that consistently fosters equality of opportunity for all.



The SPIN Project

SPIN stands for *Strategic Press Information Network*. The SPIN Project is a nonprofit group of communications specialists who provide capacity-building to nonprofit public-interest organizations across the nation. SPIN helps organizations increase their effectiveness in influencing debate, shaping public opinion and garnering positive media attention. We are increasing the capacity of organizations to ensure their voices are heard and to do more effective media work on issues important to the future of our society.

The SPIN Project believes that now is the time for organizations to boldly engage the press, communicate their values and frame their issues. We seek a stronger democracy in which people enhance and actively participate in the public discourse.

To best meet the needs of our clients, we offer:

- Communications Audits
- Communications Strategy Development
- Skills Building and Leadership Development
- Communications Coaching
- Organizational Communications Infrastructure
- Campaign Support
- Peer Networking
- Customized Communications Conferences
- Publications

The SPIN Project works with a broad range of social policy, advocacy and grassroots organizations, all of which are working to strengthen democracy and public participation. These organizations typically focus on issues concerning civil rights, human rights, social justice and the environment. The SPIN Project honors the multiracial, multicultural, diverse constituencies of the groups we train. We consistently work with people from a wide range of ages, sexual orientations, ethnicities and incomes. We travel widely, training and strategizing with organizations in the field. Our work has taken us from barrios to boardrooms, from Native American reservations to national activist conferences across the country.

We invite you to visit our Web site at www.spinproject.org or contact us if you would like to discuss our services.

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Tides Foundation

Founded in 1976, Tides Foundation has been one of the leaders of social change philanthropy in this country. It is our privilege and our purpose to work with individual donors, family foundations and institutional grantmakers to support the most effective and innovative nonprofit organizations across the country and across the globe—organizations working to honor and promote human rights, economic justice and a healthy, sustainable environment.

In order to fulfill our mission, we offer a wide range of discreet, professional and personalized philanthropic services and opportunities—from donor advised funds for individual donors to collective giving initiatives such as Bridging the Economic Divide to international grantmaking collaboratives with fellow philanthropic institutions. We provide complete grantmaking services as well as expert philanthropic advice. In 2004, we were able to grant \$74 million in one of our most successful years to date.

Tides Foundation’s National Office is housed in the Thoreau Center for Sustainability, located in the historic Presidio of San Francisco.

Please visit us at www.tidesfoundation.org.

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We’re also grateful to Douglas Gould and Company, Susan Strong, Bobbi Murray, Laura Saponara and the staff and leaders of the organizations profiled in the case studies for their support and contributions to this publication.

We salute the work of grassroots advocates for economic justice all across the country. And most of all we honor their constituents—the domestic workers, the farm workers, the garment workers, the clean up crews and all the others—who work hard and deserve fairness, respect and justice.



PART 1 THE STATE OF PLAY

Any good communications effort must begin with an assessment of the landscape—what is the policy environment and what are our target audiences ready to hear? The article that follows offers a review of the opportunities on the economic justice landscape.

Economic Justice and the American Landscape

Based on a report by Bobbi Murray

The values of the economic justice movement are shared by millions of Americans: a fair wage for hard work and opportunity for all. There has been an economic justice movement in this country at least since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the 19th Century. It has ebbed and flowed, but was revitalized in the mid-1990s by the living wage movement that helped these values, along with a broader economic justice movement, to gain new ground in establishing living wage policies over the past decade.

At its earliest stage, the living wage effort focused on local ordinances to require businesses doing business with a given municipality to pay a fair wage workers could live on. In 1994, Baltimore became the first city to pass a living wage ordinance after a \$1 billion-plus taxpayer renovation of the Inner Harbor resulted in low-wage, dead-end jobs. Central to the Baltimore ordinance were two appealing and enduring American values: working people deserve a fair wage, and private development financed by public funding should meet common-sense standards to create quality jobs for our communities. Those values guided campaigns for similar

ordinances in over 120 municipalities across the country.

Savvy communications strategies have provided the margin of victory in many of those local efforts, and have helped to reframe the national conversation on economic justice issues. One of the key gains of the living wage movement is the shift in the national discussion away from the question of job creation and to the issue of the quality of jobs. Living wage is one of the few economic justice battles in this country in which we control the frame. The work of the SPIN Project is to leverage that success to further shape the debate and shift public opinion toward the fundamental American value of economic fairness.

Economic Justice Gains Momentum

Since the Baltimore victory, activists have branched out beyond the traditional living wage strategy to include pushes for higher city and state minimum wages, as well as other strategies to raise wages and working standards. In addition to the 120-plus ordinances passed since 1994, economic justice advocates have also raised the minimum wage in seven cities and eight states. The big-picture accomplishments of the living wage movement are significant:

- **The concept of “living wage” has moved into the national vocabulary.** Scores of grassroots-level debates about

the issue have introduced a term and idea that resonates, an idea that expresses values (not policy). The concept of a fair wage for work has been widely embraced.

- By a conservative estimate, **some 250,000 workers got a raise from living wage or fair wage efforts.** Economist Stephanie Luce of the University of Massachusetts Amherst made the calculation more than two years ago before more recent city ordinances and state wage campaigns added millions of workers to the list of beneficiaries. This conservative estimate also doesn’t include the ripple effect—when the bottom wages rise, other wages tend to do so as well.

- According to 2002 calculations, **\$750 million was pumped into low-income communities annually as a result of living wage legislation.**

Additionally, the economic justice movement has also helped to build and leverage social justice infrastructure—researchers, organizing support, legal expertise, communications and media strategists—to win their campaigns.

Emerging Strategies and Opportunities

Living wage victories have helped the economic justice movement morph into a multi-strategy campaign for fairness. These emerging strategies for economic justice fall under three main categories:

1. Wage increases
2. Accountable development
3. Low-wage immigrant worker organizing

Wage Increases

Naturally, the most direct way of solving the problems of low-wage work is to increase real wages for workers. To that end, traditional living wage campaigns remain a vital building block for long-term strategy. They endure in conservative political territories, such as the South, where living wage is the most winnable ground-floor economic justice issue. But a comprehensive economic justice movement is poised to build on the gains won over a decade of living wage successes. City and state minimum wage campaigns are seen as next steps in advancing the living wage movement, given their coverage of more workers and potential to raise the wage floor for all workers in a city or region.

Accountable Development

Accountable development strategies are those that address a broad range of community needs—jobs and wages, healthcare, housing, childcare or parks—and ensure communities a voice in shaping the development projects in their area. Accountable development efforts help ensure that new developments—especially those receiving taxpayer subsidies or major land-use approvals—offer an approach to economic development that focuses on the real long-term needs of communities.

Tangible gains are often codified in community benefits agreements—legally binding deals between developers and coalitions of community organizations. These agreements provide grassroots participation in the economic development process—which in most places is still dominated by back-room deals. Community benefits campaigns can actually deliver essential quality of life improvements instead of a public windfall for private companies. And such a campaign’s message of jobs and economic gains resonates with people in the neighborhoods that most need quality employment and vital services.

Immigrant Worker Organizing

Today’s low-wage workers are likely to be Latino, Asian, Afro-Caribbean and immigrant. Some sectors of low-wage workers, particularly security guards, tend to concentrate African-Americans. Many modern employees, like day laborers and domestic workers, move from job to job, employer to employer, thus remaining untouched by living wage strategies and traditional labor organizing. Organizers—in efforts to enforce existing labor laws and develop leadership among low-wage workers—have used two principle means of organizing immigrant workers: workers’ centers and day laborer organizing.

Workers’ centers are one of the few entities that enforce wage and hour laws. They also function as possibly the only nexus point for many immigrant workers, since the traditional model of workplace union organizing is irrelevant to workers who switch workplaces and industries frequently.

Like the workers’ center model, day laborer organizing is in large part based on struggles to enforce labor standards in a world of weakened employee-employer relations where official enforcement has continued to decline. Day laborer organizing frequently takes on the issues of employers underpaying workers as well as challenging ordinances that limit their ability to seek work.

On the Horizon

From living wage to minimum wage to community benefits agreement to workers’ centers, economic justice activists are figuring out ways of broadening their base, building support, working together and expanding the benefits of their efforts to more and more workers across communities and economic sectors. This handbook is designed to support that work with tips and strategies to carry the economic justice message to communities across the country. We want to help economic justice advocates echo the American values of fairness and opportunity for all.

Bobbi Murray is a freelance journalist and nationally known writer on economic justice issues, contributing to The Nation, AlterNet.org, Los Angeles Magazine, and numerous other publications and news outlets. She recently wrote a report on the economic justice movement for the Tides Foundation.



PART 2 CROSS CUTTING FRAMES



The challenge for economic justice advocates is to figure out how to craft communication so it taps into shared values, links problems and solutions, and educates the media, policymakers and the public to win you allies and champions. In sum, you need to know how to frame.

Framing is the art and science of organizing information in a way that connects to what people already think, aligns with what they already know and helps them see new ideas in a context that acknowledges their values. This section offers recommendations and research to help you develop an effective frame.

Framing for a New Economic Vision

By Douglas Gould and Company

People’s policy attitudes are based on a complex and systematic set of values, perceptions and experiences that help them organize a worldview and determine what issues and problems they need to attend to, and in what order of importance they should place them. These organizing principals or networks of ideas are called frames. A clear understanding of how people frame low-wage workers’ and families’ issues, as well as how new frames shift policy support, allows communicators to make choices about the best way to present information on this subject.

Economic Justice: Perceptions Today

Based on extensive opinion research funded by the Ford Foundation and conducted by Meg Bostrom of Public Knowledge for Douglas Gould and Company, we know that:

- Most Americans believe first and foremost in the “American Dream”—that any one of us can achieve great wealth with hard work and good luck.
- Americans believe in the value of work and the positive example we set for our children by hard work.
- Poverty, in general, is seen, at least partially, as the fault of the poor person—a personal problem brought on by bad choices.
- Most people believe poverty is a given—that there will always be poor people.
- Most people believe the economy is like a force of nature.

It cannot be governed or changed and attempts to do so are likely to thwart its growth.

- Corporations and unions are not mentioned in connection with the issues related to low-wage workers and families.

Over the years, the issue of economic justice has not been “framed to win.” To reframe it requires facing a number of concerns:

- If the frame is about government and its failings, people will think nothing can be done that doesn’t make matters worse.
- If the frame is about individuals, policy-makers will look to reforming poor people rather than systems that serve them.
- If we can make the frame an issue of systemic failure, which systems should we focus on? Education? The system of work and reward?
- If we reframe communications in terms of our common economic security and the creation of a workforce for the future, will we get broader, deeper support?

Our opinion polling tested a number of messages and frames to determine which messages increased the amount of support people would give to the list of policies outlines above. The tested messages included the following:

- Responsible Planning/Economic Vision
- Teamwork/Respect
- Fairness
- Balance/Jobs for the 21st Century
- Opportunity
- Dead-End Jobs
- Sympathy/Poverty/Stewardship

The sympathy/poverty message is the least effective frame that Douglas Gould and Company has tested. We recommend advocates frame messages in terms of “responsible planning and economic vision,” with a strong secondary or reinforcing message about teamwork and respect.

Responsible Planning and Economic Vision

Creating a better tomorrow demands responsible planning today. Instead of short-term profit orientation, we need to think about building jobs and the economy for the long-term. Too many companies and decision makers focus on short-term profits and short-term thinking to the detriment of the

Frame messages in terms of “responsible planning and economic vision,” with a strong secondary or reinforcing message about teamwork and respect.

greater good. We need to change that thinking and create a future with a strong economy and good jobs for all workers. That means investing in education and job training, and encouraging investment in industries with the kinds of good jobs that support families and strengthen communities.

Teamwork and Respect

Good companies know that their future relies on their employees, so they treat employees as respected members of the team, and provide good pay, benefits and working conditions. But there are also “brag and go” companies that profit from others’ expense, that take advantage of employees, focus on short-term profits instead of long-term stability and jump with their profits at the first sign of trouble.

The Story-Telling Dilemma

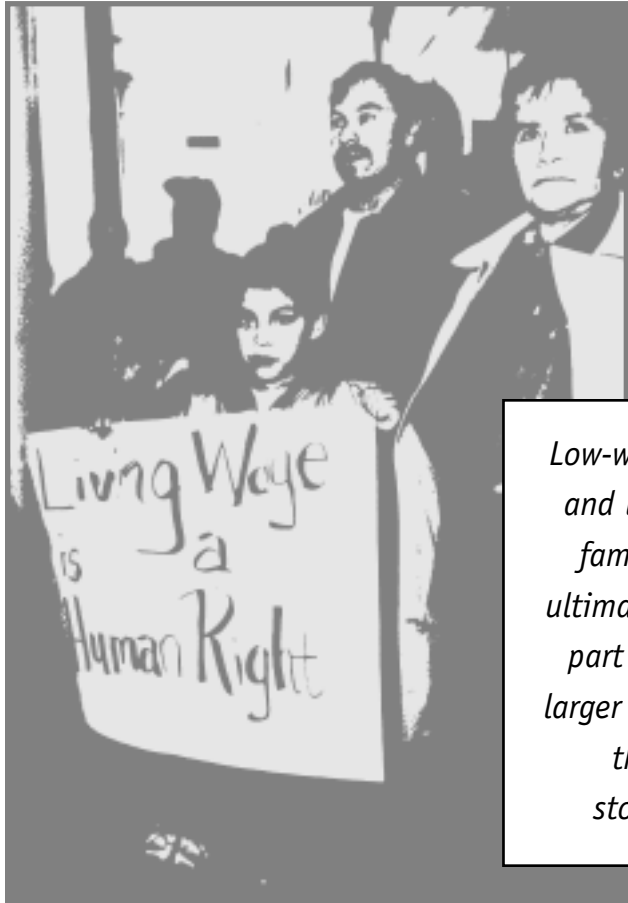
While it may seem counter-intuitive and oppositional to all of the advice media consultants have given advocates over the last decade, the telling of personal stories about the poor actually decreases peoples’ support for the policy changes we are seeking. This goes for success stories as well as people still stuck in poverty.

When people hear personal, emotional stories about the working poor, they see the personal flaws of the individual that may have contributed to the problem. “If he didn’t take drugs, or quit school, have a teenage mom, etc., he wouldn’t be poor.” Or they marvel at the ability of the person to get out of the problem, concluding anyone can do it. This makes the problem about the individual, not the system. We need to change the system.

The responsible planning frame can be best supported by shifting the spotlight away from low-wage workers or the poor and toward other actors in the system:

- The restaurant owner and her employment practices rather than the struggling waitress.
- The business owner who offers benefits such as high quality, affordable early care and health care, rather than the workers who benefit from these programs, or employees at a competing company who cannot care for their sick children.

The responsible planning frame can be best supported by shifting the spotlight away from low-wage workers or the poor towards other actors in the system.



different stories that focus on systemic, rather than personal, issues. They can also educate reporters about how the nature of their coverage encourages or undermines public understanding and action.

Advocates must also set the frame by investing more resources in media vehicles that they can control. By producing their own media materials—radio actualities, video and news releases, op-ed pieces, paid and public service advertisements—advocates can help change the way issues affecting low-wage workers and families are presented, and directly influence and encourage positive systemic change.

Low-wage workers and low-income families must ultimately become part of a much larger story, rather than the story itself.

Douglas Gould and Co., Inc. helps progressive not-for-profit organizations and foundations use the most effective communications tools to advance important causes. They create inspiring ideas, innovative messages and informative public campaigns to move organizations and important issues forward, promoting engagement, action and lasting change. You can find them online at www.douglasgould.com.

- A city planner who is trying to create good jobs rather than the people who are unemployed.

- The job trainer rather than the people who attend her classes.

When the media does focus on “real people,” the emphasis should be on groups or classes rather than individuals. Janitors or healthcare workers are excellent examples because the public understands the necessity of these workers and they hold jobs that cannot be shipped overseas.

Advocates Can Help Set the Frame

Obviously, advocates cannot control how the media operates or what stories reporters choose to pursue, but they can, and should try. Changing the way reporters cover economic justice issues is a challenging task that will require the media to shift their attention to another subject—the U.S. economy and whether it is meeting the needs of all American families. Low-wage workers and low-income families must ultimately become part of a much larger story, rather than the story itself.

But reporters are also interested in presenting solutions to the problems that low-wage workers and families face, and advocates are often the ones that can help lead them in the right direction. Along these lines, advocates can pitch

Speaking American about Economic Justice

By Susan Strong

Today, success in promoting economic justice demands that we speak honest American. To be heard above the public din, we need to be able to reframe our own messages as part of the best American story. We must tell the story of our own American Dream—a fair nation that consistently fosters equality of opportunity for all. We can learn to use with integrity the familiar images and stories that convey these values in our daily work.

Horatio Alger, Hard Work, and the American Dream

Hard work is highly valued in America. This value is evident in the well-known work of early American author Horatio Alger, who wrote stories about the American dream and the triumph of the individual over struggle. The so-called “individual responsibility frame,” or Horatio Alger story—in which one struggles through hard work and determination to escape poverty—still plays a major role in American thinking.

In order to counteract the damaging effects of this individual responsibility frame—which places both the causes of and responsibility to move beyond poverty squarely in the lap of the poor—we need to do two things. First, we must use what we can from this frame and then we must combine it with other American frames that modify and counteract its most damaging aspects.

The Horatio Alger story serves a variety of functions in American society. Its most important role is to keep hope alive. It fits the fundamentally optimistic American temperament and our pragmatic, “can do,” experimental approach to problem solving. As a nation of individualistic rebels, we like to believe that we control our own destiny and opportunities in life.

However, there is a way out of the Horatio Alger “individual responsibility” trap. Other core American ideas that can counter it include the following:

- The importance of guaranteeing equality of opportunity
- Preventing unfair advantage
- Leveling the playing field
- Government as an honest referee
- The value of helping individuals who have been the victim of bad luck or other circumstances “through no fault of their own.”

Rules of the Game

A lot of this sounds like the great American sports metaphor—that’s what it is. Sports metaphors can be useful

in translating concepts of economic justice—they are the chief carrier in American public storytelling of many of the values we hold most dear. It also carries many of Americans’ most common operational assumptions about how best to bring those values into reality. Working together as an American team to help all individuals fulfill their potential is very important to Americans right now.

And, ironically enough, to get economic justice, we have to stop talking about it using abstract phrases like “economic justice.” Instead, we need to use language that can convey our values and goals in short, easily understood bits of national story.

Small Town Security

Another moderating American frame much in the news right now is what Business Week on May 16, 2005 dubbed the “safety net nation.” Business Week found that even supporters of the Bush Administration are too worried about their futures to want drastic changes in our familiar national safety net, Social Security. The phrase “safety net nation” is just another way of invoking a set of traditional American story elements I call “small town security.” This cluster of ideas includes cooperation, mutual assistance, protection, common sense, practical problem solving, and being moderate—the kinds of traditional values found in our ideal of the small American town. These ideas are clearly reflected in the stories Business Week recounts of how ordinary people see the pension issue now.

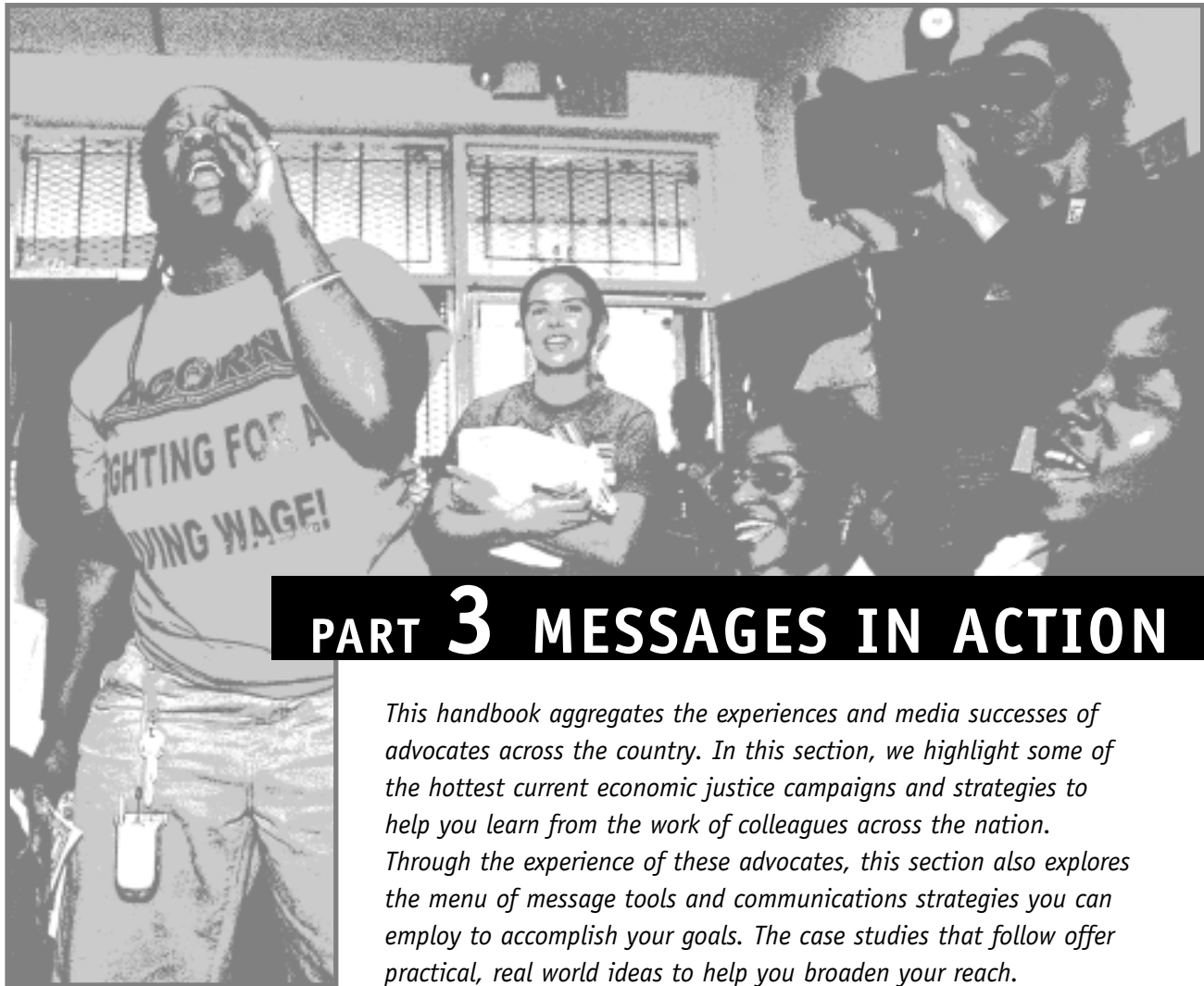
From a safety net nation with pensions, it is just a small step to calling for a safety net while people are still in the work world. For example, we can talk about a safety net that begins with guaranteeing equal opportunity to all individuals who are trying to “do better and move forward.”

American Metaphors, American Stories

Horatio Alger, sports, and small town values are each key elements of the American stories we tell each other each day in our society. By examining our stories and the metaphors we use to tell them, we engage in a systematic pursuit of economic justice. We can create positive new messages that play on core American images, themes, and stories to carry the values of economic justice.

Susan C. Strong, Ph.D., created The Metaphor Project in 1997 to help progressive activists become more effective in their work. She has worked as a public educator, communications consultant, and writer for the last twenty-four years on issues of peace, environment, and sustainability.

For more tools and resources to help modify the Horatio Alger frame, see www.metaphorproject.org.



PART 3 MESSAGES IN ACTION

This handbook aggregates the experiences and media successes of advocates across the country. In this section, we highlight some of the hottest current economic justice campaigns and strategies to help you learn from the work of colleagues across the nation. Through the experience of these advocates, this section also explores the menu of message tools and communications strategies you can employ to accomplish your goals. The case studies that follow offer practical, real world ideas to help you broaden your reach.

CASE STUDY

The People Say, Make Work Pay!

ACORN and allies raise Florida's minimum wage

On November 2, 2004, by an overwhelming margin of 71% to 29%, voters in Florida raised the state's minimum wage by \$1 above the federal level. The wage increase will affect an estimated 850,000 hard-working Floridians, providing a full-time minimum wage worker with an additional \$2,000 in annual income. Florida is now the 17th state in the country—and the first in the South—to pass a minimum wage higher than the federally mandated \$5.15, and only the third to index the wage to inflation.

The key to the success of the initiative was a massive petition gathering campaign followed by a massive Get-Out-the-Vote campaign. On Election Day, ACORN's operation

included over 1,600 volunteers and workers who knocked on doors, handed out material and gave rides to the polls in 13 cities. To win space for the initiative on the November ballot, ACORN collected around a million signatures.

Eyes on Florida

ACORN's successful signature-gathering campaign laid the groundwork for registering hundreds of thousands of new voters in low-income neighborhoods across the state. It also offered a first opportunity to generate positive media stories that emphasized widespread public support for the issue. For reporters, the effort put ACORN on the mainstream map as a grassroots force propelled by significant people power. To run the campaign ACORN developed Floridians for All (FFA)—a statewide PAC of over 100 endorsing organizations, which embarked on a flexible, pro-active media campaign with two main goals. The first was to raise public awareness about the existence of the ballot initiative. The second was to keep the issue alive in the news in order to motivate voters who respond favorably to the “working people deserve a fair wage”

frame to go to the polls. In particular, Latinos, African Americans, Haitians, women and young voters were the key constituencies targeted in the organizing and the message work.

Research Sets the Stage

The leaders of the Florida campaign drew upon a healthy amount of research to inform their message strategies. The data lent quantitative substance to conversations with reporters. The research made it easy to talk concretely about the benefits of the initiative to workers and to businesses, and to counter the myths put forth by the Chamber of Commerce and the Florida Retail Association that the initiative would wreak havoc on the economy and endanger the health of poor people.

ACORN/FFA commissioned research on which messages voters surveyed found most convincing. The findings led to these message priorities:

- Raising the minimum wage is a way of saying that we value work. We should make sure the workers who are the backbone of our economy receive fair paychecks.
- Raising the minimum wage is a matter of basic fairness. The wage floor has not been raised in seven years, so its value has been far outpaced by inflation.
- In Florida, more than 80% of workers who would be affected by raising the minimum wage are adults, and many of them are trying to raise their children and make ends meet.
- Increasing the minimum wage is the best way to fight poverty. Full time workers would earn an additional \$2,000 in wages, enough to make a difference.

Putting the Messages to Work

In the months and weeks leading up to November 2, media reporting about all things political was everywhere. News outlets were obligated to cover the ballot initiatives in some form, and ACORN/FFA provided hundreds of opportunities for reporters to write about Amendment 5.

In the weeks before the election, a 10-day, 15-city bus tour was launched with speakers including Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rev. Al Sharpton. Other celebrities, Michael Moore included, joined ACORN members for Get-Out-the-Vote rallies shortly before Election Day. These appearances, and the fact that they were repeated in different cities, allowed for constant pitching.

Being pro-active and persistent in generating stories pays off. With or without media events, ACORN/FFA issued press releases frequently to impart the key messages of the campaign and bring them to life with quotes, statistics and stories, and made it easy for reporters to get in touch.

Creative, innovative ways to spin the story abounded. Consider these press releases headers:

- “Minimum Wage Increase Would Benefit Hundreds of Thousands of Working Women”
- “Legislators Lead Statewide Push to Solidify Support for Amendment 5”
- “New Poll Shows 81% of Likely Voters Support Increasing the Minimum Wage”
- “Fifty Small Business Owners Speak Out in Favor of Minimum Wage Increase.”

Many Messengers

In a statewide campaign, having spokespeople on the ground and prepped at all times in all regions can be challenging. ACORN/FFA relied on a variety of spokes persons to articulate key messages from different vantage points—low-wage workers, legislator allies, campaign staff, concerned citizens. For example, respected state senator Tony Hill was widely identified as a key campaign spokesperson, with legitimacy among African-American voters, the labor movement and other elected officials. The National Small Business Alliance helped identify small business owners and a few executives of larger corporations who spoke to fairness and dignity for workers as good

business sense and/or plain common sense. These voices were often poignant and compelling, perhaps because many of their arguments had been previously absent from the debate. The variety of business owners who were compelled to speak up for raising the minimum wage provided reporters with many different sources and angles.

TIPS: Communications Strategies

Here are a few strategies that worked well in Florida and can be adapted for your campaign, and built upon over time.

- **Organize your media list strategically.** Reach out to a broad swath of reporters and editors who cover different “beats”—business, politics, youth, women's issues, opinion editors. Create different media databases that can be used for different purposes and pitches.
- **When possible, use “balance” to your advantage.** When nearly all of the daily newspapers editorialized against Amendment 5, ACORN/FFA seized the opportunity to provide them with well-crafted op-eds in response. With heavy follow-up and polite but direct negotiating, this strategy worked well even up to the day before the elections. Most of the op-eds were printed wholesale. Others became letters to the editor.

Two (Preemptive) Strikes and You're Out

The Long and Winding Road

To defeat the anti-worker bills, the Santa Fe Living Wage Network combined a savvy media strategy with the creation of a Living Wage Rapid Response team who would go to legislative hearings on short notice and call or fax legislators when needed.

The Target Audience

Every good media strategy begins with clarifying your target audiences. Given the nature of the pre-emption bills, state legislators became the primary target for the grassroots lobby—especially those who sat on the House Labor Committee and the Senate Corporations and Transportation Committee. The rapid response network organized phone calls, faxes and visits to members of these committees.

TIPS: Key Messages

This message was echoed by an editorial in the *Albuquerque Journal* and resonated strongly with politicians: “Whether they support or oppose the living wage concept, members of the Senate Corporations and Transportation Committee should kill [the] bill as an assault on local government authority...It’s not the Legislature’s role, let alone an



Albuquerque lawmaker's prerogative, to supplant the judgment of a city's t of the Roundhouse."

● **Living Wage Makes Good Business Sense.** This message assuaged the fears of legislators whose primary constituents were the business community:

The Living Wage in Santa Fe is working. Since it has been in effect over the last six months:

- City gross receipts are up by 5.7%, as opposed to the same 6 months in 2003, while the statewide average is only up 1.7%
- Gross receipts tax collections from retail establishments have increased 1.7%
- As of November, 300 new jobs were added in retail and another 200 in the hospitality sector, including restaurants.

This message worked well to disprove fears that a living wage would deter new businesses from opening in Santa Fe and force many local businesses to shut down. Through the Santa Fe Living Wage Network's efforts to organize several local businesses to sign on to the living wage, local business owners linked the importance of treating their workers with dignity and respect to the long-term viability of their establishments.

low-wage workers that they are not just another resource to be exploited for maximum profits. Workers reap benefits in the form of sustenance and respect, while employers enjoy the fruits of a more productive workforce willing to take on more responsibility, skills and interests in the long term viability of their establishments.”

Growing a Grassroots Organization

Riding the momentum of their success in defeating the preemption bills, the Santa Fe Living Wage Network is now organizing public school employees, who are currently exempt from the living wage law, to be covered by the living wage ordinance. Folks in Albuquerque are gearing up to put a living wage ordinance on their October elections ballot, with assistance from the lessons learned from the Santa Fe Living Wage Network.

TIPS: Rapid Response Team

Having a communications team in place and at the ready was a key ingredient in the Santa Fe Living Wage Network's success—building the capacity of a primarily volunteer-run organization became a priority. The Network had to act fast, so they hired a lobbyist to coordinate a rapid response network and build a powerful grassroots lobby—which could be mobilized in a manner of hours. (On one occasion, the Network mobilized 60 residents to show up at a hearing—with just half an

● **Rapid response** meant they were at the ready to address news as it unfolded, creating op eds and other communications to help set the record straight and educate the public about their issues. With a 24-hour news cycle, nonprofits have got to be fast if they want to be included in the story, and that may mean a bit of re-tooling or ramping up for many organizations at the height of th

● **Op-Eds and Editorials** were key tools to influence decision makers and highlight the importance of the issue. Elected officials often look to these sections of the paper to help them keep the pulse on public opinion—so try to place your op-eds in the newspaper of the state capitol *and* the target legislators' home districts.

● **Credible spokespeople** helped to strengthen the messages of the campaign—clergy and small business owners proved to be vital voices in the effort. The Santa Fe Living Wage Network set up a “Businesses for Living Wage” page on their Website which listed over 230 businesses which paid a living wage before the law went into affect or were paying it even

if they are not required to do so. Businesses that agreed to publicize that they had been paying a living wage were listed by category. In addition, the Network listed self-employed business owners who support a living wage but did not have employees. Community supporters of the living wage were encouraged to patronize these businesses and let the owners know they appreciated their fair treatment of workers.

The Network had to act fast, so they hired a lobbyist to coordinate a rapid response network and build a powerful grassroots lobby—which could be mobilized in a manner of hours.

FRAMING FEEDBACK

We asked the framing experts at Douglas Gould and Company for their feedback on the frames used in this case study. Here's what they had to say:

"This is a case in which the group was able to activate the 'Responsible Planning and Economic Vision' frame. The Santa Fe Living Wage Network and the Los Angeles Alliance for New Economy (see big Box Battles, page 16.) campaign successes were largely attributed to the fact that both organizations emphasized community responsibility in the face of efforts to strip localities from their ability to locally legislate certain matters. The issues were framed in terms of community, teamwork, opportunity and responsibility."

CASE STUDY

A Benefit for One is a Benefit for All

Community Benefits and the California Partnership for Working Families

The California Partnership for Working Families (CPWF) is a statewide organization committed to upholding the promise of economic development serving all communities. They’ve brought together four organizations anchored in major population centers throughout California—the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, the Center on Policy Initiatives in San Diego, Working Partnerships, USA in San Jose, and the East Bay Alliance for Sustainable Economies in the San Francisco Bay Area—to transform the economic development process, and to make public subsidies for development yield community-friendly results. CPWF has spearheaded the Community Benefits movement, which helps economic development create affordable housing, living wage jobs and viable neighborhood services, while also making the development process accessible and clear to policy-makers and community members.

Community Benefits

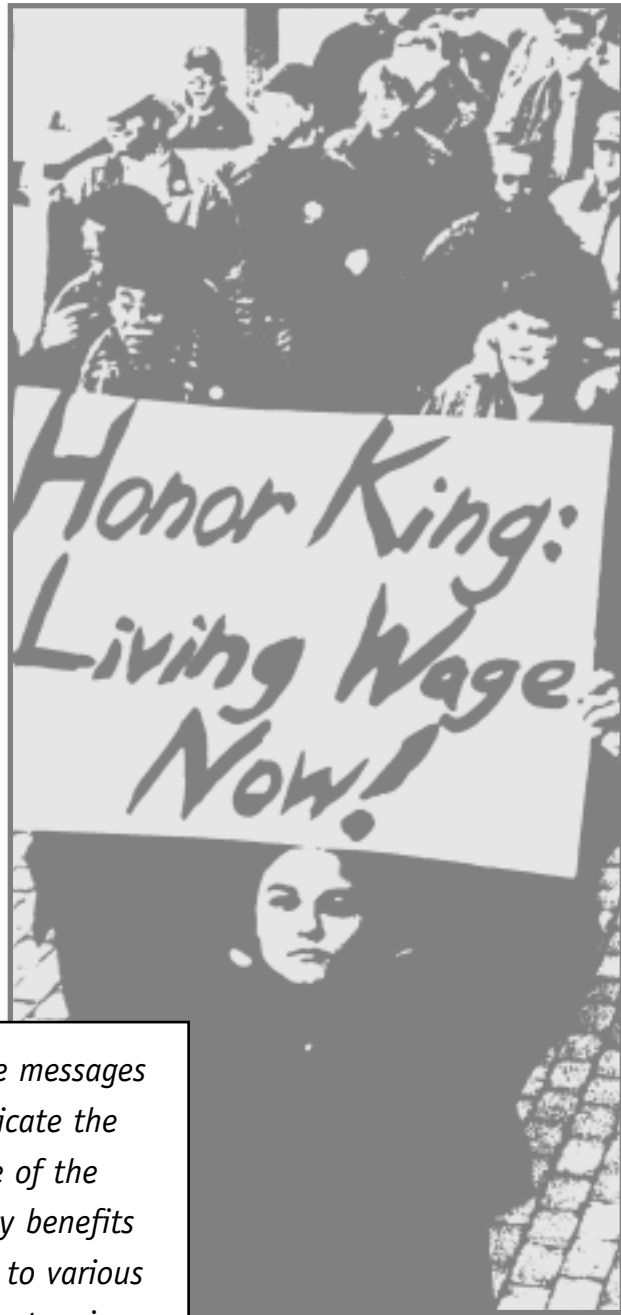
Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) are enforceable agreements between community groups and developers seeking to address a broad range of community needs. They ensure community participation in shaping major developments, and shift the public discussion on economic development—for the better. The Community Benefits movement also builds power for working people, giving them a context, language and tools to organize their communities to create the cities they want and deserve. Some shining examples include the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy’s recent victory on the largest community benefits agreement to date—the \$11 billion LAX modernization plan—and the Center on Policy Initiatives’ “Responsible Development Project,” an effort to move San Diego’s expansive development boom to be more community-friendly.

Frames That Resonate

Using effective frames and messages moves the community benefits movement beyond the province of allies and core supporters. Effective messages communicate the essence of the community benefits movement to various audiences,

Effective messages communicate the essence of the community benefits movement to various audiences, tapping into core values that we all share.

derived messages for broad impact, seeking an inclusive tone accentuating their new vision for economic development. At right are some examples of frames and core messages used by community benefits groups when developing community benefits frames and messages.



tapping into core values that we all share. Savvy advocates realized that polarizing positions like anti-development or anti-sprawl wouldn’t work in a benefits context. Instead, anchor groups

TIPS: Message Pointers

When developing messages for community benefits/accountable development, remember these basic tips:

- **Develop strong community benefits messages** by:
 - Clearly delineating the problem in non-technical terms.
 - Offering a viable solution/vision of success for community benefits.
 - Moving your audiences to act.
- **Know your target audiences:** It is especially important to make these distinctions when messaging for policymakers, media, allies and community group.
- **Make language accessible:** Community benefits is a broad movement for broad impact; make your language human and rich with values.



What Works:

- **FRAME: Positive Vision for all**
CORE MESSAGE: Community benefits agreements give a city a positive way to link responsible development with quality jobs, affordable housing and stronger neighborhood services for everyone.
- **FRAME: Win-Win Benefits**
CORE MESSAGE: Smart growth and development benefits all: Policy-makers are able to provide needed leadership on important issues, developers receive public subsidies and are able to build in our cities without conflict, and diverse communities—everyday people, small businesses, various community groups—gain much needed benefits and services.
- **FRAME: Community/Civic Participation**
CORE MESSAGE: Communities have a meaningful role in decisions on growth and development in their cities, especially since public funds are requested. Excluding their participation is unfair, and prevents them from making the best decisions for their communities.
- **FRAME: Inclusion of Broad Range of Voices**
CORE MESSAGE: Growth and development impacts everyone in a given city, so many voices can help ensure that it meets the needs of everyone in the city.

What Doesn’t

- **FRAME: Anti-Development**
CORE EFFECT: The perception that community benefits advocates are anti-business, and “tangible” benefits like tax revenues and jobs are lost.
- **FRAME: Anti-Sprawl**
CORE EFFECT: Pushes advocates into a limited space, since sprawl isn’t universally frowned upon. It is actually looked upon as aspiration by many people.
- **FRAME: Policy Reform**
CORE EFFECT: The potential broader impact of community benefits will be lost if it only resides within a policy framework. Community benefits must resonate beyond policy-speak and penetrate all forms of communications with the potential of influencing everyday people and policy-makers.

CASE STUDY

Big-Box Battles

Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy Wages War on Wal-Mart

Founded in 1993, the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) is recognized as a national authority on issues affecting the working poor and as an innovator in the fight against working poverty. Combining a vision of social justice with a practical approach to social change, LAANE has helped set in motion a broad movement based on the principle that hard work deserves fair pay, good benefits and decent working conditions.

LAANE came to prominence by leading the effort to pass one of the country's first living wage laws, raising wages for 10,000 workers. Following the living wage victory, LAANE joined with a coalition of unions and clergy to form Respect at LAX, dramatically improving wages and working conditions for thousands of airport employees. LAANE also initiated the Santa Monica living wage movement, which has raised wages and passed protective legislation for hundreds of workers in the city's tourism industry. In 2001, LAANE launched its Community Benefits program, winning landmark agreements to ensure that developers provide quality jobs and other community benefits in exchange for public subsidies.

Inglewood in the Crosshairs

LAANE's Community Benefits approach was put to the test when the nation's most notorious big-box retailer set their sights on the community of Inglewood. In the face of opposition from Inglewood City Council, Wal-Mart took its proposal to develop a Supercenter directly to voters. The company sponsored a ballot measure that would have stripped city officials of any authority over the massive Supercenter—a development equivalent to 17 football fields.

Touting jobs, tax revenue and low-priced merchandise for Inglewood's mostly Latino and African-American working class residents, Wal-Mart thought their ballot initiative strategy was a winner.

Winning Messages, Winning Strategy

A broad-based coalition of clergy, small-business owners, labor activists and community leaders—led by LAANE—warned that the retailer's presence would force down wages, cause traffic jams and kill off small, local businesses. One of the coalition's key messages was that in forcing the referendum, the company tried to circumvent the decisions of the local government. When they heard that, Inglewood's voters weren't ready to sell their democratic rights and their commu-



One of the coalition's key messages was that in forcing the referendum, the company tried to circumvent the decisions of the local government.

nity's local control for cheap stuff and low-paying jobs.

LAANE carefully tailored their message to key target audiences, modifying phone bank scripts and direct mail with slightly varied messages to resonate with homeowners, Latinos and African-American voters in the community.

Wal-Mart spent \$1.5 million on their campaign in Inglewood, outspending LAANE and their allies 10-1. Still, the measure failed—60% of voters rejected the Wal-Mart-backed proposal.

In the summer of 2004, LAANE cemented their victory and further bolstered the community's approach to development by helping to pass the groundbreaking Los Angeles Superstore Ordinance, giving communities more control over the construction of big-box stores. Under the new measure, companies are required to pay for independent studies examining whether their proposed superstores would bring more economic harm than benefits to residents. With these studies, city officials and community members have the ability to evaluate the impacts of a proposed superstore before a permit is issued. As a result, there can be meaningful public debate and control over the building of superstores in Los Angeles.

It Ain't Over 'till it's Over

Wal-Mart didn't become the world's largest company by taking no for an answer. Within a year of Inglewood voters' overwhelming rejection of Wal-Mart, the company had purchased the 60 acre parcel of land where it hoped to build the project and is continuing to draw up plans for a store on the site.

And in January 2005, Wal-Mart launched their "Set the

Record Straight" ad campaign, featuring ads in more than 100 newspapers touting the company's wages, employee benefits, economic impact and charitable contributions. The PR offensive also included an invitation from Wal-Mart to national and regional retail reporters to attend a two-day meeting at the company's Bentonville, Arkansas, headquarters.

It was then that LAANE and their allies realized: If we don't want Wal-Mart in our town, they probably don't want us in theirs, either.

Media Junket and the Journey to Bentonville

LAANE and their allies learned—from the SPIN Project—that the invitation to reporters had been issued, and decided to crash the party.

"We believe that the hundreds of millions of dollars Wal-Mart is investing in public relations would be far better spent on addressing the problems Wal-Mart has created for America's communities," said Rev. Altagracia Perez, a delegation member who helped lead the campaign to defeat Wal-Mart's ballot initiative. "We wanted to deliver a message personally to [Wal-Mart CEO] Lee Scott that the time has come for action, not words."

They indicated that if the company wanted to build in Inglewood they would have to negotiate and sign a comprehensive community benefits agreement—a legally binding contract that would guarantee living wage jobs, affordable family health care and other benefits for employees. The community benefits agreement would also protect small businesses and offset many of the other negative impacts associated with Wal-Mart projects.

"The people of Inglewood want what every community in America wants: good jobs with affordable health care and fair pension benefits, a diverse mix of small and large businesses with quality products and services, safe neighborhoods and a clean environment," said City Councilmember Ralph Franklin. "If Wal-Mart wants to come to Inglewood, it must be willing to meet the real needs of our residents." With that message, the delegation looked more reasonable than Wal-Mart in many of the news stories written after the event.

Crashing the company's press conference guaranteed lots of media coverage for their efforts. By going to where the media would already be covering the story, and by guaranteeing controversy by confronting Wal-Mart on their home turf, LAANE and their allies ensured their story would be told in media outlets across the country. In total, LAANE and the struggle in Inglewood were mentioned in 40 news stories emerging from their trip to Bentonville.

In the end, Wal-Mart did take a meeting with the delega-

tion, which they don't generally do on community terms. Meanwhile, LAANE and their allies are moving forward with a Supercenter law in Inglewood, which would provide many of the same protections as the law they won in Los Angeles. LAANE also continues to mobilize Inglewood residents around community benefits demands for large development projects in Inglewood and other areas of Los Angeles.

TIPS: Media Event Considerations

Pulling off an opportunistic media triumph like LAANE's takes some careful thinking and a great deal of thoughtful planning. Here are just a handful of the considerations LAANE and their allies had to work through to make the event a success:

● **Pitching on the down-low.** To get the word out about the trip while retaining the element of surprise—and without tipping off Wal-Mart's army of PR minions—LAANE waited till just a few days before the event to begin pitching the story—except to a handful of trusted reporters. This cut down on Wal-Mart's lead time and their ability to respond. When they began pitching the story, LAANE told reporters they were going to Bentonville, but not why—they held their key demand that Wal-Mart sign a community benefits agreement, which also eliminated the company's ability to inoculate against the story.

● **Proximity matters.** LAANE's reconnaissance team found out which hotel Wal-Mart was using to house the reporters during their stay in Bentonville, then rented out the rest of the rooms for their delegation—to ensure plenty of opportunities for the journalists to rub elbows with the community members from Inglewood. They also booked an adjacent meeting room in the hotel—under the nom-de-guerre "Tracy's Reunion"—to host their own press conference on the same site as the Wal-Mart reporter's conference.

● **Location.** The delegation's letter to CEO Lee Scott was presented—with media trailing and cameras rolling—to senior Wal-Mart officials in the lobby of the hotel immediately following the delegation's press conference. This helped to increase

the news value of the story.

● **The Right Messengers.** LAANE knew they had to send messengers who would be found credible and believable in the national media. The delegation included current and former Inglewood elected officials, supermarket workers and two local faith leaders. The delegation did not include the organization's Executive Director, Board Chair or any of the others who are often drafted to serve as talking heads at press conferences.

By going to where the media would already be covering the story...LAANE and their allies ensured their story would be told in media outlets across the country.

CASE STUDY

The Fight Against Forever 21

Low-wage Immigrant Workers Organizing for Fairness and Dignity

In 2001, Los Angeles garment workers began a three-year struggle to win worker safety, respect and dignity by launching a nationwide campaign against clothing retailer Forever 21, Inc., with the assistance of the Garment Worker Center, the first multi-racial, multi-ethnic center in the nation dedicated to organizing garment workers. In tandem with their campaign, the workers also fought for justice by filing a lawsuit against the retailer with the assistance of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, a nonprofit civil rights organization that has served hundreds of garment workers and aided them in claims for unpaid wages. The garment workers, who labored in multiple factories throughout downtown Los Angeles, said they were denied lawful wages and exposed to dangerous working conditions while they made clothes for Forever 21. Some worked six days a week, 12 hours a day, for far less than minimum wage or overtime.

With the help of Sweatshop Watch, an organization serving low-wage workers nationally and internationally, the Garment Worker Center, along with the garment workers, waged a national boycott against Forever 21. Through persistence and coordination, the workers reached an agreement with the clothing retailer that settled their legal claims and marked the end of their campaign three years later on December 15, 2004. (At the time of this report, the terms of the agreement had not been made public.) The campaign required organizing and educating workers as well as educating the public, and in particular, consumers of the clothing chain.

Conditions at today's factories are not far from where they were in the early 1900s. According to the Garment Worker Center: "The machines are crammed in with little ventilation, lots of dust particles in the air, chemicals and machinery out in the open, and workers do not have protective gear.... The



As spokespeople for the campaign, workers shared their personal stories—their own experiences, what they witnessed at their workplace—at churches, school campuses, and hearings.

bathrooms are locked and dirty, with dozens of workers—men and women—sharing just one. There is no clean water, and the lighting is bad. Many workers cannot take breaks or must eat lunch quickly. Some cannot go to the bathroom unless they finish sewing a quota. Some workers cannot look up from their machines and are not allowed to talk to each other. Factories are divided by language and race. Workers come in very early and leave late, and do not receive overtime. Some

workers must take work home after working over 10 hours in a day. The average LA garment worker makes less than \$14,000 a year and does not receive health benefits. Workers who have come to the Garment Worker Center average a wage of \$3.18 per hour. They can't even call in sick without being docked pay."

Despite laws on minimum wage, workers compensation and child labor, the Department of Labor does little monitoring. Without enforcement, low-wage workers—largely Latino, Asian, Afro-Caribbean, and immigrant—and their families suffer the consequences, and bear the burden of a perpetually lowering corporate bottom line.

Motivating Messages

Campaign organizers were well aware that identifying and knowing target audiences were critical to success. At the

onset, they identified two primary audiences: workers and consumers of Forever 21 clothing.

With workers, many of whom were not aware of their rights, the goal was to raise their consciousness and leadership in the campaign. A key component of the campaign was that it was led by workers, who were the decision makers moving the campaign forward and adopting appropriate communications strategies needed for each step. They conceived of flyers with slogans that read, "Are you paid \$6.75?" (California's minimum wage) to pique other workers' attention and remind them of the widespread exploitation in the industry. Pocketsize booklets on workplace rights as well as graphics/comics on filing wage claims with the state Labor Commissioner were offered in Chinese, Spanish and other languages.

As spokespeople for the campaign, workers shared their personal stories—their own experiences, what they witnessed at their workplace—at churches, school campuses and hearings. Their testimonies were broadcasted on television and print, including a feature story in widely read *Glamour* magazine, whose editor contacted organizers for the story after hearing much about the campaign through other media sources. Collectively, the worker testimonies painted a new image of reality for clothing consumers across the country.

Fashioning a Winning Message

With consumers, the organizers relied upon the successes of previous anti-sweatshop campaigns, which had helped frame "sweatshops" as negative, exploitative and undesirable. By calling attention to the sweatshop conditions under which workers labored while making clothes for Forever 21, the campaign automatically placed the retailer on the defense and set the terms of the debate.

Flyers, made to look like store discount coupons, bore the message: "99% of the price of this Forever 21 blouse that sold for \$13 went into Forever 21's pockets and the pockets of its manufacturers and contractors! The garment worker who sewed the blouse here in Los Angeles only received 1% of that money... 19 cents." The intent was to show consumers what was really going on. According to organizers, many consumers responded with, "Oh, I didn't realize this."

Still, as Kimi Lee, Director of the Garment Worker Center, put it, "there wasn't one magic message." Messages were tweaked based on neighborhood and location, but the core remained the same:

● **All workers have rights and should be treated fairly and with respect.** Despite existing laws to protect workers, many

are still exploited under conditions akin to those at the earliest part of the Industrial Revolution. As a result, corporate retailers are profiting from this exploitative situation where workers and consumers bear the cost of retailers' profit, lining the pockets of corporate retailers.

● **All workers have rights** and should be treated fairly and with respect.

● **As workers, we must work together** and let everyone know that they do not have to endure such mistreatments.

● **As consumers, we can help end this exploitation** by showing retailers that we will not tolerate their exploitative behaviors.

TIPS: Keeping the Story in the Spotlight

The successful media efforts of this campaign were built upon solid relationships with reporters. The Garment Worker Center, Sweatshop Watch and others got to know reporters by:

● **Contacting those who had previously written about their work.**

● The organizations made sure to **provide materials when needed**, such as interviews with garment workers, and followed up with any leads.

● The Center **pitched several story angles** to reporters each time, and as a result, reporters trusted their efforts to find a compelling angle for the stories.

During the three-year campaign, organizers also offered exclusive stories to several outlets as a means of relationship building. Reporters enjoy the chance to uncover a new story. However, choose exclusives wisely, as they may preempt relationships with other media outlets, or a story's release may become solely dependent on one outlet.

Media coverage begets more media coverage. Once a story piques the attention of mainstream viewers, news outlets, contrary to popular belief, want to cover the story. Having fresh angles on an existing story helps to keep it relevant and alive in the media and in the minds of your audiences.

CASE STUDY

Community Health and Organizational Identity

Tenants’ and Workers’ Support Committee

The Tenants’ and Workers’ Support Committee (TWSC) has been protecting communities in Washington D.C.’s Virginia suburbs for almost 20 years, consistently responding to threats to their community with effective solutions. Their first major victory was to secure affordable housing in Alexandria by creating a \$15 million housing cooperative. More recently, they have focused on protecting their community’s health, securing an agreement with a local hospital to expand access to healthcare for their base of mostly uninsured immigrants in Northern Virginia. The win: healthcare debt amnesty amounting to \$800,000 (and counting), a 35% price reduction to hospital services for medically uninsured people, bilingual hospital facilities and a new program to promote health among TWSC’s low-income base.

Along with sharp strategy, a commitment to organizing and hard work, TWSC won these victories with the help of an asset often overlooked by grassroots groups: a strong organizational identity, or brand. While TWSC already has an impressive reputation within its base, it continues to grow its brand’s capacity to impact more audiences. TWSC is currently considering undertaking one of the most ambitious branding overhauls available—renaming.

Building Power by Building Your Brand

A powerful brand is one of the most potent assets organizations can develop. Brands can transform your past wins into future credibility. They can empower a community or inspire people to trust an organization. A powerful organization with a well-known brand can also make a campaign target tremble in fear.

If the word “brand” sounds too much like slick corporate mumbo-jumbo, think of the concept as “identity” or “reputation.” Those terms might actually be more appropriate to nonprofit branding. Branding in a nonprofit context is deeper than it would be for Nike or Coke—it goes far beyond unified design standards and a snappy tagline. It speaks more about the essence of an organization and its perceived personality



A powerful organization with a well-known brand can also make a campaign target tremble in fear.

and potency. Ideally, nonprofit brands communicate the soul of an organization and/or a community.

Brands in the Real World: How Different Audiences React

When you enter a corporate boardroom or a policymaker’s office to negotiate on behalf of your community, what reputation would you like to proceed you? Disorganized and amateur? Razor-sharp and experienced? Your brand can set the tone of important negotiations to win real change. After winning big victories, TWSC is poised to brand itself as a force to be reckoned with by decision-makers and big business in Northern Virginia.

When you knock on doors in your community, will you be welcomed as a neighbor with good intentions and political skill? Or will people groan to see you approach, mistrusting your intent and doubting your motives? TWSC’s clearest branding victories so far have been in creating an identity that their base knows, trusts and supports.

TIPS: Branding Basics

An organization’s brand is its identity and its essence. You have to know thoroughly who you are before you can project your identity effectively. So, to effectively brand, start by answering these questions:

- Who are you?
- What do you stand for?
- How are you different from other organizations in your community or issue area?
- What images and stories communicate the core of your organization?

What images and stories communicate the core of your organization?

Generally, the most important starting point for a nonprofit brand is its name. If you are considering renaming your organization, first assess the costs.

- Will you lose significant power by dropping your old name? What does your current name signify to yourself and others?

- How much will it cost to produce new materials with the new name?
- Instead of changing the name, could you add a tagline to the old name to make it more effective? A tagline is explanatory language that accompanies a name, i.e., “The SPIN Project—PR with Principles.”

Branding also includes a unified design, color scheme and feel of designed materials, including Websites, brochures, letterhead and any other material that represents your organization.

Get Started: Write a Branding Statement

When you are ready to build your brand consciously, the first step is to write a branding statement. Unlike your mission statement, a branding statement is not necessarily language to be used externally. Instead, it should be an internal guide for all of your communications so that every event you hold, every material you produce and every interview you give represents your brand. A branding statement also differs from a mission statement in that it speaks about your values,

vision, history and key images more than about your specific goals. The example below is a draft the SPIN Project suggested to TWSC. While their branding statement may ultimately change to better reflect their own voices, the following example can help you create your own branding statement:

The Tenants’ and Workers’ Support Committee brings together and supports our community. We fight the forces working to destroy our community, and continually grow our community’s strength. We win concrete, lasting victories from some of the largest corporations and most powerful political forces in our region. We empower local people to protect their families, and help to grow Arlandia, Virginia into a place where established local communities are nurtured, not chased out. We fight to strengthen the pillars of a healthy community: strong schools, successful hospitals and affordable, quality housing. We are immigrants from all over the world, and most of us are people of color. We know that peoples’ experiences differ according to their race, and we seek justice and equality for the people of color that make up our community. Since there are several languages spoken in our community, we strive to be as multilingual as possible.

CASE STUDY

David vs. the Development Goliath

Miami Workers Center and the fight against undisciplined development

David: The Miami Workers Center

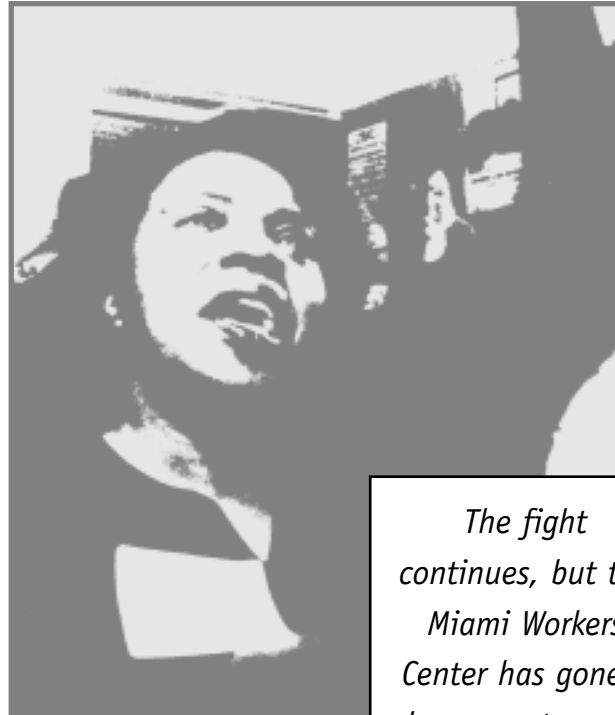
The Miami Workers Center is a progressive strategy and action center grounded in grassroots communities. They seek to win dignity and self-determination for all people, celebrating the strength of diversity based on race, class, gender, ability, age and sexual orientation. “We want all people to have equal access to resources, power and the future of their communities,” says Gihan Perrera, Executive Director of Miami Workers Center.

Enter Goliath: Boomtown Miami

Population growth and immigration in Miami Dade County are colliding with the County’s concrete geographical limits. Over the next 17 years, Southern Florida’s population is predicted to increase by 40%, and Miami-Dade’s population alone is expected to rise by nearly 1 million people. Urban growth in Miami-Dade is constricted by the county’s geographic boundaries: on the west by the Everglades, on the east by the Atlantic Ocean, on the south by the Caribbean Sea and on the north by already developed metropolitan centers. A combination of population growth, low interest rates and geographic constraints has brought about a real estate buying and building frenzy in Miami.

While city and county officials applaud the redevelopment renaissance, many community residents and activists are concerned that what is transpiring is something quite different. In Liberty City, one of Miami’s oldest African-American communities—and the home turf of the Miami Workers Center—the multi-million dollar project to build a “Transit Village” would level several city blocks of existing housing and retail space for small businesses.

The Miami Workers Center demanded that rather than railroading the community, the Miami-Dade Transit Authority make the Transit Village an example of community-guided development. They called on elected leaders and developers to meet the community’s needs for affordable housing, a health care center, childcare center, cultural library and a movie theater. Their key demand—affordable rent for small businesses—was supported by a



The fight continues, but the Miami Workers Center has gone a long way towards reframing the debate on their own terms.

newsworthy, media-friendly study of more than 100 local business, many of which have served the community for over 40 years and continue to be a stronghold for the neighborhood.

David Wins the Day

To really jump-start the development process in neighborhoods like Liberty City, Miami Mayor Manny Diaz announced a new initiative—the Miami 21 plan—which would fast-track rewrites to the city’s zoning laws to make way for hundreds of new condo and retail developments. Miami 21 was billed as a “blueprint for the Miami of the 21st Century.” The plan was announced at an April 2005 conference to one hundred developers and realtors who all stood to profit from the plan. While the media was invited to cover the Mayor’s big announcement, no community representatives were invited to comment or provide input on the ideas presented.

But the Miami Workers Center was sure they got the final say on the Mayor’s plans. They took a contingent of community members to the conference to form their own

response to the Miami 21 plan. The mayor may not have asked for their comments, but the media sure did: All of the post-conference media coverage led with Miami Workers Center’s message about the need for community participation and a community-driven approach to development in Miami. The *Miami Herald* headline for the story: “There Goes the Neighborhood.” The *Herald* also published an editorial chastising Mayor Diaz and echoing the Miami Workers Center call for an open process. The fight against the Transit Village continues, but the Miami Workers Center has gone a long way toward reframing the debate on their own terms.

Framing the Development Dialogue

Talking about development issues is a tricky business—we do want quality housing, jobs and the other benefits that development can bring to our communities, but not at the expense of the people who have lived, worked and worshipped in our neighborhoods for generations. On the right are some strategies to help you frame and discuss issues of development in your community.

TIPS: Communications Strategies

Like the Miami Workers Center, you can leverage these quick tips to help get the message out:

- **Be opportunistic.** The Miami Workers Center didn’t know about the Miami 21 conference until they read about it in the paper the day before it happened. But they quickly engaged their members and leaders to attend the conference, and scored the great media coverage because they buttonholed the reporters covering the conference, and did several days of follow up calls to keep the story alive.
- **Leverage all the elements of community**—churches, residents, small business owners as messengers for the campaign. These spokes-folks often have the most compelling stories to tell about the impacts of development on their neighborhoods and livelihoods.
- If you find your self in the position of reframing a pro-development dialog, it helps to **create a new story to tell.** Research-based reports can help change the narrative in the media and will help strengthen your case. Neighborhood profiles, small business surveys and other on-the-ground data can help focus the story on the community.
- **Don’t forget community media!** Church newsletters, neighborhood publications, cable access TV and other often-overlooked venues can be vital in telling your story. Especially in a dialog about development—which is often a debate about the very nature of community—these outlets can help you claim community space for conversation and create a sense of community pride. Often, community media outlets offer a direct pipeline to your base and other sympathetic audiences—while circumventing mainstream media outlets, which may be echoing developers’ message.

Framing Do’s:

- **Make it local**—talk about how these issues are playing out in your neighborhoods and communities.
- **Be clear about the goals and tone of your efforts**—are you trying to stop development or shape the way it’s done?
- **Remember to talk about fundamental values**—why do you want what you want?
- **Define “community” from many angles**—schools, churches, small businesses, environment, health, transportation, etc., as well as workforce. These community resources are required to fuel a healthy economy.
- **Tell human stories to back up the facts.** Put a face on the abstract issues. Talk about fairness in general terms—get specific on what is currently unfair and how it can be made more fair. Be concrete!
- **Use history.** Talk about famous cases of displacement that resonate in your area.
- **Tap into the language of “smart growth”**—it resonates for a lot of your targets (city council, etc.).
- **Use arguments that focus on community-driven development,** as well as strengthening community and economic diversity.

Framing Don’ts

- Use the word *gentrification*. It’s a wonky, charged word that only a handful will recognize—much less relate to. Find ways to define the concept and its impacts without using shorthand.
- Say you oppose “development”—in the U.S., that’s like saying you hate apple pie and puppies. Talk about the need for principled progress.
- Confuse your demands with your messages—your demands are only part of the narrative, part of the picture you want to paint. It’s not about housing or jobs, it’s about creating a community for all of us.
- Let local officials off the hook. Many people believe that when it comes to development, elected officials have their own agendas—set largely by developers. Local officials aren’t trusted to consider the long term consequences of their decisions, so your messages have an opening there.

CONCLUSION

We hope this economic justice message handbook has provided you with some useful tools to communicate your values in as broad a manner as possible. We encourage you to use these frames and messages as components of your communications strategy.

One unifying point in this handbook is our belief that careful planning, creative thinking and coordination are central to your economic justice communications efforts. Your communication work can link together all the elements of your campaign, and advance your efforts to make your community a better place to live and work. By inserting pro-active frames about low-wage workers and low-income families into the media debate, we can begin to uphold the American values of fairness, dignity and respect for all.



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