

JANUARY 2020



Story at Scale

STORY AT SCALE: NARRATIVE RESEARCH TO ADVANCE GENDER JUSTICE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

by Riki Conrey and Liz Manne



listen while you read

We've created two Spotify playlists to accompany **Story at Scale**.

Expanding Visions of Gender in Popular Music

contemporary music that reflects expanding notions of gender in popular culture

The Story at Scale Story Platform Playlist

a mix of contemporary and older songs that appeal to different audiences

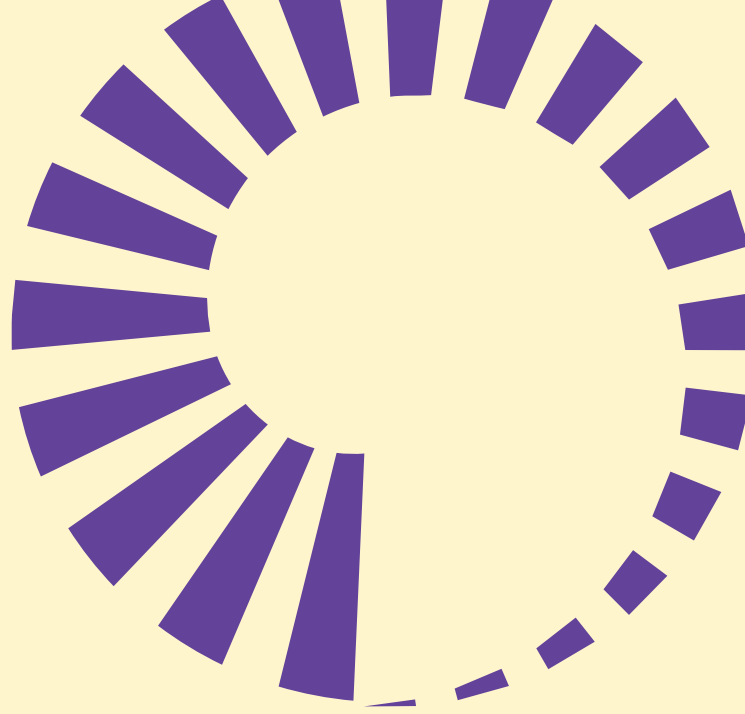


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Acknowledgements

About Story at Scale

Story at Scale is a year-long collaboration of researchers, data scientists, artists, advocates, and organizers to develop and test a new cultural strategy to advance gender justice. Using big data and a collaborative, creative process, Story at Scale delivers audience research and a narrative foundation to guide artists and campaigners in telling stories that reflect the world we seek: a joy-filled life in a gender-just future. Story at Scale's tools are designed for practical use by those working on issues ranging from reproductive justice to sex- and gender-based violence to LGBTQ+ rights and more.

We Thank Our Generous Supporters!

The project was funded by [The Culture Change Fund](#), a collaborative fund focused on using culture to advance and transform gender justice. The Fund's partners include Anonymous, Blue Shield of California Foundation, The California Endowment, Compton Foundation, Ford Foundation, General Service Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, The Lefkowsky Family Foundation, Libra Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Reproductive Health and Women's Rights Collaborative, and The Women's Foundation of California.

We Appreciate Our Team!

Riki Conrey and Liz Manne served as the co-directors of Story at Scale, and Dom Lowell served as operations director. The core team of researchers, writers, strategists, and facilitators included Michael Ahn, Kirk Cheyfitz, Janay Cody, Rachel D. Godsil, Alexis McGill Johnson, Amber J. Phillips, Erin Potts, and Olson Zaltman. kaze design provided graphic design services.

We Salute Our Wise and Engaged Research Advisory Council Members!

The Research Advisory Council advised, counseled, and pushed us every step of the way. This project would not have been possible without them, and we thank all twenty-three members for lending us their wisdom for the last year: Kimberly Alvarenga, Marya Bangee, Meg Bostrom, Jeff Chang, Janay Cody, Noreen Farrell, Ebony Ava Harper, Jee Kim, Adrienne Kimmell, Alexander L. Lee, Alexis McGill Johnson, Julie Martínez Ortega, Odell Mays II, Jess McIntosh, Eleanor Morison, Jackie Payne, Mike Podhorzer, Ai-jen Poo, Heather Rae, Favianna Rodriguez, Kate Stewart, Tracy Sturdivant, and Connie Wun.

For a complete list of Story at Scale's partners and participants, please visit storyatscale.org/about.



Authors' Prefaces

Riki Conrey

Of the 100+ leaders, activists, organizers, advocates, artists, and researchers who worked on Story at Scale to create a narrative strategy for gender justice, I'm the only one who is here specifically for the math. I'm a psychologist because they hadn't invented data science when I went to grad school, and I'm a data scientist because I cannot be anything else.

I've done the math and found that the only logical path forward through the mess we've made of gender is an unwavering insistence on optimism. We will win because we have to; we can because we have a thousand times before.

Some of the existential and scope challenges other team members faced fell outside my data-robot purview. Instead, I was challenged by the basic psychology of conservatism. Their stories—fear, anger, bigotry, and contempt—are easier to tell. So ours have to be better, and I have to be better at translating the math about audiences, emotions, and values. This (sometimes excruciating) experiment in direct collaboration between the scientists and the artists has been the most profound catalyst for that translation I could have hoped for. If we succeeded, you won't see evidence of math in these reports, but it's in there providing a reliable foundation for learning more about something really true in our culture.

I hope the result moves you as it has moved me.

Riki

Riki Conrey (she/her) is a social data scientist. She does math about people to make the world a better place. rikiconrey.com

Liz Manne

I don't like to consider myself an Eeyore, but times are tough and there is plenty of reason to despair. I mourn the rapidly devolving state of our climate, democracy, world peace, access to abortion, . . . and, for me personally, in this, the year I turn sixty, I'm not gonna lie, the crushing state of my estrogen. I am an almost comically stereotypical liberal, secular Jewish, second-wave feminist: raised as a California socialist theater kid, finished as a New York punk, irreversibly acculturated by three decades working in a male-dominated entertainment industry.

I recently shared on a team Slack channel that my first work peers were a six-foot, eleven-inch heavy-metal roadie named Ferry and a pilot named Killer. A thirty-something colleague suggested that should be my Twitter bio. On some level, it's all you need to know about my point of view.

All that to say, my limitations are legion, and I owe inexpressible levels of appreciation for all of my colleagues, partners, and teachers on Story at Scale. Your inspiration, wisdom, creativity, and optimism—plus Riki's math!—are what will heal the Eeyores among us, not to mention the state of the world, right here, right now, with gender justice at the beating heart of it all.

My deepest thanks to all of you.

Liz

Liz Manne (she/her) is a cultural strategist and creative content producer for progressive campaigns and causes. lizmanne.com

Congratulations, You Did It!

Much research has been done for the movement. Story at Scale was done by the movement. Intersectional research—research that centers marginalized voices—cannot reduce the world to what is simple or what is common. Intersectional research reduces the world to what is important, and everyone gets to decide what important means.

The goal of the research was:

To forge a data-driven cultural strategy to advance gender justice and associated objectives—reproductive health, rights, and justice; ending sex- and gender-based violence; pay equity; and so on.

The technical team coordinated a research review, a cultural audit, interviews, workshops, surveys, and predictive modeling. More than 100 activists, organizers, artists, and advocates decided where to look, what to ask, and—most importantly—what “gender justice” will look like when we get there. Here’s what your research taught us:

1. Gender affects every single part of every person’s life.
2. Gender is complicated, deeply personal, and the source of a lot of challenges—for people of all genders.
3. Gender is promising. Artists, movement leaders, and culture changers are writing a new, joy-filled, gender-just future: one where everyone belongs.
4. Having a goal is not the same thing as having a destination. (It turns out that identifying the destination was the entire point of this journey.)
5. Whoever tells the best story wins.

Intersectionality,

a term first used in 1989 by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, is a mode of analysis that examines discrimination experienced by people who face multiple lines of identity-based exclusion.



Gender justice is a framework used to bring about the fair and equitable treatment of people of all genders, with the goal of achieving dignity for all.

Politics Is Where Some of the People Are Some of the Time. Culture Is Where Most of the People Are Most of the Time.¹

Our campaigns, our organizing, and our lobbying aren't working well enough or fast enough or durably enough. We can be effective in one fight, but when we leave the field, the highly problematic, often downright toxic, gender culture comes flooding back and sets the stage for us to fight the same fight again in a year or five years. We're playing Whack-A-Mole across all of our issues and campaigns. That's not because we don't have the right message. And we know we have the right values and priorities!

But right now, we—as organizers, advocates, and campaigners—are having to fight for every inch without the **help of a cultural strategy that can make the culture work for instead of against us**: to make it take up and move our message. Instead, we have to start each conversation about abortion, parental leave, transgender rights, or sex- and gender-based violence and harassment as if it's about a political issue when really it's about the fabric of America, of our communities; it's about how we treat each other and how we live our lives.

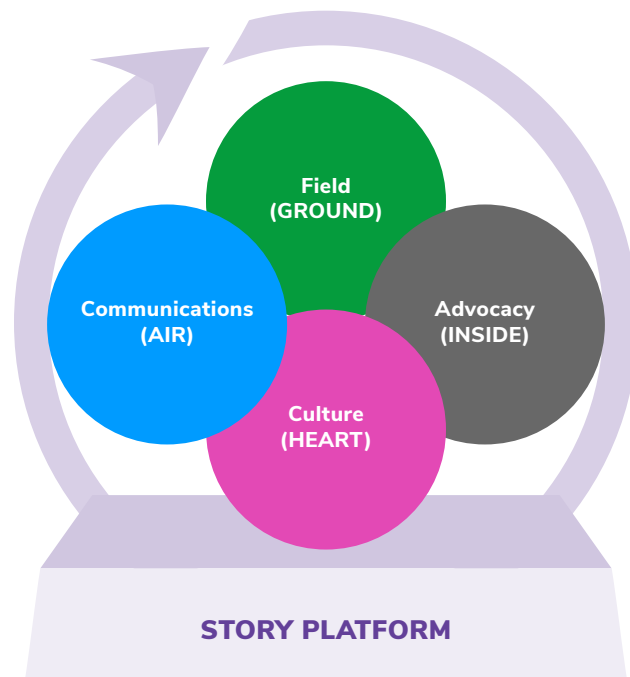
Cultural strategy is the idea of knitting together all our efforts to actually change the culture. And the best way to change the culture is when the world's best culture makers—the artists, YouTubers, athletes, chefs, and kids on TikTok and Discord and Twitch and Reddit—echo, support, and propagate our narrative. The idea here is that when we enter the field for a fight, the culture—our shared norms, beliefs, myths, and stories—surges in alongside us. That it's not just up to organizers and advocates alone.

In **conventional advocacy**, the focus is on influencing policies, law, and elections through parallel, often siloed programs like strategic communications, grassroots and field organizing, and legal and public policy advocacy. These activities are sometimes referred to as the “air game,” the “ground game,” and the “inside game,” and they typically employ a short-term time horizon. (Yeah, we realize the military metaphors need to be replaced ASAP! Forgive us for using them as shorthand right now just for the purposes of illustrating the point.)



¹ The Culture Group, *Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy*, (Air Traffic Control Education Fund, Inc., 2014), <http://theculturegroup.org/>.

With **cultural strategy**, the focus is on influencing narratives and norms (not instead of—but in addition to—policies, law, and elections) by adding two key elements: first, a story platform that undergirds and weaves together all audience engagement efforts, and second, by adding a fourth core strategy: cultural organizing. (Van Jones dubbed it the “heart game” for its emotional connection with audiences.) Real change happens when all forms of storytelling—digital campaigns, press interviews, op-eds, deep canvassing, television shows, songs, impact litigation, legislation—are aimed at forging and reinforcing an agreed-upon narrative goal—in the case of this work: a joy-filled, gender-just world.



With cultural strategy:

- We engage artists and influencers.
- We tell stories (not messages).
- We identify audiences in terms of their values and cultural affinities (not their demographics).
- We add excitement, enthusiasm, and inspiration, irrespective of the issue (or candidate).
- We help win in the near-term and build a positive culture in the long-term.



Cultural Strategy is a field of practice that centers artists, storytellers, media makers, and cultural influencers as agents of social change. Over the long term, cultural strategy cracks open, reimagines and rewrites fiercely-held narratives, transforming the shared spaces and norms that make up culture.

Jeff Chang, Liz Manne, Erin Potts
“A Conversation About Cultural Strategy,” *Medium*

A Road Trip to Remember

Story at Scale employs a data-driven, audience-centered, story-based research methodology. The project braids together three strands of audience engagement strategy, each of which marks a significant advancement in its own right. First, the project is part of a post-demographic revolution in audience research—focused not on the labels that the census gives us but on the identities, emotions, and values that make us who we are. Second, our narrative strategy was co-created by the community: 100% by and for front-line leaders, organizers, and artist-activists. Finally, our methodology employs cultural and narrative strategy, not just “messaging.”

The concept and design for Story at Scale is derived from some of our prior work, in particular, [The Peoria Project](#), [The Midwest Culture Lab](#), [#PopJustice: Social Justice and the Promise of Pop Culture Strategies](#), and [Making Waves: A Guide to Cultural Strategy](#). Those projects, in turn, stand on the shoulders of others' prior audience, narrative, cultural, and media research, strategy, and practice. Story at Scale is but one addition to a fertile and growing ecosystem.

Let us tell you the story of our year-long journey toward the future of gender.

1. We Planned for the Trip

We spent a lot of time building a comprehensive research plan! We planned for every phase, every sample, and every statistical hypothesis test. And believe it or not, we stuck to the plan.

2. We Recruited Fellow Travellers

With the support of the project's funders we recruited a Research Advisory Council made up of experts in polling, communications research, cultural strategy, reproductive justice, and gender justice who complemented our gaps in perspective and experience. The Council's role was to provide existing data and research, serve as a sounding board for every step along the journey, and hold us accountable to our twin commitments to equity and evidence. We also gathered together an extraordinary team of fellow researchers and strategists and divvied up the work. As the journey continued, many more partners and co-creators came on board. (See the full list of participants at storyatscale.org/about).

3. We Read a Lot Before We Embarked

To ensure that we were building on existing knowledge and not reinventing the wheel, we interviewed dozens of experts and read a lot of existing research reports about gender and reproductive health, rights, and justice as well as about cultural strategy and narrative change. We also looked at a lot of publicly available data relating to gender justice and to reproductive health, rights, and justice rights, and used raw data from sources like Pew Research and the World Values Survey (as well as private data held by our partners) to inform interview and survey questions.

4. We Sent Out Scouts

We deployed teams of researchers in different directions to explore and build foundational knowledge for the project. A team of social scientists, expert at the intersection of race and gender—Janay Cody, Rachel D. Godsil, and Alexis McGill Johnson—dove into social science academic literature about gender stereotypes. Their findings were more depressing than uplifting but were useful in providing incontrovertible evidence about what advocates for gender justice are up against. They also helped us understand the brain science behind narrative formation. Cultural strategist Erin Potts, with support from narrative expert Michael Ahn in exploring new tropes, conducted a cultural audit, investigating popular culture for positive clues about how we can change the culture for gender and gender justice. (As per usual, the artists provided more inspiration than the academics!) Dom Lowell, Story at Scale's operations director, who has deep field and organizational experience, dove into the practical and infrastructure considerations for advocacy organizations interested in implementing culture change programs.

5. We Learned Who We Are Speaking With

We were ready to go deep into audience research. Data scientist and Story at Scale Co-director Riki Conrey conducted a comprehensive original survey and cluster analysis. She delivered a new audience segmentation that provides a comprehensive and actionable understanding of people living in the United States and the core narratives that shape their lives and perspectives on gender. This quantitative analysis was enriched by a qualitative study by Olson Zaltman and further cultural data.

6. We Learned What We Needed to Be Saying

Equipped with this deep, new understanding of our audiences—most of whom hold wildly different perspectives on gender than we do—we set out to figure out what we were going to say to them. Content creator and reproductive justice activist Amber J. Phillips, along with Kirk Cheyfitz, an award-winning journalist and veteran of the advertising industry, led a co-creative “story platform” process comprised of interviews, workshops, and deep listening. They started with in-depth interviews with frontline organizers and movement leaders. These activists’ lived experiences, combined with their deep relationships with the communities they serve, brought to light both the challenges and opportunities for those on the front lines of fighting for gender justice. Then Amber and Kirk designed and facilitated story platform workshops and synthesized the insights of seventy-seven co-creators—artists, advocates, and culture changers—into a story platform for gender justice.

A story platform, or core narrative strategy, is to culture what a message frame is to a campaign. It keeps us centered in our values and directed toward our vision of the future even as we reach out to new audiences and enlist new voices. The Story at Scale story platform is not a description of the problem; it is a vision for the future. At last we knew where our destination was! We had a narrative foundation to guide artists and campaigners in telling stories that reflect the world we seek: a joy-filled life in a gender-just future.

7. We Test-Drove a Creative Strategy

Cultural strategist and creative producer Liz Manne led the production of fourteen videos based on the story platform, working in partnership with UltraViolet and A Stronger California (a campaign of Equal Rights Advocates) and with creative teams at joeyngloria and Art Not War. Riki Conrey—working with Janay Cody, Clarify Agency, and Swayable—tested twelve of them to help us learn more about the audiences and how, going forward, artists and campaigners can integrate the story platform and audience segmentation into their work.

8. We Passed Forward What We Learned

We wrote a bunch of reports. We built an interactive website. We participated in briefings and workshops co-hosted by the Women’s Foundation of California, the Center for Cultural Power, and The League. We made everything accessible for free via a Creative Commons license and worked to pass the baton to the field for implementation, adaptation, and ongoing learning and improvement.



For those who want all the nerdy, gory details of our methodology and findings, you're in luck. We wrote five in-depth reports covering the audience research methodology, the co-creative process of developing the story platform, a discussion of our video testing, a cultural audit investigating where popular culture is today when it comes to gender, and a research review that looks at social science research relating to gender stereotypes. We love and embrace you for your curiosity and hope there are many of you because everyone worked so hard on these reports, and they're all really good!

You can find them at storyatscale.org/reports:

Our Gender Perspectives

Audience Research

by Riki Conrey

Welcome Home: Co-creating a Gender-Just World

A Story Platform for the Movement

by Kirk Cheyfitz and Amber J. Phillips

Building a Creative Strategy

Video Testing

by Riki Conrey

Expanding Visions of Gender in Popular Culture

A Cultural Audit

by Erin Potts

What Are We Up Against?

An Intersectional Examination of Stereotypes Associated With Gender

A Research Review

by Janay Cody, Rachel D. Godsil, and Alexis McGill Johnson

in association with Perception Institute

For those of you who are already irritated at the word count of this Executive Summary report, we love you, too. No judgment. Head straight to the website and choose your own adventure: storyatscale.org. While you're cruising the site, you can listen to this [Spotify playlist](#) that Erin put together: [Expanding Visions of Gender in Popular Music](#), contemporary songs that reflect expanding notions of gender in popular culture.

For those who want something in between plumbing the depths and skimming the surface, read on. To get you started, we'll provide you with a top-line look at the the Story at Scale products: the audience segmentation, story platform, and a creative strategy.

We are glad you are here. Welcome.

Demography Is Not Destiny, but Identity Is Everything.





The first step in any cultural change strategy is knowing who we are talking to and who we should be reaching. Audience segmentation is a strategic tool that provides insight into who is with us and who we can reach and persuade.

Segmentation sometimes tempts us to customize a narrative for each audience. But that approach quickly expands into an intractable set of messages that can contradict and be confusing, inauthentic, or inefficient. Instead of using audience profiles to message to separate groups, we can use them to reach different groups and bring those groups together. The true power of segmentation is coalition building.

We don't have a separate narrative for each audience; gender justice has just one narrative, and it is the **story platform**. We should only be telling stories about the future we want—and plan—to live in, but we can tell those stories in a way that resonates with the diverse stories our audiences tell themselves.

The Story at Scale audience profiles—created from a survey of more than 6,000 people and enriched with cultural and qualitative research—are not about demographics, ideology, or indeed about political issues or gender justice; they are about how our audiences experience gender in their everyday lives.

Intersectional research pursues what is important, not what is common or easy to measure. The survey that undergirds this segmentation was not “representative.” Instead, it represented a wide variety of voices by requiring at least 1,000 white respondents, 1,000 Black respondents, 1,000 Latinx respondents, and 1,000 respondents of Asian or Middle Eastern descent and by imposing similar quotas by gender, age, class, and region. The result is the six distinct audiences in the table below.

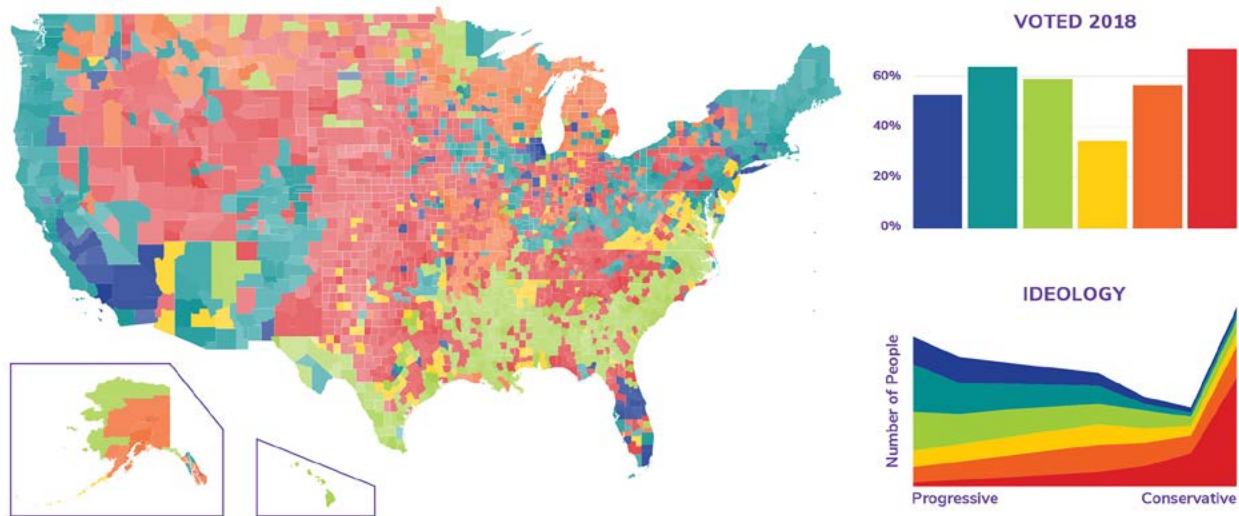
 14%	 19%	 18%	 12%	 18%	 19%
Justice Rising	Force for Good	Kids First	For the Win	No Special Treatment	Religious Traditionalists
Creative leftists who want safety and freedom	Thinking leftists who want progress and equality	Parents and grandparents who want their kids to grow up well	Leaders who want to have a good time and to win	Rule-followers who want recognition and achievement	Born again Christians who want security, conformity, and power
BASE		PERSUADABLES			OPPOSITION

The percentages here are estimates based on weighting the equity sample back to the proportions of the different populations in the United States, since it can be useful to know which groups are larger or smaller within a region or other group.

“Equity sampling” like this is a bad idea if you want to know who will win an election, but for Story at Scale, it yielded profiles in the persuadable middle unlike any we had encountered in our other projects—profiles that rang bells (“Oh yeah, that’s my cousin!”) and resonated with the lived experiences of Advisory Council members with diverse backgrounds.

Each of the audiences is set apart from the others by some set of beliefs or values that separates them from the others. Justice Rising, for instance, holds progressive values, especially on gender, but they are unique in the degree to which they feel unsafe. Force for Good is also progressive, but they feel safe and are enthusiastic about increasing flexibility in gender roles.

While segmentation itself does not assign groups by any specific feature such as progressivism, these groups did self-organize into the most progressive on the left and the most conservative on the right. Political ideology and engagement, however, are not as useful in describing the lived experiences of these audiences—especially the audiences in the political middle—as are the characters, obstacles, and objectives that make up their personal stories.



While support for legal abortion is by no means the only important gender justice issue, it is a bellwether, and the six groups fall very discretely into three camps. The two groups in the base—Justice Rising and Force for Good—believe abortion is acceptable and should be legal. Three groups in the middle—Kids First, For the Win, and No Special Treatment—are the persuadables: they firmly believe that abortion should be legal, but they may be personally uncomfortable with abortion. And one group—Religious Traditionalists—opposes legal abortion.

What the audience segmentation allows us to understand is that the three persuadable groups in the middle are not an undifferentiated blob; they are not persuadable in precisely the same way.

So that's who we are speaking with. Now onto what we are saying to them.

learn more

Read the [Audience report](#)

More than Seventy-Seven Artists, Advocates, and Culture Changers Co-created the Story Platform for Gender Justice

This project's goal was to help create a gender-just world. To define what that actually means, we looked to the broad coalition of leaders, organizers, activists, and artists working day to day on the front lines of the movement to advance gender justice. They joined us through in-depth interviews and group workshops and co-created a vivid vision of how our society will work and how we all will live together when gender justice prevails.

Achieving this goal, the co-creators agreed, requires broad support from a sizable majority of people living in the United States.

The audience segmentation showed that such majority support is within our grasp, as roughly one-third of the American electorate can be considered to be base supporters, embracing all our principal goals, while around another 50 percent substantially agree with our vision of a gender-just society or can be persuaded to join us.

What resulted is our core narrative—what we call a “story platform”—that will connect with our audiences and bring them together.

A story platform is not a line of ad copy, not a tagline, and not a slogan. It is different from a one-size-fits-all “message.” It is a narrative plotline that can form the basis for many effective stories, joining up all the stories told by the movement and ensuring they all are deeply emotionally resonant for the audience. The story platform functions as a set of creative guidelines to aid creators in telling myriad stories that all ladder back to the same underlying emotional core and land with cumulative impact.

Seventy-seven artists, advocates, and culture changers concluded that the most powerful, compelling and unifying story platform for advancing gender justice is the joyful story of the new culture we will create in a gender-just society. This is the emotionally connecting narrative that tells all potential supporters what gender justice means for them personally and why they should support it.

Our Story Platform

This is our story platform—the core narrative that will help us change the culture and achieve gender justice:

THE STORY PLATFORM



PILLARS OF THE STORY PLATFORM: WHERE TO LOOK FOR STORIES TO TELL



The pillars grow out of the story platform to support particular areas of storytelling. They rise from the strategic understructure to connect the story platform with actual stories. They are the bridge between strategy and tactics, between meta-narrative and real storytelling. This is why the pillars also are called “rich storytelling areas”—the pillars show activists and artists where to look for the different kinds of stories we need to tell to different audience segments at different moments to create the change we seek to create over time.

The Story Pillars

Joyful, pleasurable, fun

Stories that reflect the joys of life—being free to create your own identity, enjoy love with partners, belonging, creating, family-making, solitude, acceptance, giving, receiving, nature, beauty, and on and on.

Abundant, not scarce

Stories of economic equity and how to ensure that all people can make a good living and no one has to feel their gain must mean someone else's loss, their survival must mean someone else's starvation.

Safety in community

Stories of belonging—building and organizing strong, safe communities, families, and in-groups. How safe spaces make people freer to be themselves. How safety is created and increased in community.

Stories of small and big victories.

Different, equally valued

Personal stories to explore all kinds of human difference and how being human means being different from others while all hold equal value. Stories of the right to privacy and respect for personal choices. Stories of how we treat others as we want to be treated.

Sustaining forever

Stories of the balancing act needed to sustain life, society, the planet—balance between what's good for me and for the world, between tradition and change, and so on.

Curiosity, kids, and the future

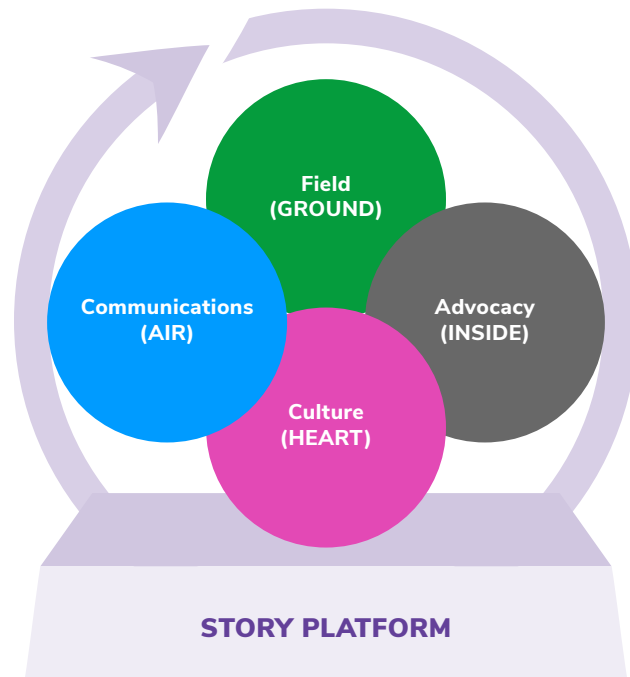
Stories of the future people want and the world children will grow up in. How parents raise kids to be happy, healthy and unique, with strong values. How curiosity helps people create identity.

learn more

Read the [Story Platform report](#)

Story at Scale Produced and Tested Videos Based on the Story Platform

Remember this image from earlier? The Story at Scale story platform and pillars, along with the audience segments, are meant to serve all the different kinds of storytellers—artists, campaigners, advocates, and field organizers—whether they’re working to win a gender- or reproductive justice-related issue campaign in the near-term or to change our gender culture over the long term.



To learn more about how the audiences and story platform work together in practice, Story at Scale produced fourteen test videos, collaborating with an extraordinary group of creative, movement, and production partners: UltraViolet, A Stronger California (a project of Equal Rights Advocates), joeyngloria, Art Not War, Amber Abundance, and Favianna Rodriguez, as well as a number of individual artists, activists, and crew members who together brought these stories to life.

For the test, we set a goal of creating content that worked for Kids First and For the Win, two of the persuadable audience groups. The videos highlighted the issues and content the partners felt they would find most helpful in their work going forward—and in the case of the Stronger California videos, they featured key grassroots partners as the videos’ cast. We used short-form video because the medium is relatively easy to create and quite easy to subject to testing that yields meaningful measures.

Any of the pillars are designed to reach any of the audiences (well, everyone but Religious Traditionalists, who, for the most part, are firmly entrenched in opposition to a future of justice and liberty for people of all genders). Storytellers should be able to mix and match between the story pillars and the audience segments they’re trying to connect with. Some pillars might provide more accessible on-ramps to connect with different audience groups (these are marked with a ★ in the chart below). For our test, we used these shortcuts.

Stories that resonate with any of the five audience segments we're addressing (everyone except the far right Religious Traditionalists) can be found in any of the six story pillars, so storytellers should feel free to mix and match. If you are looking for the broadest, most-accessible on ramps to connect with each audience segment, the chart below identifies them with a ★. And, of course, the story platform applies across the board.

	Justice Rising	Force for Good	Kids First	For the Win	No Special Treatment	Religious Traditionalists
STORY PLATFORM						
YOU BELONG. WELCOME HOME.	★	★	★	★	★	
JOYFUL, PLEASURABLE, FUN				★		
ABUNDANT, NOT SCARCE	★			★	★	
STORY PILLARS						
SAFETY IN COMMUNITY	★		★			
DIFFERENT, EQUALLY VALUED		★				
SUSTAINING FOREVER		★			★	
CURIOSITY, KIDS, & THE FUTURE			★			

What We Measured

The testing aimed to determine whether the story strategy works—in other words, whether it

- makes it possible to create several pieces of content that tell separate stories with a common authentically progressive narrative, that
- attracts base and persuadable audiences, and
- persuades them to believe in a just future for people of all genders.

Measurement is always comparative, so we want the story strategy not just to make us feel successful but to make us actually more successful than we would be if not using the story strategy. So we asked:

- Does content made with the strategy perform better (attracting and persuading) than other content made by the same organizations without the strategy?
- Does content that uses the strategy targeted at specific persuadable audiences work better with those audiences than other content?

An Initial Creative Strategy

The results: the test helped demonstrate that Story at Scale tools can work, but more important, it helped us learn how the tools work best and how our partners can use them in real-world organizations, campaigns, and cultural products. The steps below summarize some recommendations that came out of the test (though we strongly encourage you to read the [Video Testing report](#) to learn about the methodology, findings, and recommendations).

Step 1: Start with the story platform

The biggest challenge in producing videos based on the story platform is that the effort swiftly becomes a game of multi-dimensional chess. We were challenged to meet standards for digital-first video content while simultaneously pursuing specific audiences and using specific story pillars and addressing the needs of the specific partner's brand or campaign. So we recommend others start by aligning their organization or campaign brand with the story platform.

Step 2: Try things that feel uncomfortable. Use the platform to stay grounded.

Aligning movement brands with the story platform also means identifying places where those brands conflict with the platform and then challenging ourselves to tell stories that incorporate the platform's vision for the future. Are we centering anger and fear or passing through those emotions on our way to joyful, pleasurable, fun? Can we draw attention to the injustice of today while also envisioning a future of abundance rather than scarcity and conflict?

Step 3: Use story to connect.

One of the reasons stretching past our comfort zone works is that the story platform is not an issue or a "message frame"; it is the foundation of story, and story works to connect audiences where facts cannot. Our first research question centered on whether we could do better with a story-based strategy than without one. The answer was a very clear "Yes."

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**Abundance
is living our
best lives
right now.**

Amber J. Phillips
Abundance 2020

Step 4: Take aim at an audience.

When we don't take aim at an audience, the movement tends to produce content that feels good to us, our friends, and fellow travellers. Choosing one audience for each piece in the test challenged us to deeply understand who we are speaking with—to face the conflicts that exist within our base head-on or to address topics that are not always central to how we typically think about the problem at hand. (Spoiler alert: it turned out it was a lot easier for us to reach Kids First than For the Win. Some audiences will be more natural to reach than others.)

Step 5: Don't be afraid to miss; that's how we continue to learn.

We learn a little about the audiences every time we communicate with them (just like in real-life conversations with new people; over time they become a lot more familiar). The process of growing an understanding of the audience is a matter of iteration. The key is to cast a wide net—no more “micro-targeting.” Instead of assuming that we know what works for whom and pointing stories directly at audiences, you can create a variety of story platform-driven ideas and show them to everyone. That means that we grow the audience profiles not by micro-targeting but by “micro-listening.”

Step 6: Grow your understanding about the audience through micro-listening.

The original audience profiles were based on a survey and on broad research using tools like Audiense and Facebook Insights. These tools don't tell us everything we want to know about our audiences, though. To learn more, we need to “micro-listen”—which means distributing to everyone but recording audience responses tagged by audience membership so we can go back and build a strong sense of the differences and similarities between the groups.

learn more

Watch the [Videos We Produced](#)

Read the [Video Testing report](#)

It's All Yours

The Story at Scale research team is done now, but Story at Scale is intended to live on as a framework for integrating additional learning. The idea is that activists, organizers, advocates, and artists won't need research consultants to make sense of what they're seeing. These tools establish a common vocabulary for the movement to communicate internally about who they are reaching and what they are saying. You can add to the body of knowledge about what works and what works for which audiences by simply learning from the work you are already doing.

Except the videos, which belong to the partners, everything from Story at Scale is published at storyatscale.org under a Creative Commons license (Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported [CC BY-NC-ND 3.0]) to ensure wide and open access to our process and findings. Several women-of-color-led organizations are taking this work forward into the field. We encourage you all to support and track their work through the Women's Foundation of California and The Culture Change Fund.

Thank you for reading. **Onward toward gender justice!**



**Because nobody's free
to be exactly who they are
unless everybody's free to
be exactly who they are.**

Ebony Ava Harper
Director, National Alliance for Trans Liberation and
Advancement, and a co-creator of the Story Platform
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