Gentrification & Displacement Narrative Change Project

Final Report

prepared for
The California Endowment

Key Participating Community Organizations

Boyle Heights
East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC)
Inner City Struggle

City Heights
Environmental Health Coalition
City Heights Community Development Corporation

Long Beach
Housing Long Beach
Long Beach Residents Empowered (LiBRE)
Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles

Santa Ana
El Centro Cultural de Mexico
Orange County Communities Organized for Responsible Development (OCCORD)
Kennedy Commission
Latino Health Access
Santa Ana BHC
Tierra y Dignidad
Equity for All

South Los Angeles
Trust South L.A.
Los Angeles Community Action Network (LACAN)
Community Development Technologies (CD-Tech)
Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE)
Esperanza Community Housing Corporation
Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles
Physicians for Social Responsibility

and

Alliance for Community Transit L.A. (ACT-LA)

Southeast Asian Community Alliance (SEACA-LA)

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Introduction and
Project Overview

the purpose of the project is to move the needle of popular support for anti-gentification, anti-displacement efforts and solutions

This report is designed to offer lessons from the activities, outcomes, and process of the TCE Gentrification/Displacement Communications Strategy Project in 2017, which builds upon the experience, activities and learnings of the prior year.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

The primary purpose of the project is to help move the needle of popular support for anti-gentrification, anti-displacement efforts and solutions by the participating groups.

The principal goals of this project are to produce a regional meta-narrative about gentrification and displacement that can:
- be used to advance the local work of the BHC sites;
- amount to more than the sum of the parts; and,
- that can be well-served by strategically placed foundation resources.
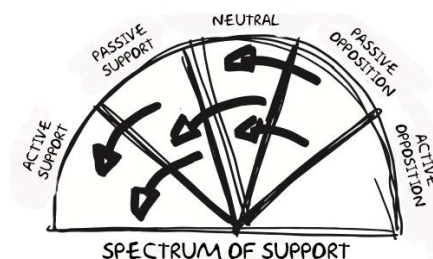
A BRIEF WALK-THROUGH OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

This project involved:

- Staff, (and, at times, members) of 21 community organizations from five neighborhood sites (Boyle Heights, City Heights, Long Beach, Santa Ana, South L.A.) as well as two Los Angeles-based coalition organizations (ACT-LA and SEACA-LA);
- Program staff of The California Endowment (TCE).
- Over a dozen consultant and resource people and organizations.

What follows is a brief walk-through of key project elements and actors, activities, and outcomes and how they flowed together over the project time-line.

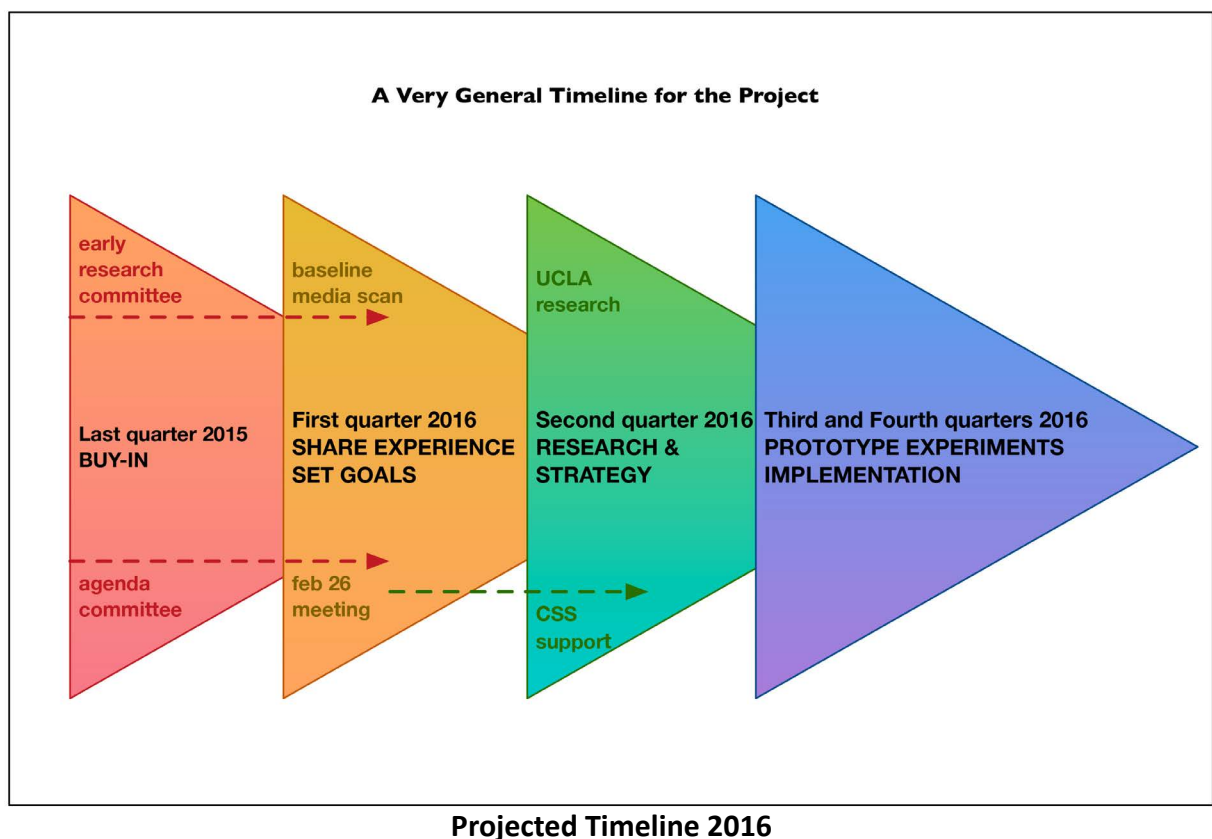### Project Frontloading (4th quarter 2015)

The following key activities preceded the project launch and established key participants and partners:

- **Project "Buy-In" Meeting:** Dr. Pop (Gilda Haas) was engaged to conduct outreach to TCE grantees in Southern California who had a demonstrated interest in gentrification and displacement, survey their communications capacity and experience, and invite them to a meeting to discuss the project's purpose and possibilities with each other and with TCE program staff. In the spirit of co-design, that meeting resulted in some basic principles of engagement and two volunteer committees — one to propose early research needs, and the other to design the agenda for the project's first regional convening.
- **Core Consultants:** As the project ensued, TCE developed consulting contracts with the following core consultants:
  - **Dr. Pop:** Project coordinator and facilitator. (Gilda Haas)
  - **Center for Story Based Strategy:** Narrative capacity building training. (Kiara Nagel)
  - **UCLA Center for Neighborhood Knowledge:** Data mapping, infographics and related research relevant to the needs of project participants. (Paul Ong)
  - **Resources Legacy Fund:** Manage and deploy implementation resources and additional consultants. (Peggy McNutt)
  - **RALLY:** Early research media scan and assist groups with communication strategy during the implementation phase of their various campaigns. (Latia Curry)
  - **Aspiration:** Assist groups to establish systems to manage their communications efficiently to ensure they get the best impact from their online communications. (Allen Gunn)
  - **Leap Associates**: Process evaluation. (Susana Bonis)
  - **Quetzal Flores:** Create and engage cultural convenings with local residents with artists that are embedded in the local participating communities. (ELACC) Artists included:
    - **Tiana Alvarez**, dancer and **Gabriel Gonzalez**, composer (Boyle Heights)
    - **June Kaewsith**, dancer (Long Beach)
    - **Moises Camacho**, muralist (Santa Ana)
    - **Sergio Alargón**, artist (South Los Angeles)
    - Local resident **Vietnamese, Mexican, East African** and **Karen** food artists (City Heights)
    - **Sopharanot Sam**, youth trainer (SEACA-LA/Chinatown)

Project Launch: Share Experience, Set Goals, Baseline Research (1st quarter 2016)
The ad hoc "early research" and "agenda" committees referenced above proposed:

- **Agenda:** This committee recommended that regional convenings take place at local sites so that participants could learn from each other's experience and contexts at the same time that they learn narrative skills and strategies. As a result, the first such meeting was held on February 26, 2016 in Long Beach during which time participants analyzed past opposition and support milestones, learned about the spectrum of popular support/opposition, and described past communications successes and missed opportunities.

- **Early Research:** This committee determined that a first order research need was to create a baseline of how the gentrification and displacement narrative was currently being played out in mainstream and social media. As a result, the RALLY communications firm was engaged to conduct a media scan. Later, volunteers were solicited to serve as an advisory group to the UCLA research team.

A Very General Timeline for the Project

early research committee

baseline media scan

UCLA research

Last quarter 2015 BUY-IN

First quarter 2016 SHARE EXPERIENCE SET GOALS

Second quarter 2016 RESEARCH & STRATEGY

Third and Fourth quarters 2016 PROTOTYPE EXPERIMENTS IMPLEMENTATION

agenda committee

feb 26 meeting

CSS support

Projected Timeline 2016

Baseline Research, Early Narrative Strategy Training, Posters and Documentary (2nd quarter 2016)
Three regional convenings took place for all participants during the second quarter of 2016:

- **Elements of Story and Drama Triangle Workshop:** This session (April 8, 2016) included a walking tour of Santa Ana. Content from the walking tour was then used as text for the narrative training exercises led by Center for Story-Based Strategy (Kiara Nagel). Participants were also apprised of the opportunity to receive mini-grants for producing rapid prototype projects to apply what they were learning into living campaigns.

- **Review of Rally Media Scan and Messaging Workshop:** This session was held at TCE on April 22, 2016 and was devoted to a review of the Rally Communications media scan (Latia Curry) and included some basic training on messaging and campaign planning.

- **Narrative Power Analysis, Framing, and Cornerstones Workshop:** This session, led by the Center for Story-Based Strategy, was held in South L.A. on May 6, 2016, using press from previous South Los Angeles campaigns as text for the workshops.

- **Center for the Study of Political Graphics Exhibition:** In June 2016 the L.A.-based Center for the Study of Political Graphics (Carol Wells), which holds an archive of over 90,000 political posters, was engaged to form a curatorial committee and design an exhibit on the topic of gentrification and displacement to be offered to each of the five site locations along with accompanying public events. The first exhibition and event was held in South L.A. at the Mercado La Paloma in May 2017.

- **KCET City Rising Documentary:** Also in June 2016 KCET (Juan Devis) began workshopping ideas for framing the City Rising documentary on gentrification and displacement in California which was available on the TV station as well as online and ultimately included stories of three of the participating sites (Long Beach, Santa Ana, and Boyle Heights) . Public showings of the documentary were used to engage local residents in dialogue about the issue. For example, when Long Beach groups rented a theater to show the film, 400 people attended the event.

Summer Pilot Communications Experiments (3rd Quarter 2016)
- **Rapid Prototypes:** During the Summer of 2016 participating sites used project mini-grants to create rapid prototype communications experiments to apply and engage with what they had been learning to their current campaigns and/or contexts. A regional meeting for all participants was held at TCE on August 12, 2016 where participants presented their work-in-progress.

- **Resilience Frame:** At the same August session, Dr. Pop (Gilda Haas) led a workshop where participants engaged with a "Resilience Frame" to re-think our gentrification and displacement narratives.

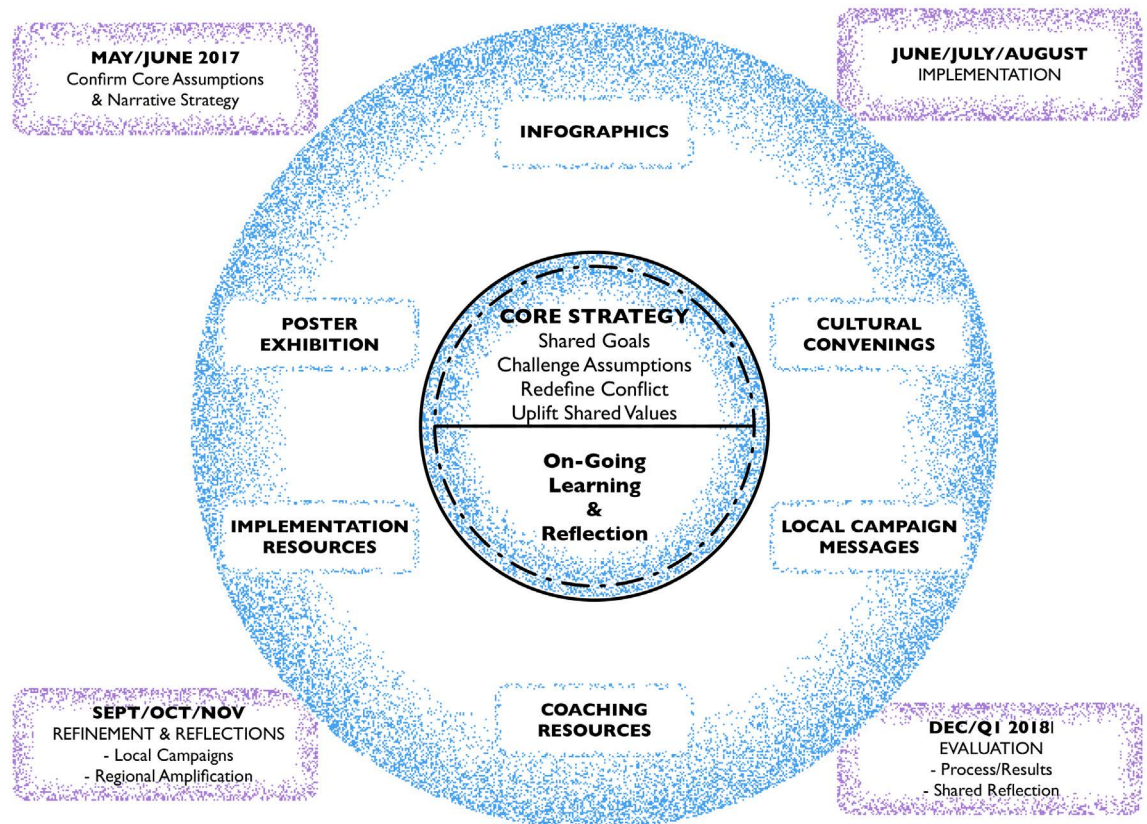**Narrative Training Intensive (4th Quarter 2016)**
- **Two Day Story Lab:** In December 2016, the Center for Story-Based Strategy team led 2 2-Day Story Labs (to accommodate the schedules of all participants) in Little Tokyo in which more advanced narrative training occurred and narrative ideas were workshopped. Over 100 people participated in the 2-day trainings.

Narrative Training Debrief, Poll and Focus Group Design, Cultural Convening Method
(1st quarter 2017)
- **Narrative Training Debrief:** Two regional meetings were held in January and February 2017 with participants (again, to accommodate schedules) to debrief the Story Labs.

- **Poll and Focus Group Design:** FM3 (Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz and Associates) was hired to develop polls and focus groups in the five local site communities on issues related to housing, gentrification, and displacement. A participant committee was established to inform survey design, material developed during the Story Labs were used in the focus groups, and participating organizations were welcome to observe any and all of the focus groups which were held in April and May of 2017.

- **Cultural Convening Method:** A regional convening was held in Los Angeles on March 9, 2017 where culture worker Quetzal Flores introduced the participants to and demonstrated his cultural convening method. For the remainder of the year, Quetzal worked with each of the sites and artists selected by the sites to develop cultural convenings to engage grassroots members around issues of gentrification and displacement. In Boyle Heights, residents worked with dancer Tiana Alvarez and composer Gabriel Gonzalez in multiple sessions, creating dance and motion and songs In public spaces. In Santa Ana, a local mural artist crew worked with the community to activate city-owned lots with murals. In Long Beach, Thai activist/dancer June Kaeswith used movement and traditional visioning methods with residents to manifest what participation in a struggle look like. In South L.A. 400 community members participated in producing Alebrijes with an artist from Oaxaca in several intergenerational community sessions. In City Heights, the four languages and cultures of immigrant residents were bridged through making and sharing food as an expression of culture and home. In Chinatown, SEACA-LA youth workers led youth in a series of poetry workshops that explored power and organizing.

FM3 Polling and Focus Groups, Affirming a Shared Meta-Narrative (2nd quarter 2017)
- **Focus Groups: Participant Observation of Focus Groups:** In April and May of 2017, participants who chose to, were able to observe any and all of the focus groups facilitated by the FM3 consultants.

- **Polling and Focus Group Results:** In a regional convening on May 22, 2017, FM3 presented the results of their polls and focus groups.

- **Reaffirming Shared Meta-Narrative:** At the same May 22 meeting, Center for Story-Based Strategy reviewed the elements of the shared meta-narrative which were reaffirmed by project participants.

MAY/JUNE 2017
Confirm Core Assumptions & Narrative Strategy

JUNE/JULY/AUGUST
IMPLEMENTATION

INFOGRAPHICS

POSTER EXHIBITION

CORE STRATEGY
Shared Goals
Challenge Assumptions
Redefine Conflict
Uplift Shared Values

On-Going Learning & Reflection

CULTURAL CONVENINGS

IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES

LOCAL CAMPAIGN MESSAGES

SEPT/OCT/NOV
REFINEMENT & REFLECTIONS
- Local Campaigns
- Regional Amplification

COACHING RESOURCES

DEC/QI 2018|
EVALUATION
- Process/Results
- Shared Reflection

Projected Timeline 2017

Preparing for Communication Campaigns' Implementation Budget (3rd quarter 2017)
- **Local Site Preparation Meetings**: In June and July of 2017 Dr. Pop and Center for Story-Based Strategy met with participants at each of their sites to prepare for a participatory budgeting process.

- **Participatory Budgeting Process:** At a regional convening of all participants on August 23, 2017, the results of the local site preparation meetings were shared, budget priorities were developed, and the results were that each site would receive a fund allocation for producing short videos, an allocation for research and development, and a larger amount to work with a communications firm on their local campaigns.

Implementation of Campaign Strategies (4th quarter 2017 and 1st quarter 2018)
- **Local Implementation Proposal Process:** In September and October of 2017, Resources Legacy Fund managed a proposal process for the implementation funds and sites began to assemble implementation teams.

- **Implementation of Local Narrative Strategies** continued into the first quarter of 2018.

Reflections on the
Historical Moment

Since the inception of this project, there have been some significant shifts in its general context, briefly summarized below:

Expanded Media Coverage of Gentrification and Displacement

About six months into the project, RALLY presented the results of a media scan about gentrification and related topics to project participants. A key take-away from the presentation was:

> *Throughout the coverage on gentrification there is no connecting narrative. Stories cover an event or a community or a person's experience, but they don't tie it back to what's going on more generally in the region — they don't reflect the breadth of the problem. This diminishes the power of the issue.*

Six months later, media coverage of the topic seemed to explode; and the connections — for example, between displacement and homelessness and high rent — became sharper. The recent decision by the L.A. Times editorial board to run a six-part, deeply intersectional series on homelessness is one example; the fact that "gentrification" may be front page news; and that on any given week there is diverse media coverage on the topic as illustrated on the following pages.

Emerging Statewide and Local Ballot Initiatives and Campaigns

A growing renters' rights movement throughout Southern California and the state, of which many of the project participants are active players and leaders, has resulted in diverse ballot initiatives and campaigns related to land use and housing including rent control initiatives (Inglewood and Long Beach); an initiative to repeal the statewide Costa-Hawkins bill which constrains local rent control; and various efforts to tie new development to affordable housing (linkage fees, inclusionary housing).

The FM3 polls and focus groups that were produced in conjunction with this project were likely influenced by these efforts at the same time that they served as inspiration and influence to them, most notably in Long Beach.

L.A. Times editorial
series & front page

EDITORIAL

LOS ANGELES' HOMELESSNESS CRISIS IS A NATIONAL DISGRACE

GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

STREET MERCHANTS are a common sight around MacArthur Park in L.A.'s Westlake district. Outsiders still see the area as a crime- and drug-ridden dystopia; on the ground, the reality is different.

MacArthur Park feels gentrification's touch

on any given day...

source: Google News

Can the LA River Avoid 'Green Gentrification'?
CityLab · Feb 20, 2018

Transit-oriented development? More like transit rider displacement
Los Angeles Times · Feb 20, 2018

Los Angeles' homelessness crisis is a national disgrace
Los Angeles Times · 3h ago

Los Angeles Brings Back Its River: Will It Do So with Current Residents in Mind?
Nonprofit Quarterly · Feb 22, 2018

Frightened by boutique grocery stores and $5 coffee
Los Angeles Times · Feb 20, 2018

Harvard Economists: Yelp Data Can Help Predict Gentrification
Yelp Blog (blog) · Feb 20, 2018

Why 37 Major Progressive Groups from LA Oppose State-Level Pro-Gentrification Bill
City Watch · Feb 21, 2018

Mark Bradford on making art in post-shock phase of the Trump era and how comics channel this moment
Los Angeles Times · Feb 19, 2018

To ease gentrification pain, some Latinos embrace gentefication to preserve culture
Dallas News · Feb 5, 2018

Clea Wurster: Proposed housing bill should include language to prevent gentrification
Daily Bruin · Feb 14, 2018

Growth of Opposition Forces

While this project has helped prepare participants to more effectively intervene in strategies to shift the public debate, it is important to note that at the same time, traditional opposition forces are increasingly and effectively selling the solution that we can build our way out of the crisis though deregulation. NIMBYs have shifted to YIMBYs. The language of frontline communities is unabashedly coopted by real estate interests, as in the postcard below.
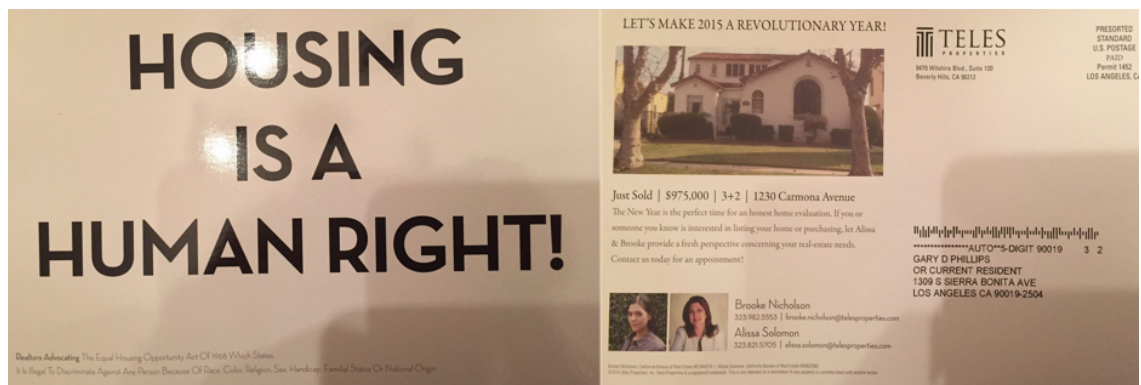
A Shift in the Nature of Narrative Itself

At the same time that this project began, a real estate reality star tweeted his way to the presidency; and "fake news" and "alt facts" have entered the national lexicon; all creating new complexity to the project of narrative and messaging.

As a result of all of the above, the Southern California region is simply not the same as when we began this project, which has made a significant contribution to the level of capacity, sophistication, partnership, analysis and creativity of its participants, all of whom are now better prepared to take on the challenges of this new moment.

Strategy &
Approach

To accomplish the above project purpose and goals the strategies and stance employed by Dr. Pop and CSS involved four basic building blocks:

1. Scaffolded Capacity-Building

The objective here is to give participants tools and practice in narrative strategy so that they can better build their own narratives, share ideas across sites towards building a common narrative, and become more discerning of what they want from communications consultants and staff.

This was accomplished by scaffolding shared learning and experimentation in a manner that prepared participants for developing and designing their own campaigns that would later be supported by selected communications consultants.

On the one hand, all groups were provided with basic tools for building narratives and were given opportunities to practice their skills in the risk-free context of a workshop — most intensively in the 2-day Story Lab at the end of 2016, as well as through a summer of rapid prototyping experiments in service to their campaigns.

On the other hand, different sites responded more or less enthusiastically to how particular resources could meet capacity-building needs. This is, in part, due to the varied needs and uses for building "capacity" among the groups and how particular resources could help solve more than one problem facing the organization in question.

There is, of course, more than one way that capacity-building in general may be conceived, depending on intention, purpose, and need, as described on the following pages.

CAPACITY TO LEAD AND ENGAGE IN NARRATIVE STRATEGY WORK

Much of the capacity building was focused on developing participants' capacity to engage in meaningful narrative change work. We introduced tools and frameworks and offered opportunities to:

Analyze dominant narratives
Generate new creative narratives to communicate story and move key audiences
Create rapid prototypes as well as longer projects
Learn from different experiences across the region

CAPACITY TO WORK EFFICIENTLY WITH COMMUNICATIONS FIRMS AND CONSULTANTS IN ORDER TO PRODUCE USEFUL COMMUNICATIONS PRODUCTS

The road to building this capacity was a bit bumpy, but ultimately yielded benefit. The difficulty was that each consultant required their own meetings with the sites and time to build relationships; consultants entered the project arena at different times which made it difficult to coordinate and consolidate; and even firms that groups had engaged with earlier in the process, might send new staff later. Another difficulty in some cases was difference between community groups and their professional consultants regarding what actually constitutes a useful communication product.

At the end of the day, however, all groups now have a much higher level understanding about what an array of communications firms and consultants do; how they are differ from each other; and which are more conducive to the needs and cultures of their organizations.

One really insightful intervention by the Santa Ana cohort was to invite all of the relevant consultants into a room with them to discuss roles and functions early in the implementation consulting phase. This was as beneficial to the consultants as to the site members, since most of them had never met each other.

CAPACITY TO UPLIFT AND SUPPORT EXISTING CULTURAL STRENGTHS OF COMMUNITIES IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS AND UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF GENTRIFICATION, DISPLACEMENT, AND THE POLITICS OF STAYING

Quetzal Flores' process of cultural convenings was introduced to the project in 2017. This method engages base communities of participating groups with activist artists who are able to transcend typical barriers of literacy, language, and formal education with other often more effective and visceral ways to communicate, share, and collaborate.

This offering was particularly important to groups for whom, at this moment, feel a great need to offer that kind of capacity to their grassroots members.

For example, in the case of City Heights where their diverse immigrant constituents (for whom displacement is not a new experience) represent many languages and cultures including Karen, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Somalian.

In order to build the capacity of this diverse base to push back against the forces of gentrification and displacement, we must first establish bonds of trust, understanding, and mutual aid. While language can be bridged with interpreters, consistent communication across many languages is costly, time-intensive, and, often, awkward. For City Heights the sharing of food became a bridge across divides — as an expression of culture and home that can be easily shared with pride and intelligence by its skilled makers and appreciated and understood by those who receive it.

In this project, the grassroots cooks were the artists, bridges of trust emerged across the cultures, and a message evolved that the exquisite diversity of City Heights is here to stay.

CAPACITY TO DEVELOP THE NARRATIVE SKILLS, PRACTICE, AND SYSTEMS SO THAT STAFF, PARTNERS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS CAN PRODUCE CONSISTENT AND PERSISTENT MESSAGES OVER THE LONG TERM

Most groups acknowledged the need to take what they were learning and re-teach it and engage in creative practice with members, activists, and other staff. However, more often than not, they found it difficult to parse out the time and energy to do so across competing campaign and organizational demands.

Several, however, reached out to CSS to do just that — to replicate some version of training that they had experienced in the regional setting for their larger constituency and in the context of their immediate work. These included City Heights, SEACA-LA, ACT-LA, and Santa Ana.

With respect to building capacity for consistent and persistent messaging, there are, of course, limits to this approach. A primary reason is that for most groups, the lack of dedicated communications staff (whether shared, embedded, or proprietary to the organization) limited their ability to absorb the benefit of the rich resources made available through the project into their organization for long-term impact.

CAPACITY TO LOCATE AND USE TRUSTED COMMUNICATION PARTNERS WHO CAN BE EMBEDDED IN CAMPAIGNS FOR THE LONG-TERM

The kind of relationship of mutual trust, respect, and collaboration that some groups formed with CSS, to a limited extent, served to embed CSS staff into the everyday strategic narrative and communications work of their organizations.

Some groups have similar relationships of trust and ease of working together with local communications consultants such as Team Friday (ACT-LA and SEACA). Others have ongoing, longer-term relationships with other kinds of technical resource people which are highly valued and appreciated.

For example, a few groups referred to the kind of relationship they have with Public Counsel, a mission-driven legal organization which engages in their campaigns, alliances, and coalitions as much and in a similar fashion as the other member groups. As a result, most of the community allies of Public Counsel do not feel the pressure to hire or retain their own lawyer to advance their work.

To our knowledge, however, there isn't a communications version of Public Counsel in Southern California.

2. Shared Learning and Experience

One of the challenges of this project is the dispersed nature of its participants in terms of municipal jurisdictions, legislative ecosystems, and experience.

This challenge, however, became a strength in a shared learning environment where diverse perspectives are appreciated and the struggles and achievements of peers are mutually motivating and affirming.

Participants found it helpful to visit each other's neighborhoods and contexts, to hear about each other's struggles, and to reflect on their differences and similarities.

In order to maximize the time we had together, as facilitators, we used the content of the hosting site as the text for whatever piece of narrative training we were doing at the time. An aspiration of this approach is for the diverse voices and considerations from visiting communities to add value to the efforts of the hosting organizations.

This approach allowed the groups to benefit from each other's learning and experience and seeded the groundwork for future exchanges.

We also built on the trust and relationships that evolved through the process to pilot a bottom-up participatory budgeting process for the implementation funds. Each local site defined their implementation goals and budget priorities and then we brought the region together to review, group, and prioritize how funds would be allocated. This was brought back to TCE and RLF for refinement and groups were also given flexibility to identify their own vendors, designers, or cultural workers to collaborate on their implementation communications projects.

Groups left the project more interested in regional collaboration then when they came in.

3. A Translocal Approach

The problem of gentrification and displacement is systemic with deep roots in social beliefs (the challenge for narrative) and institutionalized structures (the problem for campaigns).

Sophisticated in these problematics, participating groups and their members work in translocal territories which are deeply of the neighborhoods, yet connecting across region and state and nation (and, in some cases, nations). They are deeply reflective of ethnic culture, while at the same time building bridges between and across traditional borders. They are deeply immersed in how economic class and racial politics play out in the prospects and problems of people and their communities. At the same time, project participants are cognizant of the deep structural roots beneath the systems that uphold them.

To address this reality and build a meaningful shared project, our process moved between cultivating regional connections and sharing, aligning and advancing implementation through local sites in the service of the following questions:

What are the primary goals of a shared narrative across the REGION?	What are our goals on the LOCAL level?
1. Advance our principles and advance our work 2. Secure our future in the region. 3. Build, strengthen, and expand our base. 4. Gain more support from others. 5. Connect the Southern California work to be stronger together.	1. Supporting policies that promote housing, affordability, stability, or protections. 2. Supporting policies that promote land use or community-oriented business development. 3. Developing framing or messaging strategies.

The process included a series of experiments and iterations, moving from local to regional and then back again. For example:

• Regional meetings often provided frameworks and practice for designing narratives. These were followed by local sessions where sites worked to advance their plans. In addition, local experiments seeded larger strategies that were later advanced with the help of consultants.

• The process for developing the implementation budget started with local meetings at the sites and then built from there into a collective discussion to create regional priorities.

• The project "meta-narrative" was constructed as a process that moved through the Story Lab, the development of Frames, and considered the results derived from the FM3 surveys. The resulting meta-narrative consisted of regionally developed guidelines that could serve as criteria for designing local messages.

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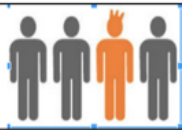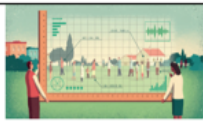
4. A Shared Meta-Narrative

One of TCE's key goals for this project was to produce a shared meta-narrative on the issue of gentrification and displacement.

Building from the developmental trajectory of the two-year process and considering the diverse starting points and contexts of the participating organizations, their constituents, and target audiences, our approach to meta-narrative veered away from producing one overarching regional message. Using the process described above, it instead produced the framework, illustrated below, to guide the practice of message development.

Groups across the region were able to build agreement around the most damaging opposition or dominant assumptions they wanted to challenge, the way they wanted to redefine the conflict and the solutions and values they wanted to uplift. This served as a template to refine communications plans and specific messages in support of local campaigns as well as strategies to help achieve specific goals.

In this way, participants built a medley of voices and approaches to anti-displacement and gentrification which, at their root, are aligned across their diversity.

meta-narrative

CHALLENGE	REDEFINE	UPLIFT
What are opposition assumptions we must challenge?	How does a new narrative redefine the conflict?	What are our assumptions or values we want to uplift in our narrative?
Individualism / Inevitability	Redefine the conflict: Build power Who is affected? What is possible?	Highlight Solutions and Community Values
"It's unfortunate to see people getting displaced and stuff, but there's really nothing I can do about it." "Homelessness is a problem but we just need more housing."	There is a solution. There are many alternatives. This isn't a small thing, it is happening to everyone, everywhere. We are all affected, but some are more than others.	We can offer real solutions, rooted in community values, and bold, new ideas informed by history and experience. Communities together and in place, matter. Our development decisions can support that.
Gentrification is inevitable, there is really nothing I can do about it. Gentrification makes our city safer, cleaner, nicer, better.	Connect growing concern on rising costs of rent and housing and increased homelessness to the decisions that creates the problem and real solutions and alternatives.	The power of this region comes from keeping residents, renters, culture, community connected and rooted.

Appreciative Inquiry
from the Participants

The collaborating team of Dr. Pop and CSS adopted a stance of appreciative inquiry in order to derive key lessons for The California Endowment from this project.

Adapting the basic framework of "SOAR" (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results), in January and February of 2018 we conducted face-to-face reflective interviews with representatives from each site as well as the two additional programs (ACT-LA and SEACA-LA).   Susana Bonis of the LEAP process evaluation team also participated in the sessions. As this report has been prepared while implementation of narrative strategies are still ongoing, we expect additional insights to be offered in LEAP's report.

What follows here are highlights from our conversations.

STRENGTHS of the project included:

- Relationships and sharing with other organizations
- Story Labs
- FM3 Poll and Focus Groups
- Rally Media Scan
- Cultural Convenings

OPPORTUNITIES include those taken and those missed:

Opportunities taken included:
- The results of the FM3 polls and disruptive examples from the Story Labs pushed people out of their "bubbles," comfort zones, and habits to better address key audiences.
- The process, although challenging, really drove participants to improve their capacity.

Opportunities missed included:
- Timelines, particularly the implementation timeline, were too short to fully plan and move communications campaigns.
- More consistent participation of the same organizational staff could have better leveraged the investment.
- When we were together across the region, we could have taken an action or put out a tweet in the service of a campaign and/or the region.
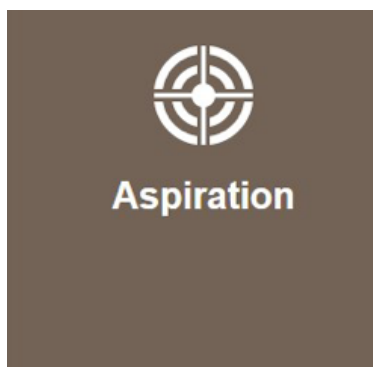
ASPIRATIONS from the sites for the future include:

- Develop sustainable support (through alternative strategies) for communications staff.
- Develop more grassroots leadership in communications.
- More cross-site learning and collaboration
- Establish a central repository to store and share messaging products, images, and other material to be used and adapted by others.
- Hope that the tools offered through the project will be applied to future campaign work.
- Would like for the art and cultural community to be more involved and engaged with our messaging.

RESULTS were identified as follows:

- Regional alignment around a shared meta-narrative strategy
- A communications plan for each local site
- Understanding what it takes to manage technical assistance providers/consultants
- Media buys, press coverage, social media engagement
- Each site produced visual story-telling videos and developed new aesthetics and new materials such as brochures, door-hangers, etc.
- Anti-gentrification language is now being adopted into policy and by the mainstream press (i.e. Santa Ana Land Trust or People's Plan)
- Neighborhood locations were activated as messages in themselves. These include, for example, vacant site popups and murals in Santa Ana; TOD tours by ACT-LA in South L.A. and Boyle Heights; Art-of-Displacement tour in Long Beach; a gentrification altar in Chinatown
- Deeper community engagement and connection to anti-gentrification work across the region through multiple mediums. Deeper resident engagement. New partners.
- Poster exhibits and KCET City Rising screenings
- Renters Day of Action occurred across multiple sites.
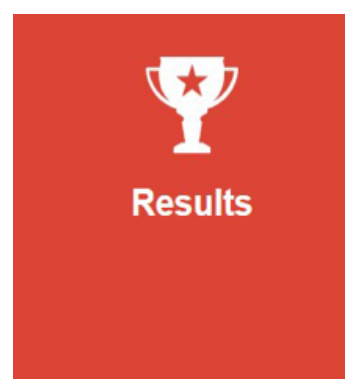
Gallery of
Narratives-in-Action
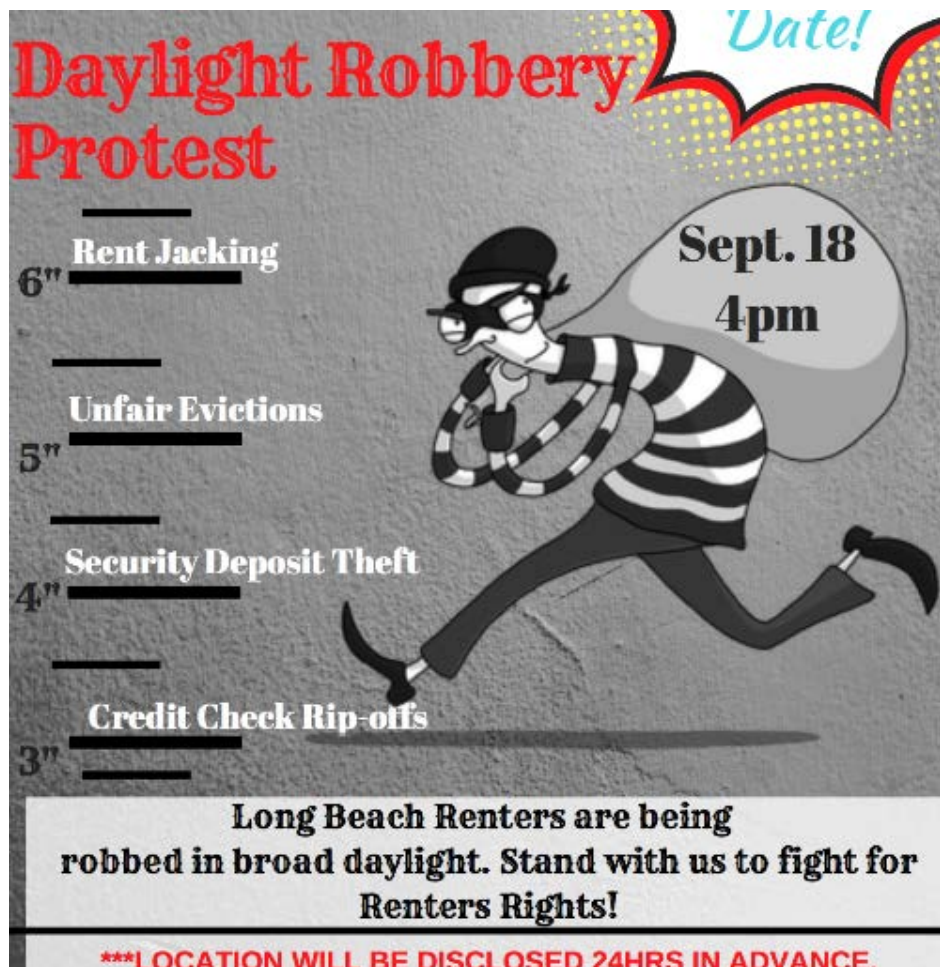
Long Beach Renters Day of Action

Santa Ana Renters Week of Action

**ACT-LA TOD Tour
&
Spokesperson Training**
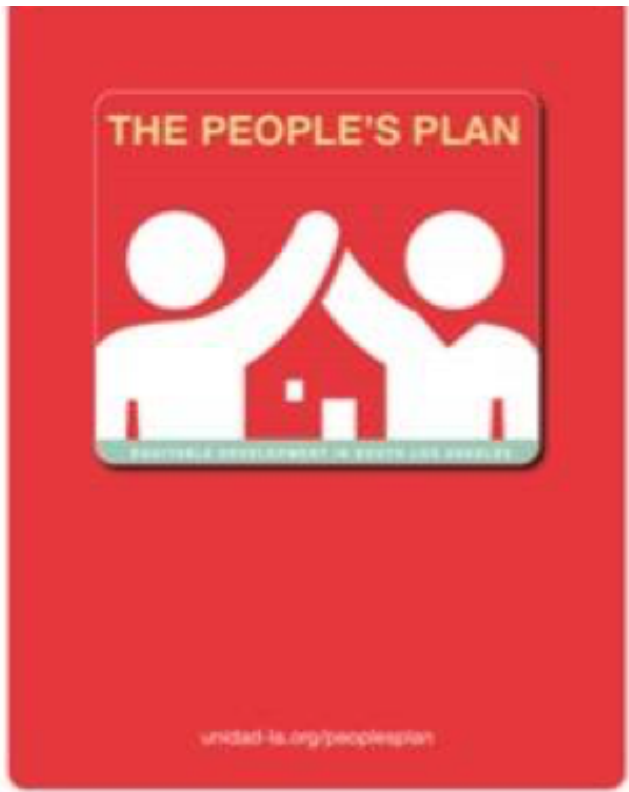
South L.A.
People's Plan Launch

South L.A. Cultural Convening

CITY RISING

January 18, 2018

Advocates Hope To Energize Affordable Housing Conversation With Free Screening of KCET's "City Rising"

by Jason Ruiz   in News

A History of Housing Practices in Long Beach

KCET's "City Rising" examines the housing crisis and possible solutions to slow the gentrification and displacement that has come to so many California communities recently.

Long Beach Shifting Narrative in the Press

Another Community Group Enters The City's Housing Arena

As Developers Move In, the Fight to Keep Long Beach Affordable Continues for Community Groups

Long Beach tenants relocating amid rising rents

Some seniors at bed bug-infested complex in downtown out

South L.A. Constellations Project

City Heights Video featuring resident stories

Don't sell our public land!
"Let the COMMUNITY DECIDE"
**how to use public land
for community benefit!**

How can the City of Santa Ana do this?

1. Place land into a Community Land Trust, where residents can decide how to use it.

2. Create an Ordinance that regulates sales of public land, guarantee community benefits.

3. Hold forums around each parcel, residents can give direction for development.

4. Set aside funds from the sale of land for public benefit.

MOST IMPORTANTLY: GUARANTEE LOCAL RESIDENTS PARTICIPATE IN DECISIONS AROUND PUBLIC LAND

Community
Lands
in
Community
Hands

Who benefits from the sale
of public land in Santa Ana?

Santa Ana Community Lands Campaign

Boyle Heights Eastside LEADS

Lessons
for the Future

**frontload
knowledge,
practice,
and
relationships**

SUGGESTED DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Based on the experience of the past two years, we have many ideas about how future, similar projects might be designed to produce even better results.

Rather than simply listing all of those ideas in brainstorm fashion, what follows are some key underlying principles and a few examples of how they might be operationalized. They are intended to serve a helpful guide to the lessons we derived from facilitating the process.

Frontload Knowledge, Practice, and Relationships

One of the project's greatest strengths was a steadily augmented stream of high-quality consultants and resources. This was also its greatest weakness in terms of deployment. Some key consultants didn't really know each other, had difficulty building on each other's work, entered the process at different times, and, as a result, inadvertently produced siloed relationships with participating groups.

In hindsight, the project may have benefited from a deep and intensive introduction to key players, their complementary offerings, and opportunities to practice new skills in a safe, experimental space.

One way to accomplish those ends could be to launch new projects with a week-long workshop retreat (co-designed several months in advance of the launch) that would bring together participating consultants, artists, staff, and organizations; include the media scan, story-based strategy training, and techniques for managing and deploying social media; in a manner that would allow the assembled to more effectively plan together, with a clear understanding that they would all be supported for a two-year timeline.

Create a Cadre of Grassroots Communications Innovators

At the end of 2016 over 100 people across Southern California participated in a two-day Story Lab. With the whole region sharing the experience, this was a turning point for the project, and the resulting cadre of grassroots communicators are still drawing from that creative narrative change boot camp.

The project participants are now beginning to look to each other as a resource, have increased collaboration across sites, and have an interest in more deliberately taking action as a region. Yet most of them still do not have dedicated communications staff, and really have to extend the energy of the staff they have in order to meet the true potential of their campaigns.

There are many different ways to continue to seed communications capacity within these organizations and within the region as a whole. Embedding communications staff within organizations is one way. Creating a fellowship model that mentors grassroots communications innovators is another. Creating a regional communications support center is yet another. We have already seen how learning and acting together can build a stronger communications practice across the region. It should not be too difficult to support and encourage ways for that to continue.

create a cadre of grassroots communications innovators

**invest in
local talent**

**support useful
redundancies**

Invest in Local Talent

One of the great benefits of this project has been participants' exposure to and consultation by professional communications firms. In addition to direct support to the tasks at hand, the experience has also elevated people's ability to discern what firms are best for what task, if resources are available in the future.

As a project we were also exposed to the genius of local home-grown artist/activists, media strategists, and others who are of the community, understand the issues, and often require less time to build relationships and collaboration (because they may already be involved). Future projects may consider placing a greater weight on investing in these individuals, in youth media activists, and in the talent that will still be present after the project has come to a close.

Support Useful Redundancies

Redundancies are generally dismissed as wasteful and unnecessary, but in reality, particularly in learning environments, redundancies can be very useful. For example, it is useful to hear and practice tools and techniques of Story-Based Strategy several times to scaffold benefit. As discussed earlier, it is not useful for busy organizations to be required to meet the separate needs of many consultants on short time-frames. Also, with more space, time, and foresight, some redundancies may evolve into collaborations that leverage resources and opportunities. For example, when the participatory budgeting process revealed that every site wanted to make short form videos, some began to ask "what if we made one that connected across the region?" or "what if we shared videographers across sites?".

Create a Flexible Menu of Resources (That Participants Can Choose for Themselves)

This project involved a lot of discovery and flexibility which required balancing the manner in which resources can be commanded from the Foundation as an institution, anticipating what kind of resource people could best serve the endeavor, and what those deliverables might look like in service to the organizations and project goals. It is thus not surprising that sometimes there was a mismatch between consultant deliverables and the needs of living breathing community campaigns or between what is the most useful platform for propogating ideas to a particular audience.

While the opportunities presented by a film showing, a communications consultant, research consultant, social media consultant, process consultant, narrative consultant, poster exhibit, cultural convenor (and more) are rarely available to grassroots organizations, the implicit assumption that everyone would take advantage of all opportunities was taxing for some groups. As one insightful TCE staff person put it, "sometimes we love our grantees too much."

Future projects might benefit from an explicit assumption, backed by a planning strategy, that allows for deeper investments in some areas and organizations based on needs, preferences, and priorities. When this actually did occur at some level in the project it was very much appreciated by participants.

Continue Participatory Budgeting

One of the best moments of project co-design occurred in 2017 through a version of participatory budgeting for allocation of implementation funds for local communications campaigns. The process involved a round of local conversations with the sites regarding their campaign focus, needs and priorities which was followed by a regional meeting where patterns were identified and a discussion ensued about how to cluster, group and allocate resources.

create a flexible menu of resources

continue participatory budgeting

co-design

sustainable

resources that

remain after

the project

is over

This kind of process holds a promise of building more power and accountability among participants in the region as they are more willing to collaborate, support others, and use resources well when they have had a hand in designing them. While seeds of that conversation began in the regional meeting, groups lost momentum to collaborate on a larger scale as the timeline for grant-making and implementation required their immediate attention.

With hindsight providing 20/20 vision, future projects might benefit by starting the participatory budgeting process sooner, perhaps as part of a follow-up to the frontloading process suggested earlier.

Co-Design Sustainable Resources That Remain After the Project is Over

The Aspiration section of the Appreciative Inquiry chapter of this report offers a sense of unfinished business, desires, and future possibilities. It is towards this conversation — towards a longer-term strategy to design sustainable resources that will outlive the project —that perhaps The California Endowment's offer to continue supporting peer exchanges and convenings can be best be taken.

And again, in retrospect, if future projects begin with this intention, it is possible that the road we build while walking will be able to support many more ideas, formations, and projects along the way.