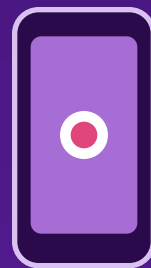


RESIST. REVOLT.

A FIELD GUIDE FOR ORGANIZING CAMPAIGNS

Story Capture

They own the networks and the newsrooms. We own the truth of our own lives. Find it, capture it, and put money behind it.



Find · Capture · Consent · Lift · Measure · Field tools included

01 Why Stories Win

Every campaign is a fight over whose reality gets believed. The boss, the landlord, and the politician they bankroll speak through press offices, ad agencies, and cable news. Working people speak through each other.

Story capture is the organized, deliberate collection of first-person testimony from the people a campaign is fighting for — on video, audio, photo, or text — so those stories can be lifted to the audiences and decision-makers who need to hear them. **User-generated storytelling** widens the net: members record and submit their own stories from their own phones.

Why it has become central to the field

- **Trust has shifted.** People believe a neighbor, a coworker, or a nurse speaking plainly into a phone far more than a polished ad or a politician. Raw, real testimony is now the most persuasive format online.
- **Stories make statistics human.** “Rents rose 30 percent” is abstract. A mother explaining which bill she skipped to make rent is undeniable.
- **Phones made everyone a producer.** Nearly every member carries a camera, a microphone, and a distribution network in their pocket.
- **Paid digital lets us choose the audience.** A single strong story can be put in front of exactly the voters, legislators’ districts, or workers who need to see it.

Read through a class lens

Exploitation depends on isolation. When each worker or tenant believes their hardship is a private failure, the system is safe. A story shared is the first step from *I* to *we*: it reveals the common condition, names the common enemy, and invites others to act. Story capture is not marketing. It is consciousness-raising at scale.

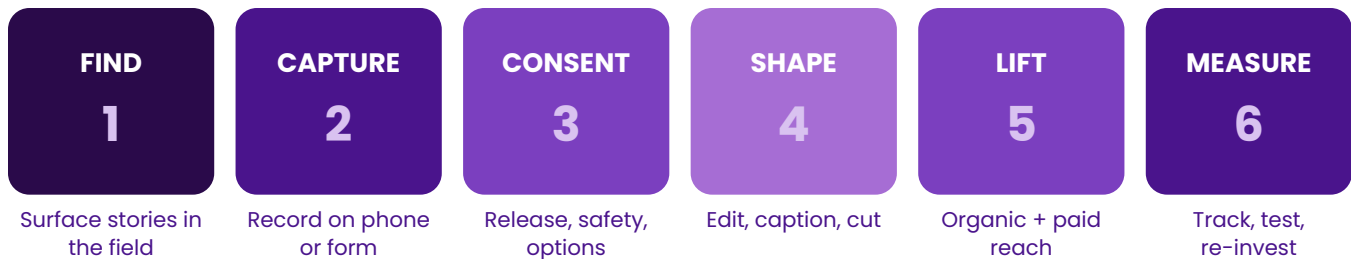
Self. Us. Now.

THE PUBLIC NARRATIVE FRAMEWORK (MARSHALL GANZ)

The strongest campaign stories move from a story of self (what happened to me), to a story of us (this is happening to all of us), to a story of now (here is what we must do, today).

02 Plan Before You Press Record

A story without a strategy is just content. Decide what the stories are for before anyone goes into the field.



THEN RETURN TO THE STORYTELLER: EVERY STORY IS A LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Answer these five questions first

- **What is the demand?** Stories should point to a concrete win: pass the ordinance, recognize the union, stop the eviction.
- **Who must be moved?** The target (a decision-maker) and the audiences that pressure them: swing voters, a district, a public that hasn't picked a side, or unorganized workers. Use your power map.
- **What stories do they need to hear?** Make a **story wish list**: the experiences, places, and kinds of messengers (a veteran, a small landlord, a pastor, a night-shift worker) that will land with each audience.
- **What will you ask people to do after watching?** Sign, call, show up, join, vote. Every story ends in an ask.
- **Who does what?** Name a story lead, field collectors, an editor, a consent and data steward, and a digital lead with a budget.

Build a story bank

Keep every story in one secure tracker: storyteller, contact, date, location, issue, audience fit, consent level, file links, where it has run, and results. A story bank turns one-off testimony into a durable movement asset, and lets you find the right voice fast when the moment hits.

03 Finding Stories in the Field

The best stories are not discovered by a communications staffer. They surface where organizing already happens: at the door, on the shop floor, in the tenant meeting. Train every organizer to listen for them.

At the door and on the phone

- Add one story question to every canvass and phone-bank script.
- Tag strong answers in your data system as “story lead” for follow-up within 48 hours.
- Carry a phone to record on the spot when someone is ready.

Worksite and community meetings

- Open meetings with a short go-around: “What brought you here?”
- Set up a quiet story booth at rallies, potlucks, and clinics.
- Ask trusted leaders to bring in coworkers and neighbors.

Text and digital intake

- Promote a text keyword so people can reply with their story or a voice memo.
- Use a short web form with an upload field for video and photos.
- Post a prompt on social media and ask followers to record and send.

Voicemail and hotlines

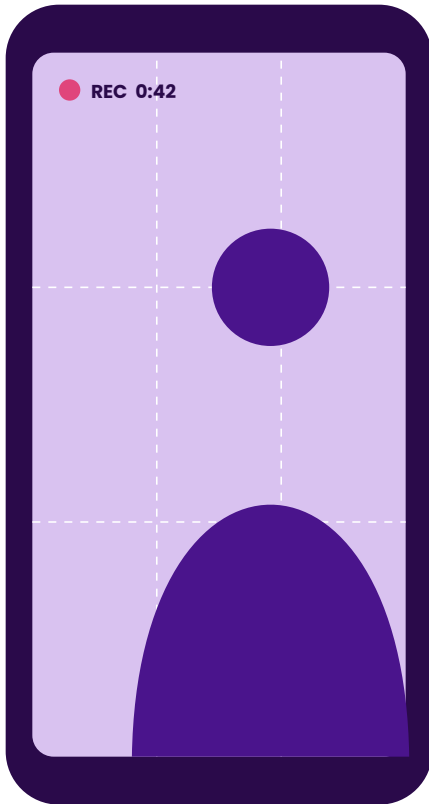
- Set up a dedicated story line people can call any hour, especially shift workers.
- Transcribe messages and follow up with the strongest.
- Partner with legal clinics and mutual-aid groups who hear stories daily.

Listening for a good story

A strong campaign story is **specific** (a name, a date, a dollar amount), **personal** (it happened to the teller), **emotional** (fear, anger, hope, pride), and **connected** to the demand. It does not need to be dramatic. Ordinary hardship, told plainly, is often the most powerful.

Screening questions: “How has this affected you or your family?” · “What did you have to give up?” · “Would you be willing to share that on camera, or another way?”

04 Capturing on a Phone



Vertical 9:16. Eyes on the top third line.
Subject slightly off-center, looking at the interviewer.

The setup checklist

- **Sound first.** Bad audio kills more stories than bad video. Find a quiet room, get close, and use a clip-on mic if you have one.
- **Light the face.** Face a window or soft light. Never put a bright window behind the speaker.
- **Shoot vertical** for social and stories; grab a horizontal take too if the story may go to TV, streaming, or a website.
- **Hold steady.** Use a small tripod or brace on a table. Lens at eye level. Clean the lens.
- **Phone on airplane mode** so calls and alerts don't interrupt.
- **Grab b-roll:** hands at work, the leaking ceiling, the paycheck, the empty fridge, the walk to the bus. Ten seconds each.
- **Keep it short.** Record 5 to 15 minutes of conversation; you will cut to 15, 30, and 60 seconds.

Interview questions that open people up

Ask open questions, then stay quiet. Have them answer in full sentences (“My name is...”, not just “yes”), because your question will be cut out.

- Tell me your name, where you live or work, and how long.
- What was life like before this happened?
- Walk me through the moment it changed. What did you see, hear, feel?
- What has this cost you and your family?
- Who do you blame, and who has the power to fix it?
- Why did you decide to speak up? What would you say to others going through it?
- What do you want the decision-maker to do? (Get a clear, direct ask on camera.)

05 Consent, Safety & Dignity

A storyteller is a comrade, not raw material. The people with the most powerful stories are often the most exposed to retaliation. Protecting them is not a formality; it is the work.

Informed consent, every time

- Explain in plain language **exactly where** the story may appear: social media, paid ads, TV, press, legislative testimony.
- Use a **written or recorded release** that names your organization, the uses, how long you may use it, and how to withdraw. Have a lawyer review your template.
- Offer it in the storyteller's first language, and never rush a signature.
- Honor **withdrawal**: if someone asks you to pull a story, pull it from future use promptly.

Weigh the risk with them

Talk through what could happen if their boss, landlord, family, or immigration authorities see it. Workers, tenants, survivors, and undocumented people may face real consequences. Offer protective options:

First name only
or a chosen name

Voice only
no face on camera

Hands & b-roll
face never shown

Actor or text read
words, not identity

Delay release
until after a vote or
drive

Integrity and security

- **Never script or fabricate.** Coach for clarity, but the words must be theirs. A single fake or exaggerated story hands our enemies a weapon.
- **Edit honestly.** Don't cut in a way that changes meaning. Show the storyteller the final cut when you can.
- **Compensate fairly** for time and travel if you can; it should never be a payment for saying something specific.
- **Secure the files.** Store raw footage and releases in access-limited storage, not on personal phones.

06 Lifting Stories with Paid Reach

Organic sharing builds community. Paid placement builds power: it puts the right story in front of the right people at the moment the decision is being made. The other side buys reach every day. So should we.

Organic first

Share through members' own accounts, group chats, and the storyteller's networks. Watch what people respond to; the winners earn the ad budget.

Paid social

Ads on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube can target a district, ZIP codes, or a list you upload. Political and issue ads usually require advertiser verification and a "paid for by" disclaimer. Some platforms ban political ads entirely, so check each platform's current rules first.

Streaming, CTV & audio

Run the horizontal cut on streaming TV and the audio on podcasts and streaming radio to reach people off social media.

Text & relational outreach

Send the story by peer-to-peer text to supporters, with an action link. Ask volunteers to forward it to five people they know. Follow consent and texting laws.

Earned media & the target

Pitch storytellers to reporters, bring them to hearings, and deliver a compilation directly to the decision-maker.

Making paid stories perform

- **Hook in 3 seconds.** Open on the most striking line, not the introduction.
- **Caption everything.** Most people watch with the sound off.
- **Cut multiple lengths** (about 6, 15, 30, and 60 seconds) and let performance decide.
- **Test stories against each other.** Run several storytellers to the same audience with a small budget, then shift money to what moves people.
- **One clear ask** on screen and in the post: sign, call, show up, join.
- **Retarget** people who watched most of a story with a stronger ask, moving them up the ladder of engagement.
- **Know the law.** Election-related ads carry disclosure and reporting rules. Talk to counsel about your organization's status.

07 Measure, Learn, Build Power

Views are not victories. Measure what moves people toward collective action, and remember the most important outcome is never on a dashboard: a storyteller who becomes an organizer.

What to track



Close the loop

- **Report back to storytellers.** Tell them how many people saw their story and what it helped win. Dignity includes knowing your voice mattered.
- **Invite them in deeper.** Ask storytellers to testify, speak at a rally, train others to collect stories, or join the organizing committee.
- **Turn viewers into members.** Every ad and post should drive into a sign-up, and every sign-up should get a call from a human organizer.
- **Debrief after every push.** Which stories, cuts, and audiences worked? Feed lessons back into the story wish list.

A sample timeline

- **Weeks 1–2:** set the strategy, build the story wish list, train collectors, prepare release forms.
- **Weeks 3–5:** field collection, intake, consent, and the first edits.
- **Weeks 6–7:** organic testing and small paid tests.
- **Decision window:** scale the winning stories with paid reach, earned media, and delivery to the target.

08 Story Intake Card

Print and carry in the field. Store completed cards securely.

STORYTELLER NAME

PREFERRED NAME TO USE PUBLICLY

PHONE / TEXT

EMAIL

NEIGHBORHOOD / WORKSITE

LANGUAGE

ISSUE

DATE & COLLECTOR

THE STORY IN THEIR WORDS (KEY LINES, NUMBERS, DATES)

FORMAT CAPTURED

☐ Video (vertical) ☐ Video (horizontal) ☐ Audio ☐ Photo ☐ Written

CONSENT AND IDENTITY

☐ Full name & face ☐ First name only ☐ Voice only ☐ No face ☐ Internal use only

APPROVED USES

☐ Social ☐ Paid ads ☐ TV / streaming ☐ Press ☐ Testimony

RISK FLAGS DISCUSSED

☐ Employer ☐ Landlord ☐ Immigration ☐ Family / safety ☐ None

NEXT STEPS

☐ Release signed ☐ Follow-up set ☐ Invite to action ☐ Leadership ask

SIGNATURE / RECORDED CONSENT CONFIRMED BY

Their story is profit. Ours is power.

Listen to each other. Record the truth. Put it where it cannot be ignored.
Then organize everyone who recognized themselves in it.

RESIST. REVOLT.

Further reading

Marshall Ganz, “Public Narrative, Collective Action, and Power” (2011), and his public narrative worksheets via the Leading Change Network.

Commons Social Change Library, guides on storytelling and campaign communications. commonslibrary.org

Companion guide: *Power Mapping: A Field Guide for Organizers* (Resist. Revolt.)

Platform ad policies and election-law disclosure rules change often: check each platform’s current political and social-issue ad policy and consult counsel before running paid content.