

Public Narrative 201: Story of Us & Now

[Program]

Trainer Names:

Learning Objectives:

Skills, Knowledge, and Attitude which learners should take away from this session.

- Understand the three stories that comprise a public narrative
- Begin to see how story and narrative build motivation and power to create change
- Understand the role of Anti-Oppression principles in solidarity organizing

Achievement Objectives:

Skills, Knowledge, and Attitude which learners should take away from this session.

- Practice crafting and sharing our own public narrative
- Practice coaching others in crafting and telling their public narratives

Time: 160 minutes (2 hrs 40 mins)

Normal = say out loud

Underlined = flipchart this!

Italics = trainer notes/instructions

Bold = key point

1. Introduction [10 mins]

Welcome to Public Narrative 201! Before we start, let's do a quick recap of Public Narrative 101. Turn to someone next to you and share a couple things you took with you from that training. (1 min)

Bring people back, have a few partners summarize what they talked about. Thank people for sharing. Add any additional context you want to bring through to Public Narrative 201. (3 min)

~~It's been a few days now since we told our Stories of Self in Public Narrative 101, so let's think back to that training. Quick recap: what is Story of Self supposed to accomplish? (Answers can include: motivation, moves people to action, reclaims our own narratives, reminds us about our passions and values, etc.)~~

Yes! And in this training, we're going to work on what comes after Story of Self – the Story of Us and Now.

If this didn't come up in the group recap, have people read these out loud to the group for one more reminder.

Flipchart three components of Public Narrative, to recap:

1. Story of Self: Who am I and why am I called to do this work?
2. Story of Us: Who are we as a community and what calls us to act?
3. Story of Now: What are we called to do now? What challenges do we face and what is our

strategy for overcoming them?

Like Public Narrative 101, we're going to share one of our stories with you all. *Introduce trainer sharing their story.*

At this point, a trainer should tell their Story of Self and Story of Us (don't go into Story of Now yet). Craft your Story of Self according to the description in the SSC Training's "Public Narrative 101: Story of Self" training. This Story of Self should lead into a Story of Us about an experience you've had as part of a community or group. Make sure to weave the two parts together by showing how your personal values, beliefs, or goals are reflected in the collective values of the "Us" you are describing.

Note: Because this training contains an introduction to solidarity organizing, it is strongly recommended that one of the Public Narrative demonstrations presented in the training is a story about solidarity organizing. There are two demonstrations of Public Narrative in the training: one in the Introduction, the other in Section VIII ("Public Narrative In Action").

Thank the trainer for sharing, and/or share resonance, and open space for other people to resonate.

Now, think about the last parts of those stories you just heard. How did the trainer communicate the values and goals in this story? ~~Was it with statistics, or with specific descriptions of people facing challenges?~~

When [trainer] talked about values and aspirations they have in common with groups they've been part of, that made a Story of Us. For the first part of this training, we'll focus on Story of Us. Then we'll move into Story of Now and putting the three parts of Public Narrative together.

Review objectives (Flipchart objectives).

Anchor: The ANCHOR step invites learners to reflect on past experiences which relate to the learning of the session. (e.g. "Think back to a time when _____. What did that feel like?")

1. What Makes an "Us"? [5 mins]

When we move from Story of Self to Story of Us, we're zooming out from our personal narratives to a bigger picture about what binds an "Us" together. When we put our stories into the context of our lives, we can see that our stories include fragments and influences of other people's stories – stories from our families, communities, cultures, faiths, books and movies, people who have hurt us and people who have inspired us... in other words, our stories are shaped by our experiences and woven together with other people's stories. Together, those personal stories weave stories of communities, organizations, movements, nations – groups that have a collective identity.

Brainstorm: Let's take a moment to think and reflect. What are some examples of groups that could be considered "Us's"? What "Us's" are you a part of? (*Call on people or ask them to shout out responses; flipchart responses*).

Participants might be likely to start off by giving examples of "Us's" that revolve around shared identity

or location (e.g. school community, communities of place, LGBTQ+ community, etc.). Push them to consider bigger, broader, or less obvious “Us’s” as well (e.g. fast food workers, families facing deportations, the millennial generation).

When you have a list of examples, pose a second question: What is it that links people together in these examples? Guide participants to the answers: **shared experiences, shared values, shared goals/aspirations.**

Add: The ADD step introduces new information and tools for learners to consider.

1. Goals of Story of Us [5 min]

- Create a sense of community by evoking shared experiences, values, and aspirations

The main goal of Story of Us is to create a sense of community among individuals who may or may not see themselves as a community.

When we’re organizing on our own frontlines, we can do this by evoking our shared **experiences, values, and goals.** Whether we’re talking about a town facing a polluting industry or a generation facing a challenging historical moment, our shared stories are woven through these points of intersection. These shared stories give a group a **culture** – core values that can be drawn upon for motivation, and that can bond us together as a community.

In solidarity organizing, we can evoke the **values and aspirations** that we as solidarity organizers share with the frontline community we organize with. We can explain the **mutual interest** that draws us to organize around this frontline, and tell a story about the movement of people who have come together around this issue. Talking about mutual interest can help us communicate to others why they should also have a stake in the struggle at hand.

- Establish collective values that can motivate action

Just like significant events can shape our individual values, shared experiences can shape our collective values. This part will set us up for Story of Now, where we call on our “Us” to translate those shared values into collective action.

- Establish common understanding of what you are working for and why

This is especially relevant if you’re telling the story of a smaller “Us” – like a group running a campaign. Your group should have a common understanding not only of **what** you are doing, but **why.** Having a shared understanding of your vision for change and why that vision is important will help every other element of your campaign.

The same thing goes for solidarity organizing. When we’re doing the hard work of aligning our frontlines and building relationships, we need to practice being upfront and honest about our interests and motivations – and that means we need to make sure we know what our motivations are and how to talk about them. If you’re part of a group that’s doing solidarity organizing, it’s important for your group have a common understanding of **why** you are all doing solidarity work.

Apply: The APPLY step invites learners to utilize the new information in a task, challenge, or focused conversation. (e.g. practice, application, case studies, compare, etc.)

1. Story of Us Brainstorm [10 mins]

On that note, it's time to move into writing our own Story of Us. Take a couple minutes to think about what "Us" looks like in your organizing. You can write, draw, or whatever helps you think through this.

- If you already organize with a group, think about the work you've done together, what drew you together as a group, and what values, goals, or experiences drew you together.
- If you're not working with a group right now, think about communities that you're a part of that you want to work with. What would inspire your community to mobilize? What inspires YOU?

Give ~5 minutes for free write. At the end of the time, ask participants to turn to someone next to them and take one minute each to share their "Us's" with each other.

Add: The ADD step introduces new information and tools for learners to consider.

1. Story of Now [10 mins]

Bring participants back to the big group to transition into Story of Now.

Okay everyone, hold onto those examples you just wrote about. What is one **challenge** your group or community is facing right now? This can be a local challenge specific to your community, or a challenge on as big a scale as climate change.

Ask for share-backs: Have people briefly describe the "Us" they wrote about and a challenge that "Us" is facing. Take 3-5 examples.

Does everyone have their challenge in mind? *If there are people struggling, have trainers who aren't facilitating see if they want any support figuring out what to write about.*

Okay, good – now it's time to dream up some hopeful outcomes and strategies for overcoming these challenges! We've arrived at Story of Now.

Once you've told your Story of Self and Us, your audience knows **why** you've been called to a particular issue and **who** you want to call on to join you in your mission. In the last piece of Public Narrative, you need to tell your audience **what is required of all of us in this moment**. Story of Now is rooted in the values you celebrated in your Story of Self and Us, and it describes how your community will mobilize to translate those values into action. It's a strategy outline that tells people what plans you have for action, why it's important or strategic to take action now, and why they should have reason to hope.

To build on the Story of Self and Us and inspire people to action, a Story of Now included some specific elements:

- The urgent challenge we face right now as a community

- A hopeful outcome that has a vivid description of what we can achieve together if we take action
- A convincing strategy – your plan for achieving this outcome (*Note: this doesn't mean you're laying out your entire campaign strategy here, just an outline*)
- A specific choice that each person in your audience can make – a call to action!
- A reminder of where we can find the courage to make that choice

This should sound pretty familiar. There's a challenge, but instead of being in the past, it's in the present. There's hope, but instead of being drawn from something that happened in the past, it's in the future. There's a choice, but instead of being a choice we once made, it's a choice we must make now. That's what makes it a "Story of Now".

The choice we're called on to make is a choice to take strategic action towards overcoming challenges. It's not a very good leadership strategy to only describe problems without identifying action that their community can take to address the problems. If you feel called to address a real challenge, a challenge so urgent that you have motivated others to face it as well, then you also have a responsibility to invite your community to join you in action that has some chance of success. In your Story of Now, make sure to emphasize where we can find hope!

Remember the emotional barriers to action that we talked about in Story of Self? Through our Story of Now, we can work to turn those emotional barriers into **motivation** for our community. We can share our own righteous anger at the injustices we face, show a community working together in solidarity, communicate the urgency of the issue, and leave them with feelings of empowerment and hope as they come to see how they can take action to be part of the solution.

Apply: The APPLY step invites learners to utilize the new information in a task, challenge, or focused conversation. (e.g. practice, application, case studies, compare, etc.)

1. Story of Now Brainstorm [10 mins]

Let's brainstorm about Story of Now – the last piece of our Public Narrative trilogy. Just like with Story of Us, everyone can choose their own Story of Now.

Take about 5 minutes to choose a focus for your Story of Now, focusing on the Urgent Challenge. What is the challenge facing the community that makes up your "Us"? What makes it urgent to you?

Ask for clarifying questions, then give 5 minutes for journaling.

*Time check: You should now be **50 minutes** into the training.*

-- Break [5 mins] --

Add: The ADD step introduces new information and tools for learners to consider.

1. Public Narrative in Action [15 mins]

At this point in the training, you should present participants with an example of a complete three-part

Public Narrative. One option is for a trainer to tell their Public Narrative. Another option – if you have computer, internet access, or have downloaded ahead of time – is to play a section of Barack Obama’s speech at the 2004 DNC, titled “The Audacity of Hope”. It is strongly recommended that you play the speech if you have technology available to do so, as it is an example of Public Narrative being used in a real-life context by a skilled public speaker. Even if you choose not to show the video to participants, trainers who are not very familiar or practiced with Public Narrative are strongly encouraged to watch this speech before giving the training!

Option 1: Trainer’s Public Narrative

For the next few minutes, we’re going to listen to [trainer] share a complete Public Narrative. While you listen, it would be a good idea to take some notes. Make note of which parts of Public Narrative you hear, and also listen to **how** [trainer] tells their story. How much detail do they use to describe the people or scenes in the story?

Listen to the trainer’s story, and then lead a brief discussion.

- Did you hear the three distinct stories? Did anyone take note of when the transition from Story of Self to Us to Now happened?
- What do you feel after listening to this narrative?
- What were some specific moments of the Stories of Self, Us, and Now we just heard that stuck out for you? What stuck out about those moments?

Option 2: Barack Obama’s “The Audacity of Hope”

For the next 8 minutes, we’ll be watching the beginning of “The Audacity of Hope,” Barack Obama’s speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. While you listen, it would be a good idea to take some notes. Make note of which parts of Public Narrative you hear, and also listen to **how** Obama tells his story. Does he use statistics? How much detail does he use to describe the people and scenes he talks about? How does this speech make you feel?

Video online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWynt87PaJ0>. Show the video from 0:50 to 8:00, right after Obama says “And that man is John Kerry”. Then lead a brief discussion.

- Did you hear the three distinct stories? Did anyone take note of when the transition from Story of Self to Us to Now happened? (*First transition: “My story is part of the larger American story”; second transition: “I say to you tonight, we have more work to do”.*)
- What do you feel after listening to this narrative?
- What were some specific moments of the Stories of Self, Us, and Now we just heard that stuck out for you? Why?

Allude back to the trainer’s Public Narrative from the beginning of the training: Do you remember [trainer]’s story from earlier? Thinking back, was it similar in structure to Obama’s speech in some ways? What stuck out to you about that narrative?

One thing Obama’s speech demonstrates is that stories are specific – they evoke a particular setting, mood, color, sound, texture, taste. The more you can communicate this specificity, the more power your story has to engage others. This may seem like a paradox, but actually, specificity makes stories more relatable and believable. It’s the details that give us access to the universal sentiments or insights that the stories hold.

Apply: The APPLY step invites learners to utilize the new information in a task, challenge, or focused conversation. (e.g. practice, application, case studies, compare, etc.)

1. Putting It All Together [20 mins]

Now that we've worked on our Story of Self, Story of Us, and Story of Now, and seen an example of all three in action... it's time to put our own stories together.

Think back to work we've done so far. Remember the emotional calls to action: anger, solidarity, urgency, empowerment, and hope. Remember that it's not logical argument that moves us to action, but stories and emotions. Think about the structure of a story: the character; the plot with a challenge, choice, and outcome; and a moral. Think about the three interwoven stories that comprise a Public Narrative – the Story of Self, Us, and Now – and that you are looking for the link between these three stories to explain why you are called to do this work, why we are called to act with you, and what we are called on to do now.

With all of this in mind, we're going to take some time to work on finessing these stories and putting them all together. When we're done writing, we're going to break into groups of 4 and practice telling our Public Narratives, just like we did in the Story of Self training.

Are there any questions at this point?

Take questions, then give the rest of the 20 minutes for writing/working.

2. Public Narrative Practice [60 mins]

Intro [5 mins]

Okay, it's time to break into groups of 4! Just like we did last time, each team will choose a timekeeper. Each person will get 5 minutes to share their Public Narrative. The team will listen to the storyteller, take notes, and give 3 minutes of coaching before rotating to the next storyteller. Remember to stick to the time limits! (*even Barack Obama told his Public Narrative in just 7 minutes...*)

Listener/coaches, remember to take notes of your groupmates' stories so that you can give detailed and constructive feedback!

Does anyone have any questions about what we're doing next?

Answer any questions, and allow a few minutes for people to assemble into their teams, or assign teams.

NOTE: All trainers not currently facilitating should participate in this.

Small Group Share [30 mins]

The trainers facilitating this session should do a time-check for all the teams every 8 minutes, starting once everyone has settled with their team: "OK, the second storyteller should be starting now!" etc. The trainers participating should be prepared to model good listening, coaching, and storytelling.

Full Group Share [25 mins]

When the last feedback session is wrapping up, bring everyone back to the big group.

We're all going to hear Public Narrative from some storytellers now. Again, we'll stick to a 5-minute limit so we have time to give feedback. Who would like to go first? *(Make sure to choose people who did **not** share Story of Self in the first training.)*

After each person shares, start a round of applause – the positive reinforcement is necessary no matter what kind of a job they did – and then launch in a maximum 3 minutes of feedback.

Great! So, what worked well in that story, and why?
Draw out 2-4 responses from the audience, then add your own feedback.

And is there anything that could be improved, and why?
Draw out 2-4 responses from the audience, then add your own feedback.

Repeat for as many more storytellers as you can, and be sure to stick to time limits!

Away: The AWAY step invites learners to connect their new understanding to the real world context of their lives. (e.g. a personal action plan, commitment, projection into future, etc.)

1. Debrief [5 mins]

Let's have another round of applause for our storytellers – all of you who shared stories today, even if it wasn't in front of the whole group. *(Initiate applause)*

This was a long session, so let's all just take a deep breath together... Before we end, let's do a quick go-around and each share one word that describes how you're feeling right now.

Thanks again, everyone, and great work! *(Initiate applause again)*

Pluses and Deltas [5 mins]

*Collect feedback on the training session by asking Sproggers for training **pluses** (things that went well) and **deltas** (things that could have gone better/could be improved/that are growth zones).*