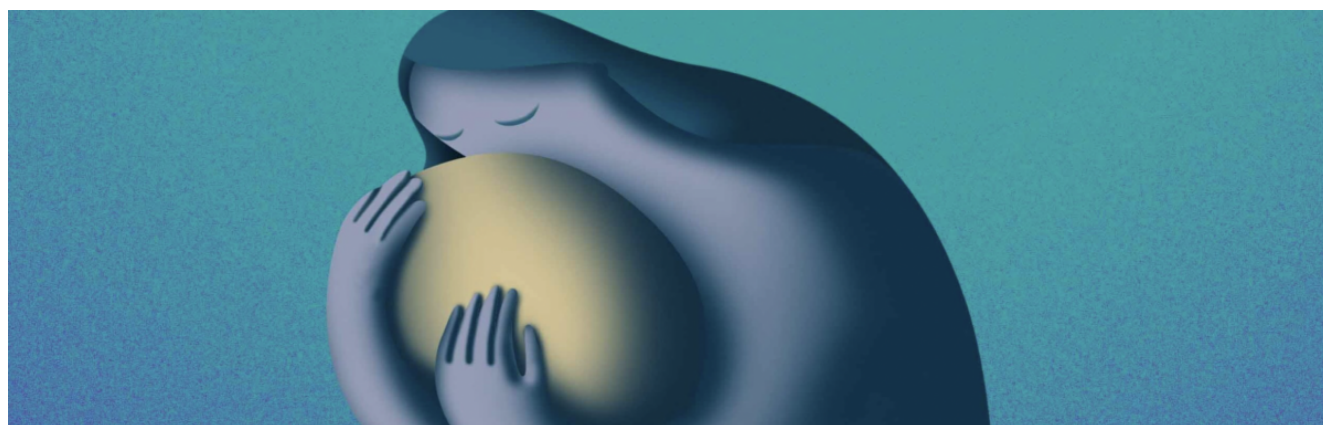
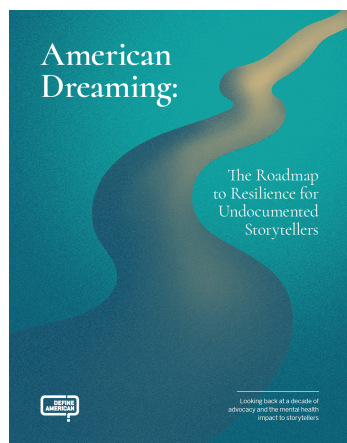


OCTOBER 2022



## 6 Commitments for More Ethical Storytelling

Since 2011, Define American has been telling the stories of people who have made America their new home so that they will be recognized first as *people* before they are demeaned by a label like *illegals*. Earlier this year, Define American released the report, “American Dreaming: The Roadmap to Resilience for Undocumented Storytellers,” culminating two years of research into the experiences of 40 storytellers from the immigrant rights movement.



For any organization that collects and shares stories of people whom it serves, the report offers practical advice for ensuring those stories are told in a fair, respectful, and ethical manner. You can download the full report [here](#), and this month we’re pleased to reprint six commitments which Define American recommends making to anyone with the courage and generosity to share their story with you.

**We will ask: Is now a good time to share your story?** How have you been since we last connected? We will offer ways to scale down the work or provide a way of stepping away from the project if necessary.

**We will ask: What do you feel comfortable sharing now?** We will use the answer as a guide for healthy boundaries in our collaborations and will not ask for additional details or efforts.

**We will ask: Have you shared your/this story before?** We will facilitate training and give guidance to lay a foundation for good health and well-being in the storytelling community.

**We will offer a scope of work, compensation, and a timeline for involvement, and ask if it feels in line with your expectations.**

**We will design ways of seeking feedback and suggestions for nurturing storytellers' mental health and well-being within our work.**

**We will hold others we work with, particularly in the media, accountable for honoring your contributions:**

- For pronouncing and spelling your names correctly
- For honoring your gender identity and pronouns
- For being forthcoming and transparent about when conversations are “on the record” or “off the record”
- For including you in the decision-making process around your stories
- When possible, sending you a draft of the story write-up before it publishes or being open to edits after a story has published if you, as the storyteller, feel uneasy about story details
- For following up with a link to a written/recorded story once it is published
- For simply thanking a storyteller for their time and vulnerability when sharing their story

*(Special thanks to Define American and especially report authors Sarah E. Lowe, Adrián Escárate, and Valeria Rodriguez for permission to reprint these recommendations.)*

Upcoming online classes at The Goodman Center		
PLAN CAMPAIGNS	TELL STORIES	RUN MEETINGS
Strategic Communications: Cutting Through the Clutter	Storytelling: Tapping the Power of Narrative	Meetings for People who Hate Meetings
October 25 & 27 11am - 12pm PT	Nov. 22, 29 and Dec. 6 & 13 9am - 10am PT	December 7 & 9 11am - 12pm PT

## Talking About Poverty? This Report Can Help

Read no further than the first line of the report, “BROKE: How the Nonprofit and Philanthropic Sectors are Talking About Poverty – and How We Can Do Better,” and you’ll hear a loud and alarming wake-up call: “Our research shows that organizations in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors are reinforcing repressive, victim-blaming narratives that shift fault and responsibility for poverty from greedy corporations and unfair laws to ordinary people.”



The report, a collaboration between The Center for Public Interest Communications and the Radical Communicators Network, analyzes the language, framing and narratives around both poverty and wealth – or, in plain language, why the rich get rich and the poor stay poor. Its conclusions show how nonprofits, foundations and others working in this area have unintentionally made matters worse, but the report also offers recommendations on how they can start improving their communications immediately. Download the full report [here](#).

## A Label Past Its Expiration Date?

If you use the term “vulnerable population” to describe an audience you serve, [Rashad Robinson](#) has a word of advice for you: *don't*. Robinson, the President of [Color of Change](#), was the opening speaker at the Southern California Grantmakers conference in Los Angeles on September 20th. The theme of the conference was “Narrative Power: Reframe Stories, Redefine Culture,” and Robinson had some reframing of his own in mind.



Rashad Robinson

Search the word “vulnerable” on Thesaurus.com and the most common synonyms listed include *defenseless*, *weak*, and *liable*. Are those terms that you would want to be associated with? And I’m guessing that the people we’ve been labeling as such would be equally offended. Robinson recommends that we should stop denigrating these people and soft-peddling the systems and policies that have placed them in challenging circumstances. Instead, he recommends, call them what they are: *exploited* or *targeted*. The conversation that proceeds from there, Robinson promises, will be very different, but much closer to the truth.



### About Us

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