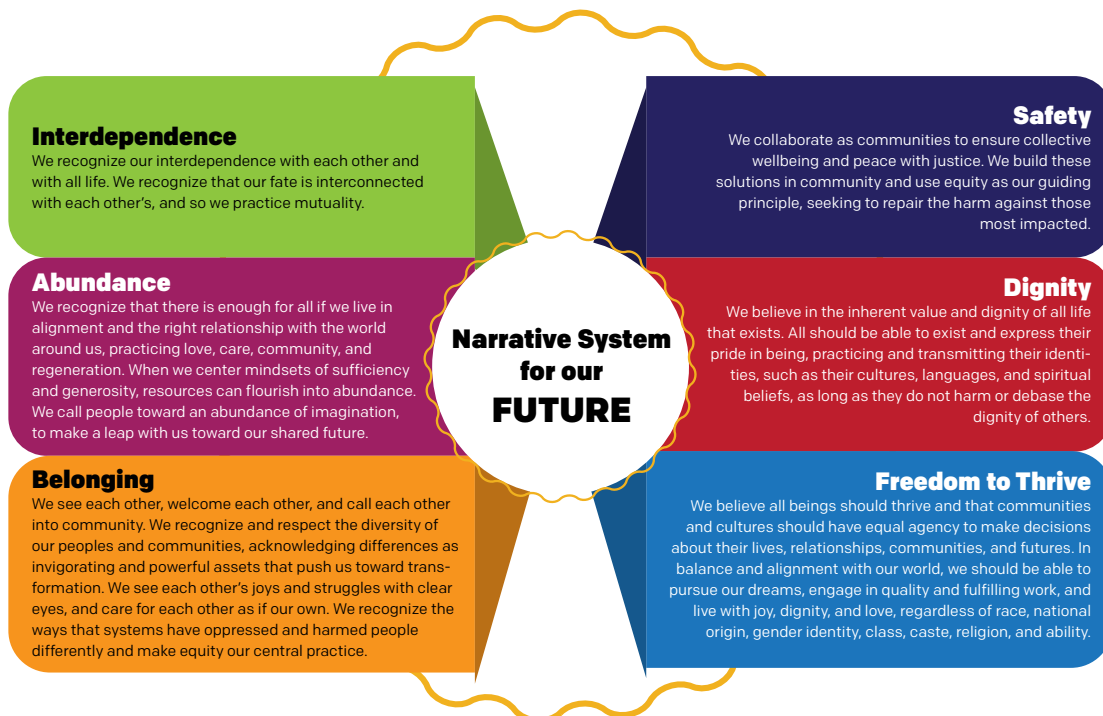# An Introduction to the Narrative System and the Narrative Ecosystem

BECAUSE WE EACH HAVE A PART TO PLAY in winning the culture, and because a multiplicity of narratives and approaches are necessary to ensure a thriving world for all, we introduce the frameworks of a narrative system and a narrative ecosystem.

People are moved and activated in different ways, along different timelines, and never just within the context of legislative, electoral, or policy campaigns. We have a better chance of building narrative power if we work with each other on different fronts, at different timelines, to move different audiences in the same direction. As a movement, we should aspire to reach people all the time.

As you design your project, use the narrative system framework to help you choose the deep narratives with which your project will align. Use the narrative ecosystem framework to help you think about how your project relates to others' work to collectively move people towards our worldview.

Interdependence
We recognize our interdependence with each other and with all life. We recognize that our fate is interconnected with each other's, and so we practice mutuality.

Safety
We collaborate as communities to ensure collective wellbeing and peace with justice. We build these solutions in community and use equity as our guiding principle, seeking to repair the harm against those most impacted.

Abundance
We recognize that there is enough for all if we live in alignment and the right relationship with the world around us, practicing love, care, community, and regeneration. When we center mindsets of sufficiency and generosity, resources can flourish into abundance. We call people toward an abundance of imagination, to make a leap with us toward our shared future.

Dignity
We believe in the inherent value and dignity of all life that exists. All should be able to exist and express their pride in being, practicing and transmitting their identities, such as their cultures, languages, and spiritual beliefs, as long as they do not harm or debase the dignity of others.

Narrative System for our FUTURE

Belonging
We see each other, welcome each other, and call each other into community. We recognize and respect the diversity of our peoples and communities, acknowledging differences as invigorating and powerful assets that push us toward transformation. We see each other's joys and struggles with clear eyes, and care for each other as if our own. We recognize the ways that systems have oppressed and harmed people differently and make equity our central practice.

Freedom to Thrive
We believe all beings should thrive and that communities and cultures should have equal agency to make decisions about their lives, relationships, communities, and futures. In balance and alignment with our world, we should be able to pursue our dreams, engage in quality and fulfilling work, and live with joy, dignity, and love, regardless of race, national origin, gender identity, class, caste, religion, and ability.
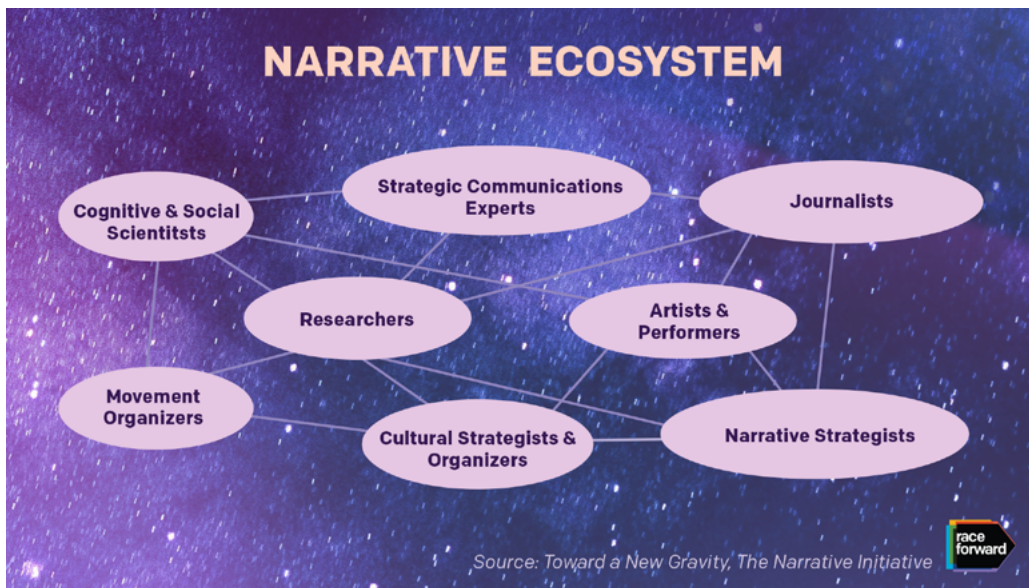
NARRATIVE SYSTEM

We define a narrative system as a set of deep narratives that together describe the worldview we want to activate at a majority level. A narrative system provides a "destination" to ground narrative projects ranging from rapid-response and policy campaigns to cultural strategies and longer-term narrative work. It sets our values, helps us to find alignment and consensus across projects and timelines, and allows us to connect our work with other social movements.

The Butterfly Lab cohort developed a narrative system to challenge the status quo. This system is anchored in six deep narratives: **Interdependence, Abundance, Belonging, Safety, Freedom to Thrive,** and **Dignity** to inform the narrative strategy work our movements need now. After reading them, ask:

- What one or two deep narratives are most resonant with the work that you are currently doing?
- Which deep narratives would require that you stretch your practices and develop new stories?
- What aligned relationships might you build with partners, collaborators, and/or allies to extend the impact of your collective work?

NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM

Our movement has an abundance of skills, capacities, and ideas. Building bridges that facilitate the easeful sharing of visions, strategies, and resources is vital in our movements. We define a narrative ecosystem as a network of connected individuals and organizations that can share knowledge, expertise, skills, ideas, capacities, and work to advance a narrative system across a diversity of fronts along different timelines.

The framework of a narrative ecosystem helps us imagine how we might be able to align ourselves with each other and work together in rapid-response and campaign timelines as well as longer timelines simultaneously.

To develop an ecosystem that prioritizes collaboration, relationality, and power-sharing, start by identifying your own role within it. The following are introductory prompts to which we encourage you to return at each step of your narrative design process. They can help you stay centered while thinking about how to forge stronger relationships.

» Who are you? Think expansively and acknowledge how you arrived at this present moment. Who helped you? What has inspired and shaped you?

» Who are your people? There is a Spanish proverb that goes, "Tell me who you walk with and I will tell you who you are." Consider all of your human and other than human relatives. What are the places, peoples, communities, geographies, and experiences to which you feel connected?

» Where are you going? What goals are you working toward—personally, culturally, and beyond? What vision of the world motivates you? What do you need to learn and what capacities do you still need to build?

» With whom will you build relationships? Whose work and goals are complementary to yours? Who might extend your capacities or teach you new capacities? What aligned relationships might you build with partners, collaborators, and/or allies to extend the impact of your collective work?

The Social Change Ecosystem Map by Deepa Iyer at Building Movement Project is a useful tool for further identifying the texture of particular roles you might hold in building cultural and narrative power.