



BUILDING NARRATIVE POWER FOR SOLIDARITY

LESSONS FROM

JUST NARRATIVES

ON ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

AUTHORS

Nikko Viquiera, Jaboa Lake, Jomaira Salas Pujols, Sughey Ramirez

EDITORS

Iris M. Crawford

DESIGNERS

Gabriela Quist

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JUST NARRATIVE SPEAKERS

Karla Bruce, Anna Castro, Eva Cardenas, Prince Corbet, Camilla Griffins, Glenn Harris, Elsie Iwase, Tonika Johnson, Pamela Mejia, Janell Nelson, Jennifer M. Ng'andu, Julia Roig, Rinku Sen, Ishita Srivastava, Traci Lester, Jess St. Louis, Makani Themba, Adaku Utah, Rachel Weidinger, Monica Roa Lopez

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RACE FORWARD'S CONFERENCES AND CONVENINGS TEAM

Stephanie Castro, Hiba Elyass, Leslie Grant, Onsaya Smith

For questions about this report and Just Narratives, please email us at narrative@raceforward.org

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INTRODUCTION



Dear friends,

Race Forward held the first **Just Narratives for Multiracial Solidarity** from November 13 to 15, 2025. **The anchor event for the 2025 Cultural Week of Action, Just Narratives** is a 2-day convening of narrative strategists, communicators, creatives, storytellers, racial justice advocates, and movement builders.

As one of the project leads, I can genuinely say that putting this conference together alongside different teams and partners has been one of the most vivid practices of solidarity I have ever experienced, and it's one for which I am ever grateful.

From the start, one of my deepest hopes for Just Narratives was to weave threads of community and relationships into a beautiful tapestry of solidarity for racial justice. Solidarity has been and will always be a core value for us at Race Forward because we believe that it provides the relational linkages needed to connect struggles and aspirations across communities and to build the power necessary to leverage transformative equitable change. Solidarity as a core value was further affirmed for us after many conversations with national and community partners and stakeholders. A convening centered on building narrative power for multiracial solidarity was a strategic and critical need during these difficult political moments of division and isolation.

And so, we built Just Narratives with these goals in mind:

- **Foster solidarity for racial justice** across our identities, geographies, and issue areas;
- **Share our lessons and best practices** from the field;
- **Offer and coalesce around new narrative and cultural strategies** and tactics that make our vision of solidarity and a racially just world real and inevitable;
- **Learn new skillsets for narrative change** by doing; and
- **Identify opportunities for collaborations** on impact storytelling for racial justice through various mediums and platforms.

Over 400 people from across the racial justice movement ecosystem attended and participated in 4 plenaries, 36 breakouts, art activations, performances, a fashion exhibit, film showing, and crochet circles. We even strengthened relationships through karaoke and dance.

Attendees co-facilitated and participated in our version of a Peoples' Movement Assembly, a methodology and practice for sharpening our collective analysis of the political moment with pathways to strategic, coordinated action. During the assembly, attendees broke into issue area small groups to identify the harmful narratives they needed to dismantle while focusing on narratives needed to activate solidarity across our movements.

At the heart of this rich programming was our **core goal**: to build *narrative power* for solidarity and racial justice by growing a sustainable ecosystem and infrastructure amid the rising tides of authoritarianism and fascism. As Glenn Harris, President of Race Forward, powerfully conveyed, *"the answers we are looking for, we already have. We just need to figure out how we weave them and build them and scale them."*

During our time together, and in the weeks since, we documented and harvested insights, learnings, tools, and critical questions, from attendees and narrative experts.

In this report, we share our bountiful findings with the larger community of practitioners working to build narrative power for racial justice and solidarity at this critical juncture in our movements. Through this work, we reaffirm the following calls to action:

- **WE NEED NARRATIVE POWER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE**
- **WE NEED NARRATIVES THAT ACTIVATE SOLIDARITY MINDSETS**
- **WE NEED A NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM THAT IS ANIMATED BY SOLIDARITY**
- **WE NEED TO PRACTICE ALIGNMENT WITHIN THE NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM**
- **WE NEED TO BUILD A NARRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUSTAIN US**

We hope that this initial report from the Just Narratives convening will give folks the tools and inspiration they need to find a point of entry or to continue working towards our collective liberation.

In Solidarity,
Nikko Viquiera



Narrative Power as the Expansion of our Imagination

This is what narrative power is all about. We must begin to imagine the shapes, colors, taste, and smell of a world and future that does not exist yet. As writers and liberated world-builders Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown affirm, “all organizing is science fiction.” Narrative power reveals to us an array of possibilities other than the status quo.


Authoritarianism thrives on making us feel afraid and overwhelmed. Astrobiologist Caleb Scharf says that humans are prone to cognitive lockdowns when faced with overwhelming problems such as fascism and systemic racism. Scharf explains that in a state of cognitive lockdown, we are unable to see the *cohesive whole*. We become so *overwhelmed* that we focus on the smaller levers and buttons immediately in front of us and are unable to see—much less dismantle and transform—the walls that harmful systems have built around us.

We become so paralyzed that we begin to believe we cannot win, despite the abundant evidence of our many wins. For example, the mass protests on our streets against the Administration’s fascist regime, the overwhelming victories in key elections across the country, and communities coming together to care and shield immigrants from ICE are many wins we can point to. We can also point to the community-focused mutual aid collectives and social justice organizations leading triumphant legal arguments against inequitable executive orders.




Yet, when we let authoritative narratives overtake us, cognitive lockdown makes it impossible to imagine an alternative reality. On a more granular level, our failure to build narrative power for racial justice is a failure of the imagination. This is why we need to align our stories, messages, and narratives in the movement around affirming visions grounded in our collective values.

Narrative power unlocks an *infinite array* of unimagined possibilities and futures. We need narrative power that will mold our collective imagination to create the future world we want— a future where racial justice is real, and *solidarity* is the dominant culture. Abolition of slavery, civil rights, and gay marriage all began as seeds of an idea in someone’s imagination that then grew into power movements, that then became the laws of this land. Building narrative power calls for us to **imagine the unimaginable today**.



“BEING ABLE TO ILLUSTRATE THAT HORIZON IS AN EXERCISE IN NARRATIVE EXPLORATION: EXERCISING THE DREAMING MUSCLE, SKETCHING MAPS OF WHAT IS DESIRABLE, IMAGINING A MOBILIZING UTOPIA THAT IGNITES BOTH IMAGINATION AND HEART.”



— Monica Roa Lopez
Founder and Executive Director of Puentes



From Imagination to Action

While imagining alternate worlds is part of building narrative power, imagination needs strategic, coordinated action to devise a utopia we deserve. Our narratives need to be so **convincing** that they *compel* us to build long-lasting systems of equity, justice, and liberation. Our narratives need to be so **magical** that they help us build deeper interconnection with each other until the design we have first imagined finally becomes the built reality we share.

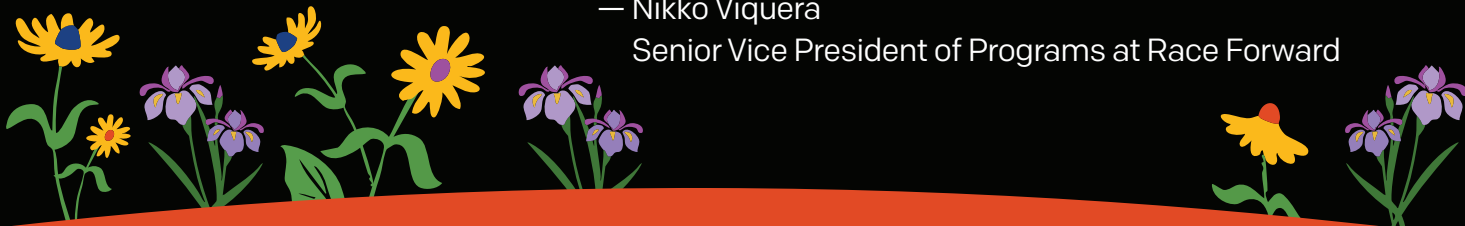
We need a narrative strategy that not only draws but activates people from across imagined walls and lines towards a majority alliance that is fortified by a sense of belonging and deep community. As philosopher activist Grace Lee Boggs said, **“Movements are born of critical connections rather than critical mass.”**

We need narrative strategies that assert not just our shared histories, but also our shared struggles and realities, and incite action towards a shared liberation.

Ultimately, building narrative power is about how we use our stories, messages, and narratives to change societal values and imaginations in ways that will dismantle the cultural, historical, institutional, economic, and ideological roots of structural racism. And finally, narrative power is about planting new seeds of racial justice and solidarity in our imaginations, from which will grow new foundations and structures.

“DRIVEN BY OUR **COLLECTIVE HOPE**, VALUES, AND JOY, THE WORK OF BUILDING NARRATIVE POWER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE IS THE WORK OF IMAGINING AND MAKING REAL A WORLD WITHOUT HIERARCHIES AND FALSE BINARIES, A WORLD WHERE SOLIDARITY IS OUR COMPASS, OUR PRACTICE, AND THE ULTIMATE MEASURE OF OUR THRIVING.”

— Nikko Viquera
Senior Vice President of Programs at Race Forward



WE NEED NARRATIVES THAT ACTIVATE SOLIDARITY MINDSETS

Addressing structural racism means dismantling the deep ideological, institutional, cultural, and historical roots of disparities that shape our conditions and material outcomes. These ideological roots have supported the inequitable policies and disparities that we see today, but they are not inevitable.

Many narrative experts surface that ideological roots cut across issues. For example *individualism* cuts across health, education, and housing among other issues— which fortifies economic oppression and upholds structural racism. Individualism trains our sights away from recognizing how institutional and structural systems affect our day to day lives, and discourage us from building relationships and taking collective actions.

We cannot address what we don't believe is real. Thus, one of the questions the Just Narratives convening seeks to answer is "What narratives do we need to address structural racism and its systemic roots?" **Our longstanding theory based on movement history and research is that narratives that activate solidarity mindsets lead to collective action and are critical in dismantling intersecting structural oppressions.**

To preface the People's Movement Assembly, we hosted a plenary conversation titled "Why Solidarity Narratives Matter In Advancing Racial Justice" to discuss findings from solidarity narrative research. Below is a summary of findings shared by narrative researchers on what strategies can activate solidarity mindsets.



A body of research from **Race Forward** highlighted the functional and different roles narrative themes can play to motivate mindsets and behaviors to shape multiracial solidarity. These narrative themes include identity, intergroup relations, perceived injustice, social attitudes, emotion, and collective efficacy. These motivators are inhibited by multiple levels of barriers, including social and material conditions. Findings shared by Jaboa Lake, Race Forward's Senior Director of Impact Evaluation, Learning, and Research show how mindsets, motivations, and material conditions are all needed to facilitate solidarity as a practice in everyday life to sustain strong multiracial coalitions.

Insight from **Harmony Labs'** Elsie Iwase highlighted the power of everyday people. "Solidarity isn't the starting point, it's the outcome of doing meaningful work together," Iwase shared. Solidarity is an everyday practice from strong relationships that elicit feelings of shared fate and, as a result, shared work on shared problems that creates a loop back to strengthening solidarity and breaking down divides.

BLIS Collective's Camilla Griffins showed how "braiding narratives" across reparations and Land Back interwove Black and Indigenous histories, and that solutions for repair that are interconnected elicited more support. Griffins highlighted that alongside how we tell stories, building infrastructure to facilitate relationships between organizations, people, and communities is also how we sustain movements.

Research from the **FrameWorks Institute** showed how narratives of fatalism can inhibit movements for justice. The institute's Ishita Srivastava, explained that sharing real messages and stories on building collective power can shift mindsets and motivate us to "unrig the system." This can then motivate people to look at systemic solutions, exercise the right to govern ourselves, and in turn, shift the decisions made about our collective fate from the "powerful few" to "regular people."

Berkeley Media Studies Group's Pamela Mejia highlighted their research on how media narratives can shape the stories people tell themselves about themselves, the perspectives they value, the solutions they see as possible - and, ultimately, what they're willing to fight for. Interconnectedness - built through "shared fate" framing across issue areas and media types - can forge a unified vision of collective liberation, and gives different audiences a starting place for action.

Narrative Initiative's Rachel Weidinger shared direct quotes from community members on the relationship between reciprocity and solidarity. A quote by one participant stated "*Care involves reciprocity...it's relational. It's recognizing interdependence. It's recognizing we all need one another to thrive and to be liberated in all of our ways.*" Findings showed how sharing stories of interdependence, mutual aid, and collectivism strengthen reciprocity and solidarity as shared practices.

Taken together, this body of research offers insights into *how* we can cultivate enduring solidarity narratives across the racial justice and narrative ecosystem by identifying barriers to solidarity *actions*. The research also surfaced insights around how narratives resonate across audiences, and how to better align our messaging and narratives across issue areas. It also reminds us that we already have what it takes to cultivate racial justice and solidarity, and that, in strategic coordination with one another, our narratives can catalyze collective action towards liberation.





WE NEED A NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM THAT IS ANIMATED BY SOLIDARITY

The Just Narratives convening was designed to bring together artists, communicators, storytellers, government employees, organizers, community builders, narrative practitioners, direct service providers, educators, and racial justice leaders and advocates from across sectors and issue areas. This is because we believe that an ecosystem approach is needed to build narrative power for solidarity.

What is a Narrative Ecosystem, why is it needed, and why us?

An **ecosystem approach** emphasizes the critical need for connection and integration of the different components of a larger whole. This approach, normally applied to ecological systems and networks, tells us that the survival and sustainability of the larger whole depends on the strategic collaboration and integration of its smaller and many diverse parts.

Building narrative power that will reshape our current social arrangement, contracts, and foundations to become racially just requires a more expansive approach beyond the efforts of our individual organizations and communities. Structural racism operates as a system of power with multiple self-perpetuating roots: interconnected institutions, racial ideologies, culture, and history. Our narrative strategy needs to address these roots.

Building narrative power for racial justice and solidarity is the work of **building narrative power for all**. It requires an ecosystem approach that emanates from and reinforces the *interconnection* between our different narrative interventions, solutions, and the liberation we are all trying to achieve.

A **Narrative Ecosystem** is a network of diverse sets of connected individuals and organizations that can share knowledge, expertise, skills, ideas, capacities, resources, and work to advance narrative change and build narrative power. Building narrative power requires a narrative ecosystem where we each have a role to play in weaving new narratives of racial solidarity. We cannot dismantle structural racism as individual organizations alone. We need all of us to be working in coordinated collaboration.

A NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM BUILT ON SOLIDARITY

Applying an ecosystem approach to building narrative power at the Just Narratives convening helped us recognize that solidarity is not just the destination of our narrative work, it is also the compass and the practice to get to that destination.

We only build a narrative ecosystem that will sustain all of our work through the practice of solidarity. As Adaku Utah, Director of Movement Programs at the Building Movement Project, powerfully put it, “solidarity is a skill and with any kind of skill it means that it is a muscle that we can practice. It is a capacity that we can keep generating and finding... over and over again.”



We practice solidarity when:

1. We strategically **collaborate** to build towards our shared goals and vision for the world;
2. We **align** our narrative strategies towards building narrative power for racial justice towards liberation;
3. We **share** resources, skills, and knowledge that fill the gaps within each of our individual work;
4. We **build** trust by consistently showing up for each other and transforming conflict into something generative.



Just Narratives served as a model for what an ecosystem approach could look like when solidarity is the practice and the goal. **This example of a narrative ecosystem is a reminder that long-term narrative power building is dependent on all of us.**

1. **Researchers** shared the critical need for narratives that activate solidarity mindsets and incite collective action as an antidote to structural racism.
2. **Artists** shared their work AND their practice to demonstrate how their craft and talents are advancing narratives that activate solidarity and equity mindsets.
3. **Government employees** shared how narrative strategies shape the role of government in advancing racial equity which has been important in social program implementation and policy change work.
4. **Legal and policy advocates** showed how narratives impact the design and implementation of policies and public programs.
5. **Organizers** shared how they are using storytelling and messaging to motivate parents and school boards to support public school education reform for equity and justice.
6. **Direct service providers** shared how practitioners are key narrative messengers on the ground.
7. **Journalists and media makers** showed how narrative strategy can shape public perception and incite action, from the individual to systemic change.
8. **Narrative strategists** facilitated sessions that sharpened the narrative strategy skills of organizers and racial justice practitioners.
9. **Funders** organized conversations on how to resource narrative work and movement infrastructure long term.



WE NEED TO PRACTICE ALIGNMENT WITHIN THE NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM

Collaboration and coordination within the narrative ecosystem requires alignment that will reveal opportunities and challenges to build solidarity and narrative power together.

To practice solidarity within and across our lived experiences and roles, we take a “Race And” approach. This approach recognizes that in order to achieve racial justice and liberation, we must include class liberation, gender justice, reproductive autonomy, climate justice, Land Back, health equity, disability justice, cooperative economics, immigrant justice, prison abolition, and many others. These systems are interconnected, and our narratives and solutions must also build across these issues and spark collective action for liberation. Below are some of the solidarity practices we tested at the Just Narratives convening.

1. Identify Shared Values

Identifying core values shared by those in the ecosystem is critical in building narrative power for and through solidarity. This is why we started the conference by inviting participants to share the core values that guide and ground their work. Shared values help unify folks in an ecosystem because it reveals to us where we might already align. They also help build trust because they allow us to be vulnerable with each other by giving us the opportunity to share something intimate and central to ourselves and our work. Shared values can also be a helpful tool in navigating conflict and tension when they arise at various points of collaboration within the ecosystem because they remind us that we have a common purpose.

Values are also important to building narrative power because they often overlap or are the same. Deep narratives are the underlying frameworks and values that form a worldview—that ground our messages and stories.

During the conference, attendees shared values that we have synthesized as follows:

- A. Solidarity**
- B. Interconnection**
- C. Reciprocity**
- D. Care & Love**
- E. Shared Learning**
- F. Collective Action**

These values are consistent with the deep narratives identified during the People’s Assembly breakouts, indicating alignment on the values and deep narratives that we want to uplift across issue areas. Shared values are effective points for aligning our work and building solidarity across our movements.

2. Build shared analysis of the Narrative Terrain

A narrative ecosystem is more effective in building power and addressing the roots of structural oppression when its members are diverse. As such, the convening brought together organizations from different issue areas: health equity, trans justice, housing justice, economic mobility, immigration justice, etc. When building alignment within a diverse ecosystem, we need to build a shared understanding of the narrative challenges, opportunities, and interventions that exist in our different terrains.

During the People's Movement Assembly, participants moved into small breakout groups organized by self-selected issue areas. In these small breakout groups, we invited attendees to identify harmful narratives that dominate the landscape of their particular issue area. We then asked them to share helpful narratives we needed to grow in order to build solidarity for racial justice.

In identifying harmful and helpful narratives together, attendees learned about each others' narrative work and expanded their knowledge of their issue area beyond the limits of their organizational focus. These strategic conversations also allowed attendees to build trust with each other.

Strengthening the narrative ecosystem must include spaces and containers for its members to have strategic conversations that build shared analysis of the current terrain and the opportunities that lie ahead. A shared analysis of the narrative terrain will also help members of an ecosystem innovate their strategies by learning about interventions and strategies used by other members.



3. Weave it all together for sense-making

In building alignment within the narrative ecosystem, it is also important to step back and make sense of the whole and how the different parts are connected. Leaders, facilitators, artists, and communicators all have a role to play in weaving together the different learnings and insights from the individual parts of the ecosystem. By revealing those threads, we begin to understand what activities and strategies will be most effective, where there might be gaps and challenges, and identify our shared goals and vision for the world we are trying to build.

A great example of how sense-making is a strategic step in building alignment is the large group discussion in Just Narratives. After breaking into small issue area groups all of the attendees convened together to weave and synthesize insights from their small breakouts.

In this larger formation, we learned that there are key **helpful narrative themes** that cut across our issue areas. The values-aligned definitions emergent from these findings include:

Collectivism: prioritization of the collective good as a structure for care for all.

Interconnectedness: the recognition that the lived and material conditions of all people are connected which influences decision-making and actions.

Solidarity as a Practice: mutual and interdependent actions that centers shared interests, support, and goals in the pursuit of collective liberation.

Collective Action: actions that center the wellness and interests of the group or collective.

Community Power: ability of communities most impacted by oppressive systems to exercise governance and drive systemic change.

Community Governance: decision-making, resource allocation, power distribution, and order driven by community.

Sovereignty: a result from the ability to self-determine and govern one's own body, community, or land.

Global Solidarity: collective responsibility to resist oppression and build people-powered systems across borders.

Unconditional Deservingness: the belief that all people and communities deserve full support without requirements or limitations.

Bravery and Courage: engagement in actions for the collective good, even when under threat, uncertainty, and discomfort.

Collective Efficacy: the belief that a collective strategy, tactic, or action will be effective in reaching our goals.

Across the multiple breakout rooms, these themes emerged as narratives that activate the mindsets we need to achieve our varying goals across issue areas. Whether we're working in disability justice or education reform, we need narratives of solidarity and interconnectedness to move people towards our narrative horizon.

We also learned that most of us, regardless of issue area-focus, are trying to dismantle key **harmful narratives themes** including:

Individualism: prioritization of the individual self over the collective.

Scarcity: the belief or reality (natural or manufactured) that there are not enough resources to fulfill basic needs.

Competition: the belief that resources are limited, and that groups must be in rivalry with each other in order for needs to be met.

Conditional Deservingness: the belief that people or communities only deserve limited support or support under certain conditions.

Personal Responsibility: the belief that an individual is responsible for their own conditions, without regard for the role of social, economic, political, or natural systems.

Disposability and Sacrificial Communities: the orientation that some groups are not worth considering or are inevitably unhelpable when engaging in decision-making or change efforts.

Disrepair: the belief that harmful conditions have caused destruction beyond repair, and thus reparative actions are not possible.

Punishment: the belief that people deserve to suffer or experience loss as a result of the negative manifestations of their social conditions.

Binaries: the belief that binaries in identities, roles, decision-making, and possibilities are natural, inherent, and inevitable.

This insight tells us that even though we work across multiple issue areas, the systems we are confronting share common threads.

By revealing the connections and overlaps of the different helpful and harmful narratives we are engaging, we realize that there is an urgent need for our organizations and communities to be collaborating even more strategically.

It is also important to note that participants found it more difficult to generate helpful narratives than to identify harmful ones. This may be a reflection of movements reacting with defensive strategies at this moment. This highlights the urgent need to intentionally create spaces for people to brainstorm, develop, test, and strengthen the narratives we want to grow. We also need more opportunities for groups to work within and across issue-area narratives, as well as financial investment that allows for





4. Apply shared values and analyses for coordinated, cross movement action

The movement requires many actors, roles, tactics, and strategies. This means that we often work alongside others who engage in different actions. Naming shared values and building a shared analysis that informs our practice allows us to support collective goals and move in a shared praxis. When values and analyses turn into a shared praxis, we are able to learn, evaluate, and grow from each others' strategies, and hold each other accountable. This builds a stronger movement ecosystem.

5. Make room for joy and creativity

Joy and creativity have been at the core of our movements. During the Civil Rights Movement, organizers and activists incorporated song and dance during direct actions. During the ACT UP movement in the 1980s in response to the AIDS crisis, advocates affirmed the need for dance and club culture to sustain their collective efforts. Joy has been a tool to help preserve and create culture necessary to our communities' survival.

Creativity has also been core to transformative movements. To build a new world requires creative imagination and thinking outside the conditions we have been told are inevitable. At Just Narratives, attendees were rooted in joy and creativity through dance, song, art, and imagining that strengthened our relationships with each other, and allowed us to draw direct connections between our shared work, collective actions, and our lives. Through joy and culture we can build stronger and more sustainable movements in solidarity.



WE NEED TO BUILD A NARRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUSTAIN US

Lastly, Just Narratives taught us that building narrative power to address the deep roots of structural inequities is a long-term game that requires multiple strategies. And so we need a **narrative infrastructure** to sustain and scale our narrative interventions.

NARRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE consists of a collection of **coordinated and organized** systems, resources, relationships, platforms, and institutions needed to build, strengthen, scale and sustain **narrative power**. A narrative strategy that builds power requires more than disseminating helpful narratives into mainstream consciousness. Building power requires a long-term infrastructure that will sustain our work to shift mindsets, enable us to scale, and ultimately transform systems. That infrastructure includes: research, convenings, curricula and training, membership networks, coalition building, cohorts for support and strategizing, labs, evaluation/learning loops, iterative practice, leadership development, shared toolkits and research. At the heart of a strong and sustainable narrative infrastructure are diverse **narrative ecosystems** rooted in solidarity between communities and institutions who all play a part in narrative change.

Below are some insights from the “Weaving a Sustainable Infrastructure to Build Narrative Power,” plenary at Just Narratives. Featured speakers included Julia Roig, founder and chief network weaver of [The Horizons Project](#), [Narrative Initiative’s](#) executive director Rinku Sen, [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s](#) managing director, Jennifer Ng’andu, and Anna Castro who is the principal narrative strategist of [Transgender Law Center](#). These panelists reminded us of the urgency of building narrative infrastructures that help us transform systems, and what it will take to sustain them.





First, in defining narrative infrastructure, panelists shared that **narrative infrastructure is more expansive than media, communications, and dissemination**. Jennifer Ng'andu defined narrative infrastructure as the organizations, the gatherings, the training, the practice opportunities, and the research, that keep narrative work going. Narrative infrastructure provides the underlying building blocks and systems that allows us to build and strengthen our narratives. As Ng'andu shared, narrative infrastructure is “the power that is beneath the surface.”



At its core, **narrative infrastructure is also deeply relational**. It demands strong relationships, mutual trust, and, as Anna Castro shared, “the courage to stretch into something new knowing that you will be held together by others.” Castro and other panelists emphasized that these relationships must extend beyond the professionalized field of narrative, media, and culture, and must include “everyday narrators” to be effective and long-lasting. Julia Roig also noted that our relationships with one another are further strengthened when we become clearer about our place in the narrative ecosystem, encouraging us “to name the roles that we are each playing and find each other so we can build that infrastructure.”

Finally, panelists underscored that **building narrative infrastructures requires a commitment to experimentation, pivots, and failure**. Rinku Sen introduced the role of a “willing loser” when advocating for more opportunities to experiment with our narratives and solidarity practice. Panelists made a call to funders to find “the experimenters” and “tolerate loss among your grantees” so that people and groups have the resources necessary to test out new ideas and learn from setbacks. “We want to be the people who are courageous in putting out ideas and then [be]willing to take the best of those outcomes and roll forward with them and then tolerate the worst of those outcomes and recover from them,” said Sen. This long-term perspective frames courage as a central value and insists on a collective and a sustained investment in our narrative projects and our communities. However, without supportive narrative infrastructure, this work may be left as a thought project, incomplete, or undocumented and irreplicable.

It is important to note that there is existing narrative infrastructure that already supports solidarity building and combats structural racism. This should be invested in. The critical narrative work that shifts mindsets, maintains and creates culture, and incites action is already happening. Everyday people, communities and collectives, networks and coalitions engage in this work at every touchpoint. These practices draw from ancestral, cultural, and historically rooted actions, rituals, and ceremonies we hold deep in ourselves.

WHAT COMES NEXT AND WHAT YOU CAN DO

Through breakout sessions, deep conversations, training and skill sharing, storytelling of wins, and learnings, attendees of the Just Narratives for Multiracial Solidarity convening shared and built a lot. The action items emergent from this gathering and shared in this brief can ground the field in building and sustaining our work.

1. WE NEED NARRATIVE POWER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE
2. WE NEED NARRATIVES THAT ACTIVATE SOLIDARITY MINDSETS
3. WE NEED A NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM THAT IS ANIMATED BY SOLIDARITY
4. WE NEED TO PRACTICE ALIGNMENT WITHIN THE NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM
5. WE NEED TO BUILD A NARRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUSTAIN US

Across roles within the narrative ecosystem, folks from all fields can contribute to these action items to combat authoritarianism and build solidarity in many ways—from our everyday engagements to our large strategic plans for action.

As you look to engage along with your community, organization, coalition, or collective in building an interconnected, strong, and sustainable narrative ecosystem and infrastructure, reflect:

What is your role?

How does your role contribute to narrative strategies?

How is your role situated within power structures?

Who are you already aligned with, and how can you build stronger alignment with others?

What knowledge, skills, resources, relationships, or strategies can you contribute to the ecosystem?





In the work of building narrative power for **solidarity, racial justice, and liberation**:

1. **Researchers** can share the findings of their work in clear, accessible ways that meet the needs of advocates, implementers, and organizers on the ground.
2. **Artists** can uplift the stories and grassroots strategies of people most impacted by repression of voice, oppression, and harmful systems to help us imagine what liberation can look and feel like.
3. **Government employees** can reinforce the critical role of government in advancing racial equity through messaging and policies that are reflective of community lives and needs.
4. **Legal and policy advocates** can incorporate the stories, narratives, language, and learnings from organizers and direct service providers in the writing, advocacy for, and accountability of policies and programs that will build transformative change.
5. **Organizers** can engage in learnings from the narrative ecosystem to inform their community engagement and basebuilding strategies to shift power, creation of demands and campaigns that align with other interconnected issues, and creation of grassroots programs that are self-determined.
6. **Direct service providers** can implement narrative strategies in their everyday practice, counter messaging and narratives that uphold oppressive systems and action, and share learnings from narrative interventions in practice back to the larger field to build a base of frontline workers combatting authoritarianism.
7. **Journalists and media makers** can use storytelling and sharing of narrative strategies and models that incite action and lead everyday people to build solidarity in their communities.
8. **Narrative strategists** can use narrative strategies to inform their framing of stories and, in doing so, build narrative power that moves away from dis- and misinformation and harmful narratives that uphold and legitimize authoritarianism and undermine solidarity.
9. **Funders can be responsive and proactive** investing in narrative experiments, pilot programs, cross-sector collaborations, and case studies to strengthen narrative infrastructure and sustainability.

THIS BRIEF IS A CALL TO ACTION FOR A MORE INTERCONNECTED, SUSTAINABLE NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM ROOTED IN AND BUILDING TOWARDS SOLIDARITY WITH EACH OTHER AND FOR EACH OTHER.