

HOW TO WIN ON HOUSING

PolicyLink, in collaboration with Harmony Labs and Erin Potts, cultural researcher, conducted an analysis to understand how different audiences consume housing-related content on YouTube and identify opportunities to better engage them on housing justice issues. The following five takeaways are derived from the resulting research: *Homes as Sanctuaries: Audience and Storytelling Insights from YouTube*. To uproot harmful narratives and replace them with housing justice narratives, here's our high-level guidance on messaging, language, storytelling, and data.

Center Stories of Personal Experiences With Housing Insecurity

The most powerful stories we can tell are illustrative, values-driven, and centered in love. A genuine connection makes your message more relatable and real.

- **Share first-person stories and lift up leaders.** To grab your audience, use narratives from individuals and families to illustrate the personal impact of housing security. Centering these narratives fosters understanding.
- **Collaborate and drive the conversation.** Identify and promote compelling perspectives to boost engagement. Audiences are drawn to personality-driven content—Who could be our housing justice “personalities”?

Let the Emotion Flow, Let Intellectualizing Go

- **Show, rather than tell.** We need to shift the dominant narratives from intellectualizing houses as structures, settings, and policies to recognizing homes as emotional spaces that enable personal identity and security. How can we tell more compelling stories about the world we are working toward?
- **Paint a picture.** We want to create stories that emotionally resonate, depicting homes as sanctuaries and spaces of identity and security. For example, create art that expands the audience's notions of houses and homes, illustrating what makes a home feel safe.

Leverage Community-Oriented Holidays for Mobilization

- **Explore Halloween narratives.** Leverage neighborhood-centered holidays like Halloween to promote housing justice. Halloween provides an opportunity to strengthen community engagement right before audiences head to the polls. What opportunities are there to lean into neighbor stories or promote the idea of “haunted houses” caused by frightening policies that can be fixed?
- **Craft other holiday campaigns.** What other “neighborly” holidays, at a local or cultural level, could be organizing moments for housing justice?

Weave Housing Justice Themes into Genres Like Gaming, Crime, and Horror

Research suggests techniques from these genres can keep your audience engaged, making housing stories more compelling and impactful.

- **Dive into the arena of video games.** Your audiences can be reached creatively with content that merges gaming and housing themes (e.g., Sims). Consider livestream events, targeted ads, and other opportunities to join the conversation.
- **Incorporate crime and horror storytelling structures.** When telling housing justice stories, add suspense and engage the audience's natural desire to problem-solve and figure out who the culprit is as the story goes along.

Share Examples of Collective Action to Nurture Hope in a Brighter Future

Research shows that [talking about a positive future is critical to moving audiences](#), yet content about the future of housing and homes is scarce.

- **Create positive mini-documentaries.** Produce digital content that showcases the emotional and collective action of communities. These stories can be powerful tools for advocacy and mobilization.
- **Encourage an active solidarity role.** Develop narratives around “[neighboring](#)” as an act of community that holds the power to make our spaces and places home.