



TELLING OUR STORIES IN THESE TIMES

As ICE escalates its abuses of power in a horrifying fashion and disappears more and more of our neighbors, the need for clear and powerful storytelling is greater than ever. And at the same time, especially in these dangerous moments, safety and privacy considerations are of utmost importance.

This short document outlines a few essential considerations for directly affected community members, family members, and advocates to keep in mind when deciding if, when, and how to share your story with the public.

This does not constitute legal advice and the considerations identified here are not intended to be “one-size-fits-all” instructions, but rather a framework that directly affected leaders, organizations, and support teams can use to guide their own conversations and weigh when making decisions.

Planning: Key questions and considerations

1. Put together your team

If a community member is facing or might be facing an immigration case, who is the team supporting them?

- Who will work together? What does your support team look like and how will you make decisions?
- **How will the directly affected person have leadership in the decision-making process and be able to give informed consent?**
 - If the community member is currently detained or incarcerated, do you have regular communication with them?
 - Have you shared information about pros/cons and possible scenarios with clear, non-jargony language and without a predetermined outcome? Has the directly affected community member been able to ask questions freely and set the parameters that feel best for them?
- What roles and capacity does your team have?
 - *Sometimes, many people who are hoping to support a person facing detention or deportation may be quickly added to a thread. Especially in fast moving situations, roles and responsibilities can become unclear. There are many different ways to structure decision-making, but at least one person should be “in charge of” or responsible for making sure the work moves forward. Roles can include:*
 - Legal representation
 - Family
 - Organizers
 - Comm/sMedia:
 - Who can: write materials, be a spokesperson, reach out to press and do social media if that is decided
 - Walk the team through different options for publicity and

- What is your protocol for making decisions in an emergency as a group? Who needs to be consulted?
 - **If you have some time to plan – set aside some time to map out what types of scenarios or outcomes might potentially occur and what threats you might face.** Then outline your goals, the decision-makers and audiences you would need to reach, and the activities you would undertake if these scenarios occur.
 - **In an emergency – again, if a person is facing imminent deportation or significant, immediate harm, and you are still seeking legal representation or other support, the team will have to carefully weigh the pro’s and con’s of moving forward quickly vs a more deliberate approach.**

2. What are your goals in sharing the community member’s story publicly, if you are considering this? What role can media and storytelling play toward advancing your goal(s)?

- Be as specific as possible when outlining your goals. This will help ensure that efforts to pursue a media strategy are aligned with your goals. (Eg, to secure the person’s release from ICE custody; to win a gubernatorial pardon, etc)

3. Who are the specific target decision makers who can make these goals a reality? What do they care about? What action(s) do you want them to take and how/through what tool(s)?

- Who is the decision maker who has control over the outcome you are trying to achieve, and who can influence them (ie, Congressmembers, etc)? What do we know from other recent campaigns about how these or similar target decision makers have responded?

4. How might public attention positively or negatively impact the community member's case?

- **First and foremost, what are the wishes of the directly affected community member?**
- What is your assessment of potential risks: (eg, potential retaliation, unwanted attention in a country the person might be deported to, the potential for ICE vilifying the person) and what is your plan to mitigate or address these?
 - If the community member has an upcoming hearing, how could coverage impact the hearing, positively or negatively?
 - As a collaborative of narrative change practitioners, we believe it is essential that safety is the first priority.

Occasionally, in cases which draw very high levels of publicity, press may seek to interview the community member while they are detained, or even may try to seek out loved ones to interview. Are you prepared for this possibility, and how will you prepare the team and the community member to respond and share interview attempts if this happens?

5. What is your ability to pursue coverage, create content, track coverage and responses on social media, and follow up if necessary?

- Do you know the reporters you are reaching out to?
 - Is there a media contact list of the reporters who are engaging and building with your team?

Storytelling models

- “Self, us, now” model: Learn more [here](#).
- For community members who have a criminal record: We believe that no human being is disposable. [This storytelling worksheet](#) can help you develop your personal story

Options for journalists to protect source's confidentiality

Once your team chooses to pursue placing a story in the news media, you should decide what **conditions** you would like to request (eg, this might include using the community member's middle name instead of their first name or not printing other identifying information. Or, the community member may strongly wish to publish their full name.)

Thoughtful reporters will carefully consider these requests but will need to consult with their editors and may decide they cannot grant the request. It is crucial to propose and **reach agreement with reporters on terms before you share key information.**

****If you reach an agreement with a reporter for full or partial anonymity, you would still share the person's full name with the reporter for verification purposes, but it will not be published.**

Remember, you are always "on the record" when in the presence of media (that includes texts, emails, every form of communication before and after the interview), unless you make a specific agreement with a trusted reporter. Here is how the Associated Press defines these terms in its [style guide](#):

Not everyone understands "off the record" or "on background" to mean the same things. Before any interview in which any degree of anonymity is expected, there should be a discussion in which the ground rules are set explicitly. These are the AP's definitions:

- **On the record.** *The information can be used with no caveats, quoting the source by name.*
- **Off the record.** *The information cannot be used for publication.*
- **Background.** *The information can be published but only under conditions negotiated with the source. Generally, the sources do not want their names published but will agree to a description of their position. (...)*
- **Deep background.** *The information can be used but without attribution. The source does not want to be identified in any way, even on condition of anonymity.*
- *In general, information obtained under any of these circumstances can be pursued with other sources to be placed on the record.*

Below is a compilation of select resources which outline recommendations or policies for journalists that you can consider when crafting your request:

RESOURCE	KEY CONTENT
"Quoting Immigrants." <i>Define American</i> , 2022	<p>This is a guide for journalists that includes recommendations on anonymity, recommendations for reporters on how to talk to sources about using their name, a section on knowing the risks, and more. "Recommendations on anonymity" outlines a hierarchy of attribution for reporters to consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Full name.2. First name.3. Middle name.4. Nickname.5. Initials.6. Do not use a pseudonym unless it is the only way this story—one that could potentially change policy or expose an abuse—can come out.

RESOURCE	KEY CONTENT
<u>Finding Common Ground: Helping Families Shape News Coverage, Protecting Immigrant Families</u> (PIF) 2024.	This interview negotiation guide includes ideas for roles, from spokesperson and journalist, to the basics of family spokesperson prep, along with field-tested tips.
<u>"Required Reading: The Do's And Don'ts' Of Anonymity."</u> NPR, 2017.	<p>NPR's criteria for considering anonymity begins with these three questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the person going to be in danger if we use a full name? • Is the subject sensitive and among those that could come back to haunt the person because the story will live on the Web forever? • How hard have we tried to get others with equally good stories who have no problem with the use of their full names?
<u>"When is it OK to use anonymous sources?"</u> Associated Press, 2018.	"At times, however, there may be a need to use anonymously attributed information in order to tell an important story. This is allowed by AP in carefully defined circumstances: if the information is from a credible source with direct knowledge; if it brings to light important facts that otherwise would remain in the shadows; and if the information can be obtained no other way."
** For survivors of sexual violence, see <u>"What are the best practices when interviewing survivors?"</u> by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center.	"Media outlets should develop and update their privacy policies. According to the AP Stylebook Online (2024), reporters should not identify people who have experienced sexual assault unless the survivor has agreed to be publicly identified. This includes sharing the survivor's name and photo. Anyone under 18 who is a survivor of sexual assault or abuse should never be identified. Additionally, take care not to accidentally reveal a survivor's identity through information such as physical descriptions, addresses, names of family, or other specific details about the case."