

# The Power of Narrative



**CVIPI**  
Community Based Violence Intervention  
and Prevention Initiative

**OJJDP** Office of Juvenile Justice  
and Delinquency Prevention

**NIJ** *National Institute  
of Justice*  
STRENGTHEN SCIENCE. ADVANCE JUSTICE.

Office for Victims of Crime  
**OVC**



**BJA**  
Bureau of Justice Assistance  
U.S. Department of Justice

# The Power of Narrative



**Fatimah Loren Dreier**

Executive Director

The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention

# What is Narrative?

*Narrative is the unspoken beliefs and ideas about the world that show up in our writing and storytelling.*

– The Color of Change



# Narrative Power and Messages

*Narrative defines what we imagine is possible and why, what we aspire to become and how, and whether we feel we have power with or over others – or none at all.*

*Messages with similar themes repeated by different people across different platforms create a narrative that shapes how people think and act on an issue. Messages are trees in the narrative forest.*

– Narrative Initiative





# What is Narrative Change?



# The Role of Message Testing in Narrative Change

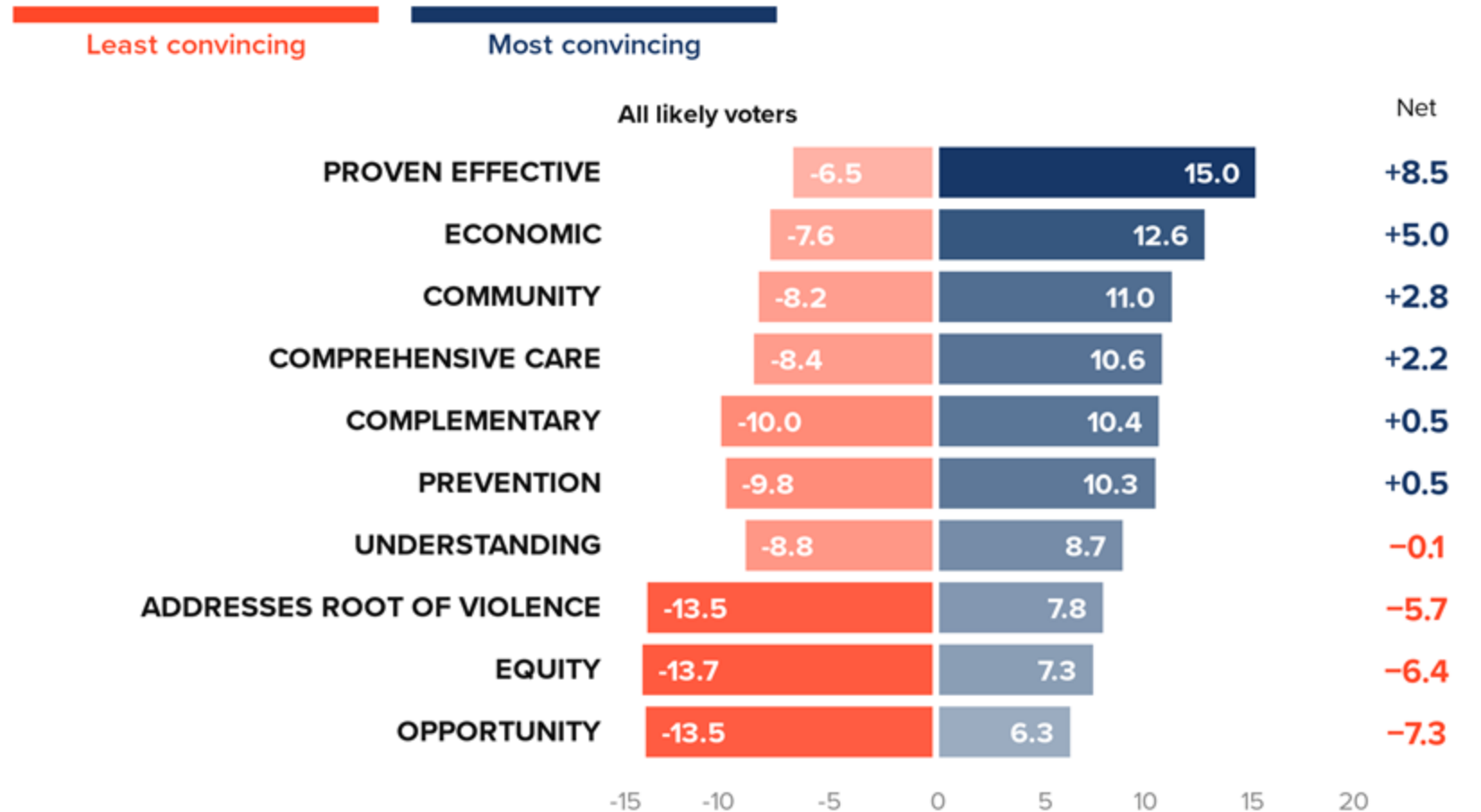
- Message testing can yield insight into which messages resonate the most with various audiences.
- Results are **not definitive** and should not be used prescriptively.
- Message testing and polling reflect **a fixed point in time**; sentiment shifts – sometimes quickly.
- Context, sequencing, and even small wording **changes matter**.



# Community Violence Intervention Message Testing

## All Likely Voters

Respondents selected the messages they found most and least convincing in connection with supporting increased funding for CVI programs.



July 21–23, 2023 survey of 1,284 likely voters

DATA FOR PROGRESS



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# Key Take-Aways

- The most popular messages, focused on efficacy and economic benefits, require both data and frontline voices/stories.
- Further message testing is needed to refine and build upon findings.
- Coordinating message testing efforts across the field will support deeper learning and increase the efficiency and efficacy of this work.







**Courtney Scott,**  
Assistant Chief Administrative Officer,  
City of Baton Rouge



# The Voices of Power Initiative



**DeAngelo Harris-Rosa,**  
Deputy Director,  
Philadelphia Office of Violence Prevention



# Leveraging Storytelling and Community Narratives to Help Advance Public Education in CVI: The Voices of Power Initiative

DeAngelo Harris-Rosa  
Founder of Voices of Power



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PHILADELPHIA, PA

**DeAngelo Harris-Rosa**  
**Founder of Voices of Power**  
**Co-Founder for Civically Engaged**



Graduated in 2024 from the University of Chicago “Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy”

Serves as the Deputy Director for the Philadelphia Office of Violence Prevention

Former Trail Commissioner for the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania

Former Diversion Paralegal for the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office

# Problem Statement

MOST GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS IN NEWS COVERAGE AND RADIO PROMOTION ARE ONLY REPORTED FOR 10-15 SECONDS

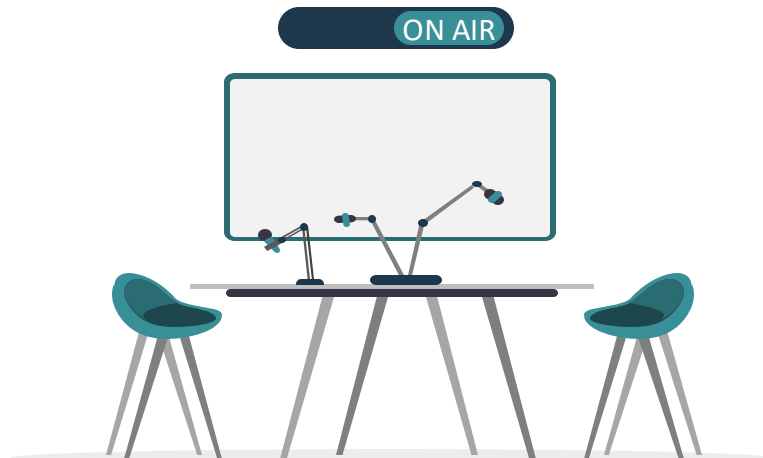
TODAY'S YOUTH ARE ONLY BEING TAUGHT WHAT THEY SEE

COMMUNITY WANTS TO BE CONNECTED BUT DON'T KNOW HOW

# Program Implementation



To elevate our work and exchange ideas and practices, we need to shift our communication behaviors to empower those striving for excellence in this field.





# Program Implementation

Voices of Power is an innovative approach to advance public education and discourse around reimagining public safety rooted in CVI, using syndicated radio and a multi-platform podcast. Through the practice of storytelling, it enables CVI leaders, local influences, youth, community members, and various other stakeholders to share and discuss CVI best practices and promising strategies highlighting that:

1. CVI works
2. Collaboration matters
3. The Voices of those most impacted are valued



# Program Implementation

The podcast initiative harnesses the power of storytelling to amplify the voices of those credible. Guests from diverse backgrounds can share their lived experiences and narratives, cultivating authentic dialogues that value each voice equally and catalyzing community transformation. Furthermore, this initiative will be hosted in a central hub for networking, collaborative events, and workshops, fostering genuine connections and nurturing personal and organizational growth.

This approach champions constructive conversations, mutual respect, and unity within varied communities. It spotlights commonalities and shared aspirations over differences to inspire social change. In doing so, it seeks to redefine roles within the community, reverse trends of violence, and lay the foundation for a legacy of peace and prosperity for future generations.



# Changing public perception to address community norms and false narratives around CVI



The amount of toxic and violent messaging and images we see each day on different media platforms in the world leads us to believe that positive influence and joint CVI partnerships can no longer exist. Voices of Power helps to dismantle those barriers through the following:

- Illustrate how youth and those affected by justice are seeking traditional public safety solutions, underscoring a gap in awareness of alternative approaches.
- Bridges the gaps between different community cultures and customs to help develop a roadmap for a safer and healthier CVI ecosystem.
- Foster a platform that unites varied voices to challenge the misconception that Community Violence Intervention (CVI) and law enforcement are inherently opposed, advocating for a unified strategy.
- Encourage genuine connections with the audience by embracing speakers' unique communication styles, moving beyond professional formalities.



## Contact information

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“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

By Andrew Whitby



**CVIPI**  
Community Based Violence Intervention  
and Prevention Initiative



**Jamila Hodge,**  
Executive Director,  
Equal Justice USA



# Seabrooks-Washington Community-Led Crisis Response Act



Najee Seabrooks



Andrew Washington





# Trauma to Trust



- Trauma to Trust is a multi-session training program and approach that brings community members and law enforcement officials together to foster empathy and mutual understanding of trauma through conversations about race, trauma, violence, and social and economic inequity.
- Trauma to Trust operates in Newark, NJ and Baton Rouge, LA



# Closing

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  - Twitter/X: [@EJUSA](https://twitter.com/EJUSA)
  - Instagram: [@equaljusticeusa](https://www.instagram.com/equaljusticeusa)

Resources:

