

# BUILDING SKILLS

## LESSON 7: PUBLIC NARRATIVE

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

💡 *Develop skills for sharing personal stories that connect with community stakeholders and call others to action.*

💡 *Learn to use stories to develop leadership and make a difference.*

## LESSON OVERVIEW

“Public narrative” is a concept developed by Marshall Ganz, senior lecturer at Harvard University, based on his work as an organizer over many years. Participants will use Ganz’s essay, “What Is Public Narrative?” and the *Public Narrative Participant Guide* to develop their own public narratives. This process will help students explore the power of crafting stories to develop leadership in themselves and others.

## SUGGESTED PLAN [🕒 75 minutes]

# LESSON PREPARATION

1. Review Marshall Ganz's essay, "What Is Public Narrative?" <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/30760283> and Ganz's *Public Narrative Participant Guide* <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Public%20Narrative%20Participant%20Guide.pdf>. Make copies of the essays or prepare to make them available to all participants electronically.

2. Prepare to screen a video of the following speech as an example of public narrative: "6.12 Seconds—James Croft's Harvard LGBT Bullying Speech," <https://youtube.com/watch?v=lymvc5d6qxY/>. (If desired, find a different relevant speech for participants to view or read.)

## INTRODUCING PUBLIC NARRATIVE [🕒 20 minutes]

Introduce the idea of public narrative as conceptualized by Marshall Ganz. Introduce the role of stories and the public narrative practice of combining stories of "self, us, and now" -- why you care about the problem(s) you are organizing to change, how these issues are broader community challenges, and what concrete actions can make a difference.

Distribute Ganz's *Public Narrative Participant Guide* <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Public%20Narrative%20Participant%20Guide.pdf>. Have students review the guide individually.

Watch the James Croft speech, "6.12 Seconds," with the full group and ask students to identify aspects of the speech that were most effective and noteworthy. Specifically, ask them to describe how the speaker uses the "self-us-now" public narrative framework.

## THINK/PAIR/SHARE [🕒 40 minutes]

Ask participants to use the Marshall Ganz handout to develop their own public narrative on a topic of their choice, using these questions as a guide:

- What is the issue/problem you want to tackle/see change?
- Why are you called to make that change? What specific experiences have shaped your story of self?
- What personal story can you tell that will help others understand why you want to make that change?
- How does this issue impact others in the community?
- What might be done to address this issue?

Participants should work in pairs for about 10 minutes to develop and practice their stories with their partner. Next, have them present their narrative in small groups of four (have each pair join another pair) to practice their stories. Small groups provide an opportunity for each participant to share their story and get feedback from peers. Have each participant share the story (2-3 minutes, depending on group size) and then get feedback (3-4 minutes). Then, the next participant should share their story using the same process until everyone has had a turn.

## **PUBLIC EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK [15 MINUTES]**

Bring the group back together to debrief the experience of telling their stories and getting feedback from peers. Ask participants to reflect on their learning and to evaluate public narrative as a tool for making change.

Have students think about how they might use this public skill in the future. Encourage them to share specific plans for practicing their public narrative as part of an organizing campaign or in another public setting.

