# DIGITAL POWER

## July 2021

Best Practices for Strengthening Strategic Communications for **Social Justice Documentary Engagement**



**CMSI** CENTER FOR MEDIA & SOCIAL IMPACT

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# About the *Digital Power* Initiative & Report



**CMSi** CENTER FOR MEDIA & SOCIAL IMPACT
SCHOOL of COMMUNICATION
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

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*proudly present:*

**DIGITAL POWER 2020**

**Webinar Series** on strategic digital communications to enable documentary impact campaigns to thrive

Mondays 1pm to 2:30 EST Starting Sep. 28

→ **Building a Movement** with Powerful Media Relations
→ **Digital Events:** Bring Power to Community and Corporates
→ The Essentials of **Web & Social Media Analytics**
→ **Digital Content Creation** & Distribution Strategy
→ Effective **Strategic Communications** to Deliver Radical Change
→ Rapid Response & **Social Justice Mobilization**
→ & More!

cmsimpact.org/DigitalPower2020    **MyClearText**

**In 2020, the historic societal upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted industries and professional life around the world, including film and TV.**

Documentary storytellers, impact producers, and engagement strategists were affected in countless ways, compelling new strategy lessons and approaches to their work. Documentaries with social impact goals were challenged to move beyond the legacy of physical screenings and community-based events to find audiences, spur dialogue, create partnerships, and forge movements in the virtual world. Given the constraints of the moment, questions about digital engagement were given fresh urgency and importance, such as: how might digital strategic communications best practices enrich the world of documentary storytelling for social change? When it comes to the virtual world of communications and public engagement, what can the documentary sector learn from leaders across disparate fields of entertainment, social movements, and public relations and marketing?

The *Digital Power* series, an 8-part masterclass webinar series (September to November 2020), aimed to address these questions by inviting leading communication and marketing strategists to join in conversation with documentary impact strategists and makers around the world. Each week during a 90-minute interactive session, top-level digital and social media strategic communication professionals shared their best practices, tips, and tools for how to use digital strategies to build social justice power. Facilitated and hosted by the Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI), based in the United States, and Together Films, based in the US and UK, *Digital Power* provided tips and tools of the trade—from social movements to entertainment TV—to the documentary community.

As some of the most widely recognized and respected leaders in their field, the speakers draw from a cross-section of diverse experiences, goals, and fields of expertise within media impact and storytelling—extending across film, documentary and TV production, strategic communication, narrative change, social media/content, advocacy, social justice, journalism, and digital marketing.

This report provides an overview of the *Digital Power* webinar presentations and highlights some of the key lessons and top tips shared by its speakers, including:

- **how social, digital media and other communications strategies can support powerful movements for social change;**
- **why it's important to understand a communication strategist's role in a community;**
- **how social analytics can help you identify the best platforms and approaches for your engagement activities;**
- **how to prepare for and host digital events (including specific strategies that can be used to keep audiences engaged);**
- **how to plan your social media campaign, create successful calls to action, make campaigns easy for people to interact with, and inject humor into your digital presence;**
- **how to use Twitter chats and podcasts in digital campaigns;**
- **how to conduct narrative power analysis to help you tell complete stories that fight harmful narratives, create narrative equity, and change dominant culture;**
- **how to create clear communication strategies that reflect the urgency of the climate crisis and environmental challenges;**
- **how to decide if an event is worth responding to and what engagement steps can be taken for rapid response and mobilization that can ultimately turn presence into power.**

In this report, brief highlight summaries of each presentation are grouped around three themes that emerged organically throughout the series:

1. Using Digital Communication/Media Strategies to Support Powerful Social Movements
2. Being Prepared and Understanding the Power of the Digital Tools and Narratives You Use
3. How to Use Social Media Tools, Campaigns and Analytics for Social Impact

A full list of the tools and resources of the speakers are provided at the end of this report. The full masterclass webinar presentations can be found and replayed at CMSImpact.org.

> ### *Digital Power* strategy & producing team:
>
> **Caty Borum Chattoo**, Executive Director of CMSI and **Sarah Mosses**, Founder & CEO of Together Films, led the project with support from **Alana Jeffery** (Impact Strategy and Development Manager, Together Films) and **Varsha Ramani** (Communications & Program Manager, CMSI). **Sahar Driver**—documentary impact strategist, researcher and educator—served as the Consulting Producer. **Jordana Jason** produced the series. This report was prepared by **Caty Borum Chattoo**, **David Conrad-Pérez**, **Alya Aziz-Zaman**, and **Camille Pipino**.

## About the Center for Media & Social Impact

The Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI), based at American University's School of Communication, is a creative innovation lab and research center that creates, studies, and showcases media for equity, social change, and social justice. Focusing on independent, documentary, and entertainment media, they produce resources for the field and academic research; create original media; convene conferences and events; and work collaboratively to understand and design media that matter.

**www.cmsimpact.org**

## About Together Films

Together Films is a Marketing, Distribution & Data agency serving film clients worldwide. They offer strategic consultancy and campaign delivery in addition to developing bespoke technical solutions for the film industry. Based on their custom Impact Distribution Strategy methodology, they devise concepts to ensure that your work is seen by the right audience at the right time. Their clients include Filmmakers, Film Festivals, Sales Agents, Distributors, Brands and NGOs—all seeking support on distribution and marketing efforts.

**www.togetherfilms.org**

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PERSPECTIVE FUND

# Introducing the Speakers

**Chelsea Fuller**, former Deputy Director of Communications at Blackbird Communications, helps lead a strategic communications practice that powers movements. Her work with the MeToo Movement and The Movement for Black Lives has led to fundamental shifts in policy and practice nationwide. She is currently the Vice President for Communication at the Times Up Foundation.

**CHELSEA FULLER**

**Devorne Hormeku** is the former Senior Social Media and Content Manager at Color of Change, which is the nation's largest online racial justice organization, driven by more than 7 million members who are building power for Black communities. Color Of Change uses innovative technology, research, media savvy and community engagement to create a less hostile world for Black people, and all people in this country. Devorne studied at Utica College and has a background in public relations in the entertainment industry.

**DEVORNE HORMEKU**

**Aryah Lester,** nationally awarded author, as well as a speaker and educator, is a Black woman of transgender experience from New York living in Washington DC. Ms. Lester is a board member of Equality Florida's TransAction Florida committee, and helped to create the TransArt series with the Betsy Hotel, the LGBT Visitors Center, and UC|CU. Ms. Lester is also Board Chair of STARR, the nation's first transgender organization initially founded by Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, and Advisory Board Member for Trans Tech Social Enterprises, Gilead Sciences, The Well Project, and ViiV Healthcare. She currently works as Deputy Director of the Transgender Strategy Center.

**ARYAH LESTER**

For more than ten years, **Shanelle Matthews** has partnered with social justice activists, organizations, and campaigns to inspire action through storytelling and communications. In 2016, Shanelle founded the Radical Communicators Network (RadComms), a go-to hub for cutting edge skills-building, values-aligned political education, and cross-movement collaboration for grassroots social justice communicators. In the fall of 2017, Shanelle joined The New School, a University in Manhattan as its inaugural Activist-in-Residence. She holds a degree in Journalism and New and Online Media from the Manship School of Mass Communications at Louisiana State University.

**SHANELLE MATTHEWS**

**Jason Mollica** is an award-winning, seasoned strategic communication professional with more than 20 years of experience as a journalist, news producer, and public relations specialist. He has been nominated for an Emmy as a television producer and he was an integral part of the team that launched Fox News Radio in 2003. Jason was also feted with a Gold Award from the Hermes Creative Awards for "The Secrets of Power Pitching." At American University, he has taught, among other courses, Strategic Communication Writing in the Professional MA program, Public Relations and Public Communication Research for undergraduates, and in the Online Master's Degree program.

**JASON MOLLICA**

**Ana Bretón** is a former Digital Producer at the hit comedic public affairs TV program, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, where she worked in digital and social media strategy. She is currently with *The Drew Barrymore Show*.

**ANA BRETÓN**

**Alice Aedy** is the Founder of Frame Of Mind, an online platform spotlighting the female storytellers shaping our understanding of the defining social issues of our time, and Earthrise Studio, a platform dedicated to communicating the climate and ecological crisis.

**ALICE AEDY**
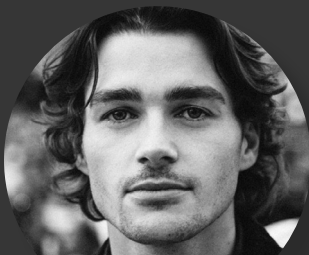
**Jack Harries** is a documentary filmmaker and environmental activist. At the age of 18, he and his brother, Finn, founded JacksGap, a YouTube platform that explored forced migration, mental health and environmental issues. To date the channel has more than 4 million subscribers and 200 million views. Most recently, Jack has co-launched Earthrise Studio, a media company and educational platform focused on communicating the climate crisis and galvanizing the next generation of activists.

**JACK HARRIES**

**Chevon Drew**, Senior Digital Strategist at Race Forward, has advised the world's largest brands on social content strategy. A veteran of the NYC tech startup community, she is a vocal advocate for diversity, and provides digital consulting to entrepreneurs in the music, entertainment, and nonprofit industries. Chevon manages the career of visual artist Michael "TTK" Harris, and speaks publicly about women, diversity, and authenticity. Chevon also serves on the advisory board for WAM!NYC (the NY chapter of Women, Action & the Media).

**CHEVON DREW**

# Using Digital Communication and Media Strategies to Support Powerful Social Movements

**Strategic communications work has always played a vital role in powerful movements for social change, but as Chelsea Fuller warns, there is a difference between communicators who see digital media strategies as a means for "supporting" social movements and those who think they are "creating" them**. The difference here is central, she says, as a communicator who understands their role as a supporter is more likely to understand the history of the issues they are engaged in and are better positioned to build trust and solidarity with the communities they seek to serve. In her presentation, Chelsea provides an overview of the foundational communications strategies and tactics that have driven some of the most *effective* social movements in history, and how impact producers can best *work with* and *support* movement communicators going forward.

This context of supportive strategies and listening to existing narratives and conversations taking place around social movements is also central to what Devorne Hormeku says is key to the strategic programming and decision-making frameworks that he uses at Color of Change, the largest racial justice organization in the United States. Devorne says that this includes bringing a purposeful framework to taking on the everyday challenge of deciding what social events within a given social movement that they should focus on and lift for wider awareness and action, and to repeatedly asking the question *"Would our campaign add to a conversation, begin a new one, or shift an existing narrative?"* In his presentation, Devorne brings his perspective and experience to this challenge of deciding what event to focus on for action, and the methodological steps for rapid response and mobilization that he says can ultimately turn "presence into power."

# Building a Movement with Powerful Media Relations

STEWARDS OF THE STORY

Presented by **Chelsea Fuller**
*Blackbird Communications,
Movement for Black Lives*

**Key Takeaways:**

Chelsea Fuller demonstrates how **communications strategies can support powerful movements for social change**; why it's important to understand a strategist's role in a community, and how to navigate the media landscape with management tools, thoughtful pitches, and relationships with members of the press.

**Important Tips and Insights:**

- Powerful media relationships build movements, right? Nope. Communications strategies can support powerful movements—this is no small semantic difference.

- There is a difference between a communicator and a storyteller who understands her/his/their role in communities.
  - As communicators, we must strive to understand how to leverage our privilege, power, and access to be in service to the work that people are doing and the movements they are building.
  - Being a communicator and storyteller is a tremendous honor, but one with a lot of responsibility.
  - Being a steward of others' stories comes with a higher level of responsibility—one that requires you to communicate that story to the world in a way that mitigates harm to the people to whom those stories belong.

- It's important to be in the right relationship with communities served by our communication work. This means:
  - Knowing your role by making sure you're operating under a value system that aligns with the value systems of the people that have invited you in.
  - Knowing what's at stake by understanding that increased visibility without increased support/protection makes folks more vulnerable to job loss, investigation or increased surveillance, and/or harassment or targeting from the opposition.
  - Being prepared to make tough calls regarding engagement goals by selecting target audiences, understanding the difference between reach and impact.
  - Accepting the "no" when it comes.

- Understand the difference between strategy (several tactics working in tandem to achieve short and long-term objectives—the WHAT) and tactics (the specific actions we move to achieve a goal—the HOW)

**Tools and Tactics**

- **Media Management Tools** (article author databases, auto-updated media lists, campaign management tools, clippings management tools, communications calendars, contact management tools, digital asset management tools, direct mail management tools, email distribution tools, press monitoring tools, and press release builders)
- Some PR and communications software recommended include:
  - **Cision**—includes media monitoring, social influencer databases, and media coverage analytics, among other resources
  - **Meltwater**—includes media monitoring, media databases, newsletters and website feeds, social media monitoring, social media engagement, social influencer management, newswire distribution, and more
  - **Muckrack**—includes media databases, media monitoring, personalized pitching assistance, earned media reporting, and other tools.
- Media Relations
  - Create a pitching strategy
  - Maintain an editorial calendar
  - Press list and engagement timeline
  - Use Cision to have up-to-date lists of editors, etc.
- Media Monitoring
  - Track news and narrative trends that are relevant to your work to find opportunities to make interventions
  - Track keywords
- Owned Media: Use the creation of organic content to increase engagement to drive earned media coverage—use your own blog, newsletter, and website to publish content!

**Question**: Strong and clear strategy falls apart when it has to be all things to all people. How do you maintain strong, clear, and sound vision—in other words, strategy—when you're creating that strategy in collaboration with many people?

**Answer:** COVID has really changed the game, especially for people that are doing direct grassroots organizing for whom everything is now all digital. Lately, a big part of my leadership has been stopping people from spiraling based on ideas like, "Everything has to be digital, and digital looks like this."

The first thing people want to do is an influencer strategy and a series of social media tactics. It has been my responsibility to say, "That's cute, but how is it achieving a goal?" I'm constantly reminding people that just because everything has to be online does not mean that every tactic has to be for everybody.

I take my marching orders from organizers, but I also have to stand in my own expertise as a communicator and a digital strategist. They are base-builders, so they often think of their audience as a base. And it's often my job to remind them that their base is not a monolith. Within a base there could be a hundred audiences.

**Quick Links**

# Rapid Response & Mobilization in Reaction to the Instability of Social Justice Today



SOCIAL MEDIA + CONTENT

Presented by **Devorne Hormeku**, *Color Of Change*

**Key Takeaways:**

Devorne Hormeku shares experiences around **how to respond quickly and thoughtfully to news events**, including those that are sensitive, traumatic, and/or rooted in systemic injustices like racism and police brutality; how to decide if an event warrants a response; how to design rapid response and mobilization strategies that can ultimately turn presence into power.

## Important Tips and Insights:

- Social media and content is at the heart of how we rapidly respond to news events, elections, police killings, and laws that will harm Black communities

- Social media plays an integral role in the health of the relationships that we have with key stakeholders and the general public
  - It's also the first line of communication our members receive from us before they receive an email

- With social media, we aim to convert our online communities to members
  - We want to move them from presence to power
  - We want to involve them in an activism relationship with us that goes beyond just signing a petition
  - We want them organizing in their own communities to make a better space for Black folks there

- All of our rapid response messaging falls under 4 content pillars:
  - **Inform**—Make sure Black people have the most updated info about the issues that impact them the most
  - **Contextualize**—Provide info in an easy and digestible way so they know how an issues is affects them and their loved ones
  - **Inspire**—Inspire our communities to take action, to see the joy in themselves, and to know they're not alone and their voice matters
  - **Activate**—We want them to sign petitions, to raise awareness, to use their voices to advocate for change and to activate their communities, their family members, and their friends towards making the world a less hostile place for Black people

- Before you decide to respond to something in the news, make sure you have a rapid response messaging strategy. Our strategy begins with asking these questions:
  - Does the issue or national happening directly tie into Color of Change's brand values or campaigns?
  - Is there an innovative way to humanize the issue before calling for action?
  - Is there potential for longevity and scaling?
  - Would our campaign add to a conversation, begin a new one, or shift an existing narrative?
  - If there is an influential narrator that can deliver the message at mass?

- Our rapid response steps are:
  - Responding on social media with a simple call to action.
  - Sending emails that give more context for the information on social media and offer more tangible ways to take action.
  - Launching targeted advocacy campaigns, like petition pages and text codes.
  - Reaching out to key influencers who align with COC's values to share our stories, giving the issue a human voice and reaching more people.
  - Using earned media (like press statements, op-eds, ads, petition deliveries, and press conferences) to galvanize more supporters (this is how we scale up and reach an even wider audience).

**Tools:**
- **Building Narrative Power**—A series of papers and presentations from Color of Change and Rashad Robinson focused on strategy, infrastructure and content for culture change and narrative change strategies
- **Ella Baker's Catalytic Leadership: A Primer on Community Engagement and Communication for Social Justice, by Patricia Parker**—A book about the legacy of influential African American civil rights and human rights activist Ella Baker.
- **Falcon**—A social media management and content creation platform.

## Highlight from Audience Q&A

**Question:** How do you manage the daily flood of interaction that you're faced with? How do you interact with your community as you're publishing, scheduling, and looking at analytics? How do you balance your time between creating content and being receptive to the community's engagement?

**Answer:** I'm fortunate to have staff that I've tasked with managing each specific platform, and that involves community management. We don't spend a lot of time managing trolls because they just want the attention.

For community management, we just block off time. We don't always have time during the day, but it's just a matter of setting aside an hour or two thirty-minute blocks a day. During a Facebook Live or Instagram Live, we have someone actively managing the comments during the event. Some things might get lost in the shuffle, but that's just the nature of the work. We just don't have time!

**Quick Links**

*Section Two*

# Being Prepared and Understanding the Power of Tools and Narratives

**Central to the importance of social listening and *supportive* communication strategies are the values of being prepared, getting outside of echo chambers, and understanding the power of the narratives and tools we use.** This means starting from the premise that well-meaning intentions can still produce harm, and one of the greatest antidotes to harm is being prepared and informed on the issues and tools we use before engaging larger audiences with them.

On the topic of virtual events, Aryah Lester explains why being prepared is one of the most important steps for communicators to take. This means familiarizing yourself with the technology ahead of time—and understanding that the same strategies used in in-person workshops won't necessarily be effective within the virtual environment. To tackle this challenge, Aryah shares experiences and strategies that she uses to keep audiences engaged and visible, and what resources she finds most useful in these efforts.

Alongside the importance of being prepared and strategic in the use of digital technology, Shanelle Matthews brings the focus of the conversation to digital tools that can be used to both make a connection between audiences and the goals of documentaries, and to ensuring that the narratives you tell and use are the most effective in reaching such goals. She explains how the goal of narrative power is "to tell complete stories that lead to complete interventions and solutions, to create narrative equity, and change dominant culture," and it means understanding the story you want to tell with your documentary and asking (in advance) what questions, narratives and actions do you want it to create? In her presentation, Shanelle illustrates how narrative power shapes the norms and rules that society lives by, and how to conduct your own narrative power analysis to help you use strategies and research (including public opinion data) to tell more complete stories that fight harmful narratives, create narrative equity, and change dominant culture.

# Maximizing the Effectiveness of Digital Events: Bring Power to Community & Corporates

Presented by **Aryah Lester**,
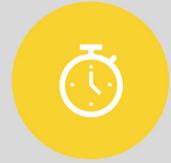*Transgender Strategy Center*

*From Instructional Workshops to Panels: Creating Engaging Online Events*
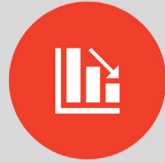
| MEGA CORPORATIONS AND CANCEL CULTURE: THE SCRAMBLE OF TRADITIONAL SYSTEMS | ENGAGING YOUR AUDIENCE VIRTUALLY: HOW TO GAUGE REALTIME EFFECTIVENESS | INTENTIONAL INJECTION: CREATING IMPACT WITH A COMMUNITY LENS |

## Key Takeaways:

Aryah Lester details the importance of being prepared ahead of organizing a digital event (along with what "being prepared" means) in order to ensure that you are **fostering an inclusive environment where diverse communities can engage beneficially with you**; how to familiarize yourself with the technology ahead of time; and which strategies are most effective in keeping audiences motivated and paying attention.

## Important Tips and Insights:

- At the Transgender Strategy Center (TSC) (a transgender-led organization providing support, training, and coaching that prioritizes grassroots trans-led organizations throughout the U.S.), we utilize a racial, gender, and economic justice framework to elevate trans leaders and organizations for sustainability to effectively address critically community issues. We believe trans liberation only comes through the leadership of trans communities.

- Mega-corporations and Cancel Culture: Currently, we're witnessing a rise in racial tensions that is manifesting as "cancel culture" and the "karen movement." A lot of corporations are trying to ensure they "look right" to the public, which is where we often come in. Is this capitalizing on corporate guilt? Yes, indeed it is!

- Tips for hosting a digital event:
  - Before an event, decide which tools you'll use, set up the shared space, test equipment, and do a run-through.
  - At the start of an event, say hello, check in, and set the agenda, expectations, and working instructions.
  - During an event, keep the energy high and the focus clear, break up in small groups when needed, be strict with air-time, and utilize the chat.
  - At the end of an event, summarize information, ask for feedback, thank participants for their input and time.
  - Controlling Your Impact: Just as you control your environment, control your impact. Don't expect everything to go smoothly all the time—be prepared for issues to arise and don't stress about them! Be ok with the silences, pauses, and technical glitches. Don't get exasperated. Give yourself time.

Tools:
- **Slido.com**—An app for conducting digital polls and Q and A sessions in meetings
- **Streamyard**—A live-streaming studio that runs the browser (no download needed) and has features for interviewing guests, screen sharing, and more
- **Crowdcast**—A live video platform with no required downloads, a single URL for meetings, interactive Q and A, a chat feature, and polls

### Highlight from Audience Q&A

**Question:** What if your presentation might introduce triggering content?

**Answer:** Frame your presentation at the beginning as potentially triggering. Have a mental health professional on hand with their own access to a breakout room—make a digital space for people who need assistance, and have slideshows going in that space with soothing images, hotline numbers, and links to digital resources.

**Quick Links**

# Using Narrative Power as a Lever of Change



Presented by **Shanelle Matthews**,
*Radical Communicators Network*

**Key Takeaways:**

Shanelle Matthews explains how **narrative power shapes the norms and rules by which our society functions**, and she details how to conduct research-driven narrative power analysis to help strategists tell complete stories that fight (rather than reproduce) harmful narratives, create narrative equity, and are therefore capable of helping to change dominant culture.

**Important Tips and Insights:**

- Why are narratives important?
    - Narratives aren't linear, they're understood on a gut level
    - Everything we do as activists, organizers, and documentarians has a narrative realm—we need to understand the full breadth and context of those narratives in order to successfully change them or intervene on them

- A narrative power analysis can help you assess the stories that prop up the status quo of power and give you a blueprint for how to intervene. Developed by Patrick Reinsborough and Doyle Canning from the Center for Story Based Strategy, a narrative power analysis is a line of inquiry that allows us to assess the stories that prop up the status quo of power and gives us a blueprint for how to intervene.
    - It's based on the recognition that the currency of a story is not necessarily truth, but meaning—not facts but how the story creates meaning in the hearts and minds of the listeners.
    - Often, the obstacle is not what your audience doesn't know, but what they do know—their existing

assumptions and beliefs, which can act as filters that prevent them from hearing social change messages.

- When conducting a narrative power analysis, start with the following questions:
  - How is the conflict framed?
  - Who are the key characters?
  - What are the conditions responsible for the problem?
  - What unexamined assumptions allow the narrative to operate as truth?
- By doing this analysis, we understand the story we're trying to change, identify the underlying assumptions that allow the story to operate as truth, and identify points of intervention in the story where we can challenge the story, change the story, or insert a new story.

- The goal of narrative power is to tell complete stories that lead to complete interventions and solutions—to create narrative equity and change dominant culture.

- Best practices for building narrative power include being willing to be self-critical, putting relationships first, centering the margins, telling intersectional stories, and maintaining the drumbeat.

- Construct a powerful message using The Opportunity Agenda's Value, Problem, Solution, Action (VPSA) message-building tool, a cognitive methodology for opening the mind of the listener/viewer/reader first with the value (that's hard to say no to), then the problem, then the solution.



**PROBLEM**
*What problem are you working to solve?*

**VALUES**
*What values are central to your issue?*

**What is you main message?**
*What is the most important thing you want your audience to know?*

**SOLUTION**
*What solution are you presenting?*

**ACTION/IMPACT**
*What action can people take?*
*OR*
*What impact would solving for this problem have?*
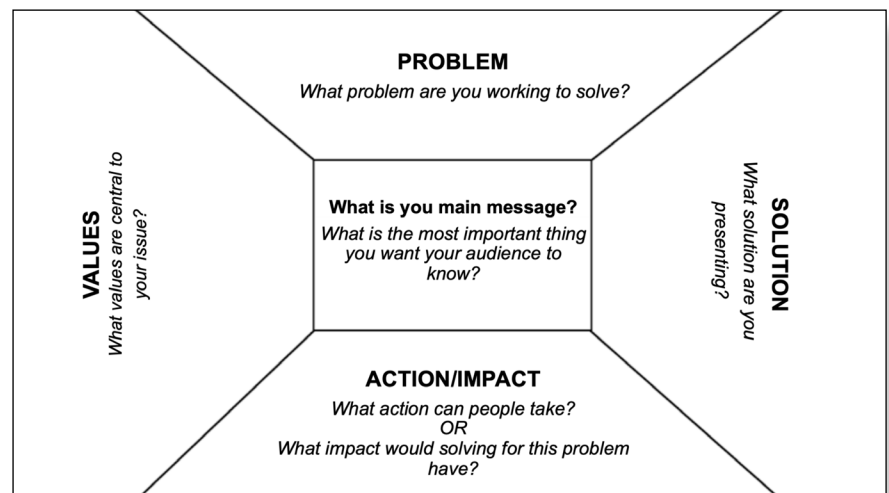
  - Your issue is in the middle of the VPSA – your main message (what is the most important thing your audience needs to know?)
  - Values are on the left of the VPSA – what values are central to your issue? Fairness, accessibility, family, etc. (you can just google "Values" for ideas)
    - Leading with values creates a broad point of agreement that resonates with almost any audience
  - Problems are on the top of the VPSA – clearly stating the problem to create urgency and connect the story to broader systems and dynamics
  - Solutions are on the right of the VPSA – give your audience a sense of hope and motivation
    - What is the solution are you presenting?
    - Does your audience know exactly what to do? Are they overwhelmed?
  - Action and impact are on the bottom of the VPSA
    - What action can people take today? What impact would solving this problem have?

## Highlight from Audience Q&A

**Question:** Are there moments where your own research has challenged your personal point of view on an issue?

**Answer:** Yes! All the time. I'm a forever learner—the best practice I shared earlier about being critical of yourself is a key principle in my life. We're all socialized in a particular way. All of the beliefs I have are taught to me by my community, my parents, my schools, and that is a very narrow understanding of the world.

For example, I brought all of my parents' belief systems into college and into my twenties. I thought things about people that were tropes I was taught by television. I grew up in 1980s and '90s Los Angeles during the height of the War on Drugs, the War on Poverty, the AIDS epidemic, and the crack epidemic. My father was incarcerated and my mom was a single parent. So I was contending with every single negative trope about Black families that was proliferated at the time. And I repeated all that! It was embarrassing!

In this process and this work, you will constantly be challenged. Have a personal set of principles and values you always come back to. One of them should always be being ok with being wrong. Brené Brown has a lot of tools for dealing with the shame of being wrong about something. We all feel that embarrassment. Sit with the heat of it for a moment, then keep it moving! As Brené Brown says, I want to "get it right," not "be right."

*Section Three*

# How to Use Social Media Tools, Campaigns and Analytics for Social Impact

**This section includes best practices and resources for doing the nitty gritty work of building social media campaigns around documentaries, along with using available social media analytics and tools to achieve effective social impact goals.** The presentations include perspectives shared by strategic communication specialists and digital organizers with decades of experience working across traditional media, social media, and TV and film.

Ana Bretón shares her experiences and tips from being a documentarian, social justice organizer, and a former digital producer with the hit satirical news TV program, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee.* Ana shares how she has worked to keep audiences engaged in the show's key conversations and issues long after its airtime and how she has worked to translate the show's calls to action into tangible political change. Ana also illustrates how to inject humor into your digital campaigns, how to build digital campaigns and effective "calls to action," and how to, as she playfully puts it, ultimately direct "audiences to do what you want them to do."

Jason Mollica shares his experience on how social media analytics and research can be used to fuel digital strategies, how to grow and sustain relationships through social media channels, and how to identify which social networks make the most sense for each distinct project.

Alice Aedy and Jack Harries zoom in on the climate crisis and provide insights about how to communicate urgency around important issues, using the example of their recent impact campaign to engage young people into action around environmental issues. They share effective digital storytelling techniques, tips for how to develop informative and shareable content on Instagram and other platforms, and how to maneuver the process of brand development to build wider reaching engagement campaigns in support of positive social and environmental change.

Chevon Drew then calls for a purposeful pause before diving too deep into building each campaign. Chevon points to the importance of grounding digital impact work in first considering core questions like "who" (you are talking with/to), "what" (is the goal/is the outcome), "where" (are your audiences hanging out online/can you reach them), and "how much" (funding and resources do you have to work with)? Focusing in on the mediums of Twitter chats and podcasts, often overlooked by documentary makers, Chevon provides her firsthand experience and best practices in working with these channels to advance digital campaigns, including equipment and gear.

# The Essentials of Web & Social Media Analytics to Fuel Digital Strategy

| | |
|---|---|
| 01 | See Who "Likes" You |
| 02 | Take Time to Talk Back |
| 03 | Make it Easy |

Presented by **Jason Mollica**,
*American University*

**Key Takeaways:**

Jason Mollica details how **social and digital media can be used to build and maintain a communications campaigns**; how social media analytics can help with strategic communications decisions; which tools and techniques are worth considering when analyzing social media; and how analytics research can shape your overall plan and help you identify the best platform for your work.

**Important Tips and Insights:**

- Top five reasons we share online:
  1. To bring valuable, entertaining content to others
  2. To define themselves and others
  3. To get and stay connected to others
  4. For self-fulfillment
  5. To support causes they care about

- Start with one social media platform and be excellent at it—don't overwhelm yourself! Despite all of the new players popping up, the top three are Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.
  - Facebook is a great place to start for a business or a film
    - It motivates people to comment on your posts
    - It's a good place for longer-form video
  - Twitter has its ups and downs and is dependent on the audience and generation

- It's a place where people get breaking news
- It allows you to find and engage with a specific audience using hashtags and list
- Instagram is great for videos
  - It's also great for capturing a moment in time
  - It's a good place to share behind-the-scenes photo and video of your project

- The built-in analytic tools on social media platforms (Facebook Insights, Twitter Analytics, Instagram Insights) can help you know your audience and understand what types of post they're most likely to engage with.

- Be part of the community. Find hashtags that fit with your project and follow hashtags to keep tabs on the conversation.

- On Twitter, the time of day you post matters for engagement.
  - From 6 a.m. – 12 p.m. people are catching up on news and want to be informed
  - From 12 p.m. – 6 p.m. people are taking breaks and seeking amusement
  - From 6 p.m. – 12 a.m. people are looking to unwind and relax

- See who likes you!
  - Remember that different people have different levels of reach on different platforms—this is called share of voice (SOV). Understanding your SOV helps you understand your pull.
  - It's not a popularity contest: the "like" is important, but so is why they liked it.
  - Take time to talk back! Develop "brand champions" so they tell people about what you're doing.

Tools
- **Hootsuite**—A social media management platform that allows you to schedule posts, manage multiple platforms at once, plan upcoming campaigns, view analytics, and more
- **Brandwatch**—A consumer intelligence platform that provides market research, crisis management, social media listening, consumer trend analysis, and competitor analysis, among other services
- **SocialMention**—A social media monitoring and search tool that aggregates user generated content from across the internet into a single stream of information, helps develop influencer marketing strategies, and allows you to perform sentiment analysis across social media
- **Keyhole**—A platform that provides social listening, influencer tracking, and social media analytics products to help marketers improve their social media strategy

**Question:** What are your biggest social media DON'Ts?

**Answer:** Don't post six or seven posts in one minute – message will get lost! Don't assume your audience gets what you're talking about (I keep it at a 6th or 7th grade level); speak to people in terms they can understand. It's important to speak *to* people, not *at* them, making them feel a part of the conversation. Also, don't cross-post from Twitter to Insta or vice versa—respect each platform's unique audience. Finally, don't assume everyone knows what you're looking for—give them a guide! Lead them where you want them to go and make it as easy as possible.

**Quick Links**

# Digital Content Creation & Distribution Strategy... (It's OK to be Funny!)

## #1 Rule: MAKE IT EASY FOR PEOPLE!

Presented by **Ana Bretón**,
*The Drew Barrymore Show*

**Key Takeaways:**

Ana Bretón, social media and digital producer, shares her experience and best practices for **keeping audiences engaged with conversations and issues long after your film or TV program airs**, including how to turn calls to action into tangible political change. Ana also demonstrates how to plan your social media campaign, create successful calls to action, make campaigns easy for people to interact with, and inject humor into your digital presence. She also shares some quick tricks to persuade your audience to do what you want them to do.

**Important Tips and Insights:**

- Make things easy for people. Make it as easy as possible for people to interact with your campaign. For example, in our "Reefer Madness" campaign (for *Full Frontal With Samantha Bee*), we wanted our audience to write letters to Jeff Sessions supporting veterans' access to medical cannabis, so we included digital links to a pre-written letter in the form of a downloadable PDF—people could simply fill in their info, add a stamp, and mail it!

- Be funny! Humor triggers a positive emotional response, connects you with an audience, and makes brands memorable. Furthermore, funny things are more shareable and generally boost sales.

- It's important to plan your campaign in advance by knowing the theme/thesis of your material, understanding what you want your audience to get out of your campaign, and knowing what you want them to do with your content (having a call to action).

- When planning your campaign, ask the following questions:
  - What is the theme/thesis of our material?
  - What do we want our audience to get out of our piece?
  - Once they get that, what do we want them to do? (Call to action)
  - How do we translate that call to action in social media?
  - What platforms work best for what we're trying to do?
  - Does text/video/photos work best for what we're trying to do?
  - What mood/tone do we want to strike?
  - How will we calculate success?
  - What is our budget?

- A social media campaign schedule for a particular event might look like this:
  - At the start of the campaign we decide on branding, pull assets, and pre-schedule posts—this is often where most of your time will be spent!
  - During the event we provide live event coverage, post "live" Tweets, and use the FOMO-machine ("fear-of-missing out-machine") to our advantage
  - At the end of the campaign, we focus on results and tracking, reposting material, monitoring audience replies, and finding new ways to tell the story

- Use the social media rule of thirds:
  - 1/3 of your content should be promotions/advertising (something you're trying to plug)
  - 1/3 of your content share posts from your audience/replies
  - 1/3 of your content share posts of personal stories to capture an audience

- Good social media practices include being authentic, being consistent (post at least once a day), encouraging engagement, and always using images (tip: a larger photo will keep a viewer captivated 3x longer than a smaller one).

- Have a healthy relationship with your audience by responding to all comments promptly, amplifying good replies (with a retweet, for example), and rewarding your most constant viewers/fans (super fans will act as influencers for your campaign).

## Highlight from Audience Q&A

**Question:** Do you ever pay to promote your post? Or do you only rely on organic reach?

**Answer:** We have a marketing person with a paid schedule of content that's separate from what I do. Generally, we don't put paid behind a joke tweet, but we do put paid behind promos, teasers and spoilers, and we have fewer paid posts than organic posts. I would put paid behind new content that doesn't have a wide reach yet.

# Trends in Short-Form Storytelling: How to Maximize Impact via Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok



Presented by
**Alice Aedy & Jack Harries**,
Earthrise Studio

**Key Takeaways:**

How can we communicate the urgency of the climate crisis to the generation that will face its consequences most directly? How can lessons from Earthrise's massive Instagram campaign be applied to other impact campaigns? Alice Aedy and Jack Harries, founders of Earthrise Studio, explain how **developing informative and shareable content on Instagram taught them how even the most pressing social issues, like our rapidly changing climate, require a clear communications strategy.**

**Important Tips and Insights:**

- Earthrise is a media platform dedicated to communicating the climate crisis, specifically designed to appeal to a younger audience.

- Jack's story begins with a YouTube channel called JacksGap
    - I founded this channel after graduation in 2011 when I was 18 years old to document my gap year. YouTube as a social media platform was completely different back then—you couldn't earn money on it. It was raw, creative and exciting!
        - The channel really took off as the platform was exploded, eventually gaining 4 million followers
    - My twin brother Finn and I spend 5-6 years working on this channel and a production company that resulted from it—this taught me a lot about creating short-form content, working with brands, and building a following
    - My key turning point was a trip with the WWF to Greenland where I helped make a film about climate change called "Our Changing Climate"

- I was confronted with the data about how climate change is physically changing our planet—however, I felt that the human element of the story wasn't being communicated

- Alice's story begins in documentary filmmaking.
  - The thread that ties my work together is social impact
  - One turning point for me was the distressing image of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi, a Syrian refugee, that illustrated the tragic refugee crisis unfolding in 2015
    - I decided to volunteer at the Calais refugee camp so I could capture this crisis visually, which began a 5 year journey documenting the refugee crisis in Europe and the Middle East—I believed in the power of the portrait to build empathy!
    - This became a turning point when I realized that climate change would cause the biggest mass migration in history
  - Jack and I met in the Calais Refugee Camp in 2015 and bonded over our shared interest in telling the human story of climate change
    - The injustice that those who have done the most to contribute to climate change would suffer the least from its consequences, compared to those in the Global South motivated us to take to the streets and get involved with activism

- When we realized we had to do something about climate change, we knew we had to operate online in order to reach a global audience
  - We wanted to de-center ourselves from the narrative and create a space where we could platform other activists—especially young activists leading this fight
    - We started with this quote, "We are the first generation to understand the issues we face and the last who can do anything about it."
    - We knew it would be youth-led and aimed at young people

- Digital communications platforms are also important for social justice because not everyone has access to or the privilege necessary for direct action.

- We identified our mission statement, our brand design, and our specific visual language.
  - We used a design agency run by two friends of ours to breathe life into what we had come up with.
  - We centered our logo design around the visual concept of seeing Earth rise from the perspective of the first astronauts moon (the same way the sun or the moon rises from the perspective of Earth).
  - We wanted positive, inclusive, welcoming, and non-shaming messaging! (This is why we ditched an early brand name "The Reluctant Environmentalist").

- Find brands that are doing what you want to do, and doing it right, and identify key trends in the larger conversation you want to be a part of. This helped us focus our messaging into 3 main categories: short form video, clear infographics, and memes/re-postings.
  - We liked the short-form videos from brands like Brut, NowThis, and Vox
  - We liked the clear and accessible infographics from the Instagram accounts soyouwanttotalkabout, antiracismdaily, and chicksforclimate

- On Instagram, we create engaging visual graphics under a variety of content strands
  - What Is: We break down confusing concepts around climate
  - Articles: We share the most relevant and interesting articles on the climate that week
  - Let's Talk About: We tackle taboos and encourage conversations about tough topics
  - Activist Spotlight: We highlight groundbreaking activists on the frontlines of climate action
  - What to Say When: We bust myths around climate change
  - Statements: We use eye-catching graphic design to create shareable statements like "Climate Justice is Social Justice"

- On the back end, maintain a content calendar so you can plan your campaign in advance, and use a key performance indicator (KPI) to compare engagement between different types of content—we keep all this on a Google Sheet.
- Remember: positivity works, it matters what time you post, arming people with information is key, content should be shareable, and consistency is important.

Tools:
- Brands that break down complex information in easy-to-understand, short-form videos:
  - **Vox**
  - **NowThis**
  - **Brut**
- Brands that have mastered the clear, shareable infographic:
  - **@soyouwanttotalkabout**
  - **@antiracismdaily**
  - **@chicksforclimate**
- **Google Sheets**—a free online spreadsheet tool that can be used to track performance of social media posts and generally organize content streams

**Question:** Do you find that your growth comes from posts being shared or from influencers and/or people in your network? Does your growth originate from things you've encouraged people to place or is your organic content being shared by your network? What are some growth strategy tips?

**Answer:** We were very privileged in that Jack and Finn, two of Earthrise's co-founders, have a very big following, so their sharing Earthrise content onto their own accounts has helped that growth. The growth has been organic in that lots of people are sharing it and we've tried very hard to make it shareable through the strength of the brand language.

But it was very important for us to build a solid foundation before going to influencers and asking people to share it. It was important not to have our physical personal presence as part of the brand so we could build that foundation. But we're about to start those collaborations! We're about to get much more personal, do more interviews, and make it much more human, because we all know human stories are powerful

**Quick Links**

# Let Them Speak: How to Use a Multi-channel Approach via Podcasts, Events and Digital to Drive Audience Engagement

- **In the twitter search bar, search for a topic**

- **Visit an influencer or org's profile related to that topic**

- **Click their "lists" tab**

- **View lists they follow or have been added to by others**

- **Follow a list**

How to Discover Twitter Lists

Presented by **Chevon Drew**,
Race Forward

## Key Takeaways:

Chevon Drew draws from her deep experience to explain the importance of grounding strategies in a set of foundational, starting-point questions; how to use often-overlooked tactics of Twitter chats and podcasts to drive digital strategies around documentaries and impact goals; and which tools, gear, and resources are most helpful today.

## Important Tips and Insights:

- It's important to ground yourself in the Who, What, Where, and How Much of any project you're working on
  - Who is your audience? Who are you talking to?
  - What is your goal? Stay grounded in something measurable! Practice asking: what is the outcome? What is the smaller goal that ladders up to the larger team goal?
  - Where are your audiences hanging out online? What platforms?
  - How much? What is your minimum budget on the low end? High end? Are there any sponsorships and/or grants available?

- Twitter chats are conversations that occur on Twitter at a set time about a certain topic. When hosting a Twitter chat:
  - Choose a goal, like gaining more followers, engaging more followers, or reaching more people to increase awareness of your work.

- Choose a hashtag that's relevant, unique, easy-to-remember, and short, and make sure your participants use it every time they participate in the chat.
- Schedule them at a time when the people you want to reach are most likely to be engaged.
- Have a moderator that can remind people to use the hashtag, reply to participants' responses using the hashtag, or quote-Tweet participants' responses using the hashtag (in addition to a main host posting all the questions from the main account)
  - If possible, have an additional moderator that can Retweet any interesting responses.
  - People will misspell the hashtag, a moderator can remind everyone of the correct spelling, or to keep using quote-Tweeting responses using the correct hashtag.
- Team up with one or more related organizations or influencers to gain visibility.
- Label your questions using "Q1," "A1," "Q2, "A2," etc. so people can easily follow along.
- When using graphics to promote your Twitter chat
  - Clearly show the hashtag, include the theme, and make sure all info is legible (use easy-to-read fonts!).
  - Show times and timezones.
  - Use long images when including more information than can fit in an image preview and know where Twitter will crop it (usually on words and people's faces).
    - Remember: Twitter will crop images to show white people! This fact went viral recently, and folks realized there was something explicitly biased about the way Twitter's algorithm worked, forcing Twitter to acknowledge this
      - If your graphics will have people of multiple races, give speakers their own individual Tweet to avoid this
      - Zoom had a similar issue where Black faces were disappearing because the algorithm wasn't designed to recognize them (this is what happens when you don't have diverse teams)
  - Canva is a good resource for creating graphics.
  - Use Sprout Social's Always Up to Date online spreadsheet for social media image sizes.
- Be prepared with bit.ly links for any resources you're using.
- Promote your Twitter chat at least 10 days in advance.
- Use email reminders. Set up an Eventbrite and use it to email reminders.
- When deciding if Twitter chats are right for you remember that generally speaking, Twitter is where activists, journalists and socially-engaged people hang out.

- A podcast is a serialized audio show that is these days often accompanied by a video stream of the conversation. To get started producing a podcast:
  - Remember that you can start small! Your lane is your lane—no matter how many other podcasts are out there, nobody can be like you. Things with momentum don't always have huge institutional support.
  - Choose a quiet space with a visually pleasing background.
  - Use a professional microphone.
  - Look at yourself on camera. Adjust it until you can see your full face and shoulders comfortably within the frame, with a little headroom on top.
  - Seat yourself where there's soft, natural light or turn on lights/lamps.
  - Use a laptop riser or stack of books to make your camera view you at eye level.

- Prioritize authenticity above everything! Even above your talking points—if something happens in the world that makes talking points out-of-date, pause and acknowledge it.
  - Tools, gear, and resources:
  - Laptop and high speed internet
  - Cleanfeed/Skype or Squadcast to record online
  - WeTransfer account to send/store audio files
  - USB microphone like Blue Yeti Shure
  - Headphones
  - Simplecast for hosting, distribution, and analytics
  - A mixer to help control levels and sounds locally
  - Mini USB drive to save all of your work

**Tools**
- **Always Up-to-Date Guide to Social Media Image Sizes**—Sprout Social's always-up-to-date spreadsheet listing correct image sizes for all social media platforms
- **Canva**—a graphic design platform used to create social media graphics, presentations, posters, documents, videos and other visual content. Includes templates for various social media posts and requires no graphic design experience to use
- **Podcast Equipment:**
  - **Backdrops**—cloths to be hung behind you during a video stream or recording which can serve as a greenscreen or a replacement for the image of your room
  - **Laptop riser**—a tool for elevating your laptop to eye level for optimal video recording
  - **Professional microphone**—USB microphones that plug into your laptop and provide sound superior to your laptop's built-in microphone
- **Test Internet Speed**—an online tool for testing your internet speed in Mbps
- **Audiogram**—an online design platform that creates graphics for podcasts and video representations of audio recordings for social media promotion
- **HeadlinerApp**—an online tool for creating videos to promote podcasts
- Tools for recording online
  - **Cleanfeed**—A collaboration tool for live audio and recording that operates from your web browser
  - **Skype**—A platform for online video chat, voice calls, and instant messaging services
  - **Squadcast**—A paid platform for remote recording and editing podcasts and videos
- **WeTransfer**—An internet-based computer file transfer service that allows you to easily send large files, like podcast audio recordings
- **Simplecast**—A paid podcast hosting and analytics platform with one-click publishing to platforms like Spotify and Apple Podcasts
- **Race Forward's podcast Momentum's episode** "Starting Your Podcast and Building Community Featuring Blk Pod Collective!"

**Question:** On a podcast, how do we create intimacy with our guests? How do we strip away the public persona and get to the real person?

**Answer:** If something sounds too rehearsed, it doesn't sound engaging. As a host, I ask unexpected questions. I look up the guest ahead of a time—I can be a bit of a troll! Not in a negative way, but in a very fun, loving way. But the more serious the guest, the more likely I am to ask them something that might destabilize them early in the conversation just so their mask falls away a bit. It can be as simple as breaking the ice with something that's happening in the world. Sometimes I ask people about their name! Sometimes I ask something that seems banal but makes them feel comfortable and relaxed, like, "What did you eat for lunch this afternoon?" And just like that you're off to a fun, comfortable start!

**Quick Links:**

# Complete List of Tools and Resources

**Always Up-to-Date Guide to Social Media Image Sizes**—Sprout Social's always-up-to-date spreadsheet listing correct image sizes for all social media platforms

**Audiogram**—an online design platform that creates graphics for podcasts and video representations of audio recordings for social media promotion

Brands that break down complex information in easy-to-understand, short-form videos:

- Vox
- NowThis
- Brut

Brands that have mastered the clear, shareable infographic

- @soyouwanttotalkabout
- @antiracismdaily
- @chicksforclimate

**Brandwatch**—A consumer intelligence platform that provides market research, crisis management, social media listening, consumer trend analysis, and competitor analysis, among other services

**Building Narrative Power**—A series of papers and presentations from Color of Change and Rashad Robinson focused on strategy, infrastructure and content for culture change and narrative change strategies

**Canva**—a graphic design platform used to create social media graphics, presentations, posters, documents, videos and other visual content. Includes templates for various social media posts and requires no graphic design experience to use

**Cision**—PR and communications software and services that include media monitoring, social influencer databases, and media coverage analytics, among other resources.

**Crowdcast**—A live video platform with no required downloads, a single URL for meetings, interactive Q and A, a chat feature, and polls

*Ella Baker's Catalytic Leadership*: by Patricia Parker—A Primer on Community Engagement and Communication for Social Justice, by Patricia Parker. A book about the legacy of influential African American civil rights and human rights activist Ella Baker.

**Falcon**—A social media management and content creation platform

**Google Sheets**—a free online spreadsheet tool that can be used to track performance of social media posts and generally organize content streams

**HeadlinerApp**—an online tool for creating videos to promote podcasts

**Hootsuite**—A social media management platform that allows you to schedule posts, manage multiple platforms at once, plan upcoming campaigns, view analytics, and more

**Keyhole**—A platform that provides social listening, influencer tracking, and social media analytics products to help marketers improve their social media strategy

**Meltwater**—PR and communications software and services that include media monitoring, media databases, newsletters and website feeds, social media monitoring, social media engagement, social influencer management, newswire distribution, and more

**Muckrack**—PR and communications software and services that includes media databases, media monitoring, personalized pitching assistance, earned media reporting, and other tools

Podcast Equipment:

- **Backdrops**—cloths to be hung behind you during a video stream or recording which can serve as a greenscreen or a replacement for the image of your room
- Laptop risers—a tool for elevating your laptop to eye level for optimal video recording
- Professional microphones—USB microphones that plug into your laptop and provide sound superior to your laptop's built-in microphone

**Race Forward's podcast Momentum's episode** "Starting Your Podcast and Building Community Featuring Blk Pod Collective!" about starting a podcast

**Simplecast**—A paid podcast hosting and analytics platform with one-click publishing to platforms like Spotify and Apple Podcasts

**Sli.do**—An app for conducting digital polls and Q and A sessions in meetings

**SocialMention**—A social media monitoring and search tool that aggregates user generated content from across the internet into a single stream of information, helps develop influencer marketing strategies, and allows you to perform sentiment analysis across social media

**Streamyard**—A live-streaming studio that runs the browser (no download needed) and has features for interviewing guests, screen sharing, and more

**Test Internet Speed**—an online tool for testing your internet speed in Mbps

Tools for recording online

- **Cleanfeed**—A collaboration tool for live audio and recording that operates from your web browser
- **Skype**—A platform for online video chat, voice calls, and instant messaging services,
- **Squadcast**—A paid platform for remote recording and editing podcasts and videos

**Value, Problem, Solution, Action (VPSA) message**—building tool, a cognitive methodology tool from the Opportunity Agenda, designed to help open the mind of the listener/viewer/reader first with the value (that's hard to say no to), then the problem, then the solution.

**WeTransfer**—An internet-based computer file transfer service that allows you to easily send large files, like podcast audio recordings

*DIGITAL POWER*

**Best Practices for
Strengthening Strategic
Communications for Social
Justice Documentary
Engagement**