




PROGRESSIVE TECHNOLOGY PROJECT

# Storytelling with Photos

Josh Warren-White, [Design Action Collective](#)

**Strong imagery, and specifically photographs, are vital in progressive communications campaigns. Good images tell a story.**

A light blue graphic consisting of a central circle with four lines extending outwards to four larger circles, resembling a stylized cross or a network diagram.

# Photography in Progressive Communications Work

## Goals:

- Discuss the importance of strong imagery & photos in progressive communications campaigns & why it's important to tell stories through those images.
- Give folks tools you can use to identify and assess good photographs
- Help folks assess what you need from photographs and tips on how to get photos that really work.
- Tips on how to find and work with the right photographer.

# A good photo tells a story.

*Try asking these questions as you evaluate images to decide if the image tells a story:*

- At a minimum, does the photo make a statement that you can articulate?
- Does the photo elicit an emotion? In other words, can you relate to the subject or the situation?
- What could be changed in the image to give it a stronger story or message.



# A good photo has a clear center of interest.

*To evaluate photos for a strong center of interest, try asking yourself these questions:*

- When you look at the photo, what is the first thing you see? Is what you see first the subject you needed the photograph to focus on?
- What holds your eye the longest?
- Do other elements in the image compete with the subject for attention?
- Do technical aspects such as light and the direction of light, focus, and so on add to or detract from the subject?



# A good photo is composed well.

*To evaluate the composition of your images, try asking these questions.*

- Is there a sense of order and balance in the image that helps lead the eye through the composition?
- Are elements included that do not contribute to the subject of the image?
- Are elements excluded that, if included, would have enhanced the subject of the image?
- Do the lighting, angle, and perspective enhance the composition?
- Does the crop enhance the composition?



## A good photo has a sharp focus & appropriate exposure.

*Questions that can help you evaluate whether focus and exposure settings are appropriate for an image include:*

- Is the sharpest point in the image on the subject of the photo?
- Does the zoom setting enhance the subject and message?
- Does the image have good overall contrast for the type image you need?
- Does the color appear natural and/or does it help set the mood of the image?



# What works and what doesn't?

*Lets look at some photos together...*











RESPONSIBLE  
BUSINESS  
= EQUALS =  
HEALTHY  
COMMUNITY

CAUSA JUSTA  
UNITE POWER & LEADERSHIP TOGETHER  
JUST CAUSE



















O FUTURO DO  
PLANETA ESTÁ  
EM SUAS MÃOS



THE FUTURE  
OF THE PLANET  
IS IN YOUR HANDS  
GREENPEACE

GREENPEACE



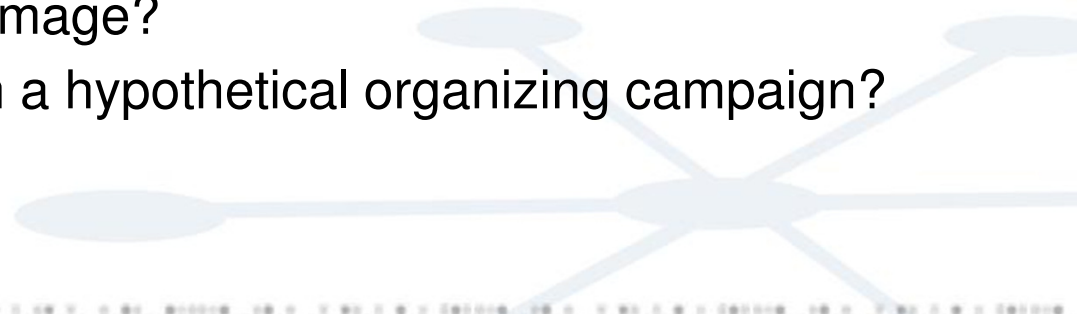


BASTA YA  
NOMAS  
ABUSOS

## SMALL GROUPS:

Find a compelling photo online that you feel like could be used in an organizing campaign & answer the following questions:

- What's the story behind this image? If you don't know it, make one up that seems likely.
- What is compelling or moving about this image? Describe your emotions around this image.
- What is the mood of this image? What visual characteristics convey this mood?
- Why did you choose this image?
- What goal could it meet in a hypothetical organizing campaign?



## Finding a photographer

- Assess your resources:
- Based on your available resources and the needs of a given project, you'll have to choose whether to use a volunteer, a staff member, or hire a professional photographer. If hiring a professional, try and find someone who broadly shares the values of your organization. And fully brief them as to your work and goals.
- If hiring a professional isn't possible, do you have someone on staff with a good eye who enjoys taking pictures and is either good at it, or can be developed in that capacity? Do you have organizational resources that could be used to help develop their capacity as a good photographer?
- Do you have an avid volunteer who loves taking pictures and is skilled?
- Once you find a good photographer, use your organizing skills and build a strong relationship with them. Make them feel invested in the work of the organization. This will increase their commitment and familiarity with your work and will directly increase the quality of photos they deliver.
- Photographing people often requires getting up in people's faces and invading their privacy. Before inviting a photographer into your organization have a talk with your members about that and work to get everyone comfortable with the situation.
- In that same regard, work to foster relationships and trust between your photographer and members in part so that the photographer feels comfortable doing what they need to do to get the shot. Be clear with them about boundaries and what is appropriate and inappropriate.
- This may be obvious, but what you want to work towards is any time you have a member event, have a photographer on hand to document it and thus help you build up an archive of images that you can draw on for future communications work.

## How are you going to get the images you need to tell your story?

- Once you have found and developed a relationship with a photographer, ask yourself what do they need to get the right image?
- As the communications worker you know that the photograph has to be very strong, and convey just the right message – and you're the one who knows what that message is. You need to come up with a way to communicate to the photographer what you need from the images.
- As the organizer and/or campaign communications staff, you need to figure out how you are going to set up the scene to ensure that your message is clearly communicated. Work with the photographer on this before hand.
- Set your goals before you start.
- What are you trying to achieve with the image?
- What's the story you want to tell?
- Who's your audience?
- What's the photograph for -- concretely? How are you going to use it?
- What mood/tone would you like it to have?

