



We're calling this presentation from CNN to Facebook to really capture how small our world or big our reach has gotten through the Strategic communications work we do.

Throughout this presentation I will be talking specifically about the work of the Miami Workers Center Communications team over the past 6 years.

That team is not just me it included (and was founded by) Sushma Sheth, as well as many others on staff, in membership and our allies, this is the integrated piece that we will get to.



The Miami Workers Center was founded in 1999 by Gihan Perera and Tony Romano, they were joined shortly after by Sushma Sheth, and Randy Jackson.

Today we are a strategy and action center focused on building the collective power of Black and Latino communities in Miami. We do this through community organizing, leadership and political development, and strategic communications.

We primarily focus on fighting racism, economic inequality, and gender oppression. Our practical on the ground campaigns usually revolve around housing and access to housing, although this is shifting.

We have also always invested a lot in movement building work from participating in the Social Forum process at the global, national and regional level to engaging in bilateral exchanges with other organizations.

From early on we understood the role of strategic communications specifically that we needed to shift thinking in order to create space to win.

This comes out of the specific conditions not only of the U.S. but of Miami where have a concentration of politically right wing people from though out Latin America, the absence of a strong union movement, and the absence of a large civil right movement.

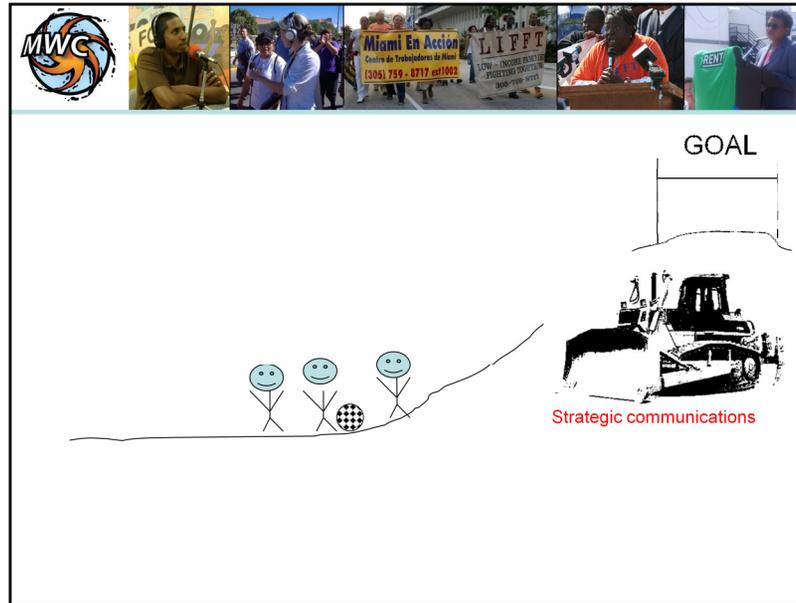
There wasn't much space here for us to win when common sense was set so squarely against what we were trying to do.



Strategic Communications for Building Power

Strategic communications is talking to the right people at the right time and saying the right things in order to build our power. Strategic communications sets up our organizations to be proactive as opposed to reactive, and creates space for material victories while challenging right wing hegemony. In order to be effective strategic communications planning and execution is fully integrated into all aspects of our organizations, and is based on an honest assessment of available resources

-Miami Workers Center



This illustration shows what we are talking about when we say it can create space for victory.

If we can shift debate, if we can shift common sense we can flatten the playing field.

This team will use an array of tactics to get that ball through that goal, to collect. But if they are playing up hill, if the ground they are standing on is against them, we need to flatten the field.

Your audience is the right people.

Determine your audience based on your power analysis. is based on your power analysis. What are your goals, who are you organizing? Who is against you? Who might support you?

Based on audience you decide your message and tactics.

How can we speak with people.

I said speak with people because we want people to feel engaged, to feel comfortable with the message we are putting out.

This doesn't mean compromising the frame, but this does mean making sure people can hear you.

We have an array of tactics available to us. If we have the capacity to use them is the question. Here are some tactics that we have used and continue to use.

Introduce Scott

9 year campaign to win justice for over 850 families displaced from their homes when HUD came in and tore them down as a part of a HOPE VI program.

We won a significant victory in 2007 when we signed an agreement for the county to have all homes rebuilt, and the right to return for all residents.

These were the conditions around that victory and the roll communications played in relation to it.

House of Lies came out. Enabled us to build broader coalition, and created space to shift frame and collect on the fight. We were able to launch our web presence, and utilize new tools. First experimentaiton with online and real world comms

Miami Herald Won Pulitzer

40 in depth stories in 4 months, print tv, web, radio roll out new era of comms tactics from name wall to online organizing, Mural, grannies cheer squad (international press), PSA

We became the good guy.

Talk about March on the mayors.

March on the mayors was a national mobilization of the newly formed fairly unknown Right to the City Alliance. An alliance of over 40 orgs fighting around the right to the city for all residents of cities.

28 Press Hits in 2 weeks.

5 eblasts sent to national and local lists that spread beyond original lists and got earned media on blogs and online version of print media

Great visuals and creative concepts tied to who is our audiences, what is the timing, and where are we.

Article placement, OpEd, Letter to the Ed, Online comms, Website, Eblast, Facebook, Training for Spokes People

Comms Can Lead

Mass form of outreach and popular education

Creates space for conducting outreach and initiating campaigns

Shifts debate to create opportunity for allies and targets to step up

We are even moving to the point to test this idea and saying Comms does lead. We are initiating frame based campaigns that will lead to an opening of space for collecting on policy and material wins. Instead of a policy fight we are waging a fight of ideas.

Communications must be seen as a value added

Whole organization must take on strat comms in the work they do

Everyone must have astrat comms perspective, and understand the implications of communications.

Particular tasks may fall to particular people

Now is the time that increased comms capacity equals increased power

I know it is icky. I know it is against what so many people don't like.

Marketing works.

We pay close attention to branding.

We use focus groups (although not as much as we should)

We think about color choices, fonts, logo design.

We are consistent with our propaganda design.

We try to keep everything culturally appropriate and smart.

Organize the media

Keep 2-3 stories in your back pocket – be a source.

Seek national (and international) opportunities

Have debate, hold them accountable.

Stay in touch - Consider reporters as the cousin you never see but sometimes need to borrow money from

Spokesperson: Leaders not Victims

Political education and **organic** understanding of issues – integration of communications

Ongoing training and coaching for speakers

Frame for power and shifting the debate

DIY:

Be a freelancer: Cover your own stories

Partner with alternative media/create media

Always take photos

Write opeds, columns, and blogs.

Beyond the base; beyond the targets; build a movement

Online presence

What about the tech gap?

Online organizing, independent but tied to on the ground campaigns

New Media can become traditional media all of this interacts now, there is a lot of experimenting to do.

I mention to reporters when we are doing online actions, they get excited. We also have had some good results with pressuring targets.

Timing is everything

Seek opportunities to expose our issues and shift the public debate

Monitor local and regional events and trends

Stretch

Art basal time. Instead of protesting we did this.

In order to have the best spokes people

In order to produce the best new media

In order to have integrated comms

We need training and we need practice. My role may be to get some tasks done in relation to comms, but it is also to educate and empower members, leaders and other staff to take on critical aspects of the work, from drafting oped, developing frames and messages, producing videos, speaking to the press, even doing press intake.

We invest in training because it builds leadership.

Sushma Sheth and I, have done countless training with members, with staff, with allies, with other organizations.

This is not a big leap.

If you integrate communication into all of the work you do.

This takes work. Communications can be fits and starts, but you are always ready to roll out.

if you are ready with your stories. Knowing your capacity

