



FRI Frontline Resource
Institute

Frontline Momentum

Supporting Local Advocacy

Issue 3: Winter 2024

In This Issue

Page 2

Grantee Spotlight:
Haciendo Acciones
Socio-Ecológicas
Resilientes (HASER)

Page 4

Three Local Advocacy
Trends That Are Driving
Change in the
Environmental and
Climate Justice Space

Page 7

Weaving Data into
Advocacy: A Guide to
Crafting Compelling
Narratives with
Qualitative and
Quantitative Insights

Cover Photo: *FRI Staff and Conceptual Committee convened in Washington, DC to catalyze a months-long strategic planning process.*

A Letter from FRI's Acting Director

It's no surprise to many of you that frontline communities often don't have a seat at the table when it comes to setting climate policy. For the last 30-40 years, advocacy around climate policy has been driven by a limited number of individuals. This has been detrimental to our ability to address climate change because important voices, and perspectives with lived expertise, are being excluded from the policymaking process.

At FRI, we are leveraging our network and resources to support frontline organizations' ability to advocate for the policies and positions that are needed to advance climate movement and support the people most adversely impacted by climate change. For example, in 2022, FRI sponsored a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency EJ Academy training in Ohio. The EJ Academy builds capacity within community-based organizations to address environmental or public health issues in their communities. It also helps them navigate the systemic structures that are often barriers to advocacy, enabling them to become stronger and better advocates. Our FRI network itself is a powerful resource for frontline organizations looking to deepen their advocacy efforts. By building a network of organizations that are engaged in this work, we are able to help our members access information and resources that they may not be familiar with.

In the coming months, FRI will launch a monthly series called, *How Did They Do That?*, which will highlight the work of community-based organizations and FRI partners who are helping themselves and others become stronger and better advocates. Each month will focus on different topics and methods for advocacy. Newsletter subscribers, like you, will be able to access this series and I invite you to check it out when it goes live!

Margot Brown
Dr. Margot Brown



GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Haciendo Acciones Socio-Ecológicas Resilientes (HASER)

FRI's inaugural grantee spotlight features an interview with Colibrí Sanfiorenzo Barnhard, Executive Director of [HASER](#). Founded in 2016, HASER is a Puerto Rican nonprofit with a mission to promote social well-being through community-based projects that advance equity and quality of life for people of Puerto Rico.

WHAT IS HASER'S MOTIVATION TO ENGAGE IN THIS WORK?

The Puerto Rican neighborhoods. HASER really believes in neighborhoods and people coming together and doing what needs to be done to have a better life. They don't want to just survive. They want to live.

DESCRIBE SOME OF HASER'S KEY PROGRAMS.

HASER is best known for its signature program, Network of Actions. Through this program, HASER engages in fiscal sponsorship relationships with community groups to enable them to complete projects that align with our mission. In these alliances, HASER acts as a [compliant nonprofit home](#), providing administrative infrastructure and sharing best practices in nonprofit management. You can learn more about these alliances on our [Network of Actions webpage](#).

A second program that HASER offers is a support program where we work with community groups to provide education and build their capacity for nonprofit management - fiscal and accounting support, legal assistance, help with internal processes - and connect them with like-minded groups in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.

A third program is HASER's collaboration program where we work with individuals, organizations, institutions, and companies toward a common goal that strengthens and advances our mission. One of these



HASER Staff, Board Members, and Network of Actions program members.

collaborations is the Fiona Fund which was organized in 2022 after Hurricane Fiona hit Puerto Rico. We collaborated with eight social justice organizations to set up this fund to provide immediate aid and support to some of the most affected and marginalized communities. This fund currently supports long term efforts for community sustainability. HASER has also engaged in collaborations that involved designing and thinking about how to structure community groups and strategizing the best ways to do advocacy work in Puerto Rico.

WHAT ARE SOME SUCCESSES THAT YOU ARE PARTICULARLY PROUD OF?

HASER is currently engaged in 16 fiscal sponsorship relationships with community groups. Of those 16 groups, five have been working with HASER since 2017. This is a super accomplishment that lets us know we are doing something right and supporting so many groups.

Another accomplishment we are really proud of is the creation of the first fiscal sponsorship guide in Spanish. The guide was published in early 2023 and is intended to educate and inform individuals and groups about best practices of fiscal sponsorship. The guide isn't limited to those in Puerto Rico. We have already seen groups in the United States, Spanish-speaking groups, who are using the guide because it's in Spanish. You can access the guide by visiting the website below:

www.guiaauspiciofiscal.org

SHARE SOME OF THE LESSONS YOU'VE LEARNED IN YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY.

It's important to center people in this work. That's what we do at HASER and it's something we communicate to those outside of our organization, including our alliance members, other community groups, and funders. HASER is nothing without the people within our organization and that's why we've been intentional in creating policies and procedures that acknowledge the many different things that affect our staff, like family obligations.

By centering people, we have also learned that it's important to help our staff avoid burnout. People need breaks, they can't be overworked. Even though we are working with communities who are facing imminent danger, in most cases, the work we are engaged in takes time. Most everything can wait for tomorrow. It's important to take care of our people first and the relationships we have with community groups. HASER has a wellness program and we are currently raising money in the hope of establishing a fund for people, both within HASER and affiliated with our fiscal sponsor projects, who need to take a sabbatical.

WHAT ARE SOME PROJECTS OR INITIATIVES THAT HASER IS ASPIRING TO ENGAGE IN OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

Right now, we are developing our next five-year plan—the current one ends in 2024. One of the things we want to sustain is the number of projects we do every year. A goal in our last five-year plan was to take on three to five groups every year. We already achieved that—in 2022, we got four new groups and in 2023, we got six new groups. So, we want to maintain that momentum while also investing time, energy and funds in our educational and capital projects..

We are also engaging in conversations about two different projects we would like to implement within the next two years. The first project involves learning about how to conduct advocacy, lobbying, and civic engagement in Puerto Rico. Unlike in the United States, these things are not really defined at the governmental level, yet engaging in them effectively is very critical for frontline groups right now. The second and biggest project is a capital project that involves purchasing land and a building to serve as a common resource for community groups. In addition to office sharing among our collaborators, there would be storage areas for emergencies, space for live art, podcast, videos, collective farming equipment storage, among other possible collective spaces designed by the community groups we work with.



[Click here to learn more about HASER!](#)

NEWSLETTER FEATURE

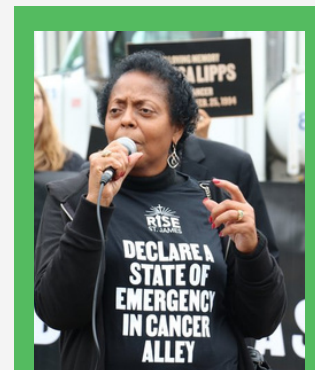
Three Local Advocacy Trends That Are Driving Change in the Environmental and Climate Justice Space

Article informed by interviews with Dr. Erica Holloman-Hill, CEO and Founder of Ayika Solutions, and Ms. Sharon Lavigne, Founder and Director of Rise St. James.

Historically, frontline communities have been boxed out and silenced at the decision-making table. Advocacy is the grassroots fuel that makes it possible for frontline groups to acquire the skills, knowledge, capacity, and acceptance that enable them to be informed and respected participants in the decision-making processes that affect their communities and everyday lives. Achieving environmental and climate justice hinges on consistent, effective advocacy efforts. The following three trends in local advocacy are helping frontline groups foster meaningful change in their communities.



Dr. Erica Holloman-Hill, CEO and Founder of Ayika Solutions and FRI Conceptual Committee Member



Ms. Sharon Lavigne, Founder and Director of Rise St. James

TREND 1: CENTERING COMMUNITY IN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

No one can tell a community's story better than the community members themselves. Yet, for many years frontline communities have been decentered and their knowledge discounted when outside experts come in to "help them" with environmental justice issues. Now the tide is changing as more people and organizations recognize the importance of centering communities in conversations and actions taken to address environmental and climate injustices.

One example is ACA-NET™ (Academic Institutions-Communities-Agencies Network). ACA-NET™ is a frontline, community engagement strategy created by Dr. Mildred McClain (Executive Director of The [Harambee House](#) and former US EPA National Environmental Justice Advisory Council member) in response to the environmental injustices that were taking place in and around Savannah, Georgia. In 1994, Dr. Fatemeh Shafiei of Spelman College and Dr. McClain hosted the inaugural ACA-NET Roundtable and presented this framework that has quietly shifted power since, within environmental justice communities across the Southeast. The use of ACA-NET™ has led to the development of a community-led, capacity-building model where communities are placed at the center and can leverage the expertise and resources of local academic institutions and their municipal government to address environmental concerns. Currently, the ACA-NET™ model is being used in Savannah to host business roundtables where community members, government agencies, and academic institutions come together to work on projects ranging from sea level rise to energy burden and solar initiatives. In addition, ACA-NET™ serves as the framework in Dr. Holloman-Hill's work that aims to create more equitable partnerships between communities and the institutions—academic and governmental—that serve them.

Another example is the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ)'s [Communiversity Model](#), which was highlighted in the Fall 2023 FRI newsletter. The Communiversity Model emphasizes a collaborative relationship between universities and communities, giving community members an equal voice in developing and implementing environmental justice projects alongside academic institutions. The model is supported and advanced by the DSCEJ Community Advisory Board, which consists of grassroots community leaders,

nonprofits, academics, and government officials who hail from the Louisiana Mississippi River Chemical Corridor and within the Gulf Coast region.

TREND 2: RAISING AWARENESS AND PROVIDING RESOURCES TO ACCESS FEDERAL FUNDS

The launch of the federal government’s Justice40 Initiative in 2021 marked an unprecedented opportunity for frontline communities to access the resources and funding needed to address environmental and climate injustices. However, accessing these resources and funds has been easier said than done as there is insufficient infrastructure to ensure that federal dollars reach the people they are intended for. This has catalyzed organizations like DSCEJ to organize around and advocate for a “just” implementation of Justice40.

The [DSCEJ Justice40 Hub](#) was formed in 2022 to build grassroots infrastructure to support community-based organizations and environmental justice groups to advocate for the use of federal funding and resources to reduce pollution in environmental justice communities, among other priorities. The hub’s convening in August 2023 brought together activists, community leaders, and policymakers to discuss strategies for achieving the goals of Justice40 and identify the gaps and ways to advocate on behalf of the environmental justice communities that the initiative is intended to benefit.

A lot of work is also being done in the philanthropic space around advocacy for Justice40 and the Inflation Reduction Act, thanks to the historic amount of funding being directed to frontline communities. For example, the [Hive Fund for Climate and Gender Justice](#) is a philanthropic organization that was launched in 2019 to support frontline groups, focused in the U.S. South, that have historically lacked access to funding. The Hive Fund essentially gathers the funds and passes them to frontline groups through grantmaking to support capacity-building efforts such as building infrastructure and hiring more staff or technical consultants. Such capacity building can ease the path for frontline groups to pursue federal funding opportunities.

TREND 3: EDUCATING COMMUNITY MEMBERS TO ADVOCATE FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

A big component of local advocacy involves passing on and sharing information. Knowledge is power, and knowledge is needed for community members to advocate for themselves and their community, especially when it comes to complex environmental and climate-related topics.

[Rise St. James](#) is a faith-based grassroots organization that is fighting pollution from the petrochemical industry in Louisiana’s Cancer Alley. In 2018, the group successfully defeated the construction of a \$1.25 billion plastics manufacturing plant and it is currently working to prevent Formosa Plastics from building a massive plastics plant in St. James Parish. A key driver of their success has been educating the public about what is being emitted into the air, water, and soil. One way they have accomplished this is through their **RISE St. James University**. This lecture-based training and education program provides information, raises awareness, and extends opportunities for community members to engage and ask questions. The courses are free and online and participants must register ahead of time to take part. Recent topics covered include water quality issues, specifically wastewater, coastal water, river water, and drinking water. Another source of education is the organization’s Chemical of the Month spotlight. Each month, the RISE St. James Community Scientist Research Team highlights a different chemical on the organization’s website, including why it is hazardous, examples of how it is impacting communities, and ways community members can help reduce the need for this chemical.



[Click here](#) to learn more about Dr. Holloman-Hill and Ayika Solutions!



[Click here](#) to learn more about RISE St. James!

GUEST AUTHOR

Weaving Data into Advocacy: A Guide to Crafting Compelling Narratives with Qualitative and Quantitative Insights

By Lakeshia Wright, Founder of Guided by Community

In the dynamic realm of advocacy, the power of a well-constructed narrative is undeniable. It can shift perspectives, influence policies, and inspire action in ways that raw numbers alone cannot achieve. However, when you complement storytelling with diverse data types, including qualitative and quantitative data, your advocacy narrative becomes not only compelling but also credible and persuasive. Here's a comprehensive guide on how to meticulously blend data into your advocacy stories to resonate more deeply with stakeholders, policymakers, and the public.



UNDERSTANDING THE DATA SPECTRUM

Before intertwining data with storytelling, advocates must understand the different kinds of data at their disposal.

Quantitative Data: This data type is numerical and structured, often used for showing the scale of an issue, trends over time, or comparisons (e.g., statistics on unemployment rates or graphs showing the increase in greenhouse gas emissions). It's valuable for its objectivity and ability to generalize findings.

Qualitative Data: Qualitative data is descriptive and unstructured, often used to provide insights into the why and how of a situation (e.g., personal testimonials of discrimination or case studies on successful community health initiatives). It adds depth, context, and humanization to the advocacy narrative.

Data, in its essence, can sometimes straddle the line between quantitative and qualitative forms. For instance, a Likert scale in a survey might measure feelings or perceptions quantitatively (e.g., rating satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 5), yet the underlying sentiment being measured is qualitative in nature. Similarly, when analyzing open-ended responses, the content might be qualitative, but when categorized and counted, it provides quantitative insights. While some data elements can exhibit both characteristics, they typically lean more distinctly toward one category—either offering specific measurable quantities or providing descriptive, non-numerical insights.

BALANCING DATA TYPES FOR A RICHER NARRATIVE

A compelling narrative is like a tapestry, where different threads of evidence interlace to form a coherent, impactful story. Here's how you can use quantitative and qualitative data for a richer, more persuasive advocacy narrative:



SETTING THE SCENE WITH QUANTITATIVE DATA

Start your narrative by anchoring it in quantitative evidence to underscore the urgency or breadth of the environmental injustice. Graphs, statistics, and charts are invaluable tools for immediately highlighting the significance of your campaign. For example, if you're advocating against a landfill's placement near a disadvantaged community, showcasing data about increased toxin levels in the local water supply compared to more affluent areas can serve as a persuasive introduction.



ADDING DEPTH WITH QUALITATIVE DATA

Having delineated the environmental issue's magnitude, it's now essential to shed light on the real-life human experiences intertwined with these statistics. Weave in personal testimonies, anecdotes, or in-depth case studies to infuse soul into your story. Drawing from the environmental justice theme, you might narrate a local resident's heart-wrenching tale of watching their child suffer from pollution-induced asthma. Such personal accounts forge a deeper emotional bond, propelling audiences from mere recognition of the problem to genuine emotional investment.



CORROBORATING EVIDENCE

Employ qualitative narratives to delve into specific community experiences or nuances that might be glossed over in broad quantitative sweeps. In tandem, bolster qualitative accounts with quantitative figures to amplify their credibility. For instance, if data shows a decline in regional pollution, but firsthand accounts reveal a specific community still grappling with polluted water sources, integrate both data types to offer a nuanced, comprehensive portrayal.



SIMPLIFYING COMPLEX DATA

Environmental justice issues often come with intricate layers of data. Design infographics that juxtapose quantitative metrics with qualitative narratives, making the data more accessible and relatable. An infographic on deforestation, for instance, could juxtapose statistics of trees cut down with local Indigenous stories about the loss of ancestral lands.



ENCOURAGING ACTION

To conclude, harness your data amalgamation to craft a potent call to arms. Let quantitative data predict the dire fallout of continued negligence or the promise of proactive measures. Concurrently, let the human stories, born from qualitative data, serve as the emotive catalyst urging audiences to rally for change from a place of heartfelt empathy.

CHALLENGES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Melding quantitative and qualitative data isn't without challenges. Advocates must maintain objectivity and avoid the selective use of data that could skew the narrative unfairly. It's crucial to present a balanced view that accounts for various data sources, acknowledging limitations and avoiding overgeneralization.

Additionally, the ethical representation of participants' stories is paramount. Advocates should prioritize informed consent, confidentiality, and the accurate portrayal of respondents' accounts. Misrepresentation can harm vulnerable groups and damage the credibility of your advocacy efforts.

CONCLUSION

In advocacy, the goal is not just to inform but also to catalyze change. A narrative enriched with quantitative and qualitative data achieves this by painting a full, verifiable picture that appeals to logic and emotion. By skillfully combining hard numbers with personal stories, advocates can create a compelling narrative that not only raises awareness but also inspires the kind of action that leads to meaningful change. In this endeavor, the responsible and ethical use of data becomes as powerful a tool for advocacy as storytelling itself.

Lakeshia Wright combines over ten years of urban planning, qualitative research, and human-centered design to foster innovation in government and organizations. Her skill in integrating program design with policymaking creates sustainable and equitable technology and cities.



[Click here](#) to learn more Lakeshia and Guided by Community!

THANK YOU FOR BEING A PART OF FRI'S NETWORK!



[Click here](#) to learn more about FRI and our work!



[Click here](#) to view our grant opportunity database!