



# Impacting Policy by Telling Your Story

## Disability Policy Seminar 2014

Sarah Baron, Field Associate, Half in Ten Campaign

# Agenda

- What is Our American Story
- Why personal stories are important
- Collecting stories and best practices
- Deploying stories and ingredients for success

# Half in Ten

The Half in Ten campaign is a project of the Center for American Progress Action Fund, the Coalition on Human Needs, and The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. It is dedicated to building the political and public will to cut the U.S. poverty rate in half in 10 years.



The Campaign to Cut Poverty in Half in Ten Years

# Our American Story

Our American Story, a project of Half in Ten and the Coalition on Human Needs, is a storyteller action network, a community of low-income families, service providers, and other community leaders working to expand economic opportunity for all through the power of their personal stories.



# Why Storytelling

- Stories complement data
- Stories fight stigma and negative stereotypes
- Stories can be a powerful advocacy tactic

# Power of Personal Stories

- Stories bring public policy to life by connecting people to policy
- Too often, low-income families do not have a seat at the table for the debates that have direct implications for their lives, Our American Story amplifies the voices of low-income Americans in the policy debates.


# Story Collection

- Topics: Safety Net Programs
  - Jobs/Training (UI)
  - Nutrition Assistance (SNAP)
  - Income Assistance (TANF, SSDI/SSI)
  - Education
  - Housing & Utilities (Section 8, LIHEAP)
  - Health (Medicaid)
  - Other
- Accept video and written stories; today we have 300+ from nearly every state

# www.halfinten.com/

## ouramericanstory

[Home](#) [About](#) [Issues](#) [Poverty Data](#) [Take Action](#) [Stories](#) [Blog](#) [Donate](#)



A community of low-income families, service providers, and other community leaders working to expand economic opportunity for all through the power of their personal stories

Our American Story is a joint project of Half in ten and the Coalition on Human Needs

### Why Stories Matter

Stories bring public policy to life. They show how policy impacts real families and communities around the country. Through storytelling, we remind our leaders that poverty doesn't have one face or take just one form.

[Read More](#)

### The OAS Booklet

*Our American Story: Personal Stories on the War on Poverty's Legacy* is a collection of thirty written stories from Americans who have benefited from programs with roots in the War on Poverty.

[Read More](#)

### Take Our Survey

We want to create an interactive and vibrant network of advocates who are not only comfortable sharing their stories but are willing and able to take action on the issues that effect them. We want and need your feedback!

[Read More](#)

Stories by Issue

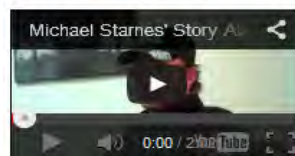
Stories by State

## Featured Stories

Housing

### Michael's Story about Housing

Posted on February 25, 2014



Hear how housing vouchers helped Michael break the cycle...

**Michael**  
Buffalo, NY

[Read More](#)

Child Care

### Share Your American Story

It's easy to be part of Our American Story. Here's what you need to do:

#1

Join the Storytellers Network  
Stay up to date on ways to take action through Our American Story, how stories are having an impact, and resources to use stories in your community.

[Join the Network](#)

#2

Submit your written or video story Contributors to Our American Story speak



# How to Submit

Share Your American Story

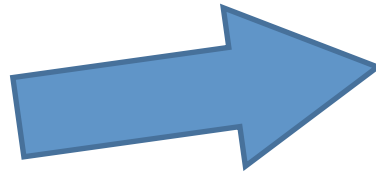
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Stay up to date on ways to take action through Our American Story, how stories are having an impact, and resources to use stories in your community.

**Join the Network**

**#2** Submit your written or video story Contributors to Our American Story speak personally about how they or people they know have been helped by child care, nutrition assistance, job training, early learning programs, affordable housing, health coverage, low-income tax credits, and other vital services.

**Submit Your Story**



## Contact Information

\* First Name

\* Last Name

\* Email Address

\* Phone

What's the best way to reach you?

\* Street

\* City

\* State

\* Zip

How did you hear about us?

## Your Story

Give us a link to your video story on [YouTube](#) or [Vimeo](#)

(2-3 minutes or less)

Your Story

(300 words or less)

# Collection Strategies

- Specific ask
- Give examples
- Think long term
  - for storytellers and for collecting
- Partner with another organization
- Track and manage stories
- Vet storytellers

# Deployment

## How We Use Stories

- Use stories in advocacy efforts to connect storytellers to action opportunities with policymakers and the media
- Deploy stories to maximize impact → to shape the debate and change the conversation

# Deployment Cont'd

First determine your stance & the kinds of stories you've collected:

- **Defensive**
  - Response to cuts
  - Combat misinformation
  - Turn it into an opportunity
- **Proactive**
  - What policies/reforms will better help you?
  - Introduce new ideas

# Deployment Strategies

Then determine what method and medium will be most effective to achieve the desired impact.

- Storyteller must be comfortable
- Audience – supporters, opposition?
- National vs state
- Storyteller's voice (op-ed) vs organizational statement
- Should the story be told in person?

# Examples

Op-ed, LTE, Hill visits, floor of Congress, press conference, TV, radio, policy briefs & reports, webinars, etc.

THE HUFFINGTON POST

THE  
Nation.

— THE —  
**SHRIVER**  
— REPORT —

CHICAGO **SUN-TIMES**

The Gazette



# Examples Cont'd



Almeta talks to Maria Shriver about Head Start



Melissa advocates for subsidized housing



Amy shares her story with Rep. Lee

# Let's stay in touch!

Sarah Baron

Field Associate, Half in Ten

[sbaron@americanprogress.org](mailto:sbaron@americanprogress.org)

Twitter: @halfinten

[www.halfinten.com/ouramericanstory](http://www.halfinten.com/ouramericanstory)

