



Investing in Narrative Change and a Culture Change Strategy



In 2016, we came together with the Nathan Cummings, Ford, General Service, and JPB Foundations to launch the five-year, multi-million dollar Pop Culture Collaborative. We have since been joined by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Omidyar Network, and other philanthropic partners.

Simultaneously, we have engaged dozens of experts through multiple convenings to develop Unbound Philanthropy’s culture change strategy.

We are often asked how we got to these investment points or how to enter this complex area of change work. In short, we have been learning, investing, and risk taking for nearly ten years—and our learning continues. This learning brief documents our journey to date.

How we got started: Storytelling by and for the immigrant rights movement

Our interest in narrative change builds on our long history of supporting and championing storytelling within the immigrant rights movement. In particular, we have supported storytelling by people who are immigrants, including undocumented youth and their parents, domestic workers, and day laborers. And we have supported their partnerships with visual artists, filmmakers, and musicians, to tell their stories in different ways and to communicate them through multiple platforms.

We have also invested in organizations to document missing stories—for example about Asian Pacific Islanders and Black Immigrants. And we have invested in expanding the pipeline of artists from immigrant and refugee communities, and from communities of color.

These investments have illuminated for us the empowering, catalytic nature of art, and have played a powerful role in lifting up immigrant and refugee communities.

Going beyond our choir: Reaching new audiences

Unbound, along with others in our movement, realized that we also need creative, catalyzing stories to be seen by more types of audiences. We want to reach audiences who we are not currently reaching and who don’t have the chance to engage directly with immigrants. Research tells us that people who know immigrants or refugees are in general more supportive of them, and many of the people who are hostile do not have any meaningful interaction.



What do we mean by culture change strategy?

“A culture change strategy is a long-term, multi-layered approach designed to—over time—create profound shifts in how people think, feel, and behave in relationship to big ideas, narratives, values, and beliefs.”

-Bridgit Antoinette Evans
Executive Director,
Pop Culture Collaborative
and Founder, FUEL

Funding Experimentation and Evaluation: *Halal in the Family*

In 2015, we invested in a type of project we don't normally fund—production development—and an evaluation strategy to explore the potential of this work more deeply. Aasif Mandvi, a correspondent on *The Daily Show*, launched the first American sitcom about a Muslim family to combat anti-Muslim bias. *Halal in the Family* was a riff off of the 1970's *All in the Family*, and originated from The Qu'osby Show sketch on *The Daily Show*.

Strategic Storytelling and Community Advisors

Mandvi partnered with Moore + Associates, a creative agency specializing in developing culture-

shifting campaigns, to apply a strategic lens to the project. An Advisory Council of advocacy groups was formed, including Muslim Advocates and Center for New Community. The team identified three goals: 1) raise awareness; 2) shift behavior and bias; and 3) support advocates and allies. They did this through creating high-quality content, ensuring it covered Muslim experiences authentically, elevating existing campaigns to combat bias, leveraging media interest to expand viewership, and measuring its impact.

A Nimble Platform

The sitcom was web-based, allowing full control of the content, keeping

costs low to allow for experimentation, and enabling web-based links to learn more or take action immediately.

Evaluation and Insight

The team engaged the Perception Institute to monitor and evaluate the project. The findings were encouraging: viewers of *Halal* were more likely to want to learn more about anti-Muslim bias and to support anti-discrimination legislation after they watched an episode.

To date, the series has over 600,000 views, 600 million media impressions, and 100 separate pieces of media coverage.



Sample Unbound grants made to support narrative change

General Operating
to fund organizations with narrative change at their core, such as *Color Of Change* and *Define American*.

Project-specific
to fund, for example, *National Domestic Worker's Alliance's (NDWA)* work to establish a strong immigrant rights and domestic care movement presence in Hollywood.

Monitoring and Evaluation
to fund experimentation and learning, such as *Halal in the Family* as described above.

A new scale to reach more hearts: The birth of the #PopJustice reports and the Pop Culture Collaborative

In order to better understand what is possible with mass audiences, and whether there is a role for philanthropy to make an impact, Unbound and the Nathan Cummings Foundation funded Liz Manne Strategy to assemble a team of experts in the entertainment industries, social justice, cultural organizing, narrative change, and more to illuminate the pop culture landscape for the philanthropic sector. They produced a six-volume report series, *#PopJustice*, that provides an incredible framework and set of resources for understanding a highly complex landscape.

The *#PopJustice* research told us that even though the pop culture industries are huge, there are successful strategies for influencing them, and there is a role for philanthropy. Moreover, it demonstrated that the time is ripe for strategic intervention based on recent trends and evolving, nimble entry points. The research indicated we would need to partner with peers to develop innovative philanthropic strategies and raise significant funds for targeted investment to enter this space at a meaningful scale.

The result is the Pop Culture Collaborative, a five-year, multi-million dollar hub for high impact partnerships and grants designed to leverage the reach and power of pop culture in service to social justice goals. The work of the Collaborative is to drive authentic, just narratives about people of color, immigrants, refugees, and Muslims in pop culture to shift how mass audiences understand the past, make sense of the present, and imagine an inclusive future. Learning from this work is informing Unbound's unique popular culture strategy focused on imagining a new narrative for people who are immigrants and refugees.

Imagining the new narrative: Developing an informed strategy for Unbound

Simultaneous to the formation of the Pop Culture Collaborative, Unbound Philanthropy began partnering with Bridgit Antoinette Evans (now the Executive Director of the Pop Culture Collaborative) and her firm FUEL to develop a culture change strategy for Unbound Philanthropy.

We established three big goals for our work together:

1. To articulate a vision for the new cultural landscape, or new way of life, in America that Unbound seeks to contribute to;
2. To understand, through informal learning and formal research, the deeper motivations and drivers that compel different audiences to resist, ignore, or fear immigration solutions that treat immigrants and refugees with dignity and benefit the whole society; and
3. To define the continuum of narrative experiences needed to shift the way critical audiences think, feel, and relate to the 'new way of life' envisioned by Unbound and our partners.

Over the past 18 months, we have held several convenings of grantees and experts to help us understand the cultural, psychological, and emotional barriers that prevent the immigrant and refugee rights movement from realizing this new way of life right now. At each step of the way, we have shared our findings and new ideas with movement leaders, and asked for their candid input so that we can iterate together. We also began to identify and define the key audiences we want to reach, because the medium of our intervention will be driven by audience types.

Targeting our work: Defining and understanding our key audiences

In order to refine our understanding of our target audiences, we commissioned a research firm, as well as independent data scientists and insight strategists, to conduct a study of over 2,500 people who are nationally representative of the general public, and to group them along a continuum based on their views on immigrants and immigration.

The survey included questions about respondents' immigration beliefs, economic situation and concerns, political views, voting history, awareness and interest in immigration issues, influencers, and demographic characteristics. We held a preliminary briefing in summer 2017 and are holding a second briefing in the fall to reveal actionable insights for those leading short-term and long-term engagement efforts, gleaned from this and other research and analysis.

What's Next: New strategy announcement in early 2018

By early 2018, we will have a new culture change strategy in place, informed by this cumulative learning and investment to date, and nested within our next five year Strategic Plan. We look forward to sharing it widely to serve as peer education and we will continue to seek collaborations to leverage our learning and impact with those who share similar goals.



We've engaged 50+ experts across multiple fields

to help inform our strategy, including esteemed artists, journalists, taste makers, evaluators, and media mavens, as well as our grantees.

We developed an immigration genealogy

to identify, as much as possible, immigration's many different branches and divisions of history, public understanding, popular and policy representation, in order to create a map of the evolution of the idea of immigration in the US. This work was led by Ryan Senser.

We surveyed 2,500 people representative of the general public

to home in on our target audiences for our culture change strategy.



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