

SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM

Solutions Journalism with Covering Climate Now
Climate Journalism Through A Solutions Lens
May 19, 2021

@soljourno #TheWholeStory

SOLUTIONS
JOURNALISM
NETWORK



Solutions journalism is

rigorous,
evidence-based
reporting on
responses to social
problems.

Where we began...

- Started in 2013 by veteran journalists David Bornstein, Tina Rosenberg, and Courtney Martin
- **MISSION:** To legitimize and spread the practice of solutions journalism

Where we are today...

- 21,000+ journalists trained
- More than 500 newsrooms incorporating solutions journalism in their work
- Operate in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa
- **MISSION:** To scale the practice of solutions journalism globally across all areas of journalism.

CHAT DISCUSSION

What words or phrases come to mind when you hear "solutions journalism?"





LET'S START WITH
WHAT
SOLUTIONS
JOURNALISM ISN'T

NOT “JUST AN IDEA” or “Just a Task Force”

The US climate envoy, John Kerry, has said 50% of the carbon reductions needed to get to net zero will come from technologies that have not yet been invented, and said people “don’t have to give up a quality of life” in order to cut emissions.



© Provided by The Guardian Photograph: Alex Wong/Getty Images

INSTEAD, something that’s already underway

WISCONSIN PUBLIC RADIO
Wiscnsin and the World. **npr**

HOME NEWS WEATHER ARTS & CULTURE MUSIC EVENTS SHOW

WPR

Mike Noreen, conservation and efficiency coordinator for River Falls, stands near the city's solar panels Friday, April 16, 2021. Angela Major/WPR

'We Need To Act Now': This Small Wisconsin City Is Boosting Its Use Of Renewable Energy To Fight Climate Change

River Falls Ranks 2nd Nationwide For Participation In Green Pricing Programs

NOT “INSTANT ACTIVIST”

Lucy Lawless



Amanda Edwards via Getty Images

Lucy Lawless, famed for her role in “Xena,” isn’t just an on- screen warrior princess. She has also been an off-screen warrior for the environment. Lawless is a “climate ambassador” for the Greenpeace [“Sign On” campaign](#), and just like Xena, she’s not afraid of a fight. She was arrested in 2012 in New Zealand for [boarding an oil drilling ship](#) with five other Greenpeace activists. They refused to disembark because they wanted to prevent the ship from departing to the Arctic to lead an oil exploration.

INSTEAD, report the responses,
not the people

To fix the climate, retrofit your home

New zero-carbon homes are nice. Old homes are the solution.

Michael J. Coren and Jemima Kiss

Apr 20 2

Simple climate action // ISSUE 33 // HEATING



Renting a home is an energy suck...

By Jemima Kiss

I’ve never had the luxury of owning my own home, but the rental place where I live is a good example of why most 20th-century homebuilding isn’t fit to achieve net-zero emissions in the 21st century. As is common in California, our house is wood-framed and has a flat, wood-and-tar roof. There’s no insulation in the walls or the roof (there is no attic space), and the long front of the house is floor-to-ceiling glass. Which sounds nice, but it sucks heat out of the house in winter and traps heat in the summer. In short, it couldn’t be less energy efficient.

NOT HERO WORSHIP

like “Good Neighbors” Stories

CNN HEROES



CNN Heroes: The Seal Rescuer

When Maine's seals are in trouble, Lynda Doughty and her team get the call. Her nonprofit, Marine Mammals of Maine, provides care with the ultimate goal of releasing the animals back to the wild. This story was originally published in 2020 and updated in 2021. [Source: CNN](#)

INSTEAD, use characters to talk about systemic change



Cheetahs, seen here in Tanzania, are coveted as show pets in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Somaliland is a transit region for smuggled cheetah cubs.

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANS LANTING, NAT GEO IMAGE COLLECTION

ANIMALS | WILDLIFE WATCH

This impoverished region is a hub for the cheetah trade. Now it's fighting back.

NOT A MAGIC BULLET

like “They Bought Him A Car”

Single dad walked 11 miles to work, so his coworkers bought him a car



An Alabama man walked almost 20 miles to his new job. When his boss found out, he gave him a car.

Co-workers buy car for teen UPS employee who walks 10 miles to work

INSTEAD,
examine systemic efforts



GET TO WORK

The jobs are in the suburbs, but many Philadelphians have no way to get there.
The Philadelphia Unemployment Project has the answer: Car pooling

THE PHILADELPHIA
CITIZEN

NOT AN AFTERTHOUGHT

like “Rags to Riches”

She was homeless, sleeping outside a condemned house, 6 months ago. Now, she’s a published author.

Tyler Perry lived on this street before he was homeless. A nearby highway sign now bears his name



She was homeless and living in a grocery store’s parking lot. Then the store hired her.

20 rich and famous people who were once homeless

INSTEAD,
responses that made a difference

BUILDING TRUST



As Texans face the skyrocketing cost of housing, community land trusts offer the promise of permanent affordability. You just have to give up ownership of your land.



What about ...

A new grant or funding?

Proposed legislation?

A task force?

An exciting coalition?



NONE of those are solutions ... why?

Ideas and theories have no evidence of effectiveness in the real world (but they might point to pilot projects that could be investigated)

Plans and promises are just that. Without evidence, these are just hope with no teeth.

EVIDENCE IS CRITICAL



I will not keep writing the same depressing story over and over
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So what is solutions journalism?

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NETWORK



Solutions journalism is

rigorous,
evidence-based
reporting on
responses to social
problems.

reporting on
something that's
happening now, and
the effects it is
producing

**SOLUTIONS
JOURNALISM
IS A PRACTICE,
NOT THEORY**

IT'S SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM IF IT...

Features not just a person, but a **response** to a problem and how it happened

Provides available **evidence** of results, looking at effectiveness — not just intentions. And especially looking for evidence focused on communities most affected by the problem and solution.

Seeks to provide **insights (lessons learned/replicable model)** that can help others respond, too — not just inspiration

Discusses **limitations** and avoids sounding like a fluff story





WHY DO SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM?

How telling “The Whole Story” creates impact

J

JOURNALISM'S PRESENT THEORY OF CHANGE: THE WATCHDOG

- Journalists act as whistleblowers and expose wrongdoing
- Pointing out social problems in hopes that they will spur reform



TO “GUIDE DOG”

FROM “WATCHDOG”

- Inadequate for journalists to simply uncover what’s wrong and hope for society to change
- People seek credible responses to problems

This solutions-based theory of change can have a positive impact on news organizations as well as its audiences.

Improved readers' perception of article quality.

Increased readers' intentions to engage.

Increased readers' interest in and knowledge about the issue.

Boosted readers' positivity.

79%

of people surveyed said reporting
on problems AND effective
responses to those problems is
either "important" or "essential."

Solutions journalism isn't producing "good news" ... it's holding people, politicians, companies, governments, those in power, accountable for the responses they bring to social issues.

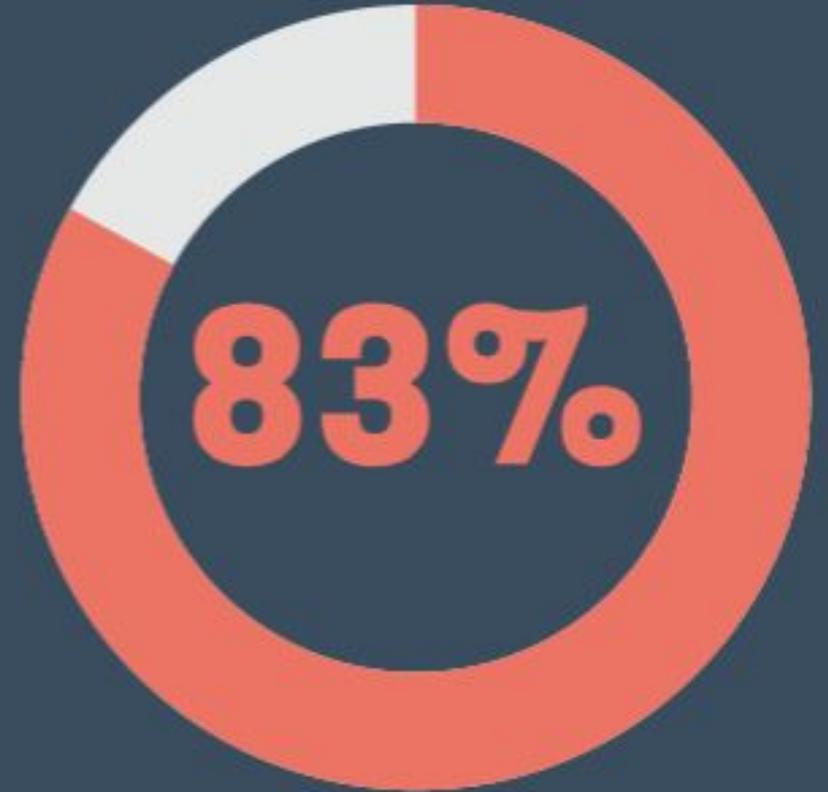
**A PROBLEM THAT WAS
SEEN AS UNAVOIDABLE**

**COMES TO BE SEEN
AS UNACCEPTABLE**

% OF PEOPLE WHO TRUSTED
THE STORY



PROBLEM STORY



SOLUTIONS STORY

How to do solutions journalism right now

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JOURNALISM
NETWORK



1 Identify the **issue or question** of concern, as precisely as possible

2 Ask **what's missing** from the public conversation

3 Start hunting for **candidates** for solution stories by asking **who's doing it better?**

4 Select a **story** to highlight

5 Report the story, focusing on the **how**

It's SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM if it...

- W Weighs a response to a problem?
- H How it works, the "howdunnit"
- O Offers insight
- L Includes limitations
- E Most important, provides evidence of impact

...tells the WHOLE story.



WHAT LEADS TO CHANGE?

(*ACCORDING TO MARSHALL GANZ)

COMBINATION OF A CRITICAL EYE
AND A HOPEFUL HEART

AWARENESS OF THE WORLD'S PAIN
AND THE WORLD'S POSSIBILITY

WHAT DO WE DO AT SJN



NEWSROOM PARTNERSHIPS

Workshops, individual consultations, Complicating the Narrative training, revenue and audience metrics support, project funding through initiatives. Support large-scale collaboratives in several U.S. cities.



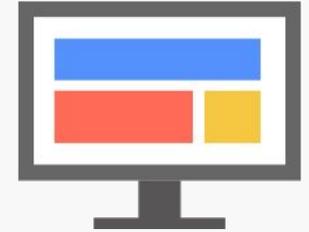
INDEPENDENT JOURNALISTS

Platforms for learning and collaboration, initiatives such as the LEDE fellowship and mentoring program to support independent journalists.



BEYOND JOURNALISM

Solutions journalism modules and full semester courses for partner J-Schools; story collection creation for non-journalism courses; collaborations with organizations such as Project Drawdown.



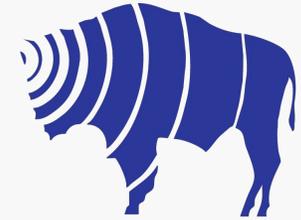
ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM

Comprehensive online toolkits, Solutions Story Tracker with 11,000-plus searchable stories, Learning Hub and monthly workshops — all for free

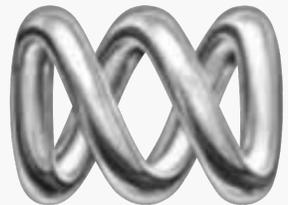
OUR GROWING NETWORK



The Guardian



WYOMING PUBLIC MEDIA



ABC
Australian
Broadcasting
Corporation



The Washington Post

The Seattle Times



J



Become a hub member (it's
free!)

solutionsjournalism.org



SOLUTIONS STORY TRACKER®

11,490 stories produced by 1,412 news outlets, from 181 countries, and growing every day.

The Solutions Story Tracker® is a curated database of rigorous reporting on responses to social problems. We collect and tag every story, providing you with the ability to find coverage of effective or promising ideas and approaches— by issue, location, journalist, and success factor (strategic insights that emerge as patterns).



**SUBMIT
SOLUTIONS
JOURNALISM**



**GET SOLUTIONS
STORIES IN
YOUR INBOX**

THE HUB

HUB HOME

GET TRAINED

FINISH YOUR STORY

FIND YOUR
COMMUNITY

PITCH YOUR STORY

SUBMIT YOUR
SOLUTIONS STORIES

Welcome, journalists, to The Hub!



GET TRAINED

Start with our core training in solutions journalism, offered in the form of webinar, in-person training, or the online self-directed Learning Lab.



FINISH YOUR STORY

Apply for a travel grant, get matched with a mentor/mentee, and workshop your story with other members to help polish your piece.



FIND YOUR COMMUNITY

Connect with your local coordinator and join our Facebook group to hear about events, expand your network, and get a lead on your next story.



LET US CELEBRATE YOU!

Submit your published solutions journalism to our Solutions Story Tracker* (we'll promote it on our channels), and start the search for your next story lead!

- Unlimited access to toolkits, reporting guides, and the Solutions Story Tracker.
- Information on upcoming events and webinars
- Lists of editors who accept solutions pitches, and more
- Sign up for newsletters in topical areas such as Economic Mobility, SoJo Exchange

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solutionsjournalism.slack.com

Facebook: Solutions Journalism
Network Group

THANK YOU!!!

fara@solutionsjournalism.org