

Expanding
Opportunity



The **Opportunity** Agenda



Opportunity is a deeply held American value and a precious national asset. At its core, it means that all of us deserve a fair chance to achieve our full potential.

Crucial to the promise of opportunity is that all people have access to a good education, a decent job at a living wage, an affordable place to live, and high quality health care.

Yet many Americans—including many people of color, poor people, immigrants, and women—face multiple barriers to opportunity that can't be overcome through individual effort alone.

We have it in our power as a nation to expand opportunity for all. Doing so requires working to turn our beliefs and aspirations into public support for fundamental change.

Opportunity *in America*



THE OPPORTUNITY AGENDA

The Opportunity Agenda was founded with the hopeful mission of building the national will to expand opportunity in America. Through our active partnerships with advocates, organizers, researchers, and policymakers, The Opportunity Agenda tells a new story to the American people:

- We use communications and media to build public support for expanding opportunity for more Americans;
- We synthesize and translate research on the obstacles to opportunity;
- We train and support social justice leaders;
- We identify and advocate on behalf of policies that expand opportunity for all.

The Opportunity Agenda's work moves hearts, minds, and policies, while building the skills and capacity of social justice organizations, leaders, and movements.



Opportunity *means*

that we all have a fair chance to achieve our full potential. Ensuring that fair chance requires that our nation fulfill these core values:

Equality

The benefits and burdens of society should not depend on what we look like or where we come from. Equality requires that we celebrate our differences while challenging stereotypes and breaking down barriers. Equality is both the absence of discrimination and the presence of fairness.

Security

We should all have the tools to meet our own basic needs and the needs of our families. Without economic and social security, it is impossible to access the other rights and responsibilities society has to offer. Security is at the core of our human dignity.

Mobility

Where we start out in life should not determine where we end up. Inherent in mobility is the belief that everyone who works hard should be able to advance and participate fully in society. Mobility requires that our nation's class distinctions be fluid and unpredictable over generations, while moving forward as a society.

Voice

We should all have a say in the decisions that affect us. Our voices must be heard in voting booths, at public forums and across the media. Expanding opportunity requires that we listen to the ideas, hopes, and dreams of everyone who lives here.

Redemption

We all grow and change over time and need a chance to start over when things go wrong. To foster redemption, we must provide conditions that allow people to develop, to rebuild, and to reclaim full responsibility for their lives.

Community

We share responsibility for each other, and the strength of our nation depends on the vibrancy and cohesiveness of our diverse population. With a strong sense of community, we understand that opportunity is not only about personal success but about our success as a people.

These values are part of our **human rights**, the rights we all have simply by virtue of our humanity. As the founders of our nation recognized when they declared that we are all created equal, fulfilling our unalienable human rights is essential to realizing the American promise of opportunity for all.

The Reach of Opportunity

As we reach people in the media and in person, we take another important step in building the national will to creating a true opportunity society. Between February 2006 and February 2008:

2,735 people
attended our events,
trainings and
briefings.

80,000 visitors
explored our website.

2,753 people
received our
print publications.

8,150 people
received our electronic
newsletters.



We placed 272 print articles and op-eds, reaching audiences as large as **52 million** people.

We were responsible for 172 TV and radio stories, reaching audiences as large as **29.8 million** people.

Our blog posts and online articles reached audiences as large as **2.25 million** people.

LONG-TERM GOALS WITH SHORT-TERM RESULTS

In the long-term, we move hearts and minds and shape public policy and political discourse. In the short-term we empower social justice organizations with the following support:

- Developing messages and communication tools;
- Convening and planning strategy sessions;
- Building new media and online communities;
- Translating research into solutions;
- Developing policy and legal strategy.

Case Studies in Opportunity

Telling a Shared Story: *Working for Immigrant Rights*

Immigrants are—and always have been—a vital part of our national community. They are our neighbors, coworkers, and key contributors to our economy and culture. But newcomers often face a range of challenges and hostilities, and addressing these issues is crucial to ensuring opportunity and human rights for all. We therefore need national and local policies that welcome immigrants, while promoting the economic security and mobility of everyone.

THE CHALLENGE

Although most Americans favor immigration, discussions around the issue have grown contentious and divisive. Though small in numbers, the anti-immigration movement has successfully controlled the public discourse, and consequently thwarted positive solutions. Media research shows that while immigration opponents have been disciplined in their core messages, no similarly coherent or compelling story about integrating immigrants into the fabric of society has broken into the media discourse.

THE OPPORTUNITY AGENDA'S APPROACH

The Opportunity Agenda helps advocates across issues craft and use values-based messages to amplify existing campaigns, while building a long-term constituency for opportunity. To address fragmented or uncoordinated communications, we bring people together for the movement-level communications strategy development that is often missing in social justice efforts. Partners then tailor shared themes to create messages that move their particular audiences, while at the same time contributing to a drumbeat of messages that build public will for opportunity.

OUR ACTIVITIES

The Opportunity Agenda brings together immigration allies to develop and promote a common, values-based narrative about immigration that taps into Americans' core values and counters the divisive and misleading story that opponents have so effectively promoted.

We analyzed public opinion and media coverage, and worked with partners to create a series of communications tools, including talking points, model op-eds, and letters to the editor.

To further encourage a shared strategy and message, we facilitated a Strategic Messaging Forum, which included more than 100 leading voices in the field. The Forum, and the efforts that followed, have helped immigrant advocates and supporters pursue a shared message on a range of issues, including fair wages and working conditions, access to medical care, due process and detention policies, and a pathway to citizenship. Advocates and policymakers are now using a shared message to fight off harmful policy proposals and advance affirmative solutions.

As with all of our work, we have linked these types of immigration activities and partnerships with efforts to ensure economic and racial justice for all Americans.

PARTNERS INCLUDE:

American Civil Liberties Union
Asian American Justice Center
California Immigration Policy Center
Center for Community Change
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Education Fund
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
National Council of La Raza
National Immigration Forum
National Immigration Law Center
The New York Immigration Coalition
Rights Working Group
Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition

Integrating Communications, Advocacy and Research: *Promoting Health Care Opportunity in New York*

To protect and promote good health, equality, community, and voice are key values often overlooked in discussions of costs or specific policies. Community needs must be figured into health care planning, and people need a voice in decisions about health care and services. However, New York state has neglected these considerations in its health planning for years. And people's health has suffered as a result. The racial, ethnic, or economic character of a community should not determine the quality of care that it receives.

THE CHALLENGE

Years of disinvestment have left some neighborhoods in New York, particularly low-income communities of color, dangerously underserved by health services. And the health of residents in these areas is demonstrably worse than those in better-served, more affluent parts of the city. Many advocates and health care providers were therefore concerned when the Governor formed a commission charged with downsizing hospitals throughout the state. They were particularly troubled that the commission's process left little room for community input, or addressed concerns about disparities and underserved areas. They mobilized to educate about the mismatch between services and community needs, and to encourage community input. In doing so, they realized the need for an engaging way to tell the story of inequalities.

THE OPPORTUNITY AGENDA'S APPROACH

By bringing together research, policy, and communications strategies, along with new media and web-based tools, we provide advocates with resources that highlight the extent of the problem, that offer positive, evidence-based policy solutions, and that reach and sway varied audiences to adopt those solutions.

OUR ACTIVITIES

To make the case for health opportunity in New York, we culled research in public health and other fields to identify pressing inequalities. We also reviewed the state's statutes and constitution and produced a report that showed how state and city policy, by insufficiently addressing disparities, had violated residents' rights under a range of city, state, national, and international laws.

To determine how best to communicate these findings, we conducted a statewide poll and crafted our communications and policy strategy based, in part, on one of its major findings: that 77% of New Yorkers believe that health care is a human right.

We then provided advocates with traditional and web-based communications tools, message guidance, and media training and placement, resulting in an amplification of their voices in the din of politicians and health care business leaders.

By offering an integrated strategy, we provided advocates with complementary tools that are effective on their own, but stronger when used in concert. Advocates were then better able to make their case—for better community health planning and for increased community input—and to articulate a persuasive critique of the commission's process. These groups continue to use our tools to promote equitable health planning for the state.

PARTNERS INCLUDE:

Bronx Health REACH
Brooklyn Perinatal Network, Inc.
Commission on the Public's Health System
SEIU - Committee of Interns and Residents
New York City Council Committee on Health
The New York Immigration Coalition
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
Physicians for a National Health Program
Public Health Association of New York City



Harnessing New Technologies to Promote Opportunity: *Mapping Health Opportunity*

The opportunity to enjoy good health is crucial to the security of all Americans and to our nation's strength and prosperity. But millions lack that opportunity, and low-income communities, women, people of color, and immigrants are especially likely to face obstacles. While access to quality health care is an important gateway to good health, social investments in neighborhoods, in such wide ranging factors as environmental protection, safe and affordable housing, child care, and healthy food markets, also play a major role in protecting health opportunity.

THE CHALLENGE

Although research supports investment in community-level solutions to expand health opportunity, this approach has proven difficult to explain to the media, policymakers and the public. Instead, discussions tend to focus solely on how individual decisions affect the health problems people face. Advocates, researchers, and others who champion health opportunity need ways to illuminate how investment in public systems and structures influences health.

THE OPPORTUNITY AGENDA'S APPROACH

We harness new media technology to illustrate systemic barriers to opportunity, particularly in the area of health. By demonstrating and promoting the use of blogs, social networking, interactive mapping, and other online strategies, we provide advocates with new tools for telling compelling stories and promoting policies that expand opportunity. Mapping is a particularly useful tool in showing the relationship between good health and community investment, highlighting the importance of policies that improve the health of all communities.

OUR ACTIVITIES

In New York, we developed www.healthcarethatworks.org, an interactive online map that illustrated how hospital closings in New York City have predominantly harmed low-income communities of color. Users of the map can follow the trajectory of hospital closings over time, contribute information and comments, and contact their local news outlets and elected officials.

Building on that experience, we developed a state-wide interactive map in California that illustrates a far wider range of health and opportunity data in even more interactive ways. We have engaged a range of advocates, community leaders, policy experts and others to build a map that speaks to the concerns of the state's diverse communities. The map can be used by a broad audience for education, advocacy, and news reporting, and it can inform innovative policy change.

PARTNERS INCLUDE:

Applied Research Center
Brooklyn Perinatal Network, Inc.
California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Catholic Healthcare West
Commission on the Public's Health System
Community Clinics Initiative
Kirwan Institute on Race and Ethnicity
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
ZeroDivide



Elevating Social Justice Values in an Election Year:

Community Values and Opportunity

Americans understand that we prosper most when our policies reflect that we're all in it together. The election of 2008 presented an opportunity to elevate this idea in the political conversation, as presidential elections are unique in focusing the political discourse on our national values and the policies needed to fulfill them. Such discussion can leave a lasting legacy that shapes policy and public opinion for years to come.

THE CHALLENGE

Over the past three decades, political discussions have focused on themes of extreme individualism, blaming social ills on individual decisions instead of highlighting our shared fate. The resulting policies have led to a fractured health care system, growing gaps between the rich and poor, and dwindling investment in education, human rights protections, and other programs that protect and expand opportunity. Meanwhile, those working for social justice have lacked a cohesive way to counter this dominant theme, instead fracturing into issue-specific messages that fail to inspire the public.

THE OPPORTUNITY AGENDA'S APPROACH

We use shared values like opportunity and community to connect a wide range of issues. By telling stories through this lens, we challenge the notion that all problems can or should be solved by invoking individual responsibility. We then leverage our active partnerships to provide those narratives with considerable reach and greater impact.

OUR ACTIVITIES

In partnership with the Center for Community Change (CCC) and groups around the country, we developed the concept of community values—the idea that we're stronger as a country when we work together for the common good. This theme served to articulate a positive vision while creating a unifying theme for disparate groups and issues.

Beginning with the Iowa caucuses and continuing throughout the general election season, we engaged community organizations and advocates with the community values theme through a series of nonpartisan, non-electoral activities. In Iowa, we held workshops and provided communications support for CCC's pre-caucus activities, including the Heartland Presidential Forum, which featured major presidential candidates and launched the Campaign for Community Values.

Throughout the general election season, we trained hundreds of organizers and advocates in California, Colorado, and Tennessee, provided communications tools to thousands of leaders, and placed a number of important news stories.

Most importantly, we gave groups with wide and varied networks a common theme under which to connect and advance their many causes. This approach, combined with the reach and leverage of our partners, resulted



in a powerful shift in political discourse, including the language of candidates, content in the blogosphere, and organizing around the country.

PARTNERS INCLUDE:

Center for Community Change
Colorado Progressive Coalition
Gamaliel Foundation
Granite State Organizing Project
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
Maine People's Alliance
Nashville Peace and Justice Center
The Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition
Northwest Federation of Community Organizations
Sunflower Community Action Committee

Understanding and Influencing Public Opinion:

Promoting Human Rights at Home

Opportunity requires a national commitment to protecting and promoting human rights. These rights are the guarantee of dignity and fairness we all deserve by virtue of our humanity, and which the world's governments have recognized as universally essential. Because the human rights of many Americans continue to be denied, it is essential that we work to build understanding and support for those rights here at home.

THE CHALLENGE

Attempts to promote and protect human rights in the United States have suffered from the absence of a “human rights culture” in our public discourse and policymaking. Though most Americans believe in the concept of human rights, few are familiar with international principles or their implications for domestic social problems. Lawmakers lack knowledge about human rights and feel little public pressure to fulfill our country's obligations. A small, but growing, U.S. human rights movement has begun to put these issues on the map, but has had little information on public attitudes or how to influence them.

THE OPPORTUNITY AGENDA'S APPROACH

The Opportunity Agenda believes that communications strategies must be inspired by values, while grounded in research. To guide our message development, we scan existing opinion research to identify opportunities for moving public opinion. When adequate information isn't available, we conduct original research with key audiences,

and build on this knowledge to craft and test messages, train advocates, and inform communications campaigns.

OUR ACTIVITIES

To support the expansion of a domestic human rights movement, we worked with leaders and advocates to design and implement communications strategies that examine and expand public understanding of and support for human rights in the U.S.

To do this, we first surveyed human rights leaders about communications and messaging on domestic social issues. Based on their feedback and scans of opinion research and media, we undertook a multi-year research project to examine the views of key audiences. Using focus groups, surveys, a national poll, and message testing, we were able to provide the field with a better understanding of these audiences' views, interests, and concerns.

We then worked with field leaders to develop a hands-on communications toolkit and trainings, and finally to take our shared message “live” in campaigns on specific human rights issues around the nation.

Advocates are using our research and advice to press for human rights protections. We believe this approach of combining research, testing, training, and outreach can be applied to other social justice topics to expand opportunity across issues.

PARTNERS INCLUDE:

Advocates for Environmental Human Rights
American Civil Liberties Union
Amnesty International
Breakthrough
Center for Reproductive Rights
Community Media Workshop
Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
National Center for Human Rights Education
National Economic and Social Rights Initiative
Rights Working Group
SPIN Project
The Nation
US Human Rights Network
Witness



Using Current Events to Shape Public Dialogue: *Promoting Diversity, Racial Justice, and Educational Opportunity*

Equal opportunity is a core national value, and Americans strongly believe that it should not be hindered by race, gender, ethnicity, or other aspects of who we are. However, while inequalities persist across a range of issues, the public is increasingly skeptical of the existence of racial discrimination in particular. We need new and better ways to talk about equal opportunity and diversity, and the barriers that hamper them. As an important gateway to opportunity, educational equality must be central to our new story.

THE CHALLENGE

Barriers to equality and diversity in our education system continue to mount, and experts tell us that racial segregation and isolation cannot be overcome without making integration an explicit goal in educational policymaking. In 2007, the Supreme Court took up this issue, hearing two cases regarding the ability of school districts to employ voluntary integration programs. The Court handed down a complex and mixed decision that educational policymakers could have interpreted in many ways. It was therefore imperative for advocates to react with a coherent story that protected equal opportunity and diversity.

THE OPPORTUNITY AGENDA'S APPROACH

The Opportunity Agenda often uses timely and newsworthy events to elevate social justice values and solutions. To do so, we work closely with partners to frame the debate in ways that foster support for expanded opportunity. Strategies often include spokesperson training and aggressive media placement, focusing resources on targeted opportunities to contribute to the public debate.

OUR ACTIVITIES

To prepare for the media blitz surrounding the Supreme Court cases, The Opportunity Agenda worked with partners to anticipate possible decisions and develop talking points based on an analysis of public opinion research and media coverage. When the Court handed down its decision, we issued new talking points in 90 minutes, briefed education and civil rights leaders, and helped place those leaders in dozens of news stories around the nation.

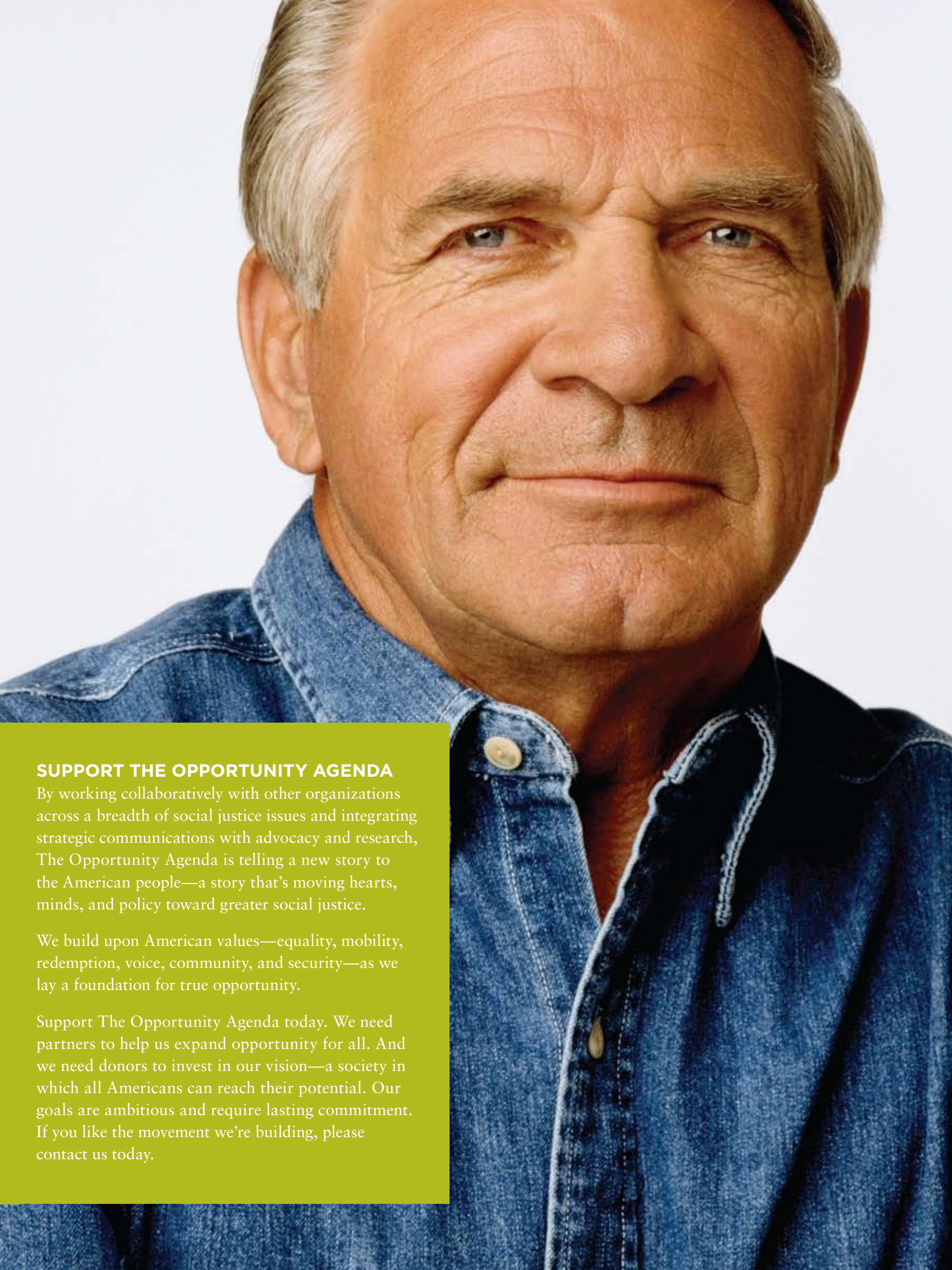
The spokespersons with whom we worked appeared in many subsequent stories, using our tools and carrying a shared message. An analysis of media coverage surrounding the cases revealed that these spokespersons maintained a consistent, effective, and influential message.

Our work with key educational and civil rights organizations in this initiative helped develop an optimistic and powerful message around promoting diversity. We believe our work has helped to convince school districts to maintain their integration and educational opportunity policies in the wake of the court's decision. Fueled by the attention the decision received, we continue to work with partners to promote lawful and effective local policies that offer equal access to quality education for all.

PARTNERS INCLUDE:

The Civil Rights Project at UCLA
Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice
Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity
Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund





SUPPORT THE OPPORTUNITY AGENDA

By working collaboratively with other organizations across a breadth of social justice issues and integrating strategic communications with advocacy and research, The Opportunity Agenda is telling a new story to the American people—a story that's moving hearts, minds, and policy toward greater social justice.

We build upon American values—equality, mobility, redemption, voice, community, and security—as we lay a foundation for true opportunity.

Support The Opportunity Agenda today. We need partners to help us expand opportunity for all. And we need donors to invest in our vision—a society in which all Americans can reach their potential. Our goals are ambitious and require lasting commitment. If you like the movement we're building, please contact us today.



Join the conversation at:

OpportunityAgenda.org



The Opportunity Agenda

*Building the National Will
to Expand Opportunity in America*

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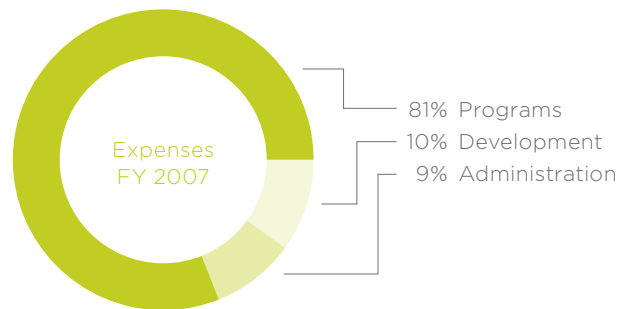
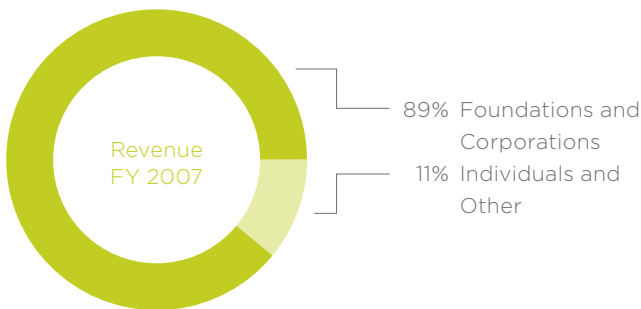
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Statement of Revenue and Expenses

for the Fiscal Years ended December 31, 2004-2007

REVENUE	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007
Total Revenue	\$ 929,025	2,488,111	703,124	3,383,875
EXPENSES				
Salaries, Payroll Taxes and Benefits	62,478	504,494	835,595	833,316
Professional Services	82,465	561,357	612,348	537,486
Publications and Reference	862	35,401	74,356	37,480
Travel and Meetings	2,618	71,292	99,049	96,542
Office Services	791	15,547	17,817	13,163
Postage and Delivery	185	4,302	18,769	13,123
Equipment and Maintenance	–	5,843	9,088	7,696
Occupancy	9,646	155,897	172,274	195,366
Fiscal Sponsor Fees	83,751	151,761	43,310	194,178
Membership and Dues	–	570	1,050	378
Depreciation Expense	174	7,549	16,766	20,467
Total Expenses	242,969	1,514,013	1,900,464	1,945,445
NET SURPLUS				
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	686,056	974,097	(1,197,340)	1,434,429
ENDING BALANCE				
Ending Fund Balance	\$ 686,056	1,660,153	462,813	1,897,243



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We are very grateful to the following group of individuals for their participation in ongoing conversations with The Opportunity Agenda staff about governance, fundraising, finance, and board relations.

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