

Three takeaways from Anat Shenker-Osorio's 2/15 message workshop -- and some questions or tips on applying to your own messaging...

1. Words Matter – *Specific words matter, and affect people's receptivity to our policies.*

WATCH OUT FOR

The Passive Voice

When we say "rents have skyrocketed," "people are being displaced" we essentially concede that things are out of our control.

Hedging or a lack of affirmative vision

Are you doing something, or are you thinking about maybe kind of talking about it? Additional words like "seek to" or "strive to" or "work to" dull the impact of our desires and accomplishments.

Review the "Messaging This Moment" Handbook for more examples and specific phrasing you can try out in your own materials.

2. Conceptual metaphors – *You can unconsciously deliver packets of information that influence how your audience perceives your message through the use of conceptual metaphor.*

Conceptual metaphors are those beyond our conscious awareness – phrases like "her idea flew by me," "I couldn't grasp what she was saying" suggest that ideas are *objects*. Ideas can also be food: "I couldn't swallow her argument."

[Research showed](#) that when individuals were presented with factual data and statistics about crime, when it was primed with a virus metaphor language versus opposition language, people were more likely to look for preventative solutions and recall positive data.

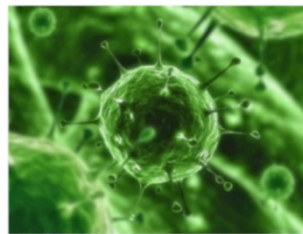
As you review your message, ask yourself the following questions:

Which conceptual metaphors are you using? (On average, we use metaphorical speech in American English every six to seven words! What picture do your non literal words convey? How might people respond to the ideas you're seeding? Is there a better metaphor you can use that highlights the default assumptions you want people to hold?

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD

- ✓ Present problems as people-created so that they can be people solved.
- ✓ Describe who is behind the problem.
- ✓ When this isn't obvious, use verbs like choose or decide, eliminate or confiscate, to characterize what lawmakers have done or seek to do.

- ✓ Be less modest!
- ✓ Embrace direct action language, such as "we achieve," "we create," "our campaign challenges" and "our coalition builds"



"crime is spreading"
"infesting our city"
"plaguing our streets"



"fight crime"
"beat back rates"
"get tough on crime"

3. **Race Class Narrative** – If you don't address race and class explicitly, your audience will fill in the blanks on their own. Be successful by directly addressing our reality in a way that inspires our base and persuades those in the middle.

In your own message:

✓ Name race from the outset and establish cross-racial solidarity: “No matter our differences, whether we’re white, black, or brown, we all want a safe, stable place to call home” or “We must join together across racial differences...”

✓ Name race when establishing shared values. It's not enough to say 'everyone' and 'all of us.' We must make clear that 'everyone' is inclusive of people across the racial spectrum to confront existing perceptions that other races are different from our own.

✓ Call out the problem: There are people using race to divide us, and we must call them out (using the “people do things” principle) to acknowledge how race and class are part of our story and goals.

**Race-Class Narratives
Core Elements**

