A RUBRIC FOR TELLING STORIES THAT TRANSFORM PERSPECTIVES ON POVERTY

Stories are the most powerful tool we have as changemakers. They can shift perspectives by helping people understand what economic injustice feels like and how it came to be. They can also inspire people to act.

Use this rubric to determine whether your story is likely to be effective in shifting mindsets around the issues you're working on, without reinforcing harmful pervasive narratives.

Are you using the narrative arc?

Which plot structures does your story use? Check all that apply. (If it's one that's used all the time, consider shifting to one less often used. In our research for this project, we saw that many organizations are using the *overcoming the monster* plot structure more than any other.)

❑ *Overcoming the monster*, in which a group of people work together to defeat a common threat to self or country

❑ *Rags to riches*, in which a character has nothing, gains everything, loses it, and then gains it for good, often after the demise or misfortune of their adversaries

❑ Comedy, in which a series of ridiculous or funny events result in a happy ending

❑ Tragedy, in which an otherwise likable character has a deep moral flaw that results in their demise or that of others

❑ The quest, in which a character or group of characters seeks an answer, event, or object

❑ Voyage and return, in which the central character travels to a new place and returns transformed

❑ Rebirth, in which a character either gains a new perspective or helps others do so, which results in a shared new and improved reality

What do you want people who hear this story to do (i.e., take a specific action)?

Given what you want them to do, what do you want people who hear this story to feel? Focus on positive emotions like pride, hope, love, awe, and parental love, which are associated with agency and action.

Are systems of inequality and how they operate to oppress poor people central to the story (for more on this, review the <mark>systems worksheet</mark>)? These could include:

- Structural barriers to choice and access

- Explicit acknowledgment of white supremacy, racism, capitalism, classism, or patriarchy

- A systemic, not individual, root of the challenge facing central characters

Is the conflict between the central character and another character, or between the character and a system?

Which aspects of the system are you highlighting in your story with character and setting choices to illustrate the root cause of conflict?

- ❑ Historical

- ❑ Political

- ❑ Geographical

- ❑ Social

- ❑ Economic

Are racism, classism, sexism, and ableism made explicit and central to the story? How are these visible in the story?

Are you featuring the experiences of poor people authentically? Have you included specific cultural details and experiences (e.g., cultural authenticity vs. generalizations and simplifications)?

Whose point of view is the story written from? (Most often, this should be the perspective of the individuals who are most affected.) How does that point of view bring audiences into the story?

If the story is not being told by those most affected, are you featuring the experiences of poor people authentically? Have you included specific cultural details and experiences (e.g., cultural authenticity vs. generalizations and simplifications)?

Who is the hero in the story? Is it your organization? How can you make affected communities or allies the hero?

How does the affected community express its agency? What does their power look like?

Is the villain or source of the problem a system rather than a single individual?

Does this story uphold any common <mark>harmful tropes or narratives</mark>? Check all that apply

❑ American Dream

❑ Deservingness

❑ Personal responsibility as a source of problem and solution

❑ Bootstraps worldview

❑ White savior

❑ Welfare queen

❑ Participation in capitalism as an ideal outcome

❑ Other

Did this story challenge any of these? If yes, how so?

▪ Y/N

▪ How:

Do the underlying values in the story or moral of the story focus on:

❑ Reparations

❑ Justice

❑ Fairness

❑ Reducing harm to poor people

❑ Interdependence

❑ Reciprocity

❑ Community care

❑ Solidarity

❑ Mutual aid

❑ Other

Survey inspired by:
Pérez Huber, L., Camargo Gonzalez, L., & Solórzano, D. G. (2020). "Theorizing a Critical Race Content Analysis for Children's Literature about People of Color." Urban Education, 0042085920963713.