

SOCIAL MEDIA BEFORE THE INTERNET

MINDBOMBS & MEDIA

GREENPEACE

WHO AM I? PLEASE TELL ME...



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- ▶ 1st person to use “functional addiction” on the web
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GREENPEACE

Hi, my name is Laura Hilliger, I'm on the interwebz. So when you're using your social media to tell your networks about #engageprague and all the brilliant stuff I'm about to say, or to make fun of me when I put my foot in my mouth, please do include @epilepticrabbit – you know, feed my ego please.

You know that icebreaker game where you tell two truths and one lie and people have to guess which is the lie? That's what these bullets are.

How I dress, how I speak, the images I chose for these slides, the places I fumble in this talk – all of this, in combination with these bullet points, is going to help you form a story about me, personally. Your story about me, as is your story about most things, just one side of perception. What you think might not be true, keep that in mind.

STORIES ARE A CENTRAL FUNCTION OF THE HUMAN MIND.



WHO MADE THIS UP?

- ▶ Monday: Beginning of the workweek
- ▶ Tuesday: Taco night
- ▶ Wednesday: Hump day
- ▶ Thursday: Afterwork drink night
- ▶ Friday: TGIF
- ▶ Saturday: Hangover / Flea Market
- ▶ Sunday: Rest and hang out with family day

Thirty four thousand years ago, in a large cave in Southern France, an artist used pigment to create some of the first known paintings. Herds of bison, charging rhinos, leaping gazelle. The animals - some of them now extinct - were rendered in startling detail. However, these were not simply portraits. The animals were interacting with one another. Interaction is story. Every interaction is a story.

Story is how we remember the past, how we imagine the future, how we create our identities. Stories are how we relate to people. The days of the week are stories we tell ourselves to organize time. Sickneses are stories scientists make up to explain our mortality. Stories are in everything.

STORIES ARE A CENTRAL FUNCTION OF
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STORY AND TRUTH

Stories don't have to be fictional or artistic. And they don't belong to certain kinds of people. Given that a story or narrative is present in almost everything we think, say, or write, theorists often say that after language, it is the most distinctive human trait. Narrative or stories are a central function of the human mind

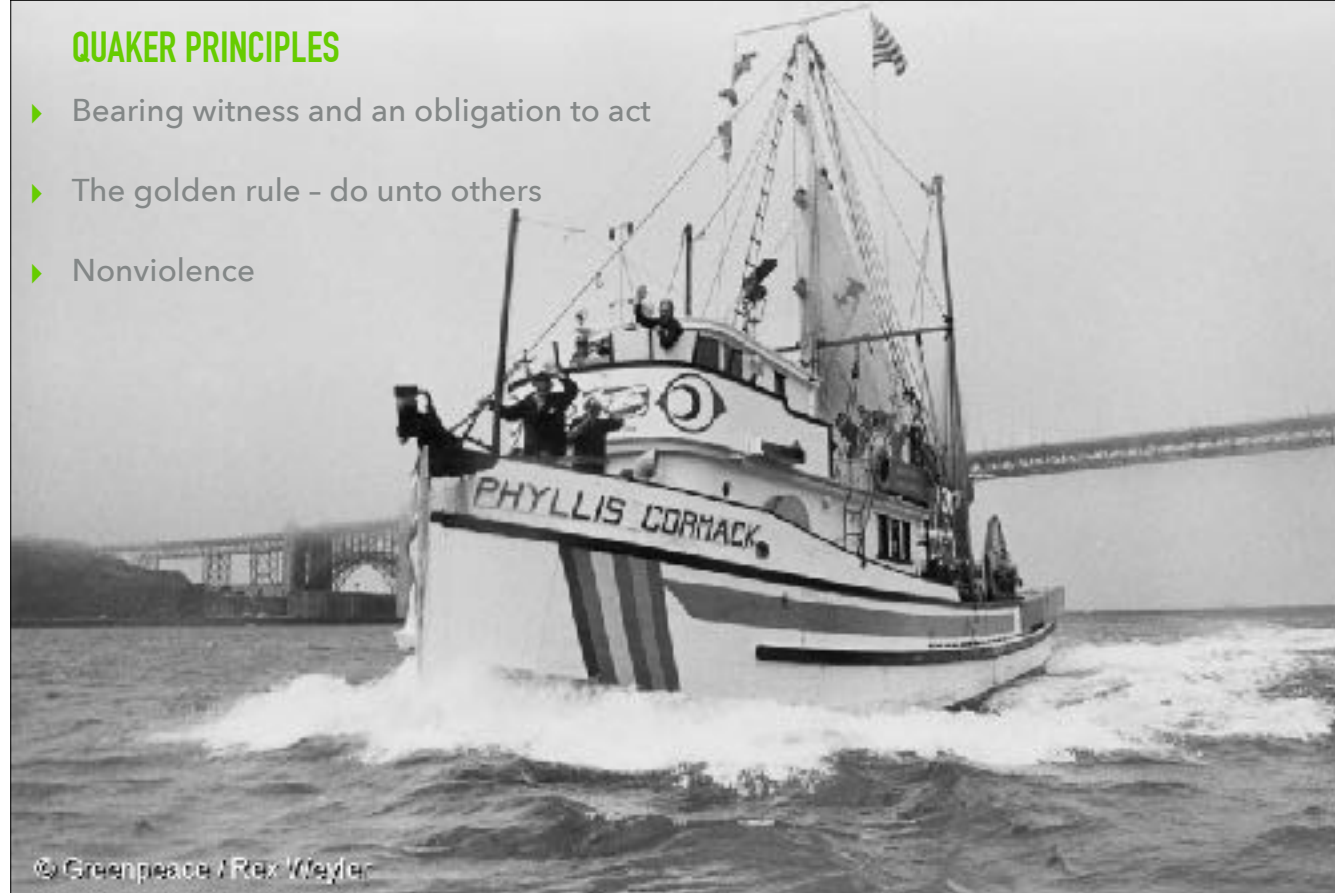
Think about it – how do you relay information to your family and friends? You don't submit factual reports with fifteen expert sign offs, do you? No, you tell people stories about what happened, what's going on in your life.

Greenpeace wants to tell honest stories through social media. Greenpeace is not, nor has it ever been just about the environment nor is it an animal rights organization. Our mission is to have a green and peaceful world. As a non-profit with a mission to protect the planet in all it's biodiversity, the stories Greenpeace tells aims to put the ecological movement on an equal playing field with forces that have more resources.

So we use social media as a tool to access power.

QUAKER PRINCIPLES

- ▶ Bearing witness and an obligation to act
- ▶ The golden rule - do unto others
- ▶ Nonviolence



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Greenpeace has a powerful story, and Greenpeace has always used media to create power. And it's always done so using social networks. Before GP was an organisation, an office or a movement - it was a ship and an action. The super short version of this founding story goes like this:

In the early 70s, the US government wanted to test a hydrogen bomb on a small island off the Pacific Northwest coast called Amchitka. Some folks from Vancouver learned of this test and started protesting – their first argument was quite simply that no one knew what testing a nuclear warhead would do to life on or under or around the island. People worried about causing a title wave. They worried about radiation poisoning.

These concerned citizens were inspired by Quaker principles and they formed the “Don’t make a wave committee”. They protested in the streets, they talked about their concerns to others. They formed networks of people. More people became concerned, but the US Defense department showed no signs of canceling the test. These rabble rousers weren’t going to give up. The Don’t Make a Wave Committee decided to take a ship to Amchitka and protest the US nuclear testing at the site. They threw a benefit concert, raised money and leased a small fishing trawler called the Phyllis Cormack.

“THE ONLY DELIVERY SYSTEM WE HAD WHICH COULD POSSIBLY FEND OFF THE MILITARY’S NUCLEAR WEAPONS DELIVERY SYSTEM WAS THE MASS MEDIA. OUR IDEA WAS THAT WE WOULD FIRE OFF PRESS RELEASES INSTEAD OF BALLISTIC MISSILES. SO IN A WAY THIS LITTLE OLD FISHING BOAT BECAME A KIND OF MEDIA BATTLESHIP.”

Bob Hunter, ca. 1971

The other thing this group of citizen did, though, the thing that the newly formed Greenpeace did that set a chain of events in motion that would lead to the Environmental movement as we understand it today, was storytelling.

The founders of Greenpeace had an visceral understanding of how to use mass media to tell an inspiring and engaging story.

The images and the stories of a group of ragtag activists sailing towards a nuclear testing site to protest spread around the world. Bob Hunter, one of the founders, said the image the story was a “mind bomb” – a story designed to shift perspectives.



Here's another mind bomb

Working with ships has allowed Greenpeace to go to places that most people can never go and to witness environmental crimes/injustice that would otherwise never be seen.

Because we are there – we are impelled to take action. Because others bear witness with us – we hope that they also are inspired to act.

A POWERFUL STORY: HOW GREENPEACE HAS USED MEDIA IN A SOCIAL WAY



When people think of Greenpeace, often what they think of is daring individuals showing physical courages. An activist standing boldly in the path of a bulldozer in a political or moral act. A climber hanging above raging waters showing solidarity for a specific cause.

They think this because a: it's true, Greenpeace is full of daring and courageous individuals. And 2: We spread iconic images and stories.

OUR NEGATIVE NARRATIVE: EMOTIONAL VS RATIONAL



The story of the environmental movement is one that many people now are familiar with. The setting: our world, the characters: huge faceless corporations who care for nothing except money, annoying environmental activists who expect everyone to be a vegan. The idiotic, consumption obsessed public, unaware of either the greed or the planetary destruction. We know the conflicts.

This story is set up, ingrained in us, even if people have different views on the issue itself.

Over the years, Greenpeace fell into a kind of doom & gloom narrative. When people think of the environmental movement, they think about death, destruction, mayhem. The end is coming, we've been telling our stories as if they're supposed to be part of the apocalyptic genre. Think about how I described the characters – faceless, annoying, idiotic. We've been telling stories as if the characters are all bad.



This narrative is powerful and wide-reaching. We've been using it for years. But it's a shallow triumph because critical voices who deny climate change and push ecological boundaries past their limits are still loud.

Ideological disagreements about climate change have paralyzed global action (both in terms of government and ordinary people). Progressive activists have in the last few decades, especially with regard to climate change, tried to make arguments with a heavy emphasis on science and rationality. While our opponents have chosen to frame their narratives in doubt, rumors, emotional appeals etc.

Our opponents frame their arguments in terms of loss of freedom, loss of prosperity. For example, although there are much cleaner, more efficient and safer ways to produce energy than burning coal, proponents of coal simply say "Why are you trying to take away blue collar jobs!?" and no one cares that we don't really need to use coal anymore. They use emotional arguments that hit close to home. They use fear of inconvenience or fear of losing status to make us buy things and consume things with total disregard for what our consumption does to the planet.



Meanwhile, environmentalists have tended to frame our ecological problems in rational terms: loss of biodiversity, over proliferation of chemicals. We tell people what to do – stop this, stop that. We haven’t provided emotional context. People have become so overwhelmed with messages on how they should behave, how they should “be” different, they just don’t care anymore.

Greenpeace has a history of using rational arguments. Facts, figures, reports. We used to think truth in this way was the answer. And it is. But the truth needs storytelling. We can’t just expect that the most compelling facts will win. We learned that our audiences needed to become broader. We needed to learn to speak to “the masses”.

The power dynamic lies with those who shape the conversation. Corporate advertisers are telling the story that we will be prettier, smarter, better if we just keep buying new stuff. But digital marketing is not the same as digital advocacy, and we activists use our social media to ransack corporate bullshit and propose a different vision of our collective future.

Anti Nuclear Demonstration in Brazil

On the day before the 25th Anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, Greenpeace activists spray an orange smoke to simulate a nuclear accident in front of the National Bank for Economical and Social Development - BNDES. They are asking the bank to stop financing a new Brazilian nuclear plant (the Angra III).

[INSERT
INSPIRATIONAL
PHOTO REPRESENTING
GROWTH, LEARNING,
CHANGE, HUMANNESS]

Growing up, I was a freak. I felt like a freak, people told me I was a freak. I got put in the freak classes – you know, the ones for smart people. This was not cool. I didn't fit in, people were cruel – you know, sob story. And I resisted.

I have fought social and cultural norms my entire life because I was taught so many conflicting ideas, and my mind works in nuances.

I was taught a *story* of individualism. That I had to make my own way. That I would have to struggle to survive. That this was normal. That people aren't to be trusted. That being smart isn't enough, that I would have to “adapt” to fit in. I was taught that no one was going to help me.

But somewhere along the way, I learned another story – that no matter what, I can choose to be strong, fierce, independent. Through my friends and family, I learned that people *would* help me. I learned that the world *is* nuanced. “Learn to fit in” and “be yourself” is not a dichotomy. We are taught conflicting ideas all the time, and we have free will – we have a choice in what we do.



At Greenpeace, we realized that we needed a new narrative for the environmental movement. One that is as powerful as the modern story of individualism.

We dream of a future that is a balanced, modern, utopian narrative of social progress and renewal. What we want is to provoke hope -- especially for the story of climate change, which has seemed doomed because of its emphasis on the apocalyptic genre.

We need to tell a story of a visionary species. A romantic journey of change and human agency and power. The story of a girl who went from being a freak to being a total badass – where the girl is “all humans” and the journey is from a system and a planet built on competition and to a system and a planet built on cooperation.

Everywhere there are people already living our dream. We want to change the perspective that Greenpeace is purely “environmental” and help people recognize the interconnectedness of the environment and other causes. We have a broader story about humanity to tell.



Greenpeace – as well as the other communities I spend my time around, like the open source community and the co-operative community – have started to have conversations about how solidarity and collective effort can shift the balance to change the pervasive narratives in our world.

Using personal and localized narratives, we are starting to use our broadcasting power to tell the story of people, not just the iconic representations of our organization. We do think that some of the issues we address are serious, and it would be disrespectful to our audiences to pretend like they're not, but we don't have to take ourselves too seriously, and we can propagate a hopeful narrative in any case. We aim to get away from the binary logic of the apocalyptic genre.

Our Theory of Change is simple: we believe that in order to change the world, we need to go after the stories that shape our behavior and our sense of what's possible.

THE UNIQUE AND HUMAN VOICE, FAILING FORWARD, BEING GENUINE



So you want to know about our social media strategy? Well we live in a world of direct communications, peer to peer shares, people bypassing the gatekeepers. We are in real time, the speed of light, the speed of communication, visceral connection, FB live, twitter, the rise of personal media, citizen journalism and a collapse in faith in 'official stories' – These are all opportunities to reinvigorate our communications as story.

Now, social media gives the microphone to so many more people. It has opened up the way Greenpeace tells stories and even the way we think about ourselves. We aren't the lone heroes. We recognize the power behind sharing and amplifying *others'* stories. Speaking up *collectively* on more issues. Making *space* for supporters to speak, not just talking for them.

Protest for Free Society in Budapest, Hungary

70.000 people took to the streets in Hungary's capital, Budapest, to protest against new laws targeting independent academia and civil society organisations. They protest for free organizations, free thought and a free society in Budapest. Our colleagues in Hungary were amidst them and our colleague Katalin, a grandmother of five and lifelong campaigner spoke to the assembled people on stage.



We are in a place where we can live out loud and start to overcome the socially ingrained, culturally inflicted fear of failure and celebrate the messiness of human existence. We have to fail forward, learn from our mistakes and each other and recognized that as a values based organization, we have to communicate to that place where values are formed. The human heart.

In a time when dichotomies abound between the right and left. In a time of political upheaval and the us versus them mentality is part of our social fabric, idealists like me, inside of Greenpeace and out there in the world of technology and activism and art – out there in every industry actually – idealists are looking at the world and saying, you know what?

We are not in competition with each other. Let's use the tech we have to cooperate, connect, to learn, to grow and to change the world for the better.

Thank you.

Love Trumps Hate Protest in Prague