

API Agents of Change:  
Disrupting Gender Violence  
Defining Gender Democracy

## **Using Messaging and Media for Impact**

August 7, 2018

Harmful policy proposals and divisive rhetoric emerging from Washington, D.C. and many statehouses target the communities we serve. At the same time, these challenges create opportunities for advocates to speak clearly and forcefully in a collective effort to center immigrant survivors of gender-based violence, push back against dangerous policies, and positively influence the public narrative.

In this workshop, we'll explore how to create effective Values-Based Messaging and communications strategies to highlight your work, build your audience, and increase your impact. We'll also discuss effective techniques for interviewing with reporters and participants will practice responding to difficult questions. Even at a moment when our communities are under attack, we can work to disrupt oppressive systems with our powerful voices and stories.

# Alliance for Immigrant Survivors

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Intro: My name is Charlie McAteer, a strategic communications consultant based in Seattle who works with non-profit clients who fight for racial, economic, and immigrant justice. I've been blessed to have the opportunity to work with the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence.

Part of that work includes branding and launching the new Alliance for Immigrant Survivors, a network of advocates and allies working on immigration-related policies and issues impacting survivors of gender-based violence. We want to activate the broader DV community while centering immigrant survivors. AIS will be launching social media platforms, a new website, and providing a regular email featuring helpful resources, toolkits, talking points, and webinars by our network and others, so please join our email list if you didn't when you came in.

Transparency and accountability, I'm a cis-gendered white male privileged to be invited into this decidedly non-white space with you – it's refreshing and humbling. I aim to engage you in conversation about messaging and media strategies. There is so much leadership, brilliance, and talent in this room, I'll be passing the mic to other communicators to share their success stories and lessons learned. Interrupt me at any moment with questions, challenges, or additional points you'd like to add to the mix.

## Workshop Goals

Strategic communications

Values-based messaging

Effective interviewing techniques with media

Answering difficult questions from reporters

In this workshop, we'll explore how to create effective Values-Based Messaging and discuss effective ways to work and interview with reporters. I aim to provide space for you to practice with each another in responding to difficult questions.

- Discuss value of strategic communications
- How to create Values-Based Messaging to support your work
- Tips for effective interviewing techniques with media
- Practice answering difficult questions from reporters

## Strategic Communications

Communications strategy aligns with &  
supports advocacy strategy

Communications helps you focus &  
use resources wisely

Cuts through the noise &  
helps you connect

Strategic communications is worth your investment for many reasons, including:

- Your communications plan can align with your advocacy plan to serve your goals – there may be different tools, such as media placement, social media, and video storytelling, but communications supports advocacy, reflects mission
- Communications can help you focus your efforts so you're not spinning your wheels trying to reach everyone, but are delivering your message get more of the right people interested and involved in helping your advocacy succeed
- We live in an increasingly noisy and divisive environment; you're more likely to cut through the noise and connect with people based on shared values when you're intentional about how you communicate your advocacy goals

## Survey: Communications Capacity

Q. What's the communications capacity of your organization?

Scale 1 – 5

1 = little to none

2 = some capacity, mostly reactive

3 = issue media releases, active on social media

4 = communications part of staff responsibilities

5 = dedicated staff, develop communications plans

Comms survey: I want to start with an informal survey to get an idea of where we're all at today.

Survey: what's the communications capacity of your organization? There's no right or wrong answers and no judgement here. Just getting a sense of the landscape.

1-5 scale

Where 1 = virtually no communications capacity

3 = put out media releases and are somewhat active on social media

5 = dedicated communications staff and prioritize developing communications plans

Pep talk: Start where you're at, you can always build as you go. **It takes time** to build relationships with reporters and develop a Twitter following, so jump in and be patient.

Think of which number fairly describes your organization and I'll read off each number one by one. Thank you.

Main advice: Start where you're at, you can always build as you go. It takes time to build relationships with reporters and develop a Twitter following, so jump in and be patient.

## Values-Based Messaging Benefits & Opportunities

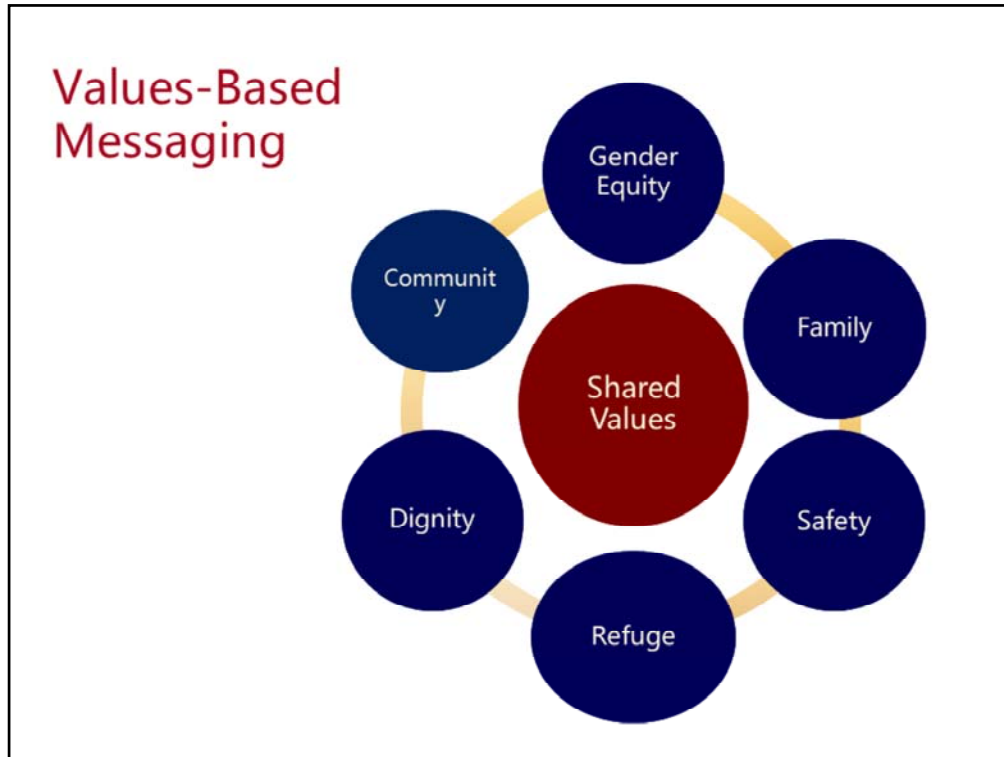
Storytelling = 

Shared values allow you to connect first,  
then move to problem & solution

Inspire people to action & build power

Positively influence public narrative

- At the heart of strategic communications is storytelling; humans are hardwired to connect with narratives – heroes and villains, conflict, overcoming the odds, etc.
- Instead of leading off with problems, narratives that first link to shared values have proven much more effective at shifting opinions toward progressive policy solutions
- Messages that are crafted to move your audience will inspire people to action & help you build power in your community
- If policymakers and the media are mischaracterizing the communities we serve, we can tell our own stories and center immigrant survivors of gender-based violence, push back against dangerous policies, and positively influence the public narrative



Here are some essential values that you may connect with. This is not an exhaustive list:

- Gender equity. Family. Safety. Refuge. Dignity. Community.
- Agency. Resistance. Inclusion. Compassion.

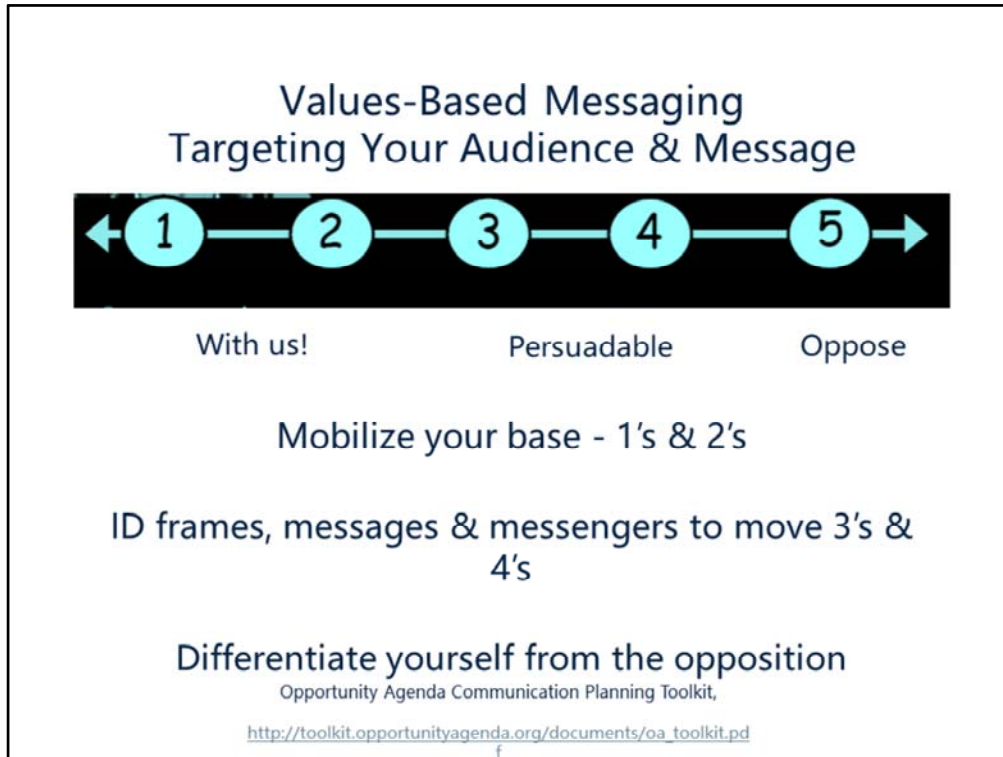
Others?

I always start here: what values will open the door to the possibility of our audiences nodding their head and keep listening?

I find values-based messaging disruptive: (1) spirit of people power, movements, (2) challenges the American ideals, like rugged individualism

To develop your messaging, you can:

- Keep an eye out for messages that resonate with you – at events, from conference speakers (Prof. Matsuda), media coverage (look for quotes from allies), reports, YouTube advocacy videos
- There are companies that do research and formal testing and surveying
- Conduct your own informal testing at the office, with your clients, allies, on social media
- Listen to criticism, revise and improve



- Target Your Audience: anytime you can narrow the audience you intend to speak to, you can sharpen your message – the “General Public” doesn’t exist
- Target your message:
  - **Mobilize your base**
  - **Persuade the middle**
  - **Alienate or isolate the opposition**
  - Conventional wisdom used to measure a good message based on how much opposition agrees with us; Nope, we want to differentiate our beliefs from opposition, make them look out-of-touch, so our position looks attractive to persuadables
  - When possible, go **Positive v. Negative** – yes, survivors are vulnerable and marginalized; but they’re also resilient, agents of change, and protectors
  - Describe what you **seek**, not what you **oppose** –
    - visions inspire, while negating a claim actually brings it to top of mind (myth busting), people accept arguments that reinforce what they already believe (confirmation bias)



## Values-Based Messaging

Q. Where would you use this messaging?

A. Everywhere.

Interviews

Website, email & social media content

One-pagers, fact sheets, toolkits, etc.

Fundraising ask

Action alerts

Public testimony

Elevator speeches

Community conversation

You may use **more legal, technical, or data-driven language** in specific arenas, but your Values-Based Messaging is what helps you connect with people without making them feel like they need to be an issue expert or an attorney to be involved.

## Values-Based Messaging – Progressive

Replace	Embrace
Our treatment of undocumented immigrants and refugees is horrendous	Most of us seek to treat others the way we want to be treated
Our broken immigration system tears families apart	Today, as always, people move to make life better for themselves and their families
Immigrants are not “criminal aliens”	Immigrant Americans contribute to our culture and community and we’re all the better for having them here
Being undocumented is not a crime	
The climate is changing	Lawmakers’ decisions to pollute our air and water
Sea levels are rising	Corporations make profits off <b>damaging our climate</b>

Anat Shenker-Osorio, “Messaging This Moment,” Center for Community Change, <https://communitychange.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/C3-Messaging-This-Moment-Handbook-1.pdf>

- Let’s look at some **tested messages** that Anat-Shenker Osorio did for the Center for Community Change, mostly on progressive issues or the economy, but I pulled some relevant messaging for us to look at today.
- There are efforts to fund testing for messages that work to support immigrant survivors of gender-based violence – see me if you want to stay in the loop.
- Replace / Embrace:
  - If you start with something they may disagree with or doubt, you’ve got more work to do and may just turn people off
  - Heroes & Villains: Wherever possible, describe **who** is behind the problems you catalogue
  - It’s also critical to demonstrate that **our people have agency and are taking action**. Make them the subject, not the object

## VPSA Message Framing Approach



**Values** – inspirational and forward looking, why your audiences should care

**Problem** – frame as a threat to vision and values

**Solution** – keeps audiences hopeful, restores values

**Action** – move audiences to action

- Here's a tool developed by the Opportunity Agenda that can be very helpful to turn your talking points into messaging that activates your people:
  - Values – inspirational and forward looking – why your audiences should care
  - Problem – frame as a threat to vision and values
  - Solution – keeps audiences hopeful, restores values
  - Action – move audiences to action

## Values-Based Messaging Immigrant Survivors, ICE & Safe Cities

70 percent of undocumented individuals report that they're less likely to contact police if they are the victim of a crime when they know local police enforce federal immigration laws.

Example of stat message: "70 percent of undocumented individuals report that they're less likely to contact police if they are the victim of a crime when they know local police enforce federal immigration laws."

This is an accurate and strong quote, using a startling statistic

But it might be more effective **AFTER** you've connected with your audience using shared values

Let's try this instead...

## Values-Based Messaging Immigrant Survivors, ICE & Safe Cities

Everyone deserves to feel safe, no matter what they look like or where they were born.

Yet when local law enforcement works closely with ICE, immigrant survivors fear deportation and separation from their family. In fact, 70 percent of undocumented individuals report that they're less likely to contact police to report abuse which means crimes go unpunished and women and families remain in danger.

On the other hand, data shows that safe cities experience less crime than communities where police collaborate with ICE. This is true of both large central metro communities as well as rural communities.

“Everyone deserves to feel safe, no matter what they look like or where they were born.”  
UNIVERSAL value. Hard to contradict.

NEXT: DEFINE PROBLEM

“Yet when local law enforcement works closely with ICE, immigrant survivors fear deportation and separation from their family. In fact, 70 percent of undocumented individuals report that they're less likely to contact police to report abuse which means crimes go unpunished and women and families remain in danger.”

PROBLEM BACKED UP WITH KEY STAT

NEXT: INTRODUCE SOLUTION

“On the other hand, data shows that safe cities experience less crime than communities where police collaborate with ICE. This is true of both large central metro communities as well as rural communities.”

THEN: PIVOT TO ACTION

Do X

## Using Messaging and Media for Impact

Share your communications wins!

Time to pass the mic.

- Yein and Shirley at API-GBV sent a **survey** before the Summit asking who would be interested in sharing a brief example of a communications win with us – highlight what you did, what was the impact, and what you learned from this experience. I connected with some of you, but not others.

## Earned Media Benefits & Opportunities

Inform & engage wider audiences

Build brand & credibility

Choose your message & messenger

Center your community, challenge  
bad policies & actors

- Media can help you **inform and engage broader audiences** than you normally reach using your own communication channels
- Media coverage can provide **third party validation** of your work, strengthens your credibility, shows you are the experts – **op-eds**
- You can choose which **messengers** carry your message – this is important based on which audience you're targeting
- Media can help you **center and protect the communities** you serve, can help you push back against dangerous framing or challenge misstatements
  - If you're not getting a response from a target policymaker or agency, you can pitch a story that enables the reporter to **get that target on record**
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## Earned Media Best Practices

Keep your media lists fresh

Build relationships

Craft newsworthy pitches & media releases

Offer spokespeople, including clients

- Spend time keeping your lists fresh:
  - Use an email marketing platform – some are free or inexpensive:
    - Media releases **look good** and have your brand
    - **Segment** your lists based on issue area, geography, and, if appropriate, language, so you're sending reporters what they're interested in
    - Can **track** what reporters are interested in by seeing which emails they open and click on – I often develop my initial **call list** based on reporters who opened the release
- Build Relationships:
  - **Reach out** to reporters by email, phone, social media
  - **Be responsive** – reply ASAP with update even if you're not going to speak on the record; make other recommendations
  - Support budding journalists – student reporters, interns, freelancers – they often become FT reporters
  - Share info you know they're interested in without expecting coverage
  - **Share their work** on social media, tag them, the outlet, and your allies – make sure you're **following them** on Twitter, original Tweets show more love
  - Post coverage to your website or share through email
  - IDEA: Invite a **panel of journalists** to an internal or public discussion – reminds them they're not the “enemy of the people”
- Craft newsworthy pitches and media releases
  - Intentional **targeting** is essential OTW you're just sending out releases hoping for the best
    - Follow the news & **ID reporters** who cover your issue areas and client community – add them to your media list & follow them on social media
  - When pitching reporters, keep it brief and on point
    - **Reference previous coverage!**
    - **Offer key experts** – lead attorney, researcher, client impacted by policy – reporters are busy, you can make their job easier
    - **Ask a question:** “please LMK if you'd like to set up an interview or want more information first”
    - When they reply, even if not interested, thank them and say you'll reach out another time
  - With media releases:
    - Is it news? If you opened that email, one of a hundred you get every day – and would hit delete immediately, don't send it – sorry, but most likely your annual report is not news
    - Always include a **quote** from your spokesperson or client, heart of your release
- Contact person – use someone's name, not just organization name, more personal



## Earned Media Talking with Reporters

Know your audience  
Be responsive & strategic  
Think like a reporter  
Create your talking points  
Stay on message  
Embrace the silence  
Avoid jargon  
Be thankful

- Know your Audience – does the reporter have particular interest or beat? Politics, education, criminal justice, gender rights, immigration – and tailor your message appropriately
- Be responsive & strategic – if offering a client interview, invite reporter into your office so you're on home field
- Think like a reporter – what questions would *you* ask? Where's the conflict in the story? What sensitive topics might you want a comment on?
- Prepare for your interview – **Pull from your Values-Based Messaging to create 3-4 brief Talking Points** that you want to appear in the coverage and practice them
  - Have stories or examples you can use to illustrate them
- Message – don't just answer their questions, push your messages and stay on message
  - Don't be afraid to say, "Could I take a look at some things and get back to you on that?"
- **Once you finish your thought, stop speaking.** Embrace the silence. It's not rude, it's smart. People say things they don't want to when they start rambling. Reporters know this, so may wait for you to get off track.
- Avoid jargon. DV TPS U & T Visas might mean a lot to us, but may need some explanation
- Thank them. They're busy. Say you'll follow up with info and follow up. Share their coverage once posted.

## **Using Messaging and Media for Impact**

Share your communications wins!

Let's hear from you! Participants share communications wins. Open to discussion.

## Earned Media Answering Difficult Questions Tips & Techniques

Use your messaging – Bridging allows you  
to pivot back to your points

Stay on message: same question = same answer

When ambushed, slow down

Keep villains on the back foot, pivot to positive

- Strategies & techniques:
  - Answer questions with your message. Don't repeat or negate questions whose premise you disagree with – especially in broadcast interviews.
  - When they're challenging, **Bridging** allows you to pivot back to your main messages:
    - Acknowledge the question, but you **don't need to accept the frame** they provide (e.g. undocumented immigrants are criminals so they don't deserve the same protections as native born citizens)
    - Examples of bridging statements
      - "Well I think the main thing to focus on is..."
      - "That's not what our communities is telling us and we take direction from them."
  - Reporter may ask the same question in several different ways to try and get you to say something new or trip you up. **Stay on message. The same question deserves the same answer.**
  - When you get **ambushed or asked a surprise questions** about decision or policy proposal you haven't heard about or had the time to think about:
    - Don't say "I don't know anything about that"
      - We're analyzing the impact of that decision right now and I can get back to you.
      - I always check with my clients and my team before responding.
  - Be clear about your **hero and villain**. Client, survivor. Policymaker, perpetrator, system.
    - Don't want to bad mouth an elected official who you must work with or a federal department that funds your organization.
    - At the same time, be honest. It's not partisan to say that Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric is dangerous. Pivot to the positive: "Our organization is part of a movement, that is here to protect our shared values of respect, dignity, and

inclusion. Our clients are agents of change.”

**Earned Media**  
**Answering Difficult Questions - Example**

Q. Doesn't the asylum process serve as an  
incentive to fraud?

A. The #MeToo movement has created a more  
open environment for women to publicly  
acknowledge  
the harassment, violence, and abuse they've  
suffered and turn the tables on perpetrators.  
Inaccurate claims of visa fraud will return us to an  
era when women were silenced and abuse went  
unchecked.

**1. FRAUD**

Q. Doesn't the asylum process serve as an incentive to fraud?

A. The #MeToo movement has created a relatively more welcoming environment for women to publicly acknowledge the harassment, violence, and abuse they've suffered and turn the tables on perpetrators. Inaccurate claims of visa fraud will return us to an era when women were silenced and abuse went unchecked.

Challenge. Be clear that claims of fraud are inaccurate and a convenient distraction

Disruption. Lift up what survivors are doing in the movement

Position progress. If you support the status quo, you will be left behind

## Earned Media Answering Difficult Questions Exercise

Ones = You're a reporter on a tight deadline who will ask the questions

Twos = You're a spokesperson for your organization who will answer the questions

Threes = You're the advocate's ally who will provide constructive feedback

*Let's practice!*

### Directions:

- Ten-minute exercise. When I say go, self-select quickly into small groups of 3. Ready? Go!
- First one to hold your hand up is one. The person on your right is two. The next person in your triad is three.
  - Ones = If you're a 1, you're a reporter on a tight deadline tasked with getting a spicy quote on a "controversial" subject.
  - Twos = If you're a 2, you're a powerful advocate building power in your community. In other words, you're you! "But I'm not usually the spokesperson at my organization?" You are today! And you may be in the future, so let's go.
  - Threes = If you're a 3, you're the advocate's ally. After they provide their answer, you can provide constructive feedback, including suggesting what you might have added.
- You may be a seasoned pro, or this might be your first time answering questions like this. This is a safe space to try it out, just go for it.

OK, any questions?

## Earned Media Answering Difficult Questions Exercise

**Context: Sanctuary/Safe Cities**

Question: Don't Sanctuary City policies stop local police from pursuing criminals and protecting public safety?

**Context: Changes to asylum policy/Matter of A-B-**

Question: The administration says that asylum-seekers and their advocates have for years been exploiting "loopholes" that help them gain asylum, then turn around and become citizens. Why shouldn't our country be able to defend itself against this problem?

**Context: Sanctuary/Safe Cities**

- Don't Sanctuary City policies stop local police from pursuing criminals and protecting public safety?
- Sample response: When immigrant communities trust the police, they come forward as victims and witnesses, building partnerships with the police to help keep our whole community safe.
- Send an email to the Mayor thanking her for standing with everyone in our community.
- Don't say: "Immigrants are not criminals" because we're staying in the criminal frame and many people hear "immigrants" and "criminals" and not the "not"

**Context: Changes to asylum policy/Matter of A-B-**

- The administration says that asylum-seekers and their advocates have for years been exploiting "loopholes" that help them gain asylum, then turn around and become citizens. Why shouldn't our country be able to defend itself against this problem?
- Sample response: We can continue being a beacon of hope for families escaping gender-based violence or we can turn our backs on those seeking protection. Policies that slam the door shut on asylum seekers do exactly nothing to improve the conditions they face when they're forced to return to the violent environment they fled. We must do better.

Recap: Who wants to share what worked really well? What was really challenging?

- Lean into it and practice with your peers. I do this exercise with clients when prepping them for interviews and they surprise me with straightforward and genuine answers that cut through the

tension and the controversy, because it's their lived experience. I always learn from them.



## Using Media and Messaging for Impact

Thanks to these strategic communications leaders!

- Opportunity Agenda – <https://opportunityagenda.org/>
- Anat Shenker-Osorio – “Messaging This Moment,” Center for Community Change, <https://communitychange.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/C3-Messaging-This-Moment-Handbook-1.pdf>
- Celinda Lake with Lake Research Partners – <http://www.lakeresearch.com/>
- Radical Communicators Network (RadComms)

Provide credit and thanks to resources. Please contact me with any questions, suggestions, for more resources, or to share writing or messages.

## Alliance for Immigrant Survivors

Thank you!

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Big thanks to Grace and Yein with API-GBV – thanks to everyone who shared their communications wins – and thanks to all of you for the work you do and for joining us today.