



To op-ed or not?

How to be heard in an increasingly noisy world
(Hint: it's not always an op-ed)



Watch the training

Click to watch the Zoom recording of this training

Passcode: 5&q9tnFV

Today's flow

- Welcome + intros
- 2020 sucked + impacts on media pitching
- Gatekeeping
- When/why you should or shouldn't pursue an op-ed
- What are the alternatives?
- Q&A

Please introduce yourself in the chat: Name, pronouns, location, title/org ... what you hope to get out of today's training.



Who's in the room?

Quick poll + please introduce yourself in the chat:

Name, pronouns, location, title/org ...

what you hope to get out of today's training.

About us

A woman in a black tank top and light blue shorts is holding the hand of a small child in a blue dress. They are standing in a desert landscape with many wind turbines in the background. The text "CLIMATE NEXUS IS DEDICATED TO CHANGING THE CONVERSATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLEAN ENERGY." is overlaid on the image.

CLIMATE NEXUS IS DEDICATED TO CHANGING THE
CONVERSATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLEAN ENERGY.

About us

The Water Hub is a project of Climate Nexus.

We work to make water communications more accessible and activism more effective, so the people most impacted by water challenges — largely people of color and tribes — have greater power to set the solutions.



Our experts



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It's *not* just you ...





“Business as usual”
has been obliterated

Newsrooms have been hit hard

- 36k workers at U.S. news companies laid off, furloughed, or had pay reduced during pandemic (New York Times, April).
- 11k newsroom jobs cut by June (Axios)

This is an ongoing trend ...

- More than 2,100 U.S. cities have lost a newspaper in the past 15 years
- Newspaper jobs dropped by half from 2008 to 2019



Who are the gatekeepers?

Mini-analysis

- Know your target; calibrate your expectations
- Large newspapers centered traditional experience
- Local most likely to publish community voices
- Digital spaces are more prolific



There are gatekeepers in media?

Although journalists claim to be unbiased in their news coverage, only reporting facts and issues that impact their audiences but there are major behind the scenes people who decide what makes something newsworthy.



General managers, news directors, and editors decide what's newsworthy



When considering gatekeepers for your op-ed:

- Two things to ask yourself:
 - Who's the target audience?
 - What is the ethnic makeup of the editors of the publication?



Everyone loves the New York Times

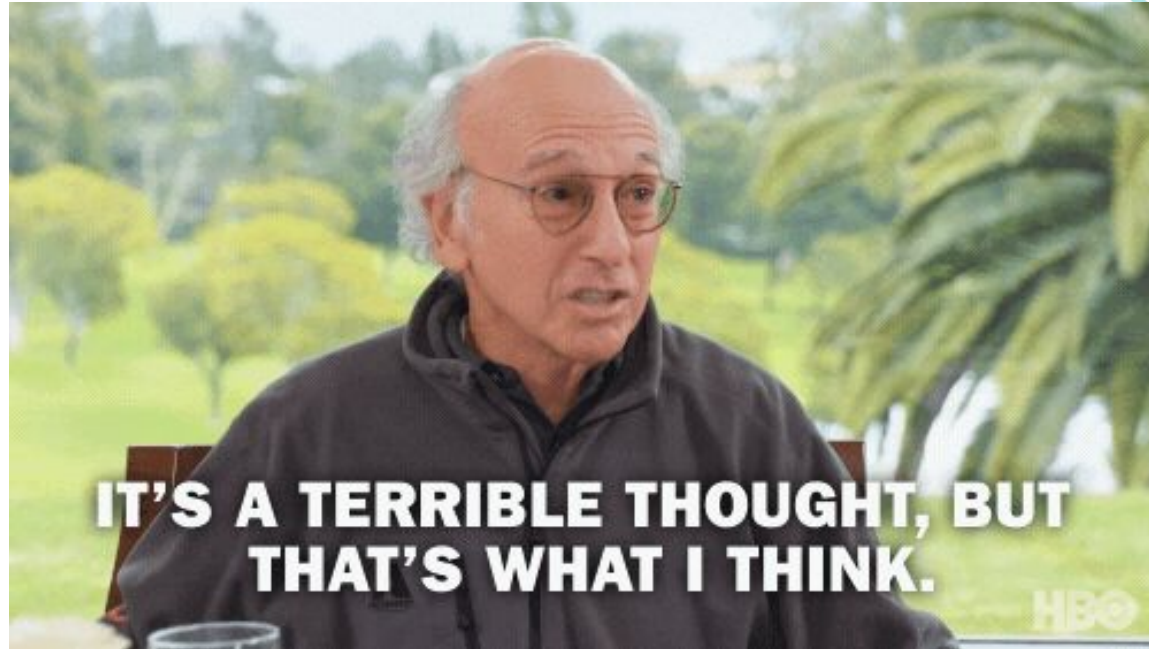
- The idea of your op-ed landing in a top-tier news outlet is exciting, but like many top-tier outlets, their editorial staff isn't very diverse.
- Your job is to convince white, educated men — who likely will not relate to you — why your opinion and subject matters.

Consider the audience

- The readers of these top-tier publications may not align with your target audience.
- The readers also tend to be white and male, a group that is least likely to be moved.
- How much work are you willing to spend on this single piece?



Op-ed: yay or nay?



Op-ed: yay or nay?

- What are your goals?
- A media placement is not the end goal. It's just a step in getting you toward a bigger goal.
- Be honest about what your goals are. (Vanity, impressing donors, etc. can be the goal. Just own it!)



Op-ed: yay or nay?

- What are you trying to accomplish
- Who's your audience?
- Where are they and where are they getting their information?
- Why is an op-ed the best medium?



So you have an unpublished op-ed...

Op-eds don't have to languish!

Have you truly exhausted all your options?

- Online news outlets
- Trade press
- Ethnic media



So you have an unpublished op-ed...

- Try repurposing for other formats:
 - Blogs: Your own organization's blog, [I Heart Climate Voices](#)
 - LTEs, Ed board memos
 - Medium
 - LinkedIn
 - Tweet threads

Wildfires and Water in the West

This year's catastrophic Western wildfires made headlines across the country. With rains returning to much of the region, we invited four...



I ♥ Climate Voices

Nov 25 · 5 min read



Renewable Energy Can Save Lives in Hurricane-Prone Regions

By Dr. Susan Pacheco



I ♥ Climate Voices

Oct 29 · 3 min read



What's your promotion plan?

- Social media strategy
- Sharing with partners
- Hill outreach
- Using it to reach out to radio/journalists





Questions?



What's the alternative?

What's the alternative?



What's the alternative?

- **Self-publishing**
- **Join the A/V Club**
 - Video
 - Text over video
 - Interviews
- **Digital**
 - LinkedIn article
 - Twitter threads
 - Video platforms (YouTube, TikTok)
- **Recurring**
 - Newsletter
- **Trainings/Info-sharing**
 - Webinars
 - Live streaming (Facebook Live, IGTV, etc.)
- **The rest of the opinion pages**
 - LTEs
 - Columnist
 - Editorials
- **Pitch outside the box**
 - Podcasts
 - Radio
 - Hyper-local

What's the alternative?

- Pitch outside the box
- Join the A/V club

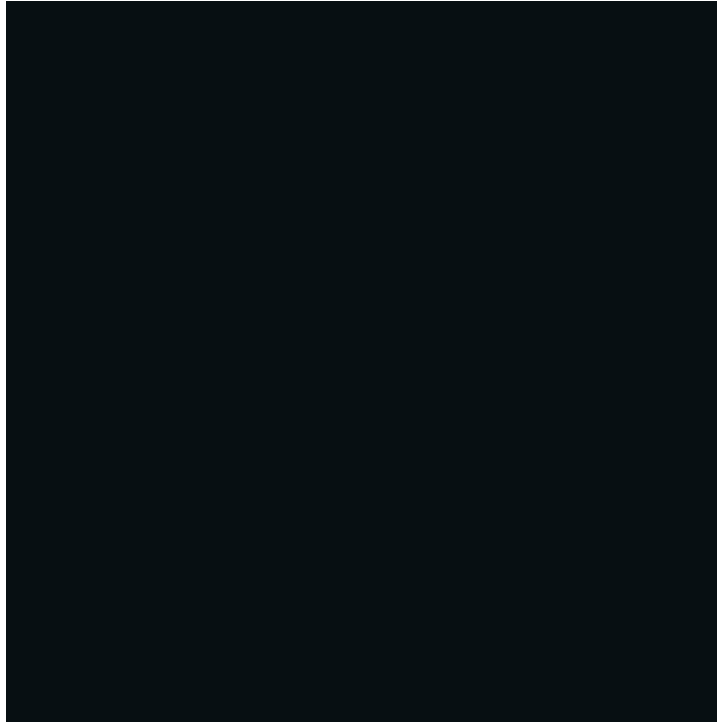


Pitch outside the box



- Interview programs
 - Radio
 - Podcasts
- Existing opinion leaders
 - Columnists
 - Bloggers
- Hyper-local

If this is you now...



Join the A/V club



Join the A/V club

- “On the scene” videos
- Text over footage/photos
- Live streaming



Video best practices

- “On the scene” videos
 - Keep it short
 - Pay attention to light and sound
 - Include a call to action
 - Re-use & re-purpose



Text/VO over footage



Between aging infrastructure and a changing climate, we're in need of a water revolution. Scaling up investment in localized solutions can build resilience and keep water affordable for generations to come. The [#FutureofWater](#) is local.



Live streaming

GOING
LIVE!

Final thoughts

- Let your audience/goals be your guide
- Think across multiple channels
- Ask for help





In the chat ...

How does that resonate?

What's working for you?

Questions?



We're here to help

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Op-ed: yay or nay?

- What constitutes a newsworthy moment:
 - Conflict
 - Timeliness
 - Newness
- What constitutes a (potentially) strong op-ed idea
 - Is it strong? Is it interesting? Does it spark an emotion?
 - Who's the author?



Thought leadership/personal branding



- Who are you? What do you care about?
- It's also a mutually beneficial cycle — you build up your platforms, and then maybe more op-ed coverage will come
- Making sure your orgs websites/twitter lists out your experts
- Making a name for yourself

What do I say?

- Listen first
 - Entertain, invite conversation, ask questions, share images/video
 - Be useful and informative – share industry info, hints and tips, curate content
 - Share info about your org / program
 - Stories!!
 - 10 % push / 90% pull
 - What's new?
 - What did you recently do to help someone achieve success?
 - What advice have people been asking you for lately?
 - Grab attention
 - Make people FEEL something
 - Create educational and entertaining content
 - Share more stories!
 - Monitor what others are saying
 - Be ready for conversation
- Engage > Listen > Respond > Learn