



MEDIA GUIDE FOR HOSTING EYES WIDE OPEN & BEYOND

The key to getting extensive media coverage is to create buzz. Be visible, be simple, be persistent, and be creative. Though a first page story in your city's newspaper may seem unattainable, the more an editor hears about Eyes Wide Open (EWO), the more likely she or he will be to give you a headline. Try these strategies:

People may doubt what you say, but they will believe what you do.

- LEWIS CASS

BEFORE THE EVENT

1. Decide whom you are trying to reach.

Is your community historically friendly to activism? Are you trying to reach the average community member or specific government officials? Is this event designed to raise general awareness or make specific changes in the community?

2. Pre-plan the image and message your group wants to portray to the public.

You want to be able to give your message very concisely so that media sources cannot edit or distort what you have to say. Use 3 or 4 key points from the **EWO Talking Points** that you want to stress to your audience. Often, television and print media have limited time and space. Clearly define the issue or problem, state why you think it is a problem, and give a clear solution and action steps to attain that solution. Try to relate everything back to your community.

3. Designate a media spokesperson.

(or more than one, depending on the estimated media turn-out and event size.) This person should be well-versed with the talking points and purpose of EWO and the goals of the AFSC and other organizations. S/he should also be a person that is comfortable with being put on the spot and can respond quickly while maintaining the message.

4. Be prepared for how your story might be distorted.

If media in your area is typically conservative and portrays your group to be more radical than you feel you are, make sure your spokesperson speaks in a way that relates your message to people who may be turned off by radical actions.





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5 Start within your school.

Contact your school radio and television stations. Put your EWO event on as many community and campus calendars as possible. If you can't afford advertising space in the school newspaper, try the classified section, events calendar, events reporter, etc.



6 Contact local officials, veterans, and military families to speak.

Inviting city council members, mayors, members of Congress or the Senate, veterans, and military families can raise the profile of an event. Reach out to them early and ask them to say some words at a press conference for the event.

7 Contact local media.

Editors get dozens of media releases and story appeals every day. You have to make yours stand out and sound credible. It can be helpful to contact the specific reporter who may be interested in your story. Is there someone who has been covering the war? Someone who typically covers civic events? See the section on writing press releases for more tips on page 4.

8 Host a publicity event.

If Eyes Wide Open is coming to your school, try doing a smaller event such as a vigil or table the week before Eyes Wide Open is scheduled. This can gain attention and publicize your event to students who may otherwise ignore fliers or posters. People will be more familiar with the subject and can spread the word to members of the community. Make sure to have fliers and information about your main event to hand out!

People
don't follow
titles, they
follow
courage.

- WILLIAM WELLS
BROWN





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DURING THE EVENT



1 Put together press packets.

These should include the event flyer or press release, short bios of all the speakers, and any key resources you think provide depth to the message. Give a packet to each reporter who comes to your event so that they can refer to it when they write their story. Be sure they have your contact information so they can call you with questions or to verify facts or details about the event.

2 Tie Eyes Wide Open to local issues.

If someone asks you why you are against the war, instead of just speaking about death tolls, speak about local troops or veterans. If there is an issue that is big in the local media, such as a new mayor or lack of funding for public transportation, connect your issue with what is already gaining attention.

3 Keep your eye out for media.

Keep your eye out for media. Encourage them to speak to people who are closely linked to the event and will be able to give accurate quotes. If media reporters attend, make sure your spokesperson is aware of their presence and available to speak.

4 Keep a good record of the event.

Count how many people attended. Designate a group member to take footage and pictures. Recording can be used for publicizing future events or spreading your message to people who could not attend. "Google News Alert" with the name of your event and location to make sure you don't miss any news about your event.



To the wrongs that need resistance, to the right that needs assistance, to the future in the distance, give yourselves.

- CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT



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HOW TO WRITE A NEWS RELEASE

Your news release is your first step at getting any editor’s attention. They receive dozens of story ideas a day and for your story to be chosen, it needs to be catchy and relevant. Start with these tips for a solid news release:



American Friends Service Committee

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - DATE

A Strong Headline Is Essential

The first paragraph should include all of the important information: who, what, when, where, and why/how. The following paragraphs should build and elaborate on the first in descending order of importance.

Keep your release short. It should be no longer than a single sheet with simple paragraphs, no more than 3 or 4 sentences each.

Include quotes from the group’s leader or spokesperson. Even if your story gets edited down to a few sentences, quotes cannot be changed and are a great way to get your message across clearly.

Avoid clichés or over-exaggeration. Because you are writing to a news source, you want to be as accurate and informative as possible without being preachy or irrelevant to the public.

Emphasize the WHO WHAT WHEN WHERE WHY of your event. At the end of your release, include in bulletpoint form all key information as a quick reference for busy reporters.

Use letterhead in order to make your news release look as professional as possible. Have your EWO coordinator approve your press release before distribution to the media.

By placing the date and “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” at the top, you will make the story urgent and increase the chances of avoiding the trash bin.

Without an intriguing headline, the release will not get read. Make sure to not give away all of your information in the headline, but still make it catchy and simple enough that the reader has a general idea of the subject of your news release.

Include a “Notes to the Editor” section after your release is over. Here you will include extra details that would not be suitable for print but may be helpful for a reporter, such as associated websites, how to get access to photographs or interviews, etc.

Clearly include contact information for the spokesperson. Include all available means of communication, including cell phone numbers. Make sure there is someone available to speak in the early morning and late evening hours- often reporters do not work 9-5pm shifts.



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WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR NEWS RELEASE

News is typically slow on Mondays or after holidays. This is an ideal time to plan an event and/or put out a news release. Your story will get more attention if it has less competition.

Do not put out a release on a weekend. Follow this rule even if your event is on Saturday, Sunday, or Monday. Send it out on Thursday or Friday to give writers/photographers a chance to plan ahead.

If you can, fax it to your recipients. Follow up with a confirmation phone call and be prepared to re-fax, email, or hand deliver multiple copies.

Assume your release has not been received. Be persistent until you have spoken with someone from the office. It is best to make calls the morning of your event before 8am so that assignment editors can put it on their daybooks.

INTERVIEWS

Be prepared to offer times for interviews if contacting radio or television news source. On the phone, have 3-4 main points that you want to stress as interview-worthy. Again, make sure to include local angles and examples.

In an interview, focus on your message. Most television interview clips do not show the reporter's question, but instead focus only on the response. Therefore, if you get a question that you do not know how to respond to, revert back to your message. You may not be answering the question completely, but your message will still be clear.

Remember your audience. You are not trying to be best friends with the reporter or to convince them of your message. You are really speaking to the viewers/listeners. Think about what you want them to understand after listening to you.

Try leading the subject back to your message.

This is a good rule to follow if you are asked a question that either strays from the subject or you feel uncomfortable answering. Use "bridging" comments such as: "I'm not sure about that. But what I do know is..." or "What is really important about this is..."

Tributo a soldados boricuas





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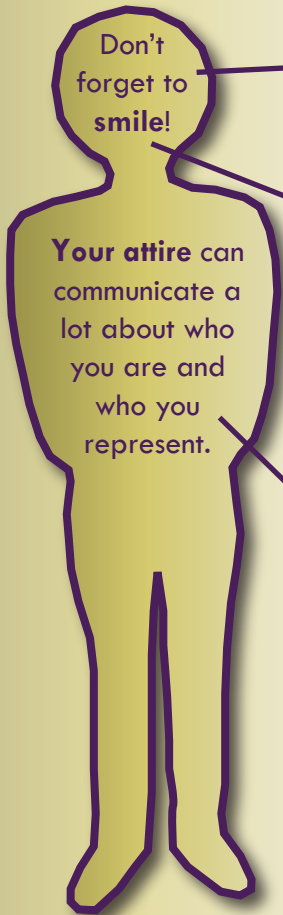
Use identifying words to point out important statements. Your excitement and voice intonation will catch people’s attention. If you relate the question back to a personal experience, using “I” statements, the audience will more easily identify with you. For example: “I think this is really important because...” or “To me, the most exciting part is...” or “When I first saw this exhibit, I felt...”

Do not rely too heavily on facts. People respond more to stories and examples rather than numbers that they will be likely to forget.

Identify your opponent’s position. If you have a chance to recognize any opposing viewpoints and then negate them, you will be able to neutralize counter-arguments. Try statements such as: “I can understand why some might think..... but what we are really try to accomplish is....” or “Not all agree with... But what we are trying to show people is....”



HOW TO BE A GOOD MEDIA SPOKESPERSON



Use visuals and metaphors. It brings the message together with an image.

Look at the person who is talking to you, not at the camera. If you are in a group, look at your colleague who is talking, the audience will see that you are interested.

Tell your personal story and insert yourself in the issue. It will resonate with the audience. You could also tell someone else’s story from your perspective.

Don’t use brochure language - it’s too lengthy and too much rhetoric.

Never say “No Comment”, you will create doubt and give up an opportunity to say something.

Don’t end your statement with an inflection that makes it sound like a question. It makes you sound like you doubt your statement.

Attire tips: Wear a jacket, sweater or vest to clip a mic to. Long, dangly earrings can make noise. White shirts don’t work - blue is best. Loud patterns and thin stripes can be a problem for the camera.

Focus your message at the people in the middle, the ones who are undecided on the issue.

For more information, **send people to a web address** (don’t say, “www”) and a phone number which the reporter might put on a graphic on the screen.

REMEMBER: It’s not about what you are AGAINST, it’s about what you are FOR!