



SCALAWAG

“Reckoning with the South”

Today's Agenda

- **9:00a:** Welcome & Grounding
- **9:15a:** Framing today's session
- **9:25a:** Mission, vision, & value
- **9:50a:** Audience growth
- **10:35a:** TEN MINUTE BREAK
- **10:45a:** Engagement & community connection
- **11:05a:** Revenue growth
- **11:35a:** What now, what's next
- **11:45a:** Q&A and close

Our Team



Lovey Cooper
Managing Editor



Alysia Nicole Harris
Arts & Soul Editor



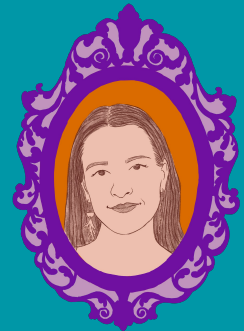
Saif Wideman
Visual Editor



Cierra Hinton
Executive Director-Publisher



Katherine Webb-Hehn
State Politics Editor



Virginia Walcott
Visual Editor

What the hell is a Scalawag?

- **Started in 2014** through a **kickstarter campaign** raising about **\$34k**; founded by 3 white folks, 2 from the South.
- For 3 years was an all volunteer team, began as a **quarterly print publication with a subscription model**, and mission was to shift the narratives of the South or elevate untold narratives.
- **Now we're a team of 7 soon to be 9**; everyone but Lovey is part-time. Scalawag is Black and queer-led with a **digital-first, membership-driven model**.
- In the last two years we've experienced a **TON of growth** going from budget of about **\$200k to \$452k** and **19k monthly unique visitors to 45k**.

Our Challenge

- We had just shifted our focus, our theory of change, and our team, but no one knew.
- We only had one product— a beautiful print magazine that cost \$\$\$ and wasn't bringing in subscriptions and that we could not measure the impact of.
- We covered a huge region with only a tiny team.
- Our audience was basically all white and older.

We're gathered here today...

GROUP AGREEMENTS

- Be present, active, and committed to process
- Listen and seek to understand and not to react
- Be flexible
- Ask questions
- There is no right or wrong; our work is infinite



JAMBOARD

YOU'RE MY JAM



Where we started: Scalawag circa 2015

Scalawag will build a freer and more just South by telling important stories, cultivating original thought, and fostering inclusive civic conversations.

Mission



We believe these goals are inextricably linked. Our storytelling and written thought will provide new, diverse vantage points on the South, and thus create spaces for new conversations; these conversations, in turn, will offer a foundation for new and better possibilities in our politics and in the many ways we live together.

Theory of change



Toward these ends, we will lift up voices that would otherwise go unheard. We will publish the South's best original reporting and sharpest commentary, in print and online. We will provide forums for conversation in communities around the South. And we will examine and celebrate the diverse joys and sorrows of the South and its people.

Strategies



LENS

COLLECTIVE POWER

By filtering our communication through the lens of collective power, we tap into **HOPE**, the **POSSIBILITY FOR REAL CHANGE**, and the **CALL-TO-ACTION** of our mission:

- Our work wouldn't exist without the voices of many, and we need more voices, particularly of **people of color, to join us.**
- Our work fosters the **imaginings** of people who are innovating solutions to the South's systemic problems.
- Our work connects people and communities isolated by geography, technology or unpopular ideology.

THEORY OF CHANGE

By amplifying the voices of activists, artists, and writers, we believe Scalawag **creates** the collective power for folks to build to a **more equitable and just South**, one community at a time.

TOC Shared Language 1

SCALAWAG'S CORE VALUES

1. SOUTHERN JOY

We love the South and celebrate the joy of this place and its people. While we believe there's much work to be done to create better living conditions for all Southerners, we believe our work, first and foremost, centers Southern joy. The many landscapes, cultures, and personalities unique to our homes are the very reasons we want a more equitable South for all.

2. THE POWER OF THE STORY

We believe stories change people. That's why we offer free training workshops to help folks tell their own stories, in their own way. That's why we uplift Southern art that reckons with our past and imagines our future, and why we publish **solutions-based journalism**. And it's why we've built our platform to support the historically unheard voices of the South. Change will come when we listen to the many stories of the South and begin working with the many communities who live, love, and struggle here.

3. THE POWER OF THE SOUTHERNER

We believe in giving power to Southern writers, activists and artists. We're tired of the ways historically unheard voices are ignored, fetishized, or manipulated by gatekeepers in media, the academy, and in art and literature. We're tired of outsiders swooping in to tell our stories



Anna Simonton
Jun 5, 2018



I suggest we flip this in a sense, to say something along the lines of we should be taking our queues from people of color who are working toward collective power in order to make our work bolster theirs. In general I'm into being like, "who do we need to join" versus "who needs to join us"

[Show less](#)



Cierra Hinton
Jun 7, 2018

agreed.



K Webb
Jun 11, 2018

I get that. And I think we can rephrase here, for sure, to put the emphasis on existing, on-the-ground work. How can we be transparent about our lack of POC contributors? From the Highlander notes, this seemed to be an area of concern. This might need to exist outside of this current doc, but I want to make sure we aren't saying we're doing something really well if we aren't yet.

[Show less](#)

IMPACT: Our current Theory of Change

RIGHT RELATION: We are in a generative, reciprocal relationship with community, organizers, and movements.



COMMUNITY-DRIVEN REPORTING: Our reporting and storytelling is informed and driven by the needs of our community including our partners. Our community trusts us to share their stories and as a source of information because of the relationships we've built with them.



OUTCOMES: Storytelling or reporting leads to an outcome*.



IMPACT: Repeated outcomes from Scalawag and other reporting media makers in conjunction with the work of movements leads to transformational change.

Scalawag Reporting Outcomes

- Policy changes that bring us closer to social justice
- Supporting movement work: making it more visible and accessible; political education; producing information organizers need to make specific interventions
- Narrative shift: challenging harmful ideologies, changing how people understand an issue
- Solidarity: providing a platform for oppressed people to directly leverage power
- Connecting people who share similar visions and values
- Nourishing radical imagination
- Building industry capacity and making pathways to media / art careers for people who have historically not had access

BREAKOUT: When I use my radical imagination ...

- 8 mins in your groups
 - 3 mins reflect on your own
 - 5 mins to share out
- *What is your vision for journalism? 30 years from now what do you want to be true?*



North Star & compass: How Scalawag is moving now

Vision: Where are we going

A more just South in which media serves as a liberatory tool.

Mission: What are we going to do to get there

Through journalism and storytelling, Scalawag works in solidarity with oppressed communities in the South to disrupt and shift the narratives that keep power and wealth in the hands of the few. Collectively, we pursue a more liberated South.

Stay grounded: Values & purpose

Values: What do we believe

- Liberation rooted in self determination and solidarity
- Radical imagination and creativity
- Moving with care and curiosity
- Abundance in community

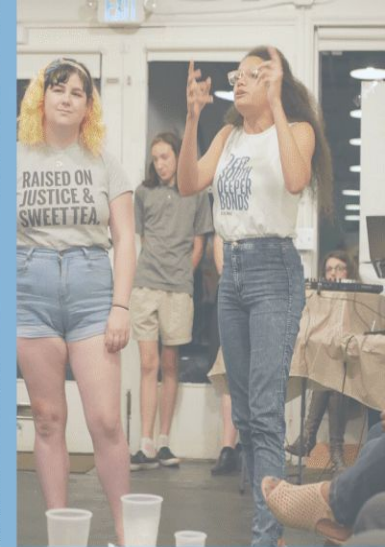
Purpose: What are we here for

- We build solidarity, community, and consciousness among Southerners.
- We sit at the intersection of folks that are early in their radicalization and folks that are already there connecting them so we can move forward together.
- We platform theory and amplify practitioners while holding space for all of us to understand what links the two.
- We nourish the radical imagination by facilitating collective “aha” moments that awaken the popular imagination to new possibilities and spark social action.

REFLECTION: Who are you considering in your work?

- 4 minute individual, silent reflection
- *What does your newsroom's mission or vision mean for oppressed people?*





Audience



How we thought about audience in 2015

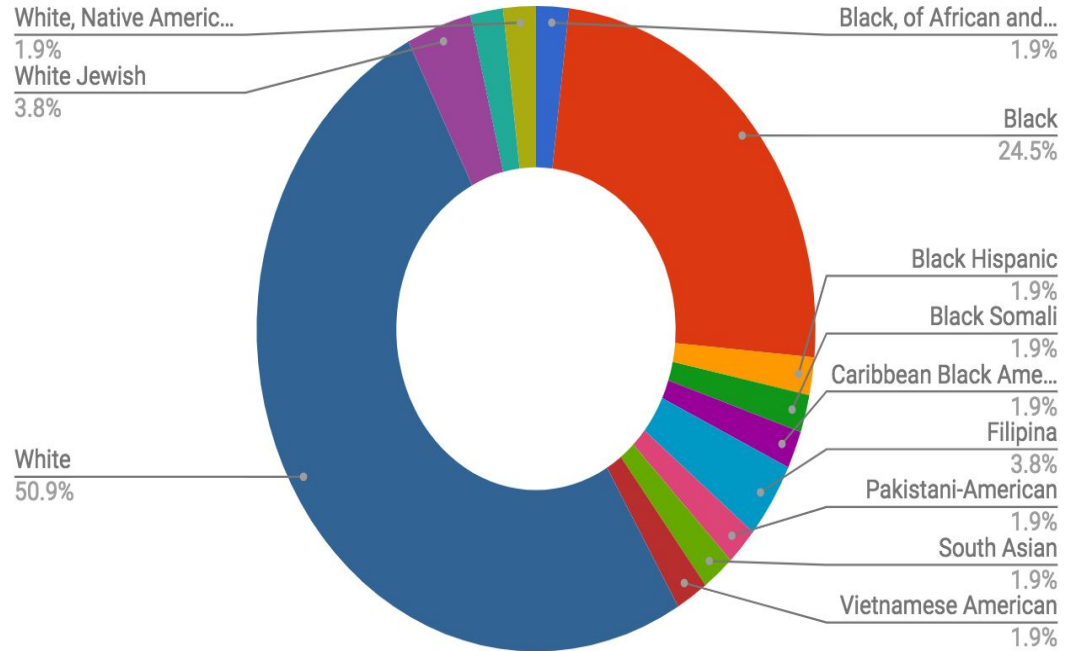
Scalawag will serve a **variety of audiences, and should strive to ensure its audience becomes and remains diverse** – racially and socioeconomically. Inevitably, a **core audience at the publication's outset will be educated, well-off, primarily white Southern liberals**. Adjacent audiences include **residents of the South's major cities, as well as academics and college students**. Scalawag should not forego the cultivation of these more accessible audiences, especially at first.

Scalawag should **seek to use diverse types of storytelling to reach beyond these conventional audiences**, and should consider means of reaching other communities in its distribution planning.

Our 2018 Audience Survey

- Came out of our participation in Table Stakes
- Started as a survey of our email list
- Conducted 53 audience interviews; 32 with current audience and 21 with community members that fit the profile of folks we wanted to reach
- One of the goals of the research was to reach more people of color to better understand how Scalawag could better reflect and serve a browner, blacker audience.

Aggregated Race-Ethnicity Breakdown



Our 2018 Audience Survey

Three personas emerged:

- **Well-educated expats** looking for connection back home
- **Folks doing the work** looking for inspiration & smart good news; think organizers and academics
- **News hounds:** point of pride to know what's going on

But ...

- Challenge was these personas were still going to lead us to an overwhelmingly white audience and as our team changed we wanted to get more intentional about building a browner, Blacker audience
- We knew we needed to build relationships and trust with the audience we wanted before they began to read Scalawag; this is how we began to shift the conversation to centering vs. targeting

Five years in, Scalawag is reframing who gets included in “the South” (and how to build a business off it)

“What does it mean for a diverse group of young Southerners to be producing content that is read by mostly white folks — and white folks that are older than them?”

By **CHRISTINE SCHMIDT**

@newsbyschmidt

Nov. 21, 2019, 1:16 p.m.

Centering vs. Targeting

TIP: CENTER before you TARGET

Centering: who are we working with and amplifying for our storytelling? Who would we like to see be a target audience in the future?

- Youth/young folks
- Queer folks
- Black, Latinx, Indigenous and AAPI communities
- Movement/community organizers

Target audiences - who is moving through our funnel?

Umbrella: left-leaning Southerners

- Queer
- Black
- People who use our reporting/relate to our brand for their work
 - Movement/community organizers
 - Academic
 - Journalists
- White, justice-oriented/ white folks that want to be anti-racist

BREAKOUT II: Centering vs. targeting

- 8 mins in your groups
 - 3 mins reflect on your own
 - 5 mins to share out
- Who does your journalism center and who does it target?
- Are their people in your community that are not represented in either bucket?



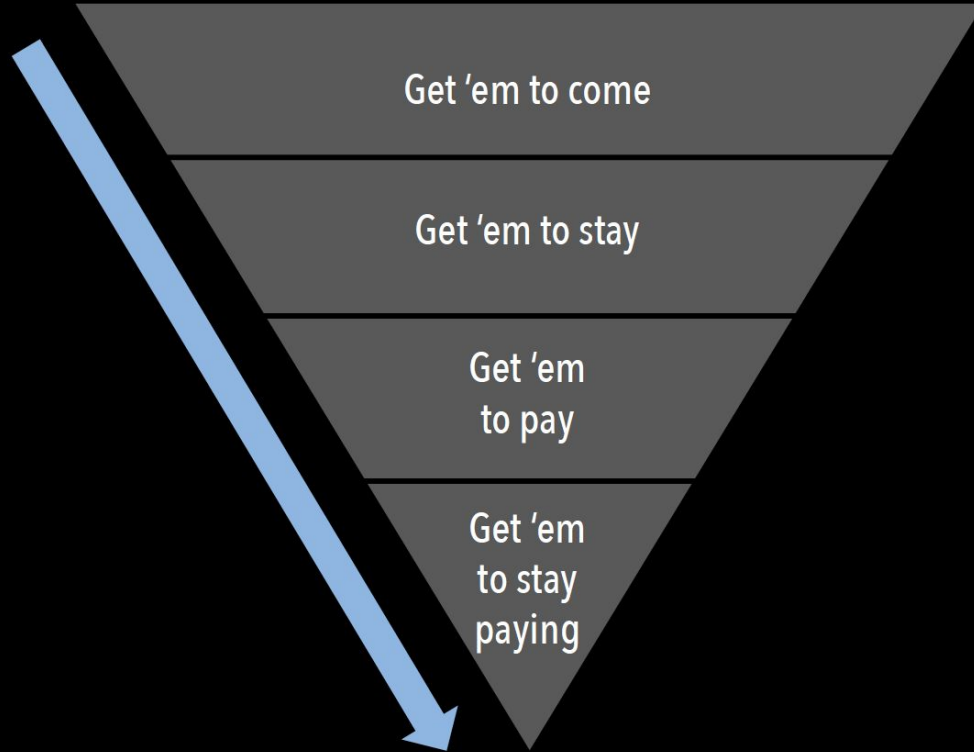
WHAT IS A 'FUNNEL APPROACH' FOR NEWS?

- Systematically moving potential customers along a journey:



* Essentially, building the largest pool of monetizable users

IF JUST GETTING STARTED, KEEP IT SIMPLE!



Scalawag Funnel

Awareness: Southerners know about Scalawag (social media, read shared content)

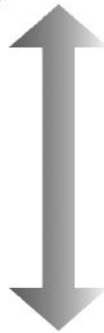
Acquisition: Follow on social, sign-up for newsletter, visit site

Activation/experience: Read newsletter, read content, happy UX, take user survey, attend event

Preference: Habitually read newsletter (2-3x/mo), attend multiple events, visit site regularly (1x/wk)

Loyalty + \$\$\$: Become a member

Advocacy: Gives yearly outside of recurring membership gift, actively participates in membership community, talks back to Scalawag driving content, increased awareness and possible participation in movement



Theory of Change

IMPACT

KPIs

Social reach, new unique visitors

Social follows, newsletter subs, total unique visitors

Newsletter open + click thru rate, event attendance #s, return unique visitors, # of survey responses


Often % in MC, event attendance, reads in last 30 days in Pico

Membership revenue, # of members, member retention

Members making 1x donation, editorial survey response (what should we be covering), takes an action with a movement partner, connects with other members

of repeated reporting outcomes

Strengthening our mid-funnel to retain audience

 **Scalawag**
Published by Cierra Hinton · April 4 at 11:21 AM · 🌐

Southern right-wing militia organizing is a tale as old as time. But the tactics? Those are brand new.



SCALAWAGMAGAZINE.ORG
How the rise of tech is fueling white supremacist organizing
The author of 'Memoir of a Race Traitor' on what does—and doesn't—s...

[Learn More](#)

 **Scalawag**
Published by Lovey Cooper · April 1 at 4:02 PM · 🌐

Breaking agriculture out of the silo. Conversations with small scale farmers growing along the Gulf, to your inbox every Wednesday.



SCALAWAGMAGAZINE.ORG
Salt, Soil, & Supper
Scalawag's weekly newsletter about Gulf Coast food and agriculture

[Sign Up](#)

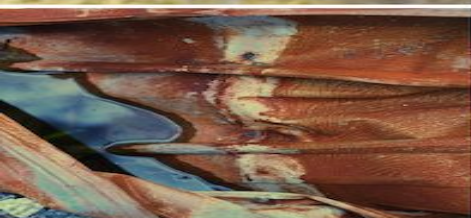
10 MINUTE BREAK

Right relationship: What we've learned about growing diverse audiences

- Community-driven journalism starts with contributors and freelancers connected to community
- Our contributors help us deepen relationship with community
- Movement organizers have a plan: that's the solution.
- Many people need more than an article. They need to ask questions, connect with resources, gain skills for organizing their neighbors.
- Marginalized folks probably know more about the problems than you. Sometimes you aren't giving them information, you are providing a space for folks and their stories to be acknowledged and valued and shared.
- Speak to the soul
- The ROI is trust and audience demographic shifts long before it is revenue from communities of color
- Not just about the content also about the products; bigger question of how you're meeting folks where they are



Products & Projects



Ending our print magazine

- We were losing money going to print.
- Our print-subscribing audience did not reflect the totality of our community.
- Scalawag has changed and is always changing.
- From an engagement standpoint: simplifying our offerings and the ways people can engage with/support us demystifies our audience journeys.




SALT, SOIL, & SUPPER





BY SCALAWAG

WHAT QUESTIONS
DO YOU HAVE
ABOUT VOTER
SUPPRESSION IN
THE SOUTH?

Have a question or
tip about voter
suppression? Text
us.

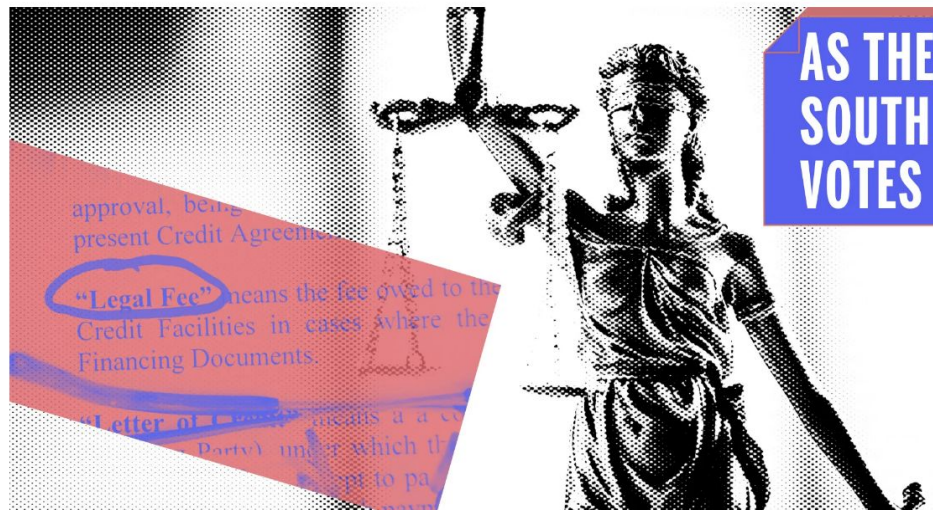
MOBILE NUMBER

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Check out our FAQ
page for more
resources, links,
stories, and videos.

AS THE
SOUTH
VOTES



Court fees and fines make voting near-impossible for ex-felons in Tennessee

From "Hillbilly Elegy" to Hollywood has a rural p

After Trump's election, all eyes turned on "rural America," but I

By **ASHLIE D. STEVENS** OCTOBER 22, 2020 9:03PM (UTC)



To Create Tactics

This is the Magazine Ren Journalism

Video
Nov 25, 2020

DIVERSIFY AND GROW THE WAYS YOU EARN REVENUE FROM THE AUDIENCES YOU BUILD

How Scalawag is using events to diversify audience and grow membership

Cierra Hinton and Alysia Harris, Scalawag, September 2020

The Art of the New Old South



Tressie McMillan Cottom Dec 7, 2020 · 6 min read ★

NiemanLab PREDICTIONS FOR JOURNALISM 2021

5 BUSINESS MODEL SHIFTS FOR LOCAL NEWS IN 2021 AND BEYOND

JOURNALISM / ARTICLE

Columbia Journalism Review.

The best journalism of 2020: Covering racial justice

A photograph of a tattoo artist in a green and white striped shirt working on a client's back. The client is a woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a white t-shirt with colorful stripes and denim shorts. They are in a room with a brick wall. A desk lamp is visible on the left, and a table with supplies is in the background. A semi-transparent grey box with the word "Events" in white script font is overlaid in the center.

Events

SCALAWAG



Communing:

Cooking and Cocktails
With Our Team

CHAT, SNACK, AND KICK BACK!
DECEMBER 10, 7 PM ET
RSVP: [BIT.LY/SCALAWAGCOMMUNES](https://bit.ly/scalawagcommunes)



Virtual Event Series

**FIGHT DISINFORMATION.
STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY.
DEFEND DEMOCRACY.**
OCTOBER 13-14

As The South Votes Townhall (10/13):
Using media and movement to bust myths
& disinformation ahead of the vote

Covering the Movement (10/14): A forum
for Southern organizers and journalists on
covering protest, voting rights, and COVID-19

PRESS | ON
SCALAWAG

CASTING SHADOWS: THE PRISON IN OUR DAILY LIVES

THURSDAY, AUGUST 20
7 - 8:30 PM ET
[BIT.LY/ABOLITIONWEEKFILM](https://bit.ly/abolitionweekfilm)

VIRTUAL FILM SCREENING OF
THE PRISON IN TWELVE LANDSCAPES

PANEL DISCUSSION WITH
PRODUCER BRETT STORY
& FELICIA ARRIAGA
OF DURHAM BEYOND POLICING

SUGGESTED DONATION \$5
FREE FOR SCALAWAG MEMBERS
& THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED



virtual jubilee

7:30 FREE POETRY READING BY:
TAYLOR JOHNSON,
JERICHO BROWN,
ALEXIS PAULINE GUMBS

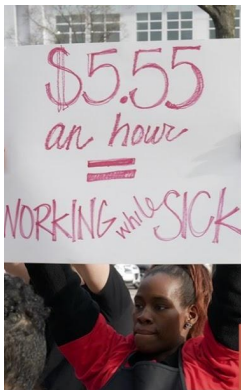
8:45 *EXCLUSIVE DANCE PARTY
WITH DJ GEMYNII

8 in person events in 3 cities,
7 virtual events,
4 jubilees,
2 film screenings,
2 rapid responses,

in 15 months.

Events are a way to build trust

- Work with partners who have access to the communities you care about. Don't just ask them to share your stuff! Share theirs.
- If your speakers and your newsroom are all white, your audience will be too.
- It's not just about diversity; it is about revenue and audience saturation.
- Follow up with everyone, even the haters. Surveys are your friend.



SOLIDARITY over DISTANCE

STRATEGIES FOR
SOUTHERN
WORKERS AMID
COVID-19 CRISIS

WEDNESDAY, 3/ 25,
6:30 PM - 8 PM EST

RSVP:
bit.ly/workersin crisis

WEBINAR

TOOLS

TRAINING

HEALING

Photo: "NC Raise Up/ Fight for \$15"

SCALAWAG



SOLIDARITY over DISTANCE

HOUSING
SECURITY IN THE
SOUTH DURING
COVID-19 CRISIS

WEDNESDAY, 4/1,
6:30 PM - 8 PM EST

RSVP:
bit.ly/housingsecurity

WEBINAR

TOOLS

TRAINING

HEALING

Photo Courtesy of Housing Justice League Atlanta

SCALAWAG

Content

- Technology is easy part. You have content. Use it!
- Use the events to create more content. Repackage the content and turn into an article or a potential report to funders.
- If it doesn't have impact, we don't care about it.
- Cover areas and target audiences missed by your normal written content.
- It can't be all doom and gloom. That's not responsible journalism or community care.



Photo courtesy of the Housing Justice League.

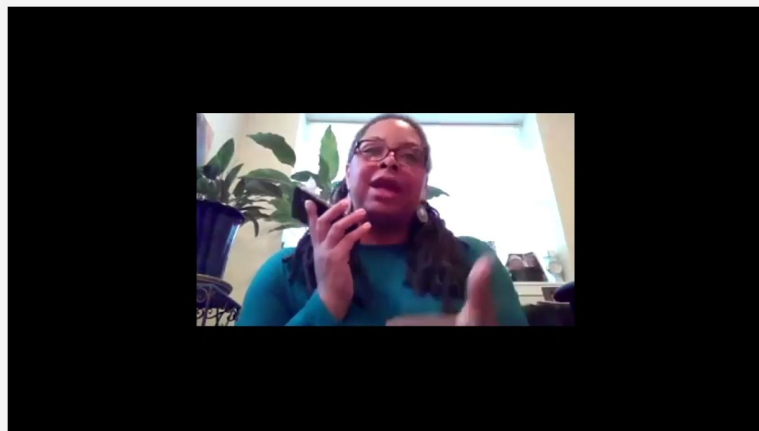
Rent Strikes & Beyond: Understanding eviction laws in the South

ALYSIA HARRIS

April 8, 2020

Southern Politics

This is the first in a two-part report from Scalawag's recent webinar, "Housing Security in the South during COVID-19." Part two goes into solutions that work in the South.



Eviction rates and landlord laws

While homeowners are afforded a few more protections—for instance, the process of foreclosure happens over the course of months rather than in a matter of weeks or days in the case of eviction—the COVID-19 crisis illuminates the more precarious housing realities facing many renters.

**HOW CAN YOUR NEWSROOM
MAKE DOING EVENTS
SUSTAINABLE?**



Go Virtual

We were spending so much money on in person events, and they took a lot of team time. Virtual events mean we can cover our whole region from the comfort of our homes.

Breathing While Black:

FIGHTING ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM IN THE SOUTH

SCALAWAG

THURSDAY, JUNE 25 / 6:30 - 8:00 PM EST
REGISTER: [BIT.LY/BREATHINGWHILEBLACK](https://bit.ly/breathingwhileblack)
\$5 TO ATTEND

VIRTUAL FILM SCREENING + Q&A WITH
MOSSVILLE PRODUCER DANIEL BENNETT AND
DIRECTOR ALEX GLUSTROM



BREAKOUT DISCUSSIONS WITH
LOCAL ORGANIZERS



2



Event Template

Once you find a format that works, stick with it. Make sure that format is aligned with your mission goals. Try film screenings, panels, author talks, virtual dance parties.

3

Establish Ownership

Events have a lot of moving pieces, even virtual ones. Make sure your events strategy lives with one person who can delegate and pull people in as needed.

4

Partner, Partner!

Share the work, the time, the audience, and the cost. Events de-silo newsrooms & community organizations. They build news into the heart of our ecosystems.

Our Partners

- Pen America
- The Movement Lab
- Full Frame Theatre
- Dynamite Hill-Smithfield Community Land Trust
- GASP Group
- PANIC
- Eco Action
- Durham Beyond Policing
- Center for Documentary Film at Duke
- Mossville Project
- SONG
- NC Environmental Justice Network
- Press On
- Highlander Center
- Appalshop
- 100 Thousand Poets for Change
- Magic City Poetry Festival
- Auburn Research Library
- Chalkbeat
- NC Legalaid
- Jane's Place
- And more



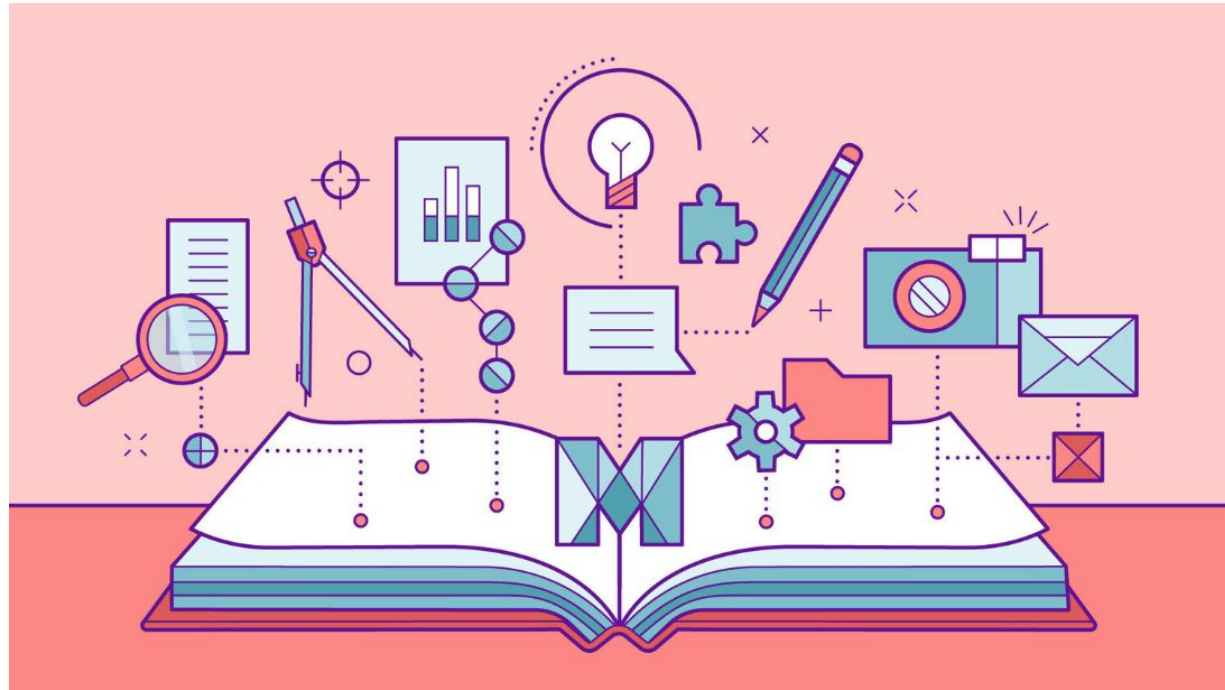
Membership

**RAISED ON
JUST
SWEET TEA.**

**ING THE DICK
OF DIXIE**
ONE MISOGYNIST AT A TIME
SCALAWAG

**ING THE DICK
SCALAWAG**

the
**MEMBERSHIP
PUZZLE
PROJECT**



Right relationship is reciprocal. A part of being of us being in relationship with our communities is them becoming members.



Hometowns



Top left: Durham, NC
Top right: Atlanta, GA
Bottom: Birmingham, AL



Community Foundations

Z. Smith Reynolds
FOUNDATION



Our
Community
Foundation

For a Greater Birmingham

Deep, meaningful connection with community means we can ask both individuals and institutions in our hometowns to support our work!

Out of 4,015 views on our membership landing page over the last 6 months, 2,143 (over half) came from stories.

Everyone is watching local or cable news, Facebook groups, local radio, and church bulletins are daily touch points in people's lives. When organizers build relationships with local media and influential creatives, they expand opportunities to inform and engage the public.

All of this sustained effort is ultimately about liberation.

Participation in the American political system is not liberation in itself. But it does provide opportunities to improve quality of life—with better health care, better schools, safer communities—through our engagement in the civic system.

**Hometown storytelling, regional impact.
Become a Scalawag member from anywhere—
in or out of the South.**

Join the fight.

Not today.

Knowing we're in this for the long haul, sustained investment helps ward off the apathy, defeat, and terror of living under white supremacy.

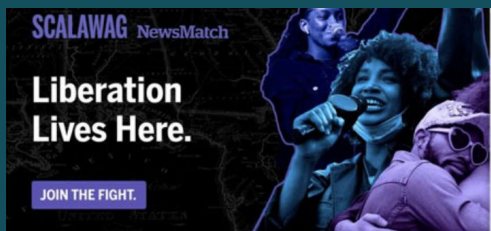
5. Accountability cannot wait until after an election

Finally, accountability must not be an afterthought in political organizing. The notion that pushing candidates to be responsive to community needs or atone for prior harms would lead to lost elections is ridiculous.



**Events are not the only way
we grow membership!**

EOY campaign & membership drive



Anna's GivingTuesday Fundraiser for Scalawag

Fundraiser for Scalawag by Public



Follow



Share



More

\$760 raised of \$700



others donated.

and 15

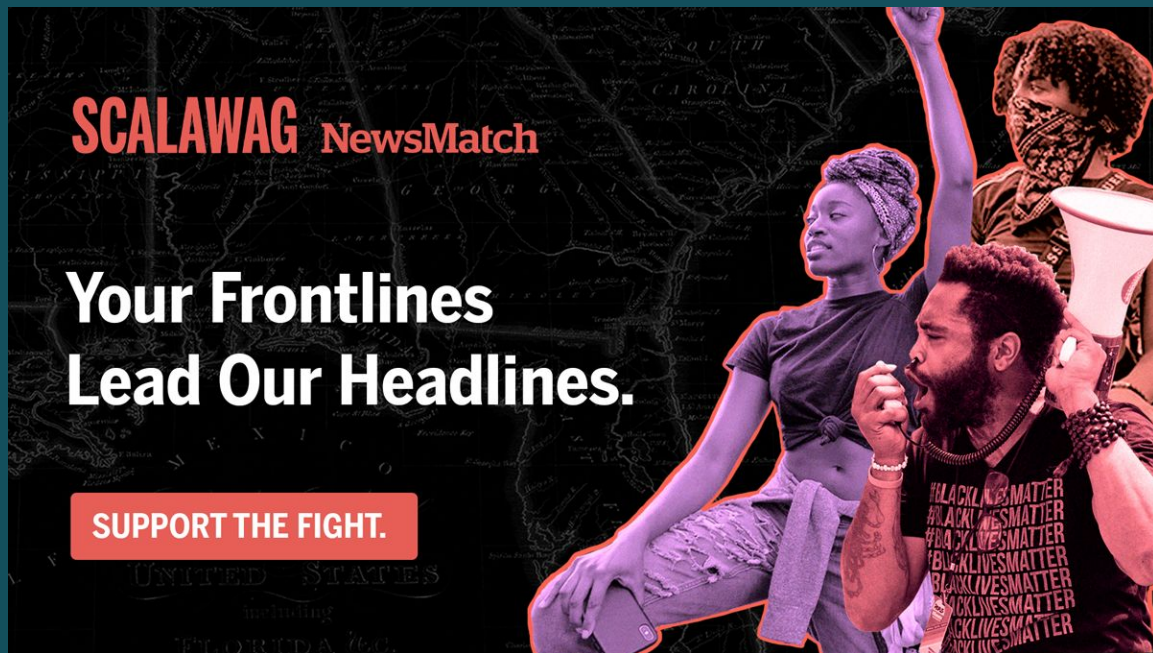
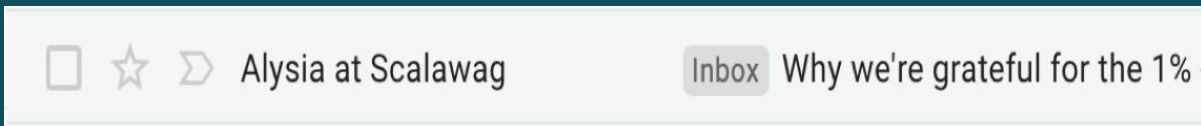
About

Join me in showing support for Scalawag! They're a media nonprofit dedicated to telling stories about BIPOC, queer, working class, immigrant, activist, and many more Southern communities that are too often left out of the news.

This is so important because the stories we tell shape

Set Reminder

DONATE



NEW!

What now, what next

NEW!



Questions & thank you!