

greater rochester

**Health** *foundation*

## REFLECTING & REIMAGINING

---

# Welcome to our new blog...I'll go first!

Tiana Flynn  
Communications Officer  
October 2023

## Freshly Back (and Refreshed!) From #ComNet23

Every year, [The Communications Network](#) hosts its ComNet Conference where “a vibrant, diverse, and dedicated community of communicators, storytellers, strategists, designers, researchers, producers, and community builders” come together to learn and connect. The network offers other educational opportunities via virtual gatherings, publishes articles, and shares best practices in the communications field –specifically for non-profits who are, what they call, “communicators for good.” I highly recommend checking them out!



This network and the conference have been instrumental in my professional development and my goals of becoming a better storyteller as I strive to uplift the work of our grantees in ways that are authentic and equitable.

I'm especially excited to share with you some of the ideas presented by Trabian Shorters, founder & CEO of [BMe Community](#), on **Asset-Framing**, which can (and should) apply to any storytelling efforts that involve humans.

Over the years, our Foundation has supported grassroots and asset-based efforts to improve the physical, social and economic environments of neighborhoods and promote new opportunities for healthy living -- so I was somewhat familiar with the principles.

***Asset-Framing® Defines communities by their aspirations and contributions, rather than their challenges and deficits. –  
Trabian Shorters***

As a communications “team,” of one, it can sometimes be challenging to produce content on a regular basis that covers our areas of work in health equity that spans nine counties in Western New York and serves an array of diverse communities. In line with our mission to “*pursue and invest in solutions that build a healthier region where all people can thrive,*” I have found in sharing stories that there is an inherent risk of presenting the audience with the challenge or problem in need of solution prior to spotlighting the people, their aspirations, and their contributions to those solutions.

In this [short video](#) created by the Skillman Foundation, Shorters warns of the dangers of philanthropic and nonprofit organizations using stigmatizing or negative narratives to describe the communities they serve.

And here’s an example that Shorters shared an example of a mission statement before Asset Framing was applied:

*“Our program helps at-risk youth in low-income neighborhoods stay on track to graduate and avoid becoming a negative statistic.”*

And then that same statement, rewritten using Asset Framing:

*“Our program helps young people striving for an education to overcome disinvestment in their communities and achieve their dreams for themselves and society.”*

Asset-Framing, Shorters says, puts the person at the center of the story as the protagonist; identifies their positive aspirations and contributions, names what is blocking those aspirations, and positions your work as a funder as a resource for achieving *their* goals.

Equipped with this new information, the first thing I did when I left Shorter's workshop was scan our website for framing...and, in full transparency, I found two [Grantee Spotlight](#) stories that I needed to edit.

Asset-Framing gives communicators tools to tell more authentic and impactful stories that strengthen an organization's focus on equity, and I'm eager to put these lessons into practice and keep building my knowledge and skills in ways that honor and illuminate the work of our grantees and partners!

Learn more about how Asset-Framing can be applied [here](#).