

# RACE-CLASS INDIANA: OUR PROGRESSIVE NARRATIVE

Both economic and racial justice are core progressive priorities, but too often we discuss them separately.

On the contrary, racial and economic harms are intertwined as are our desired solutions to them. Wealthy elites exploit racial fears to turn working people against each other and government; economic pain increases racial resentment and facilitates scapegoating, fueling support for punitive measures against people of color.

Our research demonstrates how to build a multi-racial progressive coalition that can win a better future for all. The key for cross-racial solidarity, policy victories, and voter engagement is bringing the connections between racial divisions and economic hardship to the fore. Our findings support tackling racism as a divide-and-conquer tactic that sows distrust, undermines belief in government, and causes hardship for everyone, of every color.

## CORE INSIGHTS

### Discuss race overtly

Our base, which includes many people of color, is deeply concerned about racism. Failing to address racial concerns or merely tacking them onto economic ones leaves our base unmotivated to engage, let alone persuade others. Meanwhile, most persuadables feel deep concern about race. They toggle between contradictory orientations—one that views talking about race as necessary and desires racial fairness and progressive values; and another that considers conversations about race problematic and pulls them toward racial resentment and conservative fears. The notion that we must avoid race with the middle is wrong: Remaining silent on race helps our opposition's toxic worldview gain primacy.

### Frame racism as a tool to divide and thus harm all of us

The right villainizes immigrants and African Americans as undeserving and even dangerous in order to diminish social solidarity and support for collective action that form the foundation of the progressive agenda. Pointing out this strategic racism and tying it to the class war that a handful of wealthy reactionaries are waging helps connect the experiences of targeted people of color to those of economically anxious white people. It provides a way for people of all races to understand our noxious racial environment and makes clear that white people will gain more from cross-racial solidarity than from siding with race-baiting billionaires.

### Connect unity to racial justice and economic prosperity

Making division the central problem seeds desire for unity as the response. However, it also leaves us vulnerable to claims that we too sow division. We must provide frequent endorsements for coming together, including references to having done so in the past, when calling out opponents for intentional division. "Joining together across racial differences" as a route to secure a better future moved both base and persuadables toward support for a progressive agenda.

## BASE (34% OF SAMPLE)

- Strongly concerned about bias against people of color
- Believe people of color face greater barriers than whites
- Support our progressive policy agenda

*More likely to be women, under 30, African American, and reside in Northwest Indiana*

## PERSUADABLES (44% OF SAMPLE)

- Of mixed minds on role of government, views of class, existence of racism, and need to discuss race
- Support our policy agenda yet also are lured by opposition on questions of racial justice

*More likely to be men and conservative*

## OPPOSITION (22% OF SAMPLE)

- Think wealth is product of individual effort
- Believe too much attention is paid to race
- Oppose our policy agenda
- Hold people of color responsible for their own conditions

*More likely to be over 50, white, and conservative*

## TOP-RATED NARRATIVES

Lake Research Partners, in collaboration with ASO Communications and Brilliant Corners Research and Strategy, designed and implemented this survey May in 2018. Narratives were tested online with 600 adults in Indiana, weighted to reflect demographics of the state. The margin of error is +/- 4.0. Top narratives garnered highest marks in moment-to-moment dial testing, convincing ratings, and share ratings from base and persuadables.

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### TOP TIER

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**Indiana's Strength** No matter where we come from or what our color, most of us work hard for our families. But today, certain politicians and their greedy lobbyists hurt everyone by handing kickbacks to the rich, defunding our schools, cutting Medicare and Social Security, and stripping working people of our rights to negotiate in union. Then they point the finger for hard times at poor families, Black people and new immigrants. We need to join together with people from all walks of life to fight for our future, just like we won better wages, safer workplaces, and civil rights in our past. By joining together, we can elect new leaders who work for all of us, not just the wealthy few.

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### SECOND TIER

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“

**Working People** No matter where we come from or what our color or religious tradition, most of us work hard for our families. But today, certain politicians and their greedy lobbyists hurt everyone by handing kickbacks to the rich, defunding our schools, and threatening seniors with cuts to Medicare and Social Security. Then they point the finger for hard times at poor families, Black people, and new immigrants. We need to join together with people from all walks of life to fight for our future, just like we won better wages, safer workplaces, and civil rights in our past. By joining together, we can elect new leaders who work for all of us, not just the wealthy few.

“

**Future** Every child, regardless of where they come from, what they look like, or where they live, deserves to pursue their dreams and live their lives as God intended. But certain politicians and their greedy lobbyists are putting our children's future at risk. They rig the rules to enrich themselves, while they distract us by generating fear based on race, background, and religion. Together, we have the power to pick leaders who have faith in all of our children. When we come together across our different communities, we can make this a nation we're proud to leave our kids, brimming with the new ideas that come from so many different people working together for everyone's benefit.

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**Reform** “United we stand, divided we fall.” This doesn't mean we always agree. It means that when we come together, we have the power to make things better. But today, wealthy special interests and the politicians they fund divide us with fear mongering about people based on what they look like, where they come from, or how they worship, while they rig the rules to benefit themselves. We must come together to demand a political system where every person has an equal say, ending corporate lobbying and pay-to-play donations. We deserve representatives that reflect who they serve—leaders who've walked in our shoes and understand our challenges. That's how we ensure our schools, our workplaces, and our society enable all of us to prosper.

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✓ *Motivating to our **base**, especially in terms of desire to share with others*

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✓ *Earns high marks from **persuadables**, especially in terms of desire to share with others*

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✓ *Effective with **persuadables**, particularly “we have the power” and “we deserve representatives that reflect who they serve”*

## FAMILY FIRST PLATFORM

Every element of the **Family First Policy Platform** earns majority support among Hoosiers, with certain policies receiving over 70% overall approval. Enabling Hoosiers to care for family, expanding Medicaid, reforming law enforcement and ending cash bail are all strongly favored, especially among our base and persuadables.

### Do you favor or oppose the following policies...

● STRONGLY FAVOR ● TOTAL FAVOR: 6-10

Ensure every working parent paid family and medical leave\*



Expand IN's Medicaid Program, known as HIP to ensure people who are ill or disabled, are struggling to make ends meet or are unable to find work, have essential medical care\*



Provide preschool for all so every young child enters school ready to learn



Ensure people who are mentally ill or suffer from addiction receive treatment to recover and can remain with their families\*



Reform law enforcement to ensure accountability to the well-being of our communities\*



End the cash bail system, so people's freedom is based on maintaining safety in our communities, not ability to pay



### Total: 6-10

BASE    PERSUADABLES

98      91

99      86

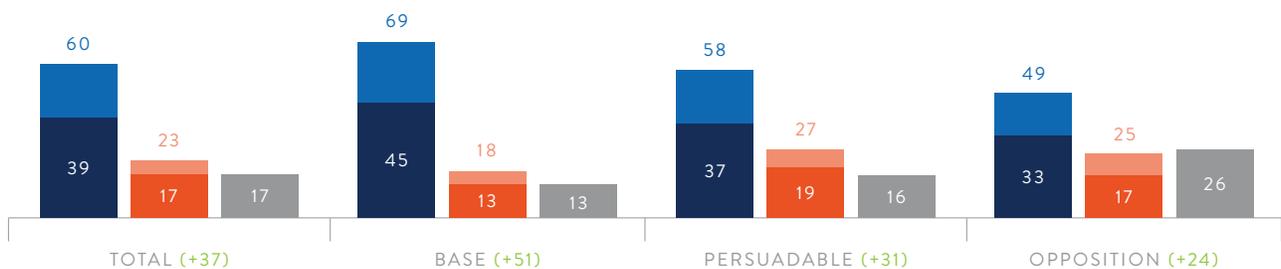
98      87

93      81

93      79

79      70

Right now, the Indiana state legislature is discussing increasing the tax on cigarettes to \$2 a pack, which has been the most effective method to decrease smoking, especially among teenagers. **Do you favor or oppose the legislature increasing the tax on cigarettes to \$2 a pack?**



Specifying that cigarette tax funds will go toward “improving the well-being of families with programs like preschool for every four-year old, programs to treat mental illness and addiction, and expanding HIP 2.0, Indiana’s Medicaid program, to ensure care for more Hoosiers” increases support by 12 points overall, bringing the margin to plus 45 points in favor of the tax.

## WORDS THAT WORK

Say this	Instead of	Notes
Join together across racial differences	Join together in our communities	Making racial reference increases interest of base and maintains support of persuadables.
Our opponents point the finger at [group(s)]; our opponents shame and blame [group(s)]	Our opponents are racist against [group(s)]	Reframing racism as scapegoating helps draw causal link to economic concerns shared across races.
To make life better for working people we must...	To grow/improve our economy we must...	Framing our objectives as “for the economy” activates opposition’s worldview to our detriment.
We have the power to pick leaders (who believe in all our children); Elect new leaders (who respect all of our families)	We should come together for a better future	More specific calls to action garner greater enthusiasm and likely help abate cynicism.
As people of faith	As caring people	Claiming religious identity bolsters support for progressive solutions.
Wealthy special interests who rig the rules	Powerful elites; the wealthy	In naming antagonists, it’s critical to specify we mean <i>certain</i> members of a group, not the whole category.
Ensure care for people struggling to make ends meet	Ensure care for people regardless of their income	Foregrounding the continuous efforts of people, as opposed to merely naming them by category.
Work together; join together with people from all walks of life; stand up for each other	Form alliances	Hoosiers are especially receptive to appeals to community and doing right by your neighbor.
Law enforcement	Policing	People are more receptive to reform when we remind them of the core function of the police: to enforce laws.
People who are mentally ill or suffer from addiction receive treatment	People who are mentally ill or suffer from addiction are not locked away in jail	People prefer to engage in creating something good rather than merely diminishing something harmful.

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### Further Information

Non-partisan findings detailed here are for Indiana. We also completed research nationally, in CA, MN, and OH, as well as in an electoral context. For further information on our process or findings from national or other state’s work, please contact [RCN@demos.org](mailto:RCN@demos.org). For information about partisan elements, contact [RCN@demosaction.org](mailto:RCN@demosaction.org).