

MIDWEST RACE CLASS NARRATIVE ACTION

2020 Research Summary



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MINNESOTA

Racial resentment, wrapped in faux economic populism, has long proven critical to enticing white voters in the Midwest and beyond. Meanwhile, people of color, young people and many women are blocked from the political process and left feeling like outsiders by narratives that stay silent on fundamental human rights or downgrade them to special interests. In response, progressive organizations in MI, MN, MO, OH, PA and WI came together to apply and extend the original Race Class Narrative (RCN) Project¹ in order to uncover effective ways of persuading the middle and mobilizing a justifiably disenfranchised base with a narrative rooted in race, class and gender tailored to each particular state context. This brief outlines key insights and messaging recommendations for Minnesota based on research done there and with demographic oversamples across states.²

Core Insights

- Effective messages follow a set order: shared value, problem, solution. In contrast, leading with problems makes our solutions seem less credible. It primes people's understandable cynicism and reluctance to get involved.
- For narratives and distinct wording choices to work, they must be heard over and over again which requires that people be willing to repeat them. Messages about enacting solutions and promoting a desirable future garner greater enthusiasm from our base and prove more persuasive to the middle than those centered on addressing problems.
- Speak about race, class and gender as interconnected: Describe the shared values that exist across these lines. Call out the ways our opposition divides us by race and gender or shames and blames particular groups in order to distract us while they hand kickbacks to the richest 1% and keep us from uniting for our economic wellbeing.
- Messages about division and scapegoating, as opposed to just financial concerns, are powerful ways to connect the targeted harms done to particular groups to the financial hardships familiar to many. However, it's vital to guard against claims that we are the ones sowing discord. We do this by first naming what we hold in

common and, when we describe our solutions, including explicit calls for cross racial solidarity to make this a place where fairness, freedom and prosperity are for all of us, no exceptions. While state identity is a strong motivator for collective identity, we must take care how we express it and steer clear of extolling the idea of “Minnesota nice.”

Minnesota Respondents

These respondents were grouped based on their responses to questions around worldviews toward race, wealth, and the role of government.

Base (27% of voters)	Persuadable (48% of voters)	Opposition (26% of voters)
<p>Strongly believe government should create opportunity</p> <p>View wealth as largely product of circumstances</p> <p>Believe people of color face greater barriers than whites</p> <p>Support our policy agenda</p>	<p>Of mixed minds on role of government, origins of wealth, benefits to talking about race</p> <p>Support our policies yet also lured by opposition on questions of race, gender and government</p>	<p>Strongly believe government should get out of the way</p> <p>Think wealth is product of individual effort</p> <p>Reject need to tackle racism and believe things have “shifted too far” on gender equity</p>

More likely to be Democratic, under age 40, people of color and live in Twin Cities

More likely to live in Twin Cities collar counties but otherwise mirror demographics of state

Likely to be men, over 50, Republican or Independent, white and live in Northern part of state

Top Rated Minnesota Narratives

MINNESOTA'S STRENGTH³

Minnesota's strength comes from us being there for each other – bringing together people from different places and of different races to create community. For this to be a place where all of us can thrive, we cannot let a handful of politicians and the richest 1% divide us based on what we look like, where we come from, or how much money we have. We must pick new leaders who see all of us as equal and govern for all of us, for generations to come. By joining together, we can make Minnesota a place where community, wellbeing, and respect are for everyone, no exceptions.

RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER

Most of us work hard for our families, no matter what we look like or where we come from. But today, a powerful few pit us against each other, blocking our efforts to ensure a fair return on our work and paid time to care for our families, affordable childcare for our kids and quality healthcare for our loved ones – [and even restricting our rights to make decisions about our own bodies.] By joining together to rewrite the rules, we can ensure every one of us, whether we're women or men, young or old, White or Black, can care for our families, have our voices heard and our rights respected.

Minnesota Policy Preferences and Issue Responses

We tested different approaches to promote progressive policies and to most effectively combat opposition claims. These are our most effective messages for engaging our base and persuading the middle on these policy and issue arguments in Minnesota.

Progressive Policies ⁴	Base Agreement	Persuadable Agreement
Make sure every child, no matter their zip code, can have a high-quality education by making our state's largest corporations and the wealthiest 1% pay their fair share to fully fund our public schools*	89% (55% strongly)	71% (34% strongly)

Progressive Policies ⁴	Base Agreement	Persuadable Agreement
Ensure every working person gets paid time to care for a new baby, a sick loved one, or to recover from their own illness or serious injury	89% (50% strongly)	72% (26% strongly)
Expand MinnesotaCare to ensure every family can access affordable, quality health care	88% (57% strongly)	72% (26% strongly)
Transition to 100% renewable energy across the state*	92% (39% strongly)	67% (22% strongly)
Ensure people’s voting rights by implementing automatic voter registration and statewide vote by mail*	84% (43% strongly)	57% (16% strongly)
Ensure people’s voting rights by implementing automatic voter registration, statewide vote by mail, and enabling people who have served time in prison to vote after their release*	78% (36% strongly)	50% (14% strongly)
Ensure everyone in Minnesota who drives a vehicle can be fully licensed, regardless of immigration status*	78% (35% strongly)	47% (14% strongly)

Rebuttals Against Opposition Claims	Base Agreement (% agreeing with oppo. statement)	Persuadable Agreement (% agreeing with oppo. statement)
<p>[Countering Anti-government, Trickle Down Economics] To make life better for working people we need to invest in education, create better paying jobs, and make healthcare more affordable for people struggling to make ends meet regardless of what we look like or where we come from</p>	<p>96% (4%)</p>	<p>62% (22%)</p>
<p>[Countering Fear Mongering] We need elected leaders who will reject Trump's divide and conquer tactics and put working people first, whether we're White, Black, or Brown</p>	<p>86% (12%)</p>	<p>51% (34%)</p>
<p>[Immigrant Rights] For America to be the 'land of the free and home of the brave' we need to respect and embrace people with the courage and tenacity to move for a better life</p>	<p>86% (10%)</p>	<p>54% (29%)</p>
<p>[Police Reform] We need to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our communities and that requires training police in de-escalation and anti-bias and ensuring they uphold their oath to protect and serve all</p>	<p>83% (17%)</p>	<p>49% (38%)</p>

Words that Work

Embrace	Replace	Explanation
Certain politicians; a handful of CEOs; some corporations	Politicians; CEOs; corporations; the wealthy	Respondents reject absolutes, even implied ones.
[Naming villains] Richest 1%	Billionaires; Top 1%	Persuadable voters are fairly equal in their disapproval of either billionaires or the richest 1% but the latter helpfully alienates the opposition while increasing enthusiasm from base.
[Naming division] Fuel divisions, fueling divisions	Divide us against each other	Minnesota base and persuadable voters agree more readily when we imply divisions are pre-existing and elites exacerbate them.
Join together for/ represent/make things better...in Minnesota	Join together for/ represent/make things better...in America	Base and persuadable voters are more optimistic about responsive government at state level while opposition prefers acting at national level.
The wealthy and powerful benefit when certain politicians practice divide and conquer politics against people of color, blaming them for the hard times all working people face	The wealthy and powerful benefit when certain politicians shame and blame people of color for the hard times all working people face	Minnesota voters respond much more strongly to describing what certain politicians do as “practice divide and conquer politics.” While this does bring along some of the opposition, they remain antagonistic to this notion because of the accurate naming of race.
Unions of working people	Labor unions	Despite greater familiarity of “Labor Unions,” Unions of Working People center the members and thus garner greater approval.

Embrace	Replace	Explanation
<p>For America to be the 'land of the free and home of the brave' we need to respect and embrace people with the courage and tenacity to move for a better life</p>	<p>People who move here to make a better life for their families help make this a stronger, more prosperous nation</p>	<p>Tying to core values of freedom and underscoring immigrants' courage and tenacity is a more effective rebuttal to anti-immigrant claims than describing how they benefit the nation. This holds true for respondents who are immigrants themselves.</p>
<p>To make life better for working people we need to invest in education, create better paying jobs, and make healthcare more affordable for White, Black, and Brown people struggling to make ends meet</p>	<p>To make life better for working people we need to make things right for those who are being harmed the most today, especially African Americans and immigrants⁵</p>	<p>A race class narrative approach, that builds toward cross racial solidarity, is more motivating and persuasive than one rooted in ideas of racial repair.</p>
<p>Ensuring women and men are equal in our society is largely a matter of men changing how they treat the women in their lives</p>	<p>Ensuring women and men are equal in our society is largely a matter of women changing what they expect of men in their lives</p>	<p>Focusing on men's behavior and how it should evolve elicited strong agreement and more productive engagement on gender equity.</p>

Contact Information

Please direct any inquiries regarding this summary to info@raceclassnarrativeaction.com

Endnotes

1. Race-Class Narrative Project, lead by Ian Haney López, Anat Shenker-Osorio, and Heather McGhee, 2018.
2. Present research fielded January 31 to February 25, 2020 and consists of six online state dial surveys from a voter-file matched panel (N=600 voters per state), regional oversamples of AAPI voters (N=403), Latinx voters (N=186), African American voters (N=215), and union member respondents (N=797), as well as a national survey of Spanish speaking adults (N=401).
3. These messages have been adapted from what was dial tested in order to incorporate learnings from moment to moment responses.
4. Policies with asterisks (*) were split-sampled in order to perform wording experiments; the more effective formulations appear here.
5. This finding came from surveys conducted in PA, WI, and MI.