MIDWEST RACE CLASS NARRATIVE ACTION

2020 Research Summary

MISSOURI

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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) Project[1] in order to uncover effective ways of persuading the middle and mobilizing a justifiably disenchanted 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 Missouri 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 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.

Missouri Respondents

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

Base (28% of voters)	Persuadable (47% of voters)	Opposition (25% of voters)
Strongly believe government should create opportunity View wealth as largely product of circumstances Believe people of color face greater barriers than whites Support our policy agenda	Of mixed minds on role of government, origins of wealth, benefits to talking about race Support our policies yet also lured by opposition on questions of race, gender and government	Strongly believe government should get out of the way Think wealth is product of individual effort Reject need to tackle racism and believe things have "shifted too far" on gender equity
More likely to be Democratic, under age 40, African American and in Kansas City or central MO	**More likely to be women and African American but otherwise mirror demographics of state**	**More likely to be men, over 50, Republican or Independent and white**

Top Rated Missouri Narratives[3]

MISSOURI'S STRENGTH

Missouri's strength comes from our ability to come together across our differences to overcome our challenges. For this to be a place where everyone can thrive, we cannot let a powerful few divide us based on what we look like, where we come from, or how much money we have, hoping we'll look the other way while they take from working people to hand kickbacks to the richest 1%. We need to join together with people from all walks of life to fight for our future. It is time for us to pick new leaders who reflect the very best of every kind of Missourian. Together, we can make this a place where a better future is 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, when a powerful few exploit divisions among us, they block 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. 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.

Missouri 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 Missouri.

Progressive Policies	Base Agreement	Persuadable Agreement
Ensure every working person gets paid time off work to care for a new baby, a sick loved one, or to recover from their own illness or serious injury	91% (63% strongly)	75% (34% strongly)

Progressive Policies	Base Agreement	Persuadable Agreement
Ensure thousands of parents, seniors, and people struggling to make ends meet can access affordable healthcare by expanding Medicaid coverage	92% (65% strongly)	73% (38% strongly)
Have independent, non-partisan experts and a citizens' commission draw our legislative maps instead of lobbyists and politicians	75% (47% strongly)	58% (27% strongly)
Ensure Missourians have the freedom to decide for ourselves whether and when to have children through access to reproductive healthcare including, prenatal care, contraception, and abortion care	84% (58% strongly)	61% (34% strongly)
Allow voters to cast an early ballot the weekend before an election day	75% (44% strongly)	56% (28% strongly)
Automatically register eligible adults to vote and update our registrations when we interact with the DMV and other government agencies	81% (48% strongly)	53% (22% strongly)

Rebuttals against opposition claims[4]	Base Agreement (% agreeing with oppo. statement)	Persuadable Agreement (% agreeing with oppo. statement)
[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	**91%** (8%)	**70%** (20%)
[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	**86%** (10%)	**48%** (39%)
[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	**85%** (9%)	**43%** (42%)
[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	**80%** (6%)	**40%** (46%)

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 goal] Come together and make things better	Move toward greater equality	Persuadable and base voters react the same to either formulation however expressly naming unity and improvement distances us from opposition voters.
[Naming division] Divide us against each other	Fuel divisions, exploit divisions	Unlike in other states, Missouri base and persuadable voters are more compelled by language that implies divisions are manufactured, not merely exploited, by elites.
Unions of working people	Labor unions	Despite greater familiarity of "Labor Unions," Unions of Working People center the members and thus garner greater approval.
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	People who move here to make a better life for their families help make this a stronger, more prosperous nation	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.

Embrace	Replace	Explanation
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	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 immigrants[5]	A race class narrative approach, that builds toward cross racial solidarity, is more motivating and persuasive than one rooted in ideas of racial repair.
Ensuring women and men are equal in our society is largely a matter of men changing how they treat the women in their lives	Ensuring women and men are equal in our society is largely a matter of women changing what they expect of men in their lives	Focusing on men's behavior and how it should evolve elicited strong agreement and more productive engagement on gender equity.

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. Messages have been adapted from what was dial tested in order to incorporate learnings from moment to moment responses.

4. Rebuttals 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.