

MIDWEST RACE CLASS NARRATIVE ACTION

2020 Research Summary



PENNSYLVANIA



For Our Future PA 



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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) Project¹ 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 Pennsylvania 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. Universal shared values were especially important in Pennsylvania, where focus group respondents felt their state lacked an overarching identity to which to anchor a message.
- 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 the 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.

Pennsylvania Respondents

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

Base (24% of voters)	Persuadable (48% of voters)	Opposition (27% 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 under the age of 50, Democratic, African American, and reside in Philadelphia

More likely to be women but otherwise mirror demographics of the state

More likely to be men, over 50, Republican or Independent, residing in Central PA and Pittsburgh

Top Rated Pennsylvania Narratives³

AMERICA'S STRENGTH SOLUTIONS

No matter where we come from or what our color, most of us work hard for our families. But, for this to be a place where everyone can thrive, we cannot let the richest 1% and the politicians they pay for exploit divisions among us based on what we look like, where we come from, or how much money we have. It's time to stand up for each other and come together. It is time for us to pick new leaders who reflect the very best of every kind of American. Coming together, we can elect new leaders who will deliver better healthcare for our families, quality schools for our kids, and a fair return on our work.

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.

Pennsylvania 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 Pennsylvania.

Progressive Policies ⁴	Base Agreement	Persuable Agreement
Protect our air, water, and land by enacting rules to reduce our carbon output by 30% by 2030*	95% (58% strongly)	67% (34% strongly)

Progressive Policies ⁴	Base Agreement	Persuadable Agreement
Protect our access to reproductive healthcare including contraception and abortion care*	89% (50% strongly)	64% (34% strongly)
Ensure everyone is paid a living wage by raising the minimum wage to \$15 and giving our cities and towns local control in determining the appropriate local wage rate for themselves*	92% (46% strongly)	56% (22% strongly)
Raise revenue for our schools, roads, and services by implementing a shale tax and closing loopholes for Pennsylvania corporations who evade our state taxes	83% (44% strongly)	70% (31% strongly)
Maintain the existing rule that working people who benefit from union representation in their workplace must join their union*	60% (21% strongly)	47% (15% strongly)
Increase development of affordable housing and provide more short and long-term housing	89% (33% strongly)	61% (17% strongly)

Best Rebuttals Against Opposition Claims	Base Agreement (% agreeing with oppo. statement)	Persuadable Agreement (% agreeing with oppo. statement)
[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	90% (6%)	48% (40%)
[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	83% (15%)	42% (50%)
[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	92% (5%)	44% (43%)
[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 White, Black, and Brown people struggling to make ends meet	93% (7%)	61% (32%)

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 and base voters are more indignant about “richest 1%” but “top” unhelpfully reinforces notions of superior moral worth.
[Naming goal] Move toward greater equality	Come together and make things better	Persuadable and base voters are more motivated by explicit calls for equality than unity and improvement.
Exploiting divisions	Divide us against each other	Pennsylvanians agree more readily when we imply divisions are pre-existing rather than generated by villains named.
Unions of working people	Labor unions	Despite greater familiarity of “Labor Unions,” Unions of Working People center the members and thus garner greater approval.
Maintain the existing rule that working people who benefit from union representation in their workplace must join their union	Require that working people who benefit from union representation in their workplace join their union	Characterizing union rights as maintenance of what is already in place generates greater agreement than seeming to describe a new restriction or condition.
Enact new rules; protect our air, land and water	Enact a Green New Deal	Green New Deal label erodes support from base and persuadable voters where “enact new rules” feels usefully concrete.

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 immigrants</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. 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.