

JUSTICE IN HEALING:

A RACE CLASS NARRATIVE APPROACH TO TALKING ABOUT THE COLOR-CODED BARRIERS TO HEALTH

2020



PURPOSE

These talking points were developed to assist you in framing the conversation around how communities of color are hit first and hardest with COVID-19. It applies lessons learned from our Race Class Narrative work and can be used in conjunction with other COVID-19 messaging guidance.

In this guide, we have given you tips and examples on how to talk about these injustices in ways that build support for the demands that you are making. These examples are broken into essential sections that should be included in any messaging about this virus - shared value, problem, and call to action. These segments can be weaved into your messages to build support for addressing the unjust impact. There are also four complete narratives offered as options.

Things to Remember

- Lead with values, not problems.
- Do **not** assume that merely presenting facts about the high rate of COVID-19 infections and deaths among Black people and communities of color will make the case that structural factors, *not* individual failings, are what rendered those communities vulnerable to the virus.
- The pre-existing conditions that make Black people and other people of color more vulnerable to death from COVID-19 are the effects of structural racism (forced poverty, red-lining, gentrification, healthcare denial, food deserts, discrimination, bias, etc.) Below, we have outlined examples on how to ensure this is conveyed.
- Be specific about what is causing the problems you highlight. Problems described passively appear to have no known cause and thus no achievable solution.
- Our message should be rooted in the values of people looking out for one another, that we are all connected, our shared purpose and how to take collective action.

Messaging Elements

LEAD WITH A SHARED VALUE

Select from these options.

- When things get tough, we know how to come together across our differences to create new ways of caring for one another and confront challenges to make things better than they were before.
- COVID-19 has shown us that our health and wellbeing are connected. Ensuring that each of us, regardless of where we live or where we come from, can get the care we need to get and stay well is how we care for ourselves and each other.
- When any one of us is barred from being able to prevent, detect, treat and recover from this illness, all of us are at risk.
- No matter where we come from or what's in our wallets, getting sick and needing care reminds us that we must come together to ensure all of us can get and stay well.
- Every one of us, regardless of where we live or what we look like, needs accessible healthcare, paid time to recover and resources to make ends meet.
- America is a place where people come together from different places and different races to move past our imperfections and make things better for future generations.
- Our wellbeing is connected. My health is linked to yours and yours to mine.
- No matter what we look like, where we live, or what's in our wallets, when someone we love is sick, we want them to get the care that they need.

FRAME THE PROBLEM AS A MATTER OF STRUCTURE AND DELIBERATE DECISIONS

Select from these options.

- Self-interested politicians are choosing to look away when Black, brown and Indigenous people are dying at higher rates because they are more interested in padding their pockets with corporate donations than taking care of the people who are continuously forced to go without proper care and struggle most to make ends meet.
- Today, a handful of our elected leaders are picking and choosing who will live and who will die from this virus based on age-old color-coded barriers to getting necessary care.
- Insurance corporations, big pharma and the politicians they pay for deny us the testing and treatment that we need so they can get back to lining their pockets and looking the

other way while our communities are forced to work under dangerous conditions and denied proper care and paid time to recover.

- Making millions of people vulnerable to this dangerous virus is a choice that we don't have to make. There are proven solutions to the problems we face and we need leaders who are willing to look into why some communities are suffering more and take action to protect everyone's health, no exceptions.
- Black, brown and Indigenous communities have always been denied the resources we need to be healthy and so it is absolutely predictable that they are the communities hit hardest by COVID-19.
- Today, Black, brown and Indigenous people are forced to live in places without healthy food options, clean drinking water or safe workplaces, and so it's completely expected that they are hit hardest by COVID-19.
- COVID-19 is only highlighting what was always true - Black, brown and Indigenous people have been denied the adequate care and treatment that we all deserve. We need to implement proven solutions that address the underlying issues that created this problem - access to paid time to recover, healthcare, and a fair return on our work that allows us to make ends meet.
- Self-interested politicians are trying to cover up their failure to ensure that working people have protective equipment and access to paid time to recover by blaming Black people and people of color for their own deaths.
- Black people are more likely to be denied ways to shelter in place and so it is absolutely no surprise that they are more likely to get sick and die from this pandemic.
- Black people are getting sick and dying because they are more likely to be confined to dangerous jobs that cannot be done from home, denied proper protective equipment, and face barriers to adequate treatment and care.

PROVIDE A CALL TO ACTION

Select from these options.

- Allowing COVID-19 to destroy Black, brown, and Indigenous communities is unacceptable. To ensure we can prevent the spread and heal from this pandemic, we first need accurate and up to date information on COVID-19 testing, treatment, and fatality rates in our most impacted communities.
- We must come together to demand clarity on how this virus is impacting each community and implement proven strategies that ensure every one of us, regardless of

where we live or what our color, gets the care and treatment that we need.

- When testing and treatment is provided for all of us, regardless of where we live or where we come from, we are all better off.
- By pulling together as we've done in the past, we can make sure that everyone of us can get the care that our families need to see us through this pandemic and build a stronger, healthier and more just future.
- We can only solve this health crisis if we properly record how it is devastating Black people and communities of color. When we track and share data based on race and other demographic criteria, we can develop effective, more inclusive responses for all of us.
- It's time for (insert person or agency) to appoint a special task force that can support communities devastated by COVID-19 because they have been blocked from getting the care and resources that we all require.
- COVID-19 has revealed what Black, brown and Indigenous people have always experienced: a healthcare system built off of color-coded barriers to preventing, treating and recovering from illness. We need (insert person or agency) to track and provide real data to ensure Black people and people of color are treated as equal.
- We call on (insert person or agency) to appoint a Task Force that includes elected leaders, public health experts & stakeholders from impacted communities including worker organizations to begin to address how Black, brown and Indigenous people have been shut out and put in peril by the unequal systems for getting care.
- Black, brown and Indigenous people have been barred from living a healthy and prosperous life through the policy choices of a powerful few. COVID-19 has shined a light on the deadly outcomes of these unequal conditions. We must provide testing and treatment to all people, regardless of the color of their skin, immigration status or income.
- Our health depends on our leaders' ability to see problems, understand what is causing them, and implement proven solutions that keep our families safe regardless of where we come from or how much money we have. By appointing a task force, (insert person or agency) to look into the impact of COVID-19 on Black people and communities of color we can build a healthier and more just future.

Sample Narratives

Our Health Is Connected

Our wellbeing is connected. My health is linked to yours and yours to mine. Making millions of people vulnerable to this dangerous virus is a choice that we don't have to make. But some politicians are more interested in protecting insurance and big pharmaceutical corporations than helping us get the testing and treatment that we all need. There are proven solutions to the problems we face and we need leaders who are willing to look into why Black, brown and Indigenous people are suffering more and take action to protect everyone's health, no exceptions. We must come together to demand clarity on how this virus is impacting each community and implement proven strategies that ensure every one of us, regardless of where we live or what our color, gets the care and treatment that we need.

Justice in Care

When any one of us is barred from being able to prevent, detect, treat and recover from this illness, all of us are at risk. Today, a handful of our elected leaders are picking and choosing who will live and who will die from this virus based on age-old color-coded barriers to getting necessary care. Allowing COVID-19 to destroy Black, brown, and Indigenous communities is unacceptable. We call on (insert person or agency) to appoint a Task Force that includes elected leaders, public health experts and stakeholders from impacted communities including worker organizations to begin to address how people have been shut out and put in peril by unequal systems for getting care.

Personal Story¹

No matter where we come from or what's in our wallets, getting sick and needing care reminds us that all of us need care to get and stay well. Thirteen years ago, I experienced the joy of welcoming my son into the world and the sorrow of learning he would need chemotherapy. Since then, we've fought not only to get him well but to access and pay for the care to do it. Today, some politicians let the insurance corporations and pharma lobbyists who fund them extract record profits by jacking up our premiums and pricing life-saving drugs out of our reach. Then they try to distract us from their failures by pointing the finger at new immigrants and people of color, the very ones hit hardest and denied care for COVID-19. By pulling together, we can make sure that everyone of us can get the care that our families need to see us through this pandemic and build a stronger, healthier and more just future.

Immigrants Make US Healthy²

Whether it's for an emergency or a chronic condition, needing care reminds us that we're human, no matter our race, nationality or income. Today, nurses and doctors, health aides and pharmacists, who have moved here to make a better life for their families provide compassionate care to us all. Immigrant Americans make us healthy - healing our ailments - and bringing the fresh approaches, courage and tenacity that help us be well. When corporate lobbyists and politicians point the finger at immigrants to try to distract us from their plans to hand more profits to insurance corporations while denying us care, we know better. By joining together, we can demand testing and treatment for everyone. When all of us, regardless of where we live or where we come from, can get the care we need we are all better off.

Endnotes

- 1 This sample narrative has been edited from a version created with MomsRising and included with their generous permission. This is one particular example of a personal story to illustrate using this approach.
- 2 This sample narrative has been edited from a version created with MomsRising and included with their generous permission.