

MESSAGING THIS MOMENT:

**A HANDBOOK FOR
PROGRESSIVE
COMMUNICATORS**



**CENTER *for*
COMMUNITY CHANGE**

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**A GREAT MESSAGE
DOESN'T SAY WHAT'S
ALREADY POPULAR;
A GREAT MESSAGE
MAKES POPULAR WHAT
NEEDS TO BE SAID.**

This handbook is the culmination of a set of trainings, technical support and coaching for a talented array of communications professionals across the progressive landscape. All of this work was made possible thanks to the generous support of Open Society Foundations' Racial Justice portfolio. Over 100 participants helped shape these events, ensure representation from across a spectrum of issues, identities and geographies, and embrace the spirit of doing things differently and doing different things. We wish to acknowledge the particular contributions of Tarah Walsh, Jeffrey Parcher, Marisol Bello, Donna De La Cruz and Peter Woiwode at Center for Community Change. Joseph Reid of ASO Communications was instrumental to pulling off these events. At Open Society Foundations, particular gratitude to Alvin Starks, Leslie Gross-Davis, Andrew Maisel and Ken Zimmerman. The Ford Foundation hosted our first event thanks to Laine Romero-Alston, Charlene Caronan and Elizabeth Wann. Jonathan Heller and Dorian Warren helped launch and frame our efforts. Finally, Shanelle Matthews and the Radical Communicators Network she launched made it possible to reach an impressive array of communications practitioners and provide expert coaching for exercises during the events.

Any errors or omissions in this work are, of course, the fault of the author.

Dear Reader,

The rise of Trumpism has challenged every single aspect of being for progressives and our organizations. It is, as many of us have been saying, an existential threat to everything we care about: economic justice, racial and gender equality, a livable planet and global peace. The message and narrative challenges of the moment are critical and foreboding along at least two major fronts.

1) We desperately need to develop a broader, more inclusive narrative that mobilizes our base and persuades many more winnable people in the middle. More Americans need to see themselves in a story that leads with progressive values and sets the stage for bold policy change. We know this story must be built in an organic way around real lived experiences that embraces all of our many identities, especially those deliberately denied respect and freedom to thrive.

2) We must expose Trumpism and the conservative doctrine of by and for the wealthy. A narrative populism built exclusively on resentment and anger that scapegoats the most vulnerable people in America puts everything we are and believe at risk. There is an attack on people of color through the structural violence of vile policies of detention, racial profiling and deportation, while at the same time erecting ever higher barriers to well-being for all but the wealthiest and most well-connected.

In response to these twin challenges, I am proud that the Center for Community Change has partnered with Anat Shenker-Osorio, America's most provocative and paradigm-challenging messaging expert. Her groundbreaking work brings immediate assistance to grassroots groups that are on the front lines of building immediate resistance, opposition and power for the comeback of a progressive vision for America.

Besides this handbook, we've been able to reach hundreds of grassroots organizers through our Messaging This Moment convenings, webinars, message memos and ongoing coaching session with key leaders.

We hope you find these materials inspiring and helpful, and we look forward to partnering with each and every one of you as we work together to bend the arc of history back toward justice.

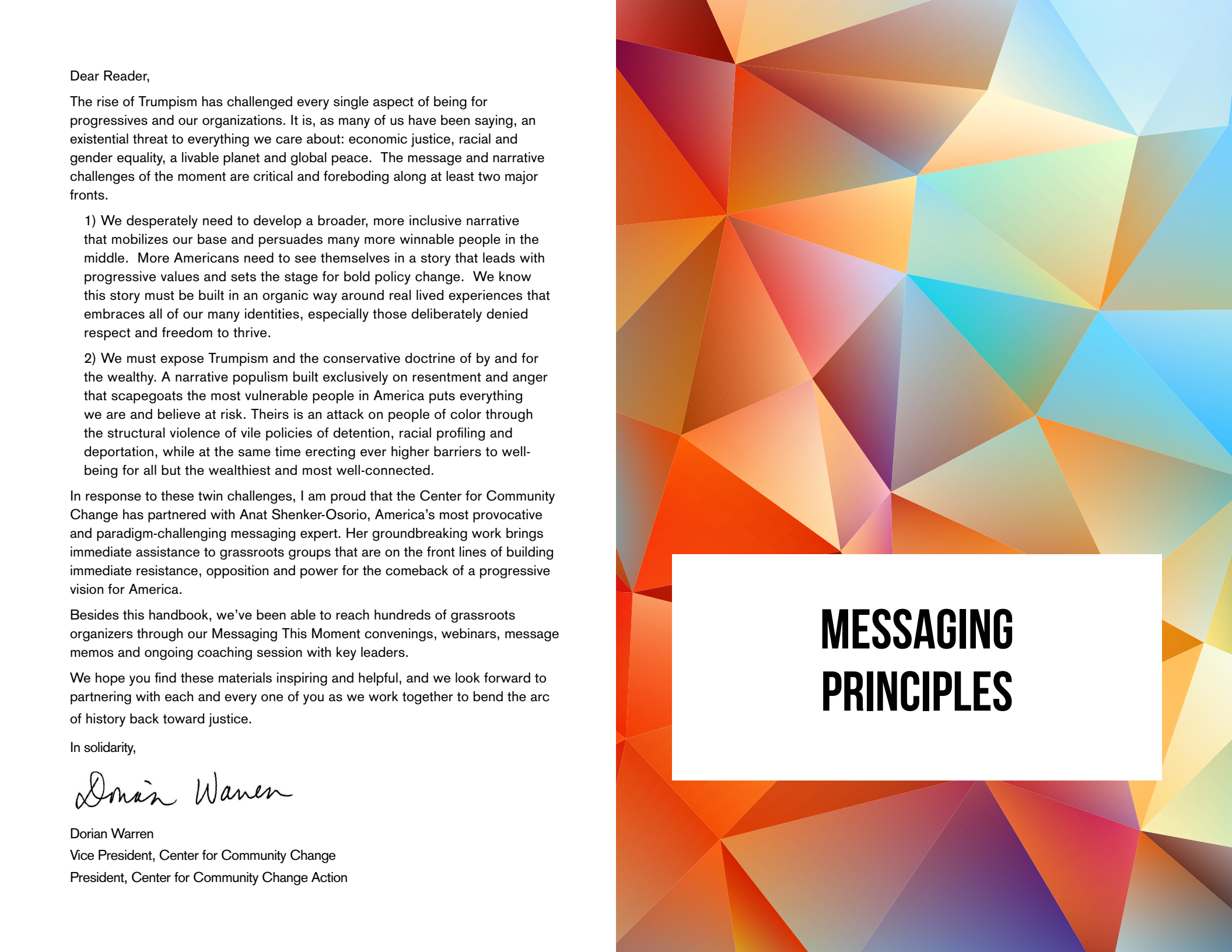
In solidarity,



Dorian Warren

Vice President, Center for Community Change

President, Center for Community Change Action



MESSAGING PRINCIPLES



LEAD WITH SHARED VALUES, NOT PROBLEMS

Right now, most progressive messaging follows a familiar order: lead with problems, move to solution, end with a call to action. Americans got 99 problems and they don't want yours. The desire to sound the alarm about the egregious, systematic and growing harms to our communities is understandable. But that doesn't make it compelling. The problem with problems is that people don't want more of them.

Instead of leading off with problems, narratives that first link to shared values have proven much more effective at shifting opinions toward progressive policy solutions.

Leading with values also reminds us that we need to challenge our entrenched beliefs about what we can and can't say in service of a progressive agenda. For too long the right has succeeded in mobilizing what they came to label "values voters" using cuddly words like "family" to cloak their anti-woman, anti-LGBT agenda. This has been so effective that progressives routinely reject messaging around family and freedom as somehow inherently conservative.

We need to confront those fears with the truth.

Conservatives get crushed in values centered debates.

Marriage equality won out precisely because LGBT people made the debate about values of commitment and family. When they stopped talking "rights" and started talking "love," the tide turned. The immigrant rights movement made headway when they made the debate about families, the American Dream, and the freedom to be who you are and go where you need to go.

Our research shows family is the perfect values lens for talking about the rules that govern our economy and our nation. If you ask Americans (and we did!) why they work and what they want for their families, you will hear a laundry list of progressive ideals: secure retirement for the elderly, brighter futures for their kids, putting dinner on the table and being home in time to eat it.

While family tested most strongly, we found progressives do better when we lean into a number of values including community, fairness and freedom.

EMBRACE	REPLACE
Most of us seek to treat others the way we want to be treated	Our treatment of undocumented immigrants and refugees is horrendous
America is a nation founded on an ideal – that all are created equal	The criminal justice system imprisons African Americans and Latinos at alarming rates
Today, as always, people move to make life better for themselves and their families	Our broken immigration system tears families apart
No matter our differences, most of us want pretty similar things	The gap between rich and poor in this country is at historic levels
In America, we value our freedom	Corporate special interests are engaging in a war on workers
Most of us believe family comes first	America is the only nation in the world without paid parental leave
You wouldn't know it from politicians, but Americans stand largely united	X is an incredibly polarizing and contentious issue with a well-funded opposition
Our country's strength is grounded in our ability to work together	Hate crimes are at historic levels
All work has value and all working people have rights	There's a war on workers
Implementing solutions	Solving problems



BRING PEOPLE INTO THE FRAME — OFFER CLEAR VILLAINS AND HEROES

While leading with problems is ill advised, it is important to convey what's at stake in our fights. Introducing the problem after you've set out the shared value helps generate cognitive dissonance in your audiences. Re-ordering when we introduce the problem is only part of the issue. We must also pay attention to how we describe it.

Unfortunately, we tend to make existing and impending problems seem to have no clear origin. "Systemic inequalities" don't create themselves; "the gap" didn't widen of its own accord. Lawmakers implement policies and can choose to do otherwise. Similarly, we find a tendency to talk about people "losing their coverage" or "wages falling." People "lose" their keys and wallets. Politicians take or confiscate health insurance. Corporate CEOs hold or force wages down.

Motives matter. It's no coincidence that massive giveaways to corporations and the wealthiest are part of the same budget that includes taking medicine, education and utilities away from struggling Americans.

Wherever possible, describe who is behind the problems you catalogue. And, when this isn't obvious, use verbs like choose or decide, eliminate or confiscate, to characterize what lawmakers have done or seek to do.

On the flip side, it's also critical to demonstrate the actions of the people for whom we advocate. We tend to leave them out of view or relegate them to the object, not subject, position.

EMBRACE

CEOs decided to pay people less
Lawmakers took our coverage

Politicians put up barriers to prosperity for communities of color
Lawmakers refused funds for health and nutrition for Americans struggling to make ends meet
CEOs fired more people

Pay taken from women/POC
Barrier to well being
Equal pay for equal work

Greedy few rigged the game
Corporations/CEOs take from working people

Too much wealth in too few hands
Our economic rules favor the rich at the expense of the rest
A powerful few get rich off the profit we produce

[People] coming together in union
[People] negotiating collectively
Join together in union

Corporations have held down wages so much that many full time employees qualify for [name of program]

X are paid less than Y

Damage to the climate
Lawmakers' decisions to pollute our air and water
Corporations make profits off damaging our climate

People/Americans struggling to make ends meet
People/Americans working to provide for family

Unions of working people

REPLACE

Jobs/homes were lost
People will lose coverage

The income/wealth gap has widened
Health disparities are increasing
The achievement gap is growing
The unemployment rate rose
Conditions persist
[Name of group] has experienced
[Name of group] continues to face

Gender wage gap, racial wealth gap

Systemic inequities

[Economic] inequality

Collective action, collective bargaining

Many jobs offer workers so little in hours and salaries they are eligible for [name of program]

X earn less than Y

The climate is changing
Sea levels are rising

Poor, working poor
Marginalized, underserved

Labor unions

3

CREATE SOMETHING GOOD, DON'T MERELY REDUCE SOMETHING BAD

Once we've named our shared value and described the problem we're tackling with clear agents named, we can move toward our solutions. When it comes to describing our policy objectives, we tend to employ the language of "fixing" or "reforming," "improving" or "mitigating." Amelioration of harm, or describing a policy as reducing some recognized bad thing, may feel accurate. But it suppresses motivation and long-term engagement. Instead, describing the good thing your policy, campaign or movement exists to create helps sustain the will to fight among your base and engender interest among skeptics.

This also means we must be for something desirable rather than merely against something deplorable. Calling out some tax evasion scheme disguised as a childcare plan or a maternal leave crumb as inherently sexist and inadequate doesn't work unless we have some attractive, fleshed out alternative to name in its place. **A "no" without a "yes" leads listeners to think we're just playing politics as usual.** It sounds like we're just denouncing whatever the other side puts out to defeat them, not making a sincere attempt to see good policy become law.

EMBRACE

Create an immigration process
Paid enough to provide for family, able to set kids off to a bright future
People who work for a living, ought to earn a living [with time for a life]
Set standards
Change the rules
Create stable workplaces

REPLACE

Fix our broken immigration system

Improve wages and working conditions

Earn a good living and have a good life

Better wages and benefits

Being there and providing for those you love isn't negotiable

Increase access to paid family leave and dependable scheduling

Create safe and healthy communities

Stop/mitigate/slow down climate change



**MARTIN LUTHER KING HAD A DREAM,
NOT A COMPLAINT.**



FOCUS ON OUTCOMES, NOT PROCESS

Currently, advocates tend to describe concerns by naming processes. For example, characterizing the decimation of Medicaid as “moving to block grants for states,” brings the means front and center and sends the ends into the shadows.

At the same time, we tend to label our desired solutions in terms of policy, not outcomes. For example, “minimum wage increase” and “paid family leave” instead of “people are paid enough to make ends meet” and “you’re at your new baby’s side,” respectively.

In health care, altering eligibility, cutting benefits and complicating enrollment all create or prolong illness in people. But instead of describing the all-too-common lived experiences of having an illness or watching a loved one suffer, we focus on the paperwork and procedures. Again, the concern in lived experience terms isn’t eligibility and benefits, it’s seeing a doctor, getting treatment, affording medicines and so on.

Further, we tend to shield humans from view, calling them “beneficiaries,” “enrollees,” “eligible individuals” or “applicants.” These are labels our audiences don’t apply to themselves or anyone they love. This applies even to the common term “worker,” which has proven in numerous tests to fall flat and diminish interest in policies like paid sick days and paid leave time. “Working people” is not only much stronger, it actually beats “middle class” as an effective label.

Any policy is only as good as what it allows you to do – prevent incurable diseases in your baby, have a little extra for savings, spend time with your family and so on. These are the terms and experiences that make things human issues, not policy debates.

EMBRACE	REPLACE
Food, housing, medical care	Safety net
Make ends meet, retire in dignity, prevent and treat illness	Entitlements
Paid time to care [for loved ones] Being there for family isn't negotiable	Paid family and medical leave, paid parental leave
Time caring for family	Days off, time off
The rules about X Change the rules about work and wages Eliminate the barriers to wellbeing	X policy/policies
Barriers to prosperity for [name of group], obstacles to wellbeing for [X]	Gap between rich and poor
[Name of program] ensures that working people struggling to make ends meet can feed their families	[Name of program] is a key work support program that helps those in low paying jobs get by
Mothers, children, friends, neighbors, teenagers, etc.	Eligible individuals, recipients, enrollees, etc.
Remove people from care, deny people care, force people into debt for care	Block grants
Care, treatment, prevention, medicine, getting and staying well	Coverage, access to coverage
Strep throat, cancer, broken arm, etc.	Medical/health conditions
Hurt Americans, hurt people	Hurt the economy
Fair return on work People who work for a living, ought to earn a living	Raise wages, living wage, adequate wage
Class sizes that enable one on one interaction Up-to-date materials and resources	Invest in classroom priorities



DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SEEK, NOT WHAT YOU OPPOSE

With a non-stop stream of vile rhetoric and rules coming our way, it's tempting to rebut, refute and rail against what our opponents are peddling. But repeating what our opposition says, even in order to counter it, simply lends them more airtime. It's also another form of leading with problems, not shared values.

Our opponents make frequent outlandish claims about our communities and their own actions. It can be tempting to engage in rebuttal – to assure audiences that “immigrants are not a security threat” and that Trump’s childcare plan “won’t help working families.” But this simply has us repeating their words and unwittingly lending credibility to them.

As much as we wish otherwise, negating a claim actually brings it top of mind. People latch onto the most tangible element of a sentence – usually the noun. In contrast, words like “don’t” and “not” are intangible.

In fact, decades of research demonstrate that attempts to refute false information can actually strengthen people’s belief in the claims. Testing shows that people remember the assertion and forget that it’s a lie.

Further, people accept arguments that reinforce what they already believe and reject those that don’t. This is known as “confirmation bias.” And, in fact, there can be a “backfire effect,” where people become more convinced of their position if it’s challenged.

People are more likely to believe refutations if they are presented unemotionally, such as in graphs. Experiments

in different domains reveal that factual presentation is even more effective when accompanied by “affirmation” that has people recall an experience that made them feel good about themselves. (Note that this is in a one-on-one conversation, not broadcast messaging, setting.)

EMBRACE

We support X plan that makes childcare affordable so any working parent can have their kid in great care. Anything else falls short

Immigrants contribute to our culture and community and we’re all the better for having them here
Immigrant Americans move here for the promise of freedom and opportunity in this country
America is supposed to be the land of the free and the home of the brave. That’s a good thing; so let’s make it that way

Muslim Americans are our neighbors and our coworkers; they are the kids in our schools and the parents in our parks
America was founded on freedom of religion. We don’t exclude people based on whether or how they pray

Without [program], people cannot work, let alone prosper; without food, children cannot learn, let alone thrive. [Program] is all that separates many Americans from frequent hunger and childhood malnutrition

At this critical time, politicians need to focus on the things that matter – good paying jobs, vibrant communities and livable neighborhoods – not go acting as the body policy on our friends and neighbors

REPLACE

This is not an adequate child care plan

Immigrants are not “criminal aliens”
Being undocumented is not a crime
No human is illegal

The vast majority of Muslims pose no threat to our security

[Program] doesn’t discourage work
People don’t stop working on [program]

There are many things that threaten our children, but transgender people using the restroom in peace isn’t one of them
A bathroom is not where women and children are at risk



INTRODUCE PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES AND HARMS AFTER SHARED VALUE

Because we're generally fighting for particular communities who bear the brunt of state and corporate cruelty, we naturally want to begin by highlighting these concerns. Leading with what differentiates us, however, diminishes our reach to persuadable audiences. And it often takes the form of leading with the problem, as described above.

We must openly name the race, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity issues our opponents dismissively label "identity politics." In message testing, it has proven most effective to do this after we name a shared value first. By framing the harm we describe as an attack not only on some group but also on the shared value established at the outset, it provides us the moral high ground and increases the size of our pool of supporters.

In addition to simply referencing the groups subjected to human rights abuses, certain vetted phrases have proven useful at moving persuadable audiences toward our solutions.

EMBRACE

Everyone means everyone, no exceptions

Politicians/CEOs choose to do X, especially in communities of color

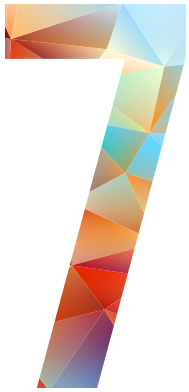
No matter what you look like or where you come from

The places that need it most
The communities longest denied

No matter your zip code



"IF YOU WANT TO BUILD A SHIP, DON'T DRUM UP PEOPLE TO COLLECT WOOD AND DON'T ASSIGN THEM TASKS AND WORK, BUT RATHER TEACH THEM TO LONG FOR THE ENDLESS IMMENSITY OF THE SEA." — ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPERY



ALIENATING THE OPPOSITION, WITHOUT PROVOKING BACKLASH FROM THEM, IS NOT MERELY ACCEPTABLE — IT IS NECESSARY

Too often, politicians and advocates craft and test for language in order to please the greatest number of people, no matter their ideology. This has left us, at best, unable to fire up the people who we need to act as the vanguards of change and, at worst, outright disempowers them. Milquetoast messaging doesn't piss anyone off. But it also doesn't ignite anyone's passion, and it fails to differentiate our beliefs from those of our opposition.

Liberating ourselves from finding messages our opponents tolerate means we hit upon words our base actually feels inspired to repeat. All while we grab and keep the large segment of our audience who toggle between our worldview and the toxic lure of fear of others, free market worship and rugged individualism.

By using messages that engage our base, persuade the middle and alienate the opposition, we achieve multiple things.

First, we empower our choir to want to convince the congregation.

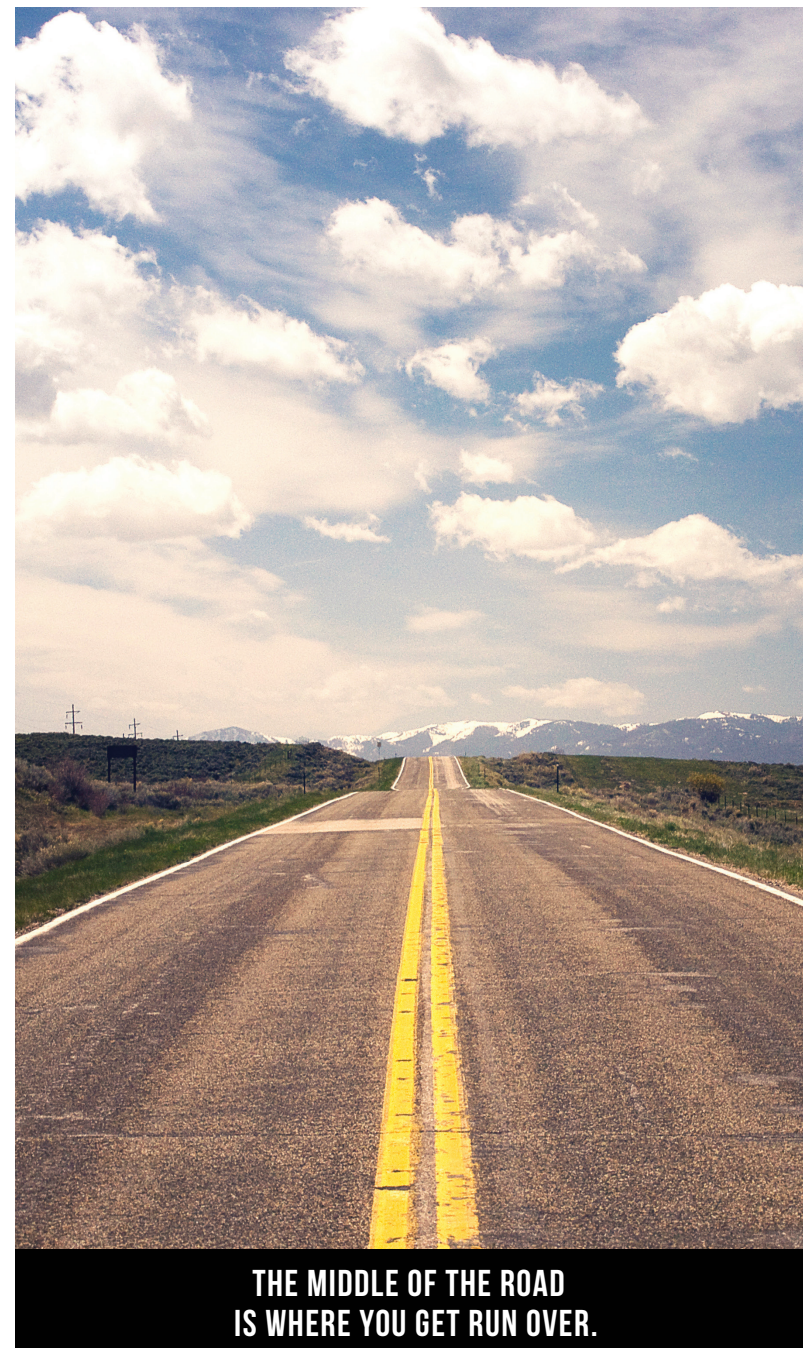
Second, we argue on our terms – not those of our opposition. If our committed opposition registers disapproval at our words, we can rest assured we're advancing our ideas, not merely saying something blandly inoffensive.

And, finally, we can make our opponents appear like the outliers they are: out of touch with what the vast majority, believe and desire.

Of course, it's also key not to provoke such backlash that we energize otherwise apathetic opponents into engaging politically. There is a difference between turning our staunch detractors off and firing them up. However, let's also face facts. **Even the most benign messages from certain messengers heat up our opponents. This means we must double down on uplifting our base to persuade the middle.**

In research, we've seen phrases like "every working parent should be paid enough to set their kids off for a bright future," "immigrant Americans moved here for the promise of freedom and opportunity in this country" and "a greedy few rigged the game in their favor, now too many jobs don't pay enough for our needs, let alone enable our wants" make around 15 percent of U.S. voters scurry. And to them we say, good riddance. We want to engage in debate on these terms – especially since we know the vast majority of Americans not only feel comfortable but actively embrace our views here.

EMBRACE	REPLACE
Do right by kids All children have rights	Invest in kids
Good for America/our nation/X city/X state	Good for our economy
Education allows children to pursue their dreams	Education allows children to achieve economic stability
Place clean air and water for all ahead of corporate profits for the few	Act to mitigate climate change
Every American ought to be paid enough to set their kid off to a great future	Improving wages will grow our economy
America isn't working for all, especially African American and Latino communities	We must make strides toward a more inclusive society
When somebody can hold down your wages, no matter their profits or your accomplishments, there's no freedom in that	Grow our middle class
Immigrant Americans contribute to our culture and community and we're all the better for having them here Immigrant Americans move here for the promise of freedom and opportunity in this country. And we think moving is one of the best and the hardest things you can do America's supposed to be the land of the free and the home of the brave, so let's make it that way	We need immigration reform that's tough, fair and practical. We need to secure our border, crack down on illegal employers and turn productive taxpaying immigrants into American citizens



THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD
IS WHERE YOU GET RUN OVER.

8

GET LESS MODEST!

Since we frequently work in coalition, our victories are always partial and we never stop fighting for freedom for all people, we tend to couch our endeavors and achievements with hedge phrases.

These additional words, like “seek to” or “strive to” or “work to,” dull the impact of our desires and accomplishments. They leave audiences wondering, do we actually do anything or do we simply try very hard?

Fortunately, of all our common messaging missteps, this one is by far the easiest to correct.

EMBRACE

We achieve...

We create...

Our campaign challenges...

Our coalition builds...

REPLACE

We work to achieve...

We strive to create...

Our campaigns seeks to challenge...

Our coalition is dedicated to building...



SAMPLE NARRATIVES

EFFECTIVE NARRATIVES LEAD WITH **SHARED VALUES**



THEN INTRODUCE **THE PROBLEM**



AND OFFER **SOLUTIONS**



ON CHILDCARE

Sample Narrative 1: People Who Work

-  People who work hard deserve to make more than a decent living; we deserve to have a decent life.
-  This means ensuring all children are cared for in a great place that doesn't break the bank. That's why we support X plan that makes childcare affordable so any working parent can have their kids in great care.
-  Trump's childcare plan is a tax cut for his wealthy friends with the chance to set up a savings account for care. If Americans had savings, we wouldn't be choosing between the care our kids need and the rent.
-  All of us need quality, affordable childcare – that is what the X plan delivers.
-  Everyone means everyone, no exceptions.

Sample Narrative 2: All Children Have Rights

-  Parents want the very best for their kids – and our leaders ought to want the very same. That means childcare you can trust, no matter your income level and the right to care for your loved ones while still making ends meet.
-  That's why we're endorsing the X childcare plan, which provides support to make great care affordable no matter your income.
-  Meanwhile, Trump's plan is another kickback for the already wealthy, while people who work for a living are left scrambling.
-  All children have rights, not just those whose parents happen to be wealthy and well connected.

Sample Narrative 3: Family Comes First

-  Most of us believe that family comes first.
-  That's why we support the X childcare plan.
-  Every parent wants to know their kids are in great hands without having to fear they can't make rent.
-  And that's what the X plan does – makes quality care affordable to working parents.
-  The scheme Trump proposes is a tax break for his fellow millionaires without real support for parents struggling to make ends meet.
-  If politicians want to talk family values, it's time they start valuing families
-  And that starts with the X childcare plan.

ON IMMIGRATION

Sample Narrative 1: Nation of Values



America is a nation of values, founded on the ideal that all are created equal.



Any order that violates every person's right to due process and equal treatment violates our Constitution and cannot stand.



Everyone means everyone, no exceptions.



This is why we must [call to action].

Sample Narrative 2: People Move



People move to make life better for themselves and their families. Immigrant Americans moved here for the promise of freedom and opportunity.



Any order that violates a person's right to remain in and contribute to our communities damages the freedom we cherish.



That's why we're [solution/call to action].

Sample Narrative 3: We Belong Together



Most of us believe that family comes first.



But today, certain lawmakers want to forcibly separate mothers from children, husbands from wives, and sisters from brothers. Anything that tears apart our families threatens our nation.



In opposing this new executive order, we affirm our belief that having "family values" means valuing families by keeping them together and honoring the contributions immigrant Americans make to our country and communities.



That's why American families are [solution/call to action].

ON HEALTH CARE, MEDICAID, MEDICARE

Sample Narrative 1: Family



In America, family should come first. And whether it's for a newborn you swear already smiles, your elderly mom or your spouse nursing an injury, taking care of family in sickness and health isn't negotiable.



But corporate billionaires have taken over our government. They are using their power to rig the rules so they can take even more of the wealth we produce. With one hand they are helping themselves to massive revenue handouts. With the other hand they are taking medicine away from people struggling to make ends meet.



That's why we're [solution/call to action].

Sample Narrative 2: Health



No matter our differences, most of us want pretty similar things – to go through our lives in good health and to get quick, effective, compassionate care if we're ever sick or injured.



But today, conservative politicians want to block people struggling to make ends meet from the most cost effective, life saving medical care [insert # of Americans on Medicaid] count on to get and stay well.



That's why we're [solution/call to action].

Sample Narrative 3: Humanity



Whether it's routine like strep throat or scary like cancer, illness reminds us that at our core, we're all human. Everyone wants proven treatments without fearing we'll go bankrupt to get them.



But today, certain lawmakers are threatening [insert estimated # of Americans who will get kicked off] with choosing between life saving health care or putting food on the table for family. Without Medicaid, people struggling to make ends meet can't take their babies for routine checkups, get treatment for serious diseases or get the pills they need to stay healthy and make it to work everyday.



That's why we're [solution/call to action].

Sample Narrative 4: Fairness



We say America was founded on the idea that people are created equal. That's why access to the medicines we need to live healthier should be equally available to all; getting sick and needing care doesn't depend on what's in your wallet. No one should go into debt to get well.



But today, the GOP wants to pick who gets to live long and in good health and who will struggle to get care for themselves or their family. They see a life in California, a prosperous state that pledges to look after all of its residents, as worth more than one in Mississippi, where state lawmakers are eager to block people from the care that they need.



That's why we're [solution/call to action].

Sample Narrative 5: Unity



Politicians may not get it but Americans stand largely united: We work hard for our families, look out for our friends, and want our neighbors to enjoy healthy and prosperous lives.



But today, a small group of lawmakers want to take away the preventative care, treatment and medicines of our fellow Americans. They are targeting our friends, family members and neighbors who have the absolute least right now – in order to award revenue giveaways to a handful of their biggest donors.



That's why we're [solution/call to action].

ON GENDER NON-BINARY AND TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

Sample Narrative 1: Equality



No matter our differences, most of us want pretty similar things – to get through the workday and have time with family and friends.



But for some people, the most basic things – like using public bathrooms – have been turned into a daily struggle because they don't look or feel like a generic ideal “man” or “woman.”



All of us need a secure, clean and comfortable place to go to the bathroom – no matter what we look like or how we identify.

Sample Narrative 2: Live and Let Live



Most of us have too much going on in our own lives to have time to worry about what other people have going on in theirs.



But in some states, certain politicians want to police the most basic things – like using public bathrooms.



People are best suited to determine for themselves where they should go when they gotta go.



At this critical time, politicians need to focus on the things that matter – good paying jobs, vibrant communities and livable neighborhoods – not go acting as the body policy on our friends and neighbors.

EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE NARRATIVES IN USE

1. EQUALITY TEXAS WEBSITE

In Texas we embrace hard work, the belief in opportunity for all, and treating others like we want to be treated. →

Discrimination toward anyone, including gay and trans-gender people → is out of line with values Texans hold dear. →

All Texans should have the rights to provide for themselves and their families, to live in a safe place and to access public spaces, safely and without fear of losing these rights because of who they are or whom they love. →

Though we believe that everyone should be treated equally, → our laws do not always reflect that belief.

- Begins in shared value, evokes the Golden Rule.
- Names the problem actively.
- Frames the problem in opposition to the shared value, not simply harmful to certain individuals.
- Says what they're for, not just what they're against.
- Returns to a shared value.

SOURCE:

Issues section of Equality Texas website: Ending Discrimination
<https://www.equalitytexas.org/our-issues/ending-discrimination>

2. EXCERPT FROM DORIAN WARREN INTERVIEW ON FOX NEWS ABOUT MAY DAY PROTESTS FOR IMMIGRANT RIGHTS

[Host] Dorian, very good to have you. If you're going to summarize the protesting, what is it?

[DORIAN] It's this administration, the Trump administration, deportation policies and machine. We're saying no to separating families, no to a border wall and no to increased enforcement. → There's a different path forward and that is comprehensive immigration reform. → It's a bipartisan issue. It passed the Senate in 2013. It couldn't get through this House that is trying to repeal Obamacare. This is a broad group of folks that are saying no to anti-immigrant policies. It's Facebook and Google, by the way, as well as many other nonimmigrants like myself out here saying no to anti-immigration, separation.

[HOST] When you say anti-immigration, it's anti-illegal immigration right?

[DORIAN] We want to keep families together. → There's a great history in this city of allowing immigrants to come in and contribute to this country and this economy... Again, business is joining with faith leaders and civil rights leaders, and the Sierra Club has joined in, Planned Parenthood have come in to say no to anti-immigrant rhetoric or policies --

- Names the harms in values terms.
- Describes solution, doesn't just critique current actions.
- Refuses to take interviewer's bait. Redirects to point he wants to make – "keep families together." Repeats core point.

SOURCE:

Television Interview on Fox News: Dorian Warren, president of Center for Community Change Action on Rise Up! May 1 actions for immigrant rights
http://video.foxnews.com/v/5418002676001/?playlist_id=930909826001#sp=show-clips

3. PETRA FALCON OP-ED IN THE ARIZONA TIMES, MAY 2, 2017

My Turn: The president has proposed huge tax cuts for the rich while cutting critical safety net programs.

We all cross our fingers that we'll receive a big tax refund this time of year – enough to pay off our credit card bills or finally replace that one appliance that keeps breaking down. → But if you're an American billionaire, this year you can look forward to a much bigger → payout. Over \$880 billion, to be exact.

That's how much President Trump and GOP lawmakers want to strip → from federal programs in order to give a giant tax cut to the super rich. And it's why on Tax Day, at the Casa de Primavera Senior Center in Phoenix, I stood alongside other Arizonans who would be affected by these cuts to call out the hypocrisy of this administration's aim to use our tax dollars not to support those who need it most, but to line the pockets of the richest few. →

Our new president's policy agenda is out of step with everyday Americans, and his proposed budget would harm seniors, children

- Starts off in common lived experience – awaiting your tax refund to cover common household needs.
- "Payout" as opposed to "tax break" avoids accidentally impugning taxes and thus activating the opposition's worldview.
- Uses active voice and names culprits – "President Trump and GOP lawmakers want to strip from federal programs," "this administration's aim to use our tax dollars not to support those who need it most, but to line the pockets of the richest few."
- Brilliant summation of issue, implies the purpose of taxes without making this conscious.

and families, including immigrant families, who are struggling to make ends meet. → With support from allies in Congress, this administration's policies would defund many of the programs and services that give a hand up to people who need it, all so they can give a handout to the wealthiest 1 percent. →

That is not who we are as a nation. →

The new president has thrown his support behind a health care plan that eliminates coverage → for an estimated 24 million people, more than 400,000 of whom live in Arizona.

Most of those slated to lose their insurance are covered by Medicaid, which primarily covers families with kids, seniors and those with disabilities. For people who get their insurance through work or the marketplace, premiums and out of pocket costs would skyrocket under the proposed plan, which congressional lawmakers are planning to revive as soon as they return from recess.

The most vulnerable stand to lose

The president's proposed budget would also drastically reduce or eliminate funding for dozens of programs that working families need to survive – and thrive. → It would cut support for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, better known as SNAP or food stamps, which helps 47 million Americans keep food on their tables. →

- Makes people agents in their own lives.
- Again, avoids impugning taxes by not making what wealthy are doing clearly bad.
- Seizes the moral high ground.
- Active, instead of the all too common “people will lose coverage.”
- Instead of listing off programs, names what programs achieve.
- Rooted in lived experience.

Two thirds of the households supported by SNAP include children. And it's not just kids that need to worry about their next meal → under this administration; the proposed budget also slashes funding for Meals on Wheels, which delivers food to needy seniors stuck at home. →

These cuts will have real life impact on Arizonans like 55-yearold Jose Perez. At the senior center last week, Perez told his story of being injured at work and having to rely on Medicaid because his employer did not pay workers' compensation. We also heard from Frances Garcia, who suffered spinal cord and brain injuries in an accident in 2006 and depends on Medicaid and SNAP funded food stamps to get by.

This administration seeks to slash holes in the safety net of programs and services that support millions of Americans. From afterschool programs that keep kids safe to treatment programs that support people fighting the stranglehold of opioid addiction to assistance for families just trying to keep the lights on, programs that entire communities depend on are under threat – all so the richest 1 percent can get a big break on their taxes. Bankrupting programs for the needy to bankroll billionaires is not what America stands for. →

Budget should reflect our values, priorities

America was built on the idea that no matter who you are or where you come from, if you work hard you can build a life for yourself and your family. →

- Rooted in lived experience.
- Rooted in lived experience.
- Shared values.
- Shared values.

Programs like Medicaid and SNAP help us deliver on our nation's promise to welcome our neighbors and extend a hand when they need it. →

That's why at Promise Arizona, an immigrant rights and civic engagement organization, we are fighting to protect federal funding for these programs; because we want all families, those who were born here generations ago and those who are new to our country, to have what they need to make it in America. →

Our leaders in Washington have abandoned the founding promise of our country, → instead pursuing an aggressive agenda of greed, personal gain and callous indifference to the suffering of others. As Arizonans and as Americans, we can and must do better.

Senators McCain and Flake, as our voice in the Senate, we look to you to fight for our values → when you return to Washington and find bipartisan, common sense solutions to our nation's problems. Show our national leaders that in Arizona we know what America stands for, → and our budget should reflect those priorities.

- Shared values.
- Names aspirational goal, not merely eliminating something bad.
- Shared values.
- Ends with a clear ask in values terms.
- Shared values.

SOURCE:

Op-Ed in The Arizona Republic: Petra Falcon, executive director of Promise Arizona on defending the safety net

<http://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/2017/05/02/trump-tax-cuts-budget/100650146/>

4. BLACK LIVES MATTER MEMPHIS' "BAIL MOMMA'S OUT" CAMPAIGN, AS REPORTED IN WREG.COM BY STACY JOHNSON

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – Official Black Lives Matter Memphis launched a new effort to pay bail for black moms in jail by Mother's Day.

Shay Jones is a member who also knows what it's like to be a mom behind bars.

"At the time my child was four years old. She had to deal with her mom. I had to go to court five or six times," she said. Ten years later she's part of the new campaign to help other moms in a similar situation, who might not have the same resources she had.

"I have had personal experience with it and I do know it creates a hardship to have to come up with \$1,000 for something that ultimately was dismissed," she said. "It's really about the fact that these people's freedom has been taken from them because they do not have money." →

Bail is a set amount that's only supposed to act as insurance for people showing up to court. It does not indicate whether someone is innocent or guilty.

"If you a black mama, you're in jail, you talking to us, then you're eligible," organizer Erica Perry said. Their goal was to raise \$35,000 to help as many women as possible get back to their kids. "We're asking our community members to think how they spend Mother's Day, how they celebrate and honor the women who they love," → Perry said.

- Implies causation – "freedom has been taken" – rather than a problem of origin unknown.
- Rooted in family, and especially mothers, as opposed to deprivations and harms. Employs what is held, largely, in common: family relationships rather than particular harms of incarceration that fall outside lived experience of some audiences.

They're focusing in Shelby County where records show nearly 274 women are in jail waiting for trial. Sixty of those women, or nearly one-fourth, are in for misdemeanor crimes. Those can include driving with a suspended license and truancy.

"It's about the fact that these people's freedom has been taken from them → because they do not have money. I think inherently that's not what we stand for as a country, as individuals. It's not moral. And going into Easter weekend, it's definitely not Christian," → Jones said.

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→ Repeats core idea of "freedom" and causation.

→ Seizes the moral high ground.

SOURCE:

Local TV News Report: Black Lives Matter Memphis profiled on their "Bail Momma's Out" campaign

<http://wreg.com/2017/04/14/official-black-lives-matter-memphis-launching-drive-to-get-moms-out-of-jail-for-mothers-day/>



