

# FRAMING THE LEFT

## A Roadmap to Meet Voters' Unmet Emotional Needs Through Shared High-Level Narrative Framing

### OVERVIEW

This shared narrative framing guide comes to you from Framing the Left, a months-long effort to co-create high-level narrative framing for the progressive movement. We have synthesized the ideas from 18 hours of brainstorming activities and small group discussions among 90 key communications leaders from 60 different organizations<sup>1</sup> into what we hope can be a roadmap for progressive messaging and communications. To be clear, **this is a guide, not an instruction manual**. You won't find prescriptive lengthy messages here. Instead you'll find a way to think about messaging to meet voters' shared emotional needs and ideas for how to implement the five key narrative frames that consistently test well, many of which have already been deployed successfully by practitioners in our field. By aligning on high-level framing, we place mutual trust in every organization to craft a message authentic to their issues and audiences.

### OUR APPROACH

1. **Feelings and Internalized Narratives:** Understand the emotional landscape and the dominant stories our audiences are holding
2. **Emotional Needs:** Identify shared emotional needs that are currently going unmet across our target audiences
3. **Narrative Frames:** Develop effective narrative frames designed to address those specific emotional needs
4. **Issues:** Apply framing to the narratives we deploy across issues

### KEY PRINCIPLES

- 1 **Draw contrast between two possible futures:** one in which MAGA Republicans try to control our lives, and one in which we protect our freedom.
  - Voters are tired of chaos, feel powerless, and yearn for a sense of personal control and stability.
- 2 Humanize and evoke **emotional intensity** by centering the impact on our **families**.
  - We work to provide for our families. Our families care for us, and we care for them.
- 3 Blame a **corporate villain** and tie them to the GOP.
  - People across party lines and demographics hate corporations and the extreme income inequality in America caused by corporate greed.
- 4 **Create agency** by highlighting a historical **proof point** of how people have come together and taken action to make change.
  - Powerlessness, despair, and disillusionment are rampant. We must remind voters of what is possible when we come together to take action.
- 5 Channel a spirit and tone of **determination**.
  - Hope is imperative, but right now, it's a hard sell. When optimism is hard to find, we fight despair with a tone of determination and defiance.

## FIVE FRAMES TO MEET VOTERS EMOTIONAL NEEDS

FRAME	Narrative tactics	ULTIMATE NARRATIVE GOAL: What do we want people to fundamentally believe?	Unmet emotional need	Voters are currently feeling / thinking...	Issues to highlight
<b>CORPORATE GREED</b>	Villainize corporations + MAGA republicans	MAGA Republicans are rigging the system in favor of greedy corporations while we support working families, the engine of our economy.	security	Unsafe / insecure “struggling to make ends meet”	cost of living, price gouging, wage theft, tax avoidance, climate pollution, medical debt
<b>FREEDOMS</b>	Activate loss aversion	We must fight to protect our freedoms. If the GOP wins, they will take away our freedoms.	control	Powerlessness “Nothing changes”	abortion, IVF, education, LGBTQ, economic well-being
<b>COLLECTIVE POWER</b>	Build agency	People have faced impossible odds before, and beat them. So will we. Our fates are linked, and our diversity is our strength.	community	Abandoned/ left behind, unseen, unheard “Govt doesn’t care”	abortion ballot measures, union organizing, voting rights, protests, Bragg trial jury
<b>FAMILY</b>	Evoke emotional intensity, bridge to lived experience	MAGA Republicans will make it harder for working families to get by. We want our families to be safe, and to thrive.	community security	It shouldn’t have to be this hard	cost of living, guns, abortion, healthcare, childcare, safety, housing, education
<b>FUTURE</b>	Present a choice between two contrasting futures	A better future is possible if we come together and fight for it. This election is a choice between two very different futures.	Exhausted, unstable, fatigued by the chaos	Exhausted, unstable, fatigued by a volatile and chaotic political environment	project 2025, climate, abortion, racial justice, education, democracy, SCOTUS

## APPLICATION OF FRAMES TO ISSUES

Issue	Their Future	Our Future	Proof Points	Stories	Phrases to Repeat
<b>ABORTION</b>	Ban abortion nationally and limit access to IVF and contraception	Freedom to decide when and how to grow our families	◆ Abortion ballot measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ People needing to travel to get abortions</li> <li>◆ Couples growing their families through IVF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ “Reproductive freedom”</li> <li>◆ “Freedom to decide when and how to grow our families”</li> <li>◆ “Decisions about abortion without government interference”</li> <li>◆ “People and doctors, not politicians”</li> </ul>
<b>ECONOMY</b>	Corporations and billionaires controlling America	Freedom for working families to make good lives and thrive	◆ Unionization of workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Union wins</li> <li>◆ Price gouging</li> <li>◆ Tax evasion</li> <li>◆ Taxing the rich</li> <li>◆ Corporate accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ “Corporate greed”</li> <li>◆ “Wealthy corporations”</li> <li>◆ “Pay what they owe”</li> <li>◆ “Price gouging”</li> </ul>
<b>DEMOCRACY</b>	Silencing our voices to take control and keep power for themselves and the wealthy	Freedom to vote and make our voices heard	◆ Civil rights movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ January 6th</li> <li>◆ Voter suppression efforts</li> <li>◆ SCOTUS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ “Freedom to vote”</li> <li>◆ “The will of the people”</li> <li>◆ “Count every vote”</li> </ul>
<b>LGBTQ+</b>	Try to control who we love and what our families look like	Freedom to be who we are and love who we love	◆ Marriage equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ LGBTQ couples and families</li> <li>◆ Attacks on trans youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ “Freedom to be ourselves”</li> <li>◆ “Freedom to love/marry”</li> <li>◆ “Love makes a family”</li> </ul>

Issue	Their Future	Our Future	Proof Points	Stories	Phrases to Repeat
<b>CLIMATE</b>	Let greedy corporations profit off of polluting our air and water	Freedom to breathe clean air and drink clean water. Freedom for future generations to thrive and live healthy lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Clean energy transition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Flint water crisis</li> <li>◆ Climate disasters</li> <li>◆ Wildfires</li> <li>◆ Storms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ “Clean air”</li> <li>◆ “Clean water”</li> <li>◆ “Big Oil”</li> <li>◆ “Greedy corporations”</li> <li>◆ “Wealthy corporations”</li> </ul>
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Instead of focusing on keeping our kids safe, MAGA Republicans want to ban books and control what our kids can learn	Our kids have the freedom to learn and to walk through their schools safe from the fear of gun violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ School board victories</li> <li>◆ Wins against book bans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Book bans</li> <li>◆ Gun violence in schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ “Freedom to learn”</li> <li>◆ “Book bans”</li> <li>◆ “Freedom from fear of gun violence”</li> </ul>
<b>SAFETY</b>	Deploy the military and federal law enforcement into our communities	Our families can feel safe and free from the fear of gun violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Student / parents against gun violence</li> <li>◆ George Floyd protests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ School shootings</li> <li>◆ Mass shootings</li> <li>◆ Police violence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ “Serious about safety”</li> <li>◆ “Freedom from gun violence”</li> <li>◆ “Free from the fear of gun violence”</li> <li>◆ “Fund our communities”</li> </ul>
<b>CARE</b>	Letting big insurance corporations make record profits while our families struggle with high cost and inaccessible care	All of us can get the care we need to thrive, regardless of our race, gender, age, or zip code	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Protecting the Affordable Care Act</li> <li>◆ Lowering prescription drug costs</li> <li>◆ Lowering the cost of insulin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Rising healthcare premiums and deductibles</li> <li>◆ High support for paid family leave</li> <li>◆ Cost of childcare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ “All of us should have access to the care we need”</li> <li>◆ “Affordable and accessible”</li> <li>◆ “Care and dignity for all”</li> </ul>

Issue	Their Future	Our Future	Proof Points	Stories	Phrases to Repeat
IMMIGRATION	Deploying the military into our communities to round up, detain, and deport undocumented immigrants	Create pathways to citizenship for families who move here for a better life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ DACA</li> <li>◆ Fighting back against Trump's Muslim Ban</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Dreamers</li> <li>◆ Family separation</li> <li>◆ Stories of everyday immigrant families to humanize their experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ "Families who move here for a better life"</li> <li>◆ "Families who come seeking safety"</li> <li>◆ "Pathway to citizenship"</li> <li>◆ "Families moving to new homes"</li> <li>◆ "Love makes a family"</li> </ul>

### MESSAGE FRAMING CHECKLIST

- Can we frame this as a choice between protecting **freedoms** or having our freedoms taken away?
- Can we frame the opposition's goal as **control** or doing whatever it takes to grab/keep power?
- How might we describe the impact on our **families**?
- Is there a **greedy corporate villain** with whom we should lay blame?
- What part of the MAGA agenda/Project 2025 can we use to illustrate a **choice of contrasting futures**?
- What **historical proof points** can we highlight to fight disillusionment and **inspire greater agency**?

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