



Words that Work on Immigrant Rights

The recommendations that follow draw upon previous research* into perception and persuasion on racial justice, immigrant rights and economic equity. The key for policy victories and voter engagement around immigrant rights is bringing the connections between racial divisions, anti-immigrant actions and wide-spread economic hardship to the fore. Our findings support tackling anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies as divide-and-conquer tactics that sow distrust, undermine belief in government, and cause hardship for everyone, of every color and place of origin.

Core Narrative A

No matter where we come from, what our color or how we worship, most of us work hard for our families. (1)

But today, certain politicians and their greedy lobbyists hurt everyone by handing kickbacks to the rich, defunding our schools, and threatening seniors with cuts to Medicare and Social Security. Then they turn around and point the finger for our hard times at new immigrants – even tearing families apart and abusing children. (2)

We need to join together with people across racial differences to demand fair and safe immigration processes for all families, just like we won civil rights in our past. (3)

By joining together, we can make this a place that honors all families, no exceptions. (4)

Narrative Elements

1. Discuss race overtly and as including everyone
2. Name racial scapegoating as a weapon that harms all of us economically
3. Emphasize unity and collective action
4. Connect this unity to government for all

Core Narrative B

Every child, regardless of where they come from, what they look like, or where they live, deserves to pursue their dreams. (1)

But certain politicians and their greedy lobbyists are putting our children’s future at risk. They rig the rules to enrich themselves, while they distract us by generating fear based on race or place of origin – undermining our basic beliefs in treating others the way we want to be treated. (2)

Together, we have the power to demand that leaders do right by all children. (3)

When we come together across racial differences, we can make this a nation we’re proud to leave our kids, one that honors the courage and commitment of those who would do anything to make life better for those to come. (4)

*Insights included from the following:

IMMIGRATION NEW MESSAGING



Using the Narrative In Specific Circumstances

[In response to anti-immigrant backlash after a serious crime]

When undocumented immigrants are charged for serious and violent crimes, it can be especially difficult to know how to respond. While it may be useful to broaden the frame to other social issues – like violence against women or gun control, depending on the circumstances of the case – it's vital to return to the deliberate distraction element of the story.

Note, it is generally unwise to prolong the story by putting forth a proactive statement. Here's a set of steps to follow when you are called upon to respond:

1. Acknowledge and empathize: *"This is a terrible tragedy. I join every person, every parent, every child in this country in mourning [victim]. Nothing can excuse a senseless act of [crime]."*

2. Call out the dog whistle: *"[Group doing anti-immigrant race baiting] should be ashamed of politicizing any tragic death/assault to spread fear and divide us from each other. They know, just like we do, that people who were born here are far more likely to commit crimes than people who aren't. How dare [opposition] dishonor [victim/victim's memory/victim's family] with lies and hate?"*

3. Pivot to future: *"We can see through [opposition's] attempts to distract us, whether we're tenth generation or newcomer. That's why we're joining together to make this a place with a bright future filled with opportunity for everyone, of every color."*

[In response to emerging "public charge" regulations and changes to legal immigration processes.]

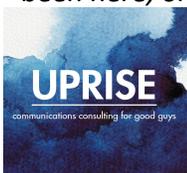
The Trump administration is proposing sweeping changes to permanent residency and citizenship processes. These changes are, of course, intended to inhibit people who have lived here for decades from having their full rights. And there's a second, equally toxic aim: Debates about the "public charge" test cement the linkage between immigrants and (purported abuse and use of) welfare. Unfortunately, leaning into the many reasons why use of public benefits ought not disqualify anyone from residency or citizenship merely reinforces this storyline. Instead, we can apply to notions of deliberate division and the ever increasing corruption of the Administration to this issue:

Most of us believe it's how you live your life and contribute to your community that should define you in this country, not what you look like or how much money you have. But Trump's new regulation is yet another attempt to divide and distract us: pointing the finger at new immigrants so we look the other way while he rigs the rules to hand more to the already rich. Trump wants to make immigration a pay-to-play scheme, putting the wealthy ahead of families who've waited years to be reunited. This

When we have each others' backs – by ensuring that those of us who've fallen on hard times can get through to better days – we make this a nation we're proud to call home. Forcing families to choose between reuniting with their loved ones and putting food on the table, would make the U.S. a sicker, hungrier and poorer nation.

We've seen Trump cross many lines before against immigrants and people struggling to make ends meet. But when Trump has gone too far we've fought back – and won. We must join together across racial differences to make a better future for us all, no matter what we look like, how long we've been here, or what's in our wallets.

*Insights included from the following:



Words That Work

Move Toward	Shift From	Because...
Take a child from his/her mom/dad; take children from their parents	Family separation; separating families	Naming children and parents, especially in the singular (e.g. child, mom) paints a clear, wrenching, scene.
Create a fair immigration process; assess each person's case; ensure the well being of families	Fix our broken system; end abuse; stop detentions	People are more motivated by creating something good than ameliorating harms. We must say what we're for, not just what we oppose.
Divide us against each other; shame and blame; point finger at...	Racism; anti-immigrant; attack immigrants	Connecting anti-immigrant actions to division helps Americans across groups understand how this affects us all.
Live in peace; care for children; live free from danger	Security; survival; escaping violence	Explaining the <i>positive</i> motivations rather than the push factors increase understanding of immigrants.
As caring people; join together across racial differences [to demand...to pick new leaders...]	As Americans	Evoking national identity brings "us/them" top of mind and makes respondents less receptive to asylum and immigrants' rights. Collaborative, call to action that names racial differences motivates base and persuades middle.
People move	Nation of immigrants	"Nation of immigrants" implies volition that's insulting to African Americans, erases indigenous communities and isn't rooted in the lived experience of enough audiences.
It is legal to seek asylum; when people cross borders their human rights come with them	It is not illegal to seek asylum; not a security issue; <i>myth busting</i>	Negating a frame brings it top of mind. Best to say what we are for not what we oppose.
Our opponents shame and blame new immigrants; certain politicians point the finger at new immigrants to divide and distract us	These policies are racist; our opponents are anti-immigrant	Connecting anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies to scapegoating helps audiences connect these efforts to their own economic hardships.

Words That Work

Move Toward	Shift From	Because...
An immigrant; a person/family who moves here	Immigrants	Mass nouns evoke stereotyping effects and eclipse the individuals and their stories, needs and courage.
We have a common sense solution that protects children; We must create a fair process that respects all families	Trump's executive order will not work; End forced separation; Stop the abuse	While it absolutely captures immediate attention to focus on egregious harms, sustained support is stronger for positive solutions.
[X] protects; [X] creates; [X] maintains	[X] seeks to protect; [X] works to create; [X] fights to maintain	Adding an extra verb is unnecessary hedging and dilutes the impact of our work and calls into question whether we achieve our aims or merely try hard.
A child forced from home; a person who must leave	Child migration; forced migration	We must help audiences focus in on real people, not imagine an undifferentiated mass of moving bodies.
Separating families and abusing children is a choice we don't need to keep making; we know how to fairly examine each case in a safe space	This is an unprecedented crisis; massive human rights violations	We must provide a sense that we know how to handle this situation, not that it is chaotic and unmanageable.
Treat others the way we want to be treated; respect people's basic rights; uphold our values	Obey human rights laws	Appeals to laws or conventions are intellectual not emotional. In contrast, appeals to shared values engage our base and move the middle.
People entering this country	People crossing our border	"The border" evokes unhelpful associations and activates the opposition's frames.
All people have rights	No human is illegal	Negating a frame brings it top of mind. Best to say what we are for not what we oppose.
Roadmap to citizenship	Pathway to citizenship	Pathway activates the all too common frame that likens immigrants to animals (e.g. "catch and release.")

Using the Narrative In Debates

ATTACK: *“They broke the law.” “They should have come the right way.”*

RESPONSE: People moved here in the past for the same reason as today - to work hard and leave things better for those to come. 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.

If possible, add: ...Certain politicians try and turn us against each other based on what we look like or where we were born, while they hand kickbacks to their donors and take away basic freedoms for everyone. We know we’re stronger when we join together and demand that our leaders reject the divide and conquer tactics of a hateful few and govern for all of us.

ATTACK: *“You’re for open borders” “We’ll be over-run.” “You’re putting criminal illegal immigrants ahead of law-abiding Americans.”*

RESPONSE: We deserve a common sense immigration process, one that makes our country stronger by respecting people’s rights and honoring our values. For decades, we have known what works: fairly assessing each person’s case, integrating new immigrants as contributing members and creating a roadmap to citizenship.

If possible, add: ...A handful of politicians want to turn something that’s common sense into a way to divide and distract us – pitting the blame on new immigrants so we won’t join together across racial differences to demand a government that works for all of us.

ATTACK: *“They put their children in danger by coming here illegally.”*

RESPONSE: Most parents would do anything to give their children a safer, freer, and more prosperous tomorrow. New immigrant parents, whatever their race or place of origin, are just the same -- bringing their children to a place of greater opportunity so that they can strive for a better future.

If possible, add: ...Only despicable politicians who want to distract us from their corruption, incompetence and greed would shame and blame parents for having to make unacceptable choices to ensure their kids can grow up.

ATTACK: *“Sanctuary cities are safe havens for criminal gangs.”*

RESPONSE: We know what keep us safe, it’s living in communities where we treat each other like neighbors, no matter what we look like or where we come from, and where we join together to push our government to provide the services and support we need to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

If possible, add:...A handful of politicians and their corporate donors want to turn us against each other – stoking fear against people based on where they come from, what they look like or how they pray. Our strength and our safety comes from our ability to stand up for each other and pick leaders who respect everyone of us.

ATTACK: *“We should deport them all.”*

RESPONSE: We deserve a common sense solution that puts our values first, creates a fair immigration process, and moves us forward together.

If possible, add: ...And that means respecting people’s basic rights, keeping families together and creating a roadmap for those who aspire to be citizens. But today, a handful of politicians and their greedy lobbyists shame and blame immigrants, trying to divide us based on what we look like, where we come from or how long we’ve been here. They want to distract us while they take away our healthcare, raid our social security and undermine our schools. Immigrants contribute to our culture and communities, and we’re all the better for having them here.

Using the Narrative in Social Media

[In response to family separation or unification story]

Families belong together and free #freedom4families

Treating others as we want to be treated means respecting people's rights to live free, raise kids in safety and seek a better life. #freedom4families

All of us are created equal – white, Black or brown, tenth generation or newcomer. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people have rights, whatever we look like and wherever we come from. #freedom4families #allpeoplehaverights

[To promote a desirable policy or condemn a bad proposal]

We deserve a common sense immigration process that respects people's rights, honors all families and upholds our values. #freedom4families #allpeoplehaverights #unitedwestand

Respecting people's basic rights, fairly assessing each immigration case and ensuring families are together and children are safe isn't a matter of right and left. It's a matter of right and wrong. #freedom4families #allpeoplehaverights #unitedwestand

[To pushback against anti-immigrant rhetoric about coming illegally]

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. If you need a lesson in courage and tenacity, ask an immigrant. #PeopleMove #freedom4Families

Same true today as ever, people move to make life better. Hard to move – takes courage. We could use more of that here. #allpeoplehaverights #aspiringcitizens #freedom4families #newAmericans

America is supposed to be 'land of free, home of brave.' Let's make it that way. #allpeoplehaverights #aspiringcitizens #freedom4families #newAmericans

People who come here to make a better life for their families embody our ideals. We believe in the freedom to be who you want to be and go where you need to go. #allpeoplehaverights #aspiringcitizens #freedom4families #newAmericans

[To promote a left-flank, more progressive approach outright and/or as cover for more mainstream demands to end abuse]

Immigrants contribute to our culture and community, we're all the better for having them here. [Name of state/organization/leader] says #BringThemHere

[In an anti-corporate campaign about for profit prisons]

There can be no business in abuse. Tell [bank] to stop financing the forced separation of families and abuse of children. #allpeoplehaverights #freedom4families

.@CoreCivic, GeoGroup draw profits from abusing children and families while @WellsFargo and @JPMorgan finance it. #allpeoplehaverights #freedom4families #nobusinessinabuse

Abuse is not a business model. Tell @WellsFargo and @JPMorgan to stop financing the abuse of immigrant families. #allpeoplehave rights
