



WE
MAKE
THE
FUTURE



Guide To Messaging Our Freedoms

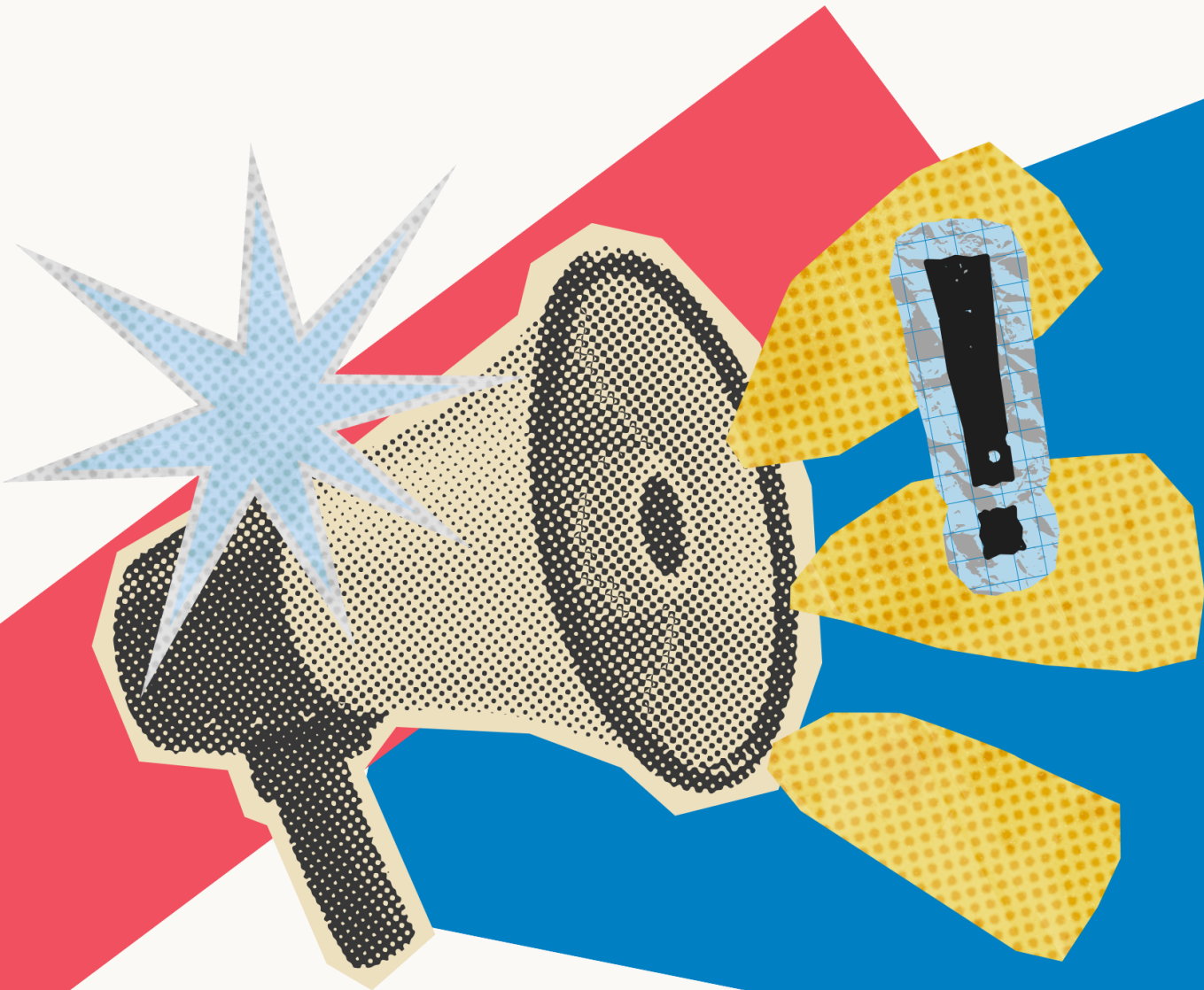


Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
About Us.....	5
How to Use This Guide.....	6
Race Class Narrative & Race Class Gender Narrative.....	7
RCN Research and Empirical Testing*	9
Stories of Success: How Organizers Have Used RCN to Win.....	10
The Freedoms Frame*	12
Words to Embrace and Replace.....	15
Messaging on Specific Issues.....	18
Anti-DEI Efforts*	18
Climate Justice*	18
Education.....	19
<i>Making the Case for Fully Funded Public Schools and Countering Attacks on Critical Race Theory.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Education Debt.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Restorative Justice.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>School Vouchers.....</i>	<i>21</i>
Gun Violence Prevention.....	21
Immigration & Immigrant Rights*	22
General Immigration Narrative.....	22
Narrative for Abductions.....	25
Countering Attacks on Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Communities.....	27
Freedom to Protest During Military Occupation.....	27
Economic Issues, Cost of Living, & Corporate Greed.....	28
LGBTQ+ Freedom to Be Ourselves.....	29
Public Safety.....	31
Public Transit.....	32
Reproductive Freedom*	32
Revenue and Taxes*	34
<i>Fund Our Futures.....</i>	<i>34</i>
Voters & Voting.....	36
Voting Rights and Elections.....	36
Get Out the Vote (GOTV).....	37
Keep Spreading the Message.....	38

* Hay guía en español

Introduction

The authoritarian regime and their billionaire backers are increasing and intensifying their attacks with the goal of keeping us disoriented, demoralized, and demobilized. They want to destroy the gains we've made towards creating an America for all of us across races, genders, and places, and they want to silence us, take away our freedoms, and roll back our progress.

But we remain steadfast. We have the power to create a better future by working together, embracing the strength that stems from acknowledging our differences, and honoring the many things that we have in common. We have won fights against exploitation by the wealthy, white few before, and by joining together, we will win again.

As our partners at [Wisconsin Race Class Narrative Education Fund](#) say, "When everything is bait, don't take the bait." In addition to scapegoating trans people and people with the courage and tenacity to move here for a better life, we know that our opposition will do everything they can to distract and divide us while they test the limits of how much of their authoritarian agenda they can enact at the federal level. We saw their "flood the zone" tactics in the first few months of 2025, and this strategy is key to their ability to pursue their agenda to control and rule over us. Therefore, we cannot be stuck reacting to the opposition's efforts to overwhelm us and throw us off course. Instead, we need to proactively name what we are fighting for.



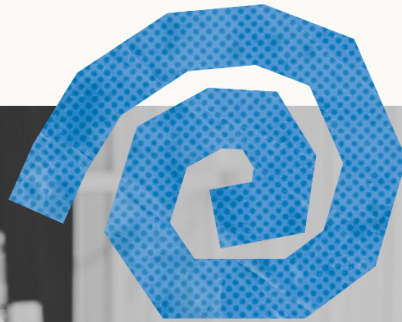
To meet this moment, it is important that we:

- Continue to organize people in our communities
- Try new ways of communicating with our audiences
- Don't "take the bait." Message from your frame, upholding the dignity of people of all races, backgrounds, and genders, without trying to debunk every single thing the opposition says. We shouldn't repeat our opposition's language or uplift their narratives.
- Speak to a proactive agenda and vision (instead of always reacting to our opposition and letting them set the terms of debate or control the narrative)
- Employ social proof and uplift our victories¹

¹ For more, see page 8 ("Race Class Narrative Architecture").

In this updated guide for 2025, we provide examples – developed by We Make The Future (WMTF), ASO Communications, and partner organizations – for how to message towards the future that we deserve. These messages are rooted in the freedom frame, the Race Class Narrative (RCN), and other empirically-based messaging practices. What we share here are proven approaches to motivate, inspire our audiences to take action, and push toward making this a country of liberty and justice for all, no exceptions.

If you have any questions about this guide or suggestions for other issues to include, email info@wemakethefuture.us.



About Us



**WE
MAKE
THE
FUTURE**

[We Make The Future](#) (WMTF) builds narrative power for a just, multiracial democracy by supporting the capacity of partner organizations to integrate race-forward, empirically backed messages across their work. Founded in 2021, WMTF is an implementation home of the Race Class

Narrative (RCN)² and other race, class, and gender-informed narratives that are designed to counter the opposition's manufactured division and spark the courage, solidarity, and action needed to create a better future for everyone. Our goal is to increase the capacity of state, local, and national partners to move a race-forward narrative on our economy and democracy so they can make a compelling case for a better future for all. Through this messaging guide and other resources, we offer content that can be adapted for different contexts.



[ASO Communications](#) (ASO) applies tools from cognition and linguistics to understand where people are presently, uncover where they're capable of going, and explore how to use our words, images, and stories to move them. We have more than a decade of experience crafting, testing,

and implementing narratives to achieve progressive policy and electoral wins in the U.S., Australia, Latin America, the E.U., and the U.K. In collaboration with the Race Class Narrative Project (now We Make The Future), ASO played a major role in shaping the narrative across multiple election cycles, helping craft and launch brands for multiracial coalitions fighting to protect our freedoms.

² The Race Class Narrative originated through collaboration between Ian Haney López, Heather McGhee, Anat Shenker-Osorio, Lake Research Partners, Brilliant Corners, SEIU, and Demos.

How to Use This Guide

We believe that if our words don't spread, they don't work. You can use the provided messaging verbatim or adapt it to more accurately speak to your audience. The choice is yours. We believe that in order for our campaigns to win, our audiences must hear our message over and over again. Repetition is key!

The messages in this guide can be used in many ways: conversations during a canvas or among friends; public statements, letters, and op-eds; interviews and speeches; billboards, radio ads, or social media; etc.

You will find sample [messages for specific issues](#), and if available, we've linked to message guides that give detailed insights and more comprehensive guidance. Scroll through what's available, or use the [Table of Contents](#) to click around and find your preferred issue.

There are similar themes moving through all of these messages. That's because we know our audience doesn't hear our messages in silos. If we want to defeat our opposition, we must tell a comprehensive story that resonates with everyday people's lives about the world we desire to see.



Race Class Narrative & Race Class Gender Narrative

Throughout our nation's history, a powerful few have always tried to control the many by selecting a scapegoat to shame and blame. In the 2024 presidential election, the authoritarian regime harnessed this age-old strategy by vilifying and harming immigrants and transgender people in order to advance their agenda, and now that they've secured power, they are working to take away our freedoms.

We must act on our values. Avoiding conversations about race and gender plays into our opposition's strategy. They deliberately try to divide us — often through [racially-coded](#) or gendered speech or imagery, meant to sow discord and undermine support for government and shared prosperity. Economic populism that does not mention race or gender cannot withstand our opposition's dog whistling.

To counter this, we must expose the deliberate scapegoating that keeps us from demanding the resources we need and the freedoms we deserve. The [Race Class Narrative](#) — and the gender-explicit version, [Race Class Gender Narrative](#) (RCGN)³ — provide a tested messaging and organizing framework that unites race, gender, and class issues, advances our worldview, and counters the use of [dog whistles](#) to win on the issues that matter. RCN and RCGN build cross-racial and gender solidarity, fueling the desire for a government that serves us all and linking shared economic prosperity directly to racial and gender justice.

Speaking affirmatively about race and gender strengthens our ability to mobilize our base (predominantly people of color, young people, unmarried women, and LGBTQ+ people), persuade the middle (a group often demographically similar to our base, but who toggle between seemingly opposing view points), and challenge our opposition's worldview. To be most effective, we must also attend to the ordering and form of our messaging. RCN and RCGN messages follow a specific architecture drawn from broader, proven best practices in advocacy communication.⁴

³ RCGN, as a gender-explicit version of RCN, is particularly helpful in contexts where our opposition uses dog whistles that are both racist and transphobic.

⁴ In shorter articulations of RCN, as on social media or 15 second digital ads, not all elements of the messaging architecture may be rendered.

Race Class Gender Narrative Architecture

Open with a **Value** shared broadly across our differences that names (and/or shows) race, class, or genders, depending on the attack.

This allows us to claim the moral high ground, invite our audience to be part of our team, and evoke cognitive dissonance such that the horrible actions of the opposition are even more repulsive.

Architecture in Action: Freedom to Be Ourselves

Black, white or brown, Native or newcomer, transgender or not — Americans won't let anyone dim our light.

Name **Villains**, their motivation, and how they use strategic racism, transphobia and/or scapegoating to divide us and seize power while they harm us all.

Without naming a villain, our opposition's storyline that some "other" is the villain goes unchecked, allowing their falsehoods to become the prevailing narrative. Unlike our opposition, we define villains by their actions, not their identity — creating the opportunity for them to come join our side at any time if they stop harming our communities.

A powerful tool to employ is **social proof** — the phenomenon that people naturally want to act how

That's why young people and families **are speaking out** in support of transgender youth, taking on the authoritarian regime and their billionaire backers who single people out to bully so they can put themselves on top — banning books, denying medical care, and passing laws controlling who we can be and love.

Race Class Gender Narrative Architecture	Architecture in Action: Freedom to Be Ourselves
they think other people like them behave. When we show our audience that a desired behavior is “in,” they are more likely to participate in that behavior. We do this with phrases like “we are speaking out” or “families around the country are taking action,” inviting our audience to join an established movement, rather than asking them to chart a new path. This could take place in the villains section — as in the bolded text of this example — or in the vision section, depending on your message.	
In addition to social proof, messages can be made stronger by uplifting Victories and/or everyday collective actions that solve problem(s).	By joining together as we have done before to pass protections against discrimination, ...
Describe a Vision for what will change and the world we want to achieve by coming together.	We can light the way to a better future, where people of all races, genders, and backgrounds are free to be ourselves and thrive.
Insert specific Call to Action.	Specific Call to Action

RCN Research and Empirical Testing

RCN has been empirically tested using multiple methodologies across audiences, geographies, and issues. It consistently outperforms competing narratives among our

base and among folks who are persuadable on policy issues. Here are a few of the many examples of RCN research and testing:

- [Freedom to Learn](#) - In partnership with labor, we learned the public is with us in supporting well-resourced, equitable public schools. We've found ways to build a narrative that pushes us toward a public education system that ensures every neighborhood school is a place where all children can learn, grow, and thrive.
- [Fund Our Future](#) - In partnership with the State Revenue Alliance, we researched how to move voters on increasing taxes for the wealthiest, funding state governments, and taking on corporations around both wages and taxes, while increasing people's willingness to act collectively for this cause. These messages and creative content provide the necessary offense to fund the care, support, and services our families need by making sure wealthy corporations and billionaires pay us what they owe.
- [Mobilizing Toward Climate Justice](#) - WMTF's Climate Cohort, ASO, HIT Strategies, and Lake Research Partners sought to expand how people understand the impact of climate change on their lives and squarely lay the blame for this disaster at the feet of greedy fossil fuel CEOs and the politicians who they pay to stand in the way of progress. The findings create a unified message that can be shared by climate advocates across the country. *Para la versión en español de esta guía, haga clic [aquí](#).*
- Spanish translated guides include/Guías en español: [Narrativa de Raza Clase Género](#), [Cómo hablar de la agenda autoritaria sobre inmigración](#).

Stories of Success: How Organizers Have Used RCN to Win

More importantly, organizers across the country have adopted RCN to win policy and narrative campaigns and build a multiracial democracy. Some recent examples include:

- In 2024, Kentuckians successfully defeated Amendment 2, which would have changed the state constitution to enable school vouchers. Using the Freedom to Learn messaging guidance, which is rooted in RCN, [the Kentucky Coalition](#) exceeded their engagement goals and saw an increase in the number of leaders attending their education work team meetings, building power for future public education wins.
- In 2024, [482Forward](#) helped pass Proposal S to support Detroit Public Schools through their Tipping the Scales campaign. Leading up to this victory, 482Forward consistently used the elements of a winning narrative, leading with values while being explicit about race and naming the “villains” who seek to defund our public schools.
- In 2024, [The Wisconsin Public Education Network](#) won 78% of their public school millage campaigns, which means public schools in 93 school districts in Wisconsin

will see increased funding. They also successfully advocated for the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to include multiple provisions from their campaign to improve public education in their state budget proposal. Despite a well-resourced opposition, the Network achieved this victory by training up their local affiliates on RCN and integrating it across all of the tactics they used to reach voters across the state.

- In 2023, [ISALAH](#), [Unidos MN](#), [We Choose Us](#), and many others in Minnesota used our “Fund Our Futures” research with an integrated RCN communications and organizing strategy to achieve [huge wins](#). They passed bills for [a fairer tax code that ensures the wealthy pay what they owe](#), [created a public health care option for residents](#) (including their undocumented neighbors), and [even secured 20 weeks of paid leave](#) to make sure working people can take the time they need to care for themselves and their families.
- In 2022, when the dominant energy provider in southeast Michigan, DTE Energy, announced a nearly 9% residential rate hike, the [Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition \(MEJC\)](#) and several coalition partners [utilized RCN messaging to demand affordable energy for all](#). Their efforts alongside We the People MI’s [utility accountability campaign](#) secured the first-ever public hearing held by the Public Service Commission to discuss the proposed rate hike. The coalition [turned out over 300 people to oppose it](#). Their efforts culminated in [DTE announcing just a 0.078% rate increase](#), while the Commission announced new plans to update the grid—which hadn’t been done in about 25 years—and use more clean energy. They credited MEJC for raising these issues.

RCN has proven to be an effective tool for unifying diverse communities, advocating for shared economic prosperity and racial justice, and countering divisive strategies. By adopting this framework, we can build a stronger and more inclusive movement to address the challenges we face as a society, so that regardless of our races, zip codes, or genders, freedom and justice are truly for all, and everyone can live safe and happy lives.

Check out We Make The Future’s [2024 Annual Impact Report](#) to learn more about how we helped our state partners build narrative power through our theory of change.

The Freedoms Frame

Throughout this guide, you will notice that we use the word *freedoms* often. Voters across races, ages, and parties consistently rate “freedom” as the most important value they hold as Americans. In using it, we want to draw a stark contrast between how our opposition seeks to take away these freedoms and how we have and must continue to fight to protect them. This messaging has been tested for use across issue areas and has proven consistently effective.⁵

Shared values for the issues we care about can be expressed through the frame of protecting our freedoms. Below is a guide to talking about a number of different issues in a way that echoes our overarching narrative.

Para la versión en español de esta guía, haga clic [aquí](#).

Abortion / Reproductive Justice:

- Our freedom to decide if and when we grow our families
- Our freedom to decide whether and when we have kids
- Our freedom to decide what happens to our bodies
- Our freedom to decide how to care for our bodies
- Our freedom to access the care we need

Climate:

- Our freedom to have safe water to drink and healthy air to breathe
- Our freedom to breathe easier
- Our freedom to leave a better life for our children, grandchildren, and future generations

⁵ [Way to Win](#) helped spearhead the development and testing of the Protect Our Freedoms framework, refined and deployed by [Research Collaborative](#) and dozens of national and state-based organizations.

Democracy / Elections:

- Our freedom to vote
- Our freedom to have an equal say in the decisions that impact our lives
- Our freedom to pick our leaders
- Our freedom to make our voices heard
- Our freedom to elect leaders who govern in our name and in our interests

Economic Well-Being, Taxes, Social Supports, Wages, and Jobs:

- Our freedom to make a good living
- Our freedom to thrive
- Our freedom to prosper
- Our freedom to care for our families
- Our freedom to retire in dignity (with programs we rely on like Social Security)
- Our freedom to put food on the table and be home in time to eat it

Education:

- Our freedom to learn
- Our children's freedom to learn

Gun Violence Prevention:

- Our freedom from gun violence
- Our freedom to trust our kids will come home safe at the end of the day
- Our freedom to go to the grocery store, send our kids to school, worship, live our lives, walk through our communities without fear of gun violence

Healthcare:

- Our freedom to get the care we need without fearing we'll go bankrupt to get it

Immigration:

- Our freedom to move
- Our freedom to give our families a better life
- Our freedom to be who you want to be, say what you want to say, and go where you want to go
- Our freedom to keep our families and communities whole

Labor and Unions:

- Our freedom to join together in union
- Our freedom to negotiate a fair return on our work so we can provide for our families

Medicare and Social Security:

- Our freedom to rely on programs we trust, like Medicare and Social Security
- Our freedom to retire in dignity (with programs we rely on like Social Security)

Paid Family and Medical Leave:

- Our freedom to care for our loved ones
- Our freedom to be there for our loved ones/ our freedom to recover from illness or injury

Police Brutality; Safety, Justice, and Accountability:

- Our freedom to breathe
- Our freedom to get home safe
- Our freedom from police brutality
- Our freedom from violence and fear where we live
- Our freedom to be treated with dignity by those sworn to protect and serve

Trans and Queer Youth:

- Our freedom to be ourselves
- Our children's freedom to be themselves and pursue their dreams
- Our freedom to shine bright as our true selves

Words to Embrace and Replace

Say this...	Instead of...	Because...
People of different races and from different places Black, brown, or white Whether you're Black or white, Asian or Latino, Native or newcomer... Whatever your... [race / gender / color / religion / zip code / job] No matter... [pick 2 or 3: who you are / where you're from / what language you speak / how you pray / who you love / the color of your skin / where you live / what you do for a living / how much money you have in your wallet]... Whether we were born here or chose to make this our home... Regardless if we're renters or homeowners, living with family, have roommates, or live alone, all of us believe...	All people Everyone	When responding to our opposition's scapegoating, we need to establish from the outset that the targeted identity is part of our broader community. We do that by naming a shared value and making it explicit that this value is shared across the difference the opposition is trying to exploit. If they are fear-mongering about trans people, for example, the "we" in our message is "people of all genders and races." If they're targeting immigrants, our value is shared "whether we were born here or chose to make this our home." Explicit reference to race engages people of color while keeping white listeners on board. We recommend using creative formulations to hook the audience while establishing a shared value at the outset of a message. The examples on the left are just a start. These opening phrases can be tailored closely to your community, issue, or geographic location. For example, Charles Booker used "from the Hood to the Holler" in Kentucky, while advocates in Minnesota used "from North Minneapolis to North Mankato, from Red Lake to Red Wing." Transit advocates described people's different experiences

Whether our backyards have corn or bodegas, forests or freeways...		with, “Whether we drive, bus, or train; bike, walk, or roll.”
Our opponents blame new immigrants, Black people, and people forced to struggle to make ends meet for our hard times. They try to bully their way into power, fueling divisions based on race and pointing their finger at transgender people so they can deny us the healthcare and resources we need, claim our wealth for themselves and control us all. .	Our opponents are racist against new immigrants, Black people, and Muslims. Politicians divide us.	Exposing the opposition’s strategic use of racism and transphobia as scapegoating helps draw the causal connection to economic concerns shared across race. It is helpful to echo and link how our opposition “exploits” division across races and genders. By acknowledging our audience’s own questions and concerns, we can remind them of their better values and intentions, and help them recognize how certain politicians take advantage of and manipulate their unease.
Wealthy few who rig the rules Certain politicians	Powerful elites The wealthy	It’s critical to specify that we mean only certain people to counter cynicism, thus adding “few,” “certain,” or “a handful.” It’s also important to identify villains based on behavior, not category or class.
Overtake the will of the people in our elections through the courts and with violent mobs of their supporters Attack on our freedom to decide who governs	Attacks on voting Attacks on democracy Attacks on elections	We want to create throughlines across our issues. Our opposition threatens and attacks our freedoms across a wide range of issues.

in our name or our freedom to vote Attack on our freedom to decide whether and when we grow our families Attack on the freedom of our kids to learn and be themselves	Attacks on abortion Attacks on public schools	
--	---	--



Messaging on Specific Issues

We believe that if our words don't spread, they don't work. You can use the messaging below verbatim or adapt it to more accurately speak to your audience. Add your specific Call to Action to the end of each message.

Anti-DEI Efforts



For America to work for all of us, our government must respect us all. This authoritarian regime and their billionaire backers want to seize more power by silencing, firing, and abducting Americans based on what we look like, where we come from or who we love. We want leaders who fight for us to have a better life, not roll back our freedoms. Our ancestors fought to integrate schools and guarantee voting rights, empower working people in unions and ensure all Americans have an equal place here. Now it's our turn to fight this regime's efforts to divide us so we can move our country forward, protect our freedoms, and make this a place of liberty and justice for all — no exceptions. **[Insert Call to Action]**

Climate Justice



[Mobilizing Toward Climate Justice](#) offers messaging guidance on how to win the narrative about climate change. *Para la versión en español de esta guía, haga clic [aquí](#).*

No matter what we look like or where we come from, we all need the freedom to drink clean water, breathe safe air, and live in healthy communities.⁶ For too long, fossil fuel CEOs and the politicians they pay for have polluted our neighborhoods and raised the cost of our utilities, targeting communities they think can't fight back. But we've shown that the many can defeat the money by winning clean energy legislation and defeating kickbacks for polluters. By **[Insert Call to Action]**, we can make this a place where everyone has the freedom to breathe easier and thrive, no exceptions.

⁶ Customize to your context and name race, class, and genders, and connect to your specific issue. For example:

"Whether you call it a bubbler or a water fountain, we all deserve fresh, healthy water..." ["Bubbler" is Midwestern, feel free to swap out slang from your region]

"Whether our backyards have corn or bodegas, foresets or freeways..."

Education⁷

Making the Case for Fully Funded Public Schools and Countering Curriculum Attacks

The [Freedom to Learn messaging guidance](#) and digital toolkit make the public case for a racially and economically just approach to education while our opposition uses lies about “Critical Race Theory (CRT),” “gender ideology,” or DEI to attack schools.



Most of us believe that children of all races, backgrounds, and genders should have the freedom to learn, be themselves, and pursue their dreams. But certain politicians deny children a quality education based on what they look like or where they live. They fuel divisions between us, re-segregating schools to deny Black and brown kids opportunities, passing laws to erase our history of coming together to push for better, and exploiting a lack of familiarity with transgender people to exclude kids from healthcare, school, and sports. By **[Insert Call to Action]**, we can make our schools places where children of all races and genders are free to learn all that they have the potential to be.

Education Debt



Across races, workplaces, and generations, we’ve come together to create a better life for ourselves and our families. When greedy corporations charge endless interest on loans that young people are forced to take out to pursue higher education, they keep students stuck in the red and unable to provide a better life for our families. Meanwhile, the politicians they pay for try to divide us by what we look like or what we do for a living so they can take away our freedoms and hand kickbacks to the rich. By unleashing our power in our communities, our workplaces, and our polling booths, we will make this a place where everyone — Black, white or brown, young or old — is free to learn and pursue our dreams. **[Insert Call to Action]**

⁷ These messages were developed in collaboration with the [National Education Association](#).

Restorative Justice

[The Restorative Justice and Rethinking Discipline guide](#) supports advocates, educators, administrators, and allies in making the case to fund the programs and resources that make our schools safe for all while eliminating the police presence that directly interrupts learning.

School is a place where childhood happens. Most of us believe that every child, whatever their color, background, or zip code, should have the freedom to learn in a supportive environment that respects their humanity, upholds their dignity, and responds fairly to mistakes and missteps. But today, certain politicians fuel divisions so they can take resources away from our schools while they let the wealthiest few get away with not paying what they owe. They send police into schools to harm students who are Black, brown, LGBTQ+, or disabled for making mistakes that — for wealthy white kids — are deemed part of growing up and learning. Our schools must treat every child as equal, especially in situations of conflict. By joining together, we can make every neighborhood public school a place where all children can learn, grow, and thrive. **[Insert Call to Action]**



School Vouchers

[The Real Story of School Voucher Programs memo](#) is intended to assist groups organizing on this issue by telling a comprehensive story that not only pushes back against voucher programs, but also drives us forward toward the vision of public education that we seek.

From the hood to the holler,⁸ most of us believe that our future depends on every child in [Insert Name of Your State] having the freedom to learn and receive a great education where they live and play. While certain decision-makers provide handouts to the wealthiest few through vouchers, they leave the neighborhood schools that nurture most of our kids' dreams struggling to make ends meet. They hope to divide and distract us so we don't join together to demand that our shared resources deliver the programs, schools, and support all of our children need. Together, we can demand our lawmakers rewrite the rules so every public school has the resources⁹ our students need to learn, grow, and thrive. [Insert Call to Action]

Gun Violence Prevention

No matter our color or background, everyone sending our kids off to school, heading to work, or getting groceries for the week should be free to leave home knowing our families will be safe from gun violence. But some greedy politicians, paid off by gun lobbyists, block commonsense gun safety that the vast majority of us favor, then try to distract us from their failures by blaming the very victims of gun violence. Allowing anyone to buy a gun and massacre our neighbors is a choice we don't need to keep making. When we come together, voting, striking and marching to stop gun violence, we will make sure that all of us, in every zip code, can make it home safe. [Insert Call to Action]

⁸ "From the hood to the holler" is a phrase commonly used in Appalachia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Customize to your context and name race, class, and genders, and connect to your specific issue. For example:

"From tribal communities to rural farms, from the suburbs to city blocks..."

"No matter our [choose 3: races / colors, backgrounds, incomes, origins / birthplaces, zip codes, faiths, ages, or genders]..."

⁹ Choose 3: smaller classroom sizes, teachers who are certified to teach physics and calculus, counselors to help students make healthy choices, school nurses who can help students when they aren't well, state-of-the-art equipment and buildings.

Immigration & Immigrant Rights

Para la versión en español de esta guía, haga clic [aquí](#).

General Immigration Narrative

Most of us would move heaven and earth to provide for our loved ones, whether we're born here or moved to make America our home.¹⁰ But the authoritarian regime wants to seize even more money and control by **[Insert Specific Anti-Immigrant Attack*]**. They spread fear and sow division based on our races, backgrounds, or genders so they can hand billionaires and corporations the wealth our work creates. Americans know it's love that makes a family, families that make vibrant communities and communities that make a prosperous nation. That's why we are joining together to protect our freedoms, keep our families whole, make our communities thrive and transform our nation into a place of liberty and justice for all. **[Insert Call to Action]**

**Customize this sentence based on the specific attack you're countering, for example, "tearing families apart," "detaining people without trials," "making sheriffs into vigilantes that target people by race," "turning ICE into a paramilitary force unleashed upon our communities," and so on.*

Words to Embrace & Replace

Say this...	Instead of...	Because...
Regime Authoritarian regime	Government	Impugning government writ large feeds a right-wing frame and undermines the idea that we can act together for our collective good.

¹⁰ Customize to your context and name race, class, and genders, and connect to your specific issue. For example:

"Whether your family has lived here for three generations or three months..."

"Whether your family eats pozole, pizza or pierogi..."

"No matter if we're lifelong residents or newcomers..."

People who come seeking safety People seeking asylum People with the courage and tenacity to move for a better life	Immigrants Refugees Asylum seekers Victims The border (Im)migrant crisis	We must center our shared humanity in how we name people. Mass nouns (e.g. “immigrants,” “refugees”) reduce people to a single action they’ve taken or the harms they have experienced and can result in stereotyping – as well as overshadowing the unique stories and bravery of each individual. Additionally, language like “the border” or “(im)migrant crisis,” bring the opposition’s divisive rhetoric of nationalism top of mind; center, instead, people who are seeking a better life and their families.
Aspiring citizen(s) New American(s) Blended American families	Undocumented workers Mixed status families	While it’s important to reference people according to identities they’ve embraced, when possible, it’s preferable to name immigrants by what they seek. Terms like “undocumented workers” emphasize what immigrants lack and objectify them for their economic potential. “Mixed status” is an unfamiliar term to most people and highlights bureaucratic concerns, not family ties.
People move	Nation of immigrants	“Nation of immigrants” implies volition that’s insulting to Black people, erases Indigenous communities and

		isn't rooted in the lived experience of enough audiences.
Live in peace Care for children Live free from danger	Security Survival Escaping violence	Explaining the positive motivations rather than the push factors increases understanding of and empathy with immigrants.
We can create a fair immigration process that respects all families. We must implement real solutions that advance freedom, safety and wellbeing for all families. Let them stay. Keep our families /communities whole.	Fix our broken immigration system End abuse Stop detention Stop mass deportations	People are more motivated by creating something good rather than ameliorating harms. We must say what we are for, not just what we're against. Avoid negative demands — phrases that include “stop X” or “end Y” — which allow our opposition to set the terms of debate and gives their damaging and divisive rhetoric more air time.
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 our opposition's scapegoating helps audiences connect these efforts to their own economic hardships.
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. Instead, use a collaborative call to action that names racial differences, motivates the base, and persuades the middle.
Immigrants are integral to our communities	Immigrants are essential to our economy	Turning our case for people's dignity, freedom, and safety

		into an economic argument cedes the moral high ground and is easily refuted. There is plenty of money to be made hurting people, whether that is in private prisons or building concentration camps. Instead, center how our immigrant neighbors are integral to our communities, whether that's in our schools, our churches or our families.
All families, regardless of what we look like or where we come from	Hard-working immigrants	Be careful not to qualify who deserves safety and who does not. Our goal is an immigration system that respects all families and all people, no exceptions.

Narrative for Abductions

This authoritarian regime is abducting our neighbors from their homes and families — assaulting the core freedoms we value as **[Name Relevant Identity, e.g. Americans, people of faith, Marylanders, students, etc.]** — and our freedom to speak about our beliefs, pursue a better life, and have our loved ones come home safely. This regime believes they can rule over us for their billionaire backers and bully, bankrupt, or disappear anyone who does not look, think, or pray like them. Every person who values our freedoms must demand an immediate end to these abductions and that all of our community members be returned home. Only by joining together will we confront this regime of bullies for billionaires and protect our freedoms, our families, and our futures. **[Insert Call To Action]**

Words to Embrace & Replace

Say this...	Instead of...	Because...
"Abduct/abducted/abduction" to describe immigration arrests and deportations, highlighting the impact on families and harm caused	Abstract language or harm to institutions to tell the tale.	We must use audience-facing harms, not violated processes, to motivate people to act.
"Assault on our freedoms" to describe the regime's attacks on our communities	"This is not who we are"	"This is not who we are" is both abstract and erases the experience of many Americans, from enslavement to the many people the regime has abducted.
Lift up personal stories, describing who the person affected is based on their family, their personal interests, and characteristics	Belaboring their status (i.e. "green card holder")	Belaboring someone's status risks implying it is legitimate to take someone of a different legal status (visa holder, undocumented person).



Countering Attacks on Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Communities¹¹

Whether we are Chinese or Iranian, Latino or Korean, Black or white, throughout our history, we've united to protect our freedoms and build a better future for generations to come. But some politicians are trying to rig the rules to pick and choose who has the freedom to move and build a life in our country. They want to stir fears based on what we look like or where we come from, hoping that we will blame our neighbors and everyday people for the hardships that the wealthiest few create. These same opponents of freedom have done this before — we won't let it happen again.¹² We're coming together across races and places to make this a place where freedom is for everyone, no exceptions. **[Insert Call to Action]**

Freedom to Protest During Military Occupation

Americans across races, backgrounds, and parties value our freedoms. But this authoritarian regime of the bullies for the billionaires has unleashed the military and law enforcement on our families and turned our government into a weapon against our people. They want to keep us from demanding a better future for all of us, but we won't be deterred or divided. Families are joining together to Free America, demanding our leaders stop this assault on our freedoms, our families, and our futures.

¹¹ This sample message was written in collaboration with the [Asian Law Caucus](#).

¹² Optional: Reference specific moments. For example: "These same opponents of freedom have done this before — whether through 20th-century laws that blocked Asian immigrants in more than a dozen states from owning land, to 21st-century bans against Muslims, Africans and people from across the Americas moving for the promise of freedom and a better life."

Economic Issues, Cost of Living, & Corporate Greed

In America, we value our freedoms — no matter what we look like or where we call home.¹³ We want our leaders to fight for us, not steal from us so they can line their pockets. But corporations and the greedy politicians they pay for take in record profits by denying our freedom to make a good living and have a good life. They hold down our wages and raise our prices all so they can enrich themselves and their billionaire backers. Real freedom means being able to demand better pay, care for our families, and retire in dignity. Only by joining together to confront these bullies who seek to control us will we protect our freedoms, our families, and our futures. **[Insert Call to Action]**

Words to Embrace & Replace

Say this...	Instead of...	Because...
Wealthy few who rig the rules Certain politicians	Powerful elites The wealthy	It's critical to specify that we mean only certain people to counter cynicism, thus adding "few." It's also important to identify villains based on behavior, not category or class.
Corporation	Company	"Company" evokes small and local. People are measurably more hostile to "corporations."
Families' economic well-being Our financial well-being Jobs	The economy	There is no independent being named The Economy; it is merely a way we measure human activity. When we personify "the economy" as capable of acting or being acted upon, feeling pain or being revived, we fuel

¹³ Customize to your context and name race, class, and genders, and connect to your specific issue. For example:

"No matter where we come from, what we look like or what's in our wallets..."

"Regardless of where we live, the amount of money in our pockets, or the color of our skin..."

"Whether we're renters or homeowners, living with family, have roommates, or live alone..."

Ability to put food on the table and support our families		opposition framing that positions the well-being of “the economy” as separate from and more important than the well-being of actual human beings. Instead, we should specify what we mean, whether that’s jobs, families being able to put food on the table, or people’s broader economic well-being.
Fund our communities/lives	Invest in our communities / kids / lives	“Invest” primes expectations of a financial return. By talking about investing in schools, investing in kids, investing in people, or investing in communities, we make the argument about financial gain, ceding the moral high ground. Simply talking about “funding” our schools instead of “investing” in them makes it clear that educating and supporting kids is the point—as opposed to the point being a financial return down the line.
Working people People who work for a living	Workers	Calling people “workers” reduces them to the role they play and eclipses their basic needs and desires as humans.
Fair return on our work	Hard work should be rewarded We need a raise	We must make clear that the money to pay people comes from the work that we do.

LGBTQ+ Freedom to Be Ourselves

This sample message is based on [2024 research with Lake Research Partners](#) and earlier work on the [Race Class Gender Narrative \(Narrativa de Raza Clase Género\)](#).



Black, white, or brown, Native or newcomer, transgender or not, Americans won't let anyone dim our light. That's why young people and families are speaking out in support of transgender youth, taking on this authoritarian regime and their billionaire backers who single people out to bully so they can put themselves on top – banning books, denying medical care, and passing laws controlling who we can be and love. Together, we can light the way to a better future, where people of all races, genders, and backgrounds are free to be ourselves and thrive. **[Insert Call to Action]**

Words to Embrace & Replace

Say this...	Instead of...	Because...
Respect kids of all genders, races, and backgrounds Respect every child's freedom to be themselves, whether they are Black, white, or brown, Native or newcomer, transgender or not	Protect trans kids	Rather than playing on the opposition's chosen terrain of "protect" – in which those with agency are never young people themselves, but always adults who need to step in for them – we should instead focus on a <i>respect</i> frame that allows agency for both young person and adult. Further, when we meet their cry to "protect children" with a call to "protect trans kids," we inadvertently reinforce our opposition's frame that this is a choice between protecting <i>either</i> non-trans youth <i>or</i> trans youth. Instead, we must make clear we are advocating for all young people, while explicitly naming that this includes transgender youth.
Our genders Genders	Gender	Pluralizing genders enables greater agreement with our worldview and helps activate more expansive attitudes towards our genders and transgender people.

Americans of all genders are speaking out in support of transgender people	Transgender people are under attack	Our research shows that even in red states, the majority of Americans agree with a pro-transgender justice message over an anti-trans message, yet they believe that most <i>other</i> people in their state would select the anti-trans message. Left unchallenged, the opposition's attacks lead less engaged Americans to conclude that the majority of people in their community share the authoritarian regime's hateful sentiments – even though that is not the case. When we repeatedly emphasize attacks without asserting widespread resistance and support for trans people, we reinforce this harmful false perception.
Authoritarian politicians and their billionaire backers are singling transgender people out to bully so they can put themselves on top	Texas/Florida/the government is attacking transgender people	Rather than impugning an entire state or government broadly, which makes the problem feel even more overwhelming and obscures the individuals responsible, we must specify who our villains truly are: a handful of authoritarian politicians and the billionaires who brought them to power. Further, when we blame “the government” as opposed to the people currently in power, we inadvertently serve our opposition's project of attacking civil servants and undermining all of the programs, services, and supports we've built with our tax dollars to care for each other.

Public Safety

The [We Know What Keeps Us Safe](#) guide and toolkit address public safety issues in a way that persuades skeptics to our cause while energizing our base to sustained participation and civic engagement.



We know what keeps us safe: living in communities where people of every color and background have fair wages, great schools, and affordable healthcare, where we address problems with proven solutions like social supports instead of militarized police. But instead of taking responsibility for their failures, certain politicians want to divide and distract us by pointing the finger at the people harmed by police brutality. This moment calls on us to go all in for all of us. We know what keeps us safe and free from violence. Together, we will make this a place where our rights are respected and where every one of us can live full and healthy lives, no exceptions. **[Insert Call to Action]**

Public Transit

In collaboration with Transit Center and advocates across the country, ASO crafted and tested [messaging that persuades and mobilizes community members](#), both current riders and non-riders, to demand more robust public transit.



Imagine having the freedom to get where we need to go — from our cities to our suburbs to our small towns. The freedom to read, text, or work on the go without having to gas up a car, to celebrate without designating a driver, to get to a game without searching for parking. For too long, a wealthy few have profited by making us pay to pump and maintain cars while they peddle fears about public transit and the people who ride it. By uniting across race and place, we can demand fully funded, accessible, and reliable transit, and ensure all of us have the freedom to move, save money, and live a good life. **[Insert Call to Action]**

Reproductive Freedom

The [“Someone You Love” ad](#), created by Gutsy Media, ASO, and Way to Win, builds on the work of messaging pioneered and popularized by reproductive justice movement leaders in the U.S., a majority of whom are Black women, and a similar framework in the successful 2018 messaging campaign to repeal the abortion ban in Ireland.

No matter our race, origin, or genders, most of us believe in our freedom to decide what happens to our bodies. But today, a handful of greedy, self-interested politicians are trying to control us and decide our futures for us, taking away our freedom to get the care we need, vote in fair elections, and decide whether and when we grow our families.*** They want to rule over, not represent us, enacting rules that harm our families while they hand the money they take from our healthcare, our schools, and our communities to their billionaire backers. By **[Insert Specific Call to Action, depending on current circumstances]**, we can make this a place where our reproductive freedoms are respected and all families are cared for.

***If addressing a new, specific attack, such as a national abortion ban, name that here.

Words to Embrace and Replace

Say This...	Instead of...	Because...
An abortion A person who needs an abortion	Abortions	Using the singular helps mitigate stereotyping about who seeks abortion care and why.
Decide for ourselves Decision Our freedom to decide	Choose Choice	Choice evokes flippancy and activates stereotyping about abortion care.
Someone you love might need an abortion one day Someone you love has had an abortion	My child, my choice	Using an individualistic framework feeds the notion of no social responsibility for kids and belies the fact that many people actually have no choice because of money. Instead, evoke empathy by inviting the audience to contemplate what they would do.

Revenue and Taxes¹⁴

Fund Our Futures

Para la versión en español de esta guía, haga clic [aquí](#).

[Fund our Futures](#) is a [messaging and digital toolkit](#) for winning the narrative to fund the care, support, and services our families need by making sure wealthy corporations and billionaires pay us what they owe.

No matter our background, faith, or color, most of us value our freedom to provide for our families. But as our work has made America prosper, a greedy few have rigged the rules to redirect resources from our communities to their country clubs, from our classrooms to their ballrooms, and from our public parks to their private jets. They stir fears based on what we look like or where we come from hoping we will blame everyday people for the hardships they create, so we don't join together to demand the programs, schools and supports all our families need. Together, we can ensure nothing stands in the way of us providing a great life for our families.

[Insert Call to Action]

Words to Embrace & Replace

Say this...	Instead of...	Because...
Wealthy few who rig the rules Certain politicians	Powerful elites The wealthy	It's critical to specify that we mean only certain people to counter cynicism, thus adding "few." It's also important to identify villains based on behavior, not category or class.
Corporation	Company	"Company" evokes small and local. People are measurably more hostile to "corporations."
Families' [economic] well-being	The economy	There is no independent being named The Economy; it is merely a way we

¹⁴ This guidance was developed in collaboration with the [State Revenue Alliance](#).

Our financial well-being Jobs Ability to put food on the table and support our families Ability to earn a good living and live a good life		measure human activity. When we personify “the economy” as capable of acting or being acted upon, feeling pain or being revived, we fuel opposition framing that positions the well-being of “the economy” as separate from and more important than the well-being of actual human beings. Instead, we should specify what we mean, whether that’s jobs, families being able to put food on the table, or people’s broader economic well-being.
Fund our communities/lives	Invest in our communities / kids / lives	“Invest” primes expectations of a financial return. By talking about investing in schools, investing in kids, investing in people, or investing in communities, we make the argument about financial gain, ceding the moral high ground. Simply talking about “funding” our schools instead of “investing” in them makes it clear that educating and supporting kids is the point—as opposed to the point being a financial return down the line.
Working people People who work for a living	Workers	Calling people “workers” reduces them to the role they play and eclipses their basic needs and desires as humans.
Fair return on our work	Hard work should be rewarded We need a raise	We must make clear that the money to pay people comes from the work that we do.

Voters & Voting

Voting Rights and Elections

The [Freedom to Vote digital toolkit](#) is for winning the narrative for our freedom to vote at the national level and mobilizing voters to demand fair districting, while combating the attacks in state legislatures across the country.

Most of us, no matter our color, origin, or genders, believe voters pick our leaders — politicians do not pick which voters to heed and which to silence. But today, certain politicians want to put up barriers to silence our voices based on what we look like, where we live, or what's in our wallets. They want to rule over us, not represent us, handing the wealth we create to their billionaire backers. But we're coming together — across race, zip code, and background — knowing that the many can defeat the money and to demand that every voice is heard and every American has the freedom to vote. **[Insert Call to Action]**

Words to Embrace & Replace

Say this...	Instead of...	Because...
Freedom to vote Cast our ballots freely, safely, and equally [The principle of] one person, one vote Right to vote	Voting rights	"Freedom to vote" is a very strong frame for us, garnering greater and more intense support. Safety is also deeply resonant, as is situating voting within the frame of equality, either by simply calling for it or evoking it. While the individualized idea of voting as "my right" also rates highly, "voting rights" renders the issue abstract and process-oriented instead of tangible and personal.
Deliberate barriers to voting Denying our freedom to vote Anti-voter bills	Voter suppression Obstacles to voting Fight voter suppression	"Voter suppression" is a phrase that is unfortunately not understood by many. Further, for conflicted voters, they are susceptible to the notion that there are votes we ought to suppress: those purportedly cast illegally. We can make this issue more concrete for our

Protect our freedom to vote		audiences by naming how certain politicians erect “deliberate barriers to voting.” And we can render it more broadly off-putting by describing the accompanying harms of these barriers.
-----------------------------	--	--

Get Out the Vote (GOTV)

We need to build up our audience’s habit of going to the polls or mailing in their ballots. [The Messaging and Best Practices for GOTV and Vote-By-Mail Guide](#) (2024), drawn from years of research, forms basic messaging recommendations for GOTV and vote-by-mail efforts. Use these recommendations when communicating with turnout targets during the two weeks before Election Day, or in the lead up to an absentee/early voting window.

No matter what we look like, where we live or what’s in our wallets, most of us value our freedom to have an equal say in the decisions that impact our lives and make our voices heard. But today, certain politicians are trying to silence our voices, turning us against each other so we won’t unite to demand what all our families need. Together, we make the future. By joining together to vote, strike, and march, we can demand our freedom to elect leaders who govern in our name and in our interests. **[Insert Call to Action]**



Keep Spreading the Message

All of the messaging and examples shared here, whether from [We Make the Future](#), [ASO Communications](#), or partner organizations, are open source. We are honored to have you use this language verbatim or adapt the framework to your context.

