RACE-CLASS MINNESOTA: OUR PROGRESSIVE NARRATIVE

Both economic and racial justice are core progressive priorities, but too often we discuss them separately.

In fact, racial and economic harms are intertwined as are our desired solutions to them. Wealthy elites exploit racial fears to turn working people against each other and government; economic pain increases racial resentment, fueling anti-immigrant sentiment and lending credence to the notion of a "rural-urban" divide.

Our research demonstrates how to build a multi-racial progressive coalition that can win a better future for all. The key for cross-racial solidarity, voter engagement, and electoral victories is bringing the connections between racial divisions and economic hardship to the fore. Our findings support tackling racism as a divide-and-conquer tactic that sows distrust, undermines belief in government, and causes hardship for everyone, of every color.

CORE INSIGHTS

Discuss race overtly

Our base, which includes many people of color, is deeply concerned about racism. Failing to address racial concerns or merely tacking them onto economic ones leaves our base unmotivated to participate, let alone persuade others. Meanwhile, most persuadables feel deep concern about race. They toggle between contradictory orientations—one that views talking about race as necessary and desires racial fairness and progressive values; and another that considers conversations about race problematic and pulls them toward racial resentment and conservative fears. One of those two schemas will be triggered. The notion that we must avoid race with the middle is wrong: remaining silent on this helps our opposition's toxic worldview gain primacy.

Frame racism as a tool to divide and thus harm all of us

The right villainizes immigrants, Muslims, and African Americans, as undeserving and even dangerous in order to diminish social solidarity and support for collective action that form the foundation of the progressive agenda. Pointing out this strategic racism and tying it to the class war that a handful of wealthy reactionaries are waging helps connect the experiences of targeted people of color and to those of economically anxious white people. It provides a way for people of all races to understand our noxious racial environment and makes clear that white people will gain more from cross-racial solidarity than from siding with race-baiting billionaires.

Connect unity to racial justice and economic prosperity

Making division the central problem seeds desire for unity as the response. However, it also leaves us vulnerable to claims that we too sow division. We must provide frequent endorsements for coming together, including references to having done so in the past, when calling out opponents for intentional division. "Joining together across racial differences" as a route to secure a better future proved effective at moving both base and persuadables toward support for key elements of our policy and electoral agenda.

TOP-RATED NARRATIVES

Lake Research Partners, in collaboration with ASO Communications and Brilliant Corners, designed and implemented this survey in Spring 2018. Narratives were tested online with 600 adults in Minnesota, weighted to reflect state demographics. Margin of error is +/- 4. Top narratives garnered highest marks in moment-to-moment dial testing, convincing ratings and share ratings from base and persuadables. Beyond the Minnesota results profiled here, we also conducted analytic, qualitative, and quantitative research in California, Indiana, Ohio, and nationally.

--- TOP TIER ---

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Minnesota's Strength

Minnesota's strength comes from our ability to be there for each other – to knit together people from different places and of different races into a community. For this to be a place of freedom for all, we cannot let the greedy few and the politicians they pay for divide us against each other based on what someone looks like or how much money they have. It's time we talk to each other and stand up for anyone getting bullied or shut out by ugly rhetoric. We must pick leaders who honor the Golden Rule, treating others as they want to be treated. Together, we can make this a place where freedom and community are for everyone, no exceptions.

--- SECOND TIER ---

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Working People No matter where we come from or what our color, most of us pitch in for each other and work hard for our families. But today, certain politicians and their greedy lobbyists hand kickbacks to the rich, defund our schools, and cut Medicare and Social Security. Then they point the finger for hard times at poor families, Black people, and new immigrants, or pit rural Minnesotans against those living in the cities. We need to join together across all walks of life to fight for our future, just like people won better wages, safer workplaces, and civil rights in our past. Joining together, we can elect new leaders who work for all of us.

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Come Together America is a place where people come together from different places and different races to make a better life for ourselves. Despite our differences, we work together, try to be good neighbors, and teach our children to respect everyone—women, people of color, new immigrants, and people with disabilities. But now special interests and certain politicians are re-writing the rules to line their own pockets while they deliberately distract us with fear mongering, especially along racial, ethnic, and religious lines. We need to come together and elect new leaders who will treat each and every one of us as equals, respect all of our families, and govern for all of us.

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Future Every child, regardless of where they come from, what they look like, or where they live, deserves to pursue their dreams. 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, background, and religion. Together, we have the power to pick leaders who believe in all of our children. When we come together across our different communities, we can make this a nation we're proud to leave to our kids, brimming with the new ideas that come from so many different people working together, to benefit everyone.

BASE (27% OF ADULTS)

- Strongly concerned about bias against people of color
- Believe people of color face greater barriers than whites do
- Support our progressive policy agenda

  More likely to be women, under 30, Democrats, and reside in cities

PERSUADABLES (44% OF ADULTS)

- Of mixed minds on role of government, views of class, and needs to address racism.
- Support our economic agenda
- Not supportive of many criminal justice reforms and view drug use as criminal behavior

  Reflect state demographics but are more likely to be men and Republican

OPPOSITION (30% OF ADULTS)

- Think wealth is product of individual effort
- Oppose our policy agenda
- Hold African Americans and Latinos responsible for their own conditions

  More likely to be older, men, Republican, and white

WORDS THAT WORK

Say this	Instead of	Notes
People of different races and from different places; white, Black or brown	All people; everyone	Explicit reference to race engages people of color while keeping white listeners on board
No matter our differences, most of us want pretty similar things	United we stand, divided we fall	"United we stand" can be a confusing set up from which to move to explicit division; it may be heard as a description of the present not an aspiration for the future
Join together across racial differences	Join together in our communities	Making racial reference increases interest of our base and persuadables
Come together as we did in our past	Come together in the hopes of a better future	Referencing previous cross-racial solidarity helps abate cynicism and increase desire to engage
As Minnesotans we can; Represent Minnesotans as Senator/Governor/in Congress	We can…; Elect as Senator/Governor/ Representative	Reminding listeners of their state identity motivates our base and moves persuadables
Our opponents blame new immigrants, Black people, and Muslims for our hard times	Our opponents are racist against new immigrants, Black people, and Muslims	Reframing racism as scapegoating helps draw the causal connection to economic concerns shared across races
Wealthy few who rig the rules; greedy few	Powerful elites; the wealthy	Critical to specify we mean only certain people thus adding "few" and naming by behavior not category or class
Divide us against each other; deliberately distract us with fear mongering	Powerful elites; the wealthy	"Pit against" implies the listener is complicit in the continued antagonism
Minnesota's cities	Powerful elites; the wealthy	"Pit against" implies the listener is complicit in the continued antagonism