

## RACE-CLASS OHIO: OUR PROGRESSIVE NARRATIVE

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

On the contrary, 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 and facilitates scapegoating, fueling support for punitive measures against people of color.

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, policy victories, and voter engagement 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 engage, 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

Focusing on racism as unjust to people of color does relatively little to move whites. Notably, while popular with advocates, it also does not always move people of color. Much more effective are explanations of racism as the means the wealthy few use to divide us against each other. This resonates with people of color. And it gives whites a way to understand our toxic racial environment without casting them as villains, but instead makes clear why their well-being requires combating racial scapegoating.

#### 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 agenda.

## TOP-RATED NARRATIVES

Lake Research Partners, in collaboration with ASO Communications and Brilliant Corners Research and Strategy, designed and implemented this survey in March-April 2018. Narratives were tested online with 600 adults in Ohio, weighted to reflect the true demographics of the state. 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 Ohio results profiled here, we also conducted analytic, qualitative, and quantitative research in California, Indiana, Minnesota, and nationally.

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### Ohio's Strength

Ohio's strength comes from our grit, determination, and ability to work together to overcome any challenge. 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 to stand up for each other and come together. It is time for us to pick leaders who reflect the very best of every kind of Ohioan. Together, we can make this a place where freedom is for everyone, no exceptions.

- ✓ Top marks from *persuadables*
- ✓ Strong with *base*

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### Working People

No matter where we come from or what our color, most of us work hard for our families. But today, certain politicians and their greedy lobbyists hurt everyone by handing kickbacks to the rich, defunding our schools, cutting Medicare and Social Security, and stripping working people of our rights to negotiate in union. Then they point the finger for hard times at poor families, Black people, or new immigrants. We need to join together with people from all walks of life to fight for our future, just like we won better wages, safer workplaces, and civil rights in our past. By joining together, we can elect new leaders who work for all of us, not just the wealthy few.

- ✓ Top marks from *base*, including desire to share
- ✓ Strong with *persuadables*

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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 or place of origin. 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 our kids, brimming with the new ideas that come from so many different people working together, for everyone's benefit.

- ✓ Galvanizing for *base*
- ✓ Forcefully engages debate — distancing opposition

### BASE (44%)

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- 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, and African American and/or Latino*

### PERSUADABLES (33%)

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- 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

*More likely to be over 65 and Independents*

### OPPOSITION (24%)

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- 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 and white*

## WORDS THAT WORK

Say this	Instead of	Notes
Whether white, Black or brown	all people, everyone	Explicit reference to race engages people of color while holding whites.
Provide proven programs/treatment and rehabilitation...instead of prison	“Stop sending people to prison...and provide proven programs/treatment and rehabilitation”	Saying what we <i>favor</i> prior to what we <i>oppose</i> increases persuasive power and base enthusiasm.
Addiction	Drugs	Health frame increases empathy and helps guard against activating safety fears.
Join together across racial differences	Join together in our communities	Making racial reference increases interest of base and persuadables.
As <u>Ohioans</u> we can; Represent Ohioans as Senator/Governor/Representative	We can...; Elect as Senator/Governor/Representative	Reminding listeners of their Ohio identity motivates base and moves persuadables.
[Policy] improves our communities	[Policy] better uses tax dollars	Pragmatic financial arguments cede the moral high ground. Bringing money top of mind has proven ineffective at persuasion.
Form alliances	Work together	“Form alliances” suggests greater permanency and power than “work together.”
Stereotypes about race <u>box people in</u>	Stereotypes about race keep us from learning from each other	Evoking the <i>freedom</i> frame with the language of “box in” engages base and helps persuadables better understand harms of stereotyping.
Drug use; when a drug has been used	Using drugs	<u>Rare</u> instance where passivizing language helps us by distancing user from culpability

### Further Information

Findings detailed here are for Ohio. We also completed research nationally and in CA, IN and MN in an electoral context. For further information on our process or findings from our state work, please contact [RCN@demos.org](mailto:RCN@demos.org). For information about partisan elements, contact [RCN@demosaction.org](mailto:RCN@demosaction.org).