



People Move: How to Talk About Immigrant Rights in the US

Introduction

With the 2024 election season underway, our opponents – led by the former MAGA president – have escalated their toxic strategy of vilifying and directly harming new immigrants in order to divide and distract us from their agenda to take away our freedoms. Increasingly, they are moving beyond racist and xenophobic dog whistles to explicitly calling for genocidal policies against people seeking safety. We must contend with their attacks and mobilize Americans to demand action and vote for leaders who will protect our freedoms and implement a fair immigration process that respects all families.

Guidance

- 1. Lead with values, such as freedom,** naming that they're shared **across races, classes, and backgrounds.**

While there is an understandable urge to emphasize the horrors experienced by immigrants and people seeking asylum, we know from years of research that focusing solely on harms demoralizes and demobilizes people, causing them to turn away rather than take action. Further, among those most impacted, it can feel like advocates are reducing people's identity only to the horrible conditions they have been made to endure. Rendering them hapless victims, rather than lifting up their courage and tenacity.

Instead, anchor your message in the shared value of freedom and uplift the courage and tenacity of people who move to the United States. Name race explicitly to build an inclusive "us" to push back against the division our opposition stokes. Avoid language like "the border" or "(im)migrant crisis," which bring the opposition's divisive rhetoric of nationalism top of mind; center, instead, people who are seeking a better life.

- 2. Name the culprits** and their motivations in blocking solutions, perpetuating harms, and scapegoating new Americans.

Providing a clear origin story for the current situation is critical. MAGA Republicans use immigrants as a catch-all villain for our problems, trying to get us to point the finger at whomever they deem “other” instead of coming together to implement real solutions. Make it clear who is at fault for the problems we are facing – politicians who use racial scapegoating to seize or preserve power and sow division among us.

3. Combat cynicism by highlighting past and recent victories we’ve achieved through collective action and unity.

Citing ways we’ve acted together in the past to achieve positive change allows us to combat cynicism and withstand false claims from our opponents.

4. Close with a vision for a better future that we will achieve by creating a fair immigration process that respects all families.

We must close with a vision of a beautiful tomorrow that is safe for us all. An inclusive, well-structured process that will uphold our shared values of freedom and foster a nation where all families have the chance to thrive and contribute.

Full Narrative v1

Whether we’re born here or moved to make America our home, most of us do what it takes to make a better life for our families. We work, sacrifice, and even pack up everything to put food on the table, provide for our loved ones, or send our kids to good schools. But today, MAGA Republicans are harming our families by handing kickbacks to corporations who gouge prices, holding down wages, and taking away our freedoms, then trying to get us to blame immigrants for our struggles. We’re onto them. By joining together as voters, we can pick leaders who implement real solutions and create a fair immigration process for all families.

Full Narrative v2

The same is true today as ever: people move to make a better life for their families. Immigrant Americans move here for the promise of freedoms that all of us – Black or white, Latino or Asian, Native or newcomer, cherish. But today, MAGA Republicans stoke fear against new immigrants to distract us while they deny our families, letting corporations gouge prices and threatening cuts to Social Security and Medicare. But we’ve shown that the many can defeat the money by voting out

politicians who sow hatred and stoke fear. By joining together once again, we can elect leaders who will implement solutions to advance freedom, safety and wellbeing for all families.

Sample Ad: <https://youtu.be/lJmeKazmxyc>

Words to Embrace and Replace

Say This...	Instead of...	Because...
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	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.
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	Fix our broken immigration system End abuse Stop detention	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

<p>freedom, safety and wellbeing for all families.</p>		<p>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.</p>
<p>Our opponents shame and blame new immigrants</p> <p>Certain politicians point the finger at new immigrants to divide and distract us</p>	<p>These policies are racist</p> <p>Our opponents are anti-immigrant</p>	<p>Connecting anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies to our opposition’s scapegoating helps audiences connect these efforts to their own economic hardships.</p>
<p>As caring people...</p> <p>Join together across racial differences [to demand...to pick new leaders...]</p>	<p>As Americans...</p>	<p>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 base and persuades the middle.</p>