



Messaging on Voting and the Election¹

As Trump does all he can to sow chaos, stoke fear, and fuel division in the midst of this election, we must deliver a credible and energizing antidote: a unifying story grounded in who we are and the future we will deliver. And we must repeat it relentlessly. While this message must address Trump's reckless escalations and violent outbursts, we cannot and should not repeat nor lend credence to his claims. Instead, we must take pains to not merely describe his actions (the *what*) but ascribe motivations to them (the *why*) within a frame that reinforces our values, our story of how the world works, and our power to create positive change.

This memo outlines how we claim the moral high ground, provide a clear rejoinder to Trump's attempts at fueling division, address the understandable cynicism that hinders participation and build public will to demand every vote is counted.

Full Narratives

Version A: Count On Us

Most of us believe everyone counts, no matter our race, accent or zip code. Trump knows he is losing this election so he wants to pick and choose who can vote and how votes will be counted. He hopes that by sowing chaos and stoking fear, it will stop us from voting at all. But we're onto him and we count on us. We are turning out in record numbers to show that everyone counts, ensure everyone's vote is counted, and swear in a government of, by and for the people.

Version B: Deliver Our Democracy

Most of us believe that for democracy to work for all of us, it must include us all. But Trump is trying to divide us - sowing doubts about this election and the right of every eligible American to have our voices heard, no matter our color or origin, our income or zip code. We are joining together with people from all walks of life to vote in record numbers, demand that every single vote is counted, and deliver our democracy.

¹ This guide draws upon the extensive work of the Everyone Counts Project and, in particular, the metanarrative led by Nicole Carty and Anthony Torres. Recent polling by GQR and Avalanche Insights critically informed these recommendations as did the body of work from the Race Class Narrative Action project.

Version C: Everyone Counts, Every Vote Counted

No matter what we look like or where we come from, most of us believe America should be a place where everyone counts and where every vote is counted. But Trump is trying to silence our voices and deny our rights; he wants to bully and cheat his way through an election he knows he's losing. Trump hopes that by stoking fear he can divide and distract us from his failure to ensure we have the care and support we need during this pandemic. But we know better. When Trump failed to prevent and protect us from COVID-19, we pulled through by pulling together. We delivered meals, we delivered masks, and we delivered protests to defend Black lives and demand liberty and justice for all. We count on us. By uniting across our differences this election season, we will ensure every vote is counted and swear in a new government elected by and for us. By joining together as voters in record numbers, we will deliver a democracy where everyone counts, no exceptions.

Key Elements of Our Message

1. **Lead with what we are for, not what we are against**

- "No matter what we look like or where we come from, most of us believe that everyone counts and we must ensure every vote is counted."
- "Whether we are Black or white, Native or newcomer, Latino or Asian, we know that for democracy to work for all of us, it must include us all."

2. **Explain the motivations behind Trump's actions in a way that reinforces *his weakness and our power***

- "Trump is trying to bully and cheat his way through an election he knows he's losing."
- "Trump is hoping to stoke fear and divide us, so we don't join together to demand the proven solutions all of our families need."

3. **Show how we'll win – by joining together in cross racial solidarity to not only vote but also ensure democratic transfer of power.**

- "We will join together across race to vote in record numbers, ensure every vote is counted, and swear in a government elected by and for us."
- "By uniting across our differences this election season, we will swear in a new government of, by, and for the people."

4. **End with our vision for the country**

- "By joining together as voters, we will deliver a democracy where everyone counts, no exceptions."
- "We count on us, and we are building a country where our leaders act in our interest, where we care for each other, and where we know that the will of the people is the law of the land."

Words to Embrace and Replace

Say this...	Instead of...	Because...
Swear in new leaders	Elect new leaders	This year, the democratic process requires both voting and remaining patient through what may be a lengthier counting process and period of uncertainty about the outcome.
Election season	Election day; November 3rd	With the pandemic making day-of in person voting challenging and even dangerous, we want to shift audiences toward early participation.
<p>Trump is trying to bully and cheat his way through an election he knows he's losing.</p> <p>Trump is attempting to scam his way through this election.</p> <p>Trump knows he can't win so he's trying to cheat.</p>	<p>Trump is stealing the election.</p> <p>Trump has rigged the election.</p> <p>Trump is an authoritarian ruler.</p> <p>Trump is a dictator.</p>	<p>We need to mobilize people to be voters, which requires some degree of confidence that voting is an action worth taking. Declaring that Trump has rigged the election or is stealing it presents Trump as having already succeeded – strengthening his position and depressing turnout. We need to talk about Trump's <i>attempts</i> to bully, cheat, and scam his way through this election, but do so in a way that presents him as weak and reinforces people's power as agents of change.</p>
Trump tries to distract and divide us from his corruption and failure to protect us from this pandemic by blaming new immigrants, Black people, and people struggling to make ends meet for our hard times.	<p>Trump did X racist thing.</p> <p>Trump is racist.</p> <p>Trump did X horrible thing.</p>	Reframing Trump's racism and evil deeds as scapegoating or deliberate division that he uses to hold onto power helps draw the causal connection to economic concerns shared across race, and presents him as weak and ineffective.
The protests are about making this country a place where liberty and justice is for all, no exceptions. That scares Trump, and he's sending federal forces into our cities and cheering on white militants to divide and distract us because he's failing us - and he knows he's losing this election. By coming together across race and place to vote in record numbers, we will swear in a government of, by, and for the people.	<p>We condemn riots and looting.</p> <p>Rioting is not protesting.</p> <p>Looting is not protesting.</p>	Debates about riots, looting, "law and order," and cities on fire is Trump's story. When we reinforce it – even in order to fight it – we lose. He's trying to change the conversation from his failures in the pandemic and the strength and racial solidarity demonstrated in this summer's uprisings. We cannot cede the moral high ground of liberty and justice, freedom and fairness. And we cannot let him change the conversation. We know what keeps us safe and it starts by voting for real leaders who

		reflect and respect the best of us.
<p>The United States has always held elections and upheld the results, even in times of great crisis. We held successful presidential elections amid the Civil War, the Great Depression, and both World Wars. Now it's our turn to prove that nothing – not even this pandemic – will stand in the way of our democratic commitment to voting.</p>	<p>Vote by mail is safe.</p> <p>Voter fraud is rare, not a real issue, etc.</p> <p>Trump is making it impossible to vote.</p> <p>COVID is making this election incredibly difficult.</p>	<p>In order to motivate participation, we must reassure all voters that this election will be conducted successfully despite the challenges. Referencing past examples of successful elections despite enormous challenges helps quell the unease that voting will be impossible or useless.</p>