



## 1.4

# A country of bigots?

### Key building blocks

To understand and fight dog whistling, we have to move away from a simple model in which all racism is equated with bigotry—the conscious hatred of other races.

- Politicians are mainly motivated to dog whistle by cold strategy. Call it **strategic racism**. This will become important when we consider how to call them out.
- The main driver for those persuaded by dog whistle messages is unconscious racism. Yet most have **split minds on race**, on the one hand harboring racist stereotypes and on the other consciously committed to racial fairness. This will become important when we think about potential allies.

Sample questions	Potential answers
<b>STRATEGIC RACISM</b>	
<p>1. What is strategic racism?</p> <p>A strategy to do what?</p>	<p>The video defines strategic racism this way: “Racism as a conscious strategy.”</p> <p>Answers include winning votes, and also demonizing liberal government. Or, in the workplace context, dividing workers and breaking workplace solidarity.</p> <p>Strategic racism is often described in other terms, such as scapegoating, or demagoguery. Or divide-and-conquer.</p>

2. Does this mean that dog whistle politicians are NOT bigots?

No. They can be bigots too. Or, they can personally reject bigotry as immoral, but still believe that the best way to win is to dog whistle.

### UNCONSCIOUS RACISM AND OUR SPLIT MINDS

1. In thinking about the audiences moved by dog whistling, what about the graph?

This wasn't just a convincing message to White voters. In fact, Blacks and Latinos agreed in almost equal numbers with the dog whistle message.

We often believe that everyone must recognize as a racist message warnings about China, illegal immigration, criminal gangs, and fully funding the police while rejecting rioters. But it's not true. Instead, majorities of Americans, of every racial group, find such warnings convincing.

2. So why is this message so convincing? Does the concept of "unconscious racism" help to answer this question.


Most of us hold internalized racist stereotypes that can be relatively easily triggered, and that seem true, at least to our unconscious minds. This is what we mean by "unconscious racism."

3. What does it mean to have a "split mind" on race?

Even though almost all of us harbor unconscious racist stereotypes, we're not bigots. We believe consciously that racism is wrong.

4. How do dog whistle politicians exploit our split minds?

The ideal is people using their conscious commitments to racial fairness to push back against their unconscious racism. One way to do this, for instance, is to really grapple with how racism works, just like you're doing.



Rather than encouraging people to use their conscious minds to control their racist fears, however, dog whistle politicians do the opposite. They constantly seek to trigger racist fears, hoping that our unconscious racism will overwhelm our ability to see clearly what's really going on.

#### Anti-racist protip

It's important to remember that anyone, regardless of their racial group, can believe that racist stereotypes as true. But when talking about dog whistle politics, we should also focus on who within a given society holds the power to act in harmful ways based on such stereotypes. And who, by experience and education, has been trained to use their conscious minds to recognize and reject stereotypes. In other words, being susceptible to unconscious racism is just one part of a larger dynamic in which whites and people of color are often very differently situated.