



## 3.1 Race-Class Narrative

### Key building blocks

The first video in this level talks about Race-Class as a story—that is, as a political message. The next two videos examine Race-Class as an approach to building a cross-racial progressive movement.

- **The three core components of the Race-Class narrative are:**
  - Distrust powerful elites stoke division
  - Join together across racial lines
  - Demand government for all
- When compared to the Class Left, Race Left, and dog whistle messages, the Race-Class story beats all of them

### The Race-Class message that we tested

Here is the full text of the message we tested, which also appears in the video.

We had come so far, but now COVID-19 threatens our families, for instance with health risks, record unemployment, and losing the businesses we worked hard to build. To overcome these challenges, we need to pull together no matter our race or ethnicity. We have done this before and can do it again.

But instead of uniting us, certain politicians make divisions worse, insulting and blaming different groups. When they divide us, they can more easily rig our government and the economy for their wealthy campaign donors.

When we come together by rejecting racism against anyone, we can elect new leaders who support proven solutions that help all working families.

Sample questions	Potential answers
<b>UNDERSTANDING THE RACE-CLASS MESSAGE</b>	
<p>1. The video describes Race-Class as a way to tell a story, a political messaging strategy. What do you think this means?</p>	<p>Political narratives can take many forms on their surface, but often there is a consistent story being told about – you guessed it – who we are, who threatens us, and who will join with us.</p>
<p>2. Does it help to recall that dog whistling is also telling a consistent story?</p>	<p>The dog whistle story goes like this (from video 1.2):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fear and resent people of color</li> <li>● Hate liberal government</li> <li>● Trust the marketplace</li> </ul>
<p>3. What are the 3 core elements of the Race-Class narrative?</p>	<p>Race-Class counters the dog whistle story by telling a new story. It's main elements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distrust powerful elites stoking division</li> <li>● Join together across racial lines</li> <li>● Demand government for all</li> </ul> <p>The point is not that political messages from progressives should use precisely this language. Rather, they build on these core elements.</p>
<p>4. The video digs into the Race-Class story by using the identity questions (from video 2.4). Do you recall the questions and why they are so important?</p>	<p>These identity questions form the basis on which most people engage in politics. They're the same questions dog whistling answers, albeit with racist lies.</p>
<p>5. Using the Race-Class story, how would you answer the three core identity questions?</p>	<p><b>Who are we?</b> We're people who embrace diversity and our commitment to each other  <b>Who threatens us?</b> Powerful elites using divide and conquer tactics</p>

**Who are our allies?** Everyone who will join with us to make sure that government works for all of us

**IDENTIFYING THE RACE-CLASS STORY IN THE SAMPLE MESSAGE**

1. Let's go through the sample message in the video. I can read it to you.

Now, can you identify the part of the message that communicates we should distrust powerful elites sowing division? That we should join together across racial lines? That we should demand government for all?

2. Are you ready to try your hand at telling the Race-Class story? Here are some issues you could focus on. Remember to use all three elements of the Race-Class story.

- Government policies that support strong unions
- Excellent and affordable college for all
- The Green New Deal (recall video 2.3)

3. How about immigration reform? That's coming up in video 3.2, but let's try our hand now.

DOES THE RACE-CLASS MESSAGE CONVINC VOTERS?	
1. How did the Race-Class message do among eligible voters?	Among Latinx people, 77% found the message convincing. Among Black people, 78% found the message convincing. And among white people, 69% found the message convincing.
2. How does it compare to the other basic messages out there?	It's powerful, indeed more powerful than: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● the Race Left message (see video 2.2; the text of the message we tested is included below)</li> <li>● the Class Left message (see video 2.4; the text of the message we tested is included below)</li> <li>● the opposition message (see video 1.4)</li> </ul>
3. (Optional) Let's look at the Class Left message. How does it answer the key identity questions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Who are we?</b> People who share an interest in economic fairness</li> <li>● <b>Who threatens us?</b> Economic elites who are getting even richer</li> <li>● <b>Who are our allies?</b> Other people who share an interest in economic fairness</li> </ul>
4. Can you see why these answers might not be effective against the dog whistle story?	The dog whistle story insists that dangerous and undeserving people of color are the real threat. The Class Left simply ignores this, even though, as we've seen in video 1.4, the racial fear story is broadly convincing.
5. (optional) Now let's look at the Race Left message. How does it answer the key identity questions?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Who are we?</b> We're people of color and white allies of people of color</li> <li>● <b>Who threatens us?</b> Racists, including racist politicians and racist police</li> <li>● <b>Who are our allies?</b> Other people of color and our white allies</li> </ul>
6. Can you see why this might alienate many whites?	This story centers people of color, and implicates most whites as part of the problem.

7. And why might this inadvertently reinforce the dog whistle story?

The Race Left story accepts that America is locked into a racial conflict between white people and people of color. This is what the dog whistle story says, too. The difference is the dog whistle story says “stand with whites,” and the Race Left story says “stand with people of color.”

8. Which message do you prefer, the Race-Class message, the Class Left message, or the Race Left message? Do you prefer one strongly over the others, and if so, why? Do you prefer all of them about equally?

**Note to facilitator:** We found that in the progressive base, all three messages perform about equally, with only a slight preference for the Race-Class message. This might be true in the discussion group as well. It’s when talking to the people who are more in the middle that the Race-Class message really pulls away as a clear favorite. This is important, because real political change requires building a super-majority.

### The Race Left Message

There’s been a horrible explosion of hate in this country. Certain politicians promote xenophobia, racism, and division. And it’s not just their words. It’s their policies, too. We see it in how they rip families apart at the border. And in how the police profile, imprison, and kill Black people, and use excessive force against people marching for justice. Right now, communities of color are suffering the greatest numbers of deaths from COVID-19, but have the least access to affordable, quality health care. To end the racism and reform immigration and policing, we must elect new leaders who truly believe that all of us are created equal and deserve to be treated that way.

### The Class Left Message

We had plenty of warning about COVID-19, but certain political leaders were unprepared to act in a crisis. They ignored the science, didn’t make plans, and even failed to tell the truth about simple steps people can take, like wearing a mask. Most families are facing record unemployment, big health risks, and uncertain futures. Meanwhile, a tiny handful of individuals and corporations are getting even richer. We live in the wealthiest country in the history of the world, but COVID-19 illnesses and deaths are worse here than almost anywhere else. We must elect new leaders who have a plan and are ready to build this country back, better.