

Messaging checklist for advocates to build solidarity across difference

Race and class messaging toolkit

What we are aiming for:

A conversation about politics and inequality which builds solidarity across ordinary people to address the urgent issues facing society today.

What we're up against:

- 1. Ordinary people in the UK have been actively held back** by precariousness, lack of voice, prejudice and loss of community space; from the rural towns of Northern England to the tower blocks of London.¹
- 2. Instead of seeing their voices and struggles centred on the political agenda, communities have been divided and pitched against one another** in the public debate, often along the lines of Brexiteers/Remainers, deserving/undeserving, British/foreigner, white/BME, white/migrant.
- 3. 'Divide and rule' tactics have fuelled scaremongering and prejudice against migrants and people of colour and distracted us** from addressing the urgent issues facing communities today: a rigged system privileging a wealthy few at the top.
- 4. This needs to change.**

What we're proposing: Many of us - advocates for race, class and/or immigration justice in the UK - have unintentionally reinforced the narratives of our opponents by discussing our issues in isolation. Building on race and class messaging and framing work in the US and the UK, as well as our own research, **here's a checklist to ensure our messages keep challenging 'divide and rule' while building solidarity across difference.** We identify 12 common traps on both the content and the form of our conversations on race, class and immigration. To any of those traps, we propose alternatives for strong messaging to engage our supporters and persuade those who can be.

Toolkit edited by Laurie Mompelat

¹ Snoussi, D. and Mompelat, L. (2019) 'We Are Ghosts': Race, Class and Institutional Prejudice, London: The Runnymede Trust and The Centre for Labour And Social Studies. Available at: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/We%20Are%20Ghosts.pdf>

The 'what to say' checklist

DON'T	INSTEAD, DO	SO THAT...
<p>1.</p> <p>Ignore the challenges and fears facing working-class people today</p>	<p>Recognize that the working-class has not only been left behind, but actively held back by precariousness, prejudice, lack of power and loss of community space. Highlight that such issues affect all working-class people, regardless of their skin colour or where they come from.</p>	<p>We avoid division and open up a conversation on how to actually address these challenges: investing in communities and services, tackling disadvantage, strengthening voice and participation, creating jobs, etc.</p>
<p>2.</p> <p>Ignore race/immigration as a part of the conversation</p>	<p>Talk about race openly and frame racism/scapegoating of migrant/BME communities as a tool to divide and thus harm all of us, whilst worsening already existing prejudice towards people of colour.</p> <p>Provide another frame to understand cross-racial relationships: tell positive stories of people coming together across difference within their communities and highlight proud moments in British history where people from different groups have stood up for each other: Manchester cotton boycott (1862), the battle of cable street (1936), Windrush campaigns and the Stansted 15 (2018).</p>	<p>We recognize migrant/BME people's experience of prejudice and connect it to working-class struggle.</p> <p>We avoid leaving the conversation on race and immigration open to those fuelling racially charged scaremongering and 'divide and rule' rhetoric.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>Portray working-class and migrant/BME communities as separate</p>	<p>Tell stories to highlight that they are (and have always been) overlapping, often living alongside each other within diverse neighbourhoods with shared experience of precariousness and prejudice, and with the potential to step up for each other to resist the status quo (e.g. Grenfell United).</p>	<p>We undo the myth of 'white working-class' interests pitched against those of migrant/BME communities, often to justify immigration policies that dehumanize migrants without improving the condition of anyone on low income.</p>
<p>4.</p> <p>Frame immigration as harmful to workers' rights and wages</p>	<p>Talk about exploitation from employers as a practice harming working people of all backgrounds: migrants get thrown under the bus but British workers also lose out when attention is diverted away from the employers and CEOs profiting from everyone's bad working conditions.</p>	<p>We avoid justifying policies that dehumanize migrant communities and fuel fear across public services and local neighbourhoods (e.g. arbitrary detention and deportation), while little is done to improve workers' conditions.</p>
<p>5.</p> <p>Ignore the role of identity and belonging in shaping people's lives and concerns</p>	<p>Appeal to people's sense of identity by celebrating belonging to local communities and willingness to stand up for each other to create a better society.</p> <p>Remind the role of a multi-ethnic working-class (from the mills of Wigan to the sugarcane fields of Jamaica) in making Britain and British culture what it is today (from the football teams we love to the Indian restaurant down the road).</p>	<p>We avoid identity being associated with a desire for exclusion based on race.</p>
<p>6.</p> <p>Oppose the fight against racism to the class struggle</p>	<p>Recognize that both race and class inequality have historically allowed a wealthy few to accumulate resources at the expense of most of us. Highlight the need to speak about both race and class injustice as a key step towards being heard: when we are united, it is more difficult for our opponents to ignore our claims for justice.</p>	<p>We make it harder for opponents to dismiss our voices or ignore our issues.</p>

The 'how to say it' checklist

DON'T	INSTEAD, DO	SO THAT...
<p>7. Stick to myth-busting</p>	<p>Mobilize positive values and feelings of compassion and solidarity to counteract affects such as fear of scarcity or 'queue-jumping' anxieties. Appeal to the person your conversation partner would like to think of themselves as (e.g. someone who believes in community and justice).</p>	<p>We address the affects fuelled by scaremongering not with mere facts, but with another affective frame that activates instead common values of compassion, solidarity and humanity.</p>
<p>8. Reproduce divides between deserving and undeserving people (even if it is to defend or champion migrant/BME groups)</p>	<p>Highlight how structures are set up in ways that require certain people to work twice as hard to get half as far, which is unfair and detrimental for society as a whole. When so many people are held back from fulfilling their potential, we are all missing out.</p>	<p>We avoid justifying policies that cut support for working-class, migrant/BME and other disadvantaged groups (e.g. funding cuts).</p>
<p>9. Talk about the 'problems' people face without portraying them as humans with agency, a voice and a story</p>	<p>Tell stories about people who are part of our communities, and whose challenges are only a facet of their experience as people living in our society. Always mention people's own demands and resistance against the conditions they are facing.</p>	<p>We avoid reproducing dehumanizing rhetoric by reducing people to conditions they were often forced into (e.g. precariousness, poverty, racism, asylum seeking, etc.).</p>
<p>10. Talk on behalf of people in working-class/migrant/BME communities without including their voices</p>	<p>Whenever possible, platform and amplify the voices of those most affected or connect your arguments to your personal experience.</p>	<p>People who have been wrongfully silenced and erased regain agency over their own narratives. Those narratives also become more powerful as they are informed by people's actual stories and experience.</p>
<p>11. Discuss the problems without offering solutions</p>	<p>Provide solutions² and highlight how we can all contribute (e.g. by creating public momentum). Invoke stories of battles won in the past (e.g. Manchester cotton boycott, Battle of Cable Street, Dagenham Women's Strike, Windrush and Stansted 15 campaigns) and connect this to present-day potential. One way of doing this is tell positive stories of local solidarity across difference (e.g. Focus E15, Grenfell United, the Trump March, workers and students' climate strikes, Migrants Organise) to highlight that change is already taking place as people come together to take action.</p>	<p>We combat cynicism and the idea that nothing can be done, as we provide a positive vision instead of just a critique.</p>
<p>12. Assume audiences will respond to your messages in the ways you intend</p>	<p>Think critically about the audience you want to reach, what is likely to be on their mind, what they are hearing from your opponents, and adapt your messages accordingly. If you can, test responses to your messages beforehand (with friends, family, colleagues or through online testing).</p>	<p>You ensure that your messages do not only reach your audience but effectively persuade those who can be.</p>

² For practical policy responses to race and class inequality, see the executive summary of 'We Are Ghosts': Race, Class and Institutional Prejudice. Available at: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/images/We%20Are%20Ghosts%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

About the race and class messaging toolkit:

The narratives outlined in this toolkit have been carefully designed using insights from our own research on race and class '[We Are Ghosts: Race, Class and Institutional Prejudice](#)' as well as from:

- Demos (2018) Race-Class: Our Progressive Narrative, available at: https://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/Race_Class_Narrative_Handout_large-print_0.pdf
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Frameworks Institute (2019) FRAMING toolkit #TalkingAboutPoverty, available at: <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/framing-toolkit-talking-about-poverty>
- Lingayah, S., Khan, O. and McIntosh, K. for Runnymede and Voice4Change (2018) Making the case for racial equality: the potential and limits of 'framing', available at: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/Making-the-Case-for-Race-Equality%20-%20full%20report%20final.pdf>
- Clarke, C. for Global Dialogue (2017) Segmentation research on public attitudes to immigration.
- Katwala, S., Ballinger, S. and Rhodes, M. for British Future (2014) How to talk about migration, available at: <https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/How-To-Talk-About-Immigration-FINAL.pdf>