



Framing and Messaging Around Race in America

The Opportunity Agenda

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The Opportunity Agenda

ANALYZING

Opinion & Media Research
Social Science Research
Law and Policy

TRANSLATING

Tools
Training
Strategy

BUILDING

Public Support
& Public Policies to
Expand Opportunity



Today

- Messaging Background: discourse and attitudes around race in America
- Messaging Recommendations
- Messaging in Action: Promoting an equitable economic recovery



Messaging Background: Our Opponents' Narrative

- Racism is “largely” over; fading over time...
- People of color obsessed with race...
- Discussing race is divisive...
- Discussing race is opportunistic demagoguery...
- Civil rights as a crutch against individual “merit”...
- Modern inequality is not racism; it’s just life...
- “New” immigrants as threat to native born white &
black



Messaging Background: American Attitudes on Racial Justice

- Belief in the *ideal* of equal opportunity
- Disagree about the *existence* of racial discrimination and *inequality*—with major racial differences in opinion
- Invested in the story of the “self-made person”/
individual responsibility
- Perception that people of color violate that norm.
- Ambivalent about *remedies* for *unequal* opportunity



Messaging Background: American Attitudes on Racial Justice

Equal Opportunity

- 60% of Americans think that white and black people have an **equal chance of getting ahead**
 - **More African Americans than ever believe this but still not a majority (44%)**
- **73%: “African Americans have reached or will soon achieve racial equality”** *April 2009*

Personal Responsibility vs. Equal Opportunity

- “Failure to take advantage of available opportunities (62%) rather than discrimination by whites is more of a problem for blacks today (21%).” *April 2008*



American Attitudes: Equality, Fairness and Freedom from discrimination

Vast majorities “strongly” believe that:

- Equal opportunities regardless of race (86%),
- Being treated fairly in the justice system (83%), or
- Freedom from discrimination (83%)

are human rights, and

- Racial profiling (84%), or
- Police stopping people solely based on their race (84% agree)

are violations of their human rights



Messaging Recommendations:



Recommendations for Talking About Race in the Age of Obama

- Acknowledge Progress
- What Does Discrimination Look Like?
- Are We There Yet? The Search for A Post-Racial America



Recommendations for Talking About Race in the Age of Obama

- Model Contributions not Deficits
- Stay on Message: Themes not Episodes
- Focus on Solutions
- Link Racial Justice Solutions with Broader Efforts to Expand Opportunity
- Keeping the Faith



Messaging in Action: Promoting an Equitable Economic Recovery



Goals of Economic Recovery Work

- **Main Premise:** Economic recovery is a moment of public investment for all Americans
- Ensure that stimulus and economic recovery funds invest in all groups and communities
- Use an emphasis on “all” communities as an opening to highlight communities facing multiple barriers to opportunity, now and historically.





Basic Elements of the Narrative

- Equal levels of access regardless of race/ethnicity, gender, disability
- Public spending can help or harm communities
- Recovery can and must be transformative
- Transparency/accountability = equity



Key Values Inherent to Economic Recovery

- **Community:** “We are all in it together”
- **Opportunity:** “Everyone deserves a fair chance”
- **Security:** “Tools and resources to support their families”
- **Mobility:** “Opportunity to move forward”
- **Equality:** “What we look like should not determine our status”

It is in everyone’s interest to ensure that all Americans have economic security and the opportunity to move forward.



Opportunity is a core American value. It means that everyone needs a fair chance to reach his or her full potential.

Value

However, despite real progress in some areas, unequal access to opportunity still persists, particularly for communities of color, and hurts us all. It's put our economy at risk. It violates our core values.

Problem

For example, people of color were three times as likely to be offered high-interest sub-prime loans than otherwise-similar white borrowers. As a result, foreclosure rates are higher in these groups, and they are losing the most secure path to building wealth: homeownership. This has reverberating effects on the national economy.

Solution

Recovering from this financial crisis demands new rules for a 21st century global economy. We need to connect all communities to economic opportunity.

Action

Urge the Administration to ...



Specific “Value/Problem” Statements on Economic Recovery

- This moment of economic recovery is an opportunity to make transformative change in our country. It should not just take us back to where we were when the economy collapsed, because there were stark disparities in the lives and realities of communities of color and women:
 - In 2008, African American individual income was about 76% of white median income, and Latinos made about 72% of white income.
 - In 2008, women made about 77% the median income of male income. African American women made about 67% of male income, and Latinas made about 57% of male income.

(State of Opportunity in America, 2010 Update:
www.opportunityagenda.org/stateofopportunity)



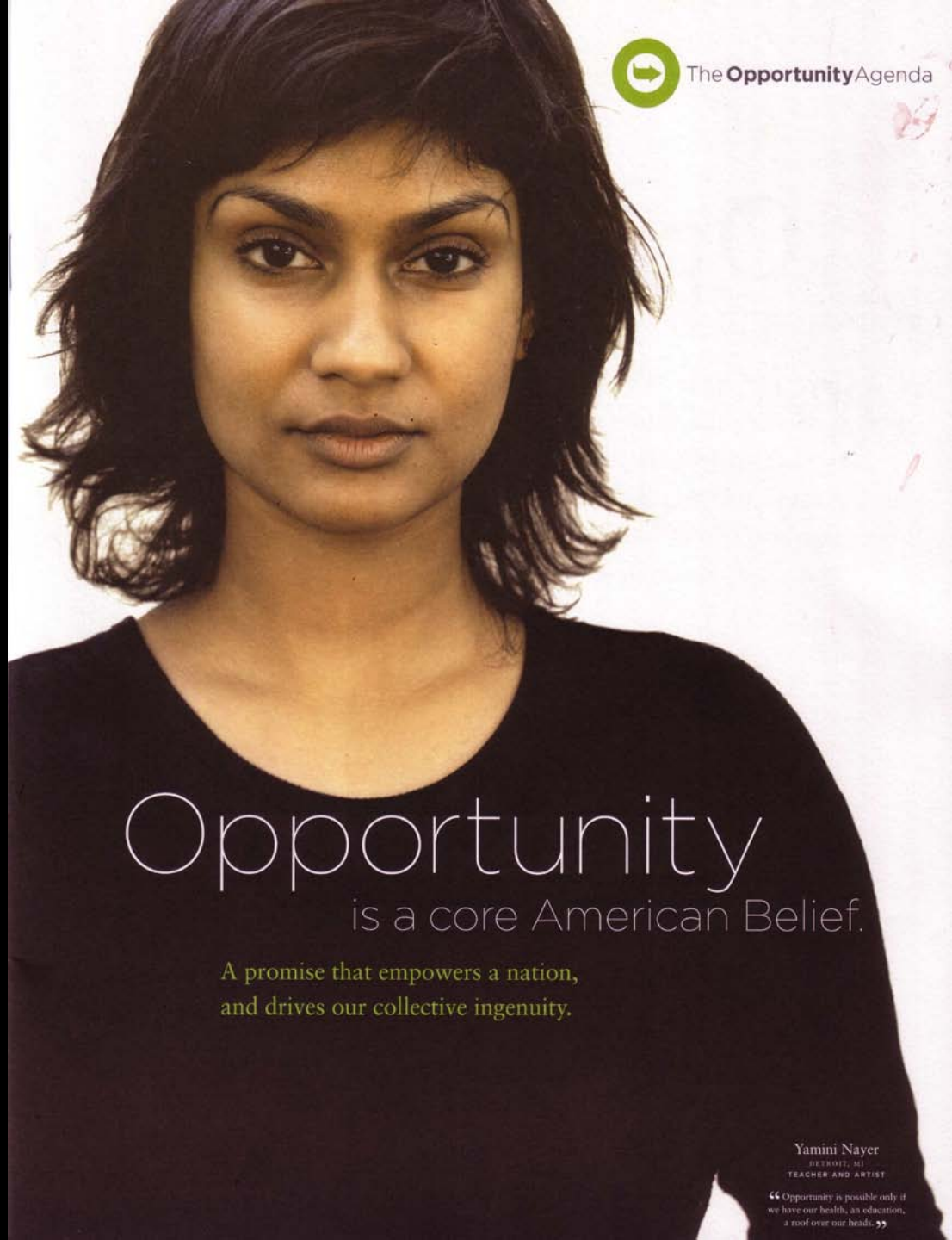
Specific “Value/Problem” Statements on Economic Recovery

- We call on the Administration to ensure that public investments offer equal and expanded opportunity for everyone and lift the common good.
 - Meet with or write to state/local officials to request their compliance plans
 - Write blog posts/letters to the editor/comments on blogs and articles
 - Monitor flow of funds in your area





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Opportunity

is a core American Belief.

A promise that empowers a nation,
and drives our collective ingenuity.

Yamini Nayer
DETROIT, MI
TEACHER AND ARTIST

“Opportunity is possible only if
we have our health, an education,
a roof over our heads.”