



The Impeachment Inquiry: Now What? Talking About the Values of a Just and Inclusive Democracy

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The recent impeachment inquiry announced by House leadership presents social justice advocates with a unique opportunity to weigh in on why this administration and its values must be interrogated. While it is important to continue to rebuff the many actions of unfitness of this president, we should use this period when the media is focused on the impeachment inquiry to express as effectively as possible the values that the inquiry is demanding. Articulately expressing this is as important as the impeachment inquiry itself, and the facts and evidence that it will eventually reveal.

The Opportunity Agenda is providing this **messaging memo** as a reminder that the impeachment inquiry presents us with a unique opportunity to reinforce the story of the Constitution's inherent values, and why we must not allow them to be taken for granted or disregarded by anyone, most especially the President of the United States. The tips below are intended for doing so.

When Talking About Impeachment, Do:

1. **Start communications with the values at stake.** It's easy to get lost in the panoply of troubling actions this administration has undertaken, let alone those that have risen to impeachable offenses. Remind people that our country has proven that it can rise above injustice when we all work together to do so. And as the most effective communicators remind us, it's important to show audiences what we are *for* more than what we are against, consistently focusing on the value and aspiration of an inclusive democracy. It's crucial to show that it's not just about being against this administration, but more importantly, organizing to protect our democracy from the threats the administration presents over and over again.

Value statement: Our country has risen above before, and we must rise above now.

2. **Emphasize the variety of solutions we can undertake to protect our democracy from this administration, but during this time, keep coming back to the option that is being discussed most: the impeachment inquiry.** As social justice leaders in our history have shown us time and time again, the clarion call that enunciates the values that we believe in — and why those values must never be conceded — is critical to our country's long and complicated march toward justice. During this unusual time, it is also important to remember that there are many interventions and solutions that can be applied simultaneously. In fact, there is nothing in the Constitution that precludes a president from being held to account, or even impeached, over multiple actions at the same time, nor is there anything that suggests that actions falling short of high crimes and misdemeanors should not also be held to account with censure, and proper oversight or litigation. Clarify what the current option — the impeachment inquiry — is intending to do. The framers created our divided system of government with an executive, judicial, and legislative branch for this sole purpose: to advance a separation of balanced powers so



that each branch could be given ways to check the power of the other. It is essential that we continue to remind audiences of this important point, and that we stay the course.

Value statement: The impeachment inquiry is one important tool to expose evidence and get to solutions.

3. **Shine the light on, and underscore, the democratic values laid out in the U.S. Constitution for the role of power in a balanced government.** Although the framers were most certainly exclusive in their own right, the theories and intentions they memorialized in the Constitution for the most part were not. It's important to present the values that we aspire to in our democracy, which are framed in the Constitution. This is again an opportunity to note the progress that we have historically made toward the integrity of inclusivity of *all people*, while at the same time recognizing that we are on a journey toward justice that this president must respect. It is important to remind audiences long before the 2020 elections that the duty to adhere to the democratic principles, values, and themes outlined in the Constitution is for all of us to do, particularly the members of The U.S. House of Representatives as they use their power to launch the impeachment inquiry.

Value statement: The U.S. House of Representatives is meant to be the peoples' House, the body that should be about representing *all of us* and using *everything in its power* – including the impeachment inquiry – to impugn anything that gets in the way of fairness, accountability, and government for the people.

4. **Talk about the ways in which this country should be setting the standard for – not shirking responsibility or disregarding – the integrity of the office of the presidency.** Underscore that corruption and disregard for the Constitution or the judicial and legislative branches is an attack on our values, our democracy, and ultimately on all of us. Share why and how you think the United States should be leading the way in these areas, and how we cannot concede anything less until we do.

Values to uplift: Integrity, Rule of Law, Accountability

5. **Share the ways in which this president and the administration should be held to account for a range of actions, and how the impeachment inquiry is one way to do so on the issue of President Trump's involvement with Ukraine, and the integrity of our elections and democracy.** Make sure that when talking about the impeachment inquiry, the issue of the integrity of our elections and democracy are central to what you discuss. Remember that the issue that the impeachment inquiry is considering is whether the president called for a foreign leader to meddle in our system of democracy for his political gain. Don't stray from the message that this is at odds with what our democracy stands for and use it as an opportunity to call out the values that we aspire to. You can point to the other injustices not being investigated in the inquiry – just make sure to pivot back to the point.



Remember to: Keep communications focused on the values that the president has and how he continues to violate those inherent to our democracy: The Constitution's provision of checks and balances; a responsible and accountable government.

When Talking About Impeachment, *Don't*:

- 1. Just call for impeachment without laying out why.** Again, laying out the facts and evidence for impeachment, along with the compelling case for how our values must be upheld with the impeachment inquiry as a tool to ensure doing so, is critical.

Remember to: Stay focused on the impeachment inquiry's objectives.

- 2. Assume your audience understands the impeachment inquiry, or the process.** The impeachment process is confusing, takes time and is structured in a way in which both the House and Senate take action. First, the House conducts the inquiry, and then a vote to impeach is considered. The Senate determines whether to hold a trial and vote on the president's fitness and removal, which is in no way guaranteed to happen given the politics of doing so, Senate leadership, and other dynamics. Audiences should be reminded that their statements and actions are critical in this process as a way to underscore the importance of the inquiry.

Remember to: Provide people with the basics about the impeachment process.

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