



Talking About Poverty & Economic Opportunity Today: Three Core Pillars

The following core pillars offer tips for discussing the values and connections we share, some of the origins of poverty and the importance of creating opportunities for *everyone*.

CONNECTIONS:	SOLUTIONS:	JUSTICE:
<p>CONNECTIONS: We move forward together.</p> <p>Remind audiences that our destiny is shared, and that we are stronger when we work together. We should discredit distinctions that pit “us vs. them” and divide us, particularly along racial and ethnic lines.</p> <p>When talking about our shared future, it is helpful to highlight goals we all have in common: to be able to provide for our families, live in healthy and thriving communities, and watch our children move forward in life. We should focus on these shared tangible goals, while emphasizing that government is instrumental in realizing this vision.</p> <p>Use language that emphasizes how <i>everyone</i> benefits when our public policies and programs allow <i>all</i> of our communities to thrive. Conversely, because we’re all connected, inequality and bad policies hurt us all – threatening our values and disrupting our communities.</p> <p>Our messaging should inspire everyone – especially strategic audiences – to see beyond political rhetoric and think about the kind of country we aspire to be.</p>	<p>SOLUTIONS: We can create an economy that works for all, with our government playing a key role.</p> <p>A consistent barrier to productive conversations about poverty is the notion that it's somehow inevitable. We need to remind audiences that our economy and its effects on people are the result of deliberate policies that benefit some over others. We have both the power and responsibility to end poverty and we can do that through government action.</p> <p>We must center ourselves in – and remind those around us of – the <i>abundance frame</i>: that there is enough to go around. Through the ingenuity of our collective efforts and by scaling up innovative solutions that have been working in communities across the United States, we can achieve true economic opportunity for <i>everyone</i>.</p> <p>Remind audiences that we must work together to protect the public programs and policies – Medicaid, CHIP, SNAP, and other initiatives – that help people get back on their feet in hard times, or when they face long-term obstacles.</p> <p>Ending poverty is within our reach. It is the responsibility of our society and nation to create economic opportunity and eliminate poverty without criminalizing or stigmatizing those affected by it. We have the power to do so.</p>	<p>JUSTICE: We all have a responsibility to address systemic injustice.</p> <p>Most Americans agree that today's current economic system is off track because it results in ever-increasing inequality and persistent poverty. Remind audiences that this is due to systemic injustices; not the sum of an individual's personal choices. In the past, powerful interests created and promoted economic policies (and continue to do so) that favored some populations and discriminated against others on the basis of race, ethnicity, and gender.</p> <p>Today, politicians attack anti-poverty policies and programs based on deep-seated stereotypes or short-term political goals. These tactics are often rooted in legacies of racism and classism. Myths about the individual effort required to pull oneself up by one's bootstraps persist and ignore the policy and structural change we need.</p> <p>Messaging about poverty and economic opportunity must continuously counter politicians' discriminatory strategies. We have to remind audiences that a just economic system works for everyone, regardless of what you look like or where you come from, and that workers have more in common with each other and greater interest in each other's well-being than corporations and the 1% do.</p>

Suggested Language:	Suggested Language:	Suggested Language:
<p>We want our nation to live up to the values we share: full and equal opportunity, community, mobility, and economic security.</p> <p>We all want:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ to be able to provide for our families; ➤ have equal access to health care; ➤ live in thriving communities; ➤ watch our children move forward in life; ➤ the chance to age and retire with dignity. <p>We must see beyond political rhetoric and think about the kind of country we aspire to be.</p> <p><i>Everyone</i> benefits when our public policies and programs allow <i>all</i> of our communities to thrive. Our destinies are shared. We are stronger when we work together, and weaker when are pitted against one another.</p>	<p>Our government helps to improve public life: agencies and programs such as Social Security, the Centers for Disease Control and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) have helped millions of American families in hard times. We must protect these programs.</p> <p>The government should do more to reduce the gap between the rich and poor. Through the leadership of people living in poverty, the ingenuity of our collective efforts, and the expansion of innovative solutions, we can achieve true economic opportunity for <i>everyone</i>.</p> <p>In our work forward together, we must center and uplift the voices of people who have experienced poverty directly and recognize their critical role in identifying and attaining solutions.</p>	<p>The economy is the sum of our activity, shaped by the decisions, policies, and practices that specific decision-makers pursue -- not an uncontrollable force or state of nature. The racial and gender inequities we see today are a direct product of discriminatory political decisions. To build the economy of the future, we must address these injustices and the legacies of our past.</p> <p>Powerful interests, such as politicians, the wealthy, and corporations, continue to create and promote economic policies that favor themselves and discriminate against others based on race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, and ability.</p> <p>There is a significant gulf between our vision of equal opportunity and the daily reality for millions of people living in poverty.</p> <p>We must challenge systemic threats to economic opportunity: harmful policies based on racist and classist perceptions of people living in poverty, misinformation, and biases. We must address unequal obstacles to opportunity based on the color of your skin, your accent, the zip code where you were born, or other aspects of who you are. We can do better.</p>