

# BLUEPRINT FOR BELONGING NARRATIVE ROADMAP

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9.29.2020



Othering  
& Belonging  
Institute

INLAND  
EMPOWERMENT

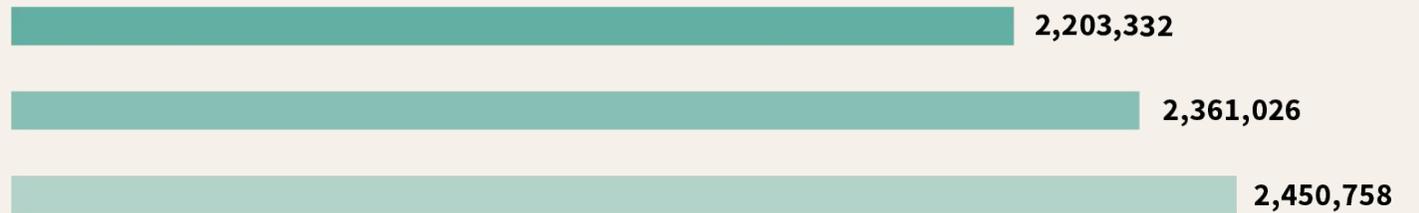
The Inland Empire is  
**fast growing and**  
**demographically**  
**shifting**

It is working class, and  
big box logistics companies  
dominate the economy

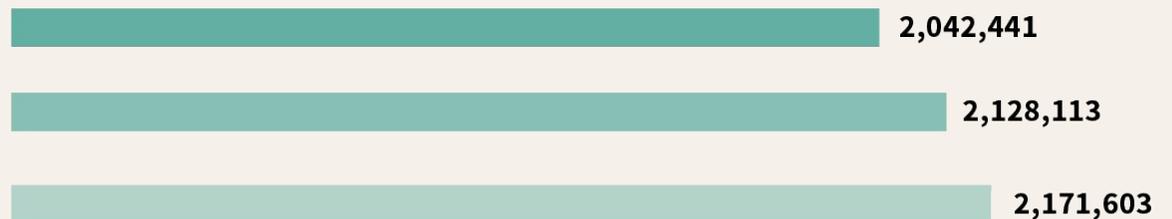
### Growth of total population

■ 2010 ■ 2015 ■ 2018

#### RIVERSIDE COUNTY

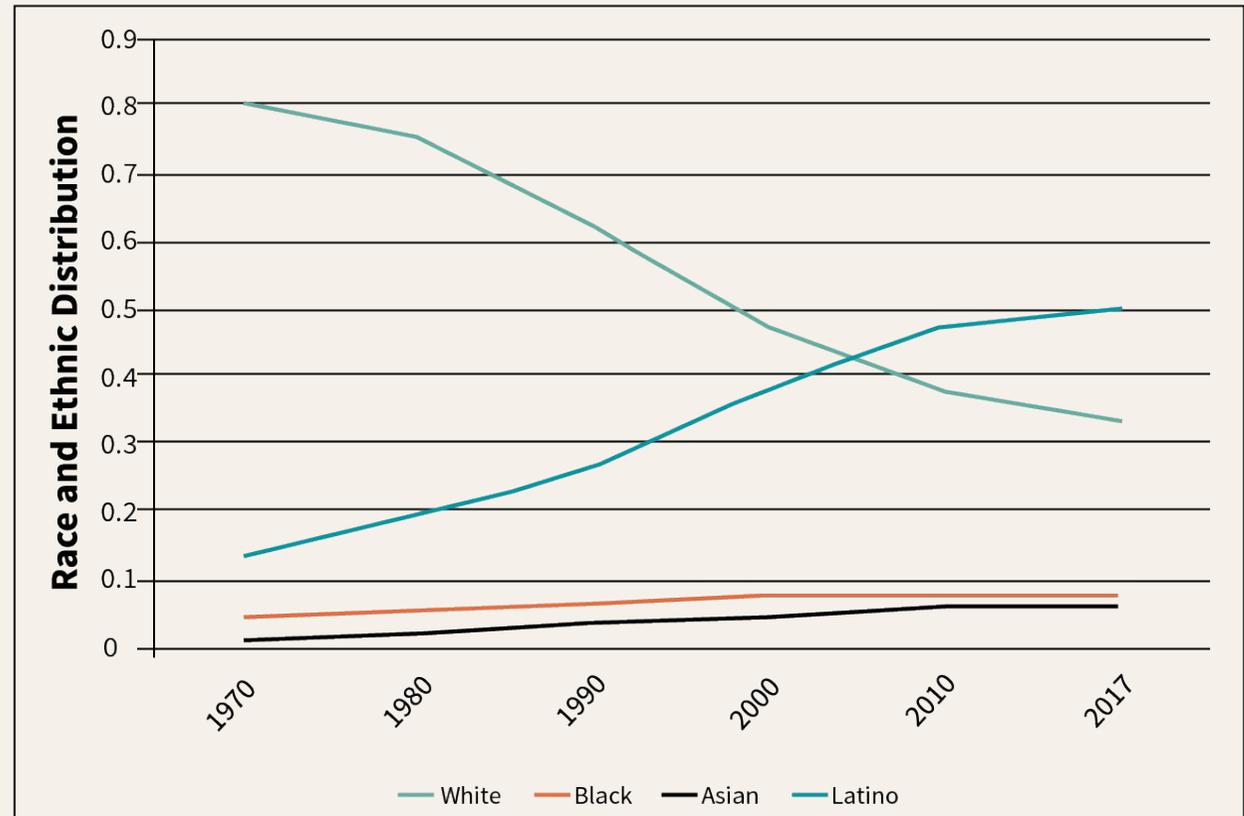


#### SAN BERNADINO COUNTY



The region has seen a significant growth in **communities of color** over the last 50 years, going from predominantly white to majority people of color

**Inland Empire Demographic Distribution, 1970-2017**



**Inland Empire Demographic Distribution, 1970-2017**

Data source: US Census Bureau

Reprinted from: Kfir Mordechay, "Inland Boom and Bust: Race, Place, and the Lasting Consequences of the Southern California Housing Bubble," Paper commissioned by the Blueprint for Belonging project, December 2019.

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How do we build a  
**unified and powerful**  
**political identity**  
across all  
communities in the  
Inland Empire?



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# Blueprint for Belonging led research on what stories bring people together and which keep them apart

## ■ Research, Analysis, and Visioning

OBI carried out field research, led workshops with civic and grassroots organizations on the region's future, and worked with A/B Partners and Inland Empowerment to identify and distill learnings into potential messaging frames

## ■ Narrative Development

OBI and A/B Partners created narratives based on message frames, research and several rounds of feedback from OBI and the Inland Empowerment coalition

## ■ Regional Survey

OBI surveyed 1,500 demographically and geographically representative respondents in the Inland Empire to ensure narrative resonance across the region

## ■ Communications Roadmap

A/B Partners and OBI developed a communications roadmap with suggested messaging frames, stories, and content

We found that:

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**Too many IE residents don't feel a sense of belonging**



**in their neighborhoods (25%)**



**in their public places (37%)**



**in their schools (39%)**

We found that:

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Especially those who have been historically **excluded**  
**from power**



**Women of Color**



**Young People (Aged 18-39)**



**Unemployed People**

We found that:

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**Governments aren't doing enough, and those in power have manipulated public conversations to **maintain that power****

### Scarcity Narratives

Scarcity narratives push the idea that there is not enough to go around: not enough jobs, homes, and resources for everyone. In this story, we're told to feel lucky for what we get, and that if more people come to the IE, that means fewer resources for everyone else.

### Anti-Tax Narratives

Anti-tax narratives push the idea that increasing taxes on corporations is not fair to entrepreneurs, or will mean fewer jobs and higher prices in the IE for everyone. These narratives lose the nuance about different tax rates for large corporations versus small businesses and wealthy individuals.

### Anti-Government Narratives

Anti-government narratives push the ideas that our governments are incompetent, corrupt, and tax hard-working people only to enrich themselves. These narratives suggest that individuals are always better off keeping resources to themselves — away from government. They direct hostility toward government in general to distract from the real problem: dramatically unequal power and influence over what government does, and for whom.

**These narratives create divisions  
between people in the Inland Empire  
in three key ways**

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- Dominant narratives try to pit Black and Latinx communities against one another.
  - OBI research suggests that these narratives have not resonated widely, but still pose a threat. Black and Latinx survey participants were most likely to see themselves as competing for jobs *with whites*. However, 38% of Black men say they perceive job competition with Latinxs.

# 1

## DIVISIONS BETWEEN RACIAL GROUPS

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- Survey results point to opportunities for bridging between Black and Latinx communities.
  - More than 50% of Latinxs in the IE say African Americans have “too little” influence on CA politics; more than 50% of African Americans in the IE say the same of Latinxs.
  - ~60% of Black and Latina *women* in the IE recognize the other group as having too little influence.
  - Young people (18-29) are especially attuned to under-representation of Black and Latinx Californians.

# 1

## DIVISIONS BETWEEN RACIAL GROUPS

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- Latinx members of focus groups revealed intra-group prejudice that echo white racist tropes – ideas about “good” vs. “bad” Latinxs and/or immigrants.

# 2

## DIVISIONS WITHIN RACIAL GROUPS

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- According to Blueprint for Belonging's survey, IE residents, relative to OC residents, did not have more gratitude for warehouse and logistics workers on the frontlines in the Covid-19 crisis, despite these workers being their neighbors.
  - When one interviewee tried to organize a protest of unfair working conditions at a warehouse, non-workers said that it wasn't their fight because it was in the warehouse, not in their community.

# 3

## **DIVISIONS BETWEEN LOGISTICS WORKERS AND OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

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“We never have transparency about [the government’s tax revenue]. **Even if I feel like they tax the wealthy more, again... that money is going to come right back at them.** It's like, ‘It's going away now, but look over here. Why isn't this program improving if we're taking more away from the top?’”

*-Focus Group Respondent*

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## **IE residents did not trust that government will invest in communities of color to address these divisions**

- Only one in three IE residents said that they are feeling “more grateful” toward state and local government since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis.
- Focus group participants expressed deep doubts that increasing government revenue would benefit their communities of color, based on histories of neglect and exclusion.

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I actually haven't been [voting], only because I **didn't feel that I was educating myself** enough into knowing the candidates or the bills or whatever

*Latina, 29, Hesperia*

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## **Mobilizing communities to vote is a critical goal, but it is a weak starting point for engagement**

- Among potential and infrequent voters, the barrier to voting was not thinking that “elections aren’t important” but counting themselves out – discounting their own ability to engage politically.
- More than one third of young people 18-29 years old, and around half of Spanish-dominant Latinxs in the IE said they believe “most people are better informed about politics and government than I am”.

**What stories have the power to unite  
people in the IE?**

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## Four narrative elements can help unite the IE

**1.**

USE  
PLACE-BASED  
IDENTIFICATION

**2.**

DEMONSTRATE  
CORPORATE  
EXTRACTION OF  
WEALTH

**3.**

CALL OUT RACIAL  
SCAPEGOATING

**4.**

EMPHASIZE  
COLLECTIVE  
POWER WHILE  
ACKNOWLEDGING  
CYNICISM

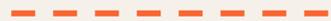
# Our final story has all these elements

## 1. USE PLACE-BASED IDENTIFICATION



**From the High Desert to Temecula, Ontario to MoVal to Coachella, people who stay in the IE are proud of our community.** We're not LA or Orange County, but in our corner of California, we make the most of what we've got. Lately, though, it seems like too many of us are struggling just to keep our heads above water, **being kept stuck in place by big corporations that just want to profit off of us.** We pay taxes that should go back into our community, but too many politicians who have been bought are just concerned about filling their pockets instead.

## 2. DEMONSTRATE CORPORATE EXTRACTION OF WEALTH



## 3. CALL OUT RACIAL SCAPEGOATING EXPLICITLY



**Some people try to explain why we're struggling by pointing to people of other races—saying immigrants take our jobs, or Black people don't work hard enough. But that's not right and we know it.** We all need to get out of this dog-eat-dog mentality. That's how we can force big corporations to treat us fairly. That's how we can take back the government so that it meets the needs of the community. **We can join with our friends and coworkers to demand good jobs, actual benefits, a safe environment, and the possibility of achieving the life that we're striving for. Because if we come together as one, we can rise together.**

## 4. EMPHASIZE COLLECTIVE POWER WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING CYNICISM



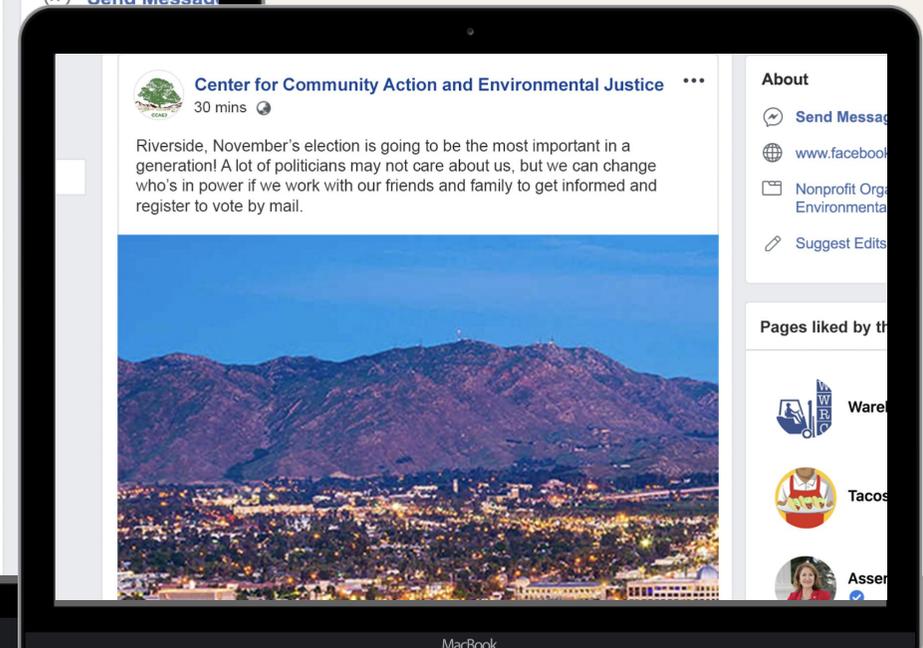
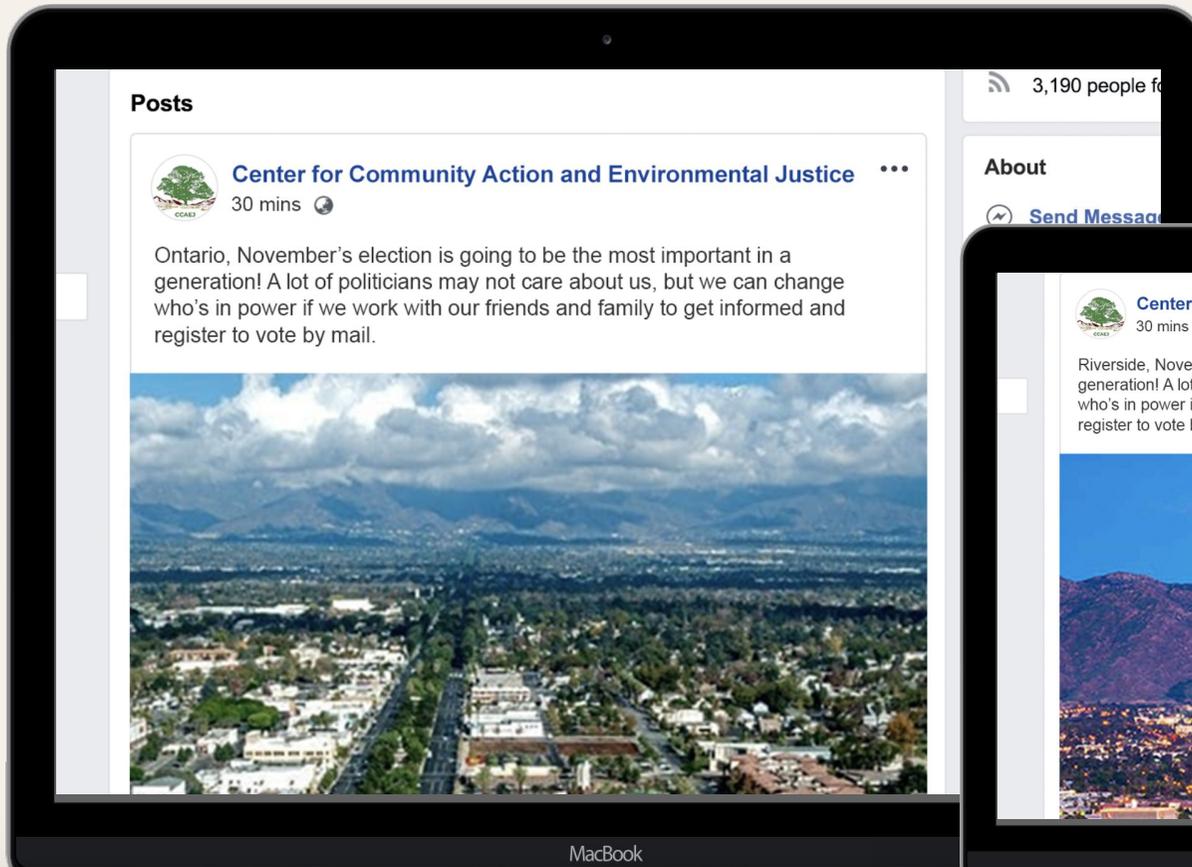
From the High Desert to Temecula, Ontario to MoVal to Coachella,  
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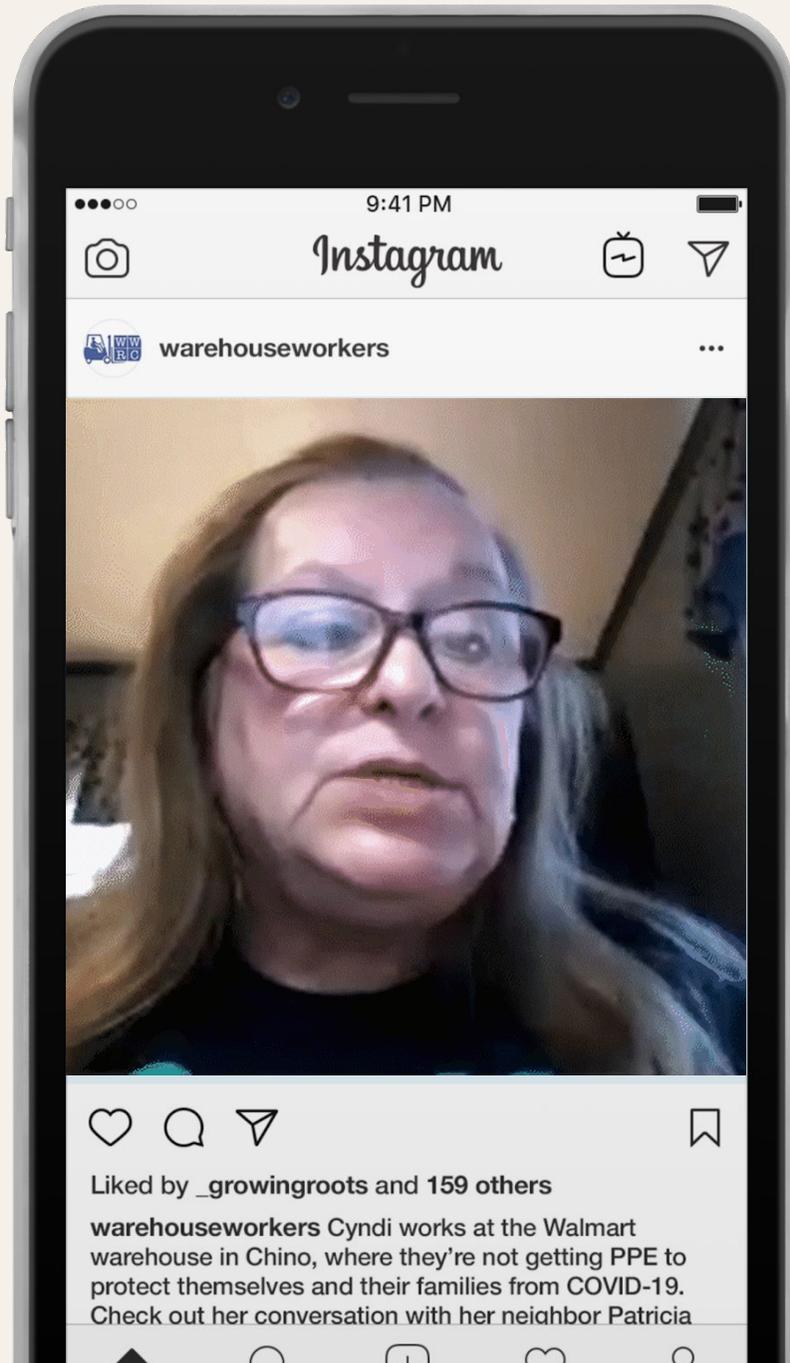
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## 1. USE PLACE-BASED IDENTIFICATION

- Naming specific locations allows audiences to self-locate in the narrative—this holds even though not all people use the 'IE' moniker
- A local messenger can endear the audience to your message

# Naming specific locations allows target audiences to self-locate in the narrative





## Using a trusted local messenger can endear a message to your audience

- Local messengers can break through the noise - especially on social
- In this example, a warehouse worker at Walmart talks to a community member about why PPE must be supplied to warehouse workers to protect them and their community from COVID-19

It seems like too many of us are struggling just to keep our heads above water, being kept stuck in place by **big corporations that just want to profit off of us**

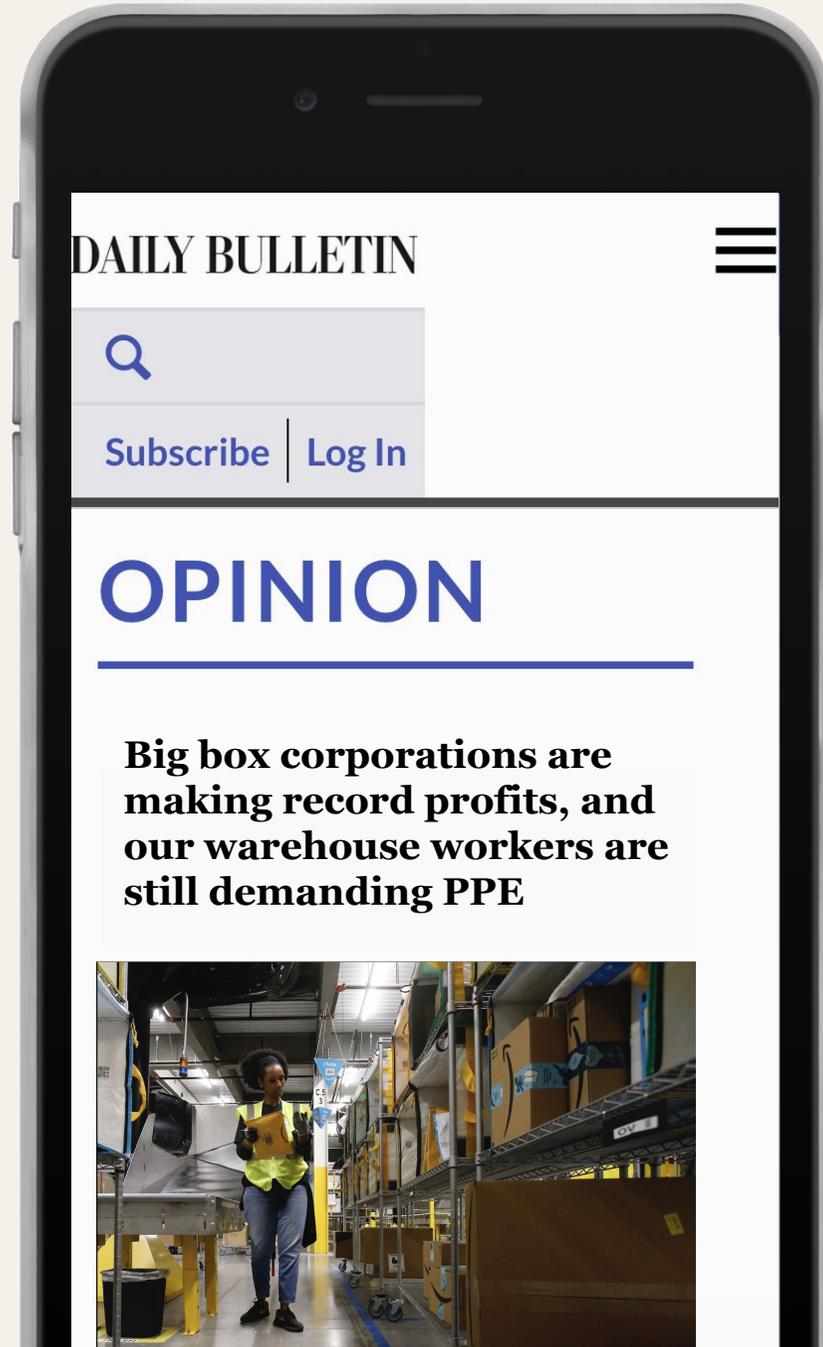
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## 2. DEMONSTRATE CORPORATE EXTRACTION OF WEALTH

- Use collective language to describe the struggle, using imagery that is focused on those most impacted. This makes the point less about placing blame and more about coming together
- Refer to corporations rather than “the wealthy” to communicate the scale of inequity and to spur action to address it

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Use collective language to describe the struggle, using imagery that is focused on those most affected



Some people try to explain **why we're struggling** by pointing to people of other races—saying immigrants take our jobs, or Black people don't work hard enough

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### 3. CALL OUT RACIAL SCAPEGOATING EXPLICITLY

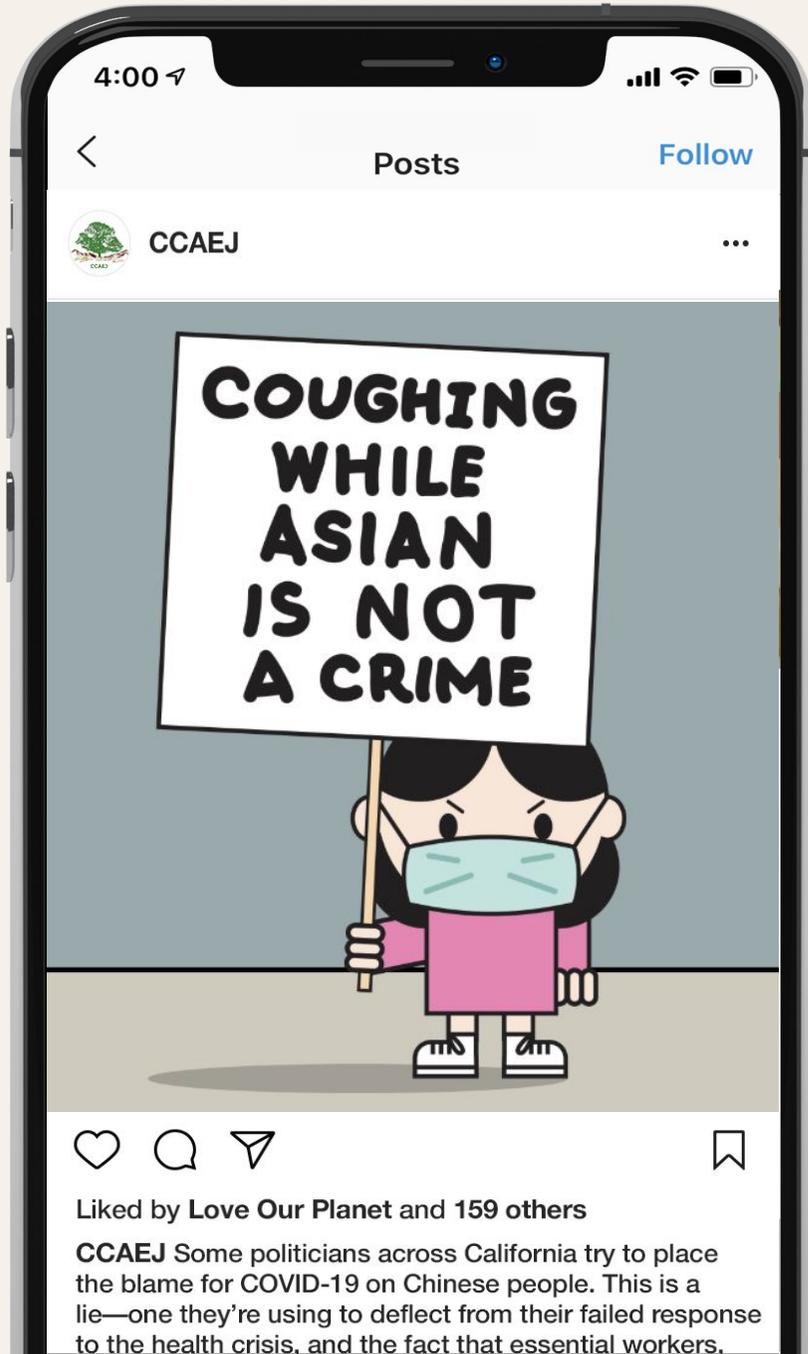
- To build a shared political identity, we must go beyond naming different groups that should come together
- Directly calling out the racist tropes that people encounter every day makes the message real and increases its power

But **we know that's a distraction.** It keeps us from changing the rules that keep people at the top rich and in power

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## **Reorienting people away from what divides them toward their goals**

- Focusing on the goal helps bring people together to activate their collective power



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Build narratives that  
confront racial  
scapegoating

We can join with our friends and coworkers to **demand good jobs, actual benefits, a safe environment**, and the possibility of achieving the life that we're striving for. Because if we come together as one, we can rise together

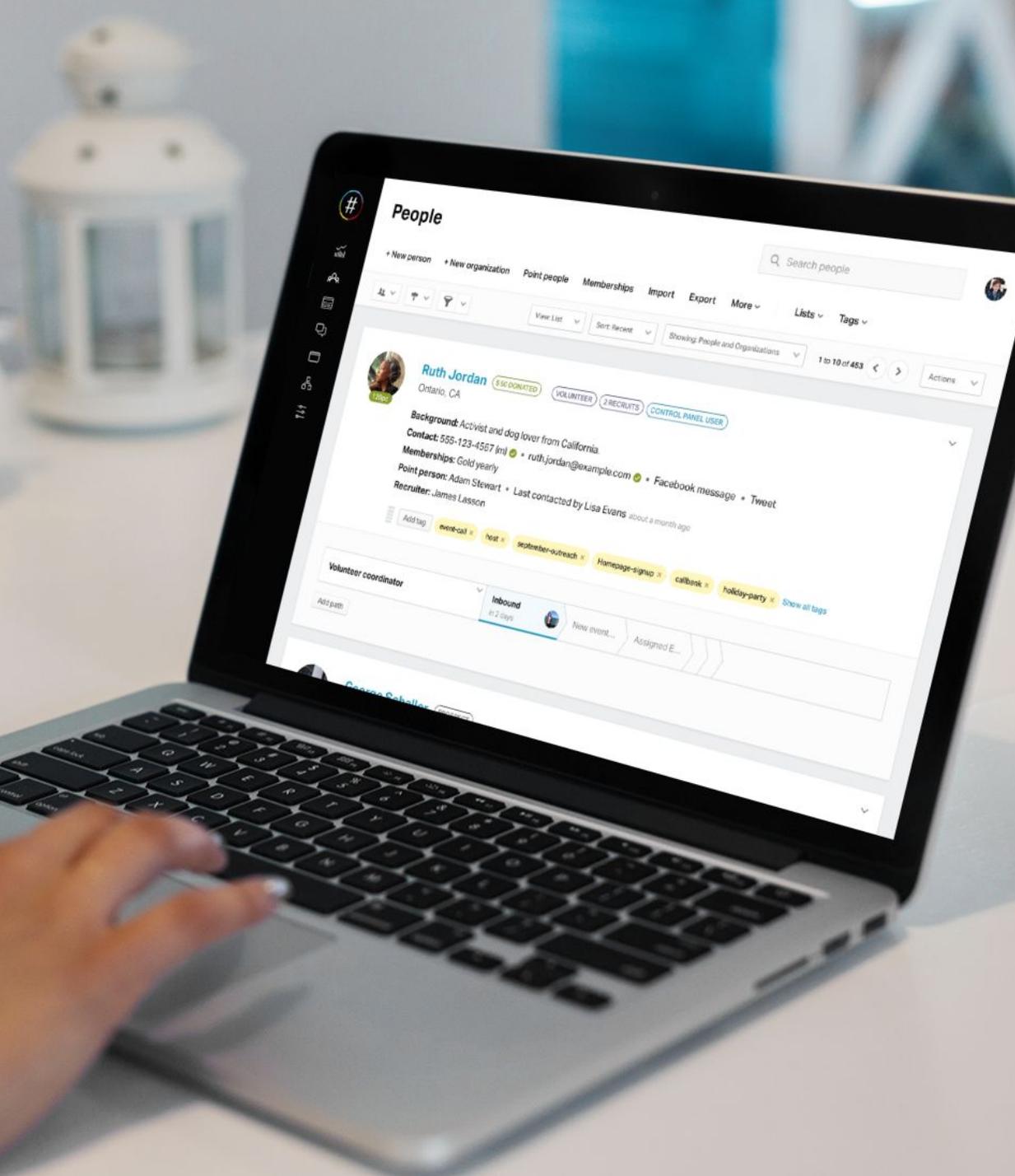
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#### **4. EMPHASIZE COLLECTIVE POWER WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING REASONS FOR MISTRUST**

- Focus on the power of collective action, even in the face of bleak realities and founded mistrust. Meeting people where they are ensures that our messages don't feel trite and removed from reality
- An aspirational vision spurs people to take action *for* something and reaffirms our individual and collective resilience, rather than just railing against all that's wrong

# Narrative Dos and Don'ts

Say	Rather than	Notes
Riverside communities are taking action	All our communities are taking action	Naming specific locations allows audiences to self-locate in the narrative
Big corporations are profiting off of us, while so many of us struggle just to keep our heads above water	Big corporations are coming into cities and making billions	Use collective language to describe who corporations are extracting wealth from and the impact that has on people. This makes the issue about fairness, not about getting more from successful groups.
Corporations just want to profit off of us	The wealthy just want to profit off of us	"Corporations" conveys the scale of inequity, instead of naming villain as a specific class of people, especially a class of people that many aspire to become
Too many politicians are just concerned about lining their own pockets while our communities struggle	Politicians are focused on lining their own pockets while our communities struggle	Name corruption as the foundation of peoples' mistrust without making a blanket statement that could undermine action for accountability
Even though we're up against a lot, we can come together to demand good jobs and safe communities	We can come together to demand good jobs and safe communities	Meeting people where they are ensures that our messages don't feel trite and removed from reality



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**These narrative practices can inform communications work across the IE as digital organizing becomes even more critical**

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**By naming both shared challenges and collective visions, strategic communications can support organizing to build a unified political identity across the IE**

