

An Uncertain Time: How to make sense of this moment

DATE

March 24, 2025

PRESENTER

john a. powell,
Director, Othering &
Belonging Institute

AUTHORIAL SUPPORT

Othering & Belonging
Institute

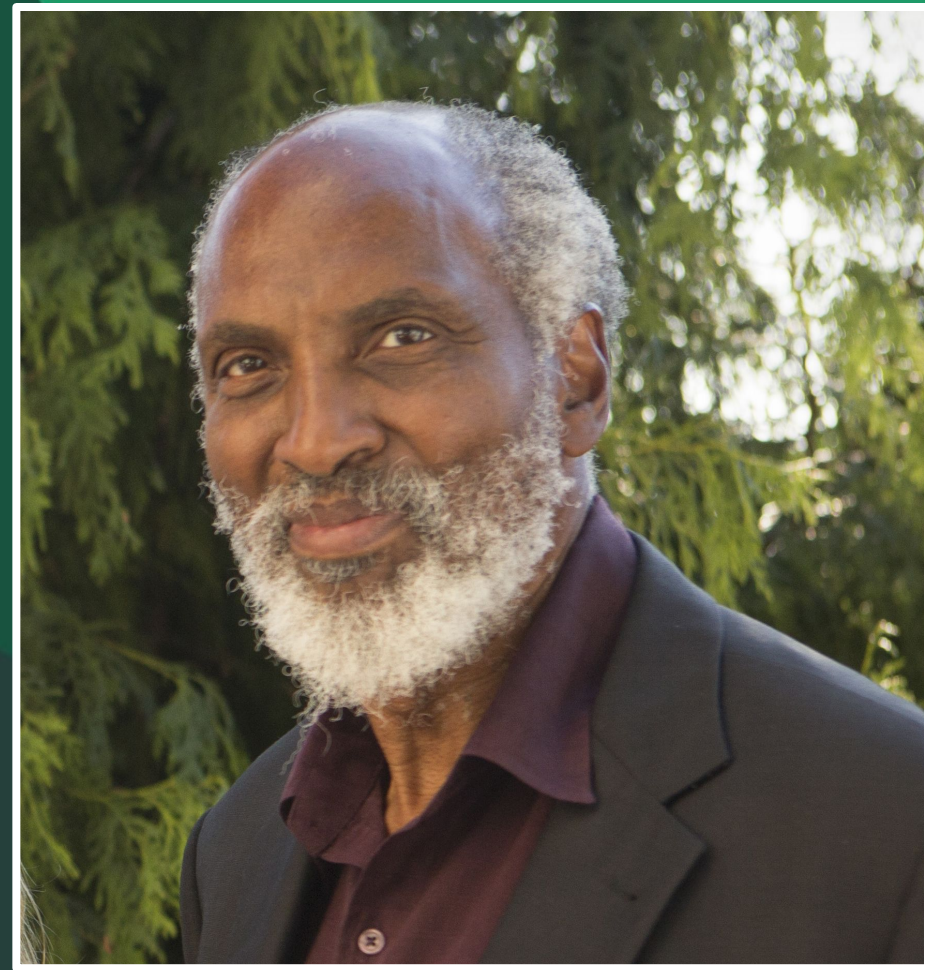


**Making belonging,
without othering, a
global norm by 2040**

john a.powell is Director of the Othering and Belonging Institute and Professor of Law, African American, and Ethnic Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. He was previously the Executive Director at the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University, and prior to that, the founder and director of the Institute for Race and Poverty at the University of Minnesota.

john formerly served as the National Legal Director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). He is a co-founder of the Poverty & Race Research Action Council and serves on the boards of several national and international organizations.

john has taught at numerous law schools including Harvard and Columbia University. His latest books are *Belonging Without Othering*, *How We Save Ourselves and the World* and *The Power of Bridging, How to Build a World where we all Belong*.



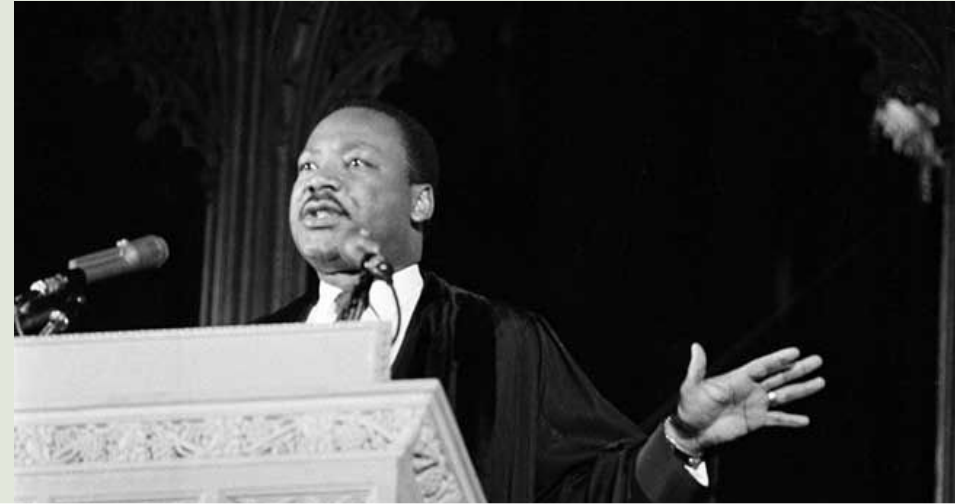
The 1960s vs Now: Social Upheaval, Strife, and Transformation



The 1960s vs Now: Social Upheaval, Strife, and Transformation



1960s: “Law and Order” and Tensions that led to Transformation

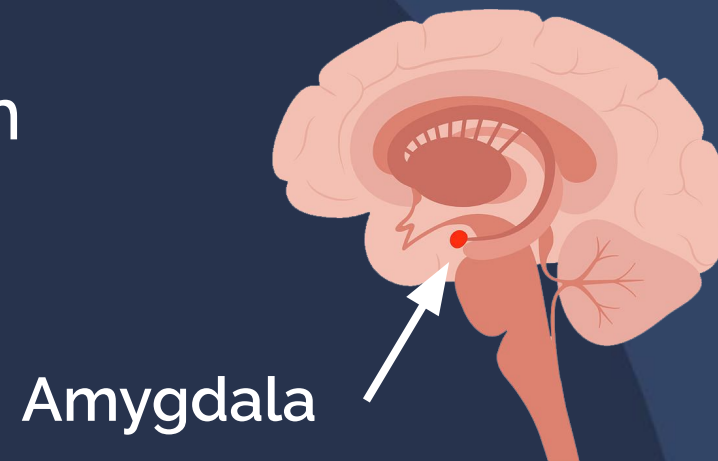


*The arc of the moral universe is long
but it bends toward justice.*

–Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution.” Speech given at the National Cathedral, March 31, 1968.

What It Means to Show Up in This Moment

- Do not cede ground
- Practice bridging, not breaking
- Resist fear-mongering activated by the Amygdala, also known as the Lizard Brain



Elements of Belonging

Inclusion

- Equity
- Absence of exclusion
- Accommodation
- Access

Connection

- Emotional / affective ties to people & places
- Sense of attachment, fondness, safety, or warmth
- Sense of warmth

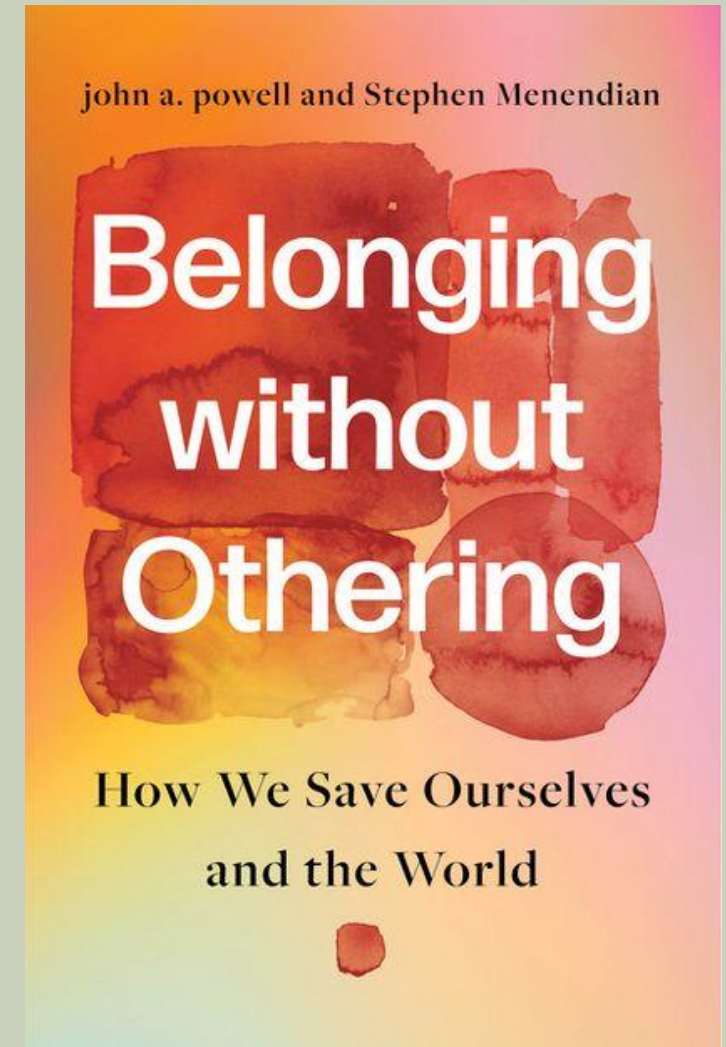
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Recognition

- Demonstration that community or institution sees, respects & values various social identities

Agency

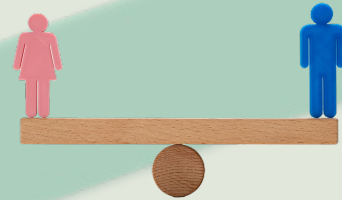
- Individual & collective capacity to co-create the environment and wield (shared) power



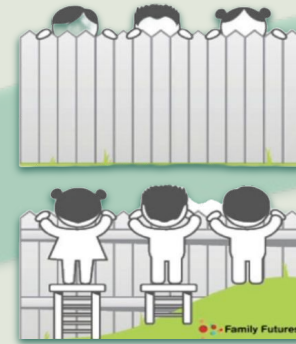
Hope for the Future: A World where We all Belong



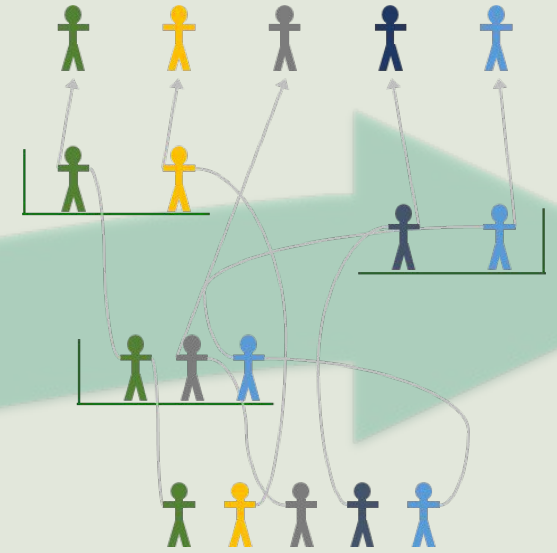
Extreme Inequality



Equality



Equity



Belonging

Miriam Juan-Torres is a multidisciplinary researcher, writer, and public speaker with expertise on authoritarian populism, polarization, and human rights.

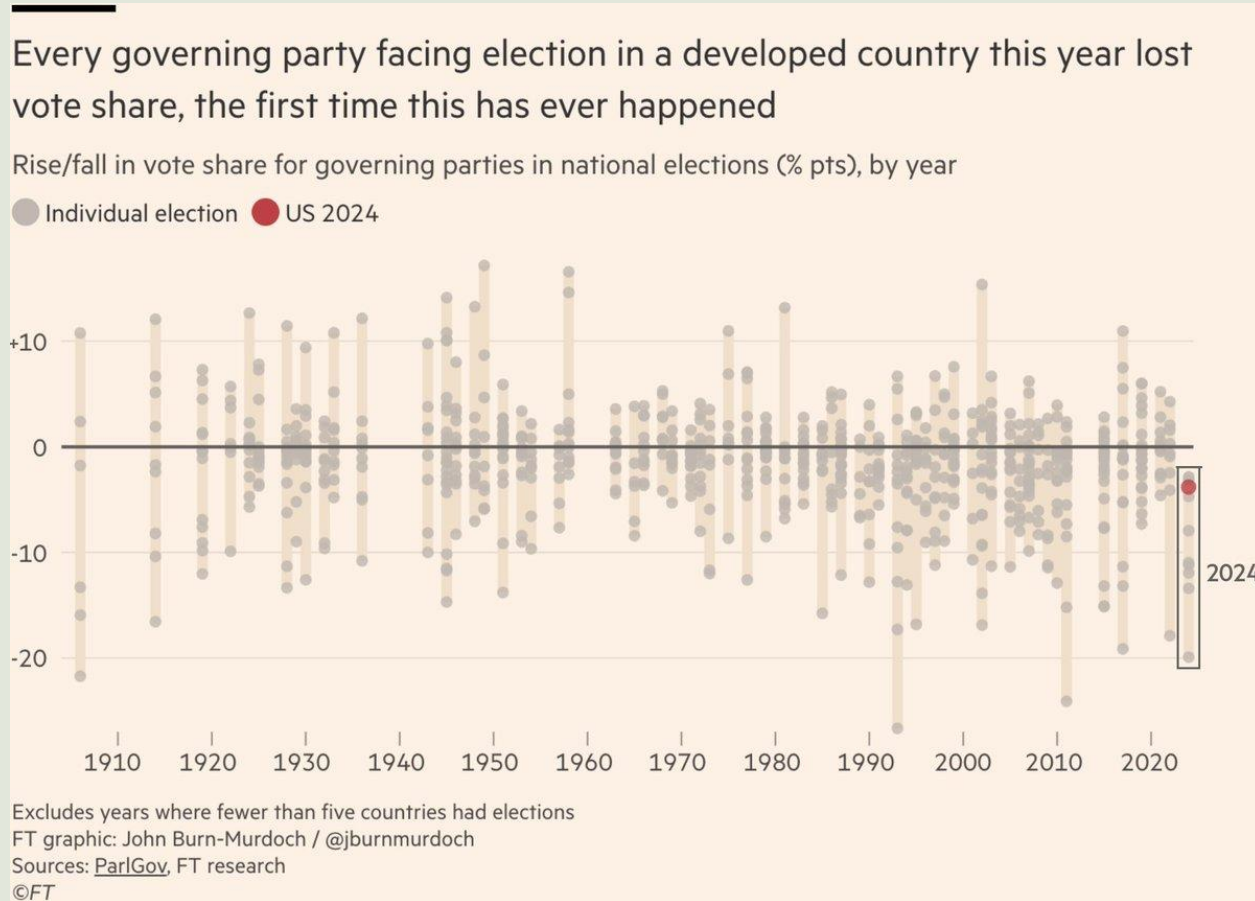
Miriam is the Head of Research at OBI's Democracy & Belonging Forum at UC Berkeley. Previously, she worked as a senior researcher at More in Common, as an associate professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, where she taught courses on human rights and international criminal law. Miriam has fieldwork experience in Ghana and Colombia, where she worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and interned at the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Miriam will present her work on authoritarian populism, with a focus on the strategies and tactics of political actors that use this political style to muster mass public support for nativist and exclusionary politics across Europe and the US.





Anti-Incumbent Effect + Anti-Establishment



- Democracies around the world are seeing governing parties consistently lose vote share
- “Most hostile environment in history for incumbent parties and politicians across the developed world.” (Burn-Murdoch, FT)*
- Incumbents of all ideological persuasions have been affected

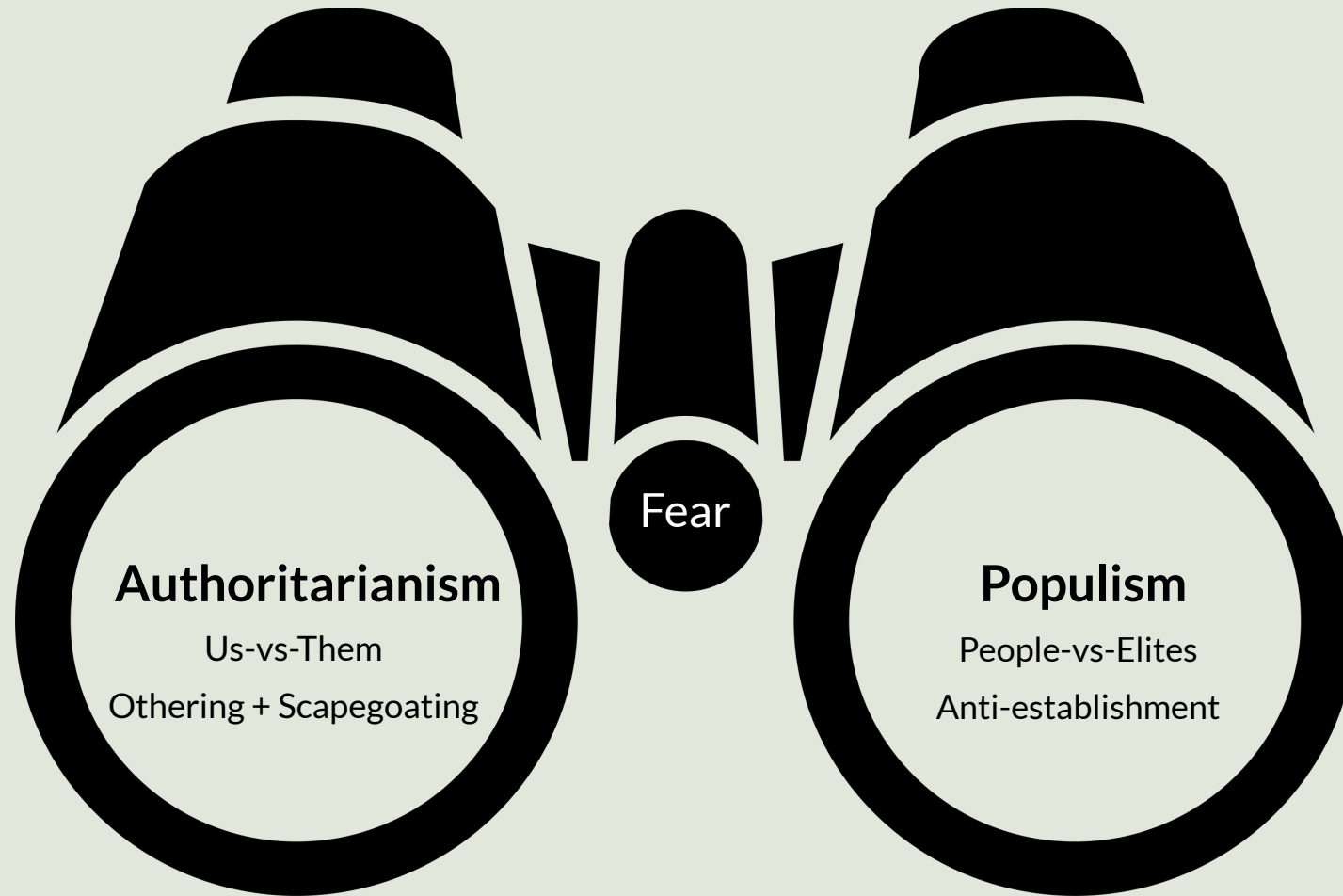
Need to distinguish

- Political leaders
- Movements
- Voters
 - Engaged
 - Disengaged





Authoritarian Populism



Shared Lens to Interpret Reality

Nurture a strong sense of **in-group identity** rooted in othering + sense of **fear** to shape how people perceive social and political issues.

- 'The true people' vs the 'elite'/ anti-establishment— [Populist dimension]
- 'Us' vs 'them' or 'Other' [scapegoating]
 - often defined by **race, ethnicity, religion, or caste**, and portrayed as a threat to the 'us.' [Authoritarian dimension]"





Populists?



Shared Core... but not much else?



NATIVISM

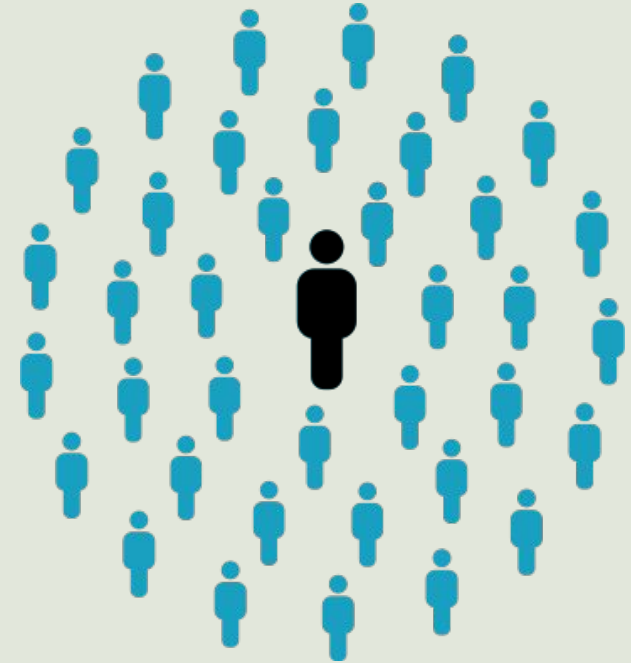


ANTI-PLURALISM

At the core of modern authoritarian populist movements' strategies is **othering**, which includes the use of scapegoating tactics to both reinforce **hierarchical and supremacist beliefs** but also to present perceived out-groups as a threat that must be rooted out through all means, including via authoritarian and anti-democratic practices that allow them to consolidate power and become even less accountable when perpetuating inequality and violence.

Big Tent without Shared Ideology?

- Shared Enemies, Stoking and exploiting fear
 - Narrative, e.g. woke ideology, gender ideology
 - Policy
- Agents of change?
- Mirror world: in the name of democracy
- Opportunism





COMMENTARY Gender

What Is Gender Ideology?

Jul 7, 2023 8 min read



COMMENTARY BY

Jay W. Richards, PhD
@DrJayRichards

Director, DeVos Center for Life, Religion, and Family
Jay W. Richards, PhD, is Director of the DeVos Center for Life, Religion, and Family and the William E. Simon Senior Research Fellow.

Example: Long-term narrative strategy

PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP

The WHITE HOUSE



PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS

DEFENDING WOMEN FROM GENDER IDEOLOGY EXTREMISM AND RESTORING BIOLOGICAL TRUTH TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The White House January 20, 2025

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 7301 of title 5, United States Code, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1. Purpose. Across the country, ideologues who deny the biological reality of sex have increasingly used legal and other socially coercive means to permit men to self-identify as women and gain access to intimate single-sex spaces and activities designed for women, from women's domestic abuse shelters to women's workplace showers. This is wrong. Efforts

*“I hope to see deeper cooperation and coordination in civil society than we have achieved before, to **develop an effective power-building strategy** to meet the current challenge. There are of course numerous organizing tools and civil resistance tactics that might be relevant to such a strategy, but ideally **the strategy would inform the sequence of tactics** (and not the other way around). And when it comes to protecting people, your own work has shown all of the **creative ways that people figure out how to provide for and care** for the most vulnerable during a crisis, including a political emergency.”*

- **Political Scientist Erica Chenoweth, expert in nonviolent social change**

What does it mean for us?

- Pillars of Support
 - The role of bridging
 - Leaders, movements, voters
 - Information ecosystem and independent press
- Ecosystemic thinking
 - Polarize or depolarize?
 - Raise the heat, point at injustice
 - Lower the heat, without falling for dehumanization
- Grassroots organizing, meet people where they are + cultural strategy
 - Gateway communities
- Islands of coherence
 - Meaning making
 - Community
- Vision
 - Joy



What does it mean for us?

Big Tent Coalitions

Poland just showed the world how democracy wins

OCTOBER 17, 2023 · SHARE · IAN BASSIN · BEN RADERSTORF

Poland's surprise opposition victory reveals the most important pro-democracy maxim: don't let the coalition fracture.



Argentines march in defence of diversity, blasting Milei's anti-woke diatribes

AMERICAS

Thousands of demonstrators rallied on Saturday in Argentina's capital Buenos Aires and in cities across the country in defence of minority rights and in protest at President Javier Milei's tirades against "wokeism", feminism and other progressive ideals.

Issued on: 02/02/2025 - 11:15 | 1 min

By: NEWS WIRES

Video by: FRANCE 24 Follow X FRANCE 24



A demonstrator holds a sign reading "Long live our freedom" during a protest in Buenos Aires on February 1, 2025. © Luis Robayo, AFP

The march was organized by women's and LGBTQ rights groups with the backing of powerful trade unions and opposition politicians.

His administration insisted Milei was the victim of "malicious interpretation," but his statements were met with indignation across Argentine society, including on the political right.

Reflection Time

The background features a dark green field on the left, which transitions into a series of overlapping, curved shapes in various shades of green (medium and light) on the right. The overall composition is modern and minimalist.

Rachel D. Godsil is a Distinguished Professor and Chancellor's Social Justice Scholar at Rutgers Law School and a Co-Founder of Perception Institute. She collaborates with social scientists on empirical research and regularly conducts workshops on the role of narrative in social change as well as strategies to ensure dignity and belonging in key domains, including education, criminal justice, healthcare, and the workplace. Her scholarly research also addresses the intersection of race, property, and the environment.





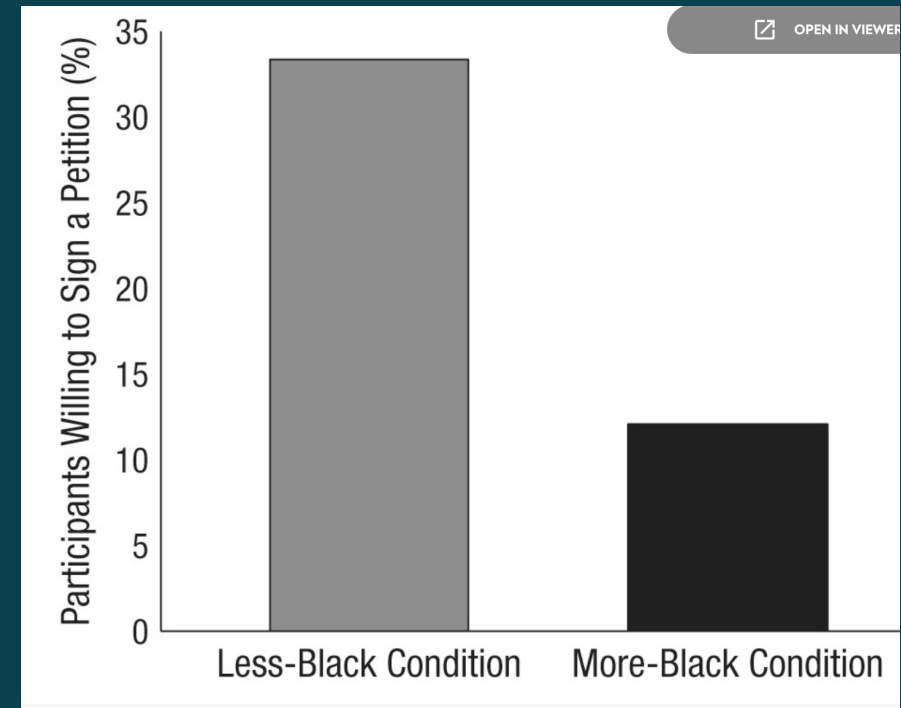
Constructing Narratives for Collective Action: Racial Ideology Mapping & Goal Framing

March 24, 2025

Narrative Risk Research

Sentencing Reform

Participants shown images of incarcerated persons and invited to sign a petition for sentencing reform.



Perception Institute/Analyst Institute; Eberhardt and Hetey

Disparity Framing: Mind Science Insights

- Increase stress and feelings of hopelessness and intractability *among* communities of concern.
- Perpetuates stereotypes *about* the community of concern.
- Exacerbates Stereotype Load *among* communities of concern.

Balcetis et al. 2021; Aboud et al, 2016
Balcetis et al. 2021; Eberhardt et. al. 2024

EXCEPTION!

Activists as the target audience are often exceptions to general findings: Disparity Framing is experienced as speaking truth to power, naming harms, and triggering moral urgency.



Effective Narratives



“Goal” Framing

- An acknowledgement of what your audience is likely feeling.
- A universal goal.
- Specific and vivid examples of how the goal can be met.
- The challenge or condition that needs to be changed.
- A call to action and/or reiteration of the goal.



– Confidential –

Mapping Racial Ideology in America

RESEARCH CONDUCTED WITH PERCEPTION INSTITUTE + ACLU

March 2025

Methods

Our methodological approach included three steps:

- 1) Scans of academic literature, theories, and metrics related to racial ideology
- 2) In-depth interviews with 61 diverse adults across the country (March 2024) – to inform the development of new metrics
- 3) A national survey among n = 3,490 adults nationwide conducted August 1 through 21, 2024 using YouGov's online panel. The survey included over samples for totals of:
 - N = 452 Black adults
 - N = 403 Latina/o/x adults
 - N = 404 AAPI adults
 - N = 105 indigenous adults

Methods

We crafted the survey instrument based on the academic scan and the qualitative research. The instrument includes 98 questions related to:

- Issue policy areas
- Racial / ethnic identity
- Experiences with discrimination
- Perceived power and privilege of racial groups
- Perceived state of equality in the US
- Racial threat
- Exclusion, resentment
- Zero-sum mentality on government support
- Preferences for a meritocracy v. collective society
- The Black Lives Matter movement



Takeaways

Following are more details...

1 More than 10 dimensions of racial ideology emerged.

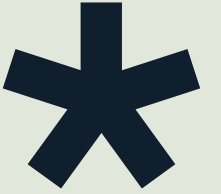
2 These three dimensions are most powerful:

- Feeling unseen and excluded on racial matters
- Recognizing systemic racism and the link between race and perceived status
- BLM as a reflection of positive social change

3 Racial ideology is directly correlated with vote choice, the degree to which voters feel Trump or Harris “cares about people like me,” and policy positions.

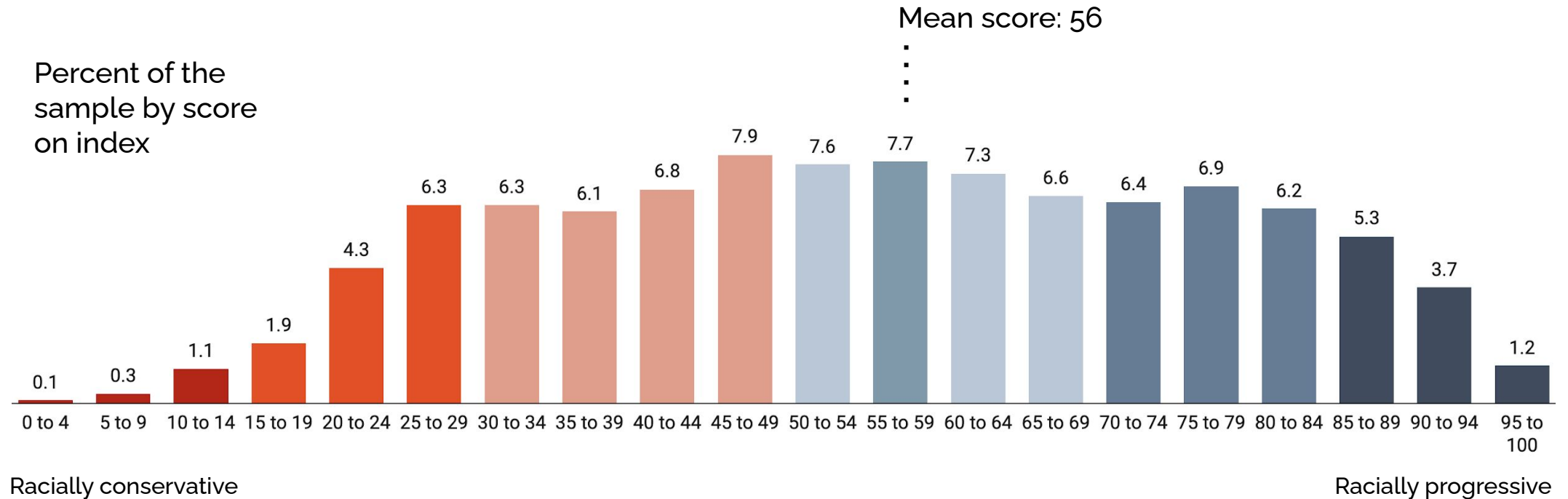
4 Seven segments of the population emerge from the data. Three are fairly progressive on racial views (35%). Two are in the middle (34%). Two are racially conservative (31%).

5 The data provide direction for new messaging and narrative strategies.

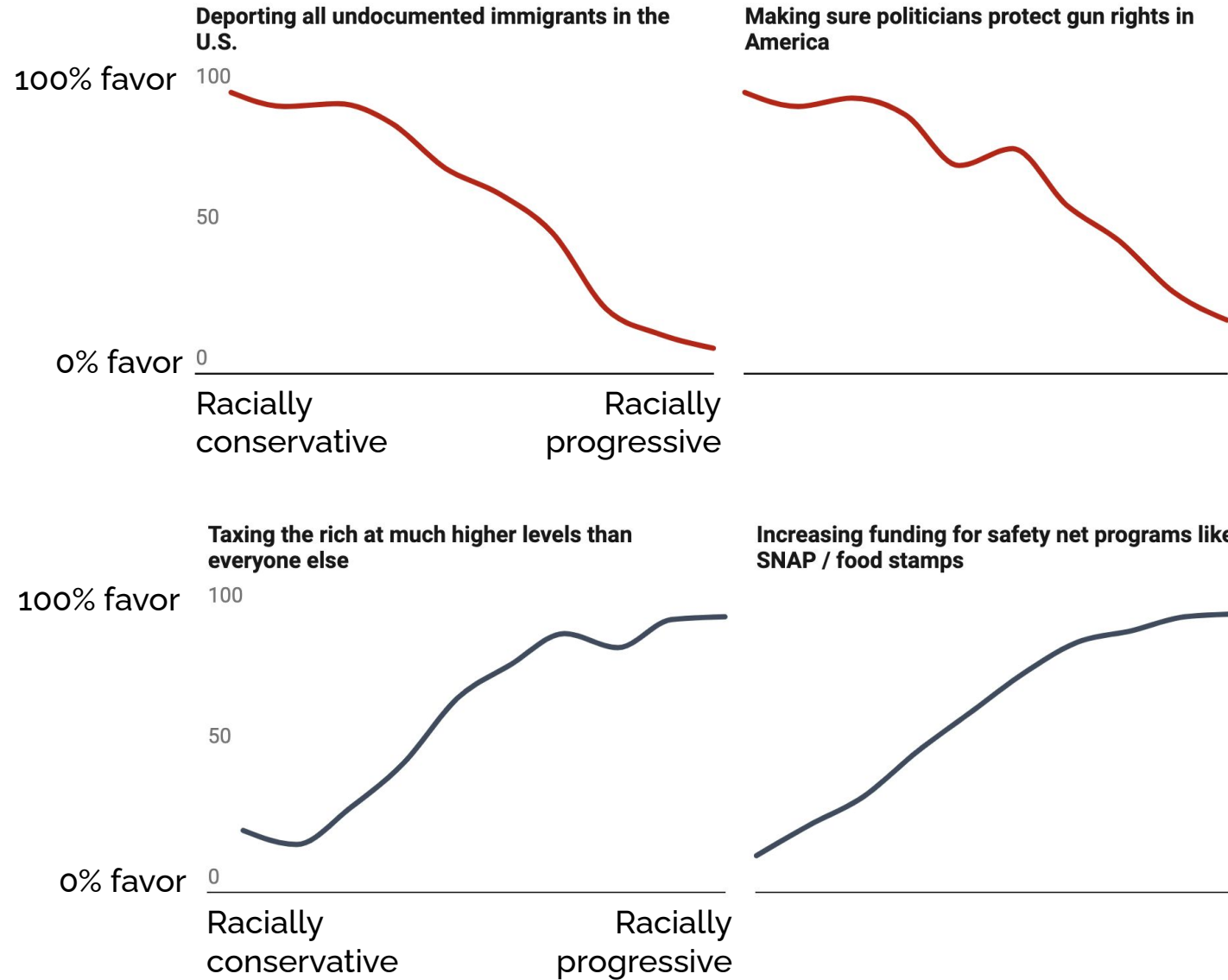


Racial ideology index

Respondents are fairly evenly distributed across the index, with a mean score of 56.



% Favor policy



The index is also strongly correlated with support or opposition for various policies.

Racial ideology profiles.

How the public breaks out on racial ideology.



The following pages provide a profile of each segment, including:

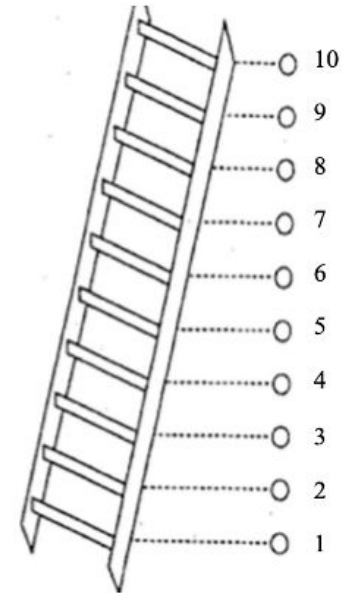
- Their defining characteristics
- Key demographics / identity
- Their perceived levels of privilege and power related to racial / ethnic groups (based on responses to the question at right)
- Key perceptions related to racial ideology
- Support for various policies
- Intention to vote in 2024

Perceived power and privilege analysis is based on responses related to this survey Q:

Now imagine that this ladder is a picture of how the United States government and laws are set up.

- At the top are people who get the most attention from the government. These people benefit the most from our laws and policies. They have the most opportunities.
- At the bottom are people who are most overlooked. These people benefit the least from our laws and policies. They have the fewest opportunities.

Where do you think you would be on this ladder?
Don't think too hard - just whatever comes to mind first.



DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

- See self and POC low on the ladder
- Likely to see systemic issues
- Don't feel represented or set up for success
- Collective, positive sum mindset
- Tied for the most progressive segment

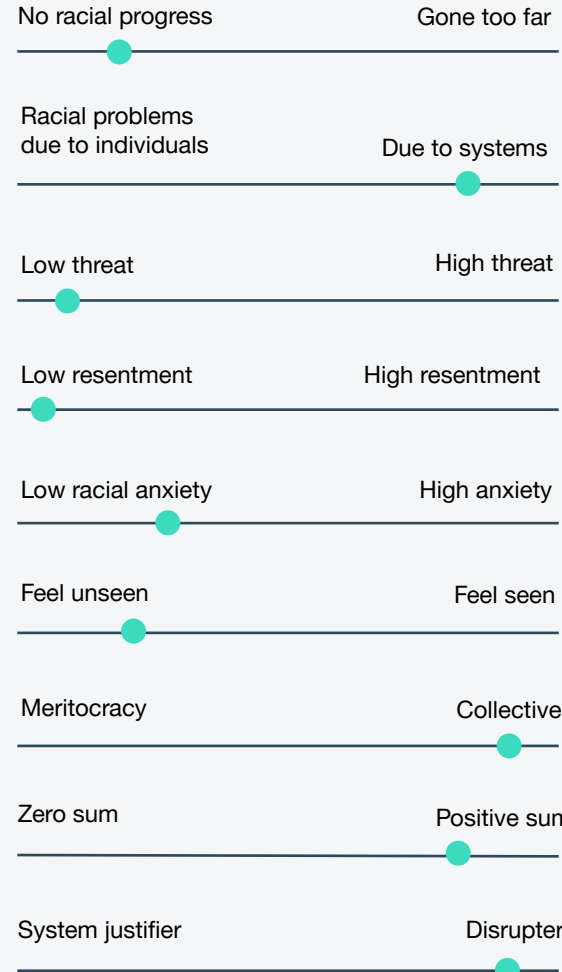
DEMOS + IDENTITY

- White (55%), Black (18%), Latina/o/x (17%), AAPI (7%)
- Democrats (63%), independents (36%), Rep. (1%)
- Under 50 (61%)
- Less than college (66%)
- < \$60K (51%)
- Race important to identity (51%)
- 30% to 40% experience racial / eth. bias

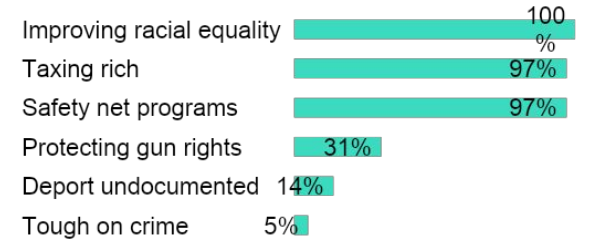
PERCEIVED PRIVILEGE + POWER



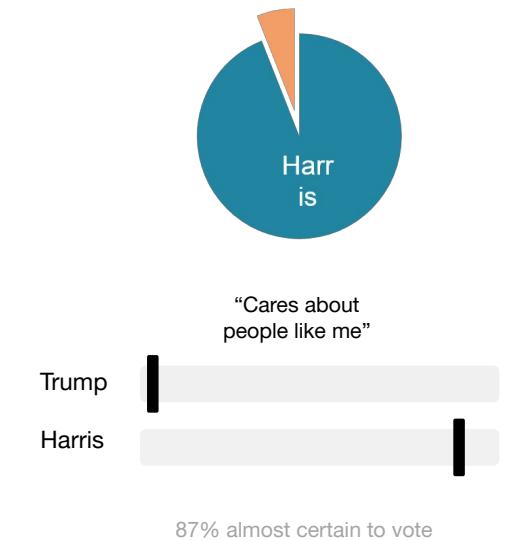
KEY PERCEPTIONS



POLICY SUPPORT



2024 VOTE



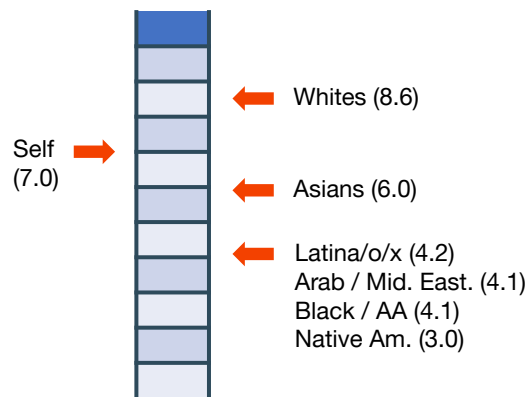
DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

- Tied for most progressive segment
- Large majority are white
- See their own privilege and power
- See systemic issues
- Collective, positive sum mindset

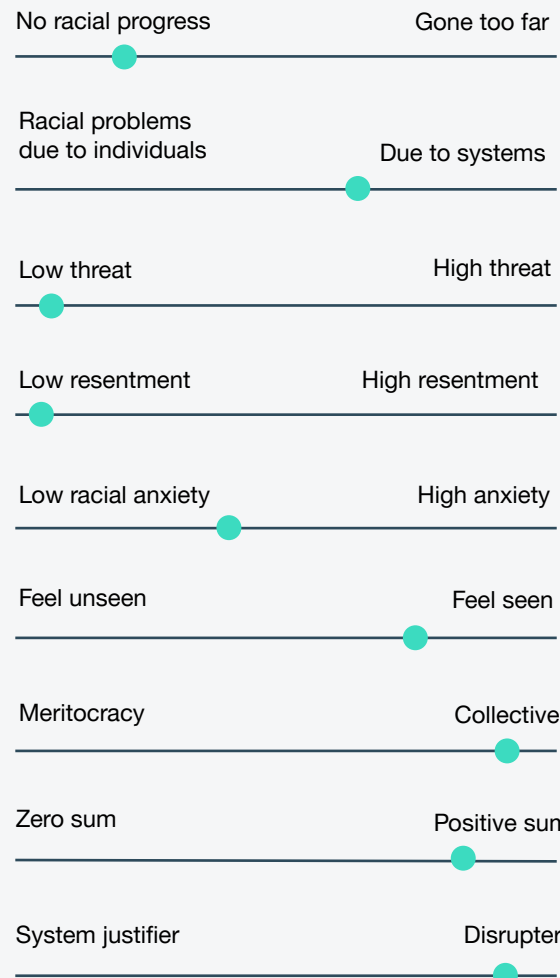
DEMOS + IDENTITY

- White (89%), Black (2%), Latina/o/x (4%), AAPI (6%)
- White women (47%) v. men (38%)
- College educated (63%)
- \$60K+ (68%)
- Democrats (69%), independents (30%), Rep. (1%)
- Race/eth. not important to identity (62%)

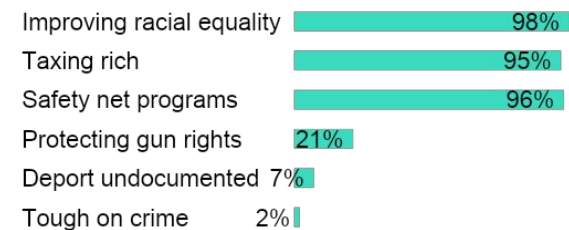
PERCEIVED PRIVILEGE + POWER



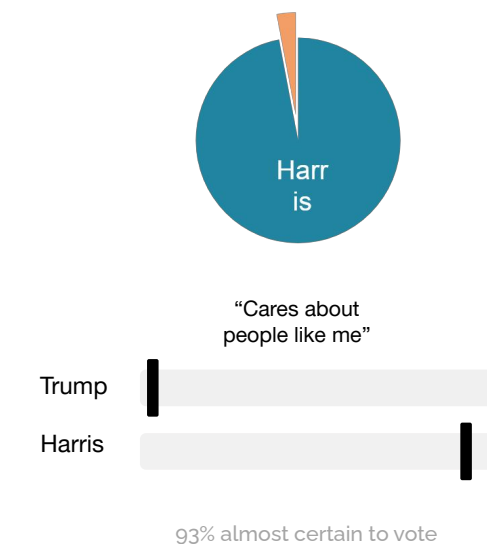
KEY PERCEPTIONS



POLICY SUPPORT



2024 VOTE



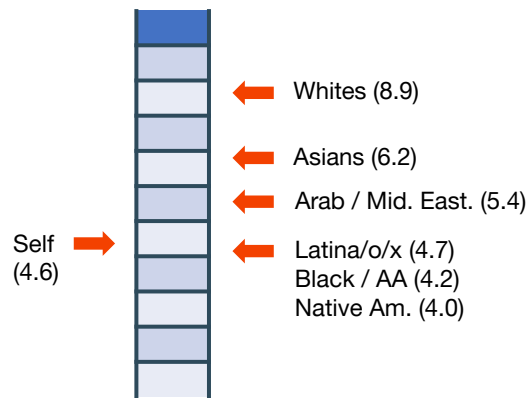
DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

- Most likely to face racial / ethnic bias
- Highest proportion of people of color
- Mix of assigning racial problems to individuals and systems
- Support Dem. policies, but also gun rights

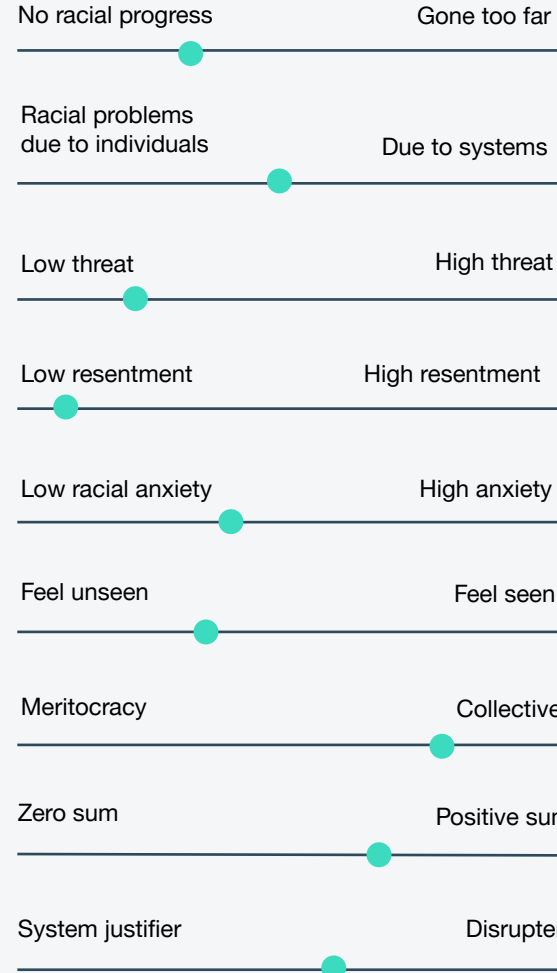
DEMOS + IDENTITY

- White (22%), Black (37%), Latina/o/x (28%), AAPI (12%)
- Women (59%)
- Less than college (73%)
- < \$60K (54%)
- Democrats (55%), independents (36%), Rep. (9%)
- Race/eth. important to identity (81%)
- 45% to 60% experience racial / eth. bias

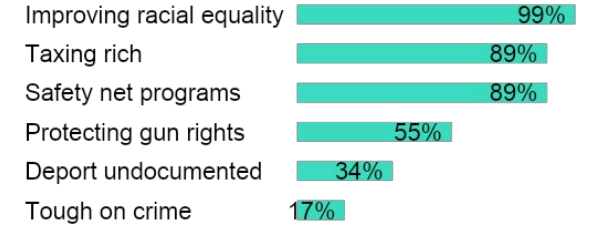
PERCEIVED PRIVILEGE + POWER



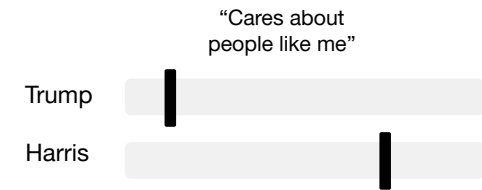
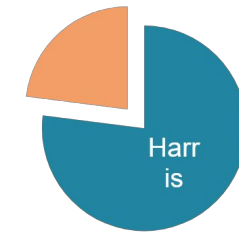
KEY PERCEPTIONS



POLICY SUPPORT



2024 VOTE



67% almost certain to vote

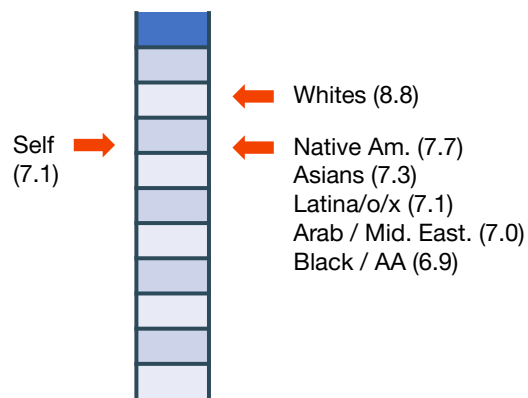
DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

- Think everyone is set up to succeed in the US
- See themselves in gov't policies and culture
- Segment most likely to believe in Am. Dream
- But sees inequality when probed
- Supports BLM
- Collective and positive sum mindset

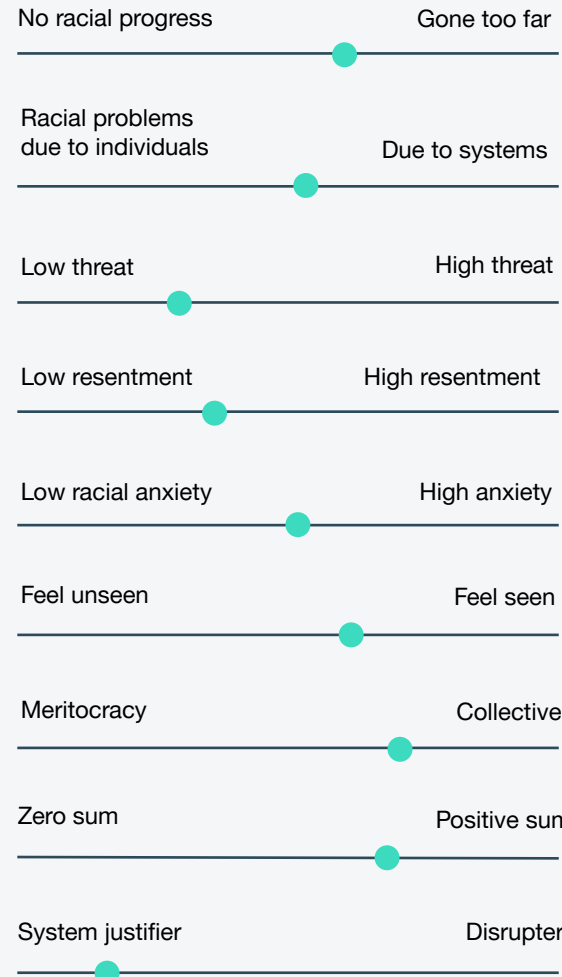
DEMOS + IDENTITY

- White (45%), Black (21%), Latina/o/x (26%), AAPI (6%)
- Men (54%)
- Less than college (68%)
- < \$60K (43%)
- Democrats (47%), independents (33%), Rep. (20%)
- Race/eth. important to identity (82%)
- 40% to 50% experience racial / eth. bias

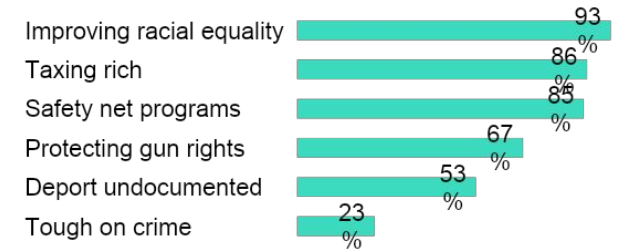
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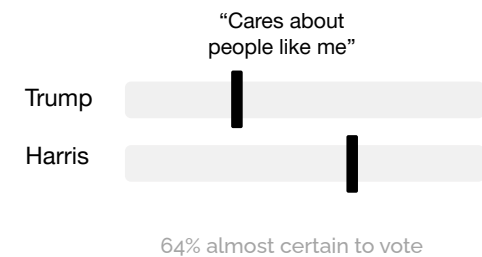
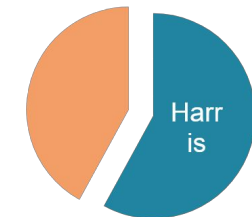
KEY PERCEPTIONS



POLICY SUPPORT



2024 VOTE



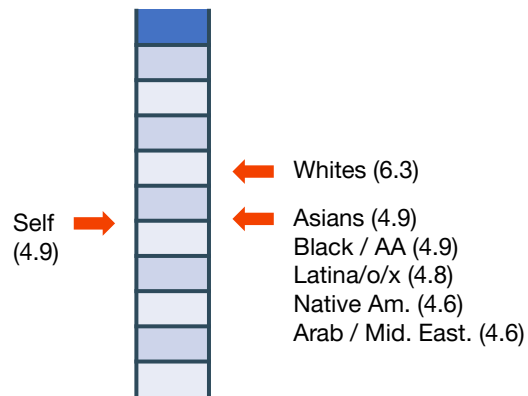
DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

- See themselves and people of color in the middle
- Are in the middle on many views
- Don't feel seen in our system
- Don't think the American Dream exists
- Don't feel strongly on policies and least likely to vote

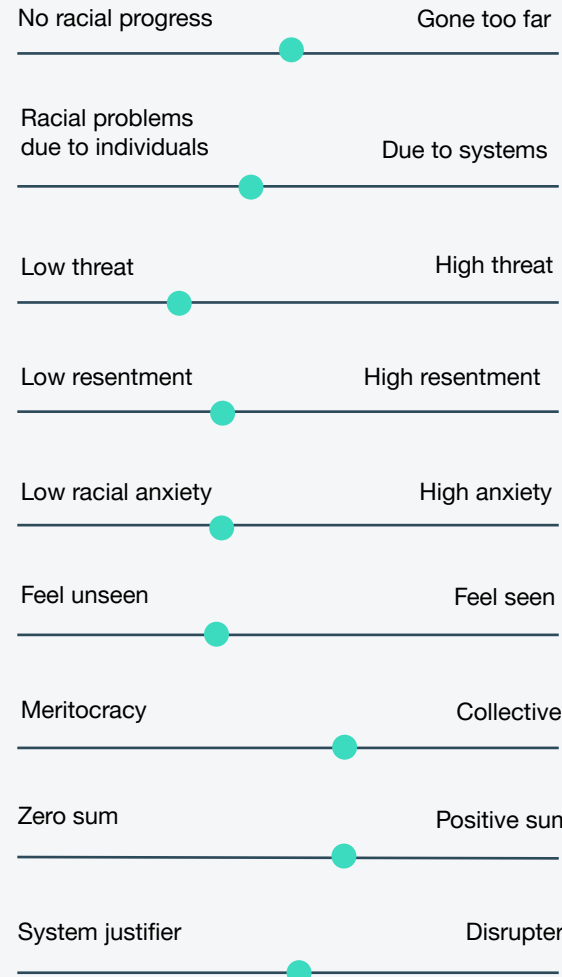
DEMOS + IDENTITY

- White (59%), Black (12%), Latina/o/x (19%), AAPI (8%)
- Men (50%)
- Less than college (78%)
- < \$60K (58%)
- Independents (43%), Democrats (29%), Rep. (29%)
- Race/eth. important to identity (70%)
- 30% to 40% experience racial / eth. bias

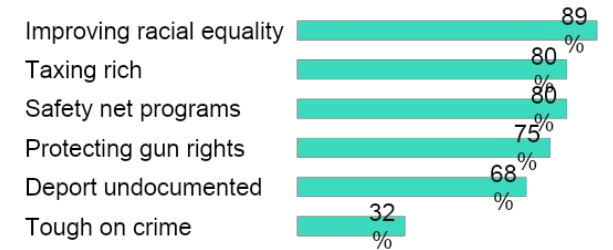
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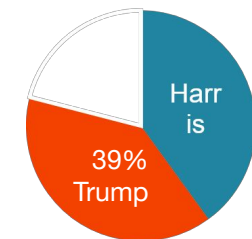
KEY PERCEPTIONS



POLICY SUPPORT



2024 VOTE



44% almost certain to vote

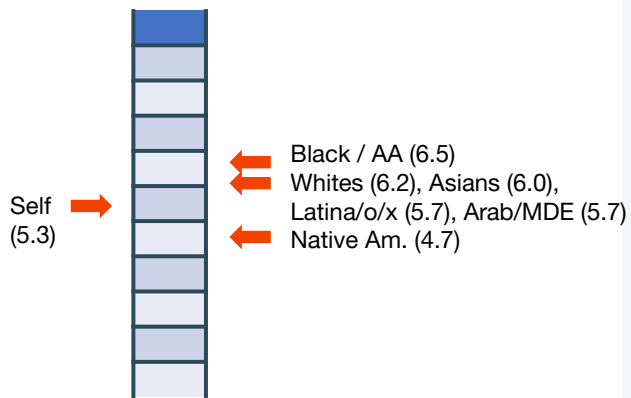
DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

- Majority white Republicans
- Put everyone in the middle rungs
- Believe equal access to opp. exists
- Rejects colorism
- Rejects white privilege
- Holds some resentment

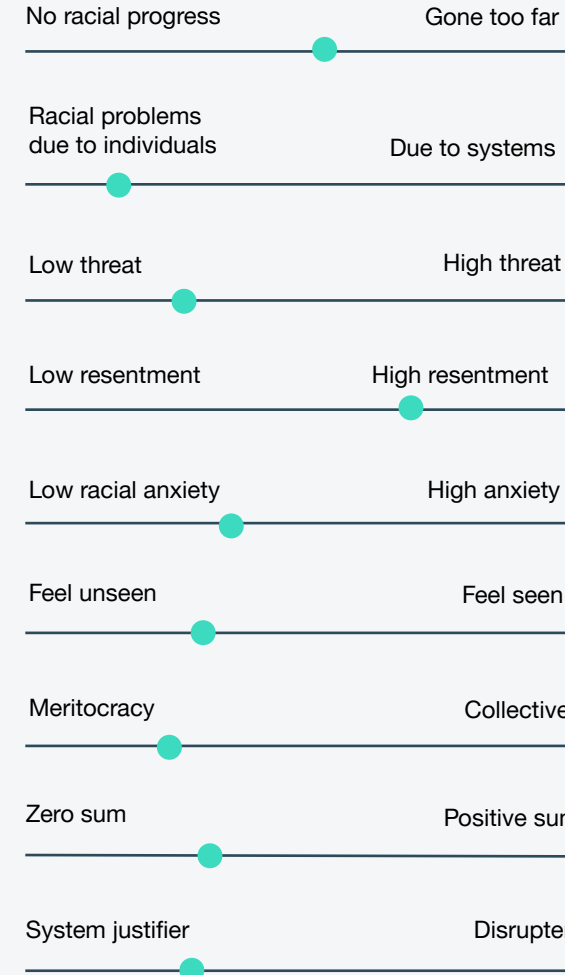
DEMOS + IDENTITY

- White (81%), Black (2%), Latina/o/x (11%), AAPI (4%)
- Men (51%)
- Less than college (66%)
- \$60K+ (49%)
- Republicans (67%), independents (32%), Dem. (2%)
- Race/eth. important to identity (44%)
- 20% to 30% experience racial / eth. bias

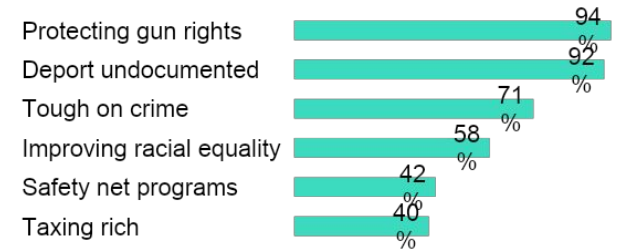
PERCEIVED PRIVILEGE + POWER



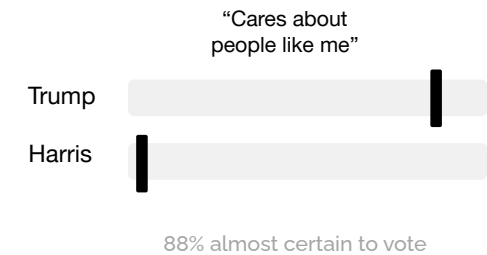
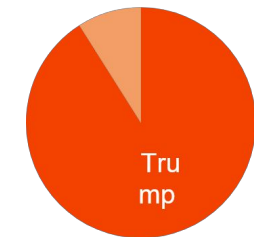
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POLICY SUPPORT



2024 VOTE



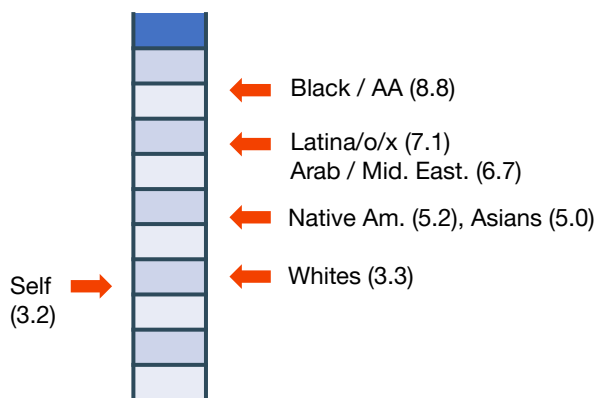
DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

- Majority white and Republican
- Believe they face racial discrimination
- Feel unsafe in America because of race
- High status threat, resentment, and feel unseen

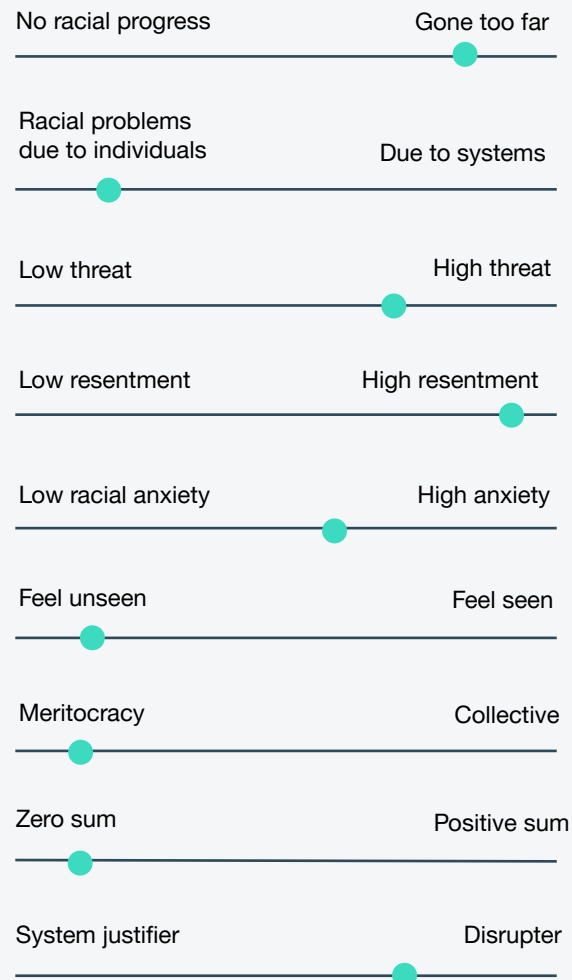
DEMOS + IDENTITY

- White (87%), Black (1%), Latina/o/x (6%), AAPI (3%)
- Men (54%)
- Less than college (62%)
- \$60K+ (49%)
- Republicans (59%), independents (39%), Dem. (1%)
- Race/eth. important to identity (44%)
- 50% to 70% experience racial / eth. bias

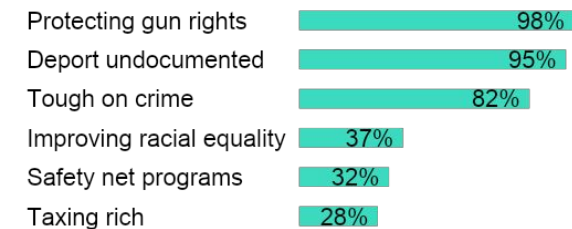
PERCEIVED PRIVILEGE + POWER



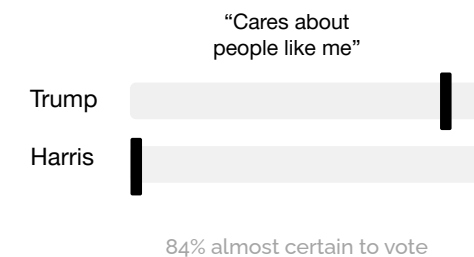
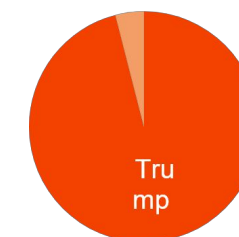
KEY PERCEPTIONS



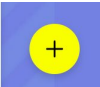
POLICY SUPPORT

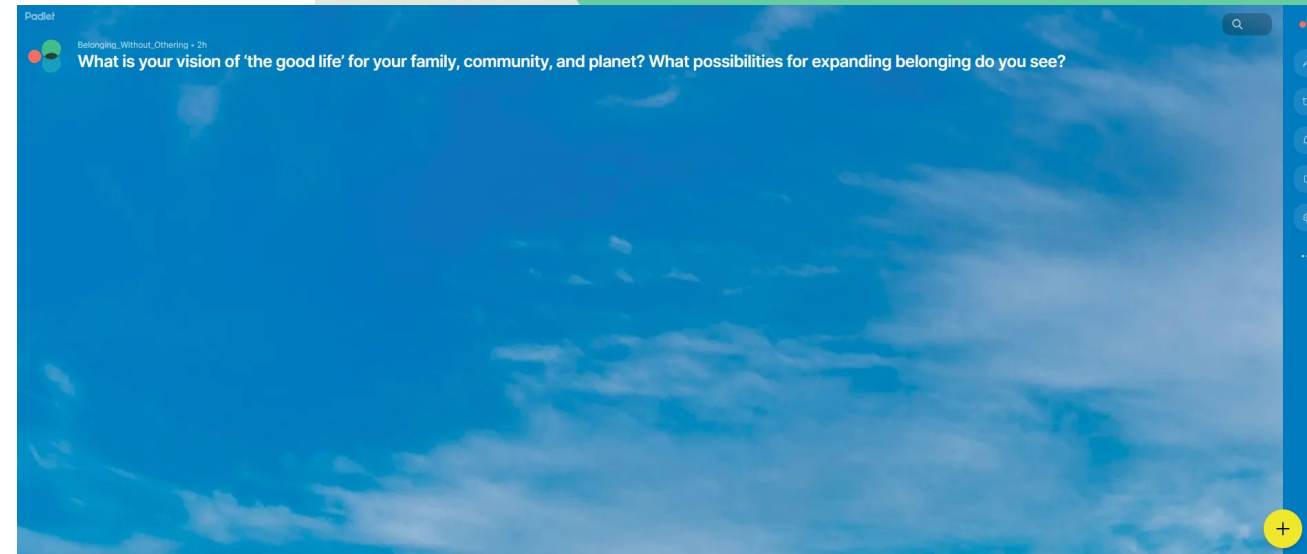
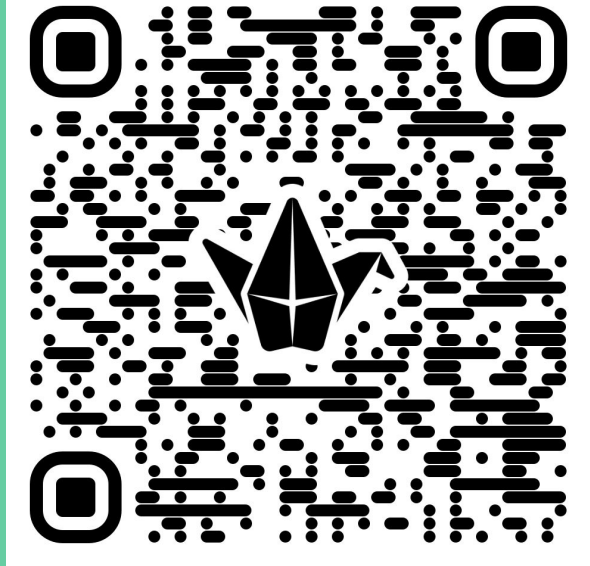


2024 VOTE



Online Discussion

1. Click on the link in the chat or point your phone at the QR code image on this slide, and Padlet will open.
2. Click on the symbol 
3. Write a short “subject” and write any details in “description”
4. Click “publish”



Eli Moore is a researcher and facilitator with the Othering and Belonging Institute where he leads transformative research processes with community-based organizations and networks. His recent work has focused on community-driven just transition planning, co-governance and community ownership, and a belonging economy as these frameworks apply to housing, local economies, and ecosystems. Eli draws on training and experience with geographic information systems, qualitative and mixed methods research, policy analysis, conflict mediation and negotiation, and popular education to facilitate participatory processes that allow those most affected by injustice to lead decision making and advance transformative change.



What is our shared vision for our future economy?



Source: Futuring Collective & Taslim Van Hattum, <https://justicefunders.org/resonance-framework/>

They Will Fail to Deliver Substantial Improvements to Wellbeing

Leading to more of this...

12 Reasons You Should Buy Groceries At The Dollar Store

Apparently groceries do grow on Dollar Trees.



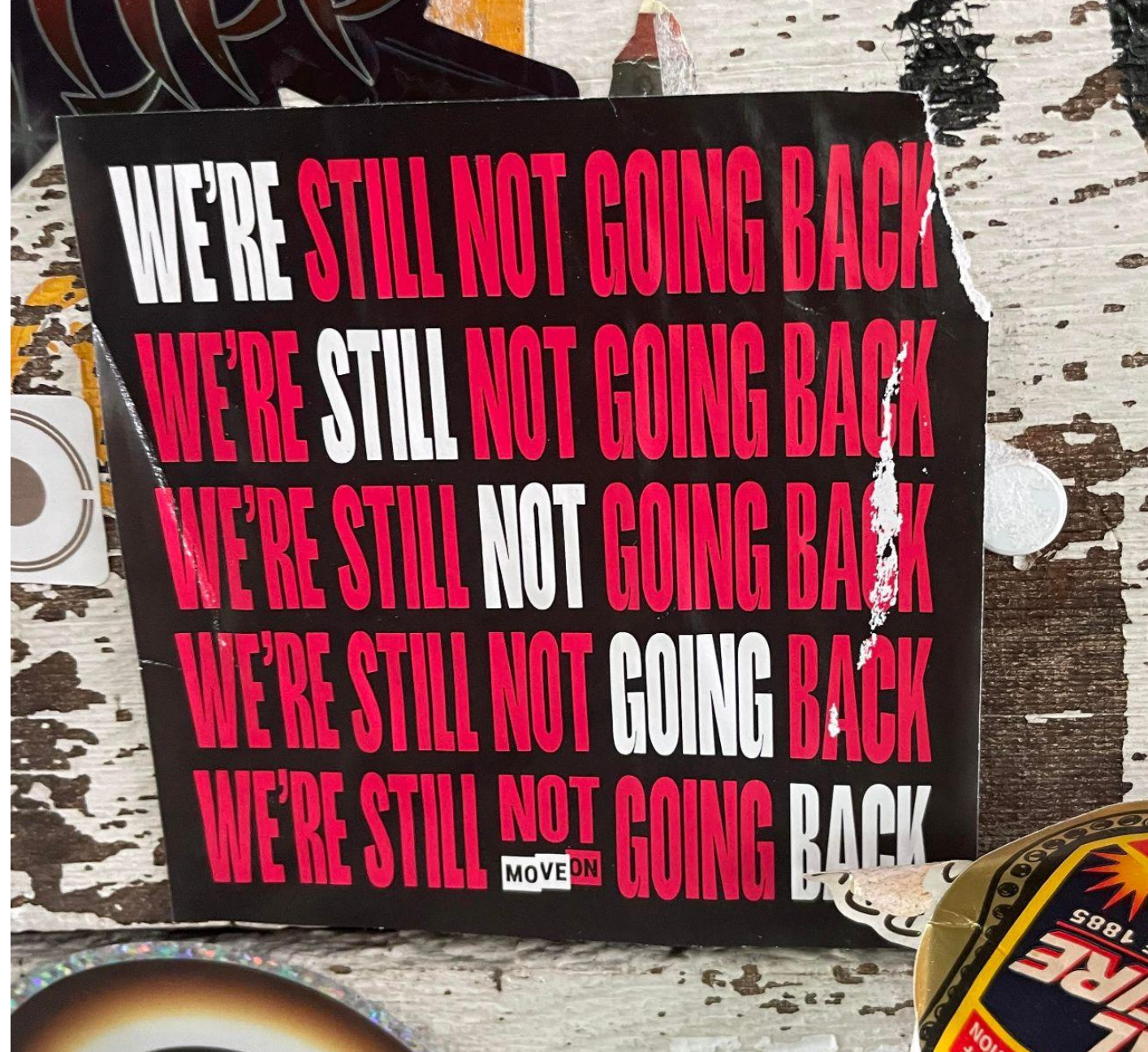
BY HANNAH DOOLIN

PUBLISHED: JUL 25, 2017

 SAVE ARTICLE



**“Return to normal”
narratives will
not resonate**



Expose False Solutions



Building Our Future: Grassroots Reflections on Social Housing



Insist on Real Solutions

Government makes things accessible and easy.

For who?

Which things?

BUSINESS

Elon Musk's government cuts could hand billions to private companies

© February 17, 2025



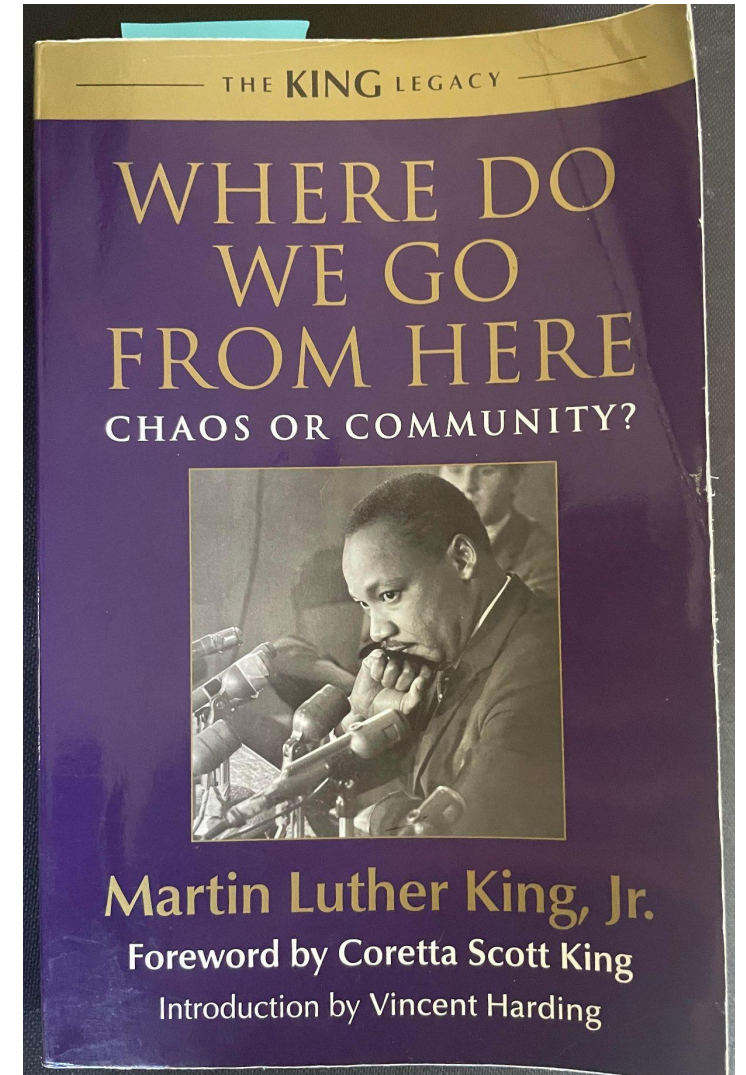
Emergency housing resources are available for Angelenos impacted by the wildfires.

Justice takes major investments

Where do we go from here?

“The practical cost of change for the nation up to this point has been cheap... Even the more significant changes involved in voter registration required neither large monetary nor psychological sacrifice. Spectacular and turbulent events that dramatized the demand created an erroneous impression that a heavy burden was involved.

The real cost lies ahead... The discount education given to Negroes will in the future have to be purchased at full price if quality education is to be realized. Jobs are harder and costlier to create than voter rolls. The eradication of slums housing millions is complex far beyond integrating buses and lunch counters.”





Divest



Invest

our labor
our investments
our purchasing
our endorsements
our time and energy



**Divest from people
and the planet?**

**Invest in oligarchs'
wealth and power?**



Divest from Harm & Invest in Care

Divest from harm:

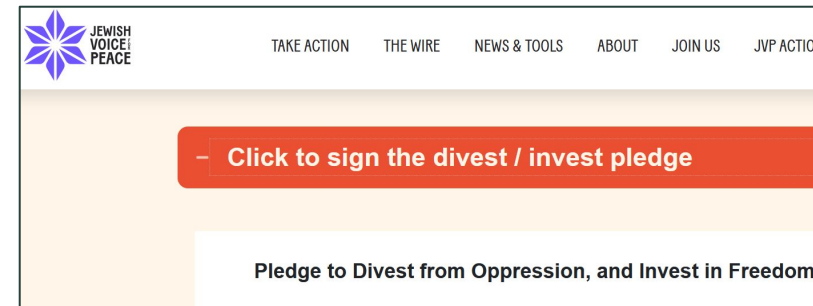
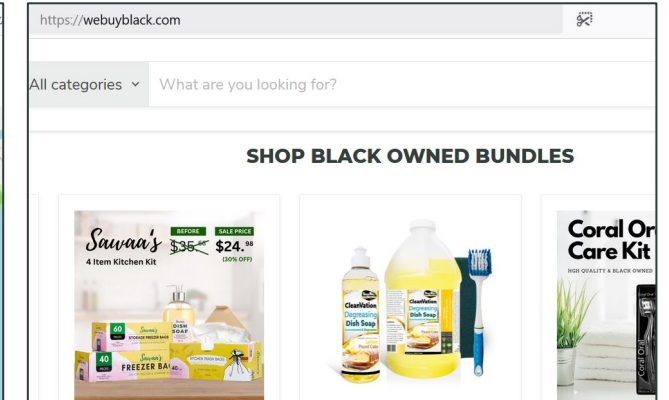
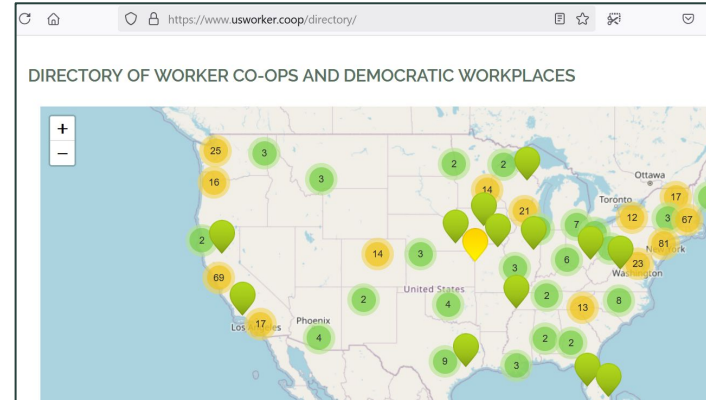
- Fossil fuel products and industries
- Financialized capital
- Low wage extractive industries
- Racist companies and companies that finance othering

Invest in care:

- Community wealth building and platforms for shared prosperity
- Resilient supply chains serving the public good
- Rebuilding the commons
- Human health
- Ecological restoration and stewardship

Community level economic power

- Worker labor action/strikes
- Consumer purchasing power
- New cooperatives
- Community-controlled funds
- Walk-outs and slow-downs
- Mutual aid labor



Institution level economic power

- Foundation endowments
- Union pensions
- Anchor institutions (university, hospital, etc)
- Shareholder action

“The point is to become the most effective change agent we can be, even if that means not being a foundation anymore in the institutional sense. That’s one reason we bother calling our choice ‘spending up’ instead of spending out or down.”

-Quixote Foundation

Local government economic power

- [Mansion tax in Los Angeles](#) - tax passed by voters applies to transactions of properties sold for more than \$5 million, and has been generating [\\$30-50 million per month](#) in revenue for social housing and homelessness prevention.
- [Excessive compensation tax in Seattle](#) - payroll tax on corporations paying employees more than \$1 million/year passed by voters to support social housing.
- [Polluters pay in Richmond CA](#) - ballot initiative to make oil refinery pay \$1 per barrel allowed city to negotiate \$550 million in new tax payments over 10 years.

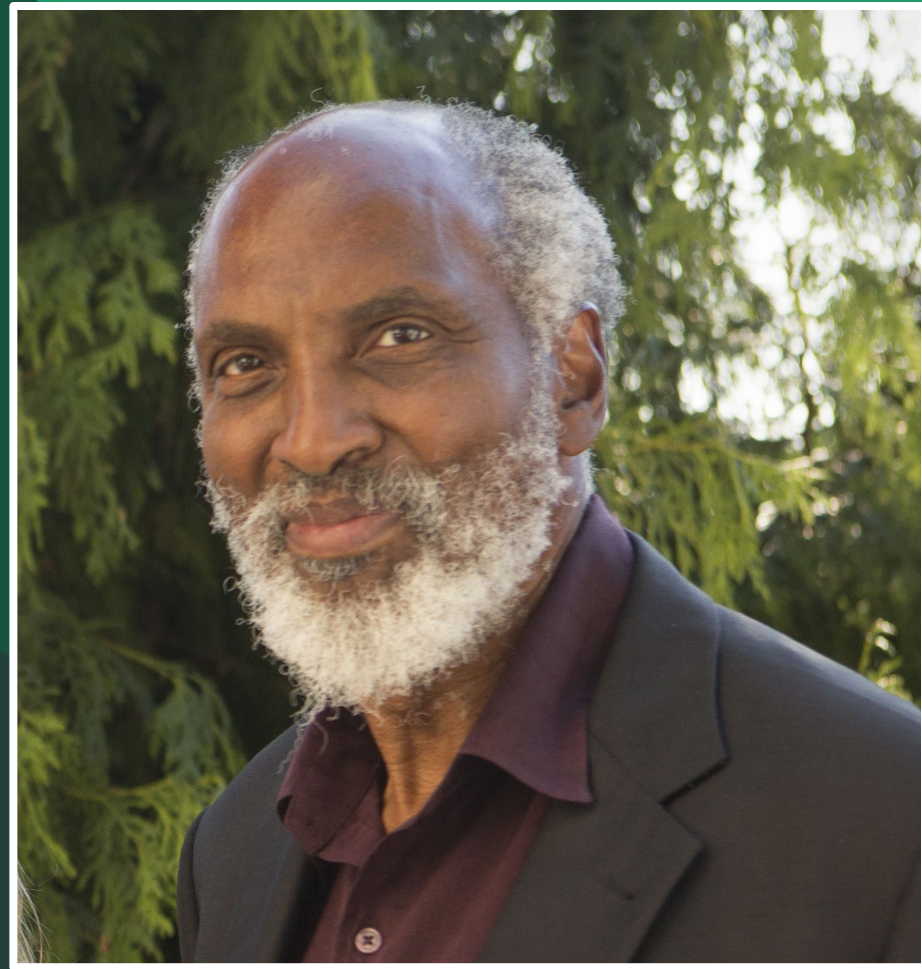
Taxing the
problems to
invest in the
solutions

Prepare for the openings that crises create



Source: Movement for a More Just World, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a-CfIHGkahA>

Closing Remarks



Bridging is a precondition for belonging. Without bridging, it is not possible to build a society in which everyone belongs.

How do we bridge in a fragmented environment?

The solution to othering is bridging, not more othering.

While many groups may view “breaking” as a way of protecting themselves from external forces who seek to blame, injure, or divide, this response harms movements’ ability to build power. As we know, there is power in diversity, numbers, and transformation—all of which require cross-group engagement, not merely in-group bonding.



[Countering Authoritarianism: Forging a Progressive Response to Fragmentation](#) John A. Powell and Sara Grossman March 16, 2023

We call for a world where everyone belongs; where we belong to each other, and ultimately, where that circle of widening concern extends even beyond the human realm, including to the earth itself.





Q&A

Question from survey:

Is Belonging *Without Othering* possible?
Is the idea too ideological? Must there sometimes be a villain for people to feel like they belong? What if members of advantaged groups feel 'othered' when people from disadvantaged groups find belonging?

Question from survey:

What strategies can we use to move people toward belonging through online discourse? A lot of what is happening in the country right now is being shared online, through social media and news platforms. What strategies can we employ on social media to foster belonging? Does it work? Should we engage online at all?



Closing