

Moving Forward: Three Ideas for Talking About the Moment We Are In

January 2021

As we process, discuss, and continue to respond to the January 6th attack on our democracy and what it means for the days leading up to the Inauguration and beyond, The Opportunity Agenda offers a few messaging ideas for the immediate moment that also advance a long-term vision for justice.

Together, we must put forth a strong and unified message that names the hypocrisy and violence that white supremacists perpetuated at our nation's Capitol on Jan. 6. We must call for those who inspired and carried out this insurrection to be held to account, and we must uplift the aspirations and vision we are striving for our democracy to be. Our communities and our country's ideals depend on it.

1. Lay out a long-term vision, framed with values. In crafting your message, uplift the values that serve us in the current moment while also strengthening our long-term narrative. For instance:

Voice: Our Democracy depends on ensuring that *all* our voices are heard, and votes counted. The history made in Georgia in the runoff election on Jan. 5, with BIPOC organizers and voters leading the way with their organizing prowess, voices, and votes, cannot be overstated, and we must continue to celebrate this #BlackJoy and #JoyToThePolls as progress for our democracy – it is a defining moment for what our country aspires to be. The values of **Voice**, Community, and Inclusion ruled the day in Georgia and in the nation with record voter turnout – particularly Black, Latinx and APIA voters -- and with the historic election of Rev. Warnock to the U.S. Senate. It is progress that we should continue to celebrate and uplift loudly despite everything else we are witnessing and facing.

Safety: We must ensure the true safety of *everyone*, whether they are working a job during the pandemic, peacefully protesting, or experiencing an encounter with law enforcement. We can use the jarring memory of the January 6th actions at the U.S. Capitol as a stark reminder that we must commit to doing all that is in our power to promote true **Safety** for all. This means resoundingly rejecting white supremacy's grasp on our society, our police departments, the White House, and all who enable it. We will not stand for a system that is complicit with the violence promulgated against Black protesters, while at the same time is easy going on white vigilantes who run roughshod on federal spaces.

Dignity: Because we are humans first, and *all people* deserve to live in peace and dignity. We must remind people that our new future is built upon everyone having

a voice, all of us coming together as a community to solve shared problems, keeping each other safe, and helping each other live with **Dignity**. We cannot go back to business as usual because that is what led to this crisis. We must take bold action to make this country a true, inclusive democracy where we stand with and for each other and where our elected officials and public servants respect our rights, no matter who we are.

2. Emphasize moving forward. Many of the events of the past year have reminded us of some of the country's worst instincts and darkest history. But we have a moment now to underscore with audiences the message that we can move toward a better version of this nation if we come together to address our shared challenges and [go beyond](#). Emphasize your long-term vision and paint a vivid picture of that future as well as the clear actions we need to take to achieve it. Remind people that to move forward, we have to come together in our diverse experiences, ideas, and strengths to build an economy, society, and country that truly embraces and embodies justice and opportunity. This means fighting for transformational changes, not accepting incremental or piecemeal solutions that leave people out and put us on a sluggish path toward our vision. We have a moment, and we must seize it.

3. Build messages that move your long-term narrative. The events at the Capitol and the actions of this administration, both recent and over the past four years, represent much of what is wrong with our country. But remember to choose your examples carefully to build your story for moving forward. For instance, the hypocrisy of law enforcement's response to the white nationalist attack on the Capitol compared to their stealthy and violent strong handling of Black Lives Matter protesters over the summer makes a powerful argument for those who are advocating to [Defund the Police](#) in favor of building community resources for achieving true safety. Also, those focusing on Democracy work may choose to highlight the president's attacks on voice and vote that culminated in the January 6th violence. Spending too much time describing or explaining all the many dimensions of a specific event will likely keep audiences in that experience rather than looking forward – so remember to keep a simple framework for talking about the [Values, Problems, Solutions and Actions](#) we are trying to share.

More resources:

Democracy Rising Social Media Toolkit: [Bit.ly/DemocracyRising](https://www.democracyrising.org/resources/social-media-toolkit)

“Speaking Out About January 6,” Frameworks Institute:
<https://www.frameworksinstitute.org/news-item/speaking-out-about-january-6/>

“Our Democracy's Ideals Depend on Our Actions Today,” The Opportunity Agenda:
<https://www.opportunityagenda.org/pressrelease-statementjan7>

“Reflecting on 2020, Going Beyond in 2021,” The Opportunity Agenda:
<https://www.opportunityagenda.org/going-beyond-2021>

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