

Shape Democracy in Your Community

For democracy to work, every voice must be heard. This requires reshaping the stories we hear to better reflect the diverse experiences of all communities, driving our actions when we vote. Yet, many voters of color are ensnared by a sinister one-sided story that tells them that democracy is not for them. While it might take time to convince every American that a diverse and inclusive democracy is within our reach, each of us holds the power to begin this important work within our own communities. But how?

“ I live in the South, and I can tell you that I have witnessed the power of the community that is down there. ”

> DANIELA
migrant equity southeast



For nearly 20 years, The Opportunity Agenda (TOA) has worked with experts, advocates, creatives, and communicators to change public discourse and provide the tools and training people need to communicate more effectively about social justice issues and inspire action in their communities. Below are ways that you can start shaping a better narrative around democracy and mobilizing those around you toward civic engagement:

1) Make Your Voice Heard

Voting is a powerful way to make our voices heard and shape the future of our communities. When you cast your ballot, you are not only choosing leaders and policies that align with your values, but you are also contributing to decisions that affect your neighborhood, schools, healthcare, and overall quality of life.

By encouraging and supporting others to vote, you strengthen the collective voice of your community, ensuring diverse perspectives are represented and heard.

Here's an [example](#).

Sharing the resources below can make it easy for you and your community to ensure every voice matters:

- [Register to vote or update your voter registration](#)
- [Check your voter registration](#)
- Help register others to vote:
 - [Rock The Vote](#)
 - [HeadCount](#)
 - [When We All Vote](#)
- Vote early, get a free ride to vote, track mail-in ballots, and more with [Vote Early Day](#)

2) Help Safeguard Democracy for Future Generations

By safeguarding democracy and engaging in community efforts, we help create a brighter future. Our research shows that the concept of “[legacy](#)” is a powerful motivator, instilling a sense of responsibility to leave behind a better world for future generations and mobilizing voters of color to take action. Georgia AAPI Hub, Migrant Equity, and OTR Media are set to launch ads highlighting “legacy” by showcasing the enduring impact of elders from migrant communities to encourage communities of color in Georgia to make their voices heard.

Here are some ways you too can help protect democracy for the next generations:

- Follow [@oppagenda](#) and share the video ads when they launch
- Sign up to be a [poll worker or interpreter](#)
- Volunteer as an [election observer](#)

3) Support Civic Engagement at the Local Level

Democracy is for everyone.

Though federal politicians and government officials are often the faces of democracy at work, we are most regularly impacted by changes happening at the local level. This is why it is critical to support grassroots organizations working to mobilize BIPOC communities.

Our [Beyond Democracy project](#) connects activists, advocates, and artists from the US Southeast and Southwest to engage and inspire Southern voters of color based on their civic interests. This

diverse group includes organizations focusing on a range of efforts, from voter mobilization to organizing neighborhood workshops on solar panel construction.

Explore a few of these organizations for ideas on how you can support or assist similar groups within your community:

- [Arkansas United](#)
- [Migrant Equity Southeast](#)
- [Mississippi Votes](#)
- [New Virginia Majority](#)
- [Texas Organizing Project](#)

Do you live in Louisiana? Check out the [We Matter Campaign](#)'s website for a list of community organizations with volunteer opportunities.

4) Start Changing the Narrative Around Democracy with Shared Values

Values are the core principles that define our personal and national identities; they are so fundamental that compromising them feels unimaginable.

As a communication tool, values are powerful - they establish a human connection that can cut through stereotypes and partisan divisions.

While facts and figures can help reinforce an idea, they don't do much to persuade, especially in this age of "fake news." Leading with values, however, stirs emotions and opens an audience's hearts and ears to your message.

TOA's signature communications structure – **Value, Problem, Solution, Action** – provides a framework that you can use for having conversations around democracy and motivating others to action.

Ready to try it out? Use our [interactive VPSA message building tool!](#)