



CIVIL  
LIBERTIES  
UNION FOR  
EUROPE



# ***HOW TO MESSAGE ON THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE FROM MARGINALISED GROUPS***

May, 2023

*A communications guide for organisations promoting  
human rights*



Co-funded by  
the European Union



Co-funded by  
the Oak Foundation

***Publisher***

Civil Liberties Union for Europe e.V  
Ringbahnstraße 16-18-20  
12099 Berlin, Germany  
[www.liberties.eu](http://www.liberties.eu)

***Author***

Israel Butler

# ***Table of contents***

<b>About this guide</b>	4
<b>Introduction</b>	5
<b>How to bring people from marginalised groups into your audience's sphere of concern</b>	7
I. Current bad messaging habits	7
II. Why this doesn't work with people outside our existing supporters	8
III. What to do differently	8
A. Make the issue directly important by appealing to a shared experience.	10
B. Make the issue indirectly important by showing how it affects loved ones.	12
C. Make the issue indirectly important by showing that people from the marginalised group are 'people like me'.	14
D. Make the issue directly important by pointing out how your opponents are using racism, misogyny, homophobia or other form of intolerance as a strategy to do things that harm everyone, including your audience.	17
When you talk about values, expressly appeal to unity across the grounds that our opponents' use to divide us	18
When you talk about the problem, explain our opponents' malign motives	19
As part of your solution, call for people to come together across their differences.	19
Get in touch	21

## ***About this guide***

This guide is a tool for organisations in the human rights sector that want to communicate more effectively with the public to build support for human rights-related causes. This includes civil society organisations, foundations, international organisations and national bodies promoting human rights.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the Liberties sister guide, 'How to message on human rights: A communications guide for organisations promoting human rights'. Certain terms and ideas used in this guide, such as the 'moveable middle', the 'truth sandwich', the four general rules for talking about human rights and the structure of a winning message, are explained in greater depth in that sister guide. The sister guide also contains links to communications materials such as images and videos from campaigns mentioned in the present guide (and other campaigns) as examples.

The advice in the present guide relates primarily to how to speak to a moveable middle audience among the majority population. That is, an audience who does not, at first glance, consider themselves to be directly affected by the harms inflicted on the marginalised group in question. Put otherwise, the guide is more about how communicators can persuade the 'majority' population to support equality for marginalised groups than about mobilising people from the marginalised group itself.

The term 'marginalised group' is used loosely here to refer to any part of the population that faces actual or potential denial of its rights. The term 'majority' population is also used loosely to refer to the part of the population who regard themselves as not personally affected by problems facing the marginalised group in question.

The guide draws heavily on the work of Anat Shenker-Osorio of ASO Communications on various human rights and social justice causes and related projects, such as We Make The Future. Much of the advice in this guide uses or adapts messages tested by these organisations in the USA. However, users can only be sure that these messages are effective by testing them in their national context and adjusting them as necessary.

# Introduction

The sister guide '[How to message on human rights](#)' elaborates on the four general rules for talking about human rights and the four-part structure of an effective message. While the four-part structure shows communicators what order their message should follow, the four general rules explain the content of the message. The general rules set out in the sister guide are:

Rule 1: Explain what rights bring to the lives of your audience

Rule 2: Explain who is doing what and why to cause the problem

Rule 3: Neutralise your opponents' messages by exposing their malign motives

Rule 4: Emphasise what you want things to look like and how your solutions deliver that

The four-part structure of a winning message, as set out in the sister guide are:

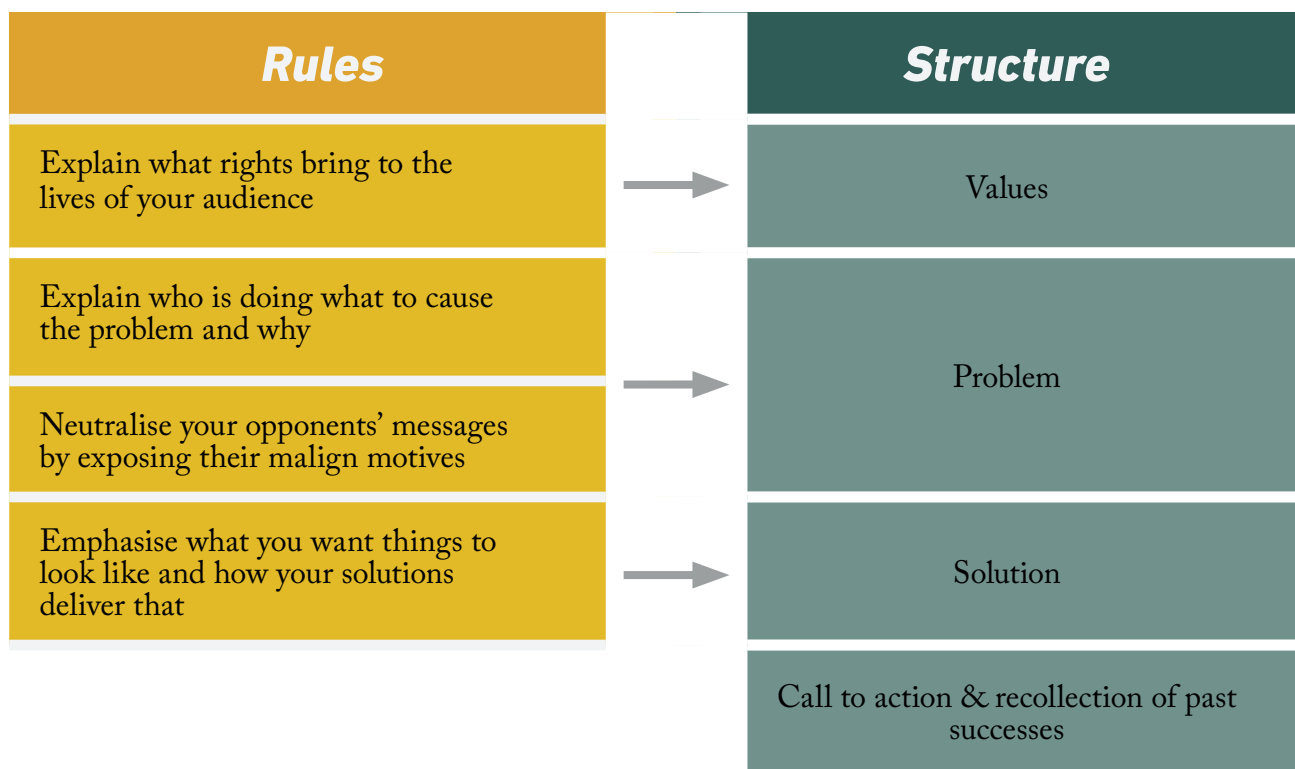
Part 1. Values

Part 2. Problem

Part 3. Solution

Part 4. Call to action and recollection of past successes

They fit together as follows:



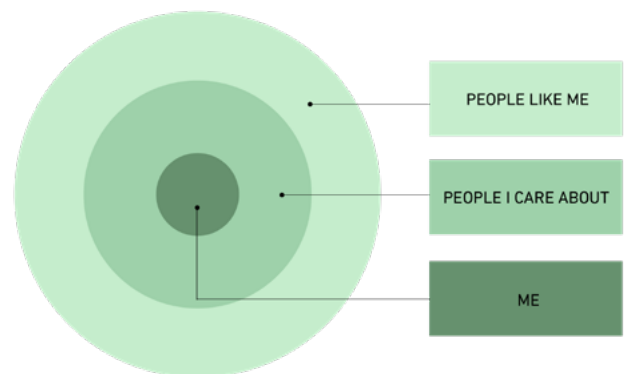
These rules and the structure of a winning message remain valid whether communicators are talking about human rights more generally or equality for people from a marginalised group in particular. However, when talking about people from marginalised groups, communicators need to incorporate additional elements in their messaging. This guide explains those additional elements.

# ***How to bring people from marginalised groups into your audience's sphere of concern***

The sister guide explains that to get support from their audience for human rights, communicators need to explain how the cause they are promoting delivers something that their audience finds important. It can be of importance to your audience directly ('for me') or indirectly ('for people I care about' or 'for people like me').

The challenge for organisations promoting the rights of people from marginalised groups is to bring the groups you're talking about into your audience's sphere of concern; to get them to realise your cause is important because it affects 'me', 'people I care about' or 'people like me'. This is because it can be difficult for your audience to realise how harms inflicted on marginalised groups affect them. People from your audience who, for example, have not been in a position where they need an abortion, or who are heterosexual, or are from the majority white population can have difficulty seeing that harms inflicted on women or LGBTIQ people or people from an ethnic minority background also touch them. This difficulty is compounded by our opponents who portray people from marginalised groups as threatening 'others'.

## ***Your audience's sphere of concern***



## ***I. Current bad messaging habits***

When our sector is promoting equality for marginalised groups, we try to persuade our audience to support us by emphasising the harms being suffered by the marginalised group, rather than by emphasising how these harms fall within the audience's sphere of concern. The traditional human rights message can be summarised as: look at these poor people over here who are suffering, we should make life better for them.

**Collective nouns**

Avoid using collective nouns. These are an obstacle to creating empathy because they hide that you're talking about individual people.

Workers vs people who work

Migrant vs a person who migrates / people who come here

Roma vs a person who is Roma

Women vs a woman in a crisis pregnancy

## ***II. Why this doesn't work with people outside our existing supporters***

Unfortunately, this contributes to othering the marginalised group. Because most of our audience hasn't experienced the harm we're talking about, it cements the idea that the marginalised group is very different. In effect, we're asking our audience to support our cause because they should feel sorry for other people who are not like us.

This kind of argument stimulates sympathy. This is often enough to motivate your existing supporters to agree with you. That's because people who are firmly committed to equality care, on principle, for people who are not part of their sphere of concern. Our supporters

don't need to be shown the link between them and the marginalised group in order to care about them, because they tend to care about all of humanity.

But the broader public needs a different approach. Most people won't be motivated to support equality for marginalised groups unless we underline how the people we're talking about (save for the problem they are facing) are like them or linked to them. People in the moveable middle need to see people from the marginalised group as part of their own group, rather than an outside group, before they will support equal treatment.

## ***III. What to do differently***

Below are four techniques that communicators can use to bring people from marginalised groups within your audience's sphere of concern. These techniques can be applied in two ways:

- In the substance of your message. Communicators can execute these techniques in the way you articulate your values the problem and solution.
- Through the messengers and visual materials that feature in the communications products you use to deliver your message.

The examples given below break up messages into three elements of the four-part structure of a persuasive message: values, problem and solution. The examples tend not to include the



fourth element of a persuasive message (a call to action and recollection of past successes) because the wording of that fourth element varies according to what you have decided to ask your audience to do, and what kinds of past successes will resonate in a given country. Here is an example of what a call to action and recollection of past successes might look like:

‘Just like we joined together to achieve paid parental leave / marriage equality / free pre-school day care / care for each other during the pandemic ... we can demand that our leaders... If you agree, share this content / talk to a neighbour / tell us why you care and include the campaign hashtag ...’

### **Messengers**

Communicators should keep in mind that the messenger can be as important as the message. Your audience should perceive your messenger as warm, personable and authentic. The latter meaning that they have some competence or experience to speak on the issue and are not perceived as promoting a self-interested agenda. The messenger doesn't just include people who physically repeat your message, but also the people who you show in your visual materials.

Different messengers will be effective for different target audiences. To know for sure whether your messenger will be effective you need to research your audience. If you need to speak to different audiences you can choose to include a mix of messengers or work in coalition with other organisations, including from other sectors such as trade unions or business, and divide your target audiences among yourselves.

There is evidence that activists will not always be regarded as effective messengers by people outside their existing supporters because the public can have a negative view of activists as militant, angry, dictatorial, condescending and generally not very nice.<sup>1</sup> Having said this, frontline aid workers like nurses, doctors and teachers, were found to be good messengers to talk about development aid.<sup>2</sup>

### ***The ‘ordinary person’ as a messenger.***

Successive editions of the Edelman Trust Barometer suggest that audiences find ‘a person like yourself’ to be trusted messengers.<sup>3</sup> This seems to be corroborated by campaigns that have used messengers whom their target audience

- 1 [Israel Butler, ‘How to talk about civic space: A guide for progressive civil society facing smear campaigns’, 2021, pp. 55-57.](#)
- 2 [Jennings, A. & Quinton, K., ‘How to shift public attitudes on equality: A practical guide for campaigners and communicators’, \*Equally Ours\*, 2019.](#)
- 3 [Edelman, ‘2021 Trust Barometer Global Report’.](#)

identify as ‘like me’. This means that if your target audience is people from the marginalised group itself, they may be more likely to regard people from their own group as an effective messenger.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, it also means that when talking to the ‘majority’ population in the moveable middle, you probably need to include messengers from the ‘majority’ population and not only people from the marginalised group in question. It seems that people from the ‘majority’ population may perceive people from marginalised groups as self-interested in advocating for a cause that benefits them.

This raises an ethical difficulty because usually one of the problems organisations promoting equality are trying to combat is the fact that people from marginalised groups have been deprived of a voice in society. Using people from the majority population to carry a message concerning people from the marginalised group may well feel like perpetuating the marginalisation you wish to combat. Some of the examples below highlight how campaigns have tried to reconcile these concerns by: including messengers both from the marginalised group and the ‘majority’ population; by including visual materials that show people from the marginalised group

together as part of a community with people from the ‘majority’ population in addition to focusing only on people from the marginalised group.

### ***A. Make the issue directly important by appealing to a shared experience.***

As explained in the sister guide, the standard way of showing your audience that the cause you are promoting is directly important for them is by explaining how it delivers something that they find important. And this ‘something’ should relate to values like freedom, control over one’s life, care and compassion, solidarity, fairness or being able to work together.

If you’re talking to an audience from the majority population, it can be tricky to find a way to highlight how promoting equality for people from a marginalised group fulfils these values directly for this audience by only appealing to values. But you can do it if you can link it with an experience that your audience shares with people from the marginalised group.

<sup>4</sup> For example, the video ‘[Make this a place where everyone can breathe](#)’ was found to be particularly effective with African Americans and people of colour in the USA in making their perception of Black Lives Matter protests more favourable.

Example:

### **Marriage equality**

Campaigns in the USA run by Freedom to Marry used a message that appealed to the shared value of love and commitment. Their overall message reminded their audience that all of us fall in love and most of us want the freedom to commit to the person we love through marriage. And that this freedom should be available to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation.<sup>5</sup> Thus, even though the majority of their audience was not directly affected by the restrictions on LGBTIQ persons, campaigners made it of direct concern to them by underlining that the goal of marriage equality fulfilled a value that their audience shared with LGBTIQ persons.

#### ***Example message***

(Values) All of us have fallen in love. When we find someone special, many of us want to make a long-term commitment to each other through marriage.

(Problem) But today our government denies some of us the freedom to commit to the person we love and found a family, just because of who we are attracted to.

(Solution) All of us should be free to commit to the person we love, no matter our sexual orientation.

#### ***Focussed sub-messaging to reframe the concept of marriage***

Sometimes you may find that for your overall message to work, you need to remove obstacles in your audience's way of thinking that would make them reject your overall message. This means that you may need to give extra focus in some of your communications to a specific element of your overall message. A potential obstacle to persuading the audience in the case of marriage equality can be the prevailing concept of marriage. If your audience thinks that the essence of marriage is a union between two people of the opposite gender, then it makes it harder for them to accept that people of the same gender can fit into their understanding of marriage. Freedom to Marry campaigners therefore created communications products that reframed the idea of marriage to conceptualise it as being about love, commitment and family, rather than a relationship between people of opposite genders. You can find examples among their [archive of videos](#).

5 See [Athene Strategies, 'Why WHY matters part 3: How starting with why changed the US'](#), 21 October 2015.

## ***B. Make the issue indirectly important by showing how it affects loved ones.***

It may be possible to bring people from the marginalised group within your audience's sphere of concern by pointing out personal connections that they already have or may realistically have in the future to people from the marginalised group. This will depend on your national context. In many countries, it will be relatively easy to point out to your audience that they have a potential connection to someone they love who could be affected by harms inflicted on women, LGBTIQ persons, children or older people.

Examples:

### ***Access to abortion***

In the Irish referendum on access to abortion, the winning 'Together for Yes' campaign reminded their audience that they should support access to abortion because one day a woman in their life might need this care. This made access to abortion a concern for men as well as for women who might have never had an abortion through their concern for the wellbeing of their loved ones. The campaign emphasised this link through materials showing people from the 'ma-

jority' population answering the question 'who needs your yes?'.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Example message***

(Values) Most of us want the women in our lives to be treated with care and compassion when they are in a crisis pregnancy.<sup>7</sup>

(Problem) But today many women are forced to continue their pregnancies even when this endangers their lives, the life of their baby, or means they cannot support the children they already have.

(Solution) By coming together we can make abortion care accessible, free and safe, so that when a woman you love needs an abortion, she gets the care and support she needs.

### ***Focused sub-messaging to dissolve negative stereotypes***

Campaigners running the Irish 'Together for Yes' campaign discovered through researching their audience that parts of the target audience held a damaging false stereotype about women who use abortion care. This is because their opponents perpetuated the idea that women who have abortions are irresponsible and promiscuous and use

6 For examples see this [collection of campaign videos](#) from 2.04 minutes. For another video from the USA with the same approach see [here](#) (1 minute version) and [here](#) (30 second version).

7 See [this video](#) from the USA as an example of how to do this.

abortion as a form of contraception. This way of thinking constituted an obstacle that could cause the target audience to reject the overall message. Campaigners therefore placed the focus of some of their messaging on dissolving this stereotype by developing communications products that focused on showing that the decision to get an abortion is usually painful and tends to arise in difficult situations where there is little real choice. For example, where the pregnancy endangers the life of the mother, where the baby's life or health is at risk, where parents cannot afford to support a new child or where the parents' life situation makes it impossible to raise a child. This is why campaigners would refer to women being in a 'crisis pregnancy'.

### *Choosing the right messenger*

Based on audience research, campaigners included not only stories from women who have had abortions, but also friends and relatives of women who have had or needed abortions as well as members of the public who simply expressed concern about wanting women in their lives (including their daughters and granddaughters) to be able to access this care should they need it in the future.

## **Equality for LGBTIQ persons**

### *Choosing the right messenger*

Both the US 'Freedom to Marry'<sup>8</sup> and the Irish 'Yes equality'<sup>9</sup> campaigns used a similar message to the example given above on marriage equality. In addition to developing communications products where LGBTIQ persons delivered this message themselves, campaigners also showed relatives of LGBTIQ persons as well as heterosexual people without children or with young children. These messengers reminded the audience that they should support marriage equality because they want their children or grandchildren to be able to get married in the future regardless of their sexual orientation.<sup>10</sup>

Hungarian activists succeeded in invalidating an anti-LGBTIQ referendum in the '2X' campaign, using a similar approach. The government's anti-LGBTIQ campaign was widely perceived as an incitement to hatred. The winning campaign featured family members of LGBTIQ people reminding their audience that we all want our loved ones to be safe from harm, regardless of their sexual orientation.

8 Evan Wolfson, "Love is love" and other stories: The role of narrative in winning the freedom to marry', *The Forge*, 22 July 2020.

9 Further insight into the messaging of the campaign can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

10 See the [campaign website](#) for examples of materials.

***Example message:***

(Values) No matter our politics, all of us want our friends and relatives to feel safe.

(Problem) But today certain politicians are putting our sons and daughters at risk of attack by inciting hatred against people just because of who they love.

(Solution) By joining together we can reject their attempts to divide us and keep our loved ones safe.

***Equality for people with a migration background***

Operation Libero ran a successful campaign to defeat a referendum initiated by the far right in Switzerland. The referendum motion called for legal reforms that would lead to the automatic deportation of foreign nationals who committed a criminal offence. Switzerland's restrictive citizenship laws mean that around a quarter of the population are non-nationals, including many people born in the country. The far right painted a false image of non-nationals as threatening and linked with criminality. To counter this, among the arguments used by Operation Libero was to remind

voters that the people targeted by the far right were very much part of daily life in Switzerland: colleagues, neighbours and partners.<sup>11</sup>

***Example message***

(Values) Most of us agree that if we happen to find ourselves in court, our case should be looked at by a judge who treats us fairly and looks at our individual circumstances.

(Problem) But certain politicians want our neighbours, colleagues and partners who've lived here all or most of their lives to automatically lose everything, just because they don't have a Swiss passport.

(Solution) Together we can reject their attempts to divide us against the people we love, live and work with.

***C. Make the issue indirectly important by showing that people from the marginalised group are 'people like me'.***

It can be difficult to highlight how your issue potentially affects your audience's loved ones in relation to all marginalised groups. For example, if you're speaking about people from an ethnic minority or people with a migration

11 For more information about the campaign see: [Words to Win By, 'Equal rights under the law: Operation Libero defeating the far right'](#).



background in countries that are not ethnically diverse, or people who are homeless, or people in detention. This is because the ‘majority’ population is less likely to have direct personal connections with people from these groups.

When it’s difficult to point to this actual or potential personal connection, then you can bring people from the marginalised group into your audience’s sphere of concern by emphasising our shared humanity. By reminding our audience how much they have in common with the group we’re talking about, we stimulate empathy and bring the marginalised group into our audience’s idea of who is part of their group. This is sometimes referred to as creating a ‘larger we’ or ‘larger us’. Empathy, and a widened understanding of who is part of our ‘in group’ leads to declining levels of prejudice and a desire that people from the marginalised group should receive the same kind of treatment they want for themselves.<sup>12</sup> This is why our opponents do so much to manufacture or exaggerate differences among the groups they attack, and to make them seem threatening.

***Be cautious with stories designed to break negative stereotypes***

Storytelling can be a powerful tool to create empathy with your audience because instead of describing the problem you want to solve with abstract ideas and numbers, it presents your audience a person with whom they can identify.

But the way we tell stories can backfire. It’s not uncommon to see organisations promoting human rights pick out a remarkable success story of an individual from a marginalised group as a way of challenging negative stereotypes.

Imagine, for example, a story about someone with an ethnic minority background who has excelled academically or professionally. While these stories may offer important role models for people from the marginalised group itself, they may not have the intended effect if our target audience is people from the moveable middle. We tend not to include in our stories an explanation of what causes structural discrimination in the first place or an explanation of how our protagonist’s success is due to the removal of these barriers and the creation of access to opportunities available to the ‘majority’ population. Rather, we just focus on that individual’s journey. But when we don’t include this contextual information, our audience can interpret the personal story in line with existing dominant ways of thinking about the issue.

We know from public opinion research that it’s likely much of our audience thinks that structural racism doesn’t exist; that our societies are meritocracies where people succeed if they work hard and stick to the rules. People from

12 [Israel Butler, ‘Populist authoritarians: Where their support comes from and how to counter their success’, Civil Liberties Union for Europe, 2018.](#)

the majority population tend to explain away evidence of structural discrimination by reverting to a damaging negative stereotype about people from the marginalised group, along the lines of: ‘the reason that people from this group have worse jobs, housing or education is because they are lazy, have inferior morals and are prone to criminality’.<sup>13</sup>

If you’re talking to the moveable middle and they think in this way, showing them an individual success story without relating it to structural factors is likely to lead them to conclude something like: ‘this individual succeeded because they worked hard. And this proves that if people from this group worked hard and played by the rules, they could be successful too.’ In other words, your story can end up backfiring and confirming the prejudices you’re trying to dissolve.<sup>14</sup>

When you use storytelling to talk to the moveable middle, be sure to mix in broader explanations about the context: why is it that people from this group are held back? What structures were in place that the majority take for granted that allowed your protagonist to succeed? And explain that any one of us can

thrive when we are given the same opportunities to do well, regardless of our ethnicity.<sup>15</sup>

To create empathy, emphasise our shared humanity and highlight how people from the marginalised group are already part of ‘us’, communicators can use personal stories that show how much we have in common as well as images showing people from the marginalised group in community with the ‘majority’ population, and including messengers from the ‘majority’ population in addition to people from the marginalised group itself.

Examples:

### **People who migrate**

A successful pilot campaign ‘Together Human’ in Germany by the organisation Juma targeted part of the moveable middle audience, which had conflicted views about migration, including scepticism that people who migrate are capable of integrating into society. Many of their campaign materials focused on showing how people with a migration background are already part of society in the same way as their audience. When the purpose of the visual materials was

13 See discussion of public opinion research in Israel Butler, ‘How to talk about ethnic profiling: A guide for campaigners’, *Civil Liberties Union for Europe*, 2021, pp 13-16.

14 See Frameworks Institute, ‘A FrameWorks Institute eZine Vivid Examples: What They Mean and Why You Should Be Careful Using Them’, 2006.

15 The Frameworks Institute refers to this as a ‘thematic’ as opposed to ‘episodic’ approach to storytelling. For here for [further explanation](#) and here for a [free online module](#).



to emphasise the shared humanity of the person with a migration background by telling their story, the materials focused mainly on that individual. When the purpose of the visual materials was to show how people with a migration background are already part of our society, they would zoom out and use images of them pursuing their careers and hobbies alongside their colleagues and friends from the ‘majority’ population.<sup>16</sup>

A successful campaign ‘Bring Them Here’ by GetUp! in Australia used images and videos of people who migrate talking about their personal lives and their aspirations to highlight how much they have in common with the target audience.<sup>17</sup>

***D. Make the issue directly important by pointing out how your opponents are using racism, misogyny, homophobia or other form of intolerance as a strategy to do things that harm everyone, including your audience.***

When our opponents attack marginalised groups, this is often part of a strategy designed

to distract and divide the public, so that our opponents can retain or gain political power and harm the public. Political movements that want political power or want to remain in power blame marginalised groups for problems facing society, or portray them as a threat to tradition, security or social and economic status. They then present themselves as providing the solution to these real or manufactured problems by punishing or removing freedoms from these targeted groups. Alternatively, political movements that are in power blame marginalised groups for problems the former have caused to distract voters from the fact that they have caused these problems. Attacking marginalised groups also serves to divide voters against each other, which stops voters uniting across their differences to demand leaders who deliver what our communities need.

In this situation, communicators can bring the marginalised group into their audience’s sphere of concern by highlighting how attacks on people from the marginalised group are part of a strategy used by our opponents to harm everyone, including our audience.

Communicators can draw from the many examples of a ‘Race Class Narrative’ developed and tested by ASO communications in the USA and the UK to explain the strategic use of racism by our opponents.<sup>18</sup> While this messaging was developed in the context of combating

16 See the campaign website [here](#).

17 For further information about the campaign see [Words to win by, ‘People seeking asylum - Australia’](#).

18 For further examples of how to implement the Race Class Narrative see: [We Make The Future, ‘Digital toolkit: Fund our future’](#); [We Make The Future, ‘Race class narrative: Example language’](#); [ASO Communications & CLASS, ‘The UK Race Class Narrative Report’](#); [ASO Communications & LRP, ‘Messaging guide: Transgender youth and the freedom to be ourselves’](#).

racism, it can be adapted to any other form of strategic division.

The Race Class Narrative follows the same four-part structure as a normal narrative or message and is a ‘truth sandwich’ intended to address a lie (in this case, lies designed to stimulate fear and resentment towards a marginalised group). The four-part structure and truth sandwich are explained in the sister guide ‘How to message on human rights’. There are three features of the Race Class Narrative that distinguish it slightly from a standard message.

***When you talk about values, expressly appeal to unity across the grounds that our opponents’ use to divide us***

The divisions our opponents use vary from one situation to another. Politicians often try

to divide voters on different grounds in addition to attacking the marginalised group. For example, they may attack people living in cities or people who support an opposition political party or who are middle class for supporting equality for a marginalised group, casting them as part of an ‘elite’ that does not care about ‘the people’ or who are unpatriotic. In contrast, our opponents tend to portray themselves as champions of ‘the people’ whom they characterise as hard-working, loyal to their party or living in rural areas. When calling out strategic division, you should close these divisions by reminding your audience of the values we share. When your opponents try to divide people on the basis of where they live, you can also be specific and name these places. Here are some examples:

### ***No matter how / where / whether / Whatever...<sup>19</sup>***

- how we vote / our party
- what’s in our wallet
- our background
- the colour of our skin
- we were born here or chose to make here our home
- we live in city x or village
- who we pray to
- who we love
- our religion
- we are black, brown or white
- what we do for a living

### ***Most / all of us want...***

- our elected representatives to do what’s best for all of us
- leaders who care for us
- similar things
- to work hard for our families
- to feel safe in our homes
- to be part of a community
- to be a good neighbour
- to support our families

19 Taken from: [We make the future & ASO communications, ‘Messaging guide’](#)

***When you talk about the problem, explain  
our opponents' malign motives***

Be careful not to repeat the lies and attacks of our opponents. Instead, say they are lying, allude to the lie, and explain why they're doing this and how it harms all of us, including your audience.

For example:

'But today, certain candidates running for election spread hatred against people just because of who they love. Candidates who are interested in serving ordinary people come to voters with their vision of how to improve our lives. When politicians try to scare us into voting for them by making us fear each other, it's because they're only interested gaining power to help themselves and their corporate friends.'

***As part of your solution, call for people to  
come together across their differences.***

For example:

'We reject their attempts to divide us. By joining together, we can demand representatives who care for all of us by delivering the things we need to support our families and help our communities thrive.'

Here are some examples of what messages on strategic division can look like when the pieces are put together.

***Strategic racism***

(Values includes call to unity) No matter where we come from or what our color, most of us pitch in for each other and work hard for our families.

(Problem explains strategic division) But today, certain politicians and their greedy lobbyists hand kickbacks to the rich, defund our schools, and cut Medicare and Social Security. Then they point the finger for hard times at poor families, Black people, and new immigrants, or pit rural Minnesotans against those living in the cities.

(Solution includes coming together) We need to join together across all walks of life to fight for our future, just like people won better wages, safer workplaces, and civil rights in our past. Joining together, we can elect new leaders who work for all of us.<sup>20</sup>

Here are two examples of how to adapt the Race Class Narrative to other marginalised groups:

***Strategic xenophobia***

(Values includes call to unity): Whether we live in the city or the countryside, if

20 This is taken from a message tested by ASO communications in the context of an election in Minnesota. For the full research see [here](#).

we meet someone in distress, most of us want to show care and compassion.

(Problem explains strategic division)  
But today, certain extremist politicians try to win political support by making us fear people based on where they come from. And instead of standing up for our values, our current leaders allow the far-right to dictate to us who we are allowed to care for and who we must leave to drown.

(Solution includes coming together)  
When we come together across our differences, we can demand that our leaders honour the values we cherish and allow us to show compassion to people who have risked everything to come here.

we can demand that our representatives work for all of us instead of spreading hatred.

### ***Strategic homophobia***

(Values includes call to unity): No matter who we vote for, most of us believe that the leaders we elect should govern for all of us.

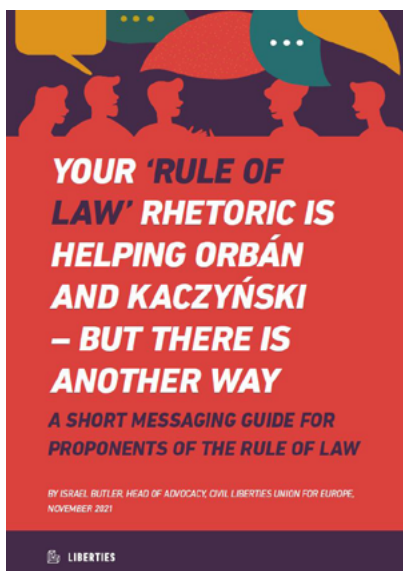
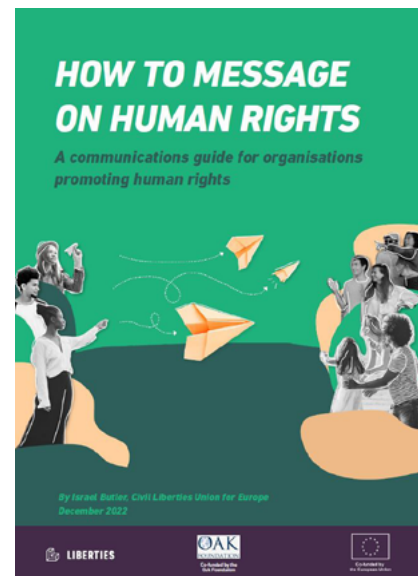
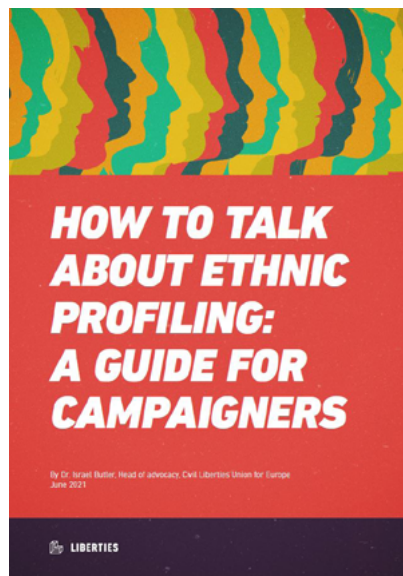
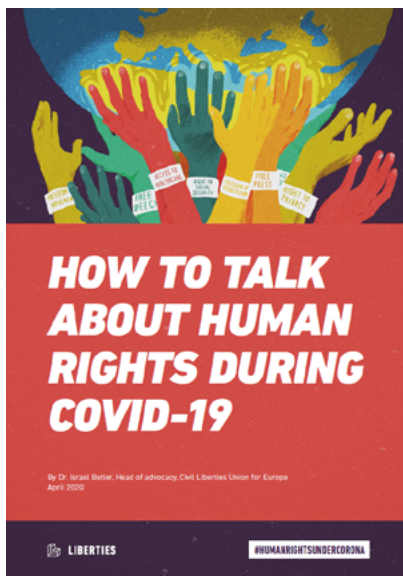
(Problem explains strategic division):  
But some politicians are so desperate to hold onto power that they fuel divisions. They try to divide us based on where we live, who we love or who we pray to. They hope we will blame each other, rather than them, for the damage their policies have caused us.

(Solution includes coming together): By joining together across our differences

## Get in touch

Readers who would like to receive training or mentoring from Liberties in how to apply the advice in this guide should feel free to write to us at: [i.butler@liberties.eu](mailto:i.butler@liberties.eu).

Other messaging guides published by Liberties are available on our [website](https://www.liberties.eu).



The Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties) is a non-governmental organisation promoting and protecting the civil liberties of everyone in the European Union. We are headquartered in Berlin and have a presence in Brussels. Liberties is built on a network of national civil liberties NGOs from across the EU. Unless otherwise indicated, the opinions expressed by Liberties do not necessarily constitute the views of our member organisations.

**Website:**

liberties.eu

**Contact info:**

info@liberties.eu

***The Civil Liberties Union for Europe e. V.***

Ringbahnstr. 16-20  
12099 Berlin  
Germany

***Subscribe to our newsletter***

<https://www.liberties.eu/en/subscribe>

***Reference link to study***

Please, when referring to this study, use the following web address:

<https://www.liberties.eu/f/9vvtuu>

***Follow us***

Co-funded by  
the European Union

The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Liberties and its authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Union.