

COMMUNITY
Power from the
ground up **CHANGE**



PolicyLink

Housing Justice Narrative Initiative

What's Race Got to do With It?

March 2021

Kalima Rose, PolicyLink

Methodology

- Conducted language analysis of discourse on housing in 2019.
- Hosted focus groups in Hattiesburg, MS; Denver, CO; Richmond, VA; Chicago, IL; San Francisco, CA.
- Online dial survey from April 8 – 17, 2020 for the national sample and from April 10 – 25 for the advocate sample.

Public Response

- Respondents know broadly that housing is too expensive.
 - *“The wrong kind of housing is getting built—too much luxury housing.”*
- A majority of respondents think that government has a role to play, but they are not sure of *what* role:
 - *“Not sure what solution would help people living paycheck to paycheck.”*
- When offered concrete policy solutions, a majority expressed support:
 - *“People should be protected from unfair evictions.”*
 - *“People deserve help to pay their rent during hard times.”*

Race Matters

- Top performing messages all emphasize inclusion and anti-discrimination, using language like:
 - *“By ensuring all of us have an affordable place to call home.”*
 - *“Most of us want to provide for our families, have a safe place to call home, and pursue our dreams, regardless of what we look like or where we come from.”*
- Additionally, naming race in value statements that highlight anti-discrimination perform near the top, such as:
 - *“Everyone should be able to choose where to live when you can afford it. Being denied where to live because of race, family status, or disability is discrimination.”*

Key Findings

- Three messages that perform especially well with our base and persuadables: American Dream, Health and Wellbeing, and People First.
- African Americans are with us solidly on housing and make up a large portion of our base.
- Latinx respond especially strongly to the wellbeing of children in value statements.
- Native Americans respond strongly, particularly around connections to work.
- Asian American/Pacific Islanders are not strongly with us initially but come our way over the messages.
- Whites are in support of our policies, but with weak intensity.

Key Findings

- People see a role for government, both federal and local, in ensuring affordable housing.
- By using a basic human needs framework, we push back against housing as a commodity.
- People aren't sure who to blame for the housing crisis.
- Our top tier of policies are comprehensive, covering policies related to economic security, regulatory policies, and investment policies.