NARAL PRO-CHOICE AMERICA

Getting the Edge

PROACTIVE ABORTION MESSAGING TO SEIZE THE DEBATE

Welcome,

NARAL Pro-Choice America began this project because we believe in the foundational truth that reproductive freedom must be for *every* body. And the vast majority of Americans are with us. We share a vision for a future where all families have the freedom to make personal decisions around parenthood, pregnancy, and abortion care without political interference. In order to make this vision a reality, we must tap into these shared values and create powerful messaging that can unite us toward our shared goal.

Polling shows that around 77% of Americans support the legal right to abortion. Despite this fact, the conversation around reproductive freedom is disingenuously treated as if it is controversial. Abortion is consistently discussed from a "both sides" approach as if public opinion is split when in truth, support for reproductive freedom is the norm. This skewed dialogue happens in part because much of the public research around abortion care has operated from this same flawed premise. We sought to chart a new path.

Since the Court handed down *Roe*, too many of us in the reproductive rights space—including our own institution—at times presumed that decision to be both sufficient and sacrosanct. We focused too much on battling incoming attacks from an increasingly vocal anti-choice movement and too little on promoting our case aggressively and on offense. Meanwhile, the anti-choice, anti-freedom movement has peddled inflammatory rhetoric and disinformation in order to assert their political power and control. Those hostile to our fundamental rights have relentlessly passed restriction after restriction to chip away at abortion access, especially for Black, Indigenous, and other people color, and in low-income neighborhoods and rural areas. The result? A web of bans and restrictions on abortion care on the state level, a Trump supermajority on the U.S. Supreme Court hostile to *Roe v. Wade*, and millions of people without local access to care. If we have the support of the majority of Americans, why is this the current reality? It doesn't have to be.

Our goal for this research was to envision a new approach, one that goes beyond what people say they think and focuses instead on what they truly feel. Using social psychology and cognitive linguistics, we hoped to tap into our shared beliefs and values and find ways to connect with people on an emotional level.

Following in the footsteps of the reproductive justice movement, which has always centered a bold vision for a just future, we sought to add to the conversation about the world we want to live in. We wanted to know: What does an aspirational vision for reproductive freedom look like? How could we compel our audiences around what we're fighting *for*, rather than just what we're fighting *against*?

Over the course of this project, we sought to conduct deep messaging research to gain critical insight to begin understanding people's mindsets, emotions, and values around abortion care. In doing so, we hoped to uncover which messages, phrases, and ideas could both mobilize our base

and bring people to our side who may not yet realize that our values align. We searched for the values and messages that could span audiences—across race, gender, age, education level, and geography—as well as those that would resonate more strongly with some groups than others.

Our research uncovered some essential information. Again and again, we found true power and emotional resonance in centering narratives around freedom and control. We found that people connected to our aspirational visions for the future—everyone from activists for reproductive freedom to those who feel conflicted about abortion care wants to live in the world we're trying to create. And finally, we learned how to show the true malice of the anti-choice movement, by showing people the coordinated barrage of attacks on abortion, politicians' selfish motivations behind restrictions, and asking people to consider the impact of these laws have on peoples' lives.

We hope that this guide adds more information, energy, and urgency to the conversation about opportunities to go on the offense. We can and should talk about our shared values and vision for the future while shining a light on our opposition's motivations and their dangerous impact.

This is just a starting point. More work remains to be done in order to continue to break down stigma and translate what we've learned into policy and legislative wins that will have a real effect on the lives of people across the United States. We encourage you to use what we've learned here in whatever way is relevant and helpful to your work—in your own messaging work, policy campaigns, future research, and more.

We're grateful for the work of our friends, partners, and allies in the fight for reproductive freedom, and we look forward to continuing our work together to build a world where *every* body has the freedom to make personal decisions about their lives, families, and futures.

Thank you,

ADRIENNE KIMMELL

Chief Research and Communications Officer
NARAL Pro-Choice America

About

NARAL PRO-CHOICE AMERICA

For over 50 years, NARAL Pro-Choice America and its network of state affiliates and chapters have fought to protect and advance reproductive freedom—including access to abortion, contraception, and paid family leave—for *every* body. NARAL is powered by our more than 2.5 million members, from every state and congressional district in the country. We represent the 7 in 10 Americans who believe every person should have the freedom to make the best decision for themselves about if, when, and how to raise a family.

GSSR

Goodwin Simon Strategic Research (GSSR) is a national public opinion research firm with special expertise in conducting research on emotionally and socially complex issues. GSSR's cutting-edge approach is built on decades of experience in polling, social and political marketing and policy analysis and communications, and is rooted in the latest research on neuroscience, emotion, psychology, cognitive linguistics, and narrative theory. This unique methodology is used to unpack underlying attitudes and emotional reactions that impact behavior and decision-making and to develop effective message frameworks that enable deep attitudinal change. Amy Simon and John Whaley of GSSR conducted the research components of this project and contributed their thought leadership to the development of this strategy guide.

THE DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Development Center consults with organizations and their leaders to tackle complex social and organizational issues, assess their root causes, and formulate and implement strategy. Our work takes into account psychological and interpersonal dynamics, organizations and context, and how they interplay with and influence one another. Through over thirty years of experience, we have learned that only by paying attention to what is apparent as well as what is beneath the surface can seemingly intractable attitudes and problems be understood, and chipped away at, to effect lasting change. Most of our clients are cutting-edge, thoughtful leaders who wish to create change in organizations and society. They are often thought leaders and public intellectuals who are highly visible in the public sphere.

REAL LANGUAGE LLC

Real Language LLC is a language and linguistics strategy firm applying cognitive linguistic expertise and innovation to help partners identify the most effective expressions of their ideas,values, and goals. Language constantly reveals and triggers deep, powerful structures of thought. We harness our understanding of these dynamics to create precise, persuasive solutions to real-world language problems. We've honed our skills over 15 years working with national leaders on some of the most challenging issues: inequality, abortion, LGBTQ interests, our environment, sex education, and healthcare. Alyssa Wulf and Erik Sahlin of Real Language contributed their expertise to the research and this messaging guide.

76 WORDS

76 Words is a political consulting firm with nearly two decades of experience making ads and directing messages to win on reproductive health issues. The firm has helped engineer more than a dozen wins on reproductive health ballot initiatives, including in North Dakota and Mississippi; and helped NARAL Pro-Choice America and the Planned Parenthood Action Fund run some of the most successful independent expenditure efforts of this era. The firm is one of the most diverse in the business, and specializes in giving voice to the New American Majority and its voters, and has won numerous awards for its creativity.

BENENSON STRATEGY GROUP

Benenson Strategy Group is a strategic research consultancy that combines the best techniques from both political and corporate worlds to effectively prepare clients to compete and win. Working at the intersection of useful and interesting, BSG uses innovative research techniques that probe deeply on core beliefs, attitudes, and emotions in order to craft messaging strategies and content that resonates intensely with our audience. By digging deeply to uncover the critical nuances of language, rhythm, and tone, we analyze and understand the prevailing cultural mindsets and obstacles our clients face in order to help guide strategic decision making.

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Who are we?

For most Americans, the idea of having access to safe and legal abortion care is not controversial. The vast majority of people in the United States believe that having an abortion is either morally acceptable and should be legal, or that the government should not prevent someone from making that decision—even if they are personally against abortion for themself. Our research participants recognize that conversations around abortion have become increasingly polarizing. Yet they are very clear that they don't want this to be the case—and with most Americans agreeing on the issue, it shouldn't be.

The fact that abortion can be so controversial and polarizing is no accident. A powerful and vocal set of actors with extreme views—those who wish to make abortion care illegal, or else make access to care impossible—have created and continue to foster conditions intended to make the issue appear divisive. They have staked out positions and put forward restrictions that are so far outside the mainstream beliefs of Americans that nearly any supportive view of abortion care will appear as polar opposite to their views.

These actors with extreme views use calculated, tested, and emotionally manipulative messaging tactics to spread misinformation and to confuse people. They have invested heavily in efforts to amplify their voices locally and nationally, doing so with a carefully measured tone designed to rebrand their extremist goals as reasonable. These actors have, in effect, engineered a polarized debate and then radically skewed it by ensuring that their messages are unavoidable and drown out all others.

This has led to a significant amount of energy, time, and money being spent to defend reproductive freedom across the United States, rather than on securing and advancing that freedom.

The questions before us were simple, but challenging to answer: How can we seize the debate around abortion care? How can we communicate differently to show that we occupy a space already embraced by most Americans? How can we reclaim the fact that we are, actually, the majority—and that there is no need to choose a polarized side?

To tackle these questions, NARAL brought together a variety of experts, each of whom addressed language, messaging, and values from different perspectives and different schools of thought. This cross-disciplinary team included:

- NARAL's Adrienne Kimmell (Chief Research and Communications Officer) and Dina Montemarano (Deputy Director of Strategic Research) developed the overall project objectives and led the project, while Ellie Langford (Director of Research) offered her critical expertise related to opposition policies, strategies, and tactics.
- Amy Simon, John Whaley, Dorcas Omowole, and Elizabeth Glover from Goodwin Simon Strategic Research led the research effort. They brought special expertise in conducting public opinion and communications research on emotionally and socially complex issues—including extensive experience on abortion-related topics.
- Frances Unsell is an organizational consultant and psychoanalyst who brought a psychoanalytical perspective along with expertise in organizational change.
- Alyssa Wulf from Real Language LLC is a cognitive linguist specializing in issues marked by judgment and stigma who helped identify the most effective expressions of our ideas, values, and goals.

- Sarah Flowers and Matt Erickson at 76 Words brought their vast creative talents to the team and led the production of our messenger videos.
- Amy Levin at Benenson Strategy Group brought expertise as a DC-based political pollster and strategist.

NARAL's goal in applying this collaborative approach was to challenge us all to think in more nuanced and creative ways to produce effective and in-depth messaging guidance.

We believe this messaging guidance has become even more important in the wake of Justice Amy Coney Barrett's confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court and the increased likelihood that *Roe v. Wade* will be rolled back. Now, more than ever, we need to tap into our core principles and values to develop proactive abortion messaging that can reach, engage and mobilize a diverse coalition of people across the United States, including Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, white, LGBTQ, and Gen Z people.

When it comes to our freedom to decide, too much is at stake—we must seize the debate.

Who is this guide for?

IS THIS GUIDE FOR YOU?

This messaging guide is intended for advocates, activists, and allies looking to use proactive messaging to seize the debate around abortion care. It is designed—in particular—for reproductive health, rights, and justice advocates; elected officials and policymakers; and grassroots activists and communicators working to ensure that legal access to abortion care is not only protected, but expanded.

The research and recommendations in this guide are also relevant to a broad cross-section of activists, advocates, and allies speaking out in support of abortion rights and access to abortion care. This includes strategists, organizers, legal advocates, public educators, faith leaders, and more.

With this messaging guide, we hope to give everyone working passionately on this issue the tools to effectively communicate with potential supporters in ways that will engage them and help to expand our collective networks of activism.

What You'll Get from This Guide:

- A quick summary of key findings and recommendations in the "Guide at a Glance" on page 47;
- A deeper understanding of people who have the potential to support our efforts to make abortion care more accessible; and
- A number of research-based recommendations that can be used to develop values-based messaging that is both authentic and effective.

It is important to remember that as human beings, we are all persuaded by emotions, values, moral arguments, our own lived experiences, and personal motivations. As we identify and engage with policymakers, judges, reporters, and others that we know will be critical to reach with our messages, it can be easy to lose sight of a simple fact: They are human beings too.

In addition to using this values-based messaging when communicating with potential supporters, it is also important for us to do so in our correspondence with reporters, through legal briefs, at events, during legislative testimony, and in many other places. Doing so will strengthen our ability to engage with these key audiences—and increase the likelihood that they and others will adopt and use language we know is effective in building support.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR READERS AFFECTED BY ANTI-CHOICE AGGRESSION

Learning how our audiences think about abortion care—as well as the people who receive abortion care—can sometimes be difficult to take in. As advocates and caring human beings, it can feel triggering to read the findings presented here.

As such, if you find yourself being triggered for any reason, we encourage you to stop reading and perhaps come back later. Alternatively, you could consider reading the guide with someone else or in a group.

In addition, please remember that our goal is to try to understand our audiences—that does not require us to agree with them.

While this guide offers research-based recommendations on framing and messaging, the intent is not to put words into people's mouths. What we offer here are research-driven insights, not answers or directives. The ultimate goal is to help advocates, activists, and allies build a deeper understanding of potential supporters and what research has shown will most effectively engage and move them. This way, each of us can continue to develop and refine messaging that is authentic to ourselves and our goals. Together, as we put this research into practice, we can continue to build on, iterate and refine these insights with what we learn.

CONSIDERATIONS AS YOU NAVIGATE THIS GUIDE

Words hold immense power. Some can serve to connect us and help us build empathy. Others can distance and divide. Depending on the issue and audience, the most effective words for us to communicate with may differ immensely.

Before you dive into the content of this guide, we thought it would be helpful to provide context around some of the considerations and decisions we made in developing the language for it. We hope this level of transparency will help to explain why we decided to use—or not use—certain words and phrases.

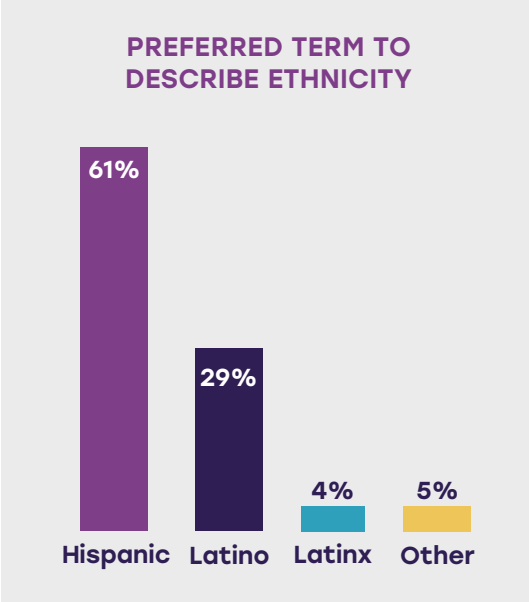
Race and Ethnicity

There are different terms we use throughout the guide to describe people's race or ethnicity. How people choose to describe their own race or ethnicity can vary from individual to individual based on many factors such as geography, age, education, political perspective, country of origin, history, culture, as well as social influences from friends, peers, and family.

Throughout this guide, for example, we use the gender-neutral term "Latinx." Notably, however, many participants in our focus groups and survey typically do not use this term themselves—preferring "Hispanic," "Latina," "Latino," or other terms instead.

As we develop external communications, we need to recognize that the term "Latinx" is not yet well known. In fact, a 2019 Pew research survey found that when asked about the term they prefer to describe their ethnicity—Hispanic, Latino, Latinx, or something else—61% of respondents say they prefer the term Hispanic, followed by 29% who prefer the term Latino, 4% who prefer Latinx, and 5% who say something else.[1]

To be sure, preference for Latinx as a pan-ethnic term is higher among those who are aware of it—10% in this group say they prefer Latinx. Yet, even among those aware of Latinx, the terms Hispanic (50%) and Latino (31%) are preferred. As such, our messaging should consider which term is most likely to resonate with our intended audience.



[1] https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2020/08/11/about-one-in-four-u-s-hispanics-have-heard-of-latinx-but-just-3-use-it/#in-their-own-words-what-does-latinx-mean-to-hispanics

You will also notice that we chose to capitalize Black as a racial identity, while not doing so for white. This may conflict with style guides that you are familiar with, which suggest the use of a lowercase alternative. Language, like all living things, evolves. These decisions are reflected in a post from the Columbia Journalism Review (CJR), "Black and white: why capitalization matters." In their post, CJR quotes Luke Visconti of DiversityInc: "[M]any Black people describe themselves simply as being 'Black,' and this reality is reflected in a body of literature, music and academic study."[1] In addition, the Associated Press announced in July 2020 that its style is "now to capitalize Black in a racial, ethnic or cultural sense, conveying an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black, including those in the African diaspora and within Africa. The lowercase black is a color, not a person. AP style will continue to lowercase the term white in racial, ethnic and cultural senses."[2]

As you develop content that includes people and families as messengers, make it a practice to ask those who are featured how they prefer to describe their race or ethnicity, and then reflect that preference in communications. To read and learn more about using inclusive language, check out this helpful resource, "Writing about Race, Ethnicity, Social Class and Disability." While it may not answer every question, it offers good guidance including this important piece of wisdom: "Language is fluid. As a writer, understand and take responsibility for the language choices you make."[3] The *Conscious Style Guide* also includes a variety of news stories and blog posts about how to communicate thoughtfully about racial and ethnic identity.[4] Another resource is the *Diversity Style Guide*, a project of the Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism.[5]

Gender Identity

Throughout this guide, as we communicate with you as advocates, we use gender-neutral (e.g., "a person") or gender-inclusive (e.g., "a woman, transgender man, or a nonbinary person") language when referring to an individual accessing abortion care. However, when sharing learnings or messaging recommendations derived from our research on Base and Conflicted audiences, we use a mix of gendered and gender-inclusive language (e.g., "a woman," "a woman, transgender man, or a nonbinary person," and sometimes "a patient"). This mixed language is used in order to stay true to what surfaced in the research—to reflect back the language that Base and Conflicted people used and needed to hear reflected in our tested messages and materials in order to understand the information and scenarios we were presenting to them.

We recognize that using the word "woman" (or "women") when describing those who seek abortion care is at odds with the real lived experiences of many transgender men and people who are nonbinary. It is also important for us to recognize that NARAL members and other activists working on reproductive freedom, health, rights, and justice issues have a foundation of knowledge and hold a set of experiences that many people—especially Base and Conflicted people we need to reach and move—just do not have.

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[1] https://www.cjr.org/analysis/language_corner_1.php

[2] https://apnews.com/afs:Content:9105661462

[3] http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/centers/writing/writing-resources/language-of-difference-writing-about-race-ethnicity-social-class-and-disability

[4] https://consciousstyleguide.com/ethnicity-race-nationality/

[5] http://www.diversitystyleguide.com/

In research conducted prior to this project, we found that solely using "person" (or "people") in place of "woman" (or "women") can be confusing for these audiences. For many, it can create real barriers to understanding and support—especially among older audiences, including older women. The majority of Base and Conflicted people simply do not yet understand enough about gender identity, sexuality, or even basic reproductive processes to enable them to understand why transgender men or people who are nonbinary would need to access abortion care. There is still a tremendous amount of education that needs to happen.

In addition, we know that the erasure of women has always been a key strategy of the anti-choice, anti-freedom movement's attempts to restrict access to abortion. When we use both gender-inclusive language and the gendered term "women," it allows us to acknowledge and affirm the experiences of trans and non-binary people while actively resisting the Radical Right's attempts to erase and control women.

To help Base and Conflicted people begin building an understanding of what it means to be transgender or nonbinary—and why transgender men and people who are nonbinary need access to abortion care—we need to give them opportunities to learn. To do that, it is going to be very important for advocates and activists to amplify the stories of transgender men and people who are nonbinary and who have been pregnant and have had an abortion.

In addition, we encourage the development and sharing of stories to help educate Base and Conflicted people and put a face on the need for transgender men and people who are nonbinary to access abortion care.

Singular Over Plural

When hearing the word "abortion," our audience will often mentally situate the issue in terms of politics and extreme polarization. Because of this, they often become uncomfortable and unwilling—or unable—to talk about the issue. Therefore, part of our job when communicating with our audience is to emotionally shift them away from the polarized, political associations they have with abortion and into a more caring space—one that is personal, individual, and human. When messaging is more personal, it is more powerful. We know this from years of research conducted across many different issues.

By using singular terms (e.g. "a woman," "a woman, transgender man, or a nonbinary person," "a person who is pregnant," or "a patient") as much as possible in our messaging, we also help to keep our conversations at a concrete, individual level rather than at an abstract, categorical ("women" or "people") level.

"ABORTION CARE" OVER "ABORTION"

In previous abortion-related research, we have consistently seen that audiences respond much more positively to the phrase "abortion care" than to the word "abortion" alone or "abortion services." In a similar vein, our research suggests that it is more effective to say "doctor/physician/nurse practitioner who provides abortion care," while deemphasizing the phrase "abortion provider."

This past research found that including the word "care" is very important when talking about abortion as a part of someone's healthcare. Why? The phrase "abortion care" allows our audiences to imagine the process as a whole—that it includes a healthcare provider, receiving unbiased information, and having the option to receive counseling if desired.

Conversely, terms like "abortion provider" or "abortion services" can feel abstract for our audiences and contribute to a sense of 'othering.'

In addition, the label "abortion provider" can lead audiences to imagine that this person's role is an inherent part of their core identity—the most important thing about that person, rather than just a single facet in their overall multi-faceted identity and lived experiences as a healthcare provider and human being.

For example, the more we say things like "a person's circumstances" or "a woman's decision," the more our Base and Conflicted people can begin to imagine what that individual's actual circumstances might be—or imagine that they don't know enough about that individual's personal circumstances. Therefore, the person who is pregnant should be in a position to make their own decision. All of this helps to disrupt the flawed mental template our audiences have developed when it comes to abortion. (See page 13 for more on flawed mental templates.)

On the other hand, when we talk in broad categories—saying things like "women's decisions" or "people's decisions"—our audience is left to imagine a group, not a person. And it is much easier for them to make assumptions and pass wholesale judgment on a group. In fact, we have found that when it comes to regulating or managing a group's behavior, people are more likely to think that they want to support restrictions on abortion. However, when it comes to individual behavior, people feel less driven to support restrictions.

What are we hoping to accomplish?

PROJECT OVERVIEW

According to a Gallup survey conducted in May 2020, the vast majority (79%) of Americans say abortion should be legal under any (29%) or certain (50%) circumstances, compared to just 20% of Americans who say that abortion should be illegal in all circumstances.[1] In addition, a 2019 Pew poll shows that the majority of Americans say their greater concern is that some states are making it too difficult (59%) rather than too easy (39%) for people to be able to get an abortion.[2]

Even though the majority of people in the United States believe that abortion should be legal and safe, the right and ability to access abortion care remains under constant assault. For decades, many of us have focused a significant amount of time and resources on protecting the rights we have and preventing restrictions on those rights.

Our overarching goal for this project was ambitious: to learn how we could move from defense to offense. To do this would require two things: 1) developing ways to call out our opposition's harmful and manipulative efforts to restrict the freedom to decide as a way to control people and expand their political power and 2) creating an aspirational vision for our issues and bringing as many people as possible along with us toward that vision. And, of course, we strove to do this in a way that stays true to our beliefs and values and would continue to engage and fire up our members and other activists.

While this project is robust and included multiple stages of qualitative and quantitative research, we were not able to do or test everything we would have liked. For example, we focused less on specific abortion-related policies, and more on values and messages that have the power to engage people and bring them with us.

RESEARCH GOALS AND PURPOSE

- Conduct in-depth, multi-faceted research using qualitative and quantitative methods, cognitive linguistics, and psychology.
- Explore attitudes and test messaging across a diverse set of research audiences, including Black, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, younger, and LGBTQ people, and people with and without a college degree.
- Identify specific words and phrases that are effective as building blocks for messaging to engage and activate the Base and that persuade, or do not alienate, those who are conflicted.
- Identify key words and phrases to create a positive and aspirational vision for what the world could look like.
- Identify key words and phrases for rebuttal messaging, including against opposition disinformation campaigns.
- Identify key storytelling components and messenger characteristics (given that messages and messengers are intertwined).

[1] https://news.gallup.com/poll/1576/abortion.aspx

[2] https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/08/29/u-s-public-continues-to-favor-legal-abortion-oppose-overturning-roe-v-wade/

Humans are Heartwired

In 2017, with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Goodwin Simon Strategic Research and Wonder: Strategies for Good released a strategy guide called Heartwired that outlined a new, integrated approach to audience research, storytelling and persuasion communication. We used this approach in conducting the research for this project.

In short, this research approach is based on the fact that human decision-making is influenced by how people are "heartwired"—the mind circuits and connections that tie together their emotions, identity, values, beliefs, and lived experiences.

Whether conducting a single survey or launching a large-scale social change campaign that may take years and require deploying multiple research methods, applying the process outlined below helps to ensure that the research findings and communication recommendations best support your objectives.

This research process includes five phases that are interconnected and ongoing. Each of the five research phases is guided by the strategic questions below:

CHANGE: What is the specific change you want to enact in the world?

LANDSCAPE: What is the current landscape or the playing field on which you have to compete to create the change you seek—and what is already known about it?

MINDSET: What is the mindset of the audiences you need to persuade?

PERSUASION: How do you translate your new heartwired understanding of your target audiences to develop effective persuasion strategies?

ACTION: Once you have the understanding and the persuasion strategies down, how do you integrate them into every facet of your work and put them into action, refining and strengthening as you go?

Mapping your change strategy makes it possible to accelerate momentum on your issue. It gives you a bird's-eye view of the world in which you are seeking to create change, and can transform how you approach your work once you're back on the ground working to change hearts and minds.

THE FIVE HEARTWIRED FACTORS

The heartwired research approach investigates these five factors and how they combine, and often collide, to shape people's attitudes and behaviors. Before you jump into the research insights and recommendations, it may be useful to familiarize yourself with the five heartwired factors—each of which influences people's thinking and decision-making.

EMOTIONS: The feelings that human beings have in response to the stimuli within and around us are complex. Our emotions typically drive our behavior and lead us to prioritize certain concerns. Because of how we are neurobiologically wired, we tend to make decisions based on emotions and back them up with logic, especially when we feel urgency and need to make a split-second decision—and this all happens on a largely unconscious level.

LIVED EXPERIENCES: The events and relationships people experience in their lives combine with the meaning they assign to those experiences to shape their responses. The way we interpret and remember events—the narrative we construct around them—is just as important as what actually happened. Exploring and understanding those lived experiences is key to effective messaging strategies that drive behavior change.

IDENTITY: Self-identity is how people see themselves in relation to the world around them. We are all driven to make decisions that align with our sense of self, and when we don't, we experience uncomfortable cognitive dissonance. Every individual's identity incorporates many facets (e.g., gender, race, faith) and traits (e.g., being hard-working, fair-minded, educated). Internal conflict related to behavior change on certain topics is often the result of a tug-of-war between different facets of a person's identity.

VALUES: Values are ideals that individuals hold about what is good or bad, right or wrong, important or unimportant, appropriate or inappropriate. Values influence emotional reactions, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors and are often shared broadly within a culture or community. A person's values help them make meaning in their lives. If those values are contradicted, people experience a sense of dissonance and incongruence, which interferes with their capacity to change attitudes and behaviors.

BELIEFS: Beliefs are ideas that people hold to be true. When we have significant experience with something, our beliefs are deeper and more nuanced. When we have little to no experience, we tend to fill in the knowledge gaps. Whether we have deep or scant knowledge, our beliefs are further shaped by our identity, our lived experience, and our values. In other words, facts alone do not shape beliefs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AT A GLANCE

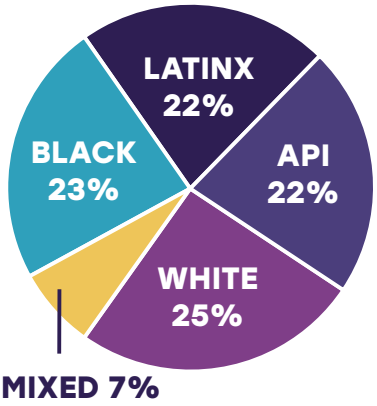
We were very intentional about conducting the research among a mix of audiences, including Black, Latinx, white, and Asian Pacific Islander (API) people, as well as younger people and people who explicitly identify as LGBTQ. Our research also includes NARAL members to test our communication strategies among politically engaged supporters within the Base. Research components included:

- November 2019 to May 2020: 19 in-person focus groups and three online focus groups among a total of 246 Black, Latinx, white, and API registered voters ages 19 to 59 in Arizona, Iowa, Michigan, and North Carolina.
- July 2020: Video dial test survey of n1,473 voters
    - Black voters (n175 Black women, n163 Black men)
    - Latinx voters (n170 Latina women, n152 Latino men)
    - White voters (n200 white women, n170 white men)
    - API voters (n172 API women, n152 API men)
    - Mixed race voters (n62 mixed race women, n41 mixed race men)
    - Voters ages 18 to 23 (n256)
    - Voters who identify as LGBTQ (n147)
- A separate sample includes n1,534 NARAL members

A more detailed methodology section can be found on Page 46.

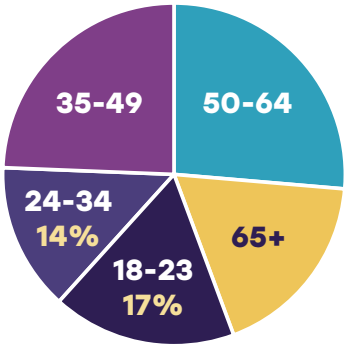
Voters of Color

75% voters of color

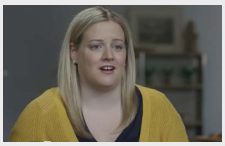


Younger Voters

31% ages 18-34

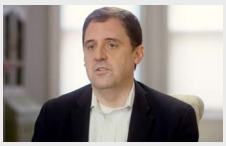


Messenger Videos Tested

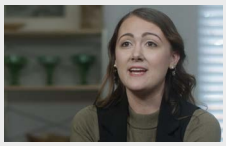


Emily
personal abortion experience

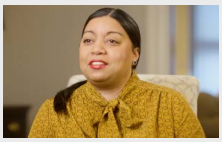
Hailey and Jayden
personal abortion experience



Rep. Jay Livingstone
state legislator



Xakota
advocate/staff

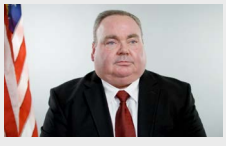


Rep. Liz Miranda
state legislator

Max and Sheri
mother and son

Avery
advocate

Dixie
advocate



Rep. Steven Harris
state legislator

Health & Human Services Chief Michael Perez

Who are our audiences and why are they important?

OUR AUDIENCES: BASE VOTERS AND CONFLICTED VOTERS

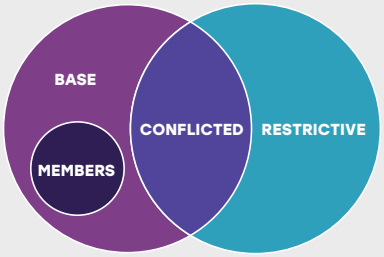
Our research focused on what we call "Base" and "Conflicted" voter audiences—registered voters who could be with us in supporting and expanding access to abortion care.

- By Base voters, we are referring to those who say that abortion should be legal and generally available and feel strongly that laws in their state regarding abortion access should be less strict or kept the same. It is possible that some within this audience are knowledgeable about reproductive health, rights and justice issues, but this does not mean that they are associated with any organization or group.
- By Conflicted voters, we are referring to those who answer abortion-related questions in a conflicted or mixed way rather than being consistently pro-access. This does not include those who believe abortion should be banned and made illegal. For example, they may believe that having an abortion is morally acceptable and should remain legal, but that there should be some restrictions around access. Others may express that, while they would never choose abortion for themselves, they still want to keep it legal.

One thing to note is that we intentionally excluded people with hard anti-choice views from our research. In general, this group holds beliefs that are so extreme they are largely unavailable to us. That said, as part of our research, 14% of the voter sample for the dial test survey we conducted includes respondents who consistently hold more restrictive views on abortion access. These people say abortion should be mostly illegal and only permitted in very few circumstances; that laws should be stricter; or that they believe having an abortion is morally wrong. We include these people in the survey in order to understand what impact the frames and messages we have developed may have on those who do not agree with us, as well as to monitor for potential backlash.

One final and important note to keep in mind: These audiences are not monolithic. There are diverse segments of people within each of the Base and Conflicted voter audiences—diverse in terms of demographics but also different beliefs, attitudes, and experiences.

A CRITICAL GUT CHECK WITH NARAL MEMBERS



As you read this guide, we ask that you hold in your mind that our Base audience and our activist base are not one and the same. While the Base audience may include activists, the overall base is much larger than the activist base (of which NARAL members are a part).

Better understanding how to engage and move this broader Base audience, as well as some of those within the Conflicted audience, will be critical for us to seize the debate and to achieve our mission.

Just as critical is ensuring that the messaging and recommendations we develop continue to be true to our NARAL members' core beliefs and values and continue to engage and fire them up. To that end, as part of our dial test survey we included a separate—and large—sample of NARAL members. This allowed us to see important differences between the views of our NARAL members and those of Base and Conflicted voters.

We call out these similarities and distinctions often throughout the guide when referencing data or findings from the survey.

What did we learn and how is it different?

UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIENCE MINDSET

What Is an Audience Mindset?

Mindset research provides a window into the life experiences, identities, beliefs, emotions, and values of the people we are trying to reach. It reveals the most powerful points of connection—those that begin with what is fundamentally true for our audience, rather than the worldview that we hold as advocates and activists who already understand and believe in our issues. By better understanding our audience's mindset, we can draw on the emotional power that helps change hearts and minds. It allows us to develop messages that fit into their already deeply held values, rather than trying to change their core values. Simply put, it means that our audience can come to the change themselves, rather than advocates trying to impose change upon them.

Audience Mindset and Flawed Mental Templates Related to Abortion

When it comes to how Base and Conflicted people think about abortion, our research over many years on this topic has revealed that people hold many deeply flawed ideas not only about abortion itself—but also about those who receive abortion care, those who provide it, and the clinics where care is provided.

There are lingering misperceptions among audiences of abortion as inherently dangerous, risky, and traumatizing, along with beliefs that those seeking abortion care are liberals or feminists who are acting cowardly, looking for an easy way out, have low self-esteem, or are easily influenced by others. There are also misperceptions of providers being unskilled, unsafe, uncaring, or taking advantage of those who are vulnerable and that they are providing abortion care in places that are dirty, impersonal, or where abortion care is the only care provided.

It is important to note that people may often hold multiple associations that seem to be in conflict. For example, the same person may simultaneously think that, in general, someone receiving abortion care is young, poor, and uneducated while also imagining that someone with a good job who is married and well-off may seek abortion care to hide an extramarital affair.

KEY CONCEPT: MENTAL TEMPLATES AND FLAWED MENTAL TEMPLATES

A mental template is a set of images and associations that people have with something—or someone—they encounter out in the world. The idea was developed by Dr. Phyllis Watts, a social and clinical psychologist who advises change-makers on the psychological dynamics that prevent progress on tough social issues.

It is important to understand that these mental templates are not always fair or accurate. According to Dr. Watts, people develop flawed mental templates when they are not deeply familiar with something or someone—when they lack the information or experiences to fully understand and are therefore forced to connect the dots themselves. Unfortunately, it is often the case that stereotypes, prejudices, or misinformation intentionally pushed by opponents are used to persuade our audience to connect the dots in ways that undermine our efforts.

In our work, this means that people who don't personally know a woman who has accessed abortion care are therefore likely to develop a flawed mental template—something that will unconsciously impact their views of and emotional reactions to abortion. For our communications to be effective, we will need to understand the key components of these flawed mental templates in order to disrupt them and replace them with associations and images that are neutral to positive.

Below are a few examples of the flawed mental templates we have found that people hold when it comes to abortion care:

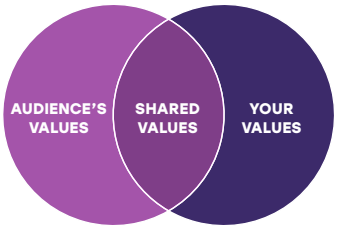
ABORTION CARE	WOMEN WHO RECEIVE ABORTION CARE	DOCTORS WHO PROVIDE ABORTION CARE	CLINICS WHERE ABORTION CARE IS PROVIDED
• Risky—much riskier than pregnancy • Easy to access • Not equivalent to other forms of healthcare	• Isolated; disconnected from family/partner/ friends • Irresponsible/ careless • Desperate/ impulsive • Selfish/career-driven • Not a parent	• Anonymous, faceless • Hiding, operating in shadows • Poorly trained, unlicensed, unqualified • Politically motivated • Indifferent, emotionally detached	• Dirty • Impersonal, cold • Located only in poor neighborhoods • Only provide abortions • Encourage abortion over other options
Abortion is riskier than pregnancy	It's the easy way out	They're not real doctors	I think of those places as shady and dangerous.

It is important for us to recognize these flawed—and often unconscious—beliefs that our audiences hold about abortion, those who seek care, those who provide it, and the clinics where care is provided because they unconsciously impact our audiences' views of and emotional reactions to this issue and the people impacted by it.

In addition, we cannot ignore the overt racism and classism that influence the biases of both women and men when it comes to abortion care, as well as the fact that abortion is not gender normative. All these factors contribute to people's flawed mental templates around abortion care.

Fortunately, we do not have to correct every flawed idea or inaccuracy in order for audiences to be more supportive. We simply need to disrupt these perceptions enough—and replace them with associations that are more positive—in order to help our audience question what they think they know and be open to hearing more and thinking about this issue in new ways.

SHARED VALUES AND HAVING EMPATHY FOR OUR AUDIENCES



Ultimately, human beings make decisions and are motivated to act not based on policy or logic, but by what we believe is right or wrong and the values that we hold dear. In this context, it is common for activists to strongly disagree with some of the deeply held values and beliefs of target audiences. This can lead us as activists to explicitly and implicitly dismiss, argue with, or even ridicule perspectives that are different from our own. It can also lead both audiences and activists to see their values as fundamentally and irreconcilably at odds with one another. In some cases, that may be true. However, we must recognize that we cannot—at least in the

short term—change our audience's core values any more than they can change ours. So, to be effective, we must tap into the Venn diagram of shared values—the places where the values of the audience overlap with those of advocates.

When we build our messaging on their pre-existing values—values that we also share—we can foster familiarity and help audiences to put more weight on the values and beliefs that lead them to be supportive, rather than on those that interfere with support. There are many shared values that emerged from our research that provide ready pathways for creating change. When we start by evoking these values, we cue our audiences to remember the ideals that they strive to live out in their daily lives.

Some of these shared values are well known among advocates and activists, and we should continue to harness them in our communications. These values (and words) include:

- Freedom (to decide/from control)
- Respecting personal, private decisions
- Having options
- Caring for women, especially in times of need/ important moments in their lives
- Being equipped with accurate, unbiased information
- Being able to make the best decision for your circumstances
- Compassion
- Providing support
- Non-judgmental
- Life is complicated/no one-size-fits all
- Safety/physical wellbeing
- Healthcare—including abortion care—should be safe/legal/accessible/affordable/available

KEY CONCEPT: EMPATHY DOES NOT EQUAL AGREEMENT

Empathy is a core concept for change-makers; having the capacity to listen to and seek understanding through the lens of your audience's good intentions is vital to persuasive communications.

That's because nearly all humans have a deep psychological need to see themselves as good, and very few want to see themselves as harming others. We better understand our audiences' attitudes and behaviors when we understand how they experience their beliefs and actions as supporting a positive view of their own intentions.

To enable change, we have to meet audiences where they are. Empathy—the capacity to understand and be sensitive to another's experience—is critical to our efforts to create changes in thinking and behavior. Our communications need to convey empathy to help meet the emotional needs of audiences and manage negative emotions and feelings that interfere with positive change. The information and stories or messages that are most compelling to us as advocates may not connect with our audiences—and if it does not feel relevant, it will not lead them to change. When we focus on what our audiences need to hear in order to help them be open to persuasion, it can sometimes feel as though we are not making as strong a case for our point of view or the information we find most important. Our research shows, however, that meeting the audience's emotional needs and providing the information that matters most to them (rather than the information that matters most to us) is critical for opening the pathway to change.

Sometimes in advocacy work, being asked to understand an opposing point of view can feel like you are being asked to validate it. However, empathy does not require that you agree with a perspective—only that you genuinely understand it. By understanding and integrating those lived experiences, values, emotions, beliefs, and identity into our communications in ways that support the change we seek, we can ensure that they do not act as roadblocks to change.

However, there are additional values that many of us often fail to lift up. While not everyone in our target audiences shares these values, many of them do—especially the audiences we need to persuade:

- Family and children
- Emotional wellbeing
- Faith—especially as it relates to compassion and understanding
- American pride, including perceived American exceptionalism

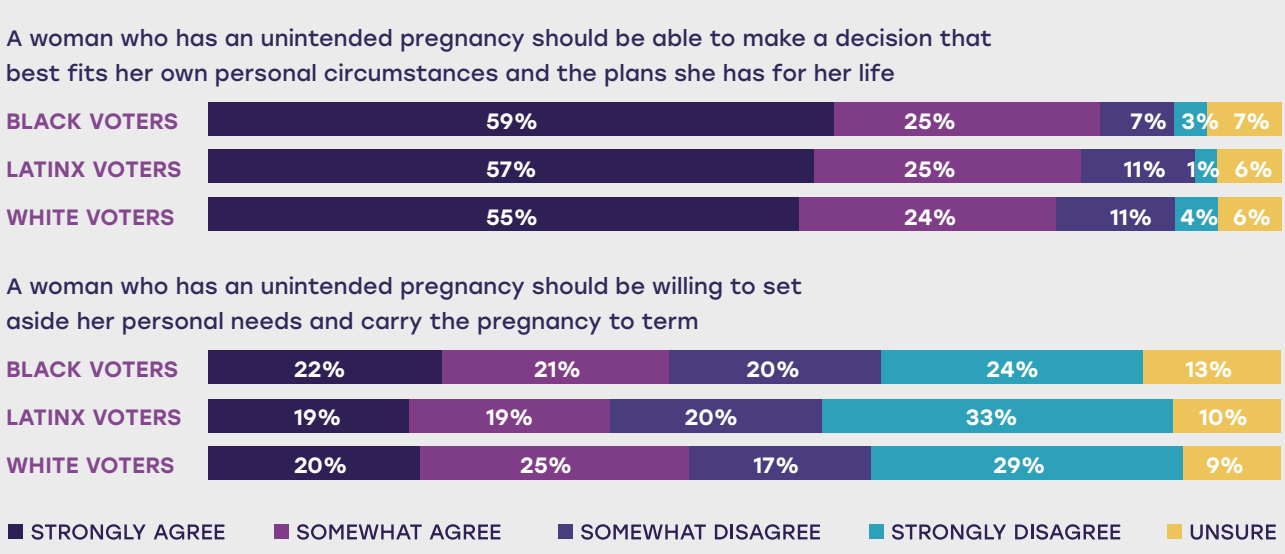
"These laws are un-American. This country is supposed to have freedom to make your own life, your own decisions." —Latinx woman, AZ

A TENSION AROUND SACRIFICE AND MAKING THE BEST DECISION

Throughout the research, we saw participants grapple with two seemingly contradictory beliefs. One, that a woman who has an unintended pregnancy should be able to make a decision that best fits her own personal circumstances and the plans and hopes she has for her life, and two, that a woman should be willing to set aside her own personal needs and carry the pregnancy to term. In other words, for many people these two beliefs are not necessarily mutually exclusive. As the chart below shows, a sizeable proportion of Black, Latinx, and white participants can agree with both propositions.

Make Best Decisions vs. Set Aside Own Needs (Race)

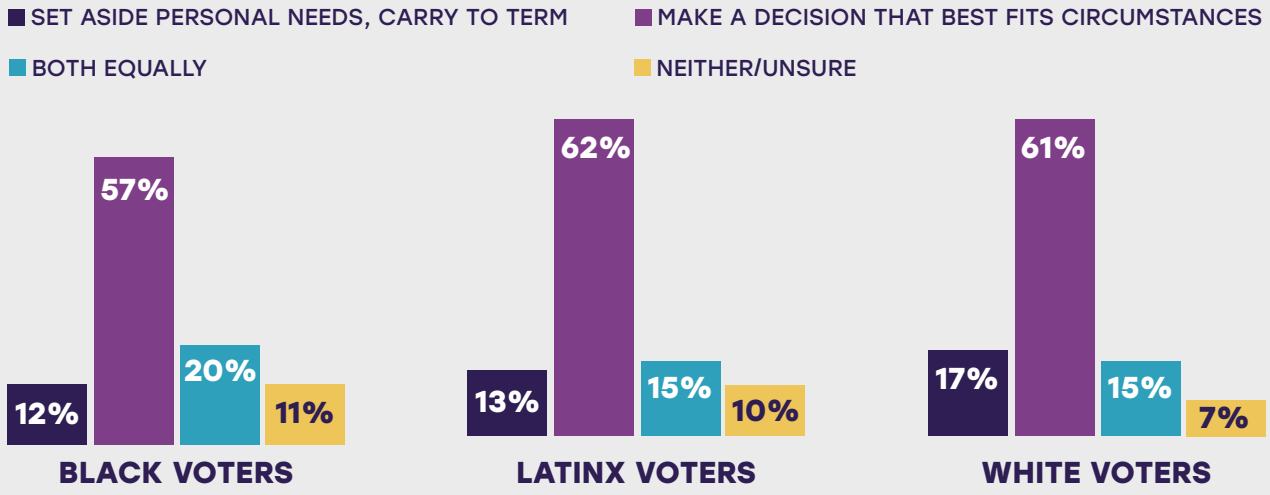
Thinking about the unexpected and difficult things that can happen in people's life, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:



Importantly, however, when forced to choose one of the two scenarios, the majority of Black, Latinx, and white participants say a woman should be able to make a decision that best fits her own personal circumstances over carrying the pregnancy to term.

Make Best Decisions vs. Set Aside Own Needs (Race)

Which of the following statements comes closest to your own point of view?



Knowing that this tension exists can help us understand and even empathize with the inner conflict many people have around abortion—and that can help us to better craft messages that resonate. Most importantly, what the research reveals is that just because someone experiences conflict around abortion, that does not necessarily mean they oppose having the freedom to decide. In other words, people who might seem like opponents because they express conflicted feelings about abortion may in fact be our allies.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GUARDRAILS / ASSUMING LAWS ARE THERE FOR A REASON

No matter our gender or race or where we are born, there are some psychological dynamics from childhood that we never outgrow—needing boundaries is one of them.

Only with boundaries do we feel our environment is safe enough to make what might be a difficult or life-changing decision. We know we are capable of making mistakes, and we feel these guardrails are there and that we are protected within them. We know we can push against them and that they will be sturdy enough to hold.

When it comes to abortion care, participants throughout our focus groups—including many participants who strongly support access—frequently express a desire to see at least some restrictions placed on abortion. In addition, many research participants believe that current laws were put in place for a reason—that these laws were passed to keep people safe.

As an example, we presented survey respondents with seven types of abortion restrictions—including laws requiring a mandatory 24-hour waiting period (or ultrasound), legally defining a fertilized egg as a full person, and banning abortion by classifying it as a 'nonessential' health procedure during the coronavirus pandemic. NARAL members in the survey quickly identify these laws as antithetical to the freedom to decide, and the vast majority of them oppose most of the restrictions. Nearly two-thirds (65%) oppose all seven restrictions (see the dark blue slice in the pie chart on the following page).

For other audiences, however, the results are much more mixed—and distressing. Even among our Base, only a quarter (24%) oppose all seven of the laws offered, while many oppose only one or two (or even zero). For Conflicted audiences, the majority support most of these laws.

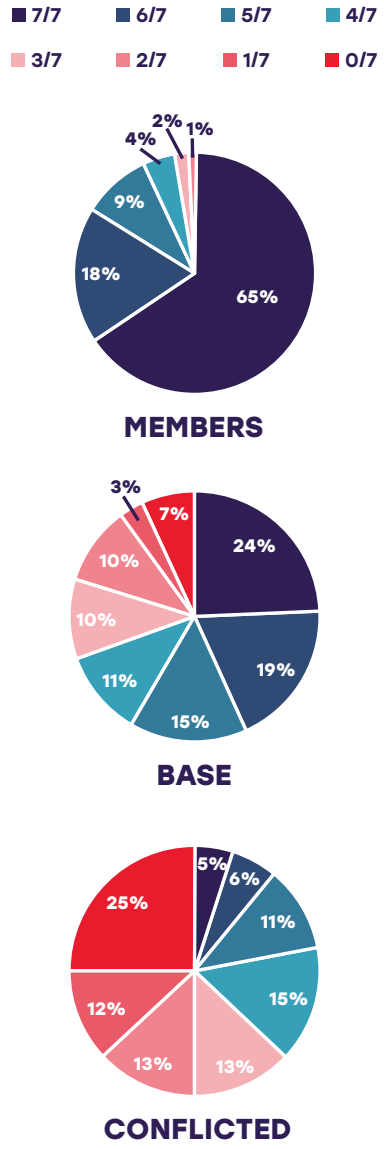
Therefore, any suggestion that we remove restrictions altogether can, psychologically, feel like a world without guardrails—one where people do not feel secure enough to make a decision that can be difficult and don't feel confident in others' ability to do so, either. What we can and should do to meet this psychological need for guardrails is to show that there are systems and structures in place to ensure that as people thoughtfully consider their options, the experiences they have with abortion align with what our audiences hope those experiences will be like.

When asked in the survey which words in the chart below best describe what they personally think abortion in America should be like, most respondents select positive words such as safe, accessible, supported, and informed.

As we develop messaging and share aspirations, we need to make clear how the opposition's current abortion restrictions do not achieve these outcomes—that they are unreasonable and often harmful. At the same time, we should talk about the need for positive and supportive medical and ethical guidelines—informed by science, not politicians—that ensure safe and accessible abortion care, and give people the support and information they need.

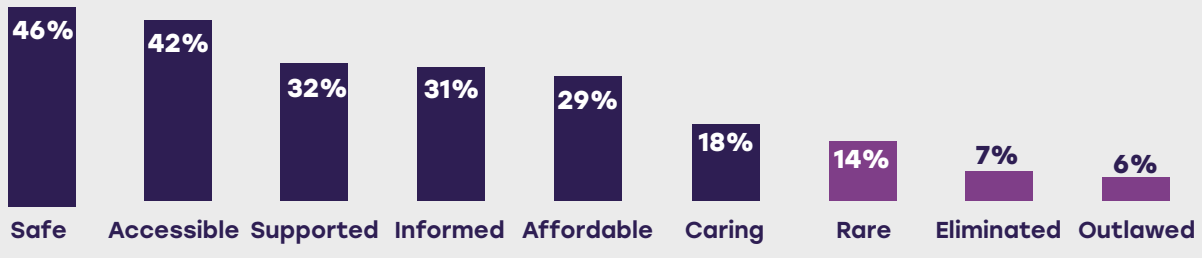
For example, we can talk about how caregivers are professionally trained, licensed, and adhere to medical and ethical guidelines already put in place by their profession. This is intentional—a structure designed to keep all patients safe and ensure they are able to access the services, support, and information they need. This includes a person seeking abortion care.

Opposition to Abortion Restrictions



Voters: Describing What Abortion Should Be Like

Which of the **three** following words, if any, **best** describe what you personally think abortion in America should be like?



This approach can help to satisfy people's desire for guardrails, but at the same time ensure these guardrails help people, not hurt them. An example of this approach can be found in the following statement—an aspirational vision for abortion care, which we discuss in detail on page 29.

A world that ensures that patients are protected and get accurate, unbiased medical information, so they can make the best healthcare decisions they can for themselves and for those they love–including decisions about abortion.

Another example can be found in the messenger videos we developed and tested throughout the research (discussed in detail on page 39). Consider the following messenger example from a conservative state legislator, who models the realization that most abortion laws are not what they appear to be.

Some reasonable regulations seemed okay–to protect women and keep them safe. But lately I've been learning that what might sound reasonable, really isn't.

This messenger, and the journey he illustrates, resonates strongly among our audiences. More specifically, nearly 4 in 5 (79%) respondents say it is important to hear from someone like this person when considering their own feelings and thoughts about abortion—and laws and regulations related to abortion.

Consider the following positive reactions to the video from respondents in the dial test survey:

"I found it compelling that he voiced how his mind was changed and spoke to how women may need to get an abortion for many reasons, none of them a legislator's business." *–Woman of mixed race, CA*

"I was expecting him to be against abortion given that he is a man and politician. I'm glad to see that he understands that women should be in control of their own bodies." *–Latinx woman, NY*

KEY CONCEPT: BROKEN REASONING CHAINS

Through our research on this and other issues, we have come to learn that people can sometimes form broken reasoning chains. A reasoning chain is the way a person's mental associations and connections lead them to develop premises and assumptions that then bring them to a particular conclusion. Broken reasoning chains form when people don't have the information that they need to fully understand an issue or problem. Without that information, they are forced to connect the dots themselves, often making flawed leaps of logic in order to complete the reasoning chain and reach a conclusion.

Many in our audience have major gaps in their knowledge around abortion care that interfere with them forming reasoning chains. It is critical for us to understand these gaps and then provide the information that will help our audience to connect the dots.

"ACCESSIBLE" VS. "AFFORDABLE"

Accessible is compelling for people because it encompasses both available and affordable. Importantly, our audiences are making those connections themselves–they are already thinking about how abortion can be legal, but that it doesn't matter if you can't get to a doctor or you can't afford it. Also important is that "accessible" for them doesn't mean it is "overly easy to get" an abortion.

THE NEED FOR A CALM AND SAFE SPACE—AND THE MOTIVATION TO DEFEND IT

Throughout our research, we heard from participants that they are yearning for less shouting over abortion—on both sides. There is a perception that debate on the issue has been dominated by the loudest voices from opposing ideologies who are doing everything they can to further their own interests and political agendas.

This perception exists, in part, because many people think that basic access to legal early abortion care is secure—that as a legal question, it is a largely settled matter. Therefore, the shouting they hear from either side can simply be tuned out as noise. To this point, we found in our research that when Base and Conflicted audiences are presented with the many controversies surrounding the continued efforts to restrict or ban abortion in multiples states, it comes as a surprise to them—and an unwelcome one.

Whether this perception may have been altered due to news coverage and public discourse around the rushed confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett remains to be seen.

During our research, our audiences shared with us that rather than controversy and inflexibility, they are looking for more thoughtfulness and understanding in discussions on abortion. Many expressed the need to have a space—a calm space that acts as a sort of holding environment where people feel safe and are allowed the freedom to make their own personal and private decisions regarding abortion. Freedom is a powerful American ideal and a core value among many within our audiences.

PARTICIPANT QUOTES:

"I hope this freedom will never be taken away and more help will be provided to those who need it." *–API woman, NC*

"We live in the United States and we can make those decisions because America is for freedom and justice." *–Latinx man, AZ*

"America is known as the land of the free—that people do have the right to decide what they want to do with their future." *–Black man, NC*

"Freedom for women to live their lives as they think best in terms of reproductive health and family planning." *–API woman, MI*

Hearing from our audiences of this need for a calm and safe space provides a very important opportunity for advocates and activists. We found that once the concept of this space is established, both Base and Conflicted audiences feel motivated to take action to defend it. As they begin to learn more about efforts to restrict or ban access to abortion, it leads them to feel this space—and the freedom that it represents—is under attack and needs to be protected.

Notably, our audiences expressed a desire to protect this space even if they personally report feeling conflicted about abortion. In addition, although they themselves may not envision needing to use this space, they are motivated to protect the space for others. These findings are largely consistent across racial and ethnic groups, and gender.

We found that effective messaging only strengthens our audiences' strong desire to protect and defend this space. Yet, our research also found that participants don't perceive many public officials or advocacy organizations as talking about, working to create, or fighting to protect this space.

Again, this provides us with an opportunity: We can rightfully claim this space as ours and encourage and organize people to help protect it. By doing so, we have the potential to redefine what we stand for and both appeal to and motivate a broader set of people to take action.

ENVISIONING A CALM AND SAFE SPACE

When discussing abortion care, research participants often noted a desire to have a calm, safe space where people have the freedom to make personal decisions around parenthood and pregnancy—whether those decisions involve giving birth, putting a child up for adoption, having an abortion, or choosing not to have children at all.

The idea of having a calm, safe space—depicted at the center of this graphic—was more conceptual than physical for our participants. The space itself could be created and exist anywhere—on a phone call, over a cup of coffee, during a walk. Yet, participants also described some physical components to this space as well—how this space could be one's bedroom, at the kitchen table with a partner, at a friend's house, or with a healthcare professional. Notably, the graphic depicts this space as including more than one person to reflect what we heard from our audiences—that ideally, these personal decisions are made with caring support from other people in our lives.

While some of our research participants may never see themselves as activists or protesters, or imagine using this space for themselves, they want it to be available for others who do need it. Likewise, while some noted feeling that they don't need this space at this particular moment in time, they nevertheless appreciate that this space exists (or will exist) at other times of their lives and in the lives of those they love and care for.

Importantly, once our participants envisioned this space and learned about the opposition's efforts to attack it by passing laws restricting or even banning abortion care, they became strongly motivated to take action as protectors of this space. Therefore, helping to establish the concept of this calm, safe space in our audiences' minds provides us with a significant opportunity to broaden support for our work.

SUPPORT OVER IDENTITY

In addition to perceiving the debate over abortion as dominated by vocal and opposing sides, our research found that most participants understand the language of the movement in terms of identity. In other words, participants frequently equate advocacy for abortion access with *being* something—for example, "I *am* pro-choice"—rather than *supporting* something—such as "I support the freedom to decide."

Using identity-focused language in this way differs significantly from many other policy-related issues and the movements to advance those issues. For example, you may have heard people say things like the following:

> ***"I support racial justice,"***
> ***NOT "I am pro-racial justice."***

> ***"I support universal healthcare,"***
> ***NOT "I am pro-universal healthcare."***

> ***"I support the freedom to marry,"***
> ***NOT "I am pro-freedom to marry."***

The example of using "I support the freedom to marry" over the identity-based construction of "I am pro-freedom to marry" illustrates an especially important point. Using language that isn't tethered to identity provides additional space for people who want to support a cause, but don't necessarily identify with the community or movement it represents. It allows them to express that they specifically support the freedom to marry, without it necessarily defining them as part of the LBGTQ community, or even being pro-LGBTQ rights more broadly. For some, this nuance can be very important in initial engagement—and that initial engagement is helpful for advocates in moving people to be more supportive over time.

Conversely, look at what is happening around climate change. As the movement has become increasingly identity-based and tribal, we now have emerging and competing factions of "climate change believers" and "climate change deniers."

Many among our Base and Conflicted audiences perceive the movement as "all or nothing"—you are either with us all the way, or you are on "the other side." Our audiences' perception that people are required to share a "pro-choice" identity in order to support a policy or an organization is likely due to misinformation being pushed by anti-choice forces and the intentional politicization and polarization they create.

THE POWER OF IDENTIFICATION

Identification—the ability to relate to, or to see yourself in someone or something—is essential for persuasive communications. As humans, when we are presented with stories or information delivered by people who we feel represent us, who talk like us, who present a shared background or history, or who communicate using values that we also share, then we tend to be open to the message they are sharing. On the other hand, when we perceive that a person does not share our values or beliefs, we are much less likely to hear what they have to say or believe it has anything to do with us—no matter how compelling their words may be.

This is important to recognize as we communicate with our audiences. If they believe that only "certain kinds of people" support abortion access—people who are not like them—they will be unable to ever imagine themselves as one of those people. Showing a wide range of messengers talking about beliefs and values shared by our audiences—compassion, family, freedom, or faith, for example—allows them to see others who are like them who hold on to these values and are also supportive of abortion care.

No matter the source, or how different this perception may be from our own experiences, it is problematic. Unless we address this issue, it will limit our ability to grow support for efforts to secure and expand access to abortion care.

As such, part of this research focused on developing and testing aspirational, vision-oriented language that models what we're *for*, rather than focusing on who we *are*. Using this approach gave us an opportunity to see if our audiences could align themselves with our vision, even if they don't necessarily identify with everyone they imagine also holds that vision.

Our research found that modeling support over identity language did in fact engage participants in a different way. As participants discuss the need for a calm and safe space, detailed in the previous section, language such as "I support the freedom to decide" prompts a desire to protect that space, even if they may have reservations about some of the decisions being made by people within it.

ADVOCATES HAVE AMYGDALAS TOO

Many people within our Base and Conflicted audiences hold deep and unwavering beliefs that the United States is inherently good—the land of justice and freedom for all. They proudly identify as Americans because of what they believe America stands for...and what it won't stand for. This is especially true for our Latinx focus group participants, many of whom reported that they came from countries where they lacked these freedoms.

At the same time, we know that the United States has a long history of engaging in overtly racist policies that reinforce white supremacy and racism, including around access to abortion care. We have witnessed the terrible impacts these policies have—and continue to have—on communities of color, immigrants, and others.

So, understandably, as advocates and activists, our amygdalas (the downstairs brain responsible for our big emotional reactions and fight or flight instincts) can get triggered when we perceive messages to be extolling or romanticizing American history or American ideals without an analysis that includes the harm the United States has caused and perpetrated, particularly with regard to race and class.

With our amygdalas on high alert, we, like our audience, often lose access to our ability to empathize with the feelings or experiences of others or to pull back our emotion. We feel defensive and want to tell our audience that their beliefs are wrong. We want to "myth bust" and expose their "flawed" ideology. However, doing so—especially initially—does little to calm the strong negative emotions our audiences are experiencing or prompt them to be their best selves and live their values. In fact, instead of cultivating opportunities for deeper and more nuanced analysis and engagement, feeling defensive often closes the door on this conversation before it can really begin.

If we can recognize this trigger and work to calm our own amygdalas, we have an opportunity to manage and reshape our own gut reactions. To help do so, it is important for us to remember that we actually share many of these same values with our audience. We believe in fairness, equity, justice, safety, and freedom. We know these ideals aren't being realized, and we may also believe that many of our systems were intentionally designed not to uphold those values. Yet, we also believe that our country SHOULD live by those values. It's part of why we do this work, after all. By first calming our own amygdalas we can have a very different response—and effect. We can show our audience that we share their values and that we need their help to make a change—giving us an opportunity to engage with them in a meaningful way. To be clear, we are not suggesting advocates should adopt messaging that romanticizes American exceptionalism or ideology. Rather, we suggest that messaging should affirm the values that people hold, while acknowledging that we have often fallen short or betrayed those values, and, ultimately, challenge our audience to live up to them.

How can we apply these learnings?

MESSAGES THAT MOVE

Effective Signs, Slogans and Graphics

A portion of our research was focused on understanding what words and short phrases would best capture our audiences' attention and move them to become engaged. To accomplish this, we asked our survey respondents to imagine they are at a town hall meeting or some other public event. *(In this scenario, we asked them to further imagine there is no coronavirus, so public gatherings are safe.)* At this event, people are holding signs to express their feelings and opinion on abortion. We gave respondents many different signs to choose from, and then asked them to select which of the following signs—if any—best reflect their own views, values, and vision when it comes to abortion.

This exercise provided us with an opportunity to dive deep on specific words and phrases to better understand what they mean or imply to our audiences. It also allowed us to test what signs and slogans would be most effective with our audiences. In many cases, the words and phrases used in these signs and slogans were taken from the language offered by research participants in early focus groups, with iterations and refinement being made to each as the research went on. We then compiled the top signs for the quantitative survey.

The following table shows the top ranked sign preferences among Black, Latinx, API, white, LGBTQ, and Gen Z voters ages 18 to 23:

Top Ranked Sign Preferences Among Key Audience Segments

	All Voters	Black Voters	Latinx Voters	API Voters	White Voters	LGBTQ Voters	Gen Z Voters
A Woman's Freedom To Decide	1	2	1	3	1	4	3
My Decision For My Life, Your Decision For Yours	1	1	4	2	2	1	3
Power To Decide	1	2	1	1	2	3	2
Our Bodies, Our Choice	4	4	3	4	4	2	1
Respect Women's Decisions	5	4	5	5	5	6	6
Protect The Freedom To Decide	6	6	6	6	6	5	6
Respect Personal Decisions	7	7	9	7	10	7	7
Protect People's Freedom to Make Personal Decisions	7	9	7	8	7	11	10
Reproductive Rights are a Human Right	9	12	9	10	8	11	10
Our Bodies, Our Families, Our Future	10	8	13	9	12	7	8
Thankful For Our Ability to Decide	10	10	12	10	9	14	17
A Woman's Freedom	12	11	8	12	13	9	8
Shout Less, Listen More	13	15	14	13	16	22	19
Open Hearts, Open Minds	13	13	11	13	13	15	21

The results show a three-way tie among "A Woman's Freedom To Decide," "My Decision For My Life, Your Decision For Yours," and "Power To Decide." Notably, these results remain fairly consistent across audiences.

These three signs all include the word "decide," which not only implies the legal freedom to decide but also the ability to do so. In other words, they suggest empowerment.

In addition, note that four of the top 12 signs include "freedom" as part of their core message.

Notably, the results show a strong preference for signs using values-based language that is quite different from the language typically used in the movement—especially when you compare these top-ranked signs to the lower-tier signs in the table below.

The strong fourth-place showing for "Our Bodies, Our Choice" may be considered an exception here, but it is notable that this sign uses the collective "Our" rather than the more traditional "My" construction of "My Body, My Choice."

Top Ranked Sign Preferences Among Base and Conflicted Voters and NARAL Members

	All Voters	Base Voters	Conflicted Voters	NARAL Members
A Woman's Freedom To Decide	1	1	3	5
My Decision For My Life, Your Decision For Yours	1	5	1	13
Power To Decide	1	5	1	2
Our Bodies, Our Choice	4	1	4	2
Respect Women's Decisions	5	4	5	6
Protect The Freedom To Decide	6	6	6	6
Respect Personal Decisions	7	8	8	18
Protect People's Freedom to Make Personal Decisions	7	11	7	13
Reproductive Rights are a Human Right	9	7	11	1
Our Bodies, Our Families, Our Future	10	13	10	11
Thankful For Our Ability to Decide	10	14	9	21
A Woman's Freedom	12	10	12	22
Shout Less, Listen More	13	20	14	25
Open Hearts, Open Minds	13	22	14	27

THE POWER OF "FREEDOM TO DECIDE"

Across the full course of the research, "Freedom to Decide"—both the concept and language—resonated very strongly among our audiences. As noted throughout this messaging guide, "freedom" is a very powerful shared value and an ideal that many among our audiences hold dear. Freedom is something that our audience feels everyone should have, and we found through our research that they are willing to take action to protect it.

While past research has repeatedly shown there are challenges with using the word "choice" in our advocacy and activism, our audiences perceive the word "decide" differently. Where "choice" can be interpreted by our audiences as either something trivial or requiring little thought—or as a loaded word in a politicized abortion context (see Support Over Identity on page 22)– "decide" suggests to them something more profound. To them, it implies there is a decision-making process and a weighing of various considerations and options. This makes the word "decide" much more effective in the context of abortion care—something our audiences expect requires deep reflection.

In fact, when surveying our audiences for this research, "A Woman's Freedom to Decide" ranks as the #1 slogan selected by all respondents in the survey (#1 among Base, #3 among Conflicted, and #5 among NARAL members). Additionally, the slogan resonates across race and ethnicity as well as with Gen Z and LGBTQ respondents.

In addition, "Reproductive Rights are Human Rights" makes it into the top 10. However, we see this kind of rights-based language is far more powerful for NARAL members and Base voters than for the Conflicted voters we are trying to persuade. This is to be expected, given this is the kind of language NARAL members have heard previously in messaging from the organization.

The following tables show the lower-ranked sign preferences among Black, Latinx, API, white, LGBTQ, and Gen Z voters—followed by the lower-ranked sign preferences among Base and Conflicted voters and NARAL members.

Lowest Ranked Sign Preferences Among Key Audience Segments

	All Voters	Black Voters	Latinx Voters	API Voters	White Voters	LGBTQ Voters	Gen Z Voters
Keep Abortion Legal	15	13	16	23	11	17	14
Pro-Choice	15	18	17	13	17	11	17
Stop Controlling People	15	18	14	17	23	9	15
Abortion is a Human Right	18	15	18	17	20	15	13
Freedom to Live Our Best Lives	19	17	22	16	20	24	21
Personally Pro-life, Pro-Choice for Others	19	20	21	17	19	28	29
I Support Reproductive Rights	21	23	18	26	13	22	15
No Forced Births	22	23	23	20	23	18	12
Our Families, Our Freedom	22	21	20	25	20	27	19
Everyone Deserves Bodily Autonomy	24	23	26	20	17	19	21
Free to Dream Our Best Lives	25	23	24	22	26	29	27
Stop Reproductive Oppression	26	30	24	26	26	24	24
Abortion is Healthcare	26	27	28	28	25	19	24
Real Access for All	26	22	26	23	33	19	24
Unite for Reproductive Justice	29	30	28	29	31	26	28

Lowest Ranked Sign Preferences Among Base and Conflicted Voters and NARAL Members

	All Voters	Base Voters	Conflicted Voters	NARAL Members
Keep Abortion Legal	15	9	19	6
Pro-Choice	15	15	16	10
Stop Controlling People	15	16	16	24
Abortion is a Human Right	18	12	21	15
Freedom to Live Our Best Lives	19	25	18	23
Personally Pro-life, Pro-Choice for Others	19	29	12	29
I Support Reproductive Rights	21	19	21	3
No Forced Births	22	18	23	20
Our Families, Our Freedom	22	24	20	25
Everyone Deserves Bodily Autonomy	24	17	25	15
Free to Dream Our Best Lives	25	27	23	28
Stop Reproductive Oppression	26	20	27	11
Abortion is Healthcare	26	22	27	9
Real Access for All	26	26	26	17
Unite for Reproductive Justice	29	28	27	19

These results show that while language frequently used by advocates and activists continues to resonate with NARAL members (again, which is to be expected given this is what they have heard in the past from the organization) this kind of language is less effective at capturing core views, values, and vision among people more generally—including people who occupy our Base. In fact, without context, the phrase "Stop Abortion Bans" performed so poorly in early focus groups that we decided to stop testing it. Most participants lacked any awareness of the bans being pushed, while others confused the phrase with a desire to *stop* abortion altogether.

Importantly, however, some of this more traditional language can be effective when set in the proper context. For example, while "Stop Reproductive Oppression" and "No Forced Births" did not perform well with Base and Conflicted audiences when offered as standalone phrases, these phrases perform much more effectively when set in the context of abortion restrictions being passed in states across the country.

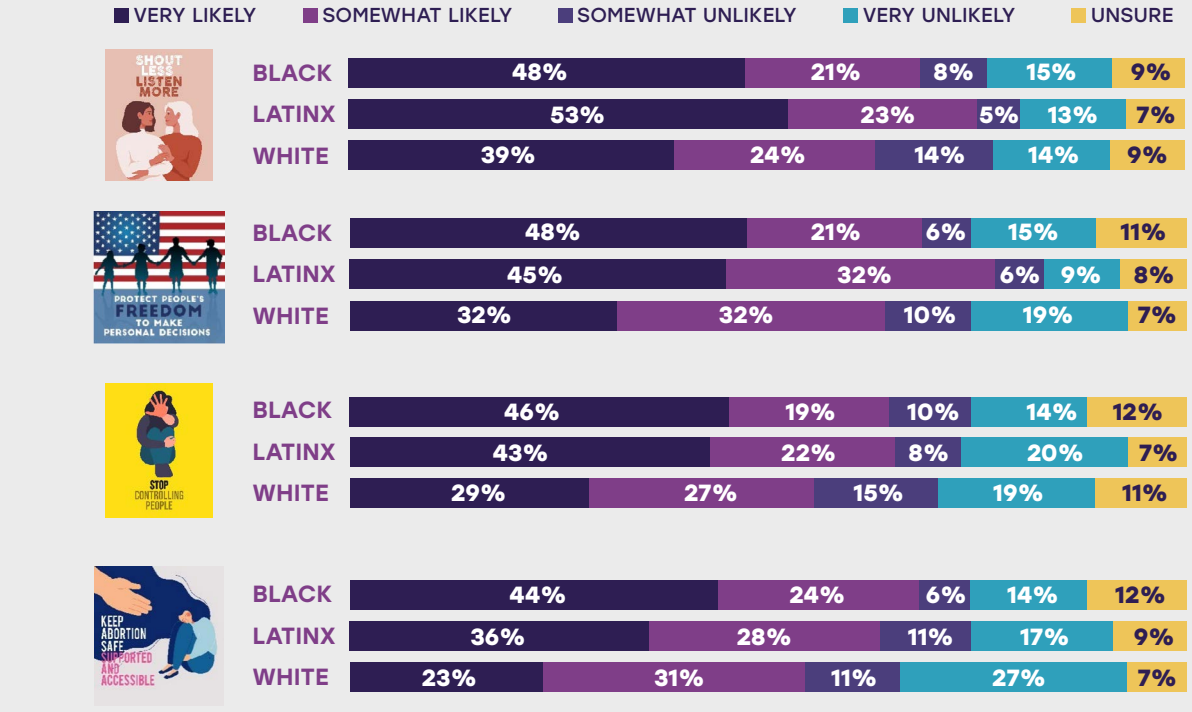
After research participants were exposed to various messages, we provided them with a set of graphics with short slogans on them and asked how willing they would be to post each on their own social media (or otherwise display it in a public setting). We designed each graphic so that the image would complement the text or slogan. An example shown below, for instance, depicts two women together talking and supporting each other along with the text: "Shout Less" and "Listen More." Another shows the outline of a family holding hands with the text: "Protect People's Freedom to Make Personal Decisions."

As the chart below indicates, a majority of all respondents say they would likely share this content with their networks. Note also that Black and Latinx respondents express greater willingness to share than white respondents.

Notably from a communications and logistics perspective, these graphics-based images performed comparably to images with photographs of real people.

Voters Likely to Share Infographics (Race)

How willing would you be to post each of the following on social media, or display in some other public setting?



DESCRIBING THE WORLD WE WANT TO CREATE

Our research also focused on developing and testing aspirational, vision-oriented language that models what we're *for* and describes the world we want to create, rather than focusing on who we *are* and what we are defending. By doing so, we hope to show that people can be a part of creating this world—if they get engaged.

Exploring an aspirational approach is very important, because many people in our audiences cannot imagine that you can have a positive conversation about abortion. This is due in part to many advocates and activists being forced to focus our time on fighting back against disinformation and attacks and defending abortion rights, rather than being able to focus on developing and sharing a positive vision about expanding abortion access.

However, our research found that when people in the focus groups began talking about their aspirational vision—and wishing for what it would be like—they became engaged and energized around these visions in a way that is really hopeful for our work.

"I feel positive about this because I agree that everyone should have control over their own life and we all deserve to feel safe."
—White woman, MI

"I believe this is a society we should strive for, personally."
—Black man, NC

"Positive and hopeful for a world with less judgment and shame when it comes to a tough choice women may face."
—Latinx woman, AZ

Then, when we introduced what oppositional forces are doing in terms of restrictions and attempts to ban abortion, those aspirational visions had even more impact. Participants went from having a non-polarized, hopeful conversation about women and their families having respect and determination in their own lives, to learning that self-interested politicians are trying to use politics to control those same people's lives. This also helped participants reconsider their own flawed perceptions of abortion opponents as nice, little old ladies knitting baby booties who oppose abortion solely on moral grounds. Most importantly, this pivot motivated many of our research participants to want to take action to defend their vision and protect the space where people have the freedom they need to make personal decisions.

WHY "COMMON SENSE" IS INEFFECTIVE

It is not uncommon to hear the phrase "common sense" used in connection with beliefs, policies, laws, or protections. However, our research discovered early on that using "common sense" is actually ineffective when discussing abortion for a few reasons. For many people, including our Base, very little related to abortion feels like common sense—it is a complicated and complex issue, and people bring very different perceptions and experiences to the issue.

"I don't think we can all come to even an understanding [of] what common sense is." *—White man, MI*

In addition, when we use language such as "common sense policies" or "using common sense," it serves to undermine a very important point we are trying to help people understand—that the reasons why someone may need to seek abortion care are many and complicated and that blanket restrictions on abortion don't take this complexity into account.

Over the course of the research, we tested 15 different aspirational visions that ranged from expansive visions to more specific ones. Like the signs and slogans, these visions were developed primarily from content generated by early focus groups participants, with improvement and refinement being made to each as the research went on. Notably, by the final survey—where we tested six final statements below—we found that each vision resonates strongly across audiences.

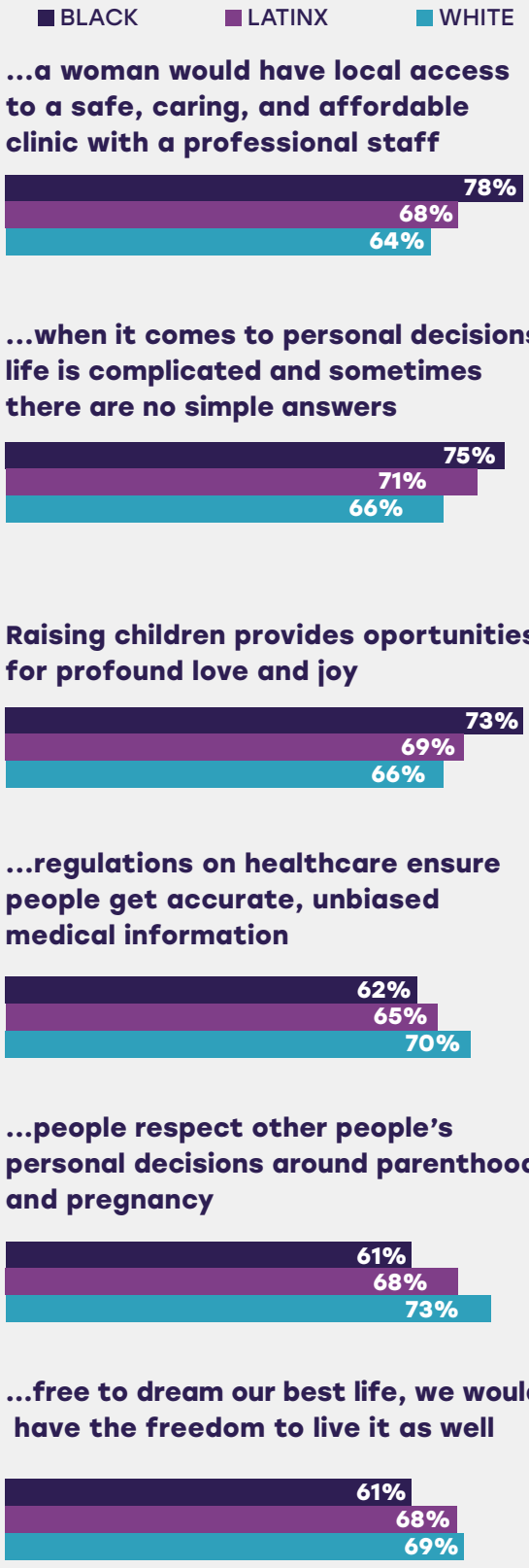
VOTERS EMBRACE ASPIRATIONAL VISIONS

Imagine a world where people had the freedom to make their own decisions around parenthood and pregnancy. What would this world look and feel like for women?

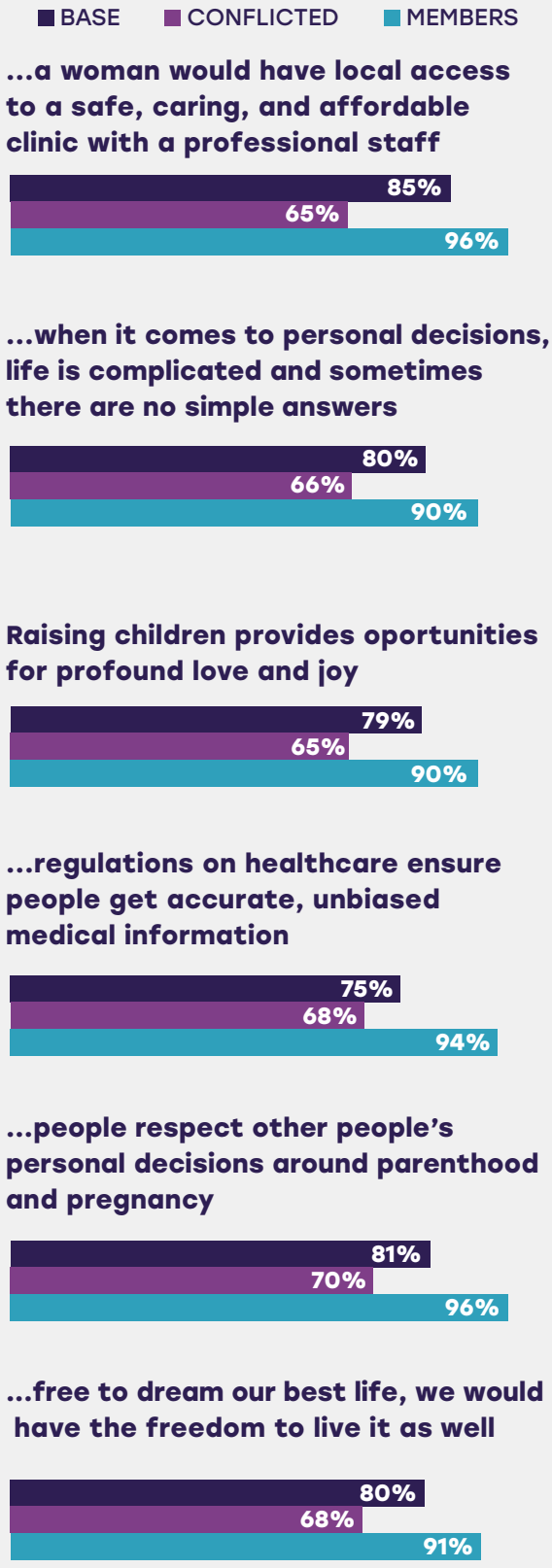
- A world where people **respect other people's personal decisions around parenthood and pregnancy**—whether those decisions involve *giving birth, putting a child up for adoption, having an abortion, or choosing not to have children at all.*
- A world where **regulations on healthcare ensure people get accurate, unbiased medical information**, so they can make **the best healthcare decisions they can** for themselves and for those they love—including decisions about abortion
- A world where each of us would not only be **free to dream our best life**, we would have the **freedom to live it as well**. People would feel **empowered**, and there would be **less judgment, less stigma, and less sham**e regarding abortion.
- A world where most people recognize that when it comes to personal decisions, **life is complicated and sometimes there are no simple answers.** People would also recognize that **one-size-fits-all laws simply don't work** when people are making personal medical decisions, such as the decision to have an abortion.
- Raising children provides opportunities for **profound love and joy,** and it also comes with **immense responsibilities.** We should live in a world where we can **respect each other's personal decisions about if, when, and how to have children, including decisions about abortion.**
- A world where a woman considering an abortion would have local access to a **safe, caring, and affordable** clinic with a professional staff of doctors, nurses, and counselors, and she wouldn't be restricted by laws that dictate her decision or place **unnecessary barriers** on the process.

Importantly, these aspirational visions resonate across race, as well as with Base voters, Conflicted voters, and NARAL members. At the same time, we also see that certain aspirations resonate more strongly with some groups than others. For example, Black respondents find the vision around ensuring local access to a safe, caring, and affordable clinic somewhat more compelling than do Latinx or white respondents (see chart on the following page). By contrast, white respondents are especially drawn to the statement about a world where people respect other people's personal decisions around parenthood and pregnancy—whether those decisions involve giving birth, putting a child up for adoption, having an abortion, or choosing not to have children at all.

ASPIRATIONAL VISIONS RESONATE ACROSS RACE:



ASPIRATIONAL VISIONS RESONATE ACROSS VOTER BLOCS:



Additional key learnings from these results include the following:

- Respect comes up frequently, as people want to live in a world where people's personal decisions about if, when, and how to have children, including decisions about abortion, are respected.
- Participants feel strongly that in order to make the best healthcare decisions they can for themselves and for those they love, we should ensure people have access to accurate, unbiased medical information. As such, they strongly oppose laws that force doctors to provide inaccurate information about abortion to their patients.
- Drawing on the core principle of freedom, we see that participants want to live in a world where people can both dream and live their best lives.
- Participants also recognize that every person's situation is different, that life is complicated and sometimes there are no simple answers. With this understanding in mind, they reject one-size-fits-all laws that restrict access to abortion.

We also explored the idea that children represent *both* love and joy *and* also immense responsibilities. Our participants recognize this essential truth, and naming responsibilities explicitly helps people understand that not everyone may be in a position to raise a child.

"I liked the part about how raising children provides opportunities for profound love and joy and it also comes with a bunch of responsibility. These attest to be realistic and see that some women can't be a mom for whatever reason. We just need to accept that and if they want to have an abortion, it is their choice." *–Latinx woman, AZ*

Once a woman has decided to have an abortion, participants want to ensure she gets the care she needs. This includes having local access to a safe, caring, and affordable clinic with a professional staff of doctors, nurses, and counselors who provide quality and nonjudgmental care and unbiased information.

Linking People of Color's Abortion Care Experiences to Reproductive Oppression, White Supremacy, and Structural Racism

True reproductive freedom first requires freedom from oppression. Achieving this freedom will require that we all work to dismantle white supremacy, eliminate structural racism, and affirm the inherent dignity of every human being.

In the wake of George Floyd's murder, we compiled and tested language that highlights the connections between Black people and other people of color's abortion care experiences, and the history of white supremacy and structural racism they continue to face in the United States. Then, we tested this language with voters and NARAL members in our final survey to see if it was effective in helping to make those connections clear.

Among the voter sample, a solid majority of respondents (58%) say the following statement is extremely effective (30%) or very effective (28%) in making the case that people of color's experiences with abortion care are linked to white supremacy and structural racism. Importantly, more than nine in ten Black respondents (92%) say the statement is extremely effective (46%), very effective (31%), or somewhat effective (15%) in making that case. In addition, overwhelming majorities of Latinx and white voters view the statement as effective.

The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery are small windows into the violence and racism Black Americans face every day. Unfortunately, a toxic mix of white supremacy combined with structural racism undermines our criminal justice system. It also fundamentally shapes how Black Americans experience education, healthcare, and simply walking around each day as a Black person in this country.

These same forces create sharp differences for people of color when it comes to abortion care and making decisions around parenthood and pregnancy. For many people of color—especially Black people—their personal and private decisions are disproportionately scrutinized, judged, and controlled. Forcing someone to remain pregnant against their will is not reproductive freedom nor is forcing them to travel long distances for abortion care when local clinics are shuttered. And when a Black woman has to fear that any child she may bring into the world will be targeted and harmed by police, she is experiencing reproductive injustice at the deepest levels.

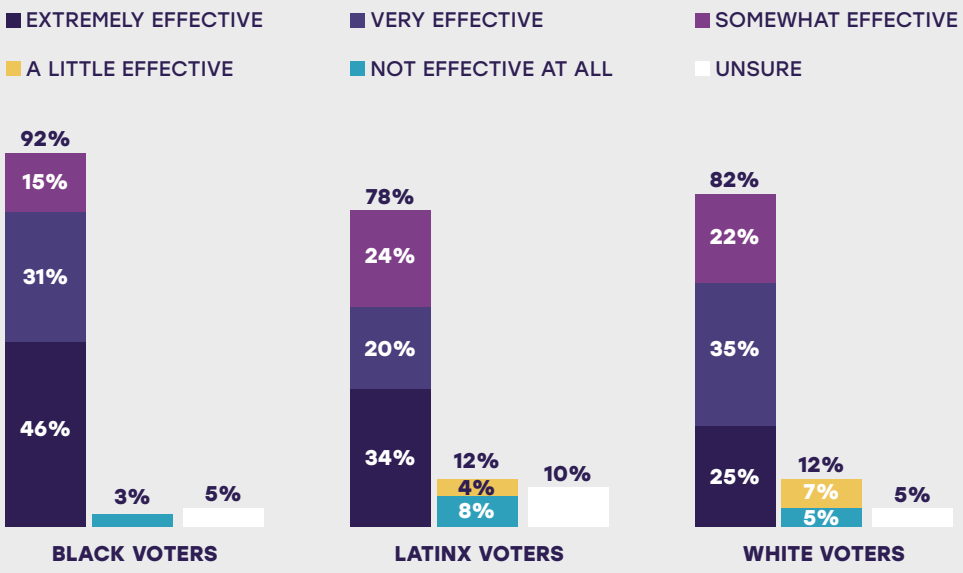
True reproductive freedom first requires freedom from oppression. We must all work to dismantle white supremacy, eliminate structural racism, and affirm the inherent dignity of every human being.

In addition, a majority of respondents overall agree that:

- this statement affected them emotionally (63% agree);
- this statement made them think about abortion in a way they hadn't before (59%); and
- they would share this statement with friends or family—or post on social media (58% agree).

LINKING ABORTION TO WHITE SUPREMACY/STRUCTURAL RACISM

How effective is this statement in making the case that people of color's experiences with abortion care are linked to white supremacy and structural racism?



What's more, over half (51%) of respondents overall say the experiences described feel relevant to their own life, as do 70% of Black respondents.

To learn more about the linguistic strategies used to construct this statement, please see "Deconstructed Narrative on Reproductive Freedom" in the Appendix.

COVID-19 Micro Story

The following COVID-19 related story, which resonates strongly across a broad array of research audiences, shows how we can mirror our audiences' values and tap into the power of empathy in our messaging. As you can see, this story lifts up the values of family, hard work, protecting loved ones, and helping others—especially in times of crisis. At the time this micro story was being tested, many Republican governors and Republican attorneys general were using COVID-19 as a reason to restrict access to abortion care.

> Michelle Johnson works as a cashier at a large grocery store. Her husband, Ben, is a delivery driver for the same store. During the coronavirus outbreak, the government designated their jobs as "essential." Michelle was glad to know their work helped ensure families could keep food on their tables, but it was hard on her own family. Even though she and Ben worried every day about bringing the virus home to their two young children, Michelle knew they both had to continue working full time. Otherwise, not only would they fail to make ends meet, the store manager had announced that people could be "replaced" if they couldn't make their shifts.
>
> Five weeks into the coronavirus crisis, Michelle discovered that she was pregnant. They were using birth control, but it must have failed. The more she and Ben talked about their circumstances and talked through all their options, the more it became clear that an abortion was the right and responsible decision for them at this point in time. But then they learned that some official or their governor—it wasn't clear to them—had decided to ban abortion care in their state during the outbreak.
>
> Michelle was overwhelmed, knowing that if she had to travel to another state for abortion care, Ben wouldn't be able to go with her. They would also need to find a sitter for the kids during her husband's overnight shift and they'd have to try to pull together extra money for her to stay in a motel, which didn't seem like a safe idea, these days. On top of that, she would need to take two or three days in a row off from work, something she knew would make her manager angry with the supermarket so shorthanded.
>
> No one was certain how long the ban would be in place—it could be weeks or months. Michelle felt extremely anxious, knowing that if they waited for the ban to be lifted, abortion might no longer be an option for them. "I feel like our decisions are being controlled and our options are being taken away," said Ben. "That's just un-American," he added. For Michelle, it feels very personal. "I feel trapped—like I am being forced to stay pregnant by these politicians that don't know anything about me or my life," she said. "This is healthcare that I need as soon as possible—why are they working to make it harder?"

Importantly, participants appreciate that Michelle and her husband are playing essential roles during the coronavirus crisis, and express dismay that such workers are not being compensated and treated fairly.

Research participants also describe this scenario as very plausible. They recognize that sometimes birth control fails, and many feel empathy and compassion for Michelle and her family.

Participants also expressed anger and disgust towards the government for standing in the way of Michelle and her husband making the best decision given their circumstances.

"She knows that having another child does not work for her family dynamic but the government is trying to control her right and her future." *–Black woman, MI*

"I'm mad about the injustice of this whole story. I'm frustrated that politicians in her state chose to restrict access to abortion." *–API woman, NC*

"Realistic, angering. The story is very plausible and I'm sure has been repeated dozens to hundreds of times since the beginning of Covid-19." *–Latinx man, AZ*

"It seems unfair and unjust that the government stopped abortion during coronavirus. It makes me angry towards the state government." *–White man, IA*

"This is un-American." *–Latinx man, MI*

HOW TO DESCRIBE ABORTION RESTRICTIONS AND THE POLITICIANS AND OTHERS PROMOTING THEM

In past research, when we have showed audiences different laws that have been introduced or enacted to restrict or ban abortion, it's often hard to get them engaged to oppose these anti-freedom restrictions. This is because many people among our Conflicted and even many among our Base audiences support some types of restrictions—particularly ultrasounds and waiting periods. Without having enough context about the restrictions, or knowing about the politicians who are pushing them, they wrongly assume these laws are being passed for good reasons.

What we find promising from this research, however, is that when we describe these laws in certain ways—especially when we include a local example—it has a very powerful effect on people. In particular, we recommend highlighting three different components when describing abortion restrictions:

- Show the full weight of these restrictions together as a coordinated political and legal strategy across the country, not just one-off laws happening in just a few states (states that may or not resemble the states our audiences live in).
- Reveal the selfish motivations driving politicians to pass these laws, including their willingness to control and manipulate people in order to expand their political power.
- Describe the real harms caused by these laws—both in terms of intended and unintended consequences—and connect the dots about what will really happen to people if these laws are enforced.

When audiences hear about the barrage of laws, when they are shown a whole coordinated, political strategy to restrict and even ban abortion—they pivot emotionally. Participants in the focus groups would often express being upset and concerned, and the language they bring into the group discussion is especially powerful: They want to protect people from these politicians and laws and ensure a safe space remains where women and their families have the freedom to decide.

In addition to the three-pronged messaging strategy described above, keep in mind that sequencing and cues matter considerably. The most powerful negative reactions surfaced when these laws were shown after focus groups participants envisioned the world they wanted to create when it comes to abortion. This was also the case when the laws were accompanied by messenger quotes that called the laws into question and included the motivations of the politicians passing them.

It is important to note that we center our messaging around the person who is pregnant. It is an established fact that the anti-freedom forces working to limit or make abortion care illegal do the opposite—they intentionally and strategically center their campaigns around the pregnancy. By doing so, they can essentially erase the person who is pregnant from the equation, along with their agency and freedom. Their strategic tactics even include using photos or illustrations that show a pregnant body without a head. By centering our messaging around the person who is pregnant, we can paint a picture for our audience of the realities of that individual's life and the importance of them having the freedom to decide, rather than allowing politicians to restrict their freedom and control their life, health and well-being.

In addition to the single words and phrases resonating among our Base and Conflicted audiences (provided at the end of this section), we see that longer themes resonate strongly as well. Notably, these themes were generated directly from participants in our early focus groups.

Themes Describing Politicians' Motivations

SELF-INTEREST/POLITICAL GAIN: Some of these themes focus on the motivations of politicians who are passing these laws—that they are selfish or self-interested; that they probably don't care that much about abortion; that it's really about manipulating others for political gain. There's a very strong belief in our research audiences that this is really all about politics, power, money, and self-interest—not about ideology or some purely moral commitment to "protecting the unborn." Shifting people's perceptions of the opposition from the latter to the former is hugely important.

> ***The politicians passing these laws are selfish and self-interested. I'm not even sure most of them really care about abortion really—they just want to manipulate others for political gain.***

THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT CHILDREN: Another powerful theme is that these politicians don't really care about children—certainly not children after they are born. Our audiences' ability to agree with this characterization when we name the hypocrisy out loud shows this message has promise.

> ***The people passing these laws usually don't care what happens to babies after they're born. These politicians who basically coerce women into staying pregnant and having a baby are the same politicians who want to cut assistance programs like early childhood education or food stamps.***

KEEPING PEOPLE DOWN: Some research participants, especially Black focus group participants in North Carolina and Michigan, noted seeing politicians passing these kinds of laws over the years as a way to control people and keep people down.

> ***I think it's worse than that. I've been around a long time, and I've seen how politicians pass laws to keep vulnerable people down. They want to keep us in our place.***

Participant Quotes:

"It is just about keeping us oppressed and abortion is just another way to control us." *—Black woman, NC*

"These laws... what they are trying to do is control us." *—Black man, MI*

CONTROLLING, NOT HELPING: As a contrast, people believe that legislators should be passing laws to help people, not to control them.

> ***Legislators should be passing laws to help people, not to control them.***

Themes Describing the Impact of These Restrictions

HOW WOULD THESE LAWS BE ENFORCED? Another important set of themes focuses on the consequences of these restrictions. For example, the following theme is based on questions raised by our research participants. They're trying to understand how these laws would be enforced. If abortion is banned, what would happen if someone has one? Would the police go after her? The criminalization of women is emotionally powerful and really concerning to our audiences, something we know other research has lifted up as well.

> ***I don't understand how they hope to enforce these laws. If abortion is banned, what happens if someone has one? Would law enforcement go after her?***

PREGNANCY LOSS/SURVEILLANCE STATE: What about if someone has a miscarriage? We also saw concerns around criminalization come up in our research when presenting a doctor talking about there being no medical way to tell the difference between an abortion and miscarriage.

> ***There's no medical way to tell the difference between an abortion and a miscarriage, so any woman who loses a pregnancy could be subject to this type of investigation. This proposal means setting up a surveillance state.***

FORCED INTERROGATION: Will they be investigated? Another theme that surfaced from participant questions focused on how laws forcing a woman to give a reason for her abortion require a doctor to interrogate their patients. This is something that Conflicted and Base people see as absolutely inappropriate.

> ***These laws require me to interrogate my patients. I don't think people in our state need or want politicians interfering in the doctor-patient relationship.***

CONNECTING THE DOTS ON THESE "RESTRICTIONS" (NOT "REGULATIONS")

As noted above, people often presume that laws are passed for a valid reason—e.g., to protect women's physical and emotional well-being—rather than the real reasons, which include political power, racism, and misogyny. As such, it is crucial to provide explanatory language that paints a picture for people of how these laws impact people—and helps make clear why they are being passed, and how harmful they are. If we fail to provide the proper context for our audiences, many of these words and phrases fall flat, cause confusion, or prompt skepticism and pushback. We need to connect the dots for our audiences, or many will support restrictive laws—even those in our Base.

When we emphasize the full barrage of restrictions—that these are part of a larger political agenda to control people and build political power—it creates positive movement among our Base and Conflicted audiences. It also shows them how these restrictions exacerbate existing injustices because they force women in vulnerable circumstances to give birth. And when we connect these laws back to the people pushing them and the politicians passing them, it becomes much easier to understand the selfish or politically-driven motives behind them.

In addition, we would recommend describing these kinds of laws as "restrictions" rather than "regulations," as the latter may generate positive reactions consistent with people's psychological need for guardrails (see The Importance of Guardrails, page 17).

Themes About the Restrictions Themselves

UN-AMERICAN: In addition to describing motivations and outcome, longer themes can also be used to describe the restrictions themselves. For example, many people see these laws as un-American because this country is about being free. Importantly, we hear this from people from both the Base and Conflicted audiences, and across race and gender. (See page 23 for more on tapping into American ideals.)

> ***To me, these laws are un-American. This country is supposed to be about having the freedom to make your own life.***

When it comes to specific words and phrases to describe the laws themselves and the politicians and others promoting anti-choice restrictions, the table below shows the words and phrases that have the most resonance with Base and Conflicted audiences. Please note that these words resonate when they are placed in the proper context around restrictions and the politicians trying to pass them, not as standalone words with no underlying context or explanation. A good example of this is "forced childbirth," which people find confusing until we connect "forced childbirth" to the full slate of abortion restrictions being passed in states around the country.

Top Ranked Words to Describe...

Abortion Restrictions	Politicians and Others Who Promote Abortion Restrictions
• "Controlling" • "Taking away our options" • "Criminalizing women and doctors" • "Anti-choice" • "Anti-freedom" • "Forced pregnancy" • "Intrusive" • "Closed-minded" • "Forced childbirth" • "Manipulative" • "Unreasonable"	• "Controlling" • "Anti-choice" • "Out of touch" • "Anti-freedom" • "Hypocritical" • "Disconnected" • "Manipulative" • "Extreme"

MESSENGERS THAT MOVE

Throughout our qualitative and quantitative research, we developed and tested a diverse set of messenger videos. These include, for example:

- Messengers of different races/ethnicities and genders, and people together as well as individuals;
- A woman and a couple sharing their own personal abortion story;
- A mother and her son;
- Three different types of state legislators;
- A government health official; and
- A range of advocate voices.

Our dial test survey confirmed that these kinds of messengers are very important for our audiences as they consider their own feelings and thoughts about abortion, as well as laws and regulations related to abortion.

In addition, we found it was important to lift up unexpected messengers and messages. These include, for example:

- Empathetic government officials who support access;
- Messengers offering their own personal faith perspectives;
- Supportive men (e.g., partner, son, father); and
- Journey stories showing people who move from opposition or conflict to support (e.g., the conservative legislator highlighted on page 19 who learns from his constituents about the importance of protecting access).

Note that we elected not to test doctors who provide abortion care, or faith leaders, as we have tested those messengers in other research.

ENGAGING MEN AS SUPPORTERS OF THE FREEDOM TO DECIDE

As noted above, focus group participants would often express concern and anger upon learning about abortion restrictions being passed in states across the country. This includes many men—who also want to ensure a safe space exists where the women in their lives have the freedom to decide.

"I don't pay attention to politics, so I learned something today. I didn't know that these laws existed, especially the ultrasound one. It is torture, to me." *—White man, MI*

"Having two daughters, I want them to have a choice. I don't want them to be forced to have a kid that they don't feel that they are ready for." *—Hispanic man, AZ*

"These laws make it impossible by restricting your access, by making it not affordable, by making some part of it illegal. It is ludicrous." *—Black man, NC*

These reactions reflect a larger finding we see across our research on abortion care: that men (as well as women) are powerfully motivated to support women. This is a positive motivation, and if we fail to harness it effectively, the opposition will employ it to defeat our efforts. We recognize that, as advocates, men's desire to support women can sometimes feel paternalistic, disempowering, or condescending. It is certainly true that its manifestation in our society has often been all of those things. Yet we would not want to live in a world in which people did not want to support and care for one another.

In our communications moving forward, we need to explore ways to effectively harness men's desire to support women within a broader message framework that supports a woman's agency, rather than in opposition to it. We believe that is eminently doable, as the desire to care for and protect one another is positive and wholesome and can be expressed in ways that do not undermine a woman's agency or capacity for self-determination.

The following quotes from our messenger videos stand out as especially resonant among Base and Conflicted survey respondents, as well as NARAL members:

QUOTES BY ADVOCATES

"In today's political climate, politicians are passing laws and restrictions on a woman's right to have an abortion."

"The decision to have an abortion is not a political one, it is a deeply personal one."

"No woman should be forced to carry a pregnancy."

"The politicians that want to pass these restrictions and laws want to control. It's just wrong."

"Women have abortions for lots of different reasons. And we have to trust that they know what is best for themselves. I would like for all women, generations to come, to have that freedom."

QUOTES BY LEGISLATORS/PUBLIC OFFICIALS

"Some reasonable regulations seemed okay—to protect women and keep them safe. But lately I've been learning that what might sound reasonable, really isn't." *(A nod to people's desire for guardrails.)*

"In some ways this is all about cold-hearted politicians trying to put an abortion ban in place, piece by piece."

"When I've seen the attempt to create greater restrictions or laws to target and restrict access to abortion, for me it's not accidental. It's intentional and it feels very purposeful to reduce access and the rights of women and children and families."

"It's been surprising how much politicians want to inject themselves into that personal decision without any expertise."

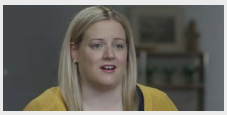
"Politicians shouldn't try to make this kind of personal decision for someone else, or force a woman to carry a pregnancy and give birth."

"We have to stop trying to control people, stop trying to force people into decisions and to let people have access to the care they need, and the support they need."

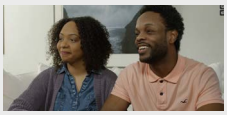
"There are many reasons a woman might need an abortion, all of them deeply personal to her and her family."

One important caveat we also learned is that messengers sharing personal abortion stories can be challenging in this context when the primary message is about laws and restrictions, because they require messengers to pivot from their personal (and often emotional) abortion stories to politics. This pivot can feel jarring—and even inauthentic—for many research participants.

Messenger Videos Tested

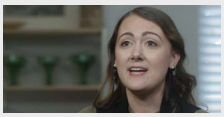


Emily
personal abortion experience

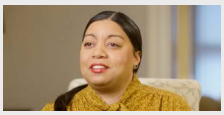


Hailey and Jayden
personal abortion experience

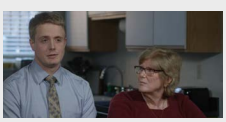
Rep. Jay Livingstone
state legislator



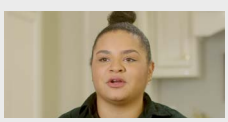
Xakota
advocate/staff



Rep. Liz Miranda
state legislator



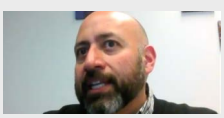
Max and Sheri
mother and son



Avery
advocate

Dixie
advocate

Rep. Steven Harris
state legislator



Health & Human Services Chief Michael Perez

MESSENGERS USING FAITH-BASED LANGUAGE

In previous research, we found that stories with religious themes or characters can be powerful because they challenge a commonly and deeply held misperception that religious people would not support a woman who has an abortion. When people of faith incorporate their faith and religion into messaging, it is helpful to reference the important role spirituality plays in assisting some people make the decision to have an abortion or helping them support someone as they make one.

Tapping into people's religious beliefs is very powerful for many audiences. Below are some helpful phrases to talk about spirituality:

- ***"A loving God would understand."***
- ***"Faith calls me to walk with women and families as they make these decisions."***
- ***"God's love is with her the entire time."***
- ***"We should be offering compassion, care, and spiritual support."***
- ***"We can walk side by side with her in her life's journey."***
- ***"As part of recognizing that God's love is constant, we have to remember that everybody's path looks a little different, and that there's room for God to love us in our differences and our paths."***

For Christians in particular, we also found that ministers/clergy are more effective messengers when they indicate that they are there to provide counsel and support for all reproductive health decisions, not just supporting a decision to have an abortion. This is best done by:

- Focusing on supportive language.
- Speaking from an "I" voice, not "Christians should..."
- Having the narrator/messenger support all decisions, not just abortion decisions.

During the research for this project, multiple messengers we tested through videos in focus groups invoked their faith when discussing their thoughts about abortion. Some of the messages that tested well with Base and Conflicted audiences include:

- ***"I was taught to lean in first in compassion, lean in first in understanding."***
- ***"I was raised with the values that we should have a just society, we should have a fair society, and that we should help those particularly those most in need."***
- ***"My faith drives me to be a person that looks at equity and justice in all things and that includes reproductive rights."***

It is important to recognize that some people of faith may feel alienated by identity-focused language such as "I am pro-choice" even though it may be a position they agree with. This language forces them to disclose where they stand on the issue—something they feel may create conflict with family, friends, or their community of faith. Their relationships are valued—and can feel fragile when the topic of abortion is raised. For them, it's more important to keep their relationships together than to interject their own judgment.

Having a broader set of non-identity focused signs and slogans can be a helpful tool for showing support without having to disclose a position. For example, the sign "My decision for my life, your decision for yours" doesn't disclose what the decision or opinion of the person holding it may be. This allows that person the space to express support without having to say what it is or to take a personal stand, which can be important for some people. The same is true of signs like "Stop Controlling People" and "Respect Personal Decisions."

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHOWING DIVERSE MESSENGERS

For our communications to be more effective, audiences need to be able to connect or identify with our messengers. They want to see messengers who are like themselves in fundamental ways. Using a wide mix of messengers including men and women, religious voices, medical professionals, older and younger people, urban and rural—especially messengers that do not fit audience stereotypes or perceptions—can help foster identification, reinforce shared values, and implicitly disrupt flawed ideas about women who seek an abortion, doctors who provide abortion care, and the advocates, elected officials, and everyday people who support access to abortion.

For example, while some may feel religion to be a barrier, research we have conducted outside of this project has shown that by using religious messengers and faith-based messages it is possible to recognize and address our audience's internal conflict arising from their faith beliefs. In testing, we saw positive responses to religious messengers. The messengers do not have to be priests or other faith leaders to be credible and persuasive.

Hearing from male messengers in their roles as boyfriends, husbands, fathers, friends, and brothers is also important to our audiences. This is true for women and for male peers who feel that supportive male voices are not often heard in the public conversation and they like hearing from them. When these messengers provide cues that they are also parents, several focus group participants noted an extra level of connection to them.

ANATOMY OF A STORY: COMPONENTS AND SEQUENCING

Many messages that strongly resonate with our audience were developed through this research. However, we found that the order in which our audience received these messages—and whom they received them from—matters greatly. As such, we must be careful to sequence our messages correctly and deploy the right mix of messengers to deliver them.

Messages and messengers should also weave in language that evokes shared values throughout. These include the values of caring, safety, family, options, non-judgment, and being informed or equipped to make the best decision for your personal circumstances.

Below you will find the key components to include in a story about abortion restrictions. Importantly, these components should follow the sequence listed here. In addition, we note that some components are core for each story to be effective, while others are situational and therefore depend on whether a story includes that particular component. Along with each component is a description of why it matters when we tell stories, and then examples from across the various materials we tested in our research that show the component in use.

Anatomy of a Story About Abortion Restrictions

Component	Why it Matters	Tested Examples from Messenger Videos
CORE: Start with shared values (including: family, caring for others, diligence, respect, etc.) and weave shared values throughout	Our messengers need to connect emotionally first and rationally second. One way to do this is to show how allied messengers demonstrate important values that are widely shared by our audience.	*I had two good role models and those were my parents. My mother taught school. She always taught my sister and me to be diplomatic at all times. However, stand up for what you believe in.* *My mother taught me to lean in first in compassion, lean in first in understanding.* *I was raised Catholic and with the values that we should have a just society, we should have a fair society, and that we should help those particularly those most in need.*
SITUATIONAL: If sharing a personal abortion story, situate the messenger within a relationship, family, and/or community	Our audience tends to view women seeking an abortion as isolated and alone, in some cases as the result of being stigmatized by family or other people in her life. Showing people talking about their connections to family and community helps to disrupt these flawed perceptions and replaces them with more accurate ones. An especially effective way to do this is to show multiple messengers together—for example, mother and daughter, woman and partner, two friends, etc.	***Heterosexual Couples*** *Woman: I think that this really strengthened our relationship. I mean, we were forced to talk about really difficult things and we were able to come together, have a conversation, and come to a decision that was best for the both of us.* *Man: I was raised by a strong woman and she told me that, you know, ultimately it will be up to her, you know, it's her decision and I wanted to make sure that we were there for each other no matter what.*

Component	Why it Matters	Tested Examples from Messenger Videos
CORE: Mirror and normalize unfamiliarity about abortion restrictions	Learning about the full barrage of abortion restrictions comes as a shock for many people. In fact, only 55% of respondents in our survey report being aware of these restrictions—and just 24% report being *very* aware. As such, we need to give people permission to be unfamiliar with these laws and inform them that they are not alone in not having known they exist. Importantly, this gives us an opportunity to show how these self-serving politicians' current ploys are part of their larger political scheme and how their motivations are rife with hypocrisy, back-room dealing, and self-interest.	*A lot of Americans are not very familiar about these restrictions. Politicians often pass these abortion laws in secret and under the radar, hoping that the majority of people who support the freedom to decide won't notice.* *A lot of my fellow elected officials are actually trying to ban abortion. And since they haven't been able to do that yet, they are trying to make it impossible for a woman to get one at all, one restriction at a time. I've been learning that what might sound reasonable, really isn't. In some ways this is all about cold-hearted politicians playing to their most extreme supporters, and trying to put an abortion ban in place, piece by piece.*
CORE: Paint a picture of the harms/the problem, especially for women already struggling to access this care	We need to show our audience why we need their support by showing how these problems impact people directly and in important ways.	*When I've seen sort of the attempt to create greater restrictions or laws to target and restrict access to abortion. It's not accidental, it's intentional and it feels very purposeful to reduce access and the rights of women and children and families.* *I heard a story not too long ago about a woman who had to drive across several state lines—I think six hours—to get access to abortion treatment because it was deemed a 'non-essential service.' And that non-essential service was a way for politicians and government leaders to again put up a barrier and restrict access to abortion services. And that's problematic. It potentially forces a woman to make decisions and choices that she would not have made, but if not for the restrictions that were put into place.*

Component	Why it Matters	Tested Examples from Messenger Videos
CORE: Paint a picture of the solution by describing ways in which people can act decisively in support of abortion access.	Effectively raising awareness about a significant problem inevitably produces anxiety in our audience. We therefore need to pivot quickly and be explicit in our communications about what the solution should be.	*We have to stop trying to control people, stop trying to force people into decisions and to let people have access to the care they need, and the support they need. As a government official, our job should be about passing laws and implementing policies that help people, not control them.*
CORE: Close with shared values and a positive vision for the future. Articulate what expanded access to abortion care could look like, making it clear how women would benefit.	While proposing specific solutions can help calm our audience's anxieties and help them see that a new way forward is possible, we find that they become more supportive when they can imagine how this solution helps create a better world where people are happier, healthier, and have the freedom to make their own personal and private decisions about parenthood.	*A world where people respect other people's personal decisions around parenthood and pregnancy—whether those decisions involve giving birth, putting a child up for adoption, having an abortion, or choosing not to have children at all.* *I think women need and deserve transparency and empathy and warmth and I don't think that any woman anywhere needs to be questioned about their motivations, and there should only be support and factual information about what is available and reasonable for them in their health.*

Looking forward.

Thank you for taking time to read through this messaging guide. We are excited by the richness of this research and the learnings that surfaced during it.

We deeply believe in creating a world where people respect other people's personal decisions around parenthood and pregnancy—and actively seek to protect other people's freedom to decide.

We are encouraged to know that the vast majority of people in our Base and Conflicted audiences agree with us and that they share our aspirational vision of the world. Importantly, this widescale agreement can be seen across voter audiences and across gender, race, and age.

What's more, the fact that NARAL members largely share in this consensus shows we can communicate in a way that stays true to our beliefs and values as activists in the movement.

We are also heartened by people's powerful desire to defend their vision upon learning about abortion restrictions and the motivations of the politicians passing them.

With this research, we see great potential to advance efforts to expand access to abortion care. We are excited to work with movement allies in the months and years ahead to further explore these opportunities and to put the findings from this research into action.

Together, we can seize the debate and work to expand access to abortion care. We can show people how important it is to have a safe space to make personal and private decisions—and channel their desire and enthusiasm to protect it. We can lead with our values and describe the world we want to create, while calling out those with nefarious motives who are seeking to restrict and control our freedom to decide.

Importantly, this research shows we can effectively engage and mobilize a diverse coalition of Americans—across gender, race, age, region, education level and other demographic groups—to protect everyone's freedom to decide.

Appendix

DETAILED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Throughout this project, we intentionally conducted research among a mix of audiences, including Black, Latinx, white, and Asian Pacific Islander registered voters, as well as younger people and people who explicitly identify as LGBTQ. Our research also includes NARAL members to test our communication strategies among politically engaged supporters within the Base.

The qualitative research phase spanned November 2019 to May 2020 and included 19 in-person focus groups and three online focus groups among a total of 246 Black, Latinx, white, and API registered voters ages 19 to 59 in Arizona, Iowa, Michigan, and North Carolina.

The quantitative phases involved a dial test messaging survey of n1,473 voters conducted in July 2020 among a broad range key voter audiences:

- Black voters (n175 Black women, n163 Black men)
- Latinx voters (n170 Latinx women, n152 Latinx men)
- White voters (n200 white women, n170 white men)
- API voters (n172 API women, n152 API men)
- Mixed race voters (n62 mixed race women, n41 mixed race men)
- Voters ages 18 to 23 (n256)
- Voters who identify as LGBTQ (n147)

The survey included a separate sample of n1,534 NARAL members.

Caveat: Sample constructed for messaging purposes and excludes registered voters who believe the law should be changed to ban all abortions. As such, these survey results are not generalizable to the full universe of voters.

While the survey excluded hard anti-choice people, the remaining respondents fall into three key audience blocs:

- Our Base audience is defined as the 24% of the voter sample who say abortion care should be legal and generally available (a 1 on the 4-way) AND who say that laws regarding abortion access should be LESS strict or kept the same AND who say that they believe having an abortion is morally acceptable and should be legal (a 1 on NARAL's 3-way question).
- By contrast, 14% of the sample are Restrictive voters who consistently hold more restrictive views on abortion access.
- The remaining 62% of the sample is comprised of Conflicted voters, who hold more moderate or inconsistent views on access.

Guide at a Glance

New findings from a year-long NARAL Pro-Choice America messaging research project finds that the freedom to decide— especially as a direct contrast to controlling politicians—provides a powerful framework for conversations around abortion in the United States. This memo outlines key messaging learnings coming out of the research, all of which resonate strongly with both Base and Conflicted voters.[1]

Weave in these powerful phrases that emphasize that this issue is about the freedom to decide

- "Protect people's freedom to decide"
- "My decision for my life, your decision for yours"
- "Ensure people have the power to decide"
- "Respect women's decisions"

Emphasize SUPPORT over IDENTITY, which encourages people to protect the freedom to decide—even if they have reservations about the decisions made by others

Instead of...	Consider...
"Senator X is a pro-choice champion"	***"Senator X champions our freedom to decide"*** ***"Senator X protects our freedom to decide"*** ***"Senator X respects our freedom to decide"***

Highlight the full slate of restrictions being passed, and the selfish political strategy behind them

- Emphasize that these laws are really about manipulating and controlling others for political gain. It's about politics, power, money, and self-interest—not about ideology.
- The following messaging statements resonate strongly among Base and Conflicted voters:
    - *"The people passing these laws usually don't care what happens to babies after they're born. These are the same politicians who want to cut assistance programs like early childhood education or food stamps."*
    - *"These laws are un-American. This country is supposed to be about having the freedom to make your own life."*
    - *"Politicians often pass these abortion laws in secret and under the radar, hoping that the majority of people who support the freedom to decide won't notice."*
    - *"Legislators should be passing laws to help people, not to control them."*
    - *"One-size-fits-all laws simply don't work when people are making personal medical decisions, such as the decision to have an abortion."*
    - *"The decision to have an abortion is not a political one, it is a deeply personal one."*

[1] Base: voters who say abortion should be legal and generally available, and that laws related to abortion access should be less strict or kept the same. Conflicted: voters who have mixed views about access to abortion care.

Key Words When Describing Restrictions	Key Words When Describing the Politicians Passing These Restrictions
• "Controlling" • "Taking away our options" • "Criminalizing women and doctors" • "Intrusive" • "Forced pregnancy"	• "Controlling" • "Out of touch" • "Anti-freedom" • "Hypocritical" • "Manipulative"

Go on offense by describing the world we want to create

- A world where people **respect other people's personal decisions around parenthood and pregnancy**—whether those decisions involve giving birth, putting a child up for adoption, having an abortion, or choosing not to have children at all.
- A world where **regulations on healthcare ensure people get accurate, unbiased medical information,** to enable them to make **the best healthcare decisions** they can for themselves and for those they love—including decisions about abortion.
- A world where a woman considering an abortion would have local access to a **safe, caring, and affordable** clinic with a professional staff of doctors, nurses, and counselors, and she wouldn't be restricted by laws that dictate her decision or place **unnecessary barriers** on the process.
- A world where **personal decisions about pregnancy are made by a woman, with the support of the people she loves and trust**—not by politicians.
- A world where each of us would not only be **free to dream our best life,** we would have the **freedom to live it, as well.** People would feel **empowered,** and there would be **less judgment, less stigma, and less shame** regarding abortion.

This messaging guidance is based on extensive qualitative and quantitative research conducted from November 2019 to July 2020, including 19 in-person and two online focus groups among a total of 246 Black, white, Hispanic and API registered voters in Arizona, Iowa, Michigan and North Carolina. The research also included a dial test survey of n1,473 registered voters from key audiences across the United States, including:

- *n340 Black women and men*
- *n329 Hispanic women and men*
- *n371 white women and men*
- *n327 Asian Pacific Islander women and men*
- *n106 mixed race women and men*
- *n256 Gen Z voters*
- *n147 voters who identify as LGBTQ*

Deconstructed Narrative on Reproductive Freedom

Racial Justice and Reproductive Freedom

The deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery are small windows into the violence and racism Black Americans face every day. Unfortunately, a toxic mix of white supremacy combined with structural racism undermines our criminal justice system. It likewise fundamentally shapes how Black Americans experience education, healthcare, and simply walking around each day as a Black person in this country.

These same forces create sharp differences for people of color when it comes to abortion care and making decisions around parenthood and pregnancy. For many people of color, especially Black people, their personal and private decisions are disproportionately scrutinized, judged and controlled. Forcing someone to remain pregnant against their will is not reproductive freedom, nor is forcing them to travel long distances for abortion care when local clinics are shuttered. And when a Black woman has to fear that any child she may bring into the world will be targeted and harmed by police, she is experiencing reproductive injustice at the deepest levels.

True reproductive freedom first requires freedom from oppression. We must all work to dismantle white supremacy, eliminate structural racism, and affirm the inherent dignity of every human being.

The opening of this short narrative does not immediately discuss abortion care. Rather, it acknowledges the broader context of violence and racism that Black Americans experience every day. Establishing this context first is important to ground the narrative in the lived experience of Black Americans. Then, we can build on it to show how disparities in abortion care are connected to these larger issues.

While many Black women believe having access to abortion care is important, so too is their ability to have children, parent children, and keep children safe. Therefore, it is important to position abortion care within a broader spectrum that includes pregnancy and parenting.

This language reinforces Black women's agency while connecting back to the reality of the painful environment described in the narrative. Also, having just focused in on abortion restrictions above, we now circle back to the freedom to have children,and tap into one of the most gut-wrenching fears a parent may have.

Including and leading with "Black Americans" is important. It provides an opportunity to define the identity of the group facing hostility (Black people), while at the same time establishing membership in a larger group (Americans)—one that is shared by nearly all of our audiences. Then, even when we use individual-level terms (Black person, Black woman) later in the text, a larger proportion of our audience is able to imagine the situation as happening to someone like them. This increases the ability for our audiences to internalize the weight of the problem—and feel a connection to the solution.

Here we acknowledge that there is a long history of people of color being "disproportionally scrutinized, judged and controlled." Again, this detail provides a broader context that is helpful for our conflicted audiences before receiving additional details about abortion care.

Again, it is important to acknowledge there is a broader context of oppression that Black Americans face, and that reproductive freedom is one part of a larger struggle to dismantle white supremacy and structural racism.

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