



PROJECT JUNTOS: LATINX RACE-CLASS

In our research, Latino respondents found a dog whistle message even more convincing than did white or Black eligible voters. Moreover, with most, the standard Democratic messages don't work.

The key factor is how Hispanics think about race. With their multiple racial identities, Latinx reflect the country in microcosm.

Race-class messages work best to build a multi-racial coalition.

Findings from a survey conducted in July 2020 by Lake Research of 1,145 eligible Latinx voters in select states (TX, CA, AZ, FL, GA, NC, MI, NV, PA, WI, CO, IA, NM, MN, VA), with an oversample of 400 white and 400 African American eligible voters. Ian Haney López and Lake partners Joshua Ulibarri and Celinda Lake crafted the survey based on 15 online focus groups, in collaboration with Way to Win and Equis Research.

RACE-CLASS MESSAGING CHECKLIST

- ❑ WHO ARE WE? We're people striving to build a better life for our families and to contribute to our communities; we're not all the same, but we respect and celebrate our differences
Start with common values shared across supposed lines of division, especially race
- ❑ WHO THREATENS US? Powerful elites and the politicians they bankroll
Shift the threat: The Right urges voters to punch at their neighbors, often presenting people of color as violent and undeserving. Emphasize that the real threat in all our lives comes from the greedy few
- ❑ HOW DO THEY WIN? By pushing division: they're main strategy is to divide and distract while they rig government and the economy for themselves
Tell the story of how and why some powerful few stoke fear and distrust; this moves from more finger-pointing ("they're divisive") to a compelling narrative of greed and power that threatens us all
- ❑ HOW DO WE WIN? By celebrating our differences and joining with others, we can make sure government works for all of us, not just for big corporations and billionaires
Put primary emphasis on this call to join together because it is hopeful and honors our highest values (e pluribus unum), while showing that these values are not only powerful ideals but actually the most practical way to protect and provide for our families

To beat divide-and-conquer, we must joint together and build

MESSAGING TO LATINX AUDIENCES

❑ Latinos want to join with other groups

In every message we tested, the call to join with others engendered the greatest enthusiasm. BUT CAUTION: Joining with others can take two forms, an inclusive form that builds bridges across differences, or an exclusive form that fashions unity by erecting walls. **The key is to BOTH explain division as a strategy of the powerful few AND to call for joining forces with others.** The combination makes clear to people that building walls against their neighbors makes them **less** safe and secure.

❑ Be careful singling out Latinos

Hispanics are proud of their diverse cultures, hard work, and service to the country. But this does not mean that they want to be praised above other groups. This strikes many as pandering and divisive. **Better, address Latinos as an equal and valued part of the American whole.** To be effective with Latinos, messages need not center Hispanics (for instance, by offering a celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month). **More important is to tell the hopeful story of working with others to solve pressing problems.** Hispanics prefer a message of solidarity with other groups, versus calls for building power within Latinx communities.

❑ Honor hard work and call for the government to increase opportunity

Even more than whites and Blacks, Hispanics emphasize the importance of hard work. BUT CAUTION: the opposition aims to win over Latinos by claiming that government regulations threaten the ability to succeed through hard work. It is critical to show that, on the contrary, **government support is required to create the conditions for success through individual effort.** Importantly, Latinos more than whites and African Americans also believe that government should create routes for advancement.

MESSAGING TO LATINX AUDIENCES

❑ COVID-19 and progress interrupted

Prior to the pandemic, Latinos more than other groups were optimistic about their children's future. The pandemic is a sharp blow to their economic progress, in addition to being a health threat and a crisis that puts Latinos on the front lines of service. **Discuss the pandemic as part of a larger story about progress interrupted and reversed through poor policies, and the possibility to restore momentum.**

❑ Address racism as one source of division among others

Race-class messages typically center on racial division. But attacks on Latinos often use proxies like immigration status, national origin, and language, which many Latinos see as distinct from race. **Expressly naming race works well among Hispanics when it is presented as one source of division among others, for instance including nationality and ethnicity.** Another approach is call for joining with other "groups"—rather than "racial groups"—to allow more people to feel seen, including along the lines of gender. Directly calling for cross-racial solidarity with whites and Blacks significantly increases support from those groups, with little loss in agreement among Latinos.

““ Latinx differences – the top performing message among Hispanics

Our Hispanic families may come from many countries, but most of us celebrate our differences and are proud to see our foods and music enjoyed widely. We also know our communities contribute to building the economy and serving this country. But certain politicians mainly criticize Latinos, talking about us as "illegals" or worse. Their divide-and-conquer tactics make it easier for them to rig the government and the economy for their wealthy campaign donors. Their attacks on some of us hurt all of us. By continuing to celebrate our differences and working together, we can build power with other groups to elect leaders who work for—and respect—all our communities.

THE OPPOSITION DOG WHISTLE NARRATIVE

Over the last half century, economic elites have sought to gain control over the political system by convincing working families to give up on collective action, especially government. Their principal strategy has been to use coded narratives to shatter solidarity, especially though not exclusively along racial lines.

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Opposition message

Our leaders must prioritize keeping us safe and ensuring that hardworking Americans have the freedom to prosper. Leaders who built a strong economy once can do it again after COVID-19.

Taking a second look at China, or illegal immigration from places overrun with drugs and criminal gangs, is just common sense. And so is fully funding the police, so our communities are not threatened by people who refuse to follow our laws.

We need to make sure we take care of our own people first, especially the people who politicians have cast aside for too long to cater to whatever special interest groups yell the loudest or riot in the street.

The dog whistle narrative
stripped of code

Trust the marketplace

Everyone is on their own, free to succeed (or fail);
business leaders should run the country

Fear and resent people of color

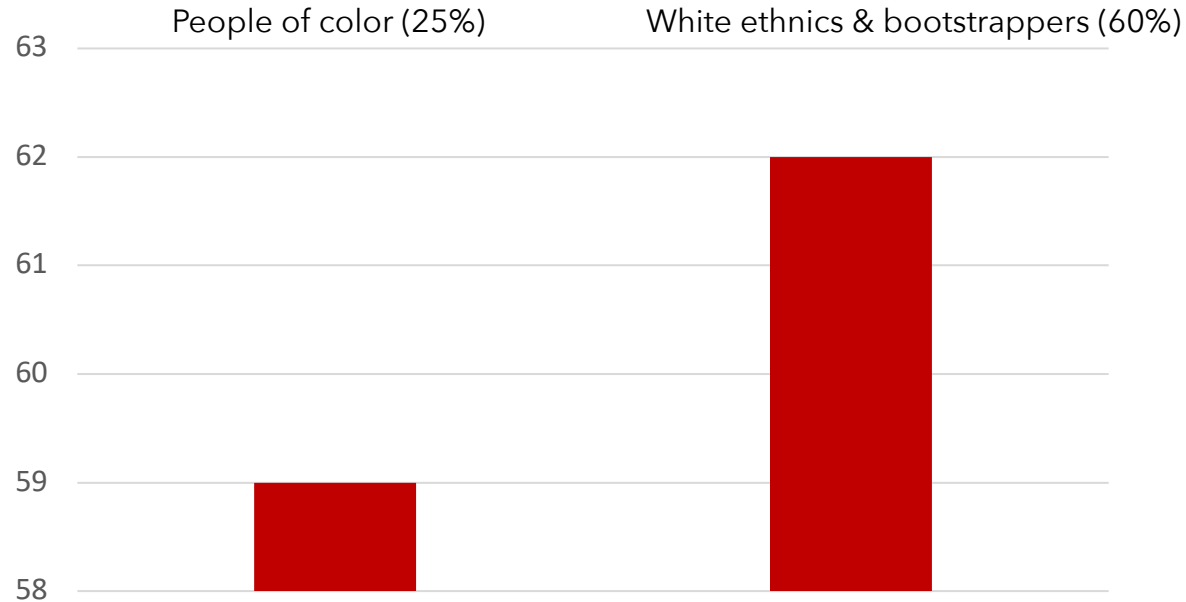
They're dangerous and underserving

Hate liberal government

It coddles criminals and welfare recipients—and thus
betrays whites by favoring people of color

THE OPPOSITION DOG WHISTLE MESSAGE

Latinos are:



Dial test (above 50 indicates positive reaction)

DIFFERENCES AMONG LATINOS

Three conceptions of Hispanic racial identity

Latinos conceptualize their individual racial identity in multiple ways. When it comes to the racial identity of the larger group, however, three conceptions of race predominate.

People of color 25% see Hispanics as a group that, like African Americans, remain distinct over generations. Individuals in this group are more likely to be younger, U.S. born, members of the progressive base, and to prefer “Latinx” (even so, within this group “Hispanic” remains the overwhelming favorite, 65% to 6%). They are also more likely to say that they are perceived as “White or Caucasian” by people who do not know them, though this cohort also includes most Afro-Latinos.

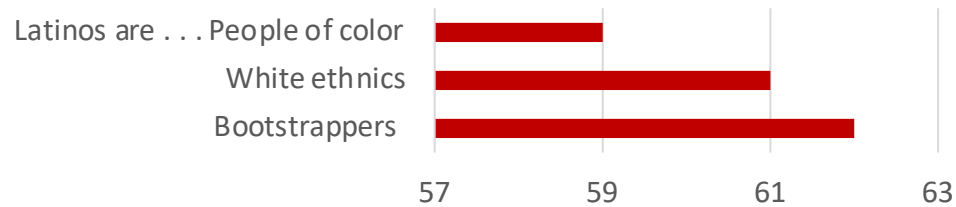
White ethnics 32% view Hispanics as a group that, like European Americans, over generations become part of the American mainstream. Those in this group are more likely to be older, immigrants, and bilingual. Compared to those who see Latinx as people of color, this cohort is almost three times as likely to believe that “people of color who cannot get ahead are mostly responsible for their own situations” (38% versus 14%).

Bootstrappers 28% perceive Hispanics, not primarily as people of color or as white ethnics, but as a group that “over generations can get ahead through hard work.” Compared to white ethnics, they tend slightly more conservative regarding race, class, and government, and are the most likely to be Republican. They are also the group least likely to say that they are perceived as white by others.

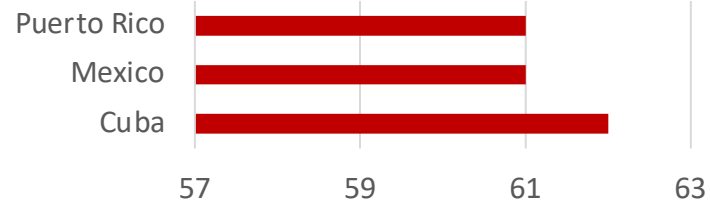
DIFFERENCES AMONG LATINOS

Reactions to the opposition dog whistle message

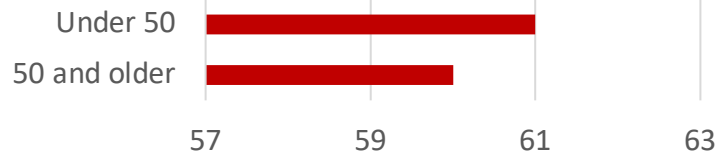
by conception of Hispanic racial identity



by family's national origin



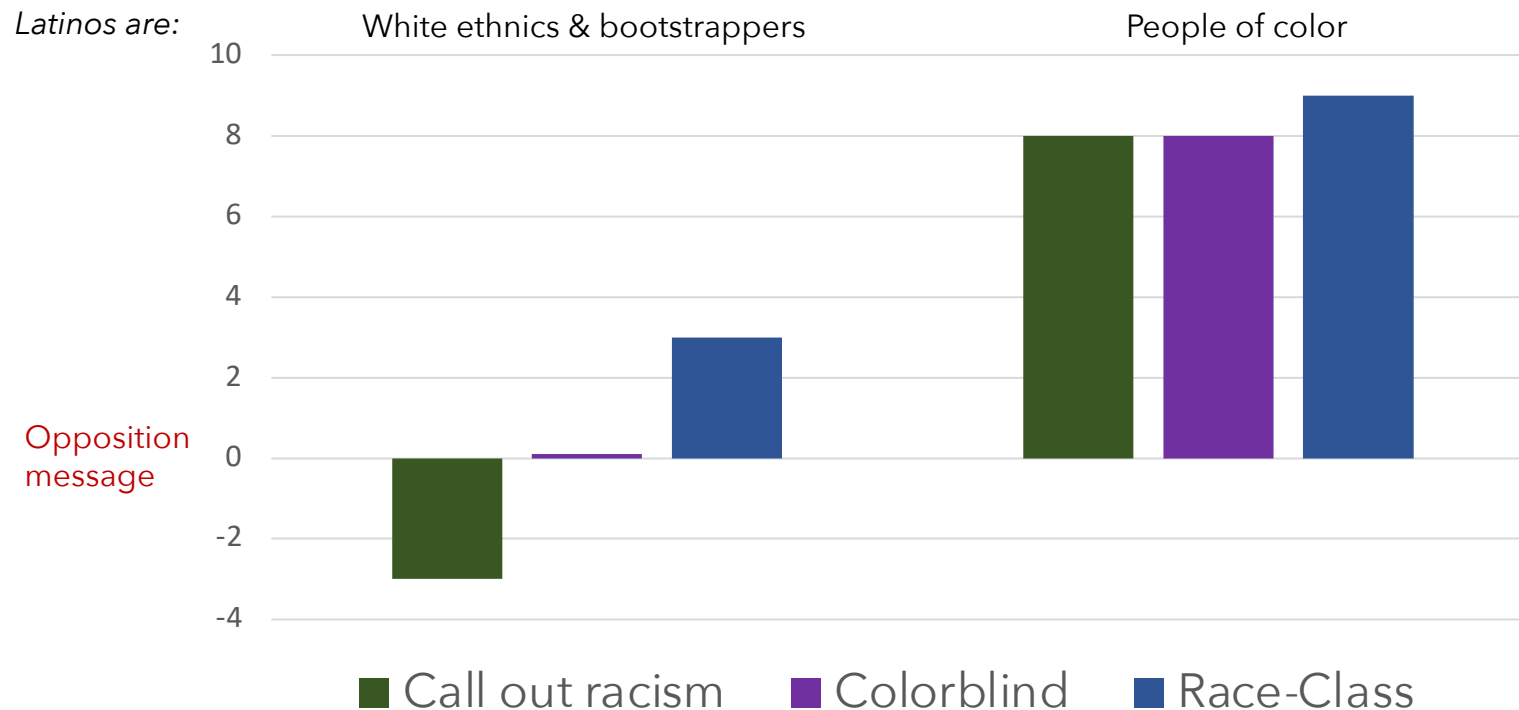
by age



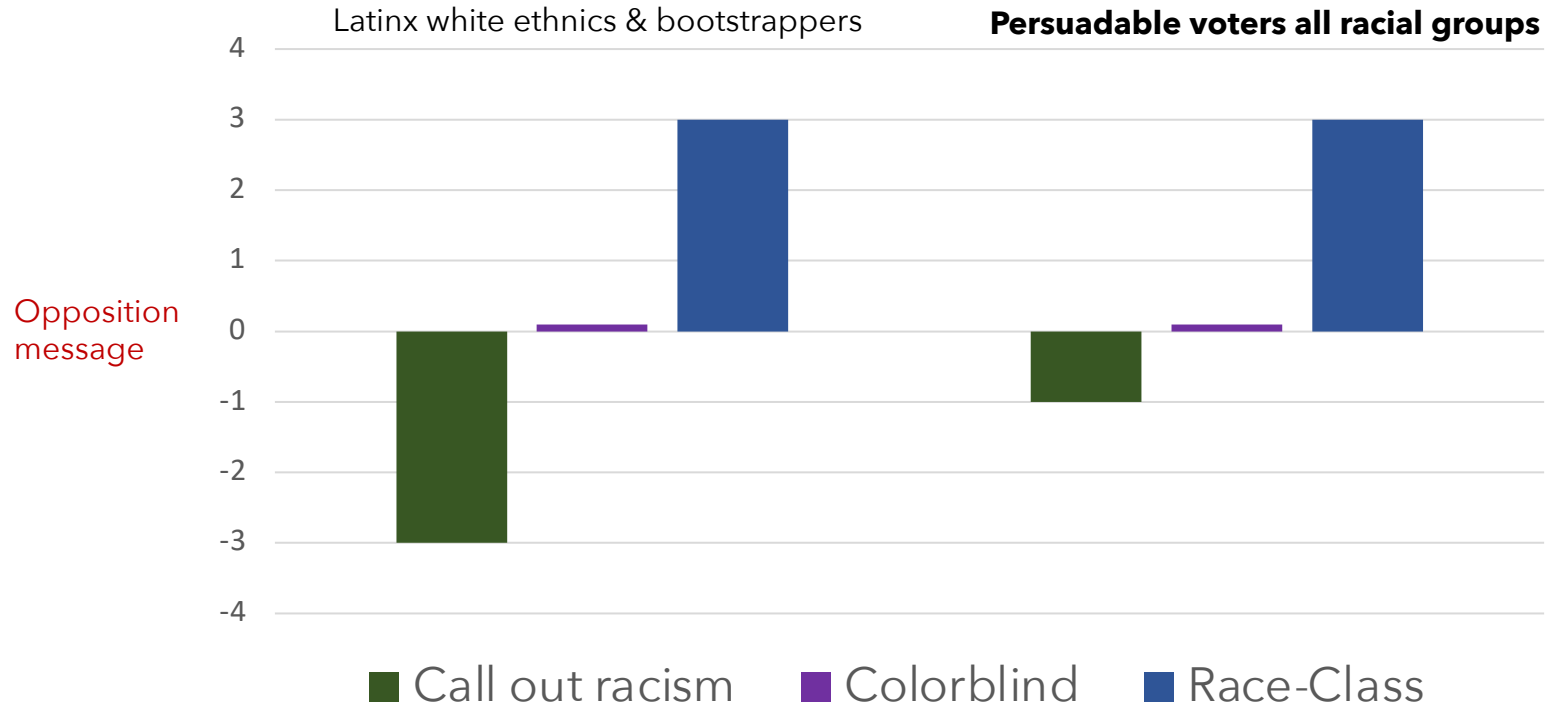
A note on gender

When measured by their moment-to-moment reactions, Hispanic women and men react very similarly to the various messages. When given time to reflect on the messages, though, Latinx women are much more likely to be positive toward messages that they recognize as progressive. Women and men make up almost equal shares of the “people of color” and “bootstrapper” cohorts, with men more likely to see Hispanics as “white ethnics” (35% vs. 30%).

OUR MESSAGING STRATEGIES COMPARED TO THE OPPOSITION MESSAGE



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THE STANDARD MESSAGING STRATEGIES

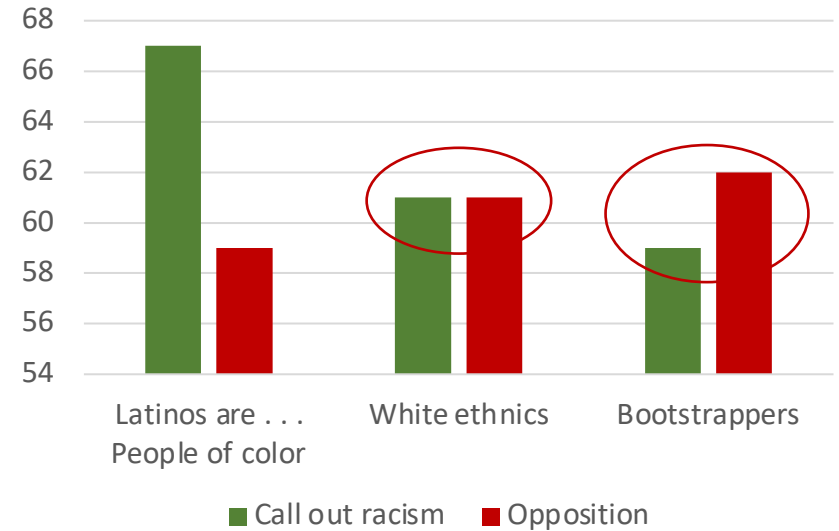
Progressives split over how to respond to dog whistle division. Some promote a strategy of directly confronting racism and its harms to communities of color—the **call out racism narrative**. Others advocate not addressing racial division—the **colorblind liberal narrative**.

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Call out racism

There's been a horrible explosion of hate in this country. Certain politicians promote xenophobia, racism, and division. And it's not just their words. It's their policies, too. We see it in how they rip families apart at the border. And in how the police profile, imprison, and kill Black people, and use excessive force against people marching for justice. Right now, communities of color are suffering the greatest numbers of deaths from COVID-19, but have the least access to affordable, quality health care. To end the racism and reform immigration and policing, we must elect new leaders who truly believe that all of us are created equal and deserve to be treated that way.

By focusing on helping communities of color, the **call out racism message** inadvertently strengthens the opposition's claim that progressives elevate people of color over whites. This contributes to alienating those who see Latinos as white ethnics or as bootstrappers.

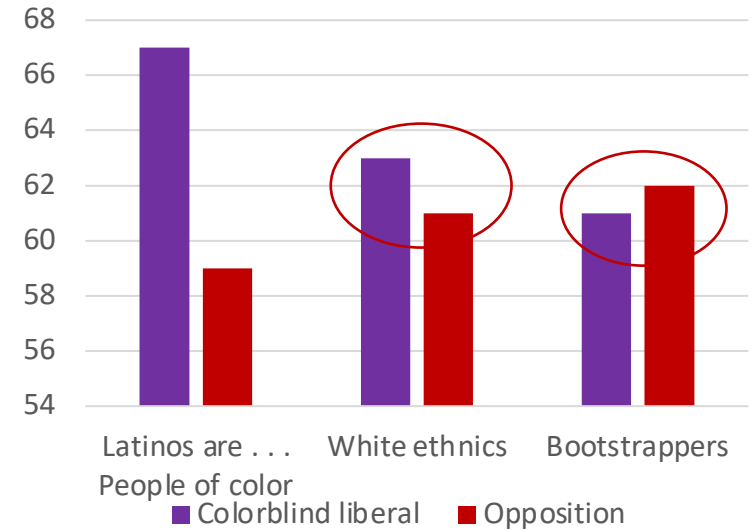


THE STANDARD MESSAGING STRATEGIES

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Colorblind liberal

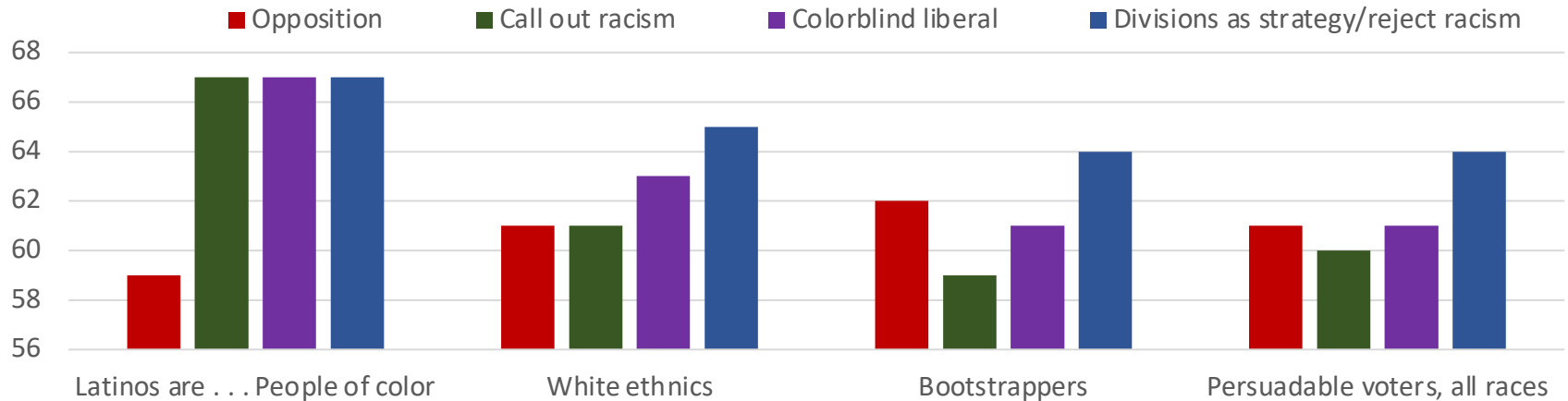
We had plenty of warning about COVID-19, but certain political leaders were unprepared to act in a crisis. They ignored the science, didn't make plans, and even failed to tell the truth about simple steps people can take, like wearing a mask. Most families are facing record unemployment, big health risks, and uncertain futures. Meanwhile, a tiny handful of individuals and corporations are getting even richer. We live in the wealthiest country in the history of the world, but COVID-19 illnesses and deaths are worse here than almost anywhere else. We must elect new leaders who have a plan and are ready to build this country back, better.



The **colorblind liberal message** ignores racial divisions in a way that is typically more comfortable to those privileged by race. White ethnics are okay with this, but bootstrappers—who are less likely to be perceived by others as white—find this message less convincing than the opposition message.

THE RACE-CLASS NARRATIVE STRATEGY

Seeing dog whistle politics as part of a larger class conflict creates new possibilities for responding. Unlike the colorblind liberal strategy, the race-class approach directly challenges racism. Unlike the call out racism message, it frames powerful elites, rather than whites in general, as the problem.



ANATOMY OF THE RACE-CLASS RESPONSE

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Divisions as strategy/reject racism

We had come so far, but now COVID-19 threatens our families, for instance with health risks, record unemployment, and losing the businesses we worked hard to build. To overcome these challenges, we need to pull together no matter our race or ethnicity. We have done this before and can do it again.

But instead of uniting us, certain politicians make divisions worse, insulting and blaming different groups. When they divide us, they can more easily rig our government and the economy for their wealthy campaign donors.

When we come together by rejecting racism against anyone, we can elect new leaders who support proven solutions that help all working families.

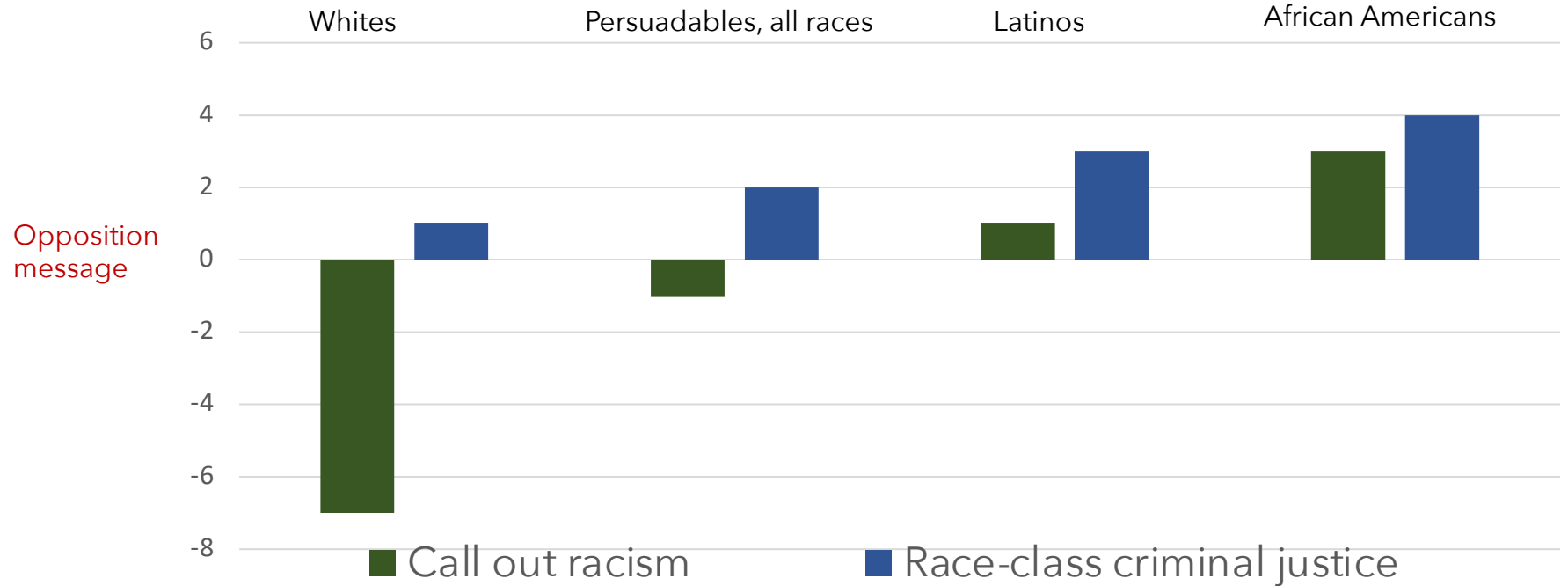
To move forward, we must . . .

Build cross-racial solidarity

Distrust powerful elites
sowing division

Demand that government work
for us all

RACIAL JUSTICE



RACE-CLASS AND RACIAL JUSTICE

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Criminal justice

It doesn't matter what race or ethnicity you are, we all know that growing up in a healthy neighborhood helps our children to thrive.

But certain politicians describe some communities as basically criminal, and then they divert needed resources to pay mainly for police and prisons. Stoking fear seems like a strategy for these politicians to avoid taking responsibility for the decisions they're making, especially the things they do for their big-money donors.

When we reject messages of fear and division and join together with people from all walks of life, we can elect new leaders who will ensure all our communities get better schools, not more barbwire, and more jobs, not more jails.

Shift the threat:
The danger does not
come from people of
color; it comes from
powerful elites pushing
division.

RACE-CLASS AND RACIAL JUSTICE

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Immigration

Whether it's from another town or another country, most of us move for the same reason—to build a better life for our families.

But especially during COVID-19, certain politicians are insulting immigrants while billions are going to a handful of corporations. The richest 1 percent benefit when politicians blame immigrants for the hard times regular people face.

We need to recognize the contributions of immigrants in our communities and states, and embrace people with the courage to move. When we come together, we can elect new leaders who will put fairness back into our immigration laws and make this a country that provides a better life for everyone, whether we're Brown, Black, or White.

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