

A photograph of three young women of diverse backgrounds smiling and posing together. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple and green circular graphic.

# Why All Guaranteed Income is Narrative Work

**Best Practices for Centering Dignity, Race,  
and Gender in Cash-Based Programs**

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**MAYORS FOR A  
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# INTRODUCTION

In October 2017, Michael D. Tubbs launched the nation's first mayor-led guaranteed income pilot. Since then, the guaranteed income space has grown exponentially, with more than two dozen pilots already launched or in progress through Mayors for a Guaranteed Income (MGI) and several non-mayoral pilots like the long-running Magnolia Mother's Trust taking place as well.

Guaranteed income pilots present both an opportunity and a challenge for narrative change, defined here as our cultural understandings, frames of reference, or mental models. This much is clear: any program involving direct, unconditional cash will inherently be influenced by – and will influence – the narratives we hold about the social safety net, poverty, race and gender. Every pilot, even those without a dedicated narrative strategy or focus, contributes to narratives around economic security through the sheer fact of distributing cash with no strings attached, often to a targeted population.

In hearing repeated requests from the community of new pilots that guidance on narrative change grounded in racial and gender justice and storytelling is lacking in the space, MGI and Insight Center – experts on guaranteed income and race/gender narratives, respectively – have created this guide and set of best practices due to growing calls in the movement to help ensure new and existing projects are taking a thoughtful approach to narrative and storytelling. Our hope is that it serves as a resource to create a cohesive narrative approach by disparate pilots so that ultimately all projects understand that their work is inextricably tied to the intersection of economic, gender, and racial justice. Our ultimate goal with this work is to build a federal level guaranteed income policy, and we know that it will be near impossible to get there without a concerted, intentional effort to change the way both the public and policymakers understand and view poverty, particularly tackling how many of us still believe poverty is a moral failing of individuals versus a result of systemic failings.

As Insight Center covered in [“The Power of Narrative in Economic Policy,”](#) it is tremendously important for those of us fighting for racial and economic justice in America to understand that the narratives we hold are based on a hyper-focus on the individual versus systems, and are rooted in racism, xenophobia and sexism. This lethal combination makes it extremely difficult to pass the policies we need for comprehensive,

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transformative structural change toward economic, racial and gender justice. As Color of Change President Rashad Robinson says, “Narrative builds power for people.” The question we must grapple with is, who are our current narratives building power for, and who do they purposely leave behind?

As narrative cannot be separated out from guaranteed income work, it is imperative that anyone building a pilot understand the significance of the ways in which harmful narratives shape our policy, politics and culture; as well as how we can shift these narratives toward a positive vision of an economy centered on wellbeing, equity and dignity for all.

## GUARANTEED INCOME AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Though it is often credited as an idea most championed by automation fears and well-known conservative men such as President Richard Nixon and economist Milton Friedman, guaranteed income's strongest advocates originate in racial justice movements.

In reality guaranteed income has been among the list of demands to achieve racial and economic liberation from people and groups such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Black Panther Party and Johnnie Tillmon of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO). The rules and structures of our economy are grounded in anti-blackness. This impacts all people of color, forcing them to be over-represented in lower-income brackets. As such, guaranteed income is inherently tied to racial justice even if a pilot does not choose to have an explicit race lens. Consequently, all guaranteed income pilots must contend with how they will talk about and deal with race as they will either reinforce harmful understandings of race and poverty in America, or work to combat how we have racialized poverty in America.

While much of the energy around guaranteed income coincided with the Civil Rights movement of the late 1960s, the concept has seen a resurgence in interest in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic further fueled this energy, with cash positioned as a quick and effective solution to the economic pain and precarity facing millions of Americans. Guaranteed income advocates also leveraged the unique window created by the pandemic to advance a longer-term vision of cash and how it can offset the embedded sexism

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and racism in our economy given that income-targeted and race-conscious programs provide an outsized positive benefit for women and people of color.

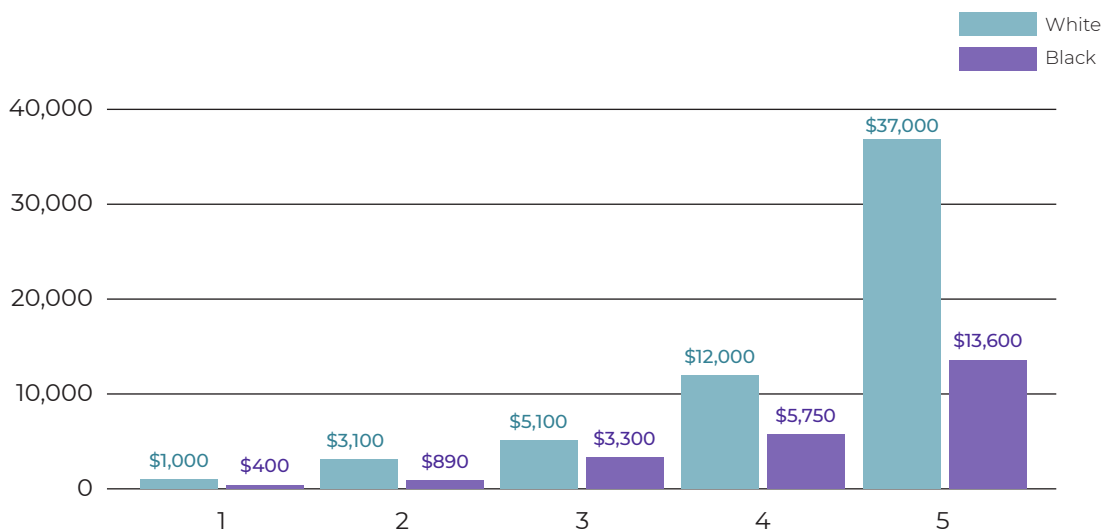
Much of the unequal outcomes of our economy and policies can be tied back to harmful narratives that shape policymakers' views of who is deserving. To level set, narratives are defined as our cultural understandings, frames of reference, or mental models and play a significant role in how leaders create and implement policies, and how Americans receive them.

More than just stories of specific people, narratives are how we make sense of the world and help us create order in a fairly chaotic landscape. They determine the extent to which we build empathy and who we see as deserving of support. Narrative shift refers to the ways in which we can invest in both exposing the inaccuracy of harmful narratives, as well as how we can further narratives based in shared dignity, equity, and a focus on policy and systemic failures rather than individual ones.

Insight Center provides examples of how narrative influences policy in recent research on the racial wealth gap, particularly the vast disparities between wealth among Black and white Americans.<sup>1</sup> By highlighting harmful narratives that have limited public understanding of which systems caused these disparities, we can then examine what policies might advance equity.

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**FIGURE 1: Median Liquid Assets by Race & Income Quintile**

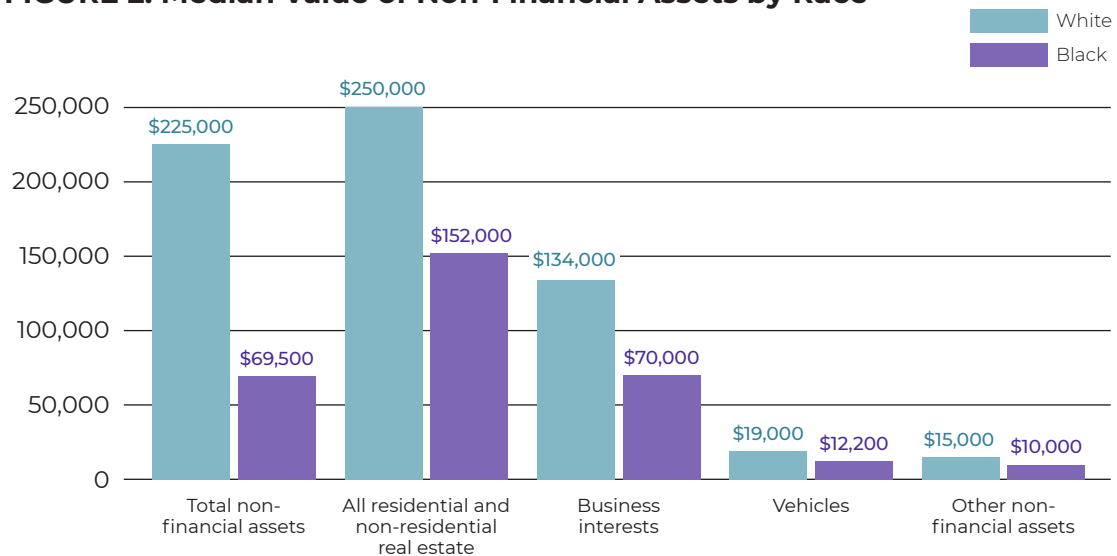


Source: Addo, Fenaba and Darity, William Jr. analysis of the Federal Reserve Board, 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances

<sup>1</sup> <https://insightcced.org/still-running-up-the-down-escalator/>

Among the insidious narratives exposed by Insight Center’s work are those surrounding anti-blackness, our limited definition of work, personal responsibility, and bootstrapping. These narratives then prevent equity in five key areas: education, homeownership, entrepreneurship, income, and family structure. Specifically, Black individuals do not experience the same benefits of education or homeownership as their white peers, and they face significant, systemic hurdles in establishing businesses and finding jobs. Pointing to rehashed narratives surrounding their work ethic, or their culture, or their family structure is a misguided answer. Instead, we must shift narratives through arts and culture, data and intentional communications efforts to recognize the root of the wealth gap is the systemic racism embedded within everything from our home buying processes to how different races and genders are valued in our labor market.

**FIGURE 2: Median Value of Non-Financial Assets by Race**



Source: Addo, Fenaba and Darity, William Jr. analysis of the Federal Reserve Board, 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances

The above examples represent how deeply-entrenched false ideas are used to perpetuate inequity. Other examples of how narratives influence policy is the idea pushed by conservatives that any social safety net benefit must include a work requirement – equating joblessness with a lack of agency, and thus diminishing a recipient of public benefits as a person, or somehow less moral. Another is the dog whistle belief deployed by conservative politicians that Black women do not want to work, despite the fact that they have always had higher labor force participation than white women.

# UNDERSTANDING NARRATIVES

First, we must acknowledge the North Star we are working toward when advancing a guaranteed income. For most pilots, that ultimate goal is federal policy. We cannot get there until we have changed the hearts and minds of people who believe the narrative that poverty is a moral failing. It is important to recognize that pilots, narrative change and advocacy go hand-in-hand as part of an overlapping strategy toward federal policy. None exist as siloes, and even those who are in the space but are not running pilots can draw on the lessons from pilots to inform their work.

A core barrier to addressing income inequality through a guaranteed income is the false narratives we collectively hold. Far too often, lawmakers and others in positions of power assert that poor personal choices or a lack of financial know-how cause economic inequities. Harmful personal responsibility narratives, in turn, have led us to believe that more education, financial literacy, and marriage are universal policy solutions to racialized and systemic economic inequality and that people living in poverty cannot be trusted to make responsible decisions with unrestricted cash. We use deep-seated narratives to shape our views on a variety of issues, and our narratives inform who we build empathy for, and who we do not.

Stereotypes go hand-in-hand with narratives. Stereotypes are micro stories used to uplift and perpetuate meta narratives steeped in anti-blackness, sexism and xenophobia. For example, the stereotype of the “welfare queen” contributes to the larger narrative that Black women can not be trusted and are cheats.

Inaccurate narratives and the corresponding inadequate solutions that they inspire strategically mask the structural issues that are actually at the root of economic disparities.

The COVID-19 pandemic and related economic crisis have only exacerbated what was already a collective failing by policymakers and elected officials, who continue to invest in solutions focused on individual behavior rather than systems change. This approach reinforces inequitable economic structures and is a primary driver of why our country has failed to move the needle on racial inequality and poverty.

Flawed and pernicious narratives stop us from addressing root causes in several policy areas and

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from adopting common-sense solutions like a guaranteed income. We must make much-needed shifts to address the root causes of racial wealth inequality, to center our COVID-19 recovery efforts on racial justice, and to truly build an equitable economy, where all Americans are afforded access to financial security.

How we make the case for our position on economic issues matters. Far too often, we try to win our audiences over with only facts. But data alone does not move people to act or shift their thinking. Cognitive experts maintain that if the data and research we present do not fit into how people make sense of an issue, they will reject those facts and continue to rely on incorrect information (such as false narratives) and/or hunker down on their current beliefs. It is the alignment of values and beliefs that move people to accept our solutions. That is why a focus on shifting narratives on the issues or populations we care about involves finding alignment between people's beliefs and the good evidence and solutions we put forward. The imagery, frames, messages, and metaphors that we use, serve as powerful tools for engaging the audiences we are trying to reach.

## Case Study: The “Bootstraps” Myth

Personal responsibility and “bootstraps” narratives are two sides of the same narrative coin. They are deeply interconnected and overlapping, but somewhat distinct. The bootstraps trope is predicated on the myth of the “self-made person” and the romanticization of a rags to riches story: it says anyone can achieve economic prosperity if they just “pull themselves up” through sheer determination, hard work, and playing by the rules.

This notion of a meritocracy is a widely held American belief and profoundly shapes our thinking about economic mobility and informs our strategies to build wealth. Under a meritocracy, wealth and advantage are rightful compensation for skill and talent. Research reveals that accepting meritocracy as true makes people more selfish, less self-critical and more prone to acting in discriminatory ways.<sup>2</sup>

The personal responsibility trope – a belief that financial insecurity and poverty are the result of moral failings, bad choices, and behaviors – has driven decades of neoliberal policies that prioritize financial markets over people and justify the erosion of our social safety net. The focus on personal responsibility also masks structural drivers – historical discrimination, racial segregation of the labor market, etc. – and blames Americans for their struggles rather than the policies like tax subsidies for the wealthy and corporations and zoning restrictions benefitting white communities that have resulted in a lack of shared prosperity.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://press.princeton.edu/ideas/a-belief-in-meritocracy-is-not-only-false-its-bad-for-you>

While the personal responsibility narrative blames Black people for their lower financial position and the inequities they experience, the “bootstraps” trope provides a logic for the mechanism by which wealth is accumulated. Both narratives are steeped in anti-blackness. They offer a rationale for disinvesting in Black people and their communities while ignoring the deep structural change needed to address who has power in our economy and democracy. In order to create structural policy change that will truly address the root causes of the racial wealth gap, we must replace these dominant narratives with ones that frame inequality as the result of deliberate policy choices and practices.

## Case Study: Millennial Women

Research into how millennial workers are viewed in the workplace showed it was common for managers to hold several stereotypes about them for better and worse, including that they are: entitled, disloyal, lazy, creative, multi-taskers, passionate, wanting work/life balance, needy, and sensitive ([Van Dellen, 2019](#)).

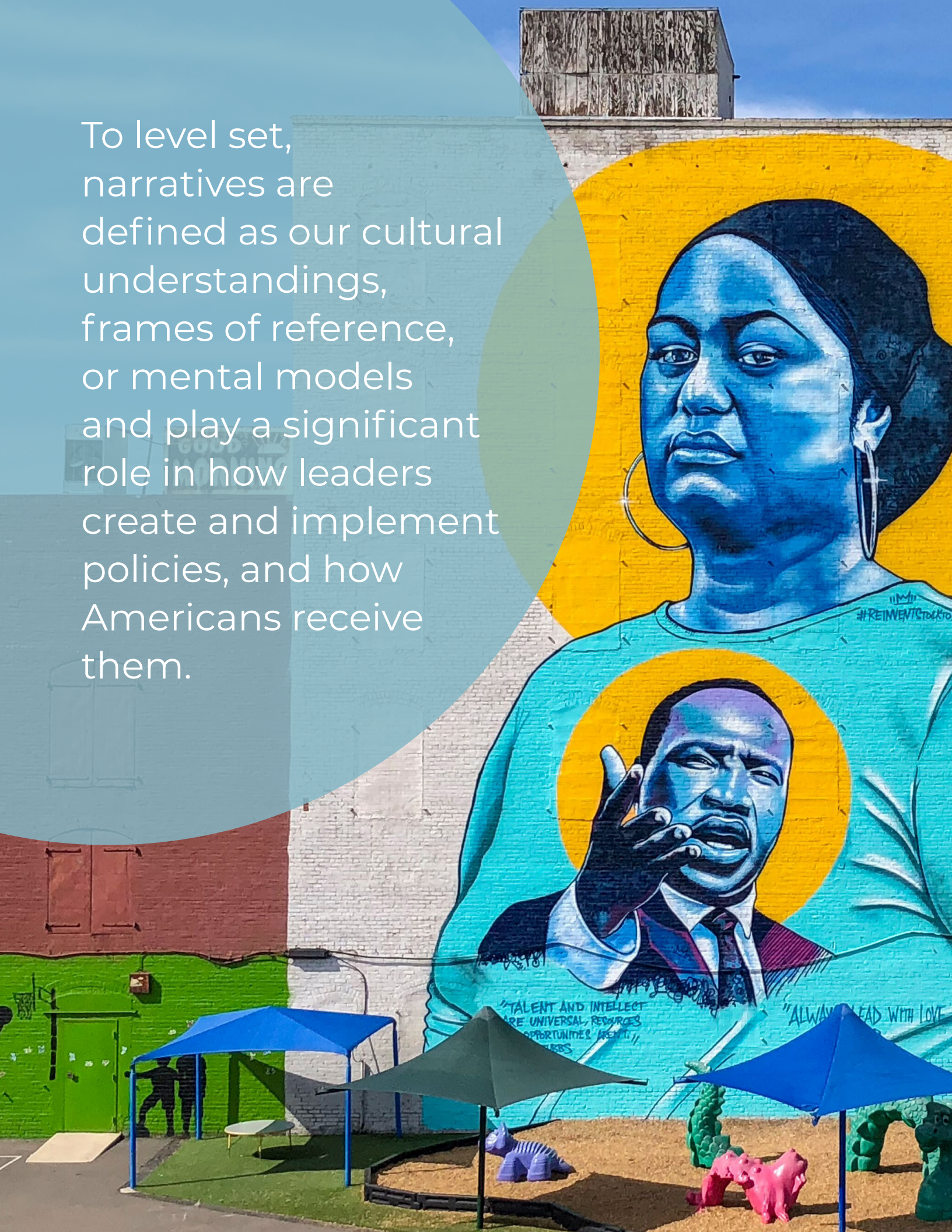
Insight Center interrogated several of these concepts, particularly as they relate to millennial women, and found a wealth of data to counter these common misconceptions that are so often perpetuated by media, policymakers and the general public as true.

Instead of being “disloyal” and “lazy,” data shows millennial women are working against a stacked deck. Representing 31.5% of the female population in the U.S., millennial women do not benefit from many economic policies and systems designed by, and built to meet the needs of, men as primary breadwinners. Today, many policies affecting family economic security fail to account for the remarkable increase in millennial women being the primary or co-breadwinner for their families. Existing policies and systems often do not support millennial women’s rise in educational attainment and resulting student debt burden, nor do they acknowledge the ongoing roles millennial women play as the primary caregivers for children and other family members.

Millennial women (born between 1980 and 1997) came of age during the Great Recession and amidst the rise of mass incarceration, unprecedented student debt levels, and changing workforce dynamics. All of these factors contribute to the fact that millennial women are 37% more likely than Generation Xers (those born between 1965 to 1980) to be living below the federal poverty line and are more likely to be underemployed or unemployed than previous generations. Additionally, immigrant millennial women, particularly Latinx women, are often key financial contributors to their parents and extended families, which directly impacts their economic stability.



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Despite important gains in college attendance rates and career opportunities, millennial women's wealth lags behind that of men. The median wealth holdings of single millennial men is still 162% greater than single millennial women (\$11,230 and \$6,914 respectively). Broken down further across race and ethnicity, single millennial women have less wealth than single millennial men. Single white men have close to six times more wealth than single Black women.<sup>3</sup>

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3 [https://insightcced.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AFN\\_2019\\_Clipper-Wings\\_BOOKLET\\_WEB\\_final-3.4.19.pdf](https://insightcced.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/AFN_2019_Clipper-Wings_BOOKLET_WEB_final-3.4.19.pdf)

## NARRATIVE PLAYBOOK

Here, we explore different narratives tied to guaranteed income pilots, the importance of storytelling as a vehicle for narrative change, and how to incorporate narrative change into your work even if you are not running a pilot.

### Narrative Roadmap

When designing any policy – including a guaranteed income – to ensure that it promotes racial and gender wealth equity, it is imperative to understand the history of wealth accumulation in the US. Specifically, we must acknowledge and account for who has been given access to wealth building opportunities and who has been, and continues to be, denied ([Bhattacharya, 2019](#)).

Understanding the full range of how narratives show up in guaranteed income work is critical to building a communications strategy that both reinforces positive narratives based in fact and dispels narratives based in gendered and racist tropes. Below are several narratives that guaranteed income advocates hope to achieve, along with related talking points to advance them:

- Gender: Guaranteed income is a tool for advancing gender justice. Examples of how this can be advanced through narrative include this piece in Ms. Magazine, The Feminist Case for a Guaranteed Income, which shows how a guaranteed income improved the lives of women receiving it. Talking points for gender and guaranteed income include:
  - In compensating for care work, guaranteed income is both a way to recognize the heavier burden women have always taken in heterosexual households. Additionally, guaranteed income is a way for women to re-enter the workforce post-pandemic.
  - Guaranteed income is a tool to narrow the gender income gap and acknowledge that unpaid care work is valuable and should be deemed as work. The National Women’s Law Center recently reported that while women make up about half of the American workforce, they comprise 70 percent of employees whose jobs paid less than \$10 per hour (Tucker and Patrick 2017).
  - Women - particularly women of color - are the most likely to live in poverty, are overrepresented in low-paying occupations, and are far more likely to lack access to sick leave and health care benefits.
  - Women are more than eight times as likely to work poverty-level wage jobs than men.
  - The pandemic has erased a generation of gains for women in the workforce. They lost more than one million more jobs than men did in 2020, and those who remain in the workforce and have children are struggling to balance an unequal share of child care and housework on top of their paid work.
  - Guaranteed income is rooted in a history of racial and gender justice – Johnnie Tillmon and the National Welfare Rights Organization called for a guaranteed income to support mothers, particularly Black women, back in the early ‘70s.
- Race: As a means to address economic and racial injustice, a guaranteed income has a notable history of being uplifted by racial justice advocates and movements. The racial justice roots of guaranteed income are centered in this TIME Magazine op-ed announcing the launch of MGI. Talking points around guaranteed income and race include:
  - Looking at historical precedents, much attention is focused on the Black Panther Party’s 1966 10-point platform, which called for offering every person employment or a guaranteed income. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., also called for a guaranteed income, outlining his own proposal in his final book, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* Much less attention has been paid to the role that the

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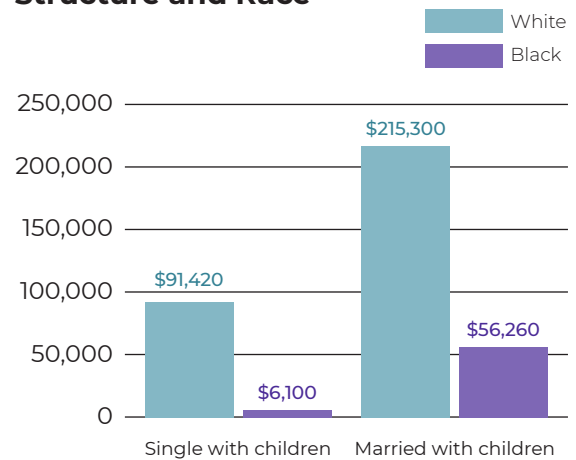
National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) played in advancing a guaranteed income, which reached over 100,000 members at the organization's peak.

- Racial justice movements understood the potential that a guaranteed income has, and current pilots are exploring how a guaranteed income needs to be designed in the 21st century in order to finish what began generations ago - particularly in the wake of 2020's racial justice protests demanding real, structural change to eradicate racism from our economy and democracy.
- COVID-19 has further exposed the economic fragility of most American households, and has disproportionately impacted Black and brown people.
- The idea of who benefits from the social safety net is rooted in inaccurate narratives of a "welfare queen" – which is both a racist and sexist trope. The truth is, white Americans have always been the biggest beneficiaries of the safety net, and Black women have always had higher labor force participation than white women. We need to both eradicate these damaging narratives, and we also need to interrogate what allowed them to flourish in the first place. This idea of who is deserving or afforded dignity is traced back to some of our earliest safety net policies from the New Deal.
- Dignity and deservedness: Inherently tied to the previous issues, but also related to socioeconomic status in that we have been steered by a narrative for too long that people are poor because they are lazy, the wealthy are rich because they work harder, and that all it takes is hard work and a good education to get ahead. MGI Founder Michael Tubbs spoke to The Nation about why ideas of worthiness and dignity are inherent to all guaranteed income programs, saying: "I would argue that the biggest part of the work is the narrative work. Because if data were all we needed, our world would look a lot different." There is also a pervasive narrative that guaranteed income is a "handout." The narrative around handouts is critical when thinking about GI, because the belief is that providing money that is not tied directly with work is morally corrosive and leads to never-ending dependency. One of the best ways to counter this particular narrative is data, such as the media attention SEED's first year results received in showing that recipients found full-time employment at more than double the rate of non-recipients. Guaranteed income pilots must recognize how important it is to position cash as a tool to recognize everyone's inherent dignity and deservedness, particularly after the devastation of the pandemic. Talking points around dignity and deservedness include:
  - There's nothing dignified about working yourself to death to pay for necessities, or working two to three jobs and never seeing your family. What we need to get to as a society is the dignity of humanity, so our dignity is secured separately from work. Work should provide dignified protections like unions, paid time off, family leave and a living wage.

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- Guaranteed income is a way to recognize everyone's inherent dignity – we have to stop attaching dignity to work, and instead attach it to our personhood.
- Guaranteed income provides agency and increased opportunity. Results from SEED show a guaranteed income removed barriers to full-time employment and created capacity for setting goals and taking risks. We hear so much about pulling yourself up by your bootstraps, and the data shows that guaranteed income provided recipients with the boots.
- (For elected officials) As elected leaders, we recognize that trust goes both ways. Our constituents trust us to make good decisions, and we trust our constituents to do the same with cash and to use it in a way that makes the most sense for themselves and their families.
- Economic insecurity isn't a new challenge and should not be a partisan issue. Even before the pandemic, wealth and income inequality were at historic highs, and it is unacceptable that people who were working two and three jobs couldn't afford basic necessities.
- Family structure: For decades, foundations and policymakers have touted marriage and two-parent families as the solution to addressing racial economic insecurity (Horn, 2001). However, this is an antiquated idea that fails to recognize the evolving family structures of a modern society and also does not account for the fact that outcomes for Black families do not include the wealth-building traditionally associated with marriage for white families, as explained in this article about the racial wealth gap. Talking points around family structure include:
  - Marriage for Black families does not translate into wealth returns like it does for white families. When comparing families with the same family structure, stark racial wealth gaps remain, and Black families of all types – married and unmarried – have far less wealth than white families (Addo & Lichter, 2013; Kent & Ricketts, 2021).

**FIGURE 3: Median Wealth by Family Structure and Race**



Source: Addo, Fenaba and Darity, William Jr. analysis of the Federal Reserve Board, 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances



- Programs and policies that keep us focused on “fixing” family structure to address racial wealth inequality distract from the fact that wealth is the driving force of education, employment and income outcomes, not the reverse. Rather than family structure shaping wealth, wealth shapes family structure.
- Research shows that Black people cannot marry their way to parity in wealth – and focusing on changing individual behaviors rather than the structural causes will only perpetuate racial wealth gaps.
- The social contract: we are emerging from the pandemic and we must demand we not return to normal, because normal was not working for too many people. This is one of primary drivers of the rise in guaranteed income pilots, and the federal policies like the Child Tax Credit expansion that show how the concept can be scaled. This op-ed illustrates how to tie the concept of a guaranteed income to cash-based policy momentum at the national level. Talking points around the social contract include:
  - In a world in which billionaires pay nothing in taxes while millions go hungry, we must call for a 21st century social contract that recognizes that in the richest country in the world, we can provide an income floor for all who need it. The pandemic exposed the deep craters in our economy, and now is the time to fix them by fundamentally shifting our approach to the social contract to one that is rooted in trust instead of punishment.
  - Guaranteed income provides increased stability for recipients. From COVID-19 to wildfires to ice storms, we live in a time of pandemics. Our economic policy should be focused on providing people the stability they need to withstand these crises, and guaranteed income is a proven way to do that.
  - Guaranteed income is this generation’s extension of the safety net, following in the path of things like Social Security, child-labor laws, weekends, and collective bargaining.

## Storytelling

As noted previously, guaranteed income pilots are not occurring in a vacuum. Rather, they are building and standing upon our current policy and narrative contexts which cannot be ignored. Furthermore, we must remember the ultimate goal of these pilots should be to enact formal policies. Building both the political and public will for this goal will require a commitment to deep, transformative narrative and cultural shift which begins with an acknowledgement of the harmful narratives we outlined above. While the road to narrative change is long, there are some immediate steps that can be

taken to ensure pilot programs are creating the right messaging frames and centering the needs of Black and brown communities and women in the national discourse around guaranteed income. Storytelling – the practice of centering on the lived experiences of those experiencing economic insecurity and recipients of a guaranteed income – is a major component of any pilot, and the insight most reporters are searching for. Storytelling allows you to marry the “head” of pilot data with the “heart” of compelling anecdotes, which is an incredibly powerful formula to positively shift narratives. Below we outline best practices in storytelling to guide this process.

## Storytelling Cohort Best Practices

Storytelling is a critical aspect of narrative change. As such, a storytelling cohort is a crucial part of your guaranteed income pilot – data is important, but just as valuable are the lived experiences of recipients. Data without the stories of lived experience can in fact be dangerous as people will rationalize the data off of the harmful narratives that exist in our society. Stories help contextualize and explain the data, and work to humanize Black and brown communities who are dehumanized daily by politicians and policymakers. The most common forms of storytelling include print and television media interviews, first-hand accounts via op-eds, documentaries and participation in webinars/panels/events.

While research takes several months if not years to complete, recipients who are willing to speak to the press give you the opportunity to share anecdotal results of your pilot throughout its course.

Communications leads should work with program administrators to ensure that opting into a storytelling cohort is part of the intake process so that you can identify which recipients are open to connecting with press. From there, you will identify a group to create a storytelling cohort. Some things to keep in mind when narrowing down the selection:

- A diversity of experiences. This includes trying to match your cohort demographically to your treatment and control groups, as well as identifying a range of personal dynamics (two-parent households, single parents, single people, working part-time, working full-time, etc).
- Prioritize recipients who communicate clearly, and weed out recipients who are particularly wordy or difficult to follow.
- Try and select recipients who seem like they are responsive and not overly busy.

**The agency and welfare of recipients should always be the top priority of any pilot storytelling initiative.** It is suggested you follow these best practices when managing your storytelling cohort and press requests:

- Try and only use recipients' first names. In the past, using a full name has led to recipients receiving unwanted messages on social media platforms from the press and general public.
- You should ensure that recipient interviews are staffed by someone from the program. This means setting up zoom calls or conference lines for interviews to make sure no personal information is shared and instructing your recipient pool not to give out their contact info in order to preserve IRB standards on recipient privacy.
- Barriers should be lifted to make taking part in interviews as easy as possible for recipients. Providing childcare and rideshare options for interviews is a good practice to meet the needs of recipients to participate.

## How to Incorporate Narrative Work Without Running a Pilot

Most advocates for a guaranteed income will not end up running a pilot. That doesn't mean that narrative change is not critical for non-pilot governments and entities to incorporate into their work – in fact, it's critical we advance the conversation beyond pilots and toward a comprehensive goal of a federal policy to serve all who need it. Strategies to tie guaranteed income narrative work into broader messaging include:

- Hosting a panel or town hall on how a guaranteed income would advance economic justice in your community and beyond. The topic can stay broad, or dive into specific intersections such as guaranteed income to advance racial equity, or guaranteed income as a tool to help domestic violence victims escape their abusers. Invite leaders in the space nationally and/or engage your local community organizations who work with directly affected communities.
- Organize a brown bag lunch or virtual learning session for organizations and leaders you work with to ask questions about guaranteed income. Due to inaccurate narratives, there is a lot of misinformation on what a guaranteed income is and isn't. By serving as a resource for your community, you can help others see the benefits of advancing dignity through guaranteed income.
- Incorporate guaranteed income as a solution into your existing messaging on the economy. Many of the local governments and nonprofit organizations in this space interact with the press on a regular basis, and speaking regularly about why you see a national guaranteed income as a vehicle for economic, racial and gender justice will help educate the press and public on its merits.

- Write and submit op-eds or letters to the editor. At both the national and local levels, guaranteed income is a topic of great interest to editors. Crafting an op-ed or LTE that shares why you are supportive of a guaranteed income and explaining some of the many benefits shown in different pilots and research projects related to government cash payments during the pandemic is an excellent way to push forward the promise of a guaranteed income while also confronting deep-seated narratives such as the “bostraps” myth discussed previously.

## CONCLUSION

Regardless of a guaranteed income pilot’s target demographic or geographical location, every pilot is engaged in narrative change by virtue of the fact that direct cash policies are a narrative third rail that challenge deeply-held beliefs across the political spectrum. While pilot organizers may all have different end goals, advancing racial and gender justice to combat long-standing structural inequities driven by false narratives should be ideas that we can all agree on.

Many pilots cannot be explicitly focused on a certain gender or race without running the risk of legal challenges because they include public funding, even though many pilot organizers want to show the power of cash to rectify historic and current inequities in our economy. Investing in strategic and thoughtful narrative work allows more generally-focused pilots the ability to be race conscious, putting us on a path of a North Star of race-centered policy that will finally close persistent racial and gender income and wealth gaps and actualize an economy in which everyone has the opportunity to thrive.









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