

# Our Story

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## KEY STORY ELEMENTS

**Now:** Most of us work hard to make a better future for our loved ones. We have a dream for equality, opportunity, and freedom for our families, friends and neighbors. But we are at a crossroads in our history. Long-standing powers are dimming the bright light of potential of our country. A select few get wealthier and more powerful while our futures are threatened. Many of us are unable to make ends meet. Climate chaos is devastating our communities, we are anxious about our futures, stressed about ourselves and those we love having enough to get by, and worried about being able to keep our families together. We're struggling to survive, but still a part of us hopes that if we work at it and keep faith, we can make a brighter tomorrow.

**Problem:** A few political and economic elites are making that difficult by doing what they've always done—choosing to stoke fear and divide us against one another in order to keep power and rig the rules in their favor. Meanwhile our communities suffer, climate change ravages our communities, and life get harder. Things are reaching their breaking point.

**Us:** We are Americans, the people who call this place home. Most of us work hard for the people we love, help people in need, and believe in treating others as we would like to be treated. We are the many. We have different genders, different colored skin, different faiths, and different backgrounds. We got here in many ways at different times, but we are united in believing that we can make tomorrow better than today for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors.

**Them:** The few wealthy, political and economic elites who have chosen to do what they have always done: sow division amongst us by pointing the finger at poor people, black people, and new immigrants in order to rig the rules in their favor and keep power and wealth in their own hands.

**Choice:** We can either let them continue to divide us and concentrate power in their hands or we can come together across our differences and take control of our destiny. It's not only achievable, we've done it before—it's in our history. All we have to do is come together as one, like courageous Americans in the past who fought for civil rights, women's suffrage, and better wages. Together we can break the cycle, take control of our democracy, and make America a place where "liberty and justice for all" is truly for all of us.

### Underlying Assumptions

- This isn't about left vs. right, it's about right vs. wrong, a country for the few vs. a country for all of us.
- We are not all impacted equally or in the same way, but we all live together in this country, and we all do better when this country works for all of us. We must end the systems and cycles of violence that harm people based on our gender, the color of our skin, our faith, how much money we have, how recently we arrived here, or who we love. We must make justice real for everyone and ensure people of all backgrounds are valued the same.

### Imagery

- People of different backgrounds help celebrating alongside each other
- The real working class that is diverse
- Children of different backgrounds learning alongside one another
- People of different backgrounds in nature
- Women leaders

### Tone

- Hopeful, optimistic, and unafraid
- Grounded in history, we know what we are trying to do is possible—history tells us so
- Welcoming and friendly

## VISION

**We are working for a fair, just America where all people have equal value. We envision an America where everyone has the freedom to thrive on a healthy planet, no matter the color of their skin, gender, religion, or whom they love.**

We believe America can be a country where everyone can live with safety and dignity in their communities. Where everyone has a roof over their heads and basic needs met, and we are free and able to pursue and realize our full potential.

We believe America can be a place where we take care of our planet and those in need. Where we treat each other as we would like to be treated. We believe we can live in a compassionate country where we are proud to take care of our neighbors, old friends and newcomers alike.

We want to create an America where we respect one another's beliefs, cultures, and expressions of self. Where we enthusiastically celebrate and grow stronger from the richness of our differences, and connect deeply over our shared humanity.

We believe America can be a place where we have the power to control our own destinies and bodies. An America where we can come together to shape our institutions, workplaces, and government to represent us, reflect us, and listen to every voice.

In short, we believe in the promise of America and believe that together we can lead America to reach its fullest potential: a place where “we the people” means all of us.

## VALUES

**Love** — We are **compassionate, empathetic, and care for our fellow humans and for our planet.** Our futures are bound up with one another. We treat our neighbors and newcomers as we would hope to be treated: with dignity, warmth, and respect.

**Freedom** — We believe **people should have the tools and equal opportunity to live to their fullest potential.** We value community and self-determination, the ability for individuals to express themselves in whatever way feels best, where people can make decisions that they believe are best for their bodies and their futures, and where communities can determine for themselves how they function.

**Inclusivity** — We believe **our diversity is a strength, and all are welcome.** We celebrate differences enthusiastically and believe everyone is valuable, has a perspective worthy of learning from, and has the ability to change for the better. We make space for all voices, especially those closest to the problems: they are often also closest to the solutions. We got here in many ways at different times, but we are united in believing that we can make tomorrow better than today for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors.

**Equality** — We believe **that all people are of equal value.** We recognize that this is not currently, nor has it been historically, accepted in our country or in the world. We strive to actively dismantle the systems, institutions and beliefs in our society and in ourselves that say some people are less human than others. We will build a fair, just world based on truth. A world where no matter the color of our skin, our gender, religion, who we love, or how much money we have, we can live on a safe, healthy planet for generations to come.

**Dignity** — We recognize **the inherent humanity of every person—and believe everyone should be valued, treated with respect, and enjoy a basic quality of life.** We know that injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere, so we show up for one another despite differences to ensure that all people can meet their basic needs and live on a healthy planet, with self-determination.

**Democracy** — We believe **in a country where every person has an equal voice and where people can come together to build and challenge power.** We believe society works best when all people are heard and have the power to shape their communities, workplaces, and governments to work for and be accountable to them.

**Co-Existence** — We know **we share this earth with people around the globe as well as with future generations.** We shape our institutions to represent and fight for us all, and work to create a fair, just world. We treat our world so that the generations to come may inherit an environment where they can enjoy clean water, clean air, and a healthy planet.

## Embrace and Replace Cheat Sheet

Embrace	Replace	Notes
Most of us work hard to make a better future for our loved ones, but times are tough and many of us are unable to make ends meet. We are anxious about our futures, stressed about ourselves, our parents, or our children having enough to get by.	America is already great.	We need to see and name grievances and struggles that people are experiencing, and not gloss over them. This helps people see themselves in the story and trust that we see them in their struggles. Specify this to your particular context where possible.
We're struggling because wealthy political and economic elites choose to sow division and rig the rules for their own gain as they always have done.  We can come together and make this country a place where all can thrive.	We're struggling, but we can come together and make this country a place where all can thrive.	We need to name that there are people responsible for this system, who are shaping the terrain in their favor against most of us. Failure to name and explain a culprit damages credibility with impacted communities who have been living in an unfair system for generations. It also glosses over real forces causing inequality over time.
The political and economic establishment are doing what they've always done—choosing to rig the rules in their favor to take from working people and keep power and wealth in their own hands.	Systemic inequities	"Systemic inequities" assumes a certain level of knowledge about what systems of inequity are and how they operate. Instead, talk about what is happening in the system itself and the people who are shaping the current system.
The political and economic elites are doing what they've always done—choosing to rig the rules in their favor to take from working people and keep power and wealth in their own hands.	Working for everyone, not just for those at the top.	Naming that the system has been rigged matters. It isn't happenstance that the system only works for people at the top, it was built that way intentionally.
The establishment divides us against one another, blaming new immigrants, or the poor, to keep power and wealth in their own hands and enrich their friends.	Stoke division and divide us against one another	Explain the causation, the reason why people are being encouraged to fear others. Exposing the rationale behind the fear-mongering and the powerful few who benefit from that fear helps inoculate people against fear-mongering and divisive messaging, and makes clear the "worthy" and "unworthy" paradigm the elites seed and maintain for their own gain. If there is one thing to be disciplined about in this message, it's this.
We can come together across our differences and take control of our destiny, like courageous leaders in the past who fought for and won civil rights, women's rights, and better wages.	We are going to transform our society.	Unknown, untested transformation makes people nervous. Ground in historical examples from the past to demonstrate that we can create this transformation and we can do it again. This is called foreshadowing and it helps overcome fatalism and pessimism.

<p>We want to build a world where everyone has clean air, fresh water, and can thrive, no matter the color of their skin, gender, religion, or who they love.</p>	<p>We must rid the world of racism, exploitation, and patriarchy.</p>	<p>Talk about the vision of the world we want, not just what we want to get rid of. Explain that the future we are fighting for, that will be better for everyone, is concrete. Talking about getting rid of systems (that most people don't fully understand) is less clear and compelling than the detailed description of what that future looks like and who is welcome there.</p>
<p>Wealthy political and economic establishment who choose to sow division.</p>	<p>Wealthy political and economic establishment</p>	<p>Identifying our "them" by their actions rather than their status pins their faults on their choices rather than who they are as people. This makes them more culpable, because it illustrates their agency in making a different choice. Hate the sin not the sinner.</p>
<p>Come together across race, gender, and class to make a country where everyone can thrive.</p>	<p>Come together to make a country where everyone can thrive.</p>	<p>Explicitly name race and coming together across differences.</p>

### Quick Tips on How to Use This:

- Start with **shared values**
- Acknowledge pain and anxiety everyday people are experiencing
- Make sure to name the **problem**, root it in history
- Explicitly name race and coming together across differences
- Foreshadow that we have done this before
- Describe what the vision of the future we want looks like in detail—paint an image (clean air, everyone free to reach their highest potential)
- Name how this future is better for everyone and everyone is welcome there. Know your messenger and make sure to name and show the diversity of everyone who is included in the vision of tomorrow

## EXAMPLE STORIES FOR DIFFERENT ISSUES

### Climate / Green New Deal

Most of us do our best to make a bright future for the people we love.

But we are at a critical moment in our history. Our planet is warming and climate chaos threatens our homes, communities, jobs, and food supply. Many of us are anxious about our futures and worried environmental changes will make it even harder for our families and our loved ones to get by.

This is all happening because the fossil fuel industry and their allies in the political and economic elite are doing what they've always done—**choosing** to write the rules in their favor to profit off the devastation of our planet to line their pockets while they seed fears of scarcity of resources, new immigrants, and people of different skin colors and backgrounds, as our communities suffer, our planet warms, and things get harder for our families.

We can either let them continue to use fear to divide us or we can come together across our different backgrounds, races, genders and faiths, like courageous leaders in the past who fought for civil rights, to transform our energy system and make America pass bold new policy like the New Green Deal to ensure a sustainable, equitable, prosperous future for ourselves, the people we love, and future generations.

Join together so we can make a future where everyone has clean air, fresh water, and the chance to live to their full potential—no exceptions.

### Immigration

Most of us do our best to make a bright future for the people we love, no matter the color of our skin or our background.

Whether that's working a few extra hours, or relocating in search of greater opportunity, we actively seek a better life for our families, as many of our ancestors have done in the past.

But today, people who are fleeing violence in search of a better life for themselves and their loved one are being caged, dehumanized, and indefinitely detained.

That's because politicians and the economic elites are **choosing** to vilify and scapegoat newcomers to the United States so they can continue to rig the rules in their own favor and rob everyone of dignity.

They stoke division by blaming new immigrants for people's hardships while they continue to rig the economy in their own favor, all the while profiting directly from our broken immigration system. Because of their choices, immigrants are caged on the border and separated from their loved ones forever, while the political and economic elites get richer and more powerful.

We can either let them continue to divide us and steal all of our futures or we can **come together** across our different backgrounds, races, faiths, and genders, like the heroes who fought for civil rights, to build a fair, just country where all people can thrive, no matter the color of their skin, their background, or where they were born—no exceptions.

### *Mass Incarceration*

Most of us do our best to make a better tomorrow for the people we love.

We work hard for them to create a future with more opportunity and joy. But too many of us are living in a world that seems built against us. Our families are struggling, despair is spreading in our communities, our neighborhoods are over-policed and underfunded. We feel forgotten and overlooked. Many of us fear the next time our loved ones walk out the door they won't come back.

That's because a wealthy few in the political and economic establishment have gotten rich by **choosing** to rig the system so that it values some lives over others. They profit off of our pain and divide us by stoking beliefs that some people are less human, less valuable, and less deserving than others, solely based on the color of their skin or how much money they have. They grow wealthier off systems they constructed to exploit black and brown people, while our communities remain shackled and unable to get ahead.

We can either let them continue to dehumanize and divide us or we can **come together** across our different races, genders, faiths, and backgrounds, like the heroes who fought for civil rights and an end to slavery, to assert that all are created equal and demand an end to mass incarceration. We've been here before; history shows us that together we can create a more fair, just country. Together we can create a country where *everyone* has the freedom to thrive on a healthy planet, and America is for all of us.

## Facebook

All of us want to feel connected to the people we care about. Social media is a critical tool that helps us keep in touch with people who matter to us, no matter how far away from each other we are.

But recently social media has been causing more division and isolation in our society than good. It is worsening divisions within our society and world.

That's because the leadership at Facebook and the politicians they pay for **choose** to profit from systems that capitalize off of our data, and design algorithms that reward extremism, stoke division, and endanger our democracy and lives. They choose to profit rather than crack down on the hate speech against women, LGBTI+ people, and black and brown people that endangers our democracy and our lives. As a result, misinformation and fear-mongering spreads, leading to harassment, Islamophobia, and violence offline, and many of us don't feel safe online.

Facebook's influence over our lives and our democracy is only growing, and we all face a choice. We can either allow Facebook to continue to profit from invading our privacy, stoking division, and profiting off of policies that allow for the harassment of women, black people, and religious minorities, or come together across race, gender, and faith, like those who fought for civil rights and net neutrality, to hold Facebook accountable and make online spaces and our world a place where people can connect with one another without fear.

## Medicare

Most of us do our best to make a bright future for our families. No matter where we're from, the color of our skin, our religion or gender, most of us want to take care of the people we love.

But today we are struggling. Many of us are balancing expenses, worried about being able to pay the medical expenses of aging parents or young children, knowing one medical bill may throw our entire future into chaos.

The medical system is rigged against us by Big Pharma and the politicians they pay for who, time and time again, **choose their own profit and power over our lives.**

They choose to divide us by rigging the rules to profit themselves and stoke division by saying that some are more deserving of proper healthcare than others. They promote the idea that people with nice jobs and good incomes are more worthy of care and medicine than low-income people or immigrants; then directly benefit from charging outrageous

amounts for medicine we need to survive—rigging the rules in their favor, enriching themselves, and sending our families into debt.

We can either let them continue to divide us and believe that some people deserve more care than others, or we can **come together** across our different races, genders, faiths, and backgrounds, like the heroes who fought for the weekend and the 8-hour work day, to assert that all are created equal and healthcare is a human right, and to pass Medicare for All. We've been here before and we can do it again. Together we can create a country where everyone has the healthcare they need and the freedom to thrive—no exceptions.

### *Abortion Bans*

Most of us believe everyone should have an equal right to live their life to the fullest potential and shape their own destiny.

But recently legislators around the country have been passing laws that deny people the right to control their own bodies and lives. Women, nonbinary, trans, and gender-nonconforming people are being forced into vulnerable and precarious situations because politicians are taking away access to birth control and healthcare that helps them shape their destinies.

This is because the political and economic elites are choosing to rig the rules of the system, supporting ideology that says women, nonbinary, trans, and gender-nonconforming people should not be able to control their own bodies and that their worth is inherently less than men's, in order to hold on to power for themselves. They choose to make us unequal on the basis of sex and to keep themselves and people like them in power, trapping women, nonbinary, trans, and gender-nonconforming people in easily exploited, undervalued positions without equal access to care they need to shape their futures.

We can either allow them to continue to treat women, nonbinary, trans, and gender-nonconforming people as second-class citizens or we can **come together** across sex, gender and race, like the leaders in the past who fought for civil rights and and to expand reproductive justice, to end the abortion bans and create a country where everyone has the freedom to control their own bodies and futures and can access the medical care they need—no exceptions.

## Islamophobia

Most of us do our best to make a bright future for the people we love, no matter the color of our skin or our what faith is.

But today people are fearful over the safety of their families and loved ones just because of their religious beliefs.

That's because politicians and the economic establishment are **choosing** to vilify and stoke fear about Muslims and other religious minorities in order to rig the rules in their own favor, enrich themselves, and rob everyone of dignity.

They choose to fan the flames of religious intolerance and attack high-profile Muslims like Rep. Ilhan Omar, while they advocate for endless wars in the Middle East which they profit from directly.

We can either let them continue to divide us and rob us of dignity or we can come together across our different faiths and backgrounds, like the heroes who fought for civil rights, to build a fair, just country where all are treated equally and everyone can thrive, no matter their beliefs.