On Culture: How are Americans thinking about the Supreme Court?

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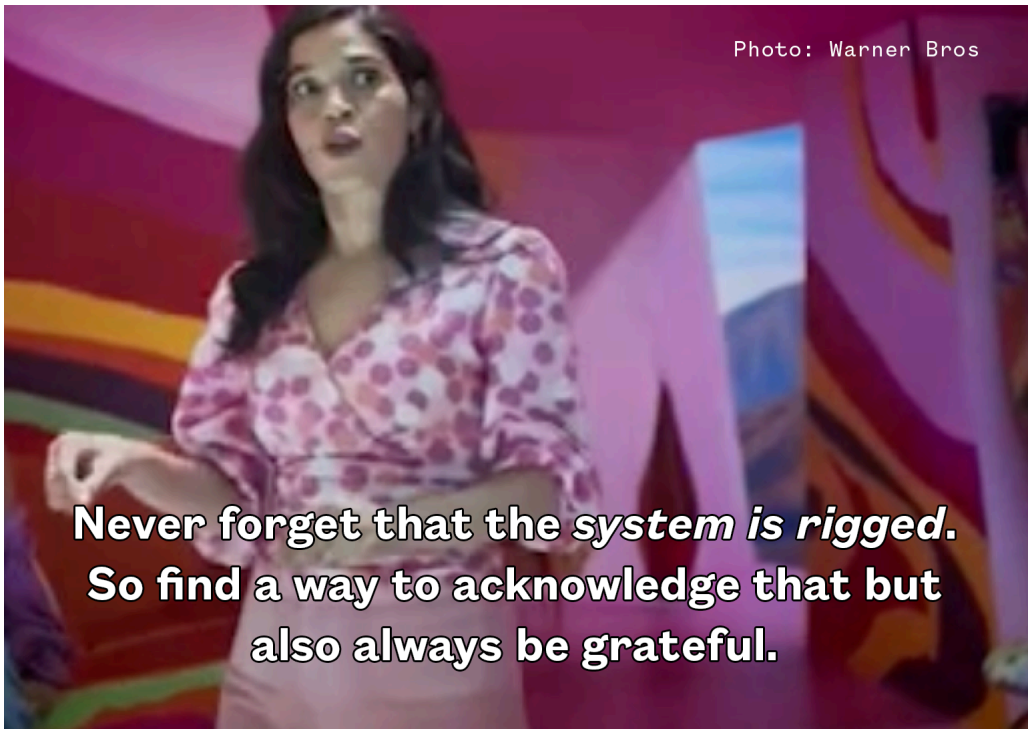
Friends and partners,

Last week I, like many of you (and millions of others), saw Barbie. Also like many others, I was transfixed by America Ferrera's now-famous monologue—particularly her pointed critique of rigged systems. Speaking to a room full of women about the paradoxical expectations we face, she laments: *"Never forget that the system is rigged, so find a way to acknowledge that, but also always be grateful."*



Of course, the idea of rigged systems is not new, nor is it exclusive to discussions of gender or patriarchy. But the interesting thing we've found in our research—and what was so interesting to observe as a Barbie viewer—is just how pervasive this mindset has become. The fact that a character in the biggest Hollywood blockbuster of the year said "the system is rigged" and everyone seemed to automatically get it is pretty remarkable, and would not have been a given ten, or even five years ago.

Traditionally, people have applied a "system-is-rigged" mentality to make sense of economic inequalities and unfairness—i.e., the wealthy and powerful are manipulating how society works to benefit themselves and hurt everyone else. Now, we are seeing people apply this mindset to make sense of a broad range of political and cultural issues—from the patriarchy to the Supreme Court. In Barbie, we see how our social structures are built by men to meet their own needs, to the detriment of everyone else. When it comes to the Supreme Court, our latest research is showing that the thinking is similar: the Justices are seen as wielding their power to serve their own (or their party's) interests rather than the interests of the American people.

It's not hard to see where this mindset comes from, particularly after a year+ of rulings on things like reproductive rights and race-conscious practices that make many of us feel like the deck is stacked against us. In some ways, it's probably a positive development that so many people are thinking critically about our structures and institutions. But are there risks associated with this mindset becoming so widespread? Can we find ways of talking about it that don't trigger a sense of fatalism, or like our problems are too

big to solve, our systems too entrenched to change? Can our discourse about systems like the Court move beyond criticism of the people who currently occupy the bench, and open up the possibility for real democratic reform?

For a deeper exploration of these and other questions about this mindset and the Court, check out our latest article from the Culture Change Project, *Supreme Distrust: How 'System-Is-Rigged' Thinking Implicates the Court*.

READ THE ARTICLE

We are continuing our investigation of the system-is-rigged mindset, and are currently testing out the effects of different ways of talking about it. In the meantime, we hope you'll let us know how *you're* seeing the system-is-rigged mindset play out in the mainstream in this month's poll question below.

Until next time, may the end of your summer be sweet!

In partnership,



Carinne Wheedan, Director of Communications

MORE ON CULTURE CHANGE

VIDEO: Neither Soldiers nor Angels: Reshaping the Narrative about Care Workers

Care work is at the core of how our society functions and how we relate to one another—yet it is often misunderstood. In our recent Instagram Live, we had the opportunity to explore how people are thinking about care work and care workers with Ai-jen Poo (National Domestic Workers Alliance), Ishita Srivastava (Caring Across Generations), and Robert Espinoza (PHI). Topics ranged from the universality of human interdependence, to racist and sexist origins of care worker stereotypes, to the actions we can all take to create a better narrative about care.

WATCH NOW

CHECK OUT THE HIGHLIGHTS

ARTICLE: Tangled Narratives: How "Barbenheimer" Tackles Themes of Individualism, Gender Stereotypes, and Rigged Systems

Through the Culture Change Project, we've been exploring trends and changes in American thinking and culture. This summer's dual blockbusters, Barbie and Oppenheimer, uniquely mirror some key themes we're finding in our research—from takes on gender essentialism, to the dominance of individualistic thinking, to different manifestations of the system-is-rigged mindset. Check out this new article from FrameWorks Senior Communications Strategist, Jay'Len K. Boone, which dives into these trends in greater detail.

READ MORE

POLL

What are some other examples of system-is-rigged thinking you've encountered in pop culture or media?

UP NEXT

UNDERSTANDING DEMOCRACY: We are currently wrapping up research to map the ways in which people are thinking about democracy during this politically tumultuous time. We will share findings from this research in our

next (October) newsletter!

CLAIMING THE SYSTEM-IS-RIGGED NARRATIVE: How can we communicate about our systems being rigged in ways that fuel systemic action and don't activate fatalist or even racist thinking? Later this year, we'll share findings from a set of experimental studies on how to effectively talk about "the system." Stay tuned!



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