FRAME WORKS

On Culture: Communicating about Threats to Democracy

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Friends and partners,

Over the past couple of months we've seen the National Guard and federal agents deployed in Los Angeles and Washington, DC, with talk of more cities to come. This feels personal for many of us, myself included, and I know this precarious moment for our democracy raises urgent communication challenges for many of you.

To support you in this work, we've created a framing guide with nine recommendations for communicating how these actions violate core democratic principles.

SHOW ME THE GUIDE

This guide offers cross-cutting framing recommendations that help make visible how these actions are part of a broader attack on democracy. The guide draws on our foundational research into how people think about democracy, authoritarianism, and the U.S. political system, along with ongoing research into how people are making sense of the moment and how we can communicate about the shifting landscape.

In the guide you will find:

- Research-backed values and principles to emphasize
- Communication *dos* and *don'ts*
- Useful language to work into your messaging, where appropriate

In the "Spotlight on Culture Changers" section below, I've shared just some of the work being done right now to push back against federal overreach. For information on opportunities to get involved in the District, I recommend checking out www.freedcproject.org.

We are with you and we are here to offer support wherever we can.

In solidarity,



Clara Blustein Lindholm

SAVE THE DATE FOR FALL 2025 BRIEFINGS

This fall, we'll be continuing our monthly briefing series on *Navigating Public Thinking about Democracy*. Each month we'll share insights from real-time research on how Americans are—or aren't—thinking about things like democracy, authoritarianism, the rule of law, executive overreach, and more. We'll also share emerging strategies for framing conversations in ways that help counter authoritarian threats and strengthen our democracy. We'd love for you to join us on the dates below—full invitations to come.

- **Wednesday, September 17 from 1–2pm ET**
- **Wednesday, October 22 from 1–2pm ET**
- **Wednesday, November 19 from 1–2pm ET**

SIGN ME UP

NEW FROM FRAMEWORKS

FRAMING GUIDE: TALKING ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE IN A TIME OF MANUFACTURED CONTROVERSY

As the federalization of police in Washington, DC continues to make headlines, young people are being painted as wild, dangerous criminals. To help our partners counter sensationalized, harmful stories about young people and youth justice, we produced a new framing guide: *Talking About Young People in a Time of Manufactured Controversy*. The guide includes an example topline message, along with four strategies for communicating about young people in productive, research-backed ways.

SHOW ME THE GUIDE

NEW VIDEO SERIES: MINDSETS AND MOVEMENTS

In the latest installment of *Fast Frames*, we explore three of the most dominant mindsets in American culture: *Individualism*, *Otherism*, and *Fatalism*. These mindsets block efforts to build demand for more just and inclusive systems. In each episode, we take a look at what the mindset is, how it works, and how we can use our communications to open up more productive and expansive ways of thinking about solving social problems.

WATCH THE SERIES

UP NEXT!

CONNECTING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT TO CLIMATE CHANGE | SEPTEMBER 2025

Climate change is typically framed as a future problem, but it's already reshaping the environments where children live, grow, play, and learn. To help change that, we teamed up with the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University and Harvard Chan C-CHANGE to explore how people think about the link between climate change and child development—and recommend strategies for communicating about this relationship. Next month, we will share two new resources that walk through our findings and recommendations.

FRAMING THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF AI | COMING SOON

Despite the increasing prominence of artificial intelligence in public life and discourse, there remains a lack of understanding about how AI works and what it means for our lives. By examining the implicit assumptions that shape thinking about AI, we will identify and share strategies for deepening understanding of AI technologies, the social implications of their use, and how they can be used on behalf of the public interest.

SPOTLIGHT ON CULTURE CHANGERS

SIX IDEAS FOR TALKING ABOUT HOUSING NOT HANDCUFFS | HOUSING NOT HANDCUFFS

This messaging guide offers six strategies for communicating about homelessness—not as a criminal issue, but as a collective responsibility. It emphasizes ideas like *community*, *systems*, and *solutions*, and offers tactics for building your message using a clear Value → Problem → Solution → Action framework.

BIG TENTS AND COLLECTIVE ACTION CAN DEFEAT AUTHORITARIANISM | JUST SECURITY

In this article, Maria J. Stephan, Co-Lead and Chief Organizer for The Horizons Project, outlines research that shows that the strongest bulwarks against authoritarianism are broad-based democratic fronts that bring people together across race, class, creed, sector, and geography to engage in sustained nonviolent mass action. This "big tent" organizing drastically increases the odds of averting democratic backsliding compared to relying on institutional channels—things like elections and

litigation—alone.

FRAMEWORKS Culture Change Project

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