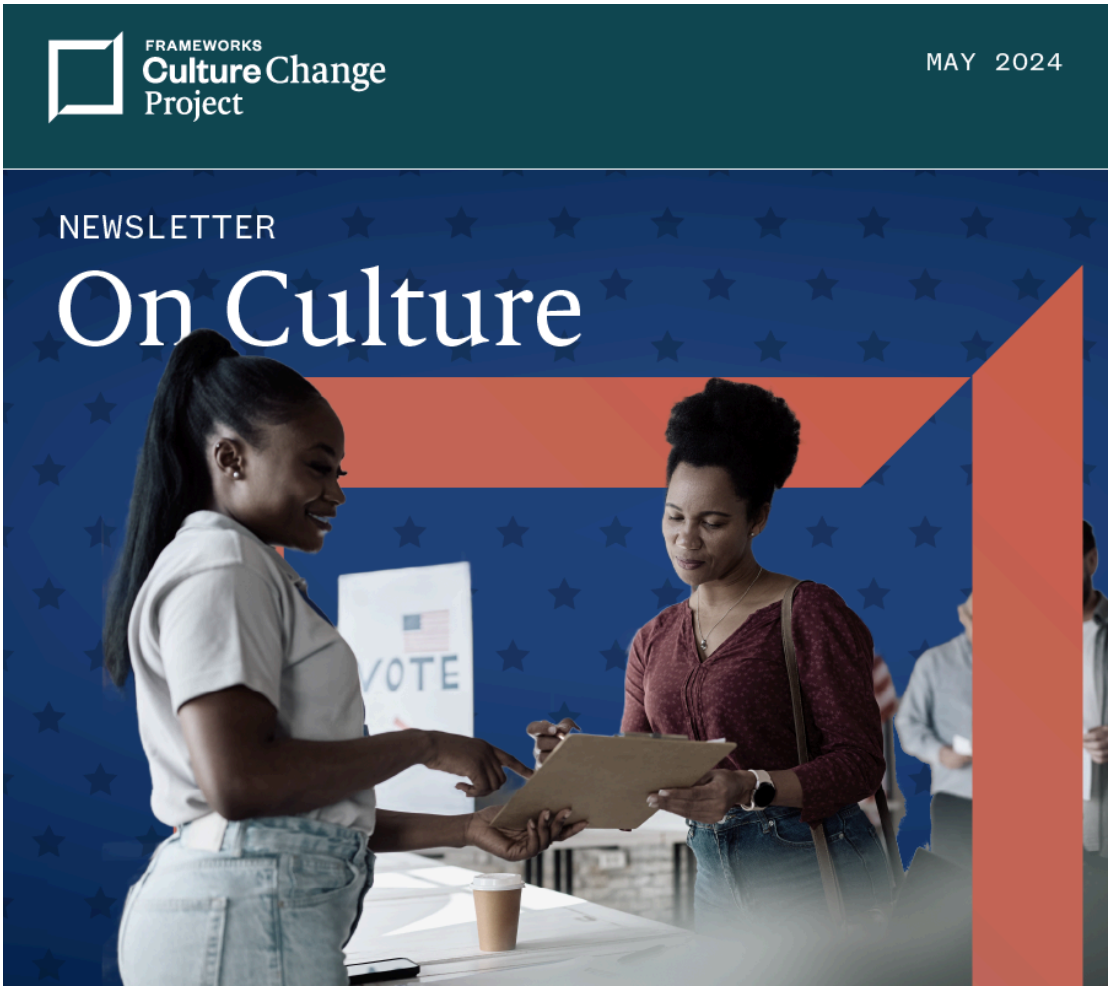
On Culture: Framing through Election Season

Thu, May 30, 2024 at 9:05 AM



Friends and partners,

In last month's *On Culture* newsletter we asked you to share your top-of-mind questions about framing the issues you work on during an election season—a time when keeping the focus on *social issues* gets tough amidst all the talk about candidates and party politics.

We received dozens of questions from folks around the country, many of which we'll be answering in a video Q&A this summer—stay tuned! In the meantime, my colleagues Carinne Wheedan (Director of Communications) and Nat Kendall-Taylor (CEO) authored a guest blog for the Communications Network with three tips for

communicating about social issues during an election season.

TAKE ME TO THE ARTICLE

In short—the task at hand for many advocates and communicators is to keep our issues front and center while avoiding the temptation to chase and respond to what individual politicians or candidates are saying.

Here are three tips to help you do that:

1. Don't fall into the political trap of framing everything as a crisis. Emphasize solutions.

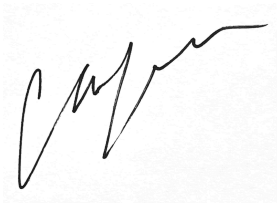
2. Highlight the role that *systems* play in causing and addressing social issues. Americans' thinking tends to be highly individualistic, and political rhetoric only reinforces this. Keep focused on the context of injustice and how systems can/need to change.

3. Frame together. So many of us are trying to move in the direction of justice. If we want to get there, we need these solutions-oriented, systemically-framed messages to be on surround sound—and on repeat.

This summer, we'll be sharing a series of short videos with more specific answers to the most frequently-asked questions we received—from how to talk about democracy in a way that people can connect with, to how to remain hopeful amidst heightened tension and fear. (Make sure you're subscribed to our YouTube channel to be the first to see the videos!)

Of course, elections *are* important, and who wins them matters. *And* we know that the narrative, cultural, policy, and practice shifts we are working toward transcend four-year cycles and electoral politics. The task at hand now is to coordinate our short-term *and* long-term framing strategies to continually move our conversations forward.

In partnership,



Clara Blustein Lindholm
Director of Research Interpretation, Culture Change Project

POLL

We are updating the way we share resources on social media and we need your input.

Where do you get most of your information about framing and/or culture change?

(Select all that apply)

- Email
- LinkedIn
- X (formerly Twitter)
- Instagram
- YouTube
- TikTok
- Mastadon
- Other

UP NEXT!

A NEW NARRATIVE FOR TALKING ABOUT KIDS: COMING NEXT WEEK!
We often hear that children are our future; that "it takes a village;" that investing in children is a moral and economic imperative. And yet, we hesitate to make significant investments in our nation's kids and families and rarely prioritize their health and wellbeing. In June, we'll be sharing a new research-based framing strategy—in partnership with Leading for Kids—that builds broad support for systemic solutions to advance the wellbeing of our nation's children and families.

TALKING ABOUT RIGGED SYSTEMS: PREVIEW COMING NEXT MONTH!
Many of us working on social justice and mission-driven causes want better systems than the ones we have now. But to get there, we'll need to communicate about our systems in ways that avoid provoking a sense of fatalism—that our problems are too big to solve. Our team has been testing framing strategies to channel the dominant "system-is-rigged" mindset in ways that facilitate productive critiques of power, generate support for policies that address inequity—and *don't* cue xenophobic or racist ways of thinking. In next month's newsletter we'll share a preview of these findings, and our full research report will be released later this year.

NEW FROM FRAMEWORKS

WORKSHIFT | RESOURCES FOR REFRAMING WORK AND LABOR:
Amidst a rise in remote work, widespread labor strikes, and an influx in policies designed to create jobs and address inflation, there's a lot happening in our public discourse about work. Last month, we launched the **WorkShift** project, including the first set of findings from a multi-year study on how Americans are thinking about work and labor. At the link above you can also find two new resources specifically focused on how Americans think about care work and care workers—and how that thinking has been changing post-pandemic.

EXPLORE THE RESOURCES

NEWSWEEK ARTICLE: WHY THE PARENTS' RIGHTS MOVEMENT (STILL) MATTERS: In this new article, FrameWorks Senior Vice President of Research Interpretation, Moira O'Neil, and FrameWorks CEO, Nat Kendall-Taylor, explain the continued relevance of the parents' rights movement despite its diminished presence in the news, and the harmful effects it's still having in our discourse and our lives. In the piece, Moira and Nat explore the rhetoric fueling the movement and outline ways we can have more productive conversations about the role of systems and policies in improving childrens' lives. Specifically, they note, it helps to be specific when we talk about the role of policies (as opposed to "government" in general), while still emphasizing the important role of parents and caregivers as experts and change-agents. Take a look at the article to learn more.

TAKE ME TO THE ARTICLE

SPOTLIGHT ON CULTURE CHANGERS

NEW WORKING PAPER | NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON THE DEVELOPING CHILD: This new working paper calls for a shift in the ways we design and evaluate early childhood policies and programs. By explaining the differences in the ways that children benefit from these programs and the needs that vary depending on experiences, environments, and contexts, the paper identifies opportunities for moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach to early childhood programs and creating greater cultural impact.

RESEARCH AGENDA: YOUTH REPRODUCTIVE EQUITY: Our friends at Youth Reproductive Equity recently released a report on the effects of abortion policy on minors, in the aftermath of the Dobbs v. Jackson decision. While it focuses specifically on the ways that young people have been disproportionately impacted by abortion restrictions, it also includes recommendations for supporting evidence-based policies on sexual and reproductive health for adolescents of all ages, their families, and their communities.



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