

MINI-TOOLKIT: NEUTRALIZING DIVISIVE ECONOMIC MESSAGING

INTRODUCTION

Progressives often face specious attacks on their economic proposals that seek to pit everyday people against one another on the basis of identity, culture, and class. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying recession, we're facing more of these attacks — and the need for rebuttals is as urgent as ever. Those in power use division as a tactic to divide us and maintain the status quo that benefits the wealthy, powerful and well-connected.

Below are some familiar arguments, along with suggested rebuttals that are short enough to post directly to Twitter, plus resources for further reading.

Note: Progressives should be careful not to repeat any of the following well-worn conservative messages – skip right to “our response” when engaging the public, media, or conservatives.

MESSAGING

<p>THEIR MESSAGE: Immigrants caused the COVID-19 crisis and destabilized our economy – the response and recovery shouldn't include them, and we should make sure we help Americans first.</p>	<p>OUR RESPONSE: We're all in this together. This crisis is showing clearer than ever that <u>immigrants are integral to the U.S. economy</u> and none of us can afford to exclude them from the public health or economic response.</p>
<p>THEIR MESSAGE: Policies aimed at structural economic change are unpopular, especially with rural/suburban/white/middle-class/moderate/conservative/southern/midwestern people.</p>	<p>OUR RESPONSE: Most people believe the economy is <u>rigged</u> to favor the rich and powerful, and <u>support policies</u> to unrig the rules and help everyday people. Combatting the public health crisis and investing in everyday people to fix our broken economy is popular across the political spectrum.</p>
<p>THEIR MESSAGE: COVID-19 will be “a great equalizer” in our economy and society – the illness knows no color, creed, or status, so its economic effects won't either.</p>	<p>OUR RESPONSE: Black, brown, and poor folks are suffering disproportionately from the health and economic crises sparked by COVID-19. Bad policy created the structural inequality causing this suffering -- and only equitable policy can stop it.</p>
<p>THEIR MESSAGE: Cultural and biological pathologies are responsible for the disproportionately negative effects COVID-19 and the current recession are having on Black communities – and policy can't change either one.</p>	<p>OUR RESPONSE: Racist policy choices are to blame for the outsized effects of COVID-19 and the recession on Black communities. The government (NOT corporations or celebrities) has the power to close health disparities and get our economy working for all.</p>

THEIR MESSAGE: Government is too inefficient to swiftly and effectively respond to crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and the recession – we should encourage the private sector and private philanthropists to step up instead.

OUR MESSAGE: Our current, underfunded and conservative-controlled government does work well – for wealthy, white, and powerful people. But a well-funded, well-run government is perfectly capable of responding efficiently and equitably to crises like the one we're facing.

THEIR MESSAGE: Progressives are too focused on identity-based economic proposals to address COVID-19 and the current recession – helping certain people over others is divisive and inefficient.

OUR RESPONSE: Our economy would have been more resilient against the shock of COVID-19 if we had done more to include people who have been left out and left behind. The response must prioritize those who need the most help -- better outcomes at the bottom will truly lift all boats.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Why Philanthropy Is Bad for Democracy](#) (New York Magazine)

[Immigration reform is pro-growth and pro-equity](#) (Washington Center for Equitable Growth)

[Want to Expand the Economy? Tax the Rich!](#) (The American Prospect)

[Why raising taxes on the rich isn't so crazy](#) (MarketWatch)

[We need a race-conscious populist economic agenda](#) (Demos)

[Toward Sustainable, Equitable Trade Policy—Not False Solutions](#) (Roosevelt Institute)

[The True Cost of Low Prices is Exploited Workers](#) (Economic Policy Institute)

[The Future of the Party](#) (Data for Progress)

[Black Americans in the Mosaic](#) (Groundwork Collaborative)