Improving Policy Narratives for Young Black Workers

1. Use the current economic downturn and the historic economic recovery to humanize the problem.

Example: “Young Black workers have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. They are more likely to be unemployed and underemployed, and they are experiencing a loss of income and job security.”

2. Show how others like us are affected.

Example: “Young Black workers are not alone in their struggles. Many other communities of color are also facing economic hardship.”

3. Acknowledge the ways racism is embedded — both historically and currently — in American discourse.

Example: “We need to acknowledge the ways that racism has shaped our economic system. Past discrimination and systemic inequalities have created barriers for young Black workers.”

4. Tell the story of how our economic systems came about as a result of racism, and a history of exclusion, discrimination, and exploitation.

Example: “Capitalism is fueled by a myth of scarcity — a story that there are not enough resources to go around. This belief is rooted in the theft of resources from Black communities.”

5. Reiterate the interconnectedness of racial and economic justice.

Example: “To build economic power for young Black people, we have to tackle both. Explicitly connect racial and economic justice.”

6. Humanize widespread social problems by putting faces, names, and stories to them. Statistics are useful for demonstrating the prevalence of a problem, but stories are what trigger empathy.

Example: “When announcing new data or new statistics about young Black workers, tell the story of their experience, the scope of their ambitions, and the richness of their relationships to destigmatize.”

7. Be specific about the actions villains who hurt everyday people and our economic well-being.

Example: “Define villains or economic bad actors who have led to the current conditions faced by young Black workers.”

8. Contextualize the problems facing young Black workers.

Example: “Capitalism is not just about profit, harming us all. Acknowledge the ways racism is embedded — both historically and currently — in American discourse.”

9. Look for ways to make space for young Black people to speak.

Example: “Look for ways to make space for young Black people to speak. When referring to young Black people (as well poor people and working families), talk about all everyone in order to boost broad support.”

10. Trace the history of systemic injustice and connect individual stories to systemic injustice rather than blaming individuals.

Example: “Our economic system is built on a foundation of systemic racism. Even young Black workers who mastered the rules of the game are still cheated out of the American Dream.”

11. Include the voices of those closest to the problem.

Example: “Include the voices of those closest to the problem. When announcing new data or new statistics about young Black workers, tell the story of their experience, the scope of their ambitions, and the richness of their relationships to destigmatize.”

12. Tell stories that promote system level change, rather than individual-level change.

Example: “Tell stories that promote system level change, rather than individual-level change. Humanize widespread social problems by putting faces, names, and stories to them. Statistics are useful for demonstrating the prevalence of a problem, but stories are what trigger empathy.”

13. Focus on asset-based framing.

Example: “Focus on asset-based framing. By young Black workers.”

RESOURCES

1. 

Example: “Resources and guidance developed by: The Opportunity Agenda.”

2. 

Example: “Radical Communicators Network.”

3. 

Example: “The Insight Center.”

4. 

Example: “Color of Change.”

5. 

Example: “The Opportunity Agenda.”

6. 

Example: “Black Workers in NYC at Why Black Workers.”