



STAND TOGETHER:

Messaging to Support Muslims and Refugees in Challenging Times

WELCOMING AMERICA



BUILDING A NATION OF NEIGHBORS



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INTRODUCTION

In your day-to-day work, you help people see that welcoming our neighbors—including immigrants, refugees, and other new Americans—represents America at our best. You do this work on behalf of and with people from every corner of the planet, of every faith and spiritual tradition. We know this is a fundamental part of who you are, and we are so proud to be working side by side with you.

Working to create welcoming communities for immigrants and refugees is always challenging, but the past year has been challenging on so many fronts for families seeking better lives in the United States. From divisive political rhetoric to a growing wave of hate crimes, the climate has in many ways grown more hostile for new Americans and Muslims—even people of faith who have been here for generations—in particular.

There is no sugarcoating the fact that these are tough times, and that it is easy to feel defeated by the pushback that seems to sneak in just as you think you are making progress. In fact, our work must start at the root of the pushback and challenge the various assumptions people make. With so many of our most cherished efforts being called into question and so much hateful speech and action being aimed at immigrants, refugees, and people of faith, it can be easy for many of us to feel discouraged.

All of us might wish at times that we lived in a more tranquil world, but we don't. And if our times are difficult and perplexing, so are they challenging and filled with opportunity.

— Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.





This guide was created for advocates, service providers, and supporters like yourself as a tool to address this backlash toward refugees and Muslim Americans, and to help you proactively engage with community leaders and neighbors. Through the messages, sample conversations, story ideas, and worksheets in this toolkit, we will help you develop straightforward yet persuasive language to use in the spoken or written communications you use in your work to support the needs of your whole community, including immigrants, refugees, and Muslim Americans. In places where leaders are actively trying to limit the movement, freedom, and faith practices of your neighbors, these messages can be helpful in pushing back on negative stereotypes and reaffirming your shared values as a community.

These messages were inspired by the latest insights and findings from research done by ReThink Media and recent public opinion polling data from Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) & The Brookings Institution. For more on the materials and links to some of the original data, please see the Appendix.

You will also see some language that may feel familiar, as we have also drawn from our own *America Needs All of Us*, *Reframing Refugees* and *Stronger Together* toolkits for some effective messages.

As we dig into the issue, it's useful to understand a few things about the context of this backlash and how to approach those who may be unsure.

Unfamiliarity Breeds Contempt

Years of research and practice has shown us that while demographic changes continue across the U.S., many Americans don't know who their new neighbors are and why they are here. And without genuine personal interactions, it's too easy for assumptions and misunderstanding to take hold.

One thing is clear from recent message testing and polling: Americans as a whole are generally unfamiliar with Islam and Muslims. This means that instead of having an authentic and shared experience of someone, their impressions of a person or group of people are based on images and sentiments they see in the media. It's also possible they know families who are Muslim, but don't realize it because they have been taught to expect Muslims to look and act in certain ways that aren't necessarily true.

This is especially important, because in many Americans' minds right now, the words "refugee" and "Muslim" are deeply linked. From our day-to-day work we know that refugees come from every religion and background, and at the same time, there are many Muslim families in America for generations. However, to many Americans, this is new information. Part of your work will be to listen deeply and look at the messaging work in front of us as a chance to educate those in your community about a subject that they may know very little about.

There is also a very good chance that even someone who is well meaning and generally welcomes new Americans, but lacks exposure and experience with Muslim Americans, may lean toward seeing them as "other" rather than valued community members. Difficult as this can be to navigate, this is a chance to give people the opportunity to do better.

In America, our individual identities are complex and multilayered. And that is great! The more we can model this through stories that build connections, the more that people can begin to develop a new and deeper relationship to people from which they may otherwise feel disconnected.





It certainly may feel that the small but vocal set of voices promoting explicit anti-refugee, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim attitudes have dominated the public conversation. Yet every day we see a quite different picture—one of millions of Americans in local communities who are working to create more inclusive communities for all. In order for us to engage our communities in a new conversation, it is important to keep in mind that the goal of these anti-welcoming efforts is to provoke fear and engage people who may have less extreme views but are unsure about demographic change in their communities. It is also very important to make sure that those hearing the anti-refugee voices also hear messages of compassion, hope, and promise from us. The more authentic we are and the more compassionate we are—even toward those who question this work—the more likely we will be to help people who may be unsure grow and become part of their new communities.

So what do we do with so much fear, especially when fear can be a natural response to uncertainty?

Don't Throw Facts at Fear!

There is no question that fear is driving the frame through which many people in America experience refugees, immigrants, and Muslim Americans. We need to recognize that this fear is real, and perhaps, given graphic and sometimes exploitive media coverage, to some extent, understandable. But the stereotyping and scapegoating of certain groups of people is neither logical nor making us safer. We need to help people move past their fear and back to their values. But how?

Enter brain science.

Those of us who want to make change in the world often point to statistics to drive our work. When talking about newcomers and refugees—people who are too often excluded from the picture—we may feel the need to legitimize our ideas with facts. But facts alone rarely change how people think and feel.

In reality, neuroscientists and psychologists have found just the opposite. A wealth of research about what is often called “confirmation bias” proves again and again that we tend to process facts differently—we believe and remember them selectively—based on our previously held understanding of a subject, especially topics that are emotionally or politically charged. This means presenting facts to people who don't already agree with you will not change

what they think. It can even backfire, pushing them into a position of deeper opposition. This is not to say facts don't matter, but rather to underscore facts only matter if they are the right facts in the right context. People have to be ready to hear your information and be primed to believe it in order to actually process it so the information sticks. And the way to prep fertile ground is through stories.

And this is neither culturally determined nor recent. As far as researchers can tell, our human brains are hardwired for stories and have been for millennia. Stories are the key building block for how we process, remember, and share information.

Also remember that just like how hate begets hate, the same is true with fear. So, it's no surprise that research from Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) & The Brookings Institution found that a majority of people who expressed fear about perceived foreigners also expressed fear of losing their job, or that a family member will be the target of terrorism or a violent crime. Acknowledging the depth and breadth of the fear is the first step toward morphing it in a way that brings us together and moves welcoming work forward.

Now is the time for us to take the long-range view. The messages and sample conversations in this guide are meant to quickly and effectively deliver strong messages that will lead your audience to renew their commitment to creating welcoming communities—or perhaps join for the first time.

Remember, proactive and strategic messaging can and does work! We wouldn't have gotten as far as we have without clear, targeted messaging, delivered through authentic stories that we use consistently to elevate our work.

We also recommend you read this, while at the same time looking for ways to engage in activities that promote refugee and Muslim-inclusive communities.

We also suggest you share your successes on social media and elsewhere, because good news builds confidence and momentum for your allies and partners. Let's get started.



Neighbors Together: Promising Practices to Strengthen Relations with Refugees and Muslims

The stories in this toolkit illustrate how multi-ethnic and socioeconomically diverse communities are welcoming Muslims and refugees, and in turn how Muslims and refugees are active civic participants and working alongside their neighbors to build stronger, more resilient, and welcoming communities. We hope the toolkit will inspire community leaders to adapt these promising practices to prevent and address anti-refugee and anti-Muslim sentiments locally.



MESSAGE TOOLKIT ELEMENTS



Audiences

This toolkit is organized in a strategic order to help you develop your messages with the right concepts and background behind you. It builds on our shared values with tested messages that can help you break through the noise we are surrounded by.



Winning Messages

We begin by looking at your **Audiences** together with **Winning Messages**, inspired by tested language and insight from recent polling.



The Power of Stories

Next, we will discuss **The Power of Stories** and share tools to create stories from your own work that reinforce the new themes and tested messaging.



Tough Questions

Last, we know that these are tough times that often call for difficult discussions. We will help you address the **Tough Questions** and be prepared to handle even the most challenging conversations that might come your way.

ABOUT MESSAGING

We know that these are challenging times for those working to make life better for immigrants and refugees—especially from the Muslim faith—in the United States. This toolkit is meant to guide you in terms of what to say to keep the welcoming work moving forward. Let's take a moment to become grounded in best practices.

As you incorporate the ideas from this toolkit and further develop stories and messages, remember the key principles of meaningful messages:

- **Perception > reality.** A person's opinion isn't based on reality—it's based on their perception of reality. Listen to and understand your audiences' perceived reality, then craft your messages to resonate with it, and use these new messages to reshape perception.
- **Emotion > logic.** Logic supports our emotions and is used to justify our decisions, but research indicates we usually apply logic only after we've made our emotional decisions. Logic plays a part in decision-making, but emotion is always the main ingredient. Emotions will get people passionate about your cause. Appeal to your audience's emotions first and you'll win them over.
- **Brevity > precision.** In a world where we've grown increasingly accustomed to sound bites and 140-character tweets, you won't have enough attention time to convey a lot of information. Use the few moments of attention people give you to convey what is essential about the work you're doing.
- **Values > features.** Above everything else, your work is founded on values. Don't talk up organizations or programs that may not matter to your entire audience; talk about the core values that animate your work—values that your audiences share.
- **Vibrant language > jargon.** Whenever possible, use clear and concise (and emotional!) language to make sure your audience can understand and connect with your message.
- **Actions > magic words.** Smart messaging expresses action; messaging isn't magic and it can't paper over strategy or execution that's missing in action. People can tell if your actions don't line up with your words. It's not enough to talk about welcoming and inclusion, you need to practice it.
- **Your audience > you.** Chances are, you (and your staff and board) are not the audience you need to influence. You and your community members are immersed in the work and already bought in. Your messaging is crafted to help you reach people who are not yet engaged. It needs to resonate with their perspective and answer for them, "So what?"





AUDIENCES

Being clear about who's listening is the first step in knowing what to say. They are the people you are ultimately trying to move, and understanding where they come from will help in knowing what to say to them. This is essential in good messaging.

It's also helpful to remember that at the core, this process is about education and dialogue building, which may be hard if you aren't starting at the same place as your audience. But the more you can connect with them in a personal way, the further you will go in helping them understand the story.

For the purposes of this toolkit, we have focused framing the discussion to reach those whose opinion researchers often call the “moveable middle,” or what Welcoming America often refers to as the “unsure.” In your day-to-day work, they are the civic leaders and community members who could be engaged as supporters, even if they are not already supportive. Maybe they have supported immigrant issues but have commingled “refugees” and “Muslims” in their minds and have stepped back because of constituent pressure after a terrorist attack. Or maybe they are a local elected official who has expressed interest in the past but is now responding to fearful calls from constituents. In the end, these people still share enough common values and beliefs, and now, more than ever, is the time to invite them to be—or remind them they already are—an ally in helping people achieve the American Dream.

Understanding the backdrop against which the messages will be heard will help move dialogue in a direction toward greater compassion for refugees and people of all faiths in America. Your audience may include, but is not limited to:

- Faith leaders of ALL faiths and their congregations
- State and local elected and unelected officials
- Civic leaders
- Community leaders, educators, and service providers

Your work now is to move into the next phase of how to make communities more welcoming. And guess what? You have a strong foundation from which to start. Keep that in mind as we move forward.



AUDIENCE DOSSIER

Okay, now it's your turn. Think about the people in your community who are your natural allies, or who are tired of the rhetoric of fear and want to build stronger communities. Do they fit into one (or more) of the categories listed on page 8? Or are they part of another category? Use this audience dossier to get to know your audience better and to think through how he or she may best hear your messages:

Fill In the Blanks

Describe their demographics (age, race, socioeconomic background).

Describe their day-to-day lives.

What do they care most about—and which of these are values that you have in common?

What's stopping them from supporting your work?

Whom do they trust? (These individuals or groups could carry your messages to them.)

Where do they get their information? Consider earned media (e.g., an op-ed by a business leader in the local business journal), paid media, or direct outreach (e.g., presentation to city council or Chamber of Commerce) to connect through these channels.

Keep your answers for each audience in mind as you tailor your conversations with them.



WINNING MESSAGES

The following messages are meant to guide your conversations and strongly affirm that the work to build thriving communities where everyone contributes is here to stay:

1 NOW IS THE TIME TO COMMIT DEEPER TO WELCOMING

Our nation's founding principles, including freedom of religion, are as important today as they have ever been.

Right now, we have the opportunity to reaffirm these values by being more, not less, welcoming to people no matter where they come from or how they choose to worship.

This means we are committed to listening to our neighbors and building community with everyone who lives here.

We know it's not what you look like or where you were born that makes you American—it's how you live your life and what you do that defines you here in this country.

It is everyone's responsibility—the media, society, and politicians, and regular people like us—to make sure our democracy reflects our value of welcoming people of all origins, backgrounds, and faiths.

Despite the very real challenges we face, we have seen much progress, and we embrace what's next in the work to build inclusive, thriving communities.

Use these message themes to frame and introduce your stories, add to your materials, and as fodder for social media posts.

2

PEOPLE OF ALL FAITHS STAND TOGETHER

And we are not alone—far from it! People from all faiths are committed to approaching their neighbors with an open heart and mind.

Because America welcomes all religions. We know that most modern religions started elsewhere, but they all belong here now.

We cannot let fear diminish the core beliefs that have guided our country for centuries.

No community should fear that how they worship or dress might target them for physical attack.

We commit to come together to solve problems, not make each other the problem.

We are incredibly proud that our Constitution protects religious freedom for everyone.

Use these message themes to frame and introduce your stories, add to your materials, and as fodder for social media posts.

3

UNITED IN COMPASSION FOR ALL

Many of us are Americans because our parents, grandparents, or great grandparents were refugees who sought to escape poverty and violence elsewhere. The United States opened its doors, and we should carry on this proud history.

We want people to know that our community is always willing to extend a hand in friendship to those who want to be a part of it.

We know the power of coming together and we have proof that it makes a real difference in our communities.

So many types of people contribute to our country. From serving in the military to opening small businesses, people of all faiths, including Muslim Americans, have made our democracy stronger since our founding.

By recognizing the contributions that we all make, we make our neighbors feel more included and our community more welcoming to everyone who calls our community home.

We must protect people who experience hate crimes based on their religion, how they dress or how they look.

Whether we were born here or not, or whether we speak English fluently or are just learning it, we all want the same thing—the freedom to speak, to pray, and to raise our children with hope. That’s what binds us as a community and defines our democracy.

We all carry around unconscious beliefs about people we don’t know based on what we see on television and hear in the media. We commit to doing our best to see each person in front of us for their own unique strengths and individual qualities.

We commit to finding common ground to build from and even if we disagree, we will simply not be divided.

Use these message themes to frame and introduce your stories, add to your materials, and as fodder for social media posts.

CHOOSE WORDS CAREFULLY

We want you to become comfortable with and make these messages your own, while at the same time taking into account best practices in communications. Be deliberate and thoughtful with your word choice, and keep the following in mind:

LEAD WITH FAITH

The overwhelming majority of Americans respond positively to the idea that faith and religious freedom are core American values and must be protected, for everyone. Building on the connection between the faith community and support for refugees, the Christian nonprofit International Association for Refugees put together “The Refugee Highway” map and video to visually tell the story of the more than 65 million refugees who were forcibly removed from their homes at the beginning of 2016. They knew that when discussing faith and refugees—particularly refugees from Muslim dominant countries—pastors and ministers could be trusted messengers, which means the audience would be better primed to hear the welcoming message. The visual tools they created, like the video and map, also mean that they don’t have to rely on words alone to communicate their stories, which means a greater chance for impact.

Also, as you integrate these messages into your work, remember that certain “buzzwords” can elicit preconceived notions in listeners. Generally, invoking faith works better when dealing with people who may be unsure, even more than invoking other values like diversity, tolerance, inclusivity, and understanding. If someone is unsure, lean into faith, and the rich American history of protecting religious freedom for everyone.

... AND FOCUS ON WELCOMING

A lot of the backlash right now focuses on stoking fears about security and safety. In such an environment, it is easy to automatically link refugees with security issues and Islamophobia. But if that isn’t already the topic at hand, don’t make it so.

If the subject of safety and security comes up, address it by actively listening and pivoting toward stories that tell the story of what happens when neighbors meet neighbors, and when communities open their hearts to everyone who lives there. Use the messaging narrative in this toolkit to proactively frame your conversations toward welcoming. If perceived safety concerns continue to dominate the conversation, remind people that, unfortunately, people of all backgrounds are capable of committing terrible atrocities for a wide variety of motivations, and that discrimination is not what we stand for as a people. It is not the American way, nor does it make us safer, to scapegoat certain types of people because they are similar to people who have done bad things in the past.





THE POWER OF STORIES

Stories play directly into the strengths of your organization and help people become more engaged. The story themes below flow directly from the messages on the previous page and provide solid direction for how to start integrating your own stories more deeply into your work.

This section was adapted from the *Reframing Refugees* toolkit and provides excellent background in how to craft stories to carry your messages. When you have time, we suggest taking a look at page 12 of the *Reframing Refugees* toolkit for further ideas and inspiration.

STORY THEMES

The following story themes will fall into each of the three frames outlined in the previous section. Look for stories that show:

- People working side by side to reach a common goal
- Families from different backgrounds coming together to nurture children
- An adult teaching a child about Islam, or telling a story about a refugee
- Muslim American communities coming together to support other communities
- People who challenge our assumptions of what it means to be of certain background
- Welcoming community evolving over time
- People of different faiths coming together for a common cause, esp. for people of different backgrounds
- People coming together through adversity
- Specific examples from your own history of refugee family members, even if distant



STORY COLLECTION

You know you want to tell stories, but how? The findings from ReThink Media reinforced the idea that stories about people using specific examples tested better than those in the abstract. So rather than saying “Muslims experience hate crimes,” get specific about what happens to people. For example, a recent tweet from the Council on Arab American Relations that referenced specific hate crimes received five times more traction than a similar post more general in nature. Being specific helps your audience place themselves in the story, which is the first step towards greater connection.

So what elements of the story should you gather? Here are some questions to ask your clients, constituents, and community members:

- > Who is this story about? Who are the main characters? What is their contact information?
- > If this is a story about a refugee family, what were the circumstances that brought them to your community?
- > If the story is about a Muslim family that has been here for generations, what are some of the successes they have brought to their community?
- > What has this person or group done to improve or change your community? What problem are they trying to solve?
- > How is your community better as a result of this activity?
- > What would this person’s or group’s neighbors, employers, teachers, etc. say about them [get real quotes if possible]?
- > What is the situation today? Is the problem solved? Do they need help or action to get to the next step?
- > What can we all learn from this situation? What opportunities do we have to be like this person?
- > Are there people from different backgrounds, faiths, or origins working together? Who are they?

You can organize these inputs into a database using a spreadsheet or other format. Here are three examples, each focusing on one of the messaging themes discussed earlier:

EXAMPLE 1

Source: Tri-Faith Initiative in Omaha, Nebraska
Theme: People of All Faiths Stand Together
Hero/es: Tri-Faith Initiative
Upshot: *On a small plot of land on the edge of Omaha, Christians, Muslims, and Jews have come together to build a mosque, synagogue, church, and community center. They did this with the purposeful intention of working together.*

- Telling Details:**
- What motivated them to build this?
 - Who inspired the work?
 - Where else has this been done?
 - What ideas do they share for others to try this?
 - What does the land look like?
 - How will it be used?

EXAMPLE 2

Source: Idaho Office for Refugees
Theme: United in Compassion for All
Hero/es: Global Gardens in Boise, Idaho
Upshot: *Global Gardens has 9 community gardens serving more than 200 refugee families. Global Gardens brings together gardeners from East Africa, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bosnia, Russia, and Uzbekistan.*

- Telling Details:**
- Where did they get the idea to start the garden?
 - Who are some of the refugees involved? Longtime residents?
 - What changes have they seen in the community?
 - What are they growing and how does that represent their diversity?

EXAMPLE 3

Source: Florida Department of Children & Families
Theme: Now is the Time to Commit Deeper to Welcoming
Hero/es: Commissioner, Mayor, Coptic Orthodox Charities, Florida Department of Children & Families
Upshot: *In 2015 Hillsborough County became the first county in Florida to be designated “welcoming” to refugees.*

- Telling Details:**
- How did they learn of the “Welcoming Cities and Counties” program?
 - What motivated the elected officials to join?
 - Who has been changed because of this work?
 - How has the community come together to be welcoming?

STORYTELLING

Now that you have captured the components of your story, it's time to put them together into a compelling tale that will connect with audiences. The elements of any story are consistent regardless of medium or outlet. Any good story includes:

- **Beginning:** Who is in your story? Tell us a little about them, and then tell us what kicks off the action. Don't necessarily start with the first thing you know about a person. Think about where the story begins. For example, if you are telling the story about a refugee who is now in medical school, the story could begin with the event or moment she was inspired to take up that profession, rather than when she arrived in the U.S.
- **Middle:** This is where you have the most leeway for length. Shorter stories might only describe the problem to be solved in the middle. Many stories use the middle to talk about one or many moments between the beginning and end, perhaps where our characters overcame an obstacle. Longer stories will include a series of obstacles or setbacks as well as moments of triumph that happen to your characters throughout their story.
- **The End:** How is the situation resolved? Does the character solve the problem? Do they at least reach a plateau in their situation? Even if the story is not over in real life, it needs an end to feel like a good story, so pick a point with some sense of resolution and end the story there. Think about how you want people to feel at the end of the story. Are we hopeful, concerned, inspired? Feelings are what help us relate to others and move us to think and act in new ways. Make sure your ending evokes the right feelings to move people in the right direction.
- **The Big Picture:** When telling a story to make change, it is critical to link it to the broader issues we are working on. How is this story typical of others like it? How is it different? What greater truth does it tell us about ourselves and our communities?

NOW WHAT?

Now the question is where to tell your stories, and the answer is: EVERYWHERE! Encourage your staff, volunteers, and members to practice their stories and tell them at meetings and events, to politicians, each other, even in line at the grocery store. While speeches get stiff with practice, stories improve the more we tell them.

By getting cues from our audience about what they find interesting and what they want to know more about, we can hone our stories so they improve with age. Any event, big or small, that you hold or attend, your team should be ready, willing, and able to tell stories—ideally their own first-person stories—or stories about people they know well.

Make sure that all of your written materials also include stories, no matter how short. No press release, newsletter, petition, or anything else should go out without the personal and emotional touch a story generates. Adding a quote and a photo that briefly tells a person's story goes a long way in making our materials more meaningful. Good stories build connection and increase exposure, even when the audience doesn't know the subject.

Here are a few more ideas to consider as you flex your story muscle:

Fewer Statements, More Stories

It's natural and well-meaning for groups to want to respond to a crisis, especially if they feel the eyes of the world are upon them, as is the case with many mosques and Muslim American organizations. We have another suggestion: Instead, of putting out a statement after a crisis, think about telling stories that show people working together in solidarity.

For example, after the horrific mass shooting in Orlando, local resident Mahmoud El-Awadi posted the following message on Facebook that has been shared nearly 200,000 times:

Yes, I donated blood even though I can't eat or drink anything cause I'm fasting in our holy month Ramadan just like hundreds of other Muslims who donated here in Orlando. Yes, I'm angry for what happened last night and all the innocent lives lost. I'm sad, frustrated and mad that a crazy guy claimed to be a Muslim did that shameful act. Yes, our blood all looks the same so get out there and donate blood cause our fellow American citizens are injured.

Another great example from social media surfaced with the hashtag #Iwillprotectyou after a Muslim mom posted the story of her eight-year-old daughter who started collecting her belongings after hearing Islamophobic statements made on television. A soldier read the post, and shared a picture of herself in uniform, saying that she was a mom too and that she would protect her. The hashtag #Iwillprotectyou surfaced, and other people in the military pledged to do the same for other families like the little girl's.

These stories are great examples of how the more you relate to someone, the harder it is to make assumptions about who they are. We find that storytelling in the time of crisis can move people to pivot off of previously held notions and onto the collective theme of working together.

Be Proactive

Don't react to bad news alone. Tell your “good news” stories all the time. You know you have a treasure trove of compelling stories to tell, so schedule them to appear on your different channels. Maybe you decide to tell a weekly story in brief—100 words or less—on Facebook, with the goal of getting at least 20 shares. Or maybe you get your core staff to volunteer having a welcoming story ready the next time someone asks, “So what have you been up to?” Be proactive and tell them an interesting part of your work. Focus on making connections. Everyday life provides many opportunities to tell strong stories that promote the welcoming work. Don't be afraid to step to the mike and try them out.

If you aren't already using an editorial calendar, now is a great time to start. Begin populating the calendar with well-timed content that is meaningful to your audiences and will help you make sure you are staying on target.

Your Story Matters Too

As you move forward and gather story fodder of the organizations and people you work with, don't forget to also tell your story. Do you have a family tie to immigrants or refugees? Do you have a favorite travel story, where you were the outsider?

A simple but great example of this is a post we saw recently where a man shared a pic of his refugee grandparents along with the following tweet: My grandparents from #Danzig #Gdansk. Refugees 1945-1947. #refugeeswelcome.

In another example, a woman on her way to work took to social media after two women wearing a hijab were accosted by a man in the New York subway who insisted they go home and “take their bombs with them.” According to the woman's post, “a black man, a Romanian, a gay man, a bunch of Asians, and a score of others came to their defense demanding that this man leave these women alone and get off this train.”

The post has been shared almost 30,000 times and proves that just a “regular” person on her way to work, sharing an authentic and inspirational story, can motivate and inspire others.

Read the messages again and dig deep within your own memory for fodder that advances the cause. We know you have it. It's just a matter of moving it to the top of your list.





TOUGH QUESTIONS

As we work to remind our communities that welcoming is here to stay, we know we face challenges with people who want to push back progress. This section is designed to dig into the kinds of questions people might ask as they try to navigate the complex world around them. As you think through these questions and conversations, remember to pull in specific examples and stories from your work and your community, and if the conversation allows for this, ask the person you are talking to for their stories. You may be surprised at the ideas that come your way! Listen for the message themes discussed earlier and the story collection tools. If nothing else, you may get a few snippets to use to further hone your messaging for the next time. Authentic and values-driven conversations are a first step in pivoting toward the outcome we desire.

Bottom line: It's not about answering the tough questions—it is about changing the frame within which the question exists. Know your audience and find connection. Together we will model conversations that give people a chance to rise to the occasion and do better.

GOOD MESSENGER STRATEGY

Here are two hard realities about messaging:

- You aren't going to reach everyone (and that's not a sign of failure!)
- Despite your best effort, the people closest to us can be the toughest to talk to

These two truths may be hard to accept, because we *do* want to reach everyone, and we especially may *want* to reach family and friends. But the reality is that despite our best efforts, there will always be some people who will not be receptive, and sometimes they happen to share blood. It's disappointing when that is the case, but do not take that as a sign of failure. One activist had this nugget of wisdom:

I always remember that to someone else, my family is not family! I know it may be easier for someone not related to them to make an impact, so I set up situations for them to hear something I might say but from someone more neutral. It can work!

The truth is that sometimes there is someone else who might make a better messenger than you. This is a great chance to really be strategic. Use your audience dossier to identify who your audience trusts and listens to. If you have someone else from that list who can share the same message, consider asking for help.

Also, don't get into an argument or engage those with obviously extreme or hostile views. You won't change their mind and you won't win the argument. Know when to change the subject or to bow out gracefully.

Now that we know what to avoid, here are a few conversation pointers. It's a good idea to:

- Listen deeply and remain calm
- Find commonalities and shared values
- If possible, offer to help or join their cause
- Tell stories people can relate to
- Give people the chance to do better

This last one, especially, may be hard in today's climate. But if someone is sincere in their desire to hold a conversation with you, listen, and give them the space to be heard. It's not an easy process, but it is one that can produce results.

SAMPLE CONVERSATIONS

Here are three sample conversations to get the dialogue moving. Be sure to look for the wins: Helping others understand the context, promoting positive stories, and building connection with people are all wins. Focus on the values we hold in common and don't be afraid to tell your own story.

Elected Official

Official: As a State Senator, I have tried to be compassionate and open our community to refugees and immigrants. But now I fear we have gone too far. I have recently gotten a handful of calls questioning the refugee screening process. My constituents are scared, and quite frankly, I understand why. I'm sorry, but we need to pull back on being quite so "welcoming."

You: Senator [Name], I understand the difficult position you must be in trying to listen to and please everyone in our district. I am sure there are many opinions and many thoughts on how to move forward, and we look to our elected leaders like you to help us create an even stronger community from so many voices.

Through everything, we believe that people should know their neighbors and in a welcoming community, neighbors get to know one another and work together.

Many of us are Americans because our parents, grandparents, or great grandparents were refugees who sought to escape poverty and violence elsewhere. The United States opened its doors, and we should carry on this proud history.

[Idea: Tell a brief story of neighbors working together that shows the contributions of a refugee community member and supports the "United in compassion for all" theme.]

Regardless of where we were born, all of us have chosen to make this community our home and want what's best for our families. I really think you and your constituents believe this too.

No doubt, there are complex issues involved, but the solution is not to discriminate and scapegoat. Refugees who are fleeing the Middle East are here because they face a threat to their safety in their former homes. As a result, refugees are far more likely to have experienced the trauma of violence, political unrest, and terrorism than the average American. They know personally the horrors of these situations, and are coming here to *escape* them, not perpetuate them.

Welcoming refugees makes us stronger because it shows we do not let violent extremists dictate our decisions. Continuing to make our community more welcoming to new Americans and to everyone who calls it home helps us all thrive.

Official: I know it's not everyone that causes problems, but I honestly think it's time to consider a ban on refugees and Muslims from coming to this country. They just don't worship or think like we do.

You: One thing that may surprise you is that Muslims have been in America for centuries, just like Jews, Christians, and people of other faiths. Islam is part of the multifaceted American tradition.

[Idea: Tell a brief story that shows people of different backgrounds working together and supports the "People of all faiths stand together" theme.]





I'm so proud our Constitution protects our right to worship as we like. Aren't you?

Proposing that refugees should be barred from entering the United States on the basis of their faith goes against our Constitution, history, and values as Americans. It goes against the very core of our First Amendment right to freedom of religion. Most modern religions started elsewhere, but they all belong here now. We cannot let our fear diminish the core beliefs that have guided our country for centuries. I know you value this, just as I do.

Official: But their values are so different than ours. Why don't more Muslims condemn violence?

You: Muslims *DO* condemn violence! But their condemnation never seems loud enough, no matter what they say, or how loudly they say it. Here's something I've

been wondering: When violent acts of crime are committed by people of other faiths besides Islam, we don't ask other faiths to speak for individuals who commit crimes, so why do we ask this of Muslims? Mass murder is committed with many false justifications. Dylann Roof, who murdered nine people in a South Carolina church, is a white supremacist; Robert Dear, who killed three at a Colorado Planned Parenthood clinic, holds fundamentalist religious beliefs; the San Bernardino shooters embraced violent Islamic extremism. We should treat all of these people as individually responsible for their actions and not to judge all white people, or religious fundamentalists, or Muslims. Discrimination is not what we stand for as a people.

Official: I just don't think you understand. My constituents aren't going to like this. This issue is just too complicated.

You: I *do* understand, and I know that you have multiple, perhaps competing, interests in your district.

We are complex, and that's great. It's the beauty of America. People can be Muslim and LGBT, or Christian and a feminist. The different facets of who we are do not follow a single line. Together we can model that for anyone who may feel unsure. Right now, we also have the opportunity to reaffirm our American values by continuing to guide our communities toward compassion.

[Idea: Tell a brief story from your community that supports the "Now is the time to commit deeper to welcoming" theme.]

This district is also made up of people of different origins, faiths, and backgrounds and we are counting on you to lead by example. I know you believe in this, and I [and organization] are here to support your stand on the right side of history.

Also, welcoming communities connect new residents to their neighbors and to local government. The aim is to create a climate in which immigrants and refugees become deeply involved in our community, investing their time, money, and hopes.

Now is the time for us to focus on the long term, and keep telling the welcoming story.

[Idea: If it seems appropriate, insert the idea of collecting a positive story about their experience from them.]

Community Leader

Community Leader: I'm very compassionate and I want to stand together, but I just think we need to pull back on just how welcoming we are. I'm not saying I think we should kick anyone out—just not put so many resources into supporting refugees.

You: Many of us are Americans because our parents, grandparents, or great grandparents were refugees, seeking to escape poverty and violence elsewhere and the United States opened its doors.

Our country was founded on the belief that all men and women are created equal and that all people have rights no matter what they look like, where they come from, or how they pray. Our country hasn't always acted on that belief, but we can now. And how we treat refugees reflects our commitment to the values that define us as Americans.

[Idea: Tell a brief story from your community that supports the "People of all faiths stand together" theme.]

Whether we were born here or not, or whether we speak English fluently or are just learning it, we all want the same thing—the freedom to speak, to pray, and to raise our children with hope. That's what binds us as a community, as a country. Shouldn't we carry on this proud tradition?

One thing we've seen time and again is that with just modest support, newcomers can become entrepreneurs who help us build a thriving economy that benefits us all. And nationwide, research has shown that for every dollar spent helping refugees start a new life in the U.S., there is significant economic return to communities.

Would you ever be able to join me at an event so you can meet some of the people I'm talking about?

Community Leader: I might be able to, but honestly here is a question I get sometimes from people in my community. They ask: "Why do refugees get all the resources? Why do they get benefits that even my family doesn't get?"

You: There is a lot of misinformation floating around about what happens when refugees arrive in the United States, so I completely understand why people might ask you that. When refugees arrive, they are fleeing crisis situations, so we support the work to meet their immediate emergency needs—like medical attention and shelter—right away. We recognize the challenges that past traumas and relation create, so we help them get their most basic needs met.

In fact, refugees are the great American success story! Through very modest investments, refugees are able to turn their lives around. Many times they are on the road to self-sufficiency and employed within six months. Cities have quantified the economic contributions of refugees and they are astounding.

[Idea: Tell a brief story that shows the benefit of contributions, supporting the "Now is the time to commit deeper to welcoming" theme.]

By recognizing the contributions that we all make, we make our neighbors feel more included and our community more welcoming to new Americans and to everyone who calls our community home. Isn't this a value we can all share?



We firmly believe that everyone in a community should feel welcome, and have the resources they need to thrive. We have so much work to do as a nation to make this a reality, but we are ready. It's a myth that there aren't enough resources to go around; there are. We just need to hold our leaders accountable for making smart decisions so that everyone may prosper.

We need to stop thinking in terms of us versus them, and start thinking in terms of just us—if we can do that, we will be able to do so much, together.

Community Leader: Okay, but how do you make sure these refugees aren't terrorists?

You: By definition, refugees are people and families who are here because they face a threat to their safety in their former homes. As a result, refugees are far more likely to have experienced the trauma of violence, political unrest, and terrorism than the average American. They know personally the horrors of these situations, and are coming here to escape them, not perpetuate them.

Community Leader: I'm overworked as it is. Why do I need to care about immigrants, refugees, or Muslims in addition to my other numerous responsibilities?

You: Sadly, many of us who care deeply about the world are overworked! We must do better to support each other. What can I do to help you? What events coming up do you have that I can attend? I know

how much the support of colleagues, even from different fields, means to me, and I'd like to support you if I can. THAT is exactly what [insert name of your organization] does. Welcoming helps us work together to make sure that all of us—white, black, Christian, Muslim, or any faith—are part of making this a great place to live.

[Idea: Tell a brief story that shows a refugee getting involved in a local or civic organization that supports the "United in compassion for all" theme.]

By giving each person an equal opportunity to contribute, it makes the entire community stronger.

We truly believe that each of us has the right to grow and thrive in the place we call home. If I can help you in that, I would be honored.

[Idea: If it seems appropriate, insert the idea of collecting a positive story about their experience from them.]



Neighbor

Neighbor: After San Bernardino, Paris, and now Orlando, I am afraid about the next terrorist attack. I still keep hearing about more Syrian refugees coming to our country, but our safety as a nation matters first. I think they need to stay where they are.

You: I understand you care about your family and the future, like I do. I understand your fear—I'm scared too sometimes! But how we deal with fear is what defines us as a people. We live in complex times, and it is everyone's responsibility—the media, society, and politicians, and regular people like us—to make sure our democracy reflects our value of welcoming people of all origins, backgrounds, and faiths. We are all in this together.



[Idea: Tell a brief story that shows people working together for democracy or humanizes a Syrian refugee family and supports the “United in compassion for all” theme.]

No matter if violent extremists try to divide us, we simply won't allow it. I have always believed we are a courageous nation. We see that in times of crisis, our neighbors step up and show us their best.

[Idea: Tell a brief story that shows community members helping each other and supports the “People of all faiths stand together” theme.]

Right now, we can demonstrate our moral courage by providing refuge to people from Syria and the Middle East who are fleeing violence and death. According to ISIS, these refugees are traitors to the radical Islamic cause. The refugees are on the same side of the fight as we are, and we should welcome them to safety on our shores.

Neighbor: Even if this is true, I just have enough to worry about with my own family. I'm afraid I am going to lose my job, and I am really not sure about what's going to happen when my kid starts school with kids from who knows where. Even if I want to, I don't see how I could possibly add one more thing on my plate to care about.

You: What you are talking about is exactly what we care about too. By nature, welcoming work IS about the whole community.

[Idea: Tell a brief story that shows how your whole community is made stronger through welcoming and that supports the “Now is the time to commit deeper to welcoming” theme.]

Investing even deeper in welcoming makes our neighborhood better.

Have you met [insert name of neighbor who is committed to welcoming]? She and I are getting a group of neighbors together and we'd love it if you'd join us. We are also inviting the new family from [insert country]. Our goal is to create a climate in which immigrants and refugees become deeply involved in our community. I think this would be a great place to start.

[Idea: If it seems appropriate, insert the idea of collecting a positive story about their experience from them.]

CONVERSATION TRACKER

Okay, now it's time to pull out your Audience Dossier and develop a practice conversation. It may feel odd to write down a conversation you haven't yet had, but in order to bring forth these messages in a way that is authentic, you need to practice. This form is meant to help you move the messages forward from a place of relation and compassion.

Fill In the Blanks

Hear ye, hear ye. Start with what you know. Based on what you know of this person, what concerns might come up? What can you say or do to acknowledge that you hear their concerns? While the goal is to approach the conversation without presuming you know what he or she will say, it is wise to do your recon and think through what issues are likely to come up.

Find common ground. Before you start, list at least three things that you share in common. They could be as simple as going to the same gym, or having a relative who attended the same college.

Show shared values. Now, list at least three values you have in common. Be specific with what they care about and what moves you both.

Time for a new frame. Think to a time in your life when you learned something new for the first time. What motivated you to learn and see things in a new way? What helped you to act in a new way? Was there someone specific that helped you? Keep this in mind as you help them see the issue in a new way.

Offer to help. Invite them to join. Is there a project or activity they care about? This is your chance to be a good neighbor or colleague. If you can, offer to help. If it makes sense, ask if you can collect their story. If you can't, that's okay, but be sure keep the door open for follow-up and next steps.

Also use this space to document what happened during the conversation, so you can improve each time.



CONCLUSION

Our nation has a complex history, but we also have some of the best examples of people coming together through adversity. Together we can use these difficult times to become better communities.

We hope this toolkit will inspire and support you in the difficult conversations we know many of you are having right now. You are the messengers who bring the messages alive each and every day. We know you are in this for the long haul, and Welcoming America is right beside you.

In this tough environment, now is the time to show people that we can be our most welcoming. The future of our country depends on working together through our challenges, not being divided. We are so proud to be doing this work together.



Appendix

LightBox Collaborative consulted the following resources for guidance in creating this toolkit:

In response to the escalation of anti-refugee and anti-Muslim sentiment, hate crimes and discriminatory policy-making, **ReThink Media** conducted a message-testing process, updated polling analysis, and developed messaging guidance and best practices based on this new research. Three documents from REThink that are helpful can be found below.

Top Findings from Muslim, Arab and South Asian Message Testing

Top Findings from Muslim, Arab and South Asian Polling Audit

Orlando Shooting: Talking Points and Resources

The **PRRI/Brookings** immigration survey was conducted by the non-partisan Public Religion Research Institute, in partnership with The Brookings Institution. The large national survey of 2,607 adults was conducted between April 4 and May 2, 2016. The survey explores attitudes about the direction of the country and cultural change, immigration policy, immigrants' contributions to American culture, and support for authoritarian leadership in a time of anxiety.

The results of the survey were reported in *How Immigration and Concerns about Cultural Change are Shaping the 2016 Election* | *PRRI/Brookings Survey*.

WELCOMING AMERICA



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