



HOW TO TALK ABOUT ETHNIC PROFILING: A GUIDE FOR CAMPAIGNERS

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Liberties welcomes queries from campaigners who are interested in receiving training on values-based framing or would like assistance or feedback on communications products they are developing based on this guide. Please email the author (i.butler@liberties.eu) or Liberties (info@liberties.eu).

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SUMMARY

This guide contains tools for campaigners mobilising the public in favour of a ban on ethnic profiling. Among other things, the guide offers two alternative narratives that campaigners can adapt and draw from in creating their communications materials. These candidate narratives have been developed based on the best available expertise on progressive communications, but they have not been tested with target audiences. The narratives are summarised below.

The community narrative

Most of us want to live in strong communities with people from all walks of life, where we feel at ease and at home. To enjoy this kind of community, we need to know and trust our local police.

Unfortunately, this is not the case for many of us from minority backgrounds. Ethnic profiling tears at the fabric of society. It happens because the system maintained by our governments trains and monitors the police in a way that rewards racist behaviour.

There are a number of things we can do to improve the service the police provide to our communities, like adjusting the way we train and recruit officers and how we keep track of stops.

Just like in the past, when we pulled together to achieve progress on social justice, we can help our police do a better job of creating the communities we want to live in.

The freedom & respect narrative

Most of us want to be free to go about our business. We need to know that the police are there for us and that they will treat us with dignity when we need to approach them.

Unfortunately, those of us from minority backgrounds don't feel free to move around our towns and cities in their daily lives. Ethnic profiling makes it harder for people to choose their own path in life. It happens because our police follow stereotypes perpetuated by politicians and the media, instead of following the evidence.

There are a number of things we can do to improve the service the police provide to our communities, like adjusting the way we train and recruit officers and how we keep track of stops.

Just like in the past, when we pulled together to achieve progress on social justice, we can help our police

do a better job. So that all of us feel free and respected when we move around our neighbourhoods and cities.

Below is a summary of the principles of good communications on this topic, drawn from the contents of the guide.

<i>Don't</i>	<i>Instead do</i>
Focus on the harms experienced by the victims of ethnic profiling. This perpetuates 'us' and 'them' thinking and at best engages sympathy.	Focus on shared values like dignity, freedom, respect, community and solidarity. This stimulates empathy and helps your audience realise ethnic minorities are part of a larger 'us'.
Focus on busting the myth that criminality is higher among ethnic minorities compared to the majority population. This will reinforce the myth in the minds of your audience.	Dissolve the false minority-criminality link by focusing on our common humanity and shared fate. Dislodge the myth by leading with your own message and explaining systemic racism.
Emphasise arguments based on the inefficiency of ethnic profiling as a tool to fight crime when communicating with the public. This will perpetuate the negative attitudes you're trying to dissolve.	Remind your audience of the kind of communities they want to live in or the freedoms they want to enjoy, and how these things define the way the police should behave.
'Other' ethnic minorities by implying the 'us' in a message means white people and the 'them' means an ethnic minority.	Appeal to a larger 'us' by using language like 'most of us', 'our communities', 'those of us from ethnic minority communities'
Limit yourself to explaining the harms that ethnic profiling causes minority communities. This implies that profiling is just a problem for those directly affected and perpetuates 'us' and 'them' thinking.	Appeal to the idea of shared fate and highlight how profiling is damaging to society as a whole. Consider linking this to an explanation of how racism is used strategically by some political parties to 'divide and rule'.
Explain the harms (e.g. reporting statistics about higher stop rates for people from ethnic minorities) without explaining the agency behind the harm.	Explain how systemic/structural racism produces the harms you want to highlight.
Focus on 'bad apples' in the police force as the explanation for ethnic profiling. This implies that racism is something that 'bad people' do, rather than a structural problem.	Talk about the rotten systems that create and reward the attitudes and behaviours of these individuals.
Make your audience feel personal blame and guilt. This makes people shut down and less likely to feel that positive change is possible.	Locate racism in the structures and systems that shape our lives, opportunities and thinking ('the water we swim in').

<i>Don't</i>	<i>Instead do</i>
Use terms like 'structural racism' or 'systemic racism' without illustrating what they mean.	Use metaphors and examples to unpack and bring to life what 'systemic racism' means and how it works.
Focus on the problem: what the government or the police have 'done wrong' and 'shouldn't do'.	Focus on the solution: what caring, responsible leadership looks like, and how the government and the police can 'do better'.
Phrase your solution merely in terms of being 'against' or saying 'no' to ethnic profiling. People react better to a positive vision they can say 'yes' to.	Place greater emphasis on how your solutions will help us bring to life the communities and freedoms we value.
Get bogged down in explaining the details of your policy recommendations when campaigning towards the public. Your audience will tune out.	Give the broad brush of your solutions but devote greater attention to your positive vision of what the world will look like once they're implemented.

1. ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Who is this guide for?

This guide is for campaigners who wish to mobilise public support in favour of a ban on ethnic profiling. Among other tools, the guide sets out two candidate narratives that activists can use for inspiration in their communications when campaigning.

What is a narrative?

This guide uses the term narrative to refer to a line of reasoning that follows a particular structure and contains specific elements, which are designed to persuade your audience to support your position. A narrative will give your audience a particular frame through which to understand your issue. Put otherwise, a narrative frames the values, problems and solutions in a way that draws your audience to adopt your understanding of the phenomenon you're dealing with. This is why terms like 'narrative change' and 'framing' or 'narratives' and 'frames' are used by communicators to describe similar things.

Where do narratives fit into campaigning?

The narratives suggested in this guide are not final communications products. They are intended to be used as the basis from which campaigners can

develop their communications products. Campaigners should also take into account that a compelling narrative is only one element of a campaign strategy.¹ For example, campaigners need to set measurable and achievable goals, determine which audience they should target to achieve these, learn about the views of that audience and how best to reach them. This includes understanding which channels to use, what kinds of communications products their audience prefers and what messengers are credible to them.

How is the guide structured?

This guide begins by explaining how values and 'common sense' determine the way your audience understands your issue. It then sets out some of the problematic ways of thinking about ethnic profiling that are likely to exist in society. It is important to understand prevailing thinking among your target audience to know what kinds of arguments they are likely to reject and what kinds of concepts you may need to introduce to your audience. The guide then outlines the general structure of a narrative and explains how campaigners can use the different elements of the narrative to overcome these problematic ways of thinking. Campaigners are then offered two alternative narratives: the community narrative and the freedom and respect narrative.

Although these narratives have been developed using the best available research and expertise in progressive communications, they have not been tested. Campaigners are encouraged to test these narratives, and develop creative outputs from these narratives that they can test with their target audiences.

Terminology

Users of this guide can adapt the narratives according to their context, and should choose the terms preferred by racial justice campaigners in their local setting for talking about ethnicity. We recommend talking about specific groups where possible, using capital letters (e.g. British Bengali) and being sensitive to the context if using collective terms like ‘ethnic minorities’. Campaigners should also be aware that using collective nouns is more likely to evoke stereotypes in your audience’s thinking. Where possible, it is recommended to use phrasing such as ‘a person who is British Bengali’ or ‘a British Bengali person’ rather than ‘British Bengalis’.

2. PUBLIC ATTITUDES ARE BASED ON VALUES AND 'COMMON SENSE'

Narratives can activate values

Research from the field of social psychology shows that a fixed range of values is hardwired into humans across cultures.² Although these values are present in every person, the priority an individual attaches to particular values varies depending on which values are

emphasised by things like national culture, the media, politicians, education, religion, workplace, upbringing and peers.

Research shows that individuals who are supportive of issues associated with human rights tend to place more priority on values of universalism, benevo-



Taken from Holmes, T., Blackmore, E., Hawkins, R. & Wakeford, T., 'The Common Cause Handbook', Public Interest Research Centre, 2011. Based on research from: Schwartz, S. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M.P. Zanna, ed. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 25. Orlando: Academic Press, 1992, pp. 1-65; Rokeach, M., 'The Nature of Human Values', New York: The Free Press, 1973.

lence and self-direction. Research also shows that narratives that emphasise these values can stimulate support in a target audience for things like civil liberties, equality and social justice. Put otherwise, communications that emphasise universalism, benevolence and self-direction can increase the priority that an audience attaches to these values and make people more supportive of progressive causes.³

While self-direction is more connected to individual freedom and autonomy, universalism and benevolence are more connected to the ideas of solidarity, caring and community. With these values in mind the guide proposes two narratives:

1. The community narrative highlights solidarity and interconnectedness. It encourages your audience to focus on what kinds of neighbourhoods they want to live in and the role of the police in building these communities.
2. The freedom and respect narrative highlights self-determination and dignity. It encourages your audience to focus on how individuals should be free to go about their lives and be treated with respect by the police.

Does that mean I should try to persuade the whole of the public?

No. A campaign should always be designed with a defined audience in mind. Campaigners should first decide who the target audience of their campaign is, depending on their objective and resources, and then try to understand more about how that segment of the public thinks.

Societies, broadly speaking, can be segmented into three groups on moral issues. Those who will be predisposed to firmly support your position (the base), those who are firmly against your position (the opposition) and those who hold conflicted views and can be persuaded to go either way (the persuadables). This moveable middle group is usually the largest on any given issue and can often be broken down into sub-groups.⁴

An effective narrative will mobilise your base and persuade the middle. Generally speaking, campaigners will need to engage at least part of the moveable middle to gain sufficient support for big policy changes. Campaigners do not need to and should not aspire to persuade the opposition. This is because messages designed to resonate with your opposition will appeal to values (i.e. achievement, power, security, tradition and conformity) and frames (e.g. that people from minority groups are threatening) that are in conflict with yours and make people less supportive of equality. If you broadcast com-

munications based on these values and frames, it will disengage your base and depress support for equality and civil liberties among the moveable middle.

Tip: Some campaigners, when advocating directly towards police forces, may be relying on the argument that ethnic profiling is an ineffective and inefficient tool that makes the public less safe. This argument probably triggers predominantly values of security and achievement because it builds the case against profiling on fighting crime and saving money. Because this argument speaks to issues that are likely to be of importance to a police force, it may well be effective for advocacy towards that particular audience. It's OK to use this reasoning if you can speak directly to the police without broadcasting it as part of a campaign to the broader public. But this should not be campaigners' primary message in a campaign aimed at the broader public. This is not to say that campaigners should avoid talking about effectiveness if it comes up in the course of campaigning. But campaigners should keep the focus of their communications around narratives like the ones suggested in this guide as much as possible.

Narratives can change the 'common sense' that your audience leans on

Campaigners often present bare facts and expect their audience to share the same understanding of the facts as they do. For example, in the context of ethnic profiling, campaigners might point out that men from a given ethnic minority are x times more likely to be stopped by police than men from the majority population. Campaigners might expect the audience to a) recognise that this is a problem and b) understand that it's caused by systemic racism within policing.

In reality, the audience interprets these bare facts according to the prevailing ways of thinking about ethnicity, policing and crime. Put otherwise, the audience will fill in their own reasons for why this is happening and decide whether it's problematic according to their 'common sense'. And this 'common sense' is made up of ways of thinking and ideas they have absorbed from the media, politicians, religious leaders and others who shape how they understand the world. If, for example, the media portrays the ethnic minority in question as linked to criminality, the audience may simply decide that stop numbers are higher for this community because they just produce more 'bad people' and that therefore ethnic profiling is a sensible policy.⁵

Part of the role of a narrative is to change problematic ways of thinking that prevail among your audience, or what your audience takes to be 'common sense'. A narrative explains the facts you want to highlight in such a way that the audience recognises them as problematic. It does this by reminding the audience of deeply held values and stimulating empathy. This encourages the audience to want the same standard of treatment for people they might not usually consider part of their 'ingroup' as they want for themselves. The narrative then shows that there is dissonance between the audience's values and the situation. Another role of a narrative is to explain how and why the problem is happening. This steers the audience to share campaigners' understanding of the causes and opens them to endorsing your solutions.

3. PREVAILING PROBLEMATIC WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT ETHNIC PROFILING

When developing narratives, campaigners should take existing public attitudes and ways of thinking into account. Understanding what your audience currently thinks of as ‘common sense’ around your issues will help in three ways. First, it will tell you how your audience is likely to interpret facts and statistics that are not properly explained, or left to ‘speak for themselves’. Secondly, it will help you work out what kinds of arguments your audience is likely to reject. Third, it will tell you which ways of thinking you need to dissolve.

Research from the USA and the UK about public attitudes on racial discrimination and policing suggests that there are certain ways of thinking among the public about racism and policing that can create barriers to campaigners trying to abolish ethnic profiling.⁶

Similar in-depth qualitative public attitude research does not seem to exist for other European countries. However, social psychology research on the nature and extent of prejudice in Europe suggests that the ways of thinking uncovered by research from the USA and UK are likely to be comparable to what exists in other culturally ‘western’

countries.⁷ Prejudicial attitudes towards ethnic minorities remain widespread in Europe, even if ‘overt’ racism has to an extent been replaced by less blatant expressions of prejudice. Various labels have been applied to this manifestation of prejudice such as ‘modern’, ‘subtle’, ‘covert’, or ‘implicit’. This research shows that many people subscribe to negative stereotypes about ethnic minorities. Although individuals might not be consciously aware of these stereotypes, they do have a negative impact on individuals’ attitudes towards minorities and can lead them to justify or explain away discriminatory treatment.

Tip: Campaigners would benefit from carrying out research about public attitudes in the country in which they are working to confirm that these four ways of thinking also exist among their target audience. For organisations with a limited budget, this could include analysis of media coverage, street interviews and longer conversations with acquaintances who have mixed feelings about ethnic profiling.⁸ You could also try checking the websites of polling agencies (such as Ipsos), university researchers (such as the European Social Survey) and public

bodies (such as the Eurobarometer) to see if they have carried out any relevant surveys.⁹ Although opinion polls don't tend to provide the same level of depth in allowing you to understand ways of reasoning about racism, they can offer some pointers. Further, campaigners should take into account any events that could have affected public thinking. For example, polling suggests that the 'Black Lives Matter' protests in the summer of 2020 may have changed public attitudes towards the police and altered the public's understanding of structural racism.¹⁰ Whether these kinds of events shift public opinion in your favour or not seems to depend in part on how they are covered by the media.¹¹ Furthermore, such events may provoke backlashes against calls for equality,¹² and opinion can shift back again over time.¹³

The four main ways of thinking that are relevant to campaigners working on ethnic profiling can be summarised as follows. While these ways of thinking might not be strong among your base, they are likely to be present to varying degrees among the moveable middle because they hold conflicted views.

a) “Racism mostly happens between people, rather than in systems”

The understanding of racism among much of the public seems to be that it is limited to the personal behaviour of 'racist' individuals, rather than something that is perpetuated by systems and institutions. This is not to say that the broader public has no understanding of institutional or structural racism. Rather, it seems that this understanding is limited to a recognition that certain ethnic minorities have a disadvantaged position in society. For example, by being overrepresented in the criminal justice system, less well educated or in a worse economic position compared to the majority population. If ethnic profiling has been a topic of public debate, it's also likely that the public is aware that certain minorities are disproportionately targeted by police compared to the majority population. However, what is problematic for the purposes of achieving support for social change, is the explanations people have of how and why this is happening. Many people appear more likely to refer to negative stereotypes about the ethnic minority in question to explain disadvantage (such as work ethic or criminality), rather than racism that has become embedded in structures and systems.¹⁴

If this is the case among your target audience, campaigners will face the following difficulties:

- Academic research shows that the less a person is aware of their own biases, the more defensively they react when their prejudices are pointed out to them.¹⁵ Similarly, research on US audiences suggests that much of the public may feel uncomfortable and defensive in reaction to narratives that directly point out that ‘society’ or ‘the police’ are structurally racist.¹⁶
- The public probably does not have a good understanding of structural racism.
- Even on occasions when the public recognises that there has been ethnic profiling, they are likely to assign blame to ‘bad apples’ in the police rather than to problems with the system.

b) “Minorities are more likely than whites to be involved in criminal activity”

As noted, negative stereotypes about ethnic minorities remain common, even if prejudices might be less overtly expressed. The power of the media to shape public opinion is well documented.¹⁷ Research also shows that the media frames certain minorities as prone to criminality and that this is likely to nurture prejudice.¹⁸ Considering this, it’s likely that parts of your target audience will subscribe to the stereotype that certain minorities are more prone to criminality.¹⁹ Research suggests that

individuals rely on this stereotype to justify or explain ethnic profiling.²⁰ Research from the UK suggests that even when people recognise that the association between race and crime is a stereotype, they still think it is built around a kernel of truth.²¹ If this reflects dominant ways of thinking among your audience, campaigners may face the following problematic attitudes:

- It is likely common for members of the majority population to think that if the police do stop a member of a minority, then this was objectively justified. This may translate into doubts about whether ethnic profiling even occurs.²²
- While lamenting that ethnic minorities are in a worse position in society, parts of the public may rely on this to justify stereotypes. For example by saying that poverty leads people to commit crime, and that therefore profiling constitutes a sensible, if regrettable, policing tool.

c) “The police generally do a good job and treat people fairly”

Campaigners working on police reform in the USA have reported that the greater respect there is for the police among the public, the more susceptible the public is to side with the police if the argument is framed in a binary way by your opponents: you’re either with the police (who can’t do their job with-

out ethnic profiling) or against them.²³ This is also supported by academic research in the USA, which found that individuals who generally approved of their police force were more likely to believe that profiling is not widespread and that when it is used it is justified.²⁴ If your target audience has respect for the police, campaigners may encounter the following attitudes:

- Many in the public may be inclined to interpret a campaign against ethnic profiling as an attack on the police in general.
- Some people may believe that getting rid of ethnic profiling will make society less safe.
- Examples of where ethnic profiling has occurred will be put down to individual ‘bad apples’ rather than the system.

Tip: Data from surveys could help campaigners work out what public attitudes are towards the police in their country. The ‘Standard Eurobarometer’ survey carried out by the EU each year includes a question on trust towards the police. Slightly more in-depth research was carried out across Europe as part of the ‘European Social Survey’ in 2010. Campaigners should also pay attention to recent developments in their countries. For example, perceptions of the police may have been affected by how they have used their powers

during the COVID-19 pandemic. Perceptions of the police may also have been affected by the content of public debate around the ‘Black Lives Matter’ protests in the summer of 2020.²⁵

d) “Fighting racism isn’t the priority”

For many people, there is a sense that although racism is important, there are many other more pressing issues to deal with. Others go further and believe that talking about racism is itself problematic because it stokes division.²⁶ If this thinking is present in your target audience, campaigners are likely to encounter the following problematic attitude:

- Many in the public may think that the police must prioritise fighting crime and responding to threats like terrorism, and that even if this means some ethnic minorities get a harder time, it’s worth it in the greater effort against crime.

4. HOW TO ALTER THESE WAYS OF THINKING THROUGH YOUR NARRATIVE

This section explains how to structure your narrative and how campaigners can use the different elements of the narrative to address some of the problematic attitudes they may encounter, set out in the previous section.

Communications experts who use values-based framing to help campaigners win on progressive issues structure a narrative around four basic elements. All of these elements are important, and so is the order they come in. Research shows that starting with shared values, and then talking about the problem, is a lot more effective than starting with the problem.²⁷

Structure of a persuasive narrative

Values statement: remind your audience of shared values and trigger empathy.

Explain the problem: who is doing what to cause or allow the problem to happen and why. What is the impact of this?

Explain the solution: show how your recommendations bring the

situation back in line with their values.

Reminder of past successes and call to action: counter defeatist thinking and tell your audience how to show their support.

a) Values statement

This element of the narrative activates certain underlying values among your audience. A values statement can refer to some kind of shared experience, or a reminder of what kind of treatment or situation your target audience wants for themselves and people like them.²⁸

The values statement should trigger values of benevolence, universalism or self-direction because this increases support for progressive causes, such as equality. The values statement also creates a yardstick against which your audience will evaluate the problem and the solutions you suggest. When you explain the problem, the audience will encounter dissonance between the values you have reminded them of, and the reality of the situation. When you explain your solution, the audience will see how they can correct the decisions

that created the problem and bring the situation back into line with their values.

The values statement can help dissolve stereotypes & make your cause a priority

Traditionally, campaigners fighting ethnic profiling have tried to simply expose the fact that the level of criminality among minority groups is lower or the same as criminality among the majority population. There are two problems with making this the focus of your communications.²⁹ First, it can actually perpetuate thinking that links minorities and crime. Second, it tends to frame the minority in question as ‘them’ or an ‘other’ for whom we should feel sympathy - rather than feeling empathy for people who are part of ‘us’.

Tip: Researchers have found that relying on statistics alone to correct your audience’s stereotypes is ineffective. If your audience believes in the stereotype that criminality is higher among ethnic minority groups, showing them statistics that disprove this will be unsuccessful in changing their mind. This is because your facts don’t fit their ‘frame’ of the issue, and the facts are then rejected.³⁰ This is why campaigners need to change the way their audience understands the issue with alternative narratives. Once your audience shares your line

of thinking, they will be more receptive to your statistics.

The candidate narratives offer campaigners examples of how to break the false minority-criminality link and elicit empathy by emphasising our shared humanity and our shared fate. When your audience thinks of someone from an ethnic minority as ‘someone just like me’ they’re less likely to think of them as threatening and more likely to agree that everyone should get the same kind of treatment. Put otherwise, this broadens the audience’s idea of who is part of ‘we’ by creating a larger notion of ‘us’.

Stimulating empathy could also make your audience more inclined to consider that tackling profiling should be a priority, because they’re more likely to consider it as a problem that affects ‘people like us’.

Tip: When converting narratives into communications products, campaigners can use certain tools to highlight minorities as ‘people like us’ towards your target audience. This includes thinking about your messenger, as well as the perspective from which the story is told. For example, campaigns could consider including some stories from those who’ve experienced profiling, as well as people from the majority population who’ve seen the impact of profiling on their neighbourhoods.

b) Explanation of the problem

The second step of the narrative explains what the problem is. This has two elements. First, showing the ‘harm’. Second, explaining the agency behind the harm. That is, who is doing (or not doing) what to allow or cause this harm. Traditionally, campaigners concentrate their communications on talking about the harm but not the agency.

It is vital to explain the agency behind the problem. If you present statistics or facts (e.g. about disproportionately high stop rates for ethnic minorities) without this explanation, your audience will just rely on prevailing ways of thinking (such as stereotypes about criminality) to interpret them. They will also be more likely to think that these harms are inevitable (even if they are regrettable). This means that campaigners should never talk about the harms of ethnic profiling without also talking about the agency.

Tip: Experts in communications have found that campaigners should spend more time reminding their audience of what they stand for, rather than what they stand against. Traditionally, campaigners open with and spend most of their communications talking about the injustice they are fighting. Instead, campaigners should lead with shared values, to remind their audience what is important and how the world should work, and also talk

about solutions, to show their audience how to bring their values to life. Of course, explaining the problem is a key element of your narrative. But if you’re trying to mobilise the public behind social change, it shouldn’t make up the majority of your messaging.

Explaining the harms can help your audience understand why and how structural racism produces ethnic profiling & how the issue is their concern

Traditionally, campaigners point to two different kinds of harm:

- The disproportionate rate at which ethnic minorities are targeted by the police compared to the majority population.

When campaigners do this, they must always link it to an explanation of how this is the result of the agency, set out below.

- The destructive impact of profiling, such as the psychological harm, or the way that someone from an ethnic minority may modify the way they dress or where they go, like avoiding certain routes or transport hubs.

When campaigners do this, they should always explain the harms in a way that helps your audience empathise and see themselves in these affected groups,

rather than just feel sorry for ‘those people over there’ who are ‘not like me’ and not part of ‘us’. This is part of the job of the values statement. But the wording and the messengers campaigners choose can also stimulate empathy.

Campaigners should also try to explain the harm that ethnic profiling causes to society as a whole. Researchers in the USA have found that emphasising the ‘shared fate’ of people from ethnic minorities and the majority population helps to stimulate empathy.³¹ For example, campaigners could point out that ethnic profiling creates harmful divisions in society. The vast majority of people are decent, friendly and helpful to each other. But profiling destroys the ties between us because it makes people suspicious, resentful and fearful towards each other just because of the colour of their skin.³²

Explaining the agency behind the harm

When explaining how and why ethnic profiling happens, campaigners should not place their focus on overt racism by individual officers as the cause. Rather, campaigners should focus on the structural racism that is largely unrecognised by your audience. This is not to say that overt racism expressed by individual officers isn’t a problem. But if campaigners make this their primary focus then it could lead to two problems: a) your audience might be less receptive to this argument if they respect the police; b)

it only addresses part of the problem – meaning that even if you can get your audience on board, this could lead them to support solutions that focus on disciplining individual officers who express overtly racist views, when what you really need from your audience is for them to agree that there are structural problems.

When explaining why ethnic profiling happens, campaigners should point to the structural factors that lead to this practice. Because many people in the public think that racism is inevitable and will always exist, campaigners need to highlight the way that racism is designed into our societies and actively maintained. By doing this, we can show how it can be designed out. Circumstances may vary from country to country. However, the causes could be summarised as follows.³³

Explanation of structural racism in policing that leads to ethnic profiling

The police disproportionately focus their attention and resources on policing ethnic minorities, in particular by over-policing the areas where they live. This leads to higher numbers of people from ethnic minorities in the criminal justice system. The police then claim that these crime figures and their personal experiences prove that people from ethnic minorities commit more crime. And this motivates police to

continue to focus on people from ethnic minorities disproportionately through further over-policing, including ethnic profiling.

Campaigners could consider adding other information specific to their country. For example, in some countries, police forces are assessed according to whether they meet targets for the numbers of arrests they make. This can intensify over-policing of people from ethnic minority groups because police believe that this is the surest way to reach their targets.

Expert communicators have found that an effective way of persuading the majority population to support racial equality is to explain how racism is used strategically by the media and certain political parties.³⁴ Campaigners should consider adding this extra layer of explanation of the broader social and political context in their communications. In this case, campaigners should test whether this further layer of explanation helps their audience understand the problem and express agreement, or whether the message becomes too complicated for the audience to follow. Campaigners should be sensitive of pointing out attempts at manipulation by politicians without appearing to patronise their audience. An explanation of racism as a strategic tool could be summarised along the following lines.

Explanation of strategic racism in society that leads to ethnic profiling

The media and certain political parties perpetuate the stereotype that ethnic minorities are more prone to criminality. The media uses racist fear-based reporting to sell newspapers and generate click bait. Certain political parties blame minorities for social problems like crime, because it helps them win votes. First, because it artificially divides working classes along racial lines - pitting (and appealing to) the 'white working class' against minorities. This is a tool to distract the majority population from the root cause of social problems: the policies of that party which are designed to benefit the richest in society to the exclusion of those who are less well off. Second, it makes policies like over-policing and ethnic profiling more popular with voters, and so implementing these policies earns them public approval.

Metaphors for structural racism

Academic researchers and communications experts have found that metaphors can be a very effective tool for helping your audience understand and share your analysis of complicated concepts.

Tip: To be effective, a metaphor should be easy to understand, easy to remember and easy to repeat. Campaigners should test their metaphors to make sure that they transmit the desired ideas and steer people towards the desired solutions. Sometimes a metaphor may seem very clever but can lead your audience to the wrong way of thinking.³⁵

Structural racism is a challenging concept to explain. Researchers in the UK and USA have tested the effectiveness of some metaphors that campaigners could use. The escalator, fabric, prosperity grid and restricts & restrains metaphors below are versions of these metaphors that the author has adapted to highlight strategic racism and ethnic profiling.³⁶ The remaining metaphors have not been tested. Campaigners can consider adapting these metaphors to resonate more closely with habits and practices people would find familiar in their national context, as well as using visuals to illustrate them.

Metaphors to explain structural racism in society and how ethnic profiling is a manifestation of this:

- **Escalator:** Living in an unequal society is like some of us riding up escalators to get to where we want to go, while others of us often only have descending escalators in our path. No matter how hard some of us try we get dragged back down. These escalators are designed and

maintained by government policies and institutional practices in our police forces, health service and schools.

- **Prosperity grid:** To do well in life we rely on our communities being well connected to a network of resources that open up the same opportunities for all of us. Like good schools, hospitals, youth clubs, decent housing and jobs. Experts call this a prosperity grid. But some communities are not well connected to the grid, including ethnic minorities. Instead of making sure all our communities are properly connected, some politicians prefer to sow division. They point the finger for hard times at ethnic minorities and encourage the police to use ethnic profiling.
- **Weather:** All of us have to navigate challenges in life. But while some people are on big yachts, others of us have tiny dinghies. That includes ethnic minorities, who have a harder time of getting ahead and weathering storms. A policy like ethnic profiling is a tool that some politicians on big yachts use to divide those of us in small boats so they can hold us all back.

Metaphors to explain the social harm of ethnic profiling:

- **Restricts & restrains:** There are structures in our society that restrict some people's options. For example, it's harder to get a good education

at a school in a poorer neighbourhood, and that holds people back from finding a better job. Similarly, a practice like ethnic profiling holds people down and makes it harder for them to choose their own path.

- **Fabric:** We all care about our communities, and would be there to help out a neighbour or a stranger in need. But ethnic profiling unravels the fabric that binds us together as a society. It destroys trust and the feeling that we all belong to the same country.

Metaphors to explain how structural racism in the police produces ethnic profiling:

- **Self-fulfilling prophecy:** Ethnic profiling is like a self-fulfilling prophecy. The police have decided to base their policy to profile on a stereotype. Then they justify that by using distorted statistics that they created using the same stereotype policy. The only thing crime figures tell us is that police are policing ethnic minorities instead of policing crime.
- **Glasses:** Crimes are like spots on your glasses. You'll see them wherever you happen to be looking. Because the police spend most of their time looking at ethnic minorities, they end up believing in stereotypes. Instead they should try cleaning their glasses.

- **Circular logic:** Police focus more on ethnic minorities because they believe in a stereotype. And they believe in a stereotype because they focus more on ethnic minorities. Ethnic profiling is based on circular logic.
- **Fishing:** Policing is like fishing. If I spend 90% of my time fishing in a river and 10% fishing in the sea, most of my catch will be river fish. Ethnic profiling is like deciding that fish live mostly in rivers because I caught more there. Instead of realising that the number is higher because I spent most of my time there.
- **Bird-watching:** Policing is like bird-watching. If I spend 6 days a week counting birds in my local park and one day counting birds in another park, I'll see more birds in my local park. Ethnic profiling is like deciding these numbers mean that birds prefer my park. Instead of realising that the number is higher because I spent most of my time there.

c) Explanation of the solution

When explaining the solution it's important to break down how your proposed solution can bring the situation back into line with the values you set out earlier - whether that's creating the communities we want to live in, or a society where individuals feel free to go about their daily lives. If you want your

audience to support a change in law or policy, then your solutions should be structural in nature rather than about how individuals can change their behaviour. Campaigners should also avoid getting bogged down describing detailed policies. That's fine for advocacy towards law-makers, but a public audience will tune out: 'sell the brownie, not the recipe'.³⁷

The way you frame the solution can by-pass the false binary choice of being for or against the police

It's likely that your opponents will try to equate opposition to ethnic profiling with opposition to the police in general. Put otherwise, your opponents are likely to steer public thinking towards a false binary choice where opposing ethnic profiling is equivalent to being against the police. This means your audience is likely to face a false binary choice between being pro-police or pro-ethnic minority. If your opponents frame the debate this way and your audience has high levels of trust in the police, they will feel less free to agree that ethnic profiling should be banned.

Campaigners should frame their recommendations in a positive way. Don't just talk about being against / saying 'no' to / banning ethnic profiling. Instead, give more space to talking about how policing that follows the evidence is helping the police to do a better job of caring for

people in their communities or allowing us to move about freely.

Tip: Campaigners working on police reform in the USA suggest that, in converting narratives into communications products, campaigners could also invite police officers who disagree with ethnic profiling to tell their stories.³⁸ This will help to show your audience that the binary choice is false because there is not a united front among the police in favour of ethnic profiling.

d) Call to action and reminder of past successes

Although your solution is structural in nature, your call to action is meant to show people what they can do to make that solution happen. This could be asking your audience to support a petition, take part in a protest or simply share your content online. It's also helpful to point to past examples of where people have achieved big changes by working together. This is to overcome scepticism in your audience that 'nothing ever changes'.³⁹ This doesn't have to relate directly to your subject - it could be something more generally connected to social justice that resonates with the particular culture or history of the country where you're campaigning.

5. CANDIDATE NARRATIVES

Based on the above analysis, two alternative narratives are suggested. Campaigners could try testing these narratives with their target audience. For organisations on a tight budget this could involve asking acquaintances who have conflicted views on ethnic profiling to read the narratives and then discuss whether these help them better understand the issue or make them more willing to support your solutions.

These narratives should not be considered as final campaign communications products. Narratives form the basis from which campaigners can develop communications products like slogans, shorter messages, personal stories, visuals and press releases.

These candidate narratives provide you with examples of how to create narratives that incorporate the suggestions in the previous section. You should feel free to experiment with the texts. For example, by swapping the metaphors, the examples of harms and the examples you use to give the audience a tangible idea of what you mean when you talk about community life or freedom to move about.

Because the groups affected by ethnic profiling vary from country to country, the candidate narratives refer only to ‘ethnic minority/ies’. Campaigners should adapt the narratives according to the context they are working in, and

choose the most appropriate terms for talking about ethnicity.

The call to action depends on the goals of the particular campaign. Also, campaigners will be best placed to understand what will resonate most genuinely in their given country when it comes to reminding your audience of past successes in the area of social justice. An example of what this could look like is included in the candidate narratives.

a) **Community narrative**

The community narrative invites your audience to think about what kinds of neighbourhoods they want to live in and is designed to activate the underlying values of universalism and benevolence. It encourages empathy by emphasising that we’re all human with similar aspirations about what community life should look like. The narrative also encourages your audience to understand that the job of the police is to help create the communities we want. This means they need to be part of the community themselves and have the trust and respect of the people they serve.

Values statement

Most of us want to live in a place with a strong community. A community that embraces people from all walks of life, includ-

ing diverse religions, ethnicities and sexual orientations. Somewhere where our kids can play together in the local park, where we feel relaxed about walking home at night, where our older neighbours feel comfortable to stop for a chat.

To enjoy this kind of community, we need to know and trust each other and our local police. We need officers who know us and greet our neighbours as they walk their rounds. Officers who feel like one of us, who serve their communities, who take their time to listen to us and who we feel comfortable talking to if we have a problem.

Explanation of the problem

Unfortunately, for many of us this is not what our neighbourhoods feel or look like, especially for those of us from minority backgrounds. The police routinely stop and search innocent people from these communities without evidence, just because of the colour of their skin.

If you know that when you go out you're likely to be stopped by the police for no reason, it feels humiliating. And so, many of our neighbours from ethnic minorities try to go out as little as possible, even if it's just for a chat or to the local shop.

Ethnic profiling makes entire communities look like suspects. This tears apart the fabric of our society, because it takes away the trust and feeling of belonging that we want for everyone in our neighbourhoods.

Why is this happening? Because our police are not trained to follow the evidence. Instead they are trained to go and look for crime where people from minorities live. Police focus more on ethnic minorities because they believe in a stereotype. But they believe the stereotype because they spend more time focusing on ethnic minorities. Ethnic profiling is based on circular logic.

This problem is made worse by the system our police use to work out how well their officers are performing. They check how many arrests they are making. This means our police forces are being trained and monitored in a way that rewards racist behaviour – targeting neighbourhoods where ethnic minorities live, and stopping as many people as possible.

When racism is rewarded by an institution like the police, this is an example of structural racism. Then the media and certain politicians help to bake this racism into our culture by reporting on inaccurate stereotypes about minorities and encouraging profiling to continue.

Explanation of the solution

It doesn't have to be this way. Our government can do three things to address racism, and help the police better serve our communities.

First, police academies could train officers to use their powers only when they have real evidence. The police should only stop someone when they can show facts that give

them a reasonable suspicion that a crime has been committed.

One way to help our officers do this, is to make sure that they fill out a stop form that records the details of the stop. Police can then keep a check on whether they are still stopping too many innocent people or focusing too much on those of us from ethnic minorities.

Police who have started using stop forms say that they have helped them do a better job. By following the evidence, they stop a higher number of genuine suspects and fewer innocent people.

A second way to help our police forces serve us better is to make sure that they get to know and understand all parts of our society. To prevent and solve crime, officers need to understand what's going on in their communities. They rely on locals to trust and talk to them. We are more likely to talk to and trust people like ourselves or who we feel understand us. So our government should recruit officers that represent our multi-ethnic communities. And all officers should learn about customs and habits that might be different in our communities, like body language or dress.

A third way to improve the work of our police is to change the way we measure how they are doing their job. The authorities should ask people in the communities the police serve for feedback, instead of just counting the numbers of arrests. This way, police forces are more likely to focus on working with communities to create the neighbourhoods we want to live in.

Call to action and reminder of past successes

If you would like to improve the way we police our communities, share this post / sign our petition. Just like in the past, when we pulled together to get paid parental leave for men and women / a universal basic income for everyone, we can improve the way our police contribute to create the communities we want to live in.

b) Freedom & respect narrative

The freedom & respect narrative invites your audience to think about how they want to be treated as individuals. If your audience accepts that we should treat each other with a basic level of dignity, and that we should be free to go where we want, it follows that ethnic profiling isn't acceptable.

This narrative doesn't really make people think about how policing is meant to contribute to community life. It's more about when the police should be allowed to step into our daily life and how they should behave when they do.

Unlike the community narrative, this is probably more likely to activate the values of self-direction and universalism. But like the community narrative, it does encourage empathy, because we're nudging the audience to think about our shared humanity.

Values statement

Most of us want to be free to go about our business. Whether that's going to the supermarket, or the subway, rushing to work or stopping in the square for a chat. We want to treat each other and be treated with respect whatever our religion, ethnicity or sexuality. To make this happen, we need to know that police officers are there to protect our freedom, rather than take it away. We should be able to approach them when we choose or need to, knowing they will treat us with humanity.

Explanation of the problem

Unfortunately, many of us, especially those of us from minority backgrounds, don't feel free to move around in their daily lives. The police routinely stop and search innocent people from these communities without evidence, just because of the colour of their skin.

If you know you're likely to be stopped by the police for no reason when you go out, it strips away your freedom and dignity. And so, many of our neighbours from minority backgrounds avoid places like the subway or the bus station, to avoid the police. Even though this makes it harder to pick up their kids from school or get to work. Ethnic profiling holds people down and makes it harder for them to choose their own path.

Why is this happening? The police justify ethnic profiling by pointing to the distorted statistics that they created by focusing more of their time policing minorities in the first

place. The only thing crime figures tell us is that police are policing ethnic minorities instead of policing crime. Ethnic profiling is like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Explanation of the solution

It doesn't have to be this way. Our government can do three things to address racism, and help police better serve our communities.

First, police academies could train officers to use their powers only when they have real evidence. The police should only stop someone when they can show facts that give them a reasonable suspicion that a crime has been committed.

One way to help our officers do this, is to make sure that they fill out a stop form that records the details of the stop. Police can then keep a check on whether they are still stopping too many innocent people or focusing too much on people from ethnic minorities.

Police who have started using stop forms say that they have helped them do a better job. By following the evidence, they stop more genuine suspects and fewer innocent people.

A second way to help our police forces serve us better is to make sure that they get to know and understand all parts of our society. To prevent and solve crime, officers need to understand what's going on in their communities. They rely on locals to trust and talk to them. We are more likely to talk to and trust people like ourselves or who

we feel understand us. So our government should recruit officers that represent our multi-ethnic communities. And all officers should learn about customs and habits that might be different in our communities, like body language or dress.

A third way to improve the work of our police is to change the way we measure how they are doing their job. The authorities should ask people in the communities the police serve, instead of just counting the numbers of arrests. This way, police forces are more likely to focus on working with communities to create the neighbourhoods we want to live in.

Call to action and reminder of past successes

If you would like to improve the way we police our communities, share this post / sign our petition. Just like in the past, when we pulled together to get paid parental leave for men and women / a universal basic income for everyone, we can help the police do a better job of making sure all of us feel free and respected when we move around our neighbourhoods and cities.

GET IN TOUCH!

If you're a campaigner interested in receiving training on values-based framing or would like assistance with or feedback on communications products you are developing based on the narratives in this guide, feel free to contact us. You can email the author (i.butler@liberties.eu) or Liberties (info@liberties.eu). We're also happy to hear about any experiences you might have from testing out the recommendations in the guide.

NOTES

1. See chapter 4 on strategic communications in [Open Society Justice Initiative, 'Challenging ethnic profiling in Europe: A guide for campaigners and organisers', 2021.](#)
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The Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties) is a non-governmental organisation promoting the civil liberties of everyone in the European Union. We are headquartered in Berlin and have a presence in Brussels. Liberties is built on a network of 19 national civil liberties NGOs from across the EU.

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