



Public Education Messaging and Framing Considerations

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LGBT public education campaigns help build awareness and support for nondiscrimination protections. This is especially critical as our opposition actively distorts the truth about being transgender. When developing public education campaigns, it is crucial to use tested messages and strategies that position spokespeople and other messengers to reach our moveable middle. While empowering supporters through public education campaigns is important, to cultivate long-term acceptance among key audiences, adhering to strategies that don't alienate the "conflicted middle" is crucial.

Here are some tips and strategies from the Movement Advancement Project on positioning LGBT people but particularly transgender people in campaign materials and collateral:

- **Emphasize shared values.** Family, opportunity, and treating people with fairness are basic tenets that most people understand and believe regardless of their political leanings or religious traditions. Including messages that build on that common ground aids the moveable middle in understanding other aspects of a transgender person's life. When talking about fairness and equality, it is important to talk about it as an action rather than as abstract beliefs -- that helps our moveable middle see themselves in the role of treating others equally and fairly.
- **Establish the need for nondiscrimination laws.** Most Americans believe that discriminating against LGBT people is already illegal under the law. Public education campaigns must make it clear that a patchwork of city, state, and federal protections means that many LGBT people constantly live in fear of discrimination in employment, housing, and in public accommodations. Emphasize the shared values of hard work, earning a living, providing for oneself and one's family, taking pride in a job well done, and being judged based on performance and qualifications -- and make the point that these values are important to all Americans, including transgender Americans. The best way to establish the need for nondiscrimination laws is to show the story of someone who has faced harm because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Situate transgender people in relationship with coworkers, family members, and in their faith communities.** LGBT people, especially transgender people, are often viewed in isolation from the rest of society. To address this misconception, it is important to depict transgender people in relationship with others to show how transgender people are deeply part of the communities in which they live. That means using images and

video that include both the transgender subject and their coworker, sibling, or faith leader together.

- **Acknowledge discomfort with transgender people or issues.** Particularly for the non-transgender allies in public education materials, it is important to show it is not uncommon to be unfamiliar with transgender people and issues. Acknowledging the discomfort with transgender people helps to neutralize feelings of shame and embarrassment for not already knowing or accepting transgender people.
- **Show a person's journey toward acceptance.** Public education campaigns must go beyond simply acknowledging discomfort with transgender issues. It is imperative to show the “conflicted middle” that it is possible to become a supporter of transgender people. Often times, particularly for our moveable middle, the notion of accepting transgender people is seen as another example of having an “agenda” thrust upon them. Because of that, they retreat and sink even further into their pre-existing views about transgender people. The research shows that the moveable middle are more likely to open themselves up when they are given a model of how someone else grew to become a supporter of transgender issues.
- **Elevate diverse communities in your public education campaign.** Our opposition uses nearly the same argument in every city or state where they have proposed anti-LGBT legislation, or sought to repeal existing nondiscrimination protections. Those arguments are almost always about the impact these laws have on business owners, implications for the freedom for religion, and threats to safety and privacy of women and children in public accommodations. To counteract these arguments, using diverse people representing different members of the community helps counteract distortions by the opposition. Some key community members to elevate include transgender people, non-LGBT allies, law enforcement, doctors and medical providers, business leaders, Republicans, and people of faith.

For in depth explanations of these recommendations, read the Movement Advancement Project's full report [here](#).