Organizer's Packet
Language Matters: Tools for Eliminating Xenophobic Language in Grassroots Organizing

Best Practices
- Be mindful of language. When are the terms foreign or foreign-owned used? Who are they applied to? Who are they not applied to? These terms are often used as dog whistles to signify that these "foreign" people or corporations have ulterior motives that are not in line with American interests.
- Be aware of the United States' own troubled history of corporate imperialism.
- Question who benefits from this type of language and who is marginalized. Who maintains power and influence?
- Recognize the real enemy - corporate overreach/corporate power/corporate consolidation.

Glossary
Many of these definitions have been adapted from definitions on the Racial Equity Tools Glossary website.

Race is a social construct that classifies humans based on shared physical or cultural qualities into categories generally viewed as distinct by society. Race as a construct was first used to refer to speakers of a common language, then to denote national affiliations, and finally to refer to physical traits. Although categories of race have no scientific foundation, race is a powerful construct because of its relationship to, and uses within, systems of oppression as a form of control.[1]

Racism is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination. Racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through the institutional policies and practices of the society and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices. Racism can mean the existence of racial prejudice embedded within social and institutional power(s), a system of advantage based on race; a system of oppression based on race, or a white supremacist system.[2]

White supremacy is the idea that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to people of color and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions. While most people associate white supremacy with extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and the neo-Nazis, white supremacy is ever present in our institutional and cultural assumptions that

---

[1] PBS, Race: Power of an Illusion; Paul Kivel, Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice (Gabriola Island, British Columbia: New Society Publishers, 2002), p.141.

[2] "Racism Defined." DRworksBook, www.dismantlingracism.org/racism-defined.html.

assign value, morality, goodness, and humanity to the white group while casting people and communities of color as worthless (worth less), immoral, bad, and inhuman and "undeserving." Drawing from critical race theory, the term "white supremacy" also refers to a political or socio-economic system where white people enjoy structural advantages and rights that other racial and ethnic groups do not, both at a collective and an individual level.[3]

---

[3] "Racism Defined."
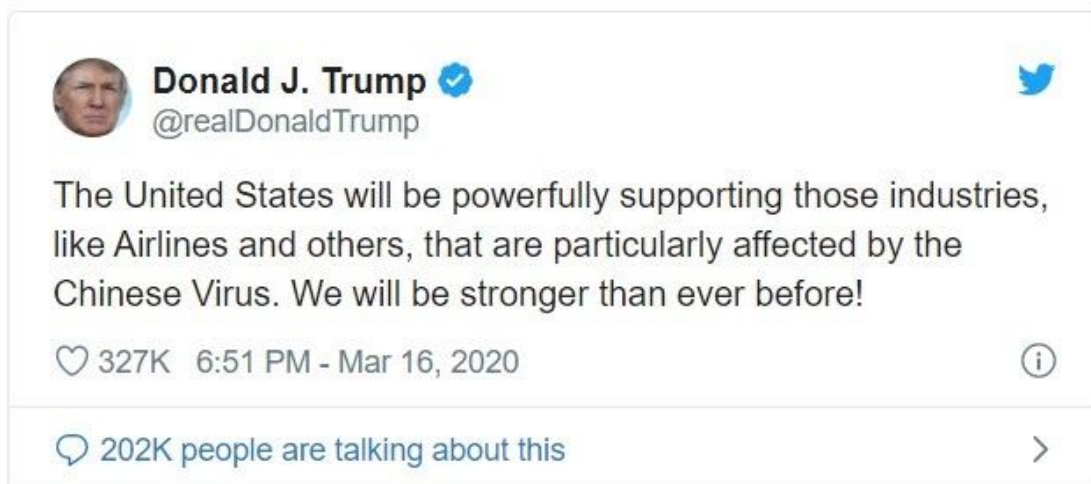
Resource List
America for Americans by Erika Lee
Why Anti-Xenophobia Campaigns May Backfire
Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism & Wrecked
the Middle Class by Ian Haney-López
4 Racial Dog Whistles That Politicians Use (While Pretending They're Not Racist)
https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/06/us/racism-words-phrases-slavery-trnd/index.html

Framework for Recognizing Dog Whistles

> **Donald J. Trump** ✓
> @realDonaldTrump
>
> The United States will be powerfully supporting those industries,
> like Airlines and others, that are particularly affected by the
> Chinese Virus. We will be stronger than ever before!
>
> ♡ 327K 6:51 PM - Mar 16, 2020 ⓘ
>
> 💬 202K people are talking about this >

1. Recognize
    a. Dog whistles seem to be pointing toward one issue, while actually gesturing (or whistling) toward something else. In this tweet, Donald Trump seems to be pledging his support toward U.S. companies, yet by calling COVID-19 "the Chinese virus" he is also whistling at several xenophobic narratives, including the narrative that immigrants/those in foreign countries are more diseased than Americans, and that U.S. companies should be supported, while others are not to be trusted. Through recognizing this dog whistle, we can begin to unpack it.
2. Interrogate
    a. Question the use of xenophobic language
    b. What message is Trump trying to get across by using the language?

       i.   His tweet taps into a long history of blaming immigrants for diseases.

      ii.   He is using China as a scapegoat. He is shifting the focus so that he won't be held accountable for the U.S.'s poor response to the pandemic.

  c. What is the impact of this language?

       i.   Asian-Americans have experienced [increased discrimination](#).

      ii.   This message glosses over the reality that the virus is very much here in the US.

3. Focus

  a. Focus on the real issue

  b. In this example, the real issue is not blaming other countries, but rather:

       i.   Getting adequate testing and supplies out to everyone

      ii.   Getting accurate information out

     iii.   Standing with Asian-Americans against this type of racist language