

# Which messages move?

Results from the Meme Factory's content-driven, audience-focused, social-media exploration of four progressive frames

# Our goals

## Messages -> Media

Take polling paragraphs and transform them into a wide variety of visual content to see how creatively flexible the different messages are relative to each other.

## Analog -> Digital

Distribute visual posts on Facebook to see how these ideas connect with real people, behaving normally, in the “real” world.

## Tailor to audiences

Specifically target two interesting audiences to enable tighter content-audience tailoring. Rather than testing the *same* posts to different audiences, create *different* posts for different people.

# Our content strategy

In previous Meme Factory experiments, we've focused on doing paid Facebook distribution of rapidly-prototyped videos across various audiences.



In this experiment, we focused on building two Facebook pages with distinct demographics, creating dozens and dozens of unique pieces of social-native visual content (memes, charts, quotes, GIFs, and more) for each, and posting to the pages largely organically.

Why? Because we believe that a higher-output creative process will lead to more creative content; that social images are the minimum viable content unit for effective testing: fast, cheap, and expressive; and that tailoring content to audiences reveals the flexibility of message frames more completely.

# Our audiences

## Urban youth

Defined as: "People aged 18-29 who live in urban areas." A "civic engagement" audience.



FB page:

["The Actual Actual"](#)

Some groups interested in this audience:  
NextGen America, For Our Future, March for our Lives.

## Suburban women

Defined as: "Women with at least 'some college' who live in suburban areas." A "persuasion" audience.



FB page:

["Wonder Women Goals"](#)

Some groups interested in this audience:  
Planned Parenthood For America, NARAL, EMILY's List.

# Our process

## Prepare

### **Audience development**

We grew a Facebook pages around both of our audiences and gathered existing qualitative research and consumer data on them.

## Create & Post

### **Meme creation for each message**

Our team generated dozens of pieces of visual content for each message per audience, over the course of a few weeks, and both posted and boosted each one to measure engagement.

## Measure

### **Engagement + persuasion**

Using digital surveys, we tested the persuasive impact of the highest-engagement content from each message-audience pairing.

# Highest-performing content from all 4 message frames

*Message frames and polling-paragraph language sourced from existing Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research work for a coalition of progressive organizations including MoveOn.org, SEIU, Working Families Party, NARAL, Sierra Club, Planned Parenthood for America, and Center for Popular Democracy Action.*

# “Change”

“Our political leadership has divided our country and plunged our government into chaos, and our elected officials continue to sit by and let it happen. We need a change to set our country back on the right path.”

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We must bring the light to them in November.

## "Change" for urban youth

We have to change our history of not turning out to vote—if not the results are on us.



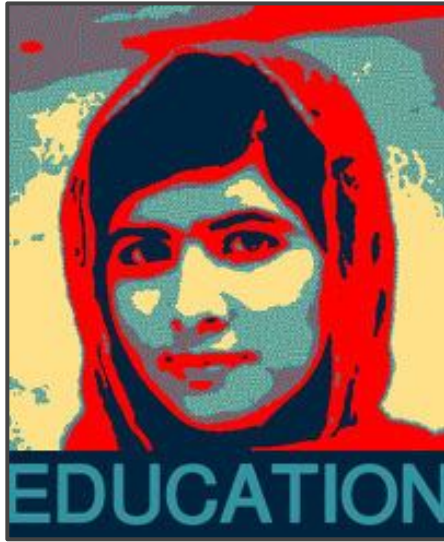
My current feelings about the state of the world



Something needs to change.



## "Change" for suburban women



Malala is so inspirational: education  
does change a person.



TFW you managed to get a  
progressive-as-hell sermon about  
inequality and poverty quoting MLK Jr.  
into the royal wedding



*No matter what I do, literally nothing bad can  
happen to me. I'm like a white male US senator.*

Time's up.



TFW you're the first  
English-African-American princess

**I'm walk -- I'm walking on  
sunshine**



**Because I'm walking  
my-darn-self down the aisle**

A Royal wedding where the  
Duchess-to-be walked herself down  
the aisle: what a dream.

# “Rigged”

“We need a country that works for the middle class and working families, not just the wealthy and big corporations. Though unemployment may be low, the cost of living is high, and too many people are living paycheck to paycheck. Politicians are making it more difficult for working people to negotiate better wages and benefits. We need a change. We need to boldly rewrite the rules of the economy so it works for working families and the middle class again.”

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# This is Matthew Charles

- He is a 51 year old Army veteran
- He spent 21 years in prison for selling drugs
- He was granted early release in 2016, and started his rehabilitated life.
- He got a job, volunteered every week, went to church, and reconnected with family.
- The DA decided to appeal his release and now he's going back to jail.



This is not right.

**"Rigged" for urban youth**

We live in a country that appropriates money to parade around our military like North Korea does but doesn't appropriate money to supporting our veterans. Something seem wrong there?



Ya know, maybe a survivable minimum wage would help...



The UK could have given every homeless person in their country \$140,000 AKA: They could have eradicated homeless.



Get married," they say. "Buy a house," they say. When we're over here hardly able to buy groceries.

**Q: How much did undocumented immigrants pay in income taxes to the federal government in 2015?**

**A: 23.6 billion**

We need an economy that serves everyone paying into it.

| California  | New Jersey  |
|---|---|
| Minimum Wage: \$11.00                                 | Minimum Wage: \$8.60                                  |
| Single-earner annual income at that rate: \$22,880    | Single-earner annual income at that rate: \$17,888    |
| Livable wage for a single, childless worker: \$29,140 | Livable wage for a single, childless worker: \$28,537 |
| Texas   | Florida   |
| Minimum Wage: \$7.25                                  | Minimum Wage: \$8.25                                  |
| Single-earner annual income at that rate: \$15,080    | Single-earner annual income at that rate: \$17,160    |
| Livable wage for a single, childless worker: \$22,942 | Livable wage for a single, childless worker: \$24,440 |

What's "livable" depends so much on where you are, and what's happening. Livable, in this case, doesn't include such extravagances as travel, meals out (ever), or money left over to save: only the bare necessities.

## "Rigged" for suburban women

| HOW MUCH EACH FAMILY OR TAXPAYER GAINS OR LOSES |             |             |             |             |            |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| INCOME GROUP                                    | 2019        | 2021        | 2023        | 2025        | 2027       |
| < \$10,000                                      | -\$79.96    | -\$304.37   | -\$390.49   | -\$456.03   | -\$530.42  |
| \$10,000-\$20,000                               | -\$46.68    | -\$436.04   | -\$550.03   | -\$588.95   | -\$788.10  |
| \$20,000-\$30,000                               | -\$3.72     | -\$414.75   | -\$464.38   | -\$550.42   | -\$743.14  |
| \$30,000-\$40,000                               | \$244.83    | -\$48.37    | -\$153.43   | -\$160.49   | -\$467.93  |
| \$40,000-\$50,000                               | \$470.37    | \$200.92    | \$131.32    | \$109.25    | -\$366.86  |
| \$50,000-\$75,000                               | \$812.98    | \$706.07    | \$605.30    | \$612.06    | -\$138.91  |
| \$75,000-\$100,000                              | \$1,206.62  | \$1,168.77  | \$989.29    | \$1,026.64  | \$71.32    |
| \$100,000-\$200,000                             | \$2,094.76  | \$2,053.00  | \$1,659.92  | \$1,700.39  | \$160.21   |
| \$200,000-\$500,000                             | \$6,508.96  | \$6,373.66  | \$5,241.04  | \$5,584.23  | \$523.03   |
| \$500,000-\$1 million                           | \$21,691.37 | \$20,415.25 | \$15,758.85 | \$16,583.75 | \$1596.71  |
| \$1 million and over                            | \$59,615.38 | \$49,126.71 | \$22,053.87 | \$25,875.61 | \$9,189.19 |

Here's how much families of different incomes are benefiting or losing after the recent tax reform bill. Notice a trend?



When people try to claim that giving tax cuts to the wealthy will "trickle down"

Average cost of a child during its first year of life: **\$12,000**

Average additional cost of daycare: **\$18,000**

Median annual household income in California in 2017: **\$64,500**

...but under proposed GOP legislation,

**maternity & pregnancy services would not be a required benefit for healthcare plans.**

The average cost of delivering a baby without insurance? **\$30,000**

Having no support from a healthcare plan when having a baby doesn't seem like the answer.



# “Freedom/ Protect”

“America was founded on freedom. That means freedom for all, not just for some. Whether it's the freedom to love who you want, the freedom of religion, the freedom to make decisions about our bodies, or the freedom to walk down the street without fear of harassment, discrimination, or even violence – we need to protect these freedoms for all Americans.”

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**THE FACE RACISTS MAKE**



**WHEN THEIR FAVORITE TV SHOW GETS  
CANCELED BECAUSE OF HATE SPEECH**

Yes, we have freedom of speech. No, our  
speech doesn't come without  
consequences.

When a children's show is too  
relatable to everyday life 🐻

**"Freedom/Protect" for  
urban youth**

Politicians aren't hiding their attacks on your freedom.

**STOP TRYING TO TAKE AWAY  
A WOMEN'S RIGHT TO HER BODY.**



**IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.**

**The state of women in  
2018**



We don't  
have freedom  
of the press  
for nothing.



## "Freedom/Protect" for suburban women

**Women aren't free if we aren't free to control our own bodies.**

**Period.**

It really is this simple.



Memo to everyone who wants to take away women's reproductive freedoms:

Truth.



Women running to the polls to protect our freedom like



## Clear faith in our President



Sara Benincasa  
@SaraJBenincasa

I am offering \$300 to the journalist who very seriously asks Trump his opinion on our nation's relations with Wakanda and gets the question and answer recorded live on video. I know \$300 doesn't sound like a lot to some people but I also know what most reporters make so...\$300.

7:58 AM · 13 Jan 18

**...but fact & fiction are hard.**

# “Communities Under Attack”

“Americans of all stripes – including women, people of color, Muslims, immigrants, and LGBTQ people -- are under attack. We need a change. We need to stand up to these attacks and protect our communities.”

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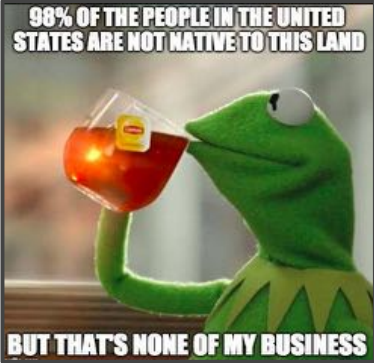


It's nice that you can hold your child, but what about the nearly 1,500 children that were lost by the US government?  
#WhereAreTheChildren



How can we trust the current people in power when they can't even keep track of vulnerable children in their care?

# "Communities Under Attack" for urban youth



Learn how YOUR family got to this stolen land.

It's 2018! Get over your ism's and your phobias and start respecting people.



People aren't illegal and trying to live your American dream shouldn't be a crime.



Less Kanye, more Barack.

# "Communities Under Attack" for suburban women

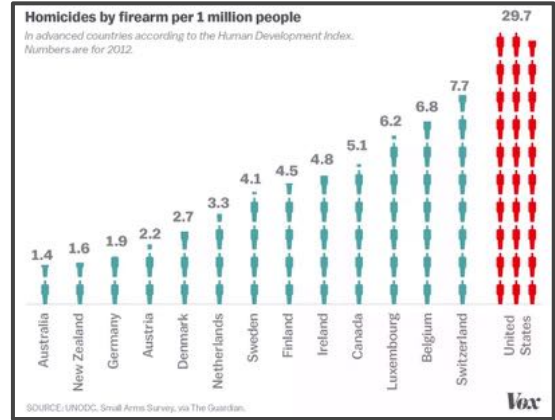
Not in our name.

US lost track of 1,500 immigrant children, but says it's not 'legally responsible'

By Dakin Andone, CNN  
Updated 8:16 PM ET, Sun May 27, 2018



One of these  
is not like  
the others.



Reading the headlines + counting the  
weeks until November = this



You can only pick one.



Diane Guerrero was just 14 when she came home to an empty house one day: her parents were deported to Colombia. No kid deserves to see their family broken up.

# Measuring the most engaging *and* most persuasive messages

# Testing methodology

## Analyze engagement

### Identify the highest-performing posts

Boost each post with \$20 to get sufficient signal. Use Facebook reach, like, and share data to select the most-engaging 5 posts per message-audience.

## Build surveys with Civis

### Craft questions and bundle visuals

We decided on key persuasion metrics and presented content in 5-visual groupings, by message, to mitigate the peculiar specificity of any one piece of content

## Test persuasion by message-audience

### Persuasion for each audience

We surveyed 3,000 people, split between audiences, to evaluate the impact of the highest-engagement content from each message-audience pairing as compared to controls

# Average engagement, shares & reach by message

| Metrics by message                                      | Page        |                | Combined |
|---|-------------|----------------|----------|
|   | Urban Youth | Suburban Women |          |
| Average of total reach as a % of page likes at the time |             |                |          |
| Change  | 114%        | 48%            | 81%      |
| Communities   | 62%         | 31%            | 47%      |
| Freedom   | 67%         | 66%            | 67%      |
| Rigged  | 89%         | 42%            | 66%      |
| Average of share rate                                   |             |                |          |
| Change  | 0.86%       | 1.02%          | 0.94%    |
| Communities   | 1.02%       | 1.30%          | 1.16%    |
| Freedom   | 0.76%       | 1.69%          | 1.23%    |
| Rigged  | 1.14%       | 1.59%          | 1.36%    |

## NOTES ON THE METRICS

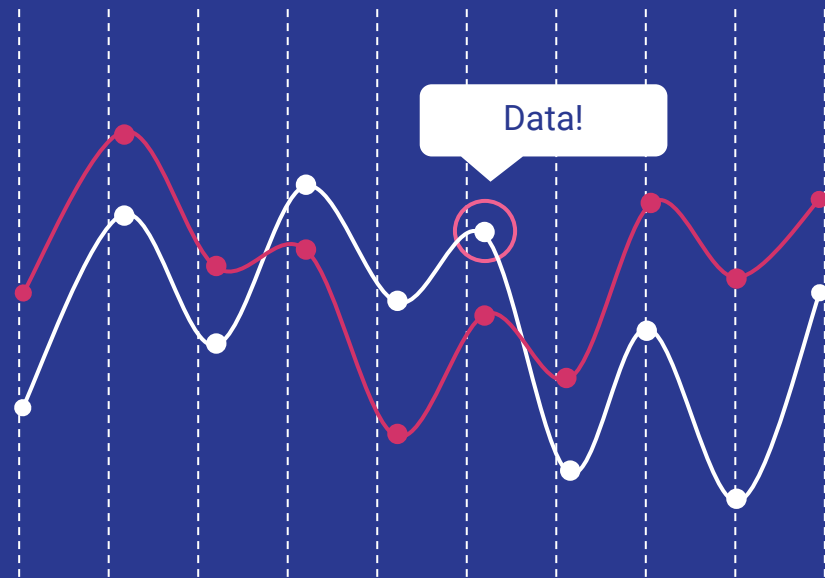
- “Total reach” is an important gauge of how cost-efficiently we can talk about this message, using content, on Facebook
- “Share rate” gives us an additional sense of which messages sparked the most active interest amongst our target audiences
- For Urban Youth, the high reach % for “Change” was driven by two extreme outlier posts, so we discounted that result to some extent.

# Persuasion of most-engaging posts by message

| Message                       | Suburban Women effects   | Urban Youth effects   |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| “Rigged”                      | +4% anti-incumbent sentiment<br>Potential increase to vote intent? | +6% Presidential disapproval (though it<br>boosted positive feelings from<br>conservatives) |
| “Change”                      | +6% anti-incumbent sentiment<br>Potential backlash to vote intent? | +4% vote intent   |
| “Communities<br>Under Attack” | +1% Presidential disapproval                                       | No persuasion detected  |
| “Freedom/Protect<br>”         | No persuasion detected   | +3% Presidential disapproval  |

# Conclusions

Actionable insights  
for each audience,  
for each metric,  
and overall



#1: Balancing reach, sharing, and a variety of survey-assessed persuasion metrics, **“Change”** and **“Rigged”** outperformed **“Freedom”** and **“Communities”** with our social-media audiences.



# Balancing engagement with persuasion

The transition from dense message paragraphs to highly engaging visual content leads to, in most cases, broader messages that are more appealing but carry less argument. That's one of the reasons we believe this process is so valuable: because it forces messages down a gauntlet they'll have to brave soon anyway.

But we need to make sure we don't lose the persuasive substance along the way, so we use survey-based persuasion testing to check our findings.

For example, in this experiment, if we looked at Facebook performance alone for the Suburban Women audience, "Freedom" would have been the clear winner. But when we gut-checked the persuasive effect of the "Freedom" content, we saw that it didn't move the needle. So we eliminated that message, and focused on the best across-the-board performers.

# Highly engaging post: “Rigged” for Urban Youth

## This is Matthew Charles

- He is a 51 year old Army veteran
- He spent 21 years in prison for selling drugs
- He was granted early release in 2016, and started his rehabilitated life.
- He got a job, volunteered every week, went to church, and reconnected with family.
- The DA decided to appeal his release and now he's going back to jail.



The Actual Actual  
Like This Page · May 30 · 🌐

\*\*\*

This is not right.

Hannah Taylor, Denise Hall, Daniel Ortega and 91 others like this.

326 Shares 13 Comments

View 7 more comments

 Tony Geesters And yet we have a 69 out with just getting his high school diploma  
2w

 Marcelius Hines For drugs smh  
2w

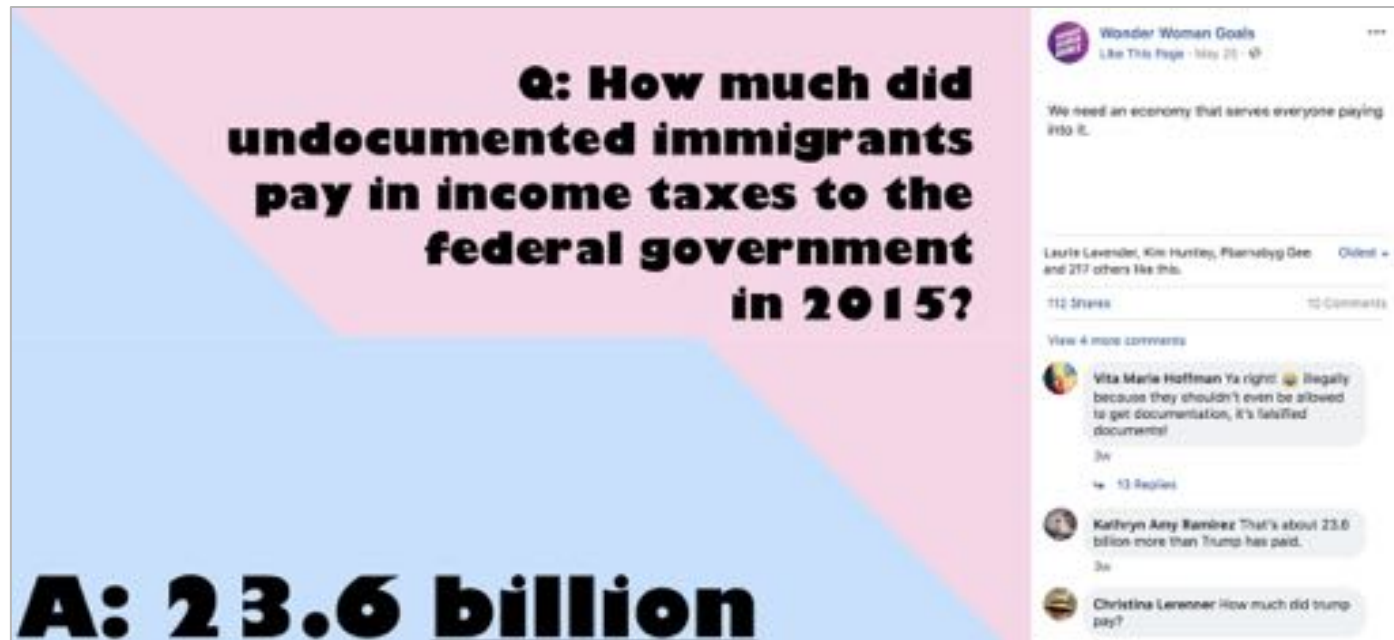
 Ka'Pree Basnight Him Sway Swaavee  
2w

 Pat O'Donnell this mans sentence should be commuted 100%  
2w

 Michael Bolton That's just a corrupt DA that wants to add to his sentencing sheet. Fire the DA since he's playing with others

This post was shared more than 325 times and reached over 25,000 users with only \$20 of boosting behind it.

# Highly-engaging post: “Rigged” for Sub. Women



**Q: How much did undocumented immigrants pay in income taxes to the federal government in 2015?**

**A: 23.6 billion**

Wonder Women Goals  
Like This Page · May 20 · 49

We need an economy that serves everyone paying into it.

Laurie Lavender, Kim Hurley, Pamela Dee and 217 others like this.

112 Shares · 10 Comments

View 4 more comments

Vita Marie Hoffman Ya right! 🤔 Illegally because they shouldn't even be allowed to get documentation, it's falsified documents!

3w · 13 Replies

Kathryn Amy Ramirez That's about 23.6 billion more than Trump has paid.

3w

Christina Lernerer How much did trump pay?

This post was shared more than 110 times and reached over 4,700 users with only \$20 of boosting behind it.

# Highly-engaging post: “Change” for Sub. Women



This post was shared more than 86 times and reached over 3,800 users. All engagement and growth was organic as “bullshit” got the boost denied.

# Highly-engaging post: “Change” for Urban Youth



This post was shared more than 110 times and reached over 8,400 users with \$20 of boosting.

**#2: Humor** was an element in all of the top-performing posts for the urban youth audience, and most of the top-performing for suburban women. (The SW audience seemed to like their humor mildly racy, with light swearing.)

**#3: Informational** content worked as a style for suburban women, who engaged on educational charts and graphs.

**#4: Timeliness** was critical to both groups. If we could add to a conversation the community was already having (about the Royal Wedding or the Kanye meltdown), we would see higher engagement.



**#5: Recognizable, of-the-moment memes** were most popular among the Urban Youth audience — more so than with the Suburban Women.

**#6: Message *flexibility* matters:** the simplicity and resulting extensibility of “change” and “rigged” helped them capture attention.

#7: Since we were imitating organic media production –wider-reaching but lighter-touch on message – our **persuasion effects were relatively small.** (Though significant!)

#8: We did all testing **before the family-separation story** broke.  
It's unclear whether “Communities under attack” would be spiking now, or whether a “Change” or “Rigged” approach to this (horrific) story would still connect more with folks?

**#9: Facebook** changed its rules in the middle of this experiment. We adapted by toning down our content's political-ness dramatically — making cultural markers even more important.

#10: Compared to video developed in previous Meme Factories, this audience-targeted visual content proved much **more shareable**.