

Bridges Not Walls - revised messaging document Jan 7th 2017

Key messages:

Single phrase

- Rise of the far right
- Solidarity
- Action

Sample quote:

"We're here today (on Trump's inauguration day) to show our support for groups under attack - here in the UK, across Europe and in the USA - and to reject the rise of dangerous and divisive far right politics."

Two/three lines:

- Rise of the far right:

This isn't just about Donald Trump. Mainstream media and establishment politicians on both sides of the Atlantic are helping to create a new normal where bigotry and extreme right wing views and language are accepted as an everyday part of life. If this process isn't stopped, history tells us exactly where it leads - to fascism.

- Solidarity

The rise of the far right on both sides of the Atlantic threatens democracy and the fabric of society, and affects everyone - but not equally. It's vital that we all stand together, and right now that means actively defending the rights of our most vulnerable people and communities - muslims, immigrants, people of colour, disabled people and LGBTQ+.

- Action

This isn't going to fix itself. The new normal the far right is seeking will roll back decades of progress on civil rights, gender equality and the environment. It is up to all of us to take responsibility for actively rejecting this. Whether or not we slide into 21st century fascism depends on what we do now.

Additional talking points

- **Rise of the far right**
- The advance of the far right in Britain in 2016 has seen a rise in racist, xenophobic, homophobic, and Islamophobic attacks, and the political scapegoating of migrants, refugees and minorities. *Use examples where possible.*

- **Solidarity**

- Environmentalists and feminists horrified by Trump's denial of climate change and raw misogyny must stand at the front line alongside those communities he has vowed to persecute once in office.
- Ethnic and religious minorities have been structurally marginalised and precarious under the status quo: they are now in imminent danger from violence and explicit political oppression.
- Solidarity means defending the rights of our fellow citizens in every way necessary in the coming years - protecting victims of hate crimes when we encounter these, yes, but also forcefully rejecting *state* oppression of minorities in all its forms.

- **Action**

- It is abundantly clear that our establishment media and elected representatives are not going to mount an effective challenge to the advance of the far right: Theresa May will only say that she looks forward to working with President Trump. Boris Johnson has already suggested that Britain should avoid talking about climate change in case it annoys Trump. Nigel Farage has just been given his own talk show on LBC.
- Bridges not walls is about making a public commitment to fighting the far right at all levels, including the everyday. Here in the UK the Brexit vote has emboldened racists and xenophobes to the point where they feel comfortable with refusing to sit next to Muslims on trains and planes, or to shout at foreign-looking children to go 'back to your own country'. The really frightening thing here is that so far bystanders are typically not intervening. Racists and xenophobes *need to know* that these are niche views which are unacceptable to normal British people - and that means somebody has to tell them. That somebody is you. Silence is compliance, so speak up.

Bridges Not Walls Tough Media Questions and Possible Answers

Where are Bridges Not Walls actions taking place?

- Should have a standard list to roll off to show the action is taking place across the UK, Europe and the US. Need to steer away from focusing on the London action, even though media are likely to focus on that for pictures etc.

(For local media) Where can people get involved if there interested?

- For interviews prior to the action on local media spokespeople need to make sure they are aware of the most local action that people can get involved in, or alternatively should know the website URL to promote.

What exactly are you worried that Trump is going to do?/What kind of policies are you protesting against?

- Spokespeople may just be able to roll off a list of actions and policies that concern them but may be useful to have a list of a few to refer to.

Who are the affected groups you are talking about?

- Muslims, immigrants, people of colour, disabled people, LGBTQ+ and women. (add more?)

How are [specific affected group] specifically under threat at the moment?

- Spokespeople should if possible try to have examples in their head for each of the affected groups about how they are affected by the rise of the far right.
- A suggestion list from Bridges Not Walls might be useful?

How do you define the far right? Is it just a catch all term for things you don't like?

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Are Bridges Not Walls saying the actions of Trump are exactly the same as the actions of the UK government? Or are you comparing him to UKIP?

- eg: People like Nigel Farage have been peddling a story that blames migrants, refugees and minorities for the problems British society faces - low wages, unaffordable housing, the NHS crisis - and the British government have been very happy to go along with this story because it distracts from their own failings. The result of this scapegoating is the same here as in the US - a rise in racism and hate crimes against foreigners and minorities.

What is Bridges Not Walls going to do next?

- Spokespeople have focused on the various groups involved in the action and encouraging people to get involved with those groups if they want to do more.
- Should Bridges Not Walls say that they might be involved in other actions in the future?

What groups are involved in the action?

- Should have a standard list to roll off to show the action has support from a wide range of groups campaigning on a wide range of issues.

Have you been personally affected by any of the issues you are raising today?

- Spokespeople need to make a decision about whether they are comfortable bringing their own personal experiences into their interviews or whether they would prefer to bridge away from this question and just talk about the action.

What right do you have to question the democratic decision of the American people?

- Possibly 'Donald Trump being president is going to affect people around the world, not just in America, but we're not just here to talk about Donald Trump, we're showing support to people affected by the rise of the far right in the UK and across Europe too'

The rise of the far right you are protesting against are a set of democratic decisions by people across the world. Is Bridges Not Walls a protest against democracy?

- Possibly 'No we're here to show our support for groups under attack and challenge elected leaders to do better, not challenge democratic decisions'

The types of issues you are protesting against are going on all the time around the world, from Russia to Saudi Arabia to China. Why protest Trump and not against the actions of those countries?

- Possibly 'Today is Trump's inauguration so we're using that as an opportunity to bring these issues to people's attention, and as British citizens we have a particular responsibility to challenge the rise of the far right in our own country, which is also what we are doing today'?
- Possibly if pressed 'Of course we also stand up for the rights of people fighting oppression across the world, but today is Trump's inauguration so we're using that as an opportunity...?'

Many have seen the rise of UKIP and Trump as a fight back against political correctness. Are you playing right into their hands with the ultimate politically correct protest today?

- Spokespeople should focus on naming affected groups and highlighting that we are protesting to show them support.
- Particularly nasty question but you could imagine versions of it being asked by shock jocks like Nick Ferrari etc.

(For evening interviews and depending on actions of other protests on the day)
[FILL IN PROTEST GROUP HERE] have been involved in violent protest today against the Trump inauguration. Do you condemn those actions?

- Totally depends on your line but have written some suggestions below.
- Possibly 'We're here to focus on Bridges not Walls...'
- Possibly if pressed 'It's not our responsibility to condemn the actions of other groups, we're here to focus on Bridges not Walls...'