



NEIGHBOR PROJECT PROPOSAL
July 2nd, 2015

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CULTURAL STORY:

What we've been looking at...and how we got to where we are now

THE (CULTURAL) STATE OF THE UNION

It's no secret that Americans are caught in a culture war centered around the rights of the individual in regards to their views around everything from the nature of human rights to sexuality and education. At its heart, it's a war of worldviews, of which Americans have many.

Because of this, Americans struggle not just with how we believe, but how to handle the beliefs of others.



"Indeed, America is at war! This war is far more serious and deadly than any physical conflict (like the Iraq war). America is fighting a spiritual culture war. Regardless of the surface issues, the central issue is—God. Make no mistake: America is in the throes of a life-and-death struggle over whether the God of the Bible will continue to be acknowledged as the one true God, and Christianity as the one true religion."

- Dave Miller, Phd

"We are engaged in a social, political, and cultural war. There's a lot of talk in America about pluralism. But the bottom line is somebody's values will prevail. And the winner gets the right to teach our children what to believe."

- Gary Bauer

WHEN IT COMES TO BELIEFS, MAJORITY RULES

A 2014 Pew Research Center survey showed that most religiously inclined groups feel positive toward people within their own system of beliefs. Certain religious groups were rated negatively simply because there were less of them:

- According to the poll, the fact that Catholics and evangelical Christians are large groups and view their fellow adherents positively explained why the two groups were among the most favorably viewed groups in the population.
- Buddhists, Hindus, and Mormons receive neutral ratings on average, ranging from 48 for Mormons to 53 for Buddhists, out of a possible rating of 100.
- The public views atheists and Muslims more coldly; atheists receive an average rating of 41, and Muslims an average rating of 40.
- Fully 41% of the public rates Muslims in the coldest part of the thermometer (33 or below), and 40% rates atheists in the coldest part.

...AND THE MAJORITY IS CHANGING

A 2015 survey of more than 35,000 Americans by the Pew Research Center finds that the percentage of adults (ages 18 and older) who describe themselves as Christians has dropped by nearly eight percentage points in just seven years, from 78.4% in an equally massive Pew Research survey in 2007 to 70.6% in 2014.

Over the same period, the percentage of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated – describing themselves as atheist, agnostic, or “nothing in particular” – has jumped more than six points, from 16.1% to 22.8%.

Additionally, the share of Americans who identify with non-Christian faiths also has inched up, rising 1.2 percentage points, from 4.7% in 2007 to 5.9% in 2014. Growth has been especially great among Muslims and Hindus, albeit from a very low base.

Personal Familiarity With Group Members Linked With More Positive Views

Mean Thermometer Ratings
(0=coldest, most negative;
100=warmest, most positive)

Mean rating given to...	Total	Know Anyone From Group?	
		Yes	No
Jews	63	69	55
Catholics	62	64	47
Evangelicals	61	65	49
Buddhists	53	70	48
Hindus	50	63	47
Mormons	48	53	44
Atheists	41	50	29
Muslims	40	49	35

American Trends Panel (wave 4). Survey conducted May 30-June 30, 2014. REL3a-h. Based on all respondents (including those who belong to the group in question).

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

THIS WILL LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL CHANGE IN A COUNTRY WHERE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT OTHERS ARE DEPENDENT ON WHO YOU KNOW

“According to Pew, knowing someone from a religious group is linked with having relatively more positive views of that group.”

Those who say they know someone who is Jewish, for example, give Jews an average thermometer rating of 69, compared with a rating of 55 among those who say they do not know anyone who is Jewish.

Atheists receive a neutral rating of 50, on average, from people who say they personally know an atheist, but they receive a cold rating of 29 from those who do not know an atheist.

Similarly, Muslims get a neutral rating (49 on average) from those who know a Muslim, and a cooler rating (35) from those who do not know a Muslim.

WHAT'S NEXT ON THE AMERICAN AGENDA: THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION IS SETTING NEW PRECEDENTS

They're the most ethnically diverse generation in American history: just under 60% are white, a record low. They're also one of the most politically progressive generations in decades: they voted for Barack Obama over John McCain by a 2-to-1 margin and opposed the Iraq war by 77% to 21%.

They're disinclined to prolong the culture wars: for the most part, they're comfortable with gay marriage, racial and gender equality, and immigration. They tend to marry later in life, to be highly educated, politically engaged and technologically savvy, and to place a high value on leisure and civic engagement.

They also happen to be the least religious generation of Americans ever.

EMPATHY, NOT AUTONOMY

Because of low religious participation, many have expressed worry that the millennial generation doesn't care about religion --- that they might be causeless, passionless, and without direction. We see something different.

In the absence of a culture war, we see a generation that believes every person should be able to make their own personal decisions about what is good for them.

"Millennials seem reluctant to make blanket black-and-white moral pronouncements about issues they see as complex. They don't only make legal allowances for circumstances, they also make moral allowances for people in difficult circumstances. It's more about empathy than it is about autonomy... "Where principles of fairness come up, millennials want to see equal access to health services, abortion and contraception. They think people should have individual freedom to make decisions."

- Robert Jones, CEO of Public Religion Research Institute

Rather than simply being against religion, studies show that millennials are in favor of individual choice.

"We found that religious involvement was low when individualism was high. Individualism is a cultural system that places more emphasis on the self and less on social rules. Individualism can conflict with religion, especially as religion usually involves following certain rules and being part of a group."

- Dr. Jean Twenge, a psychologist at San Diego State University

APPROACH:

From the Sanctuary to the Social Network

Our campaign will be the first large-scale initiative to capitalize on the millennial generation's changing views on religion and politics through social channels and organic, empathetic conversations. Because this is treading on new ground, we will start with research on how to approach a generation that is redefining the American identity, and how to turn their passion into engagement. We will use the information we gain to create a campaign that is built on a deep understanding of what defines the modern American, and how to communicate that inclusive identity to the general public.

Through a thoughtful, well-researched campaign focused on individual choice, personal dignity, and the inclusion of all religious identities, we will gain the attention and support of the first American generation that exists primarily of people who believe in the power of individual freedom.

Research Process and Tools:

Our research shows that empathy for other people and religions comes from personal relationships and trust, so we won't do typical focus groups or campaigns built on numbers. Instead, we'll build out a list of conversational questions, and have heart to heart conversations with people from different religious communities in order to find out what is most important to them to express to other Americans.

We'll combine these interviews with Contextual Research (executed through desk research and expert interviews) to find out what most effectively moves millennials to share content focused on individual freedom of choice.

First step, Phase I:

We will send an Initial survey to Interfaith organizations that asks, among many questions: "What does it mean to you to be American?" This survey will help us choose potential interviewees and their topics of conversation and develop a pre-production script.

We Are

#allAmerican

THE CAMPAIGN

The Problem

Each day in the U.S., religious minorities, people who may dress or worship different than the majority, feel obligated to “Prove their American-ness” in order to avoid discrimination. But what does it actually mean to be “American” in the 21st century?

A quick search results in photos of football, burgers, and young white men in trucks. These are the stereotypes, and stereotypes lead to discrimination. Where do people of color, people of minority faiths fit into the cultural fabric of American life?

We are #allAmerican

Objectives:

The #allAmerican campaign aims to take advantage of the opportunity that the Millennial mindset on American identity now offers. We will capitalize on this “reset” to re-define what it means to be an American by placing members of minority faith groups into humanizing situations as a way to clearly state that no matter what we wear or how we pray, we are “All American” and we share more in common than not.

Key Results:

- Create a common language and understanding around the millennial generation’s approach to religious diversity.
- Create a platform that allows diverse American beliefs to be viewed through the lens of relatable people that have similar struggles and everyday experiences as other Americans.
- Shift perspectives on what it means to be “American” to include the diverse religions and religious minorities growing in population in the U.S. today.

ACTIVATION

VIDEO: “A Catholic and a Muslim walk into a bar.”

Video production is foundational to this campaign. It’s the most effective way to humanize our subjects and to appropriately tell a complex narrative in a short amount of time. To gain as much viral opportunity as possible, we suggest approaching this topic from an unexpected and under-utilized angle: direct. Instead of feeling awkward about things we don’t understand, we will bring them directly to light in a fun, and ultimately authentic way.

Our interview series will set a lighthearted tone with a serious subject by opening on the stereotypical joke:

“A ____ and a ____ walk into a bar (coffee, juice, dessert, or alcohol bars).”

As in:

- A Catholic and a Muslim walk into a bar and talk about head coverings.
- A Christian and a Sikh walk into a bar and talk about Die Hard.
- A Jew and a Hindu walk into a bar and talk about bacon.

We will take a cue from the popular web series, “Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee”, and structure each interview with the common theme of placing two individuals from different faiths in the same space. We will have each person interview the other with questions we have pre-chosen (and hopefully a few we haven’t). Though this is a model that can scale exponentially, our initial goal is to create 3 short (under 2 min) web videos that are lighthearted and humanizing, with a touch of education.

Potential interview questions to be determined during *Phase I - Research*:

Muslim of any ethnic background and an Arabic-speaking Christian.

1. What is your name? Does it come from your faith's history?
2. Who is your favorite Muppet/Sesame Street character and why?
3. How does your faith inform your Nationality, or vise-versa?
4. Is there anything about your faith that is misunderstood?
5. We both speak Arabic. When you pray, what name do you use for God?

Laila and Harpinder, a hijabi and a dastar-wearing Sikh.

1. Pepsi or Coke? (or some similar thing: pancakes or waffles, soup or stew, toilet paper overhand or underhand)
2. What are you wearing on your head and why?
3. Do you think your religious outerwear changes the way you experience the world?
4. Best Pixar film.
5. What's something that other Americans commonly misunderstand about your faith?

The questions above will be modified based on the results of our initial survey of religious millennials.

While we understand that our interview subject choices will be dependent on a number of factors, we’re suggesting the following three “interviewees” as ideal in order to target every level of Millennial in our first three videos, and increase our potential for shares:

- Two celebrities of faith, between 25-35 years old. Either sex.
 - Rainn Wilson - Actor and founder of Soul Pancake - Baha’i.
 - Maysoon Zahid - Comedian - Muslim.
 - Scott Harrison, Charity: Water CEO - Christian.
- Two people of faith, late high school or early college age.
- Two children of faith, under 9 years old. Either sex. At least one in religious garb.

The style of these videos should be somewhat rough around the edges, allowing our audience to feel like they are taking part in the interviews themselves. We will avoid cheesy and serious. For a Millennial audience, authenticity is key. This can not be a polished and slick ad campaign. Videos must connect on an honest and personal level.

WEBSITE:

The central hub for this campaign can be hosted at <http://weareallamerican.us>, a currently available domain. We have reached out to the owner of weareallamerican.org and [.com](http://weareallamerican.com) (same individual owns both domains) to see if he is willing to part with his domains (set to expire in August). We are waiting for a reply.

The site, in Phase I will feature:

- Embedded videos from the series.
- Potential: Long-form copy - add'l interviews or longer versions of the video interviews, in text.
- Links to outside educational resources.
- A social call-to-action (detailed below).
- "Share-able" resources: social media profile icons, high-quality photography, educational infographics (as the budget allows).

BRAND IDENTITY

A professional logo and brand style guide (including brand fonts, colors, patterns, suggested photo-style) will be developed as a foundational way to develop brand awareness with our audience.

PHOTOGRAPHY

We anticipate a need for high-quality, consistent photography for use on the central website, print campaign, and the social sharables. While the campaign could make use of some stock photography, there is a surprising lack of high quality photos of Millennial-aged religious individuals and we see great potential for the campaign to add extra value to the conversation by making an investment in these particular assets.

Additionally, as a way to expand our own reach during this campaign and keep an authentic look and style to our campaign materials, we suggest approaching the photographer at <http://humansofnewyork.com> to discuss budgets or any potential pro-bono partnership opportunities.

SOCIAL CAMPAIGN:

We'll launch a shareable social campaign based around getting "out" members of all different religious groups to share why they are #allamerican - for instance, Muslim designer Hana Tajima could tweet: "I am #allamerican because of the entrepreneurial spirit instilled in me by my parents."



SOCIAL CAMPAIGN, Continued:

The Cultural Leaders

Millennials value authenticity and relationships, with more than 2/3 of Millennials only making a major decision after discussing it with a few people they trust. Through partnering with social influencers they recognize, such as HONY and “The Fat Jew”, who can bring a humorous element to the campaign, we can present our message through avenues that they already accept as safe to comment, share, and make a splash.

The Activists

We’ll reach out to writers and influencer accounts such as @TheDeansreport who are actively looking to support minority voices and change public perception around them in order to create buzz and conversations.

The Campaign

@weareallamerican is an available social profile on both Instagram and Twitter and can be used as the campaign’s social hub for posts of interesting profiles, infographics, and images of people of faith as well as retweets of those participating in our campaign.

PHASE II:

Additional campaign plans can be developed once a secondary budget is established. Some potential plans to consider:

EXPAND WEBSITE:

Phase I of the website should focus on engagement and awareness. Phase II, after brand awareness has been established, can focus on educating our audience on more details of religious minority groups in America through interactive elements, infographics, and additional written or produced profiles.

PRINT CAMPAIGN:

Potential creative concepts for the print campaign are included in the creative deck and will focus on expanding the public’s perception of people of faith to be more than just a head covering, beard, or worship style and instead focusing on all of the things that make people, people.

RETAIL:

As a good portion of the #allAmerican campaign focuses on outward appearance, the potential for clothing-based retail options is significant. Shirts that say, for example, “Part Buddhist. All American” would spark offline discussions, spread brand awareness, and could be a potential revenue source for the campaign.

Thank You.