

New Black Opps Coalition Releases Analysis on Black Community Mobilization During Trump’s Second Term

New Focus Group and Polling Research Lays Out Messaging Roadmap to Engage Voters Ahead of 2026 Midterms

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Black Opps Coalition, a national research initiative made up of 9 community, labor, and civil rights organizations, released findings from the first phase of a year-long study led by pollster HIT Strategies, revealing how advocates can better understand and mobilize Black voters to defend economic justice ahead of the 2026 midterm elections.

The study – based on polling and focus groups – found that:

- Many Black voters feel collective economic harm from the federal government’s policies – up from 47% in April 2025 to 59% in October.
- Black voters are engaging in resistance activities, but unevenly, with some Black voters feeling much more urgency to fight back than others. 30% of Black voters are highly active “Defenders,” a group that is disproportionately older, highly educated and wealthier. 34% are “Activatables,” those who can be activated to participate more in pushback activities including voting. 24% are “Spectators,” who do not currently see the urgency for Black people to take collective action.
- Barriers to resistance that prevent many from engaging in public resistance activities fall into 3 categories: fear of arrest or retaliation, concerns about lack of leadership, and concerns about the efficacy of resistance.
- The top motivations for Black voters to resist government actions: combatting racism (47%), defending rights and family (35%), and defending American democracy. Motivations to resist vary by sub-group, but must be anchored in collective power, action, and impact.
- Black Opps messaging that connects the dots of economic pain, demonstrates proof of progress from previous movements, and has a clear call to action significantly increases Black political behavior. This messaging makes Black voters +10 points more likely to boycott and +7 points more likely to protest, and increases vote likelihood among Black men by +10 and Black younger voters by +11 points.

“Since the start of this administration, the Black Opps Coalition has been looking into ways in which to best mobilize Black voters to take political actions now that increase their likelihood to vote later,” **said HIT Strategies CEO Terrance Woodbury.** “Historically, Black organizing has helped gain protections and economic opportunity for all, but today, many Black voters are weighing the real risks of resistance and prioritizing self-preservation over collective action. This research helps us understand what’s holding people back—and how to responsibly mobilize Black political power ahead of the midterm elections. By identifying lower-risk, high-impact ways to defend economic justice, we can meet people where they are and support action that protects individuals, families, and our collective future.”

The Black Opposition Coalition has been working since 2025 to explore Black voter attitudes to better understand how to effectively mobilize Black voters to resist government injustice, defend Black

communities and increase Black voter turnout in upcoming elections. This year's coalition selected two issues, split into two phases, to study how Black voters can be effectively activated to defend economic justice and democracy. The coalition members include: Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Way to Win, March On PAC, Hued Strategies, Black Economic Alliance, SEIU, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, Onyx Impact and P68.

Previous HIT research found that 74% of Black voters identified economic issues such as cost of living, rising prices, and the lack of well-paying jobs as their top issue. Black opps research explores how to connect the dots of Black economic anxiety directly to the economic policies of this administration.

Yet, barriers to resistance still remain. About 32% of Black voters fear arrest and violence while 24% have doubts that action leads to change, deterring them from participating in resistance actions in the past year. The report concluded that Black voters need a reason to resist—a compelling “why” is the only way they will engage the considerable risk of resistance. Younger voters, in particular, are more driven by fighting for the next generation than by appeals to democracy alone.

The study found that effective engagement must address these risks directly and offer clear, manageable paths to action. Lower-risk strategies resonate most: 30% boycotted in the past year, and 46% view boycotts as extremely effective. Private actions such as voting, boycotting, supporting Black-owned businesses are seen as safer and more impactful than public protests.

The first phase identified a 5-step messaging plan to activate Black voters to defend economic justice. The five key points are:

1. **Address Economic Pain Points:** Effective messaging should name harmful federal actions and policies and how they specifically impact the Black community. Economic issues including cost and wages are the top issue for Black voters. Starting with government actions that hurt Black people meets Black voters where their top concerns are.
2. **Demonstrate Progress:** Black people that do not think previous resistance activities resulted in any progress are less likely to participate in current or future acts of resistance. Messaging should name examples of collective actions and how they resulted in meaningful progress.
3. **Highlight Motivations:** Black people need a reason to resist –a compelling “why” is the only way they will engage the considerable risk of resistance. Effective messaging should describe what members of the Black community are willing to fight for, including fighting back against racism, injustice and protecting personal rights.
4. **Inoculate the Barriers:** Because the barriers to resistance are considerable, inoculating barriers is the most important message element. Messaging should consider how to mitigate concerns, including risk of arrest, violence, or professional harm and lack of resistance leadership or plan.
5. **Present a Call to Action:** Black people must be asked to do something, but not asked to do everything. Collective action, including but not limited to voting, should align level of risk with the level of urgency.

The study found that after exposure to motivating messaging, 80% of Black voters said they felt empowered to make change on the issues that matter most to their community, compared to 66% before viewing the messages. The increases in perceived community power after exposure to messages show that the messaging successfully reinforces Black voters' belief in their community's ability to drive change on economic issues.

Phase 1 included national focus groups to understand Black voters' views on the political climate, economic pain, and federal actions that harm Black communities, as well as a nationwide survey used to build an Activation Index identifying which voters are willing to fight back and what actions they can be mobilized to take. The research team also tested AI-generated content to determine what messaging most effectively mobilizes Black voters and prepares them for the 2026 election cycle.

The second phase of the study will focus on identifying messaging and strategies that most effectively activates Black voters to defend democracy. Findings from Phase 2 will be released in summer 2026.

About HIT Strategies

As Washington's leading millennial and minority-owned public opinion research company, HIT Strategies helps leaders, brands, and organizations translate their target audiences' values into real-time insights. We understand America's fastest-growing electorate and consumer groups and specialize in targeting communities under-represented in public opinion data, including Black Americans, Latino Americans, Millennials + Genz, LGBTQ+, Women, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders. For more information, visit hitstrat.com and follow [@HITStrat](https://twitter.com/HITStrat) on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

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