In the Hands of *the People:*

YOUR GUIDE TO TELLING THE STORY OF AMERICA @250

Think BIG

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, partisan divisions run deep, and many everyday Americans feel sidelined and disconnected. Those in power are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to make this anniversary about white washed history and a party for the rich and powerful.

We believe the 250th Anniversary can be a moment to tell an authentic, hopeful American story that honors our progress while igniting the will to keep striving for a nation that truly fulfills its founding ideals.

Over the past year, narrative strategists, researchers, and funders have studied the latest polling numbers and listened closely to more than 4,700 Americans across the country to understand what a diverse swath of the country is yearning for.

The result is a simple but resonant call to action that recognizes our role — the role of the people:

IN AMERICA, *the people* ARE SUPPOSED TO BE IN CHARGE.

This core idea reclaims the American story as the story of us: The people. ALL the people. Not the greedy elite. Not rulers. Even during times through history when this has not been true, We the People are still MEANT to be in charge. It's up to us to realize this idea.

We can and must create a more constructive, more inspiring conversation about what it means to live in America today. We invite you to lend your voice, stories, art, and energy to bring to life this research-backed effort to move hearts, shift culture, and shape our collective American future.

In America, the people are supposed to be in charge.

What this idea means

It's not a slogan, but shorthand for two deeply held American beliefs:

- → **From the Ground Up.** People across the country share a deeply-held belief in bottom-up approaches — a sense that ideas and action should rise from the grassroots rather than be handed down from above.
- → **A Voice, A Say, and Real Respect.** At its core, this idea is about empowerment and agency — the belief that ordinary people have a right to be heard, to have influence, and to be treated with genuine respect in shaping the world around them.

How to use it

The power of this big idea isn't just in the simple fact or assertion. The power lies in the stories we can tell grounded in this idea.

We tested different framing through a nationwide survey of over 4,500 people and identified three elements of the overarching narrative — ***In America, the people are supposed to be in charge*** — that deeply resonate.

1. **America's defining story.** Time and again, it's been everyday people — not the wealthy and powerful — who have moved this country forward. The creativity and agency of everyday people is America's defining story.
2. **The people means all of us.** The idea that the people are supposed to be in charge places the collective "us" at the heart of what America is. It's about shared purpose, not total agreement.
3. **It's up to us.** A reminder that America is a place where each person has a role to play and a responsibility to contribute toward an America of, by and for the people.

Remember, Americans are hungry for a conversation about the 250th Anniversary that acknowledges that there is progress to celebrate and much more to fight for. Use these elements and core beliefs as you develop your strategy and messages throughout the year.

Check out the complete **In the Hands of the People** guide for more details, real-world examples, and our full methodology. Have questions or need additional resources? Contact us: team@thinkbigalliance.org.

> **Interviewer:** *What should we do with this anniversary?*
>
> **Interviewee:** *Remind everyone that the people are in charge, that we, our voice does count."*
>
> – CONSERVATIVE, SUBURBAN TEXAS

> *...The individuals that we are, there's so many of us, we get to determine the state of things, rather than the top determining the state of things . . . I feel personally challenged by [this idea] because of the state of our politics. But yeah, I kind of feel called to action."*
>
> – LIBERAL, GEORGIA

IN AMERICA, *the people* ARE SUPPOSED TO BE IN CHARGE.

Not a slogan, but shorthand for two deeply-held, interconnected American beliefs:

- → From the ground up
- → A voice, a say, and real respect

Remember: It's a goal, a work in progress that we can both celebrate and fight for.

Ways to emphasize elements of the story **to bring this idea to life:**

AMERICA'S DEFINING STORY	THE PEOPLE = ALL	IT'S UP TO US
→ Our founding ideal. → Our history of making it real. → America's task ahead.	→ Our differences make us stronger. → We come together enough to work together.	→ We have agency and responsibility. → Together we have power.
Metaphor and Image Examples: *Iconic, inspirational American imagery.* → Declaration of Independence and founding ideals → Civil rights → Unions and worker power	**Metaphor and Image Examples:** *America, in all our diversity.* → Potlucks, gatherings, and community building → Ways of showcasing contributions, diverse skills and knowledge → Activities with shared purpose	**Metaphor and Image Examples:** *Images of cooperation, successful outcomes.* → Attending a town hall or passing a petition → Restoring a playground or planting a community garden