

Red Recruitment in Braver Angels: A Panel Discussion

The following represents a summary of a panel discussion about Red recruitment hosted by the Braver Angels Ambassadors on May 25, 2021

Participants

Linda Beck moderated the panel that included:

- Randy Freeman (Red)
- Carlos Hernandez (Red, whose introduction is missing due to recording issues)
- David Iwinski (Red)
- Franklin Ruff (Red)
- Maxim Schrogin (Blue who shared what he has learned about Red recruitment)

Major Points

Red Perspective

- We live in a "Blue world"; most newspapers, entertainment, and academics lean blue. To be a "Red" in such a world is courageous!
- Many Reds are not eager to meet with Blues because they feel that Blues are arrogant, elitist and trying to change their opinions on the issues. They don't trust the motives of their Blue counterparts. Reds don't feel they need to be "fixed"! Reds feel that Blues talk down to them. Reds feel their opinions are ignored or not acknowledged by Blues when in conversation. Reds have better things to do with their time.
- Reds do want to make the country better and do the right thing. They see themselves as keeping the Blues from "driving us off the cliff".
- Many Reds believe that the members in Braver Angels are there to change the Reds, not to listen and learn.

How to Bring in More Reds

- Language and activities
 - Know your audience; if mixed be neutral, if color different than your own speak with this in mind.
 - Focus on the goal of Braver Angels: change perceptions of the other side vs. their ideas on policy in an attempt to depolarize the "heat" and reactivity of both groups.
 - Speak plainly without speaking down.

- Speak with sincerity, humor, and self-doubt.
- When listening, suspend judgment.
- Consider changing titles for programs; for instance for debates instead of discussing "gun ownership", title it "Second Amendment Rights"! This will attract a redder audience.
- Consider adding more activities with a Red perspective. As an example, the last film discussion was on the documentary "No Safe Space" about the protests against inviting right-wing speakers on college campuses.
- When on 1:1s, one good tool would be to ask one person to outline their perspective on an issue for 5' and then give the other participant a minute to summarize what was said. This will promote listening and understanding vs persuasive dialog.
- Speak with sincerity and conviction as well as using stories. What has been your own experience in Braver Angels? Are you now seeing more things that you may have in common vs. different? Are you gaining any different/better impression of Reds
- Specific measures
 - Ask blues to bring a red to a meeting or activity.
 - Reach out to other audiences in your region: junior colleges, gun clubs, religious organizations with a Red tilt (conservative synagogues, fundamentalist denominations) especially in suburban and rural areas, minority groups leaning red, police organizations, VFW and American Legion chapters.
 - Consider having a Red and Blue speak together and share their experiences.