



DEFINE
AMERICAN

HARMONY LABS

Part 1:
Strategies for Deepening
Engagement with Moveable Audiences

MOVE THEM OR LOSE THEM

Findings from a 2023-2024 research partnership between Define American and Harmony Labs to understand the patterns of people who are moderate and open to change on issues concerning immigrants and immigration policy.

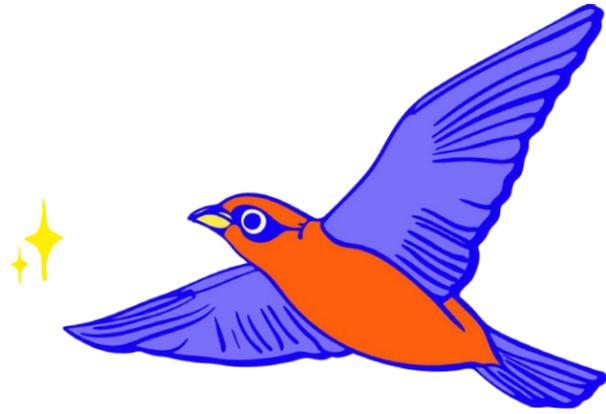


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Workin' Moms (courtesy of Netflix)

Executive Summary

The Audiences

Taking Responsibility

This audience responds to stories that emphasize interpersonal drama, family, and fairness in the way people are treated. Media with light-hearted, relatable concepts—like *The Kelly Clarkson Show*—can be leveraged to introduce immigrant characters in everyday roles that feel familiar and approachable.

Doing My Own Thing

With a preference for autonomy and rebellion, this audience connects with stories of self-determination and individuality. Content highlighting immigrant resilience and independence, where immigrants are portrayed as forging new paths—like in *Shark Tank*—appeals to this audience.

Following The Plan

With a strong interest in safety, order, and established roles, this audience prefers media featuring law enforcement, heroes, and relatable, supportive storylines. Stories with immigrants as protectors or valuable contributors to community safety work well, as seen in shows like *Law and Order*.

Getting It Done

Achievement-oriented, this audience appreciates action—driven, gritty narratives that showcase personal growth and family loyalty. Depicting immigrants in Do It Yourself (DIY) storylines, with agency and resilience, aligns well with their values.

Where to Reach Them

Our research reveals that national news is less important for these audiences than it is for Base and Opposition audiences. Instead, social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, X, TikTok, and Instagram are shaping their worldviews along with entertainment television and programming of streaming services like Netflix and Disney+.

How Moveable Are They?

A highly moveable audience across all treatment conditions, **Taking Responsibility** seems ready to move toward pro-immigrant perspectives.

Following The Plan is ready to imagine better futures for immigrants if their own lives benefit, too.

Doing My Own Thing knows the problem exists, but has a hard time being told what to do (like moving toward a positive future).

Getting It Done sees a problem and is ready to take action and make a change for the better, even for the undocumented immigrants.

Insecure (courtesy of HBO)

Overview

Define American set out to better understand the “Moveable Middle”—people in the U.S. who, with the right approach, could shift toward pro-immigrant attitudes and actions.

Partnering with Harmony Labs, we analyzed a year’s worth of media consumption data to uncover how these audiences engage with content daily and where opportunities exist to shape their perspectives.

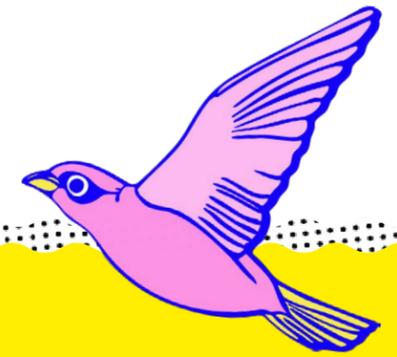
This report maps out four key Moveable Middle audiences and offers a strategic roadmap for reaching them. By meeting people where they are and aligning with their values, we can drive deeper support for immigrant communities across media and culture.

Research Questions

- Who is the Moveable Middle?
- How do immigrants and immigration show up in the audience’s media ecosystems, and what does it say about audiences’ perceptions of immigrants?
- How might this exposure affect the audience’s beliefs, values, and attitudes regarding immigrants and immigration policy?
- What media content ecosystems around immigrants activate the audience?



**Scripted TV
Film
Social Media
Online/TV News**



Target Narrative

Define American and Harmony Labs, with guidance from an external advisory board, developed a target narrative focused on the Moveable Middle. Centered on cultural rather than political indicators, this narrative aligns with Define American's belief that cultural change drives policy change. The following statements outline the three core areas used to assess audience shifts toward or away from pro-immigrant-belonging ideologies.

Right now

Immigrants do not fully belong and are not able to lead the lives they choose in the United States.

To change that

We should make certain that in the United States every immigrant fully belongs and can choose their own path.

When these changes happen

Everyone in the United States will feel a deep sense of belonging and benefit from a fuller, richer society.



Mayor of Kingstown (courtesy of Dennis P. Mong Jr./Paramount + © 2022 Viacom International Inc.)



Bob Hearts Abishola (courtesy of CBS)



Methods

Define American partnered with Harmony Labs to analyze how moveable audiences engage with media featuring immigrants and immigration to better understand their values and identify potential media-based opportunities for intervention.

Harmony Labs used a values-based methodology, focusing on core human values rather than political or demographic factors, to map and engage audiences moderate on immigration who are significant media consumers. This approach began with a survey of 2650 participants to understand audience segments based on core human values rather than solely political or demographic lines. They segmented the audience into distinct categories, each with unique media consumption patterns and values. Harmony Labs analyzed media engagement data across TV, film, digital, and social media platforms. This helped pinpoint where and how these audience segments interacted with immigration narratives, uncovering opportunities for culturally resonant storytelling.

The testing phase involved two rounds of media experiments to determine the narrative elements most effective for moving the middle audience toward a pro-immigrant stance. In the first round, Define American and Harmony Labs analyzed a broad spectrum of existing media featuring immigrant themes to identify what initially resonated with these segments. This collaborative, iterative approach helped us refine our understanding of story features that resonate across segments, providing a clear path for future media strategies aimed at fostering empathy and understanding for immigrants among Moveable Middle audiences.

For a deeper dive into the methodology behind Harmony Labs' research for the *Move Them or Lose Them* series, go to DefineAmerican.com/research/Move-Them-Or-Lose-Them

Knowing the Audience

We believe that powerful storytelling can shift perspectives and create lasting change. Understanding who we are speaking to, where they spend their time, and what resonates with them is essential to building narratives that make an impact.

In this first installment of our research findings with Harmony Labs, we dive deep into the media habits of the “moveable middle” — those in the moderate middle who have the potential to shift toward pro-immigrant attitudes and actions. This foundation allows us to design narratives that resonate and persuade, meeting people where they are in their media landscapes.



Black Panther (courtesy of Marvel Studios)

We discovered four moveable audiences:



The View (courtesy of ABC)

1

Taking Responsibility

Social rule-followers, interested in culture and invested in their local communities.



Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris (courtesy of Prime)

2

Following The Plan

Church-goers who respect authority and are interested in helping others.



Avengers: Infinity War (courtesy of Marvel/Disney)

3

Doing My Own Thing

Autonomous pleasure-seekers interested in fun, play, relaxation, personal growth, and fandoms.



Mayor of Kingstown (courtesy of Paramount+)

4

Getting It Done*

DIY go-getters, interested in action and practical solutions.

*Over a quarter of this audience are immigrants themselves.



Taking Responsibility

Social rule-followers, interested in culture and invested in their local communities.

This audience gravitates toward stories centered on interpersonal drama, family, and fairness. They respond to narratives that highlight doing the right thing and treating people with dignity.

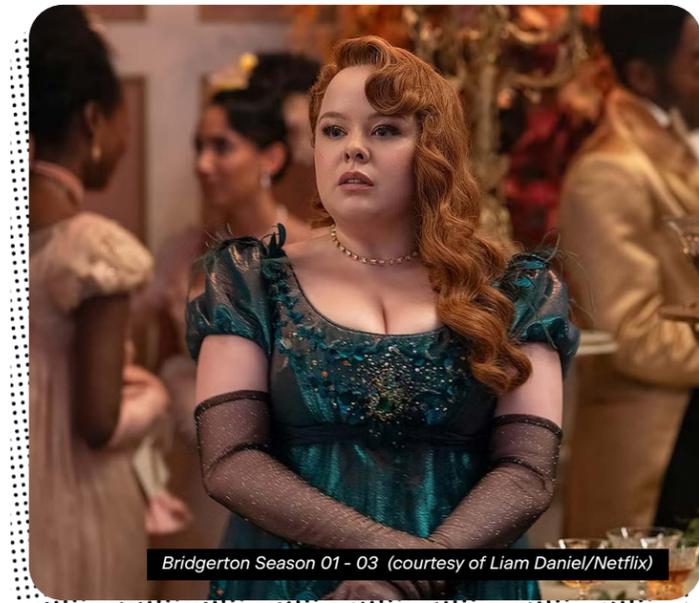
Lighthearted, relatable media — like The Kelly Clarkson Show — can introduce immigrant characters in everyday roles that feel familiar and approachable, fostering empathy and connection.

✦✦ **Values**
Order and Equity

✦✦ **Tone**
Light-hearted, Dramatic, Aspirational

✦✦ **Attitude**
Neighborly and Conversational

✦✦ **Likely To Be**
Ages 35-50 and 65+, Black, Latine, Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI), Women



Bridgerton Season 01 - 03 (courtesy of Liam Daniel/Netflix)

Actions

Their heroes take lead on solving personal and family-centered dilemmas.

Platforms

Facebook YouTube

Genres

Business News, Political Comedy, Informative, Prestige Entertainment, Skeptical Takes, Fun with Celebrities

Media

Yahoo Finance, The View, Kelly Clarkson Show, Real Time with Bill Maher, Workin' Moms, Bridgerton, Snowfall, Insecure

Do

- Lean into culture
- Be personal and conversational
- Empower and inspire to action
- Use multiple presenters

Don't

- Lecture them or take an authoritative tone
- Ignore their need for order and stability
- Assume that they agree with the base on immigration

2

Following the Plan

Church-goers who respect authority and are interested in helping others.

This audience values safety, order, and tradition, preferring media that features law enforcement, heroic figures, and supportive communities.

Stories that showcase immigrants as protectors or essential contributors to community well-being — like those seen in Law & Order — resonate deeply with them.



Values

Order and Helping



Tone

Predictable and Comfortable



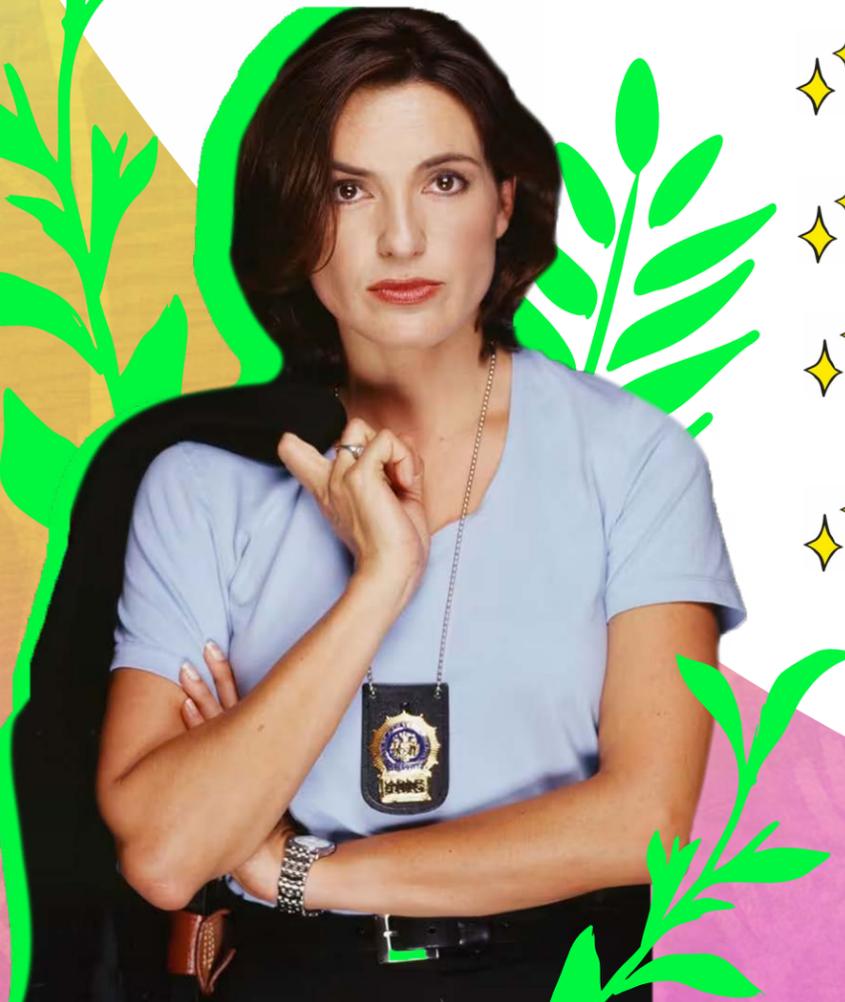
Attitude

Heartwarming, Clear “Good” vs. “Bad”



Likely To Be

Ages 50+, Women



Actions

Their heroes take charge, protect the community, resolve conflict and restore safety.

Platforms



Genres

Left & Right News, Got Talent, Practical (Ensemble Cast), Seeking Deals, Safety in Dangerous World

Media

Chicago Med, Grace and Frankie, America’s Got Talent, Mrs. Harris Goes to Paris, Heartland, The Chosen

Do

- State the problem and the solution
- Show who is in charge and how they bring order and safety
- Feature families, groups and communities

Don't

- Leave things open-ended or unresolved
- Feature distrust in leaders or broken systems
- Forget about the importance of spirituality



Doing My Own Thing

Autonomous pleasure-seekers interested in fun, play, relaxation, personal growth and fandoms.

This audience prioritizes independence and rebellion, connecting with stories of self-determination and forging one's own path.

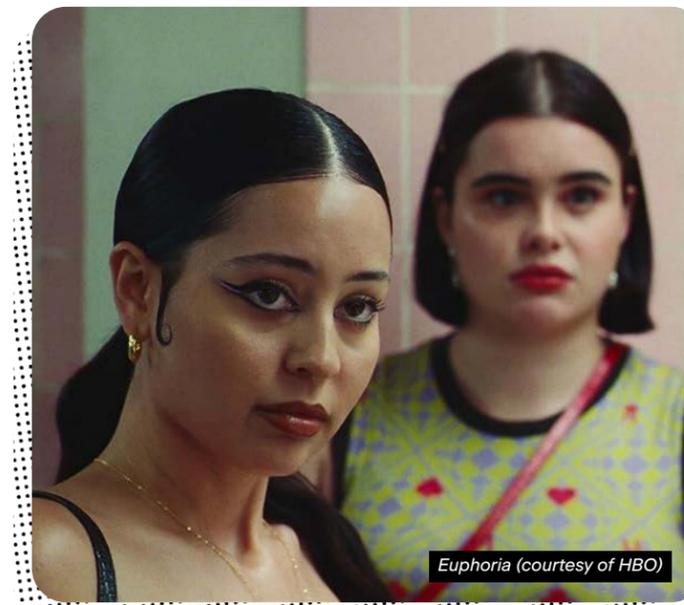
Content featuring immigrants as trailblazers — such as contestants on Shark Tank — aligns with their appreciation for ingenuity and perseverance.

✦✦ **Values**
Adventure and Isolation

✦✦ **Tone**
Aspirational, Satirical, Off-beat

✦✦ **Attitude**
Irreverent and Fun

✦✦ **Likely To Be**
Ages 18-50, Women



Actions

Their heroes are rebels who challenge conformity and forge their own paths.

Platforms



Genres

Business and Alt News, Skeptical Takes, Fun with Celebrities, Informative, Futuristic, Gaming

Media

Mr. Beat, Vice News, The Kardashians, Rick and Morty, Avengers: Infinity War, Euphoria

Do

- Give a vision of a fun and free future
- Feature international appeal
- Show creating change as rebellion against the status quo

Don't

- Expect them to be motivated by community goals
- Tell them what to do or think

4

Getting It Done

DIY go-getters, interested in action and practical solutions.

This audience is driven by achievement and grit, gravitating toward action-oriented narratives that emphasize personal growth and family loyalty.

Depicting immigrants in hands-on, DIY storylines — where they take charge and overcome challenges — reinforces their values.

Notably, over a quarter of this audience is made up of immigrants themselves.

◆◆ **Values**
Achievement and Order

◆◆ **Tone**
Suspenseful, Gritty,
Action-Packed

◆◆ **Attitude**
Loyal and Protective

◆◆ **Likely To Be**
Ages 18-34, Black, Latine,
AAPI and Indigenous*,
Immigrants

*Small sample size
for Indigenous people



Actions

Their heroes are jack-of-all-trades that use common sense to restore order and safety.

Platforms



Genres

Business and Alt News, Skeptical Takes, Fun with Celebrities, Informative, Futuristic, Gaming

Media

Forbes, Breaking News, Top Gun: Maverick, Shotgun Wedding, Ride Along, Tex Mex Motors, FUBAR, Mayor of Kingstown

Do

- Use messengers with a Maverick vibe
- Give practical actions
- Emphasize individual action as a path to greater respect and acknowledgement

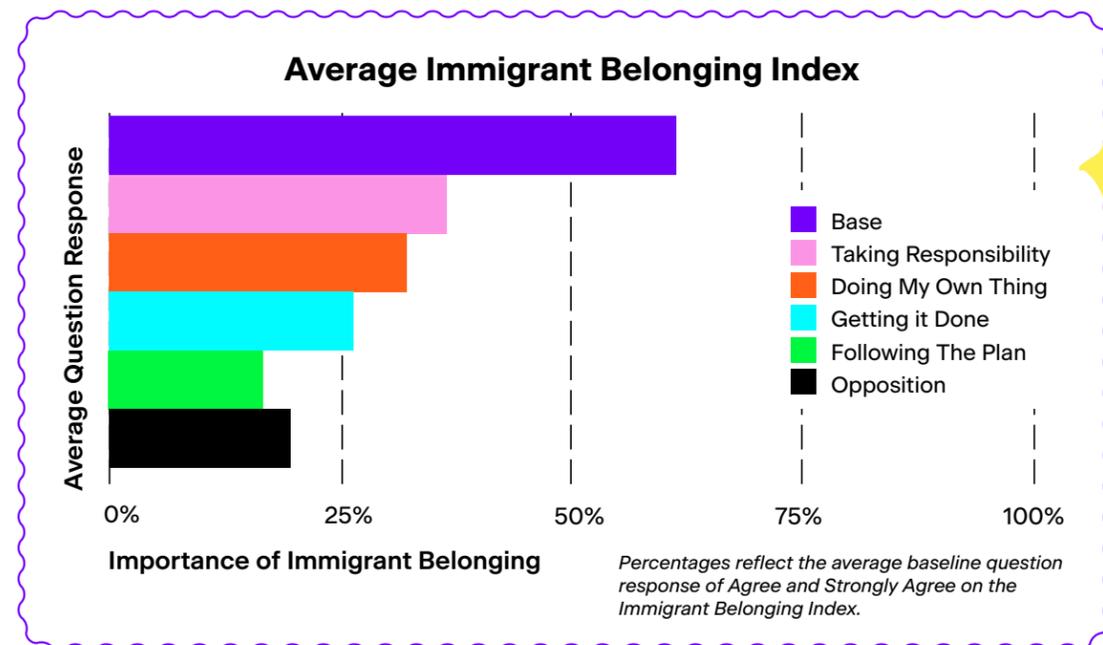
Don't

- Talk to them like they are part of a crowd
- Forget about their need to lead
- Underestimate their interest in morally complex characters or storylines



Importance of Immigrant Belonging by Audience Segment

The Moveable Middle audiences hold a variety of opinions and beliefs about immigration but immigrant belonging is not a central concern – nor is it for pro-immigrant supporters.



Their media confirms their worldviews.

The Moveable Middle seeks out stories that confirm their worldviews across all mediums, ones that align with their current perspectives.

If we want these audiences to believe something different about immigrants, we have to be prepared to work within their media ecosystems and meet them where they are.

Where They Get Their Stories

Our research reveals that national news is less important for these audiences than it is for Base and Opposition audiences. Instead, social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, X, TikTok, and Instagram are shaping their worldviews along with entertainment television and programming of streaming services like Netflix and Disney+.

When it comes to news, though, opposition narratives dominate the Moveable Middle's media.

Digital News

Opposition centered narratives had **2.5x more** daily reach than base centered narratives



TV

Opposition centered narratives had **1.19x more** daily reach than base centered narratives



The Kelly Clarkson Show (courtesy of Weiss Eubanks/NBCUniversal)

What's next?

Part One is just the beginning.

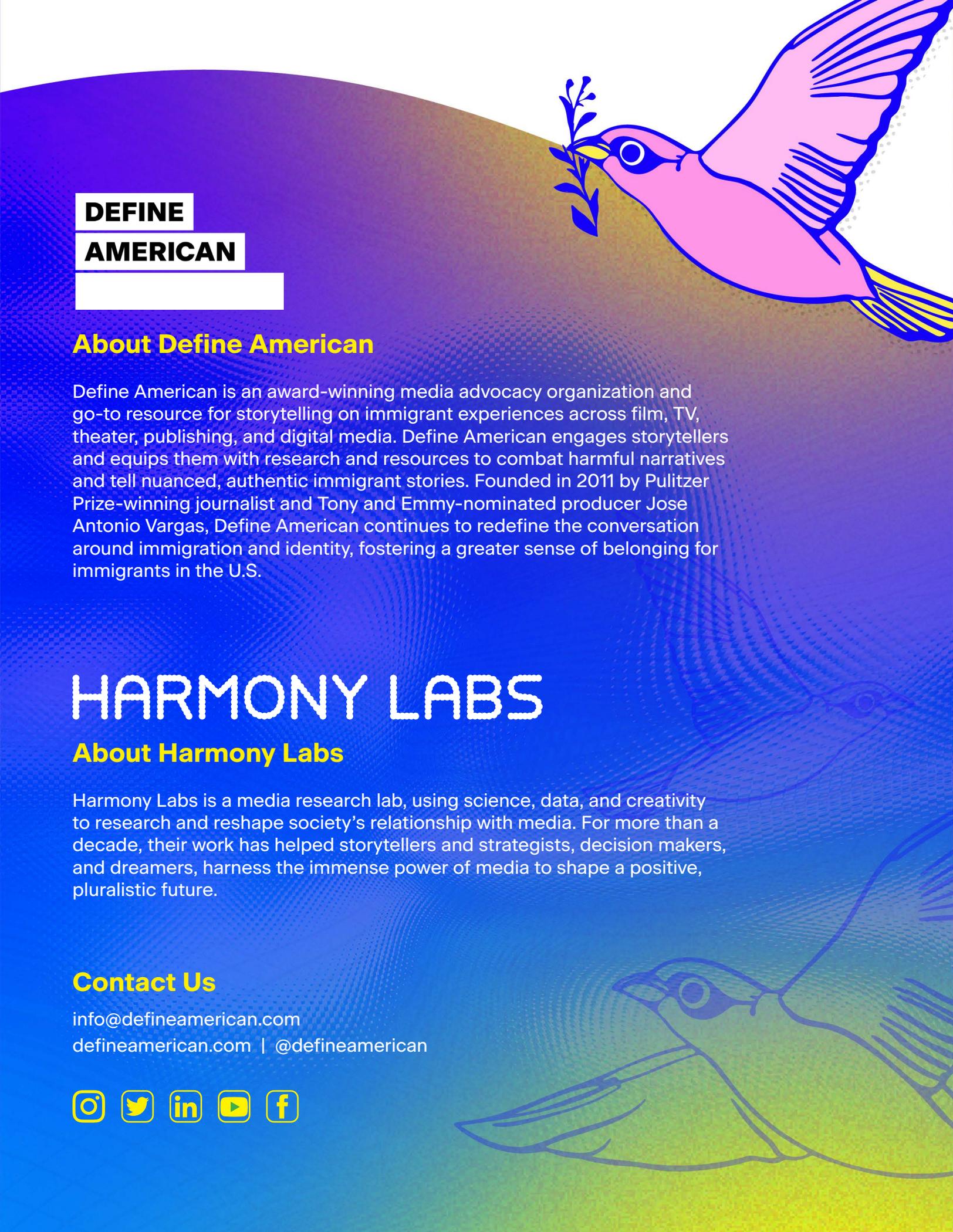
In future installments of the Move Them or Lose Them series, we'll explore how to craft narratives that move the needle on immigration issues and share strategies for reaching these audiences effectively across different platforms.



For now, understanding the media behaviors and values of the moveable middle is the first step toward calibrating our narrative strategies for more effective narrative change.



Grace and Frankie (courtesy of Netflix)



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About Define American

Define American is an award-winning media advocacy organization and go-to resource for storytelling on immigrant experiences across film, TV, theater, publishing, and digital media. Define American engages storytellers and equips them with research and resources to combat harmful narratives and tell nuanced, authentic immigrant stories. Founded in 2011 by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and Tony and Emmy-nominated producer Jose Antonio Vargas, Define American continues to redefine the conversation around immigration and identity, fostering a greater sense of belonging for immigrants in the U.S.

HARMONY LABS

About Harmony Labs

Harmony Labs is a media research lab, using science, data, and creativity to research and reshape society's relationship with media. For more than a decade, their work has helped storytellers and strategists, decision makers, and dreamers, harness the immense power of media to shape a positive, pluralistic future.

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