# Roots Beyond Race: Story Starters

The APM Research Lab's Roots Beyond Race project provides the most comprehensive portrait of Americans' identity available anywhere. We go beyond the broadly constructed racial categories that often frame discussions of race and ethnicity in the U.S. to reveal our incredibly varied populations and histories. Here is a list of potential story ideas for reporters and stations employing the Roots Beyond Race data:

1. **Mixed-race**. The Roots Beyond Race data reveal just how many people cross racial, ethnic, and cultural barriers in the United States. Reporters can see the actual numbers behind the nuanced and complex racial identity of the nation and the specific communities they cover. We especially envision this as a tool that provides important context to reporting on immigrant and emerging communities.

2. **Regional identities and stereotypes**. Roots Beyond Race illustrates the actual numbers driving regional heritage identities. For example, the Upper Midwest is home to a large population that claims German ancestry. This is a good starting point for human interest stories about why and how people continue to strongly adhere to those identities. How do changing demographics impact these well-established identities?

3. **Unique and distinctive populations**. The Roots Beyond Race tools facilitate exploring the distinctive populations in each state. Minnesota, for example, has the highest percentage of residents who claim Swedish heritage in the nation. But Minnesota is also home to the highest percentage of Somali and Liberian residents in the nation, and the second highest percentage of Hmong, Ethiopian, and Chippewa/Ojibwe residents. How do these results complicate traditional understandings of a state's identity? How and why did different heritage groups concentrate where they did?

4. **Economics of state's cultural distinctions**. Reporters could explore the economic implications of the data collected in Roots Beyond Race. Building on numbers two and three above, how does a state's cultural identity drive tourism and cultural-specific economies? What about in the case of distinctive populations within a state that differ from the dominant cultural identity?

5. **Complicating racial labels**. Broad racial labels are a common lens in news stories—often to demonstrate the inequities between White Americans and populations of color in terms of healthcare, economic status, education, etc. Roots Beyond Race, however, demonstrates that these racial labels do **not** mean the same thing from state to state. The largest Asian/Pacific Islander heritage group in California, for example, is Chinese, while in Florida, it is Asian Indian; in Minnesota, it is Hmong; in Nebraska, it is Nepali; and in Nevada, it is Filipino. Different communities necessarily have different arrival stories (e.g. H1-B visa arrivals vs. refugees), with long-reaching implications after people settle in the United States. With Roots Beyond Race, we aim to help reporters to add nuance and depth to stories that use racial lenses.

6. **Diversity and inclusion efforts**. The Roots Beyond Race tools allow users to discover the composition of states' populations by racial and heritage groups. One way to utilize this data is to examine major institutions (such as state governments) and large organizations or employers to determine if their staff is representative of their state's population. If not, which groups are overrepresented, and which are underrepresented? Are there current efforts in place to make staff more inclusive and representative? How successful have they been?

7. **Representation and 2020 Census**. The information collected in Roots Beyond Race can help state leaders better *understand* their populations, thus creating opportunities for policymakers to better *represent* their constituents. Reporters are ideally situated to point out when this is happening and, more importantly, when it is not. Particularly with an eye to the 2020 decennial Census, the data can also be used to highlight groups that may need additional outreach during 2020 Census education efforts.