

The conservative narrative on “fraud” in basic needs programs incriminates people with low incomes who receive benefits.

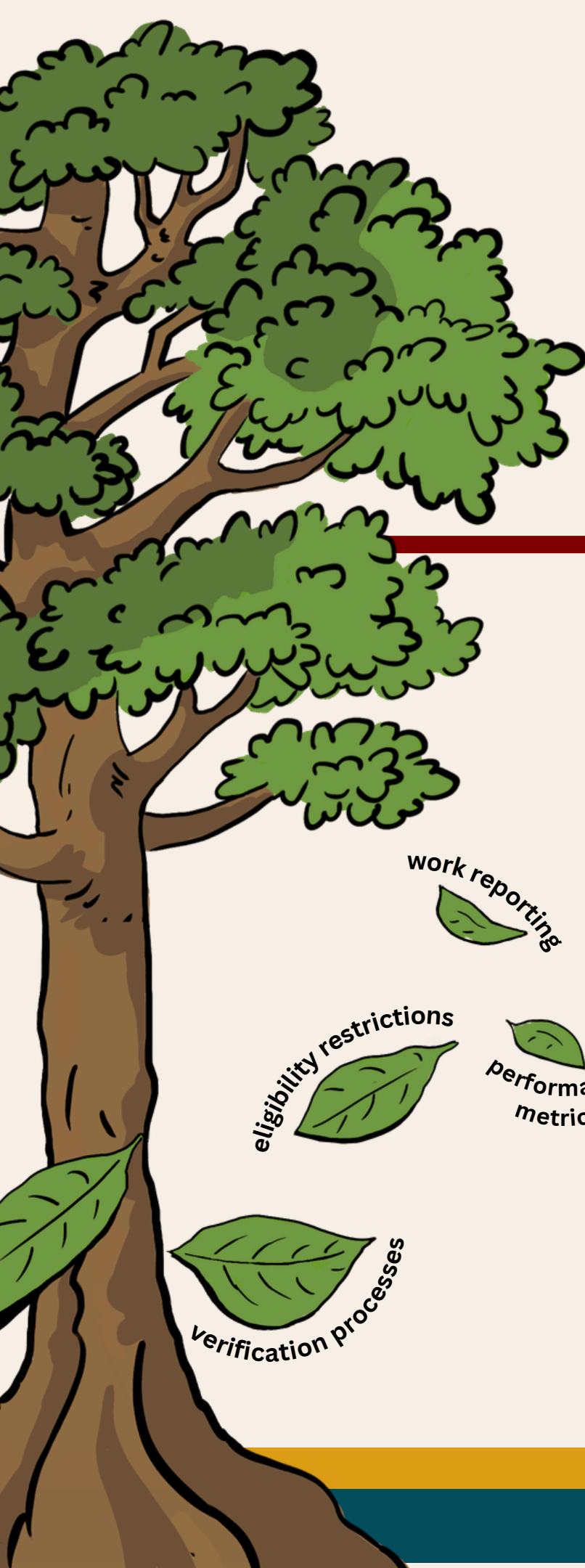
Common talking points such as...

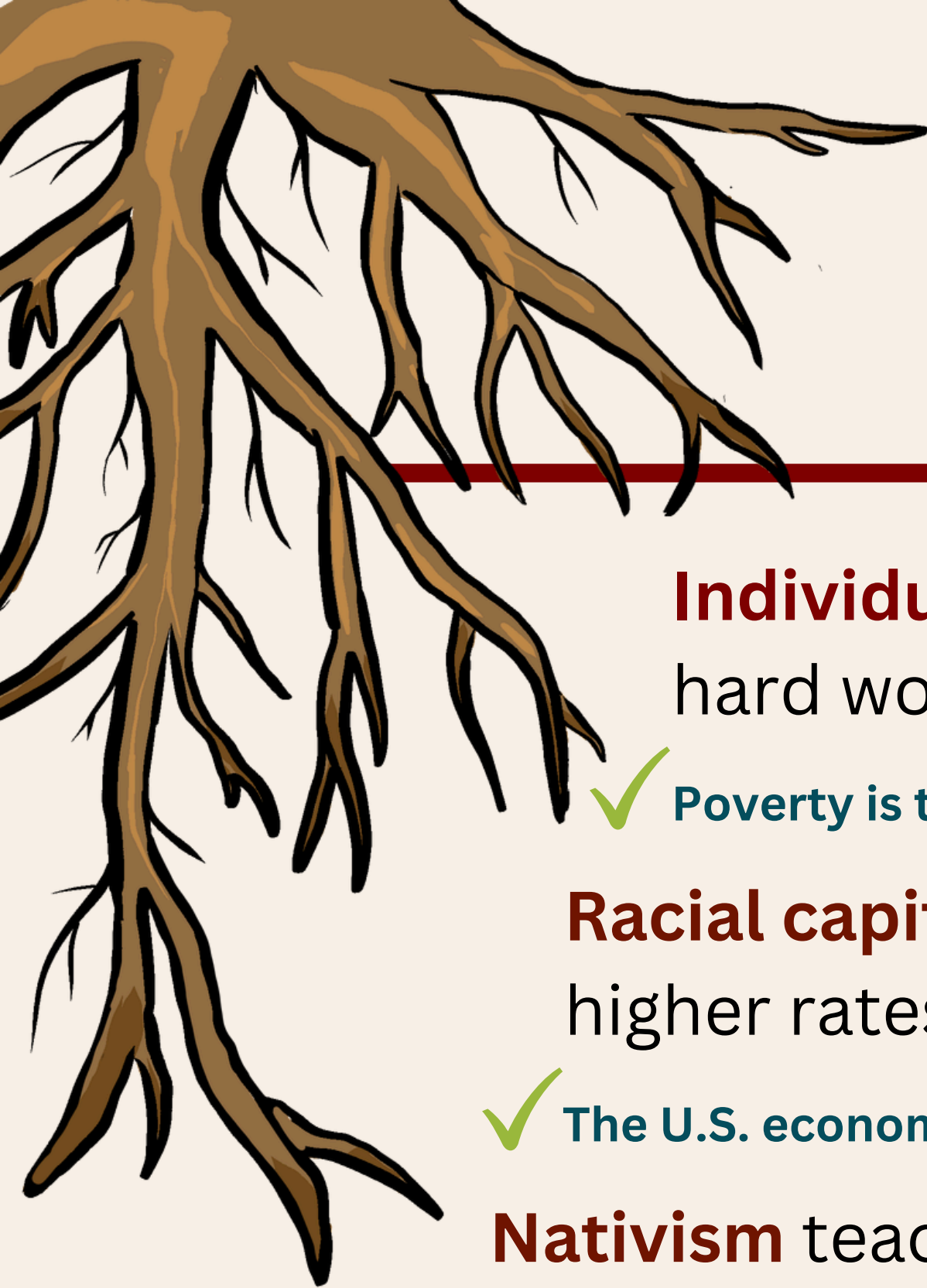
“ People with low incomes ‘take advantage’ of programs that are funded with taxpayer dollars

OR

People who receive help from programs ‘don’t want to work’ and aren’t ‘trying hard enough’ ”

are used to justify policy changes that surveil recipients and limit program participation.





There are 3 powerful **myths** at the root of narratives about widespread “fraud” in basic needs programs.

Individualism teaches us that people with wealth earned it through hard work, so people have low incomes because of personal choices.

✓ **Poverty is the predictable result of stagnant wages and rising costs in a capitalist economy.**

Racial capitalism teaches us that Black people experience poverty at higher rates than white people because of cultural differences.

✓ **The U.S. economy was built on 400 billion hours of unpaid enslaved labor, valued at \$14 trillion.**

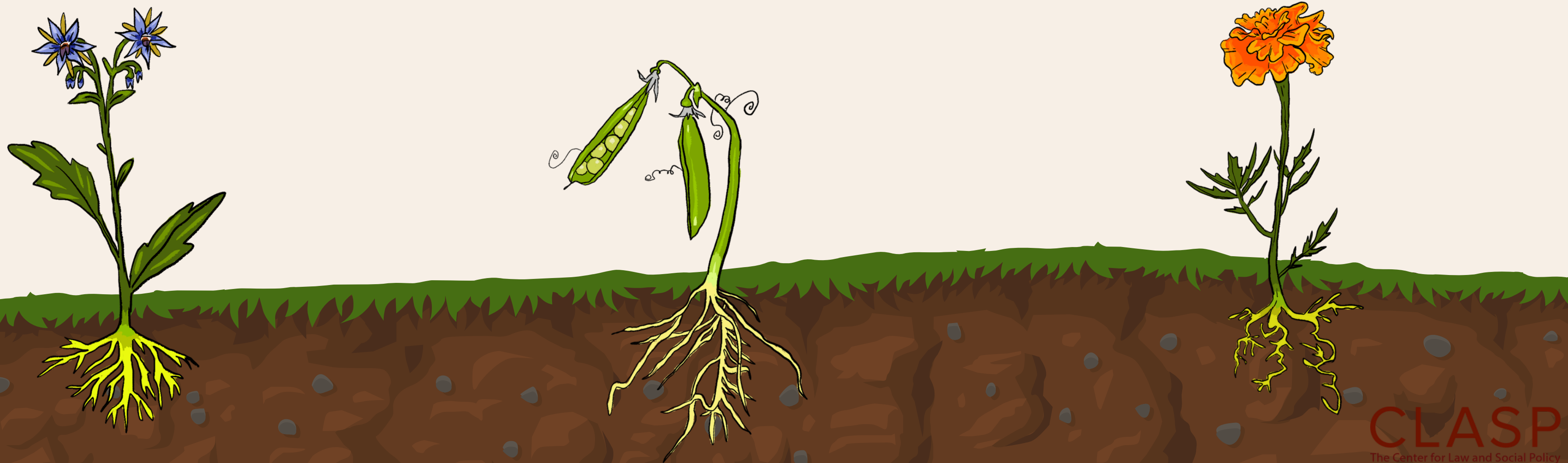
Nativism teaches us that immigrants of color threaten people’s jobs and consume finite resources.

✓ **Immigrants enliven American culture and contribute significantly to the U.S. economy.**

Developing arguments that counter harmful narratives requires us to treat the soil that nourishes American culture **at the root**.

One technique gardeners use to improve soil quality involves growing complementary crops that don't compete for resources, called **intercropping**.

Certain crops, or **core arguments**, are foundational to challenging the conservative narrative on “fraud” in basic needs programs at the root.





Starflowers grow thick roots that aerate the soil, creating space for new roots to grow.

Tell the Truth and Present an Alternative Worldview

Policymakers fabricate stories about widespread “fraud” in benefit programs to justify policy changes that hurt us all, including the middle class.

Using billions of dollars to surveil benefit recipients won’t make groceries, housing, and gas affordable for everyday people.

The government could be investing tax dollars into public goods and services that help people afford their basic needs and achieve economic mobility.



Marigolds are a natural pesticide, fending off bad actors that hurt the garden.

Name Systemic Actors Committing Actual Fraud

Fraud is the act of obtaining something valuable through willful misrepresentation, and it's committed by people with the institutional power to abuse government resources.

Nearly 1,000 millionaires have not filed their tax returns and owe an estimated \$34 billion in taxes.

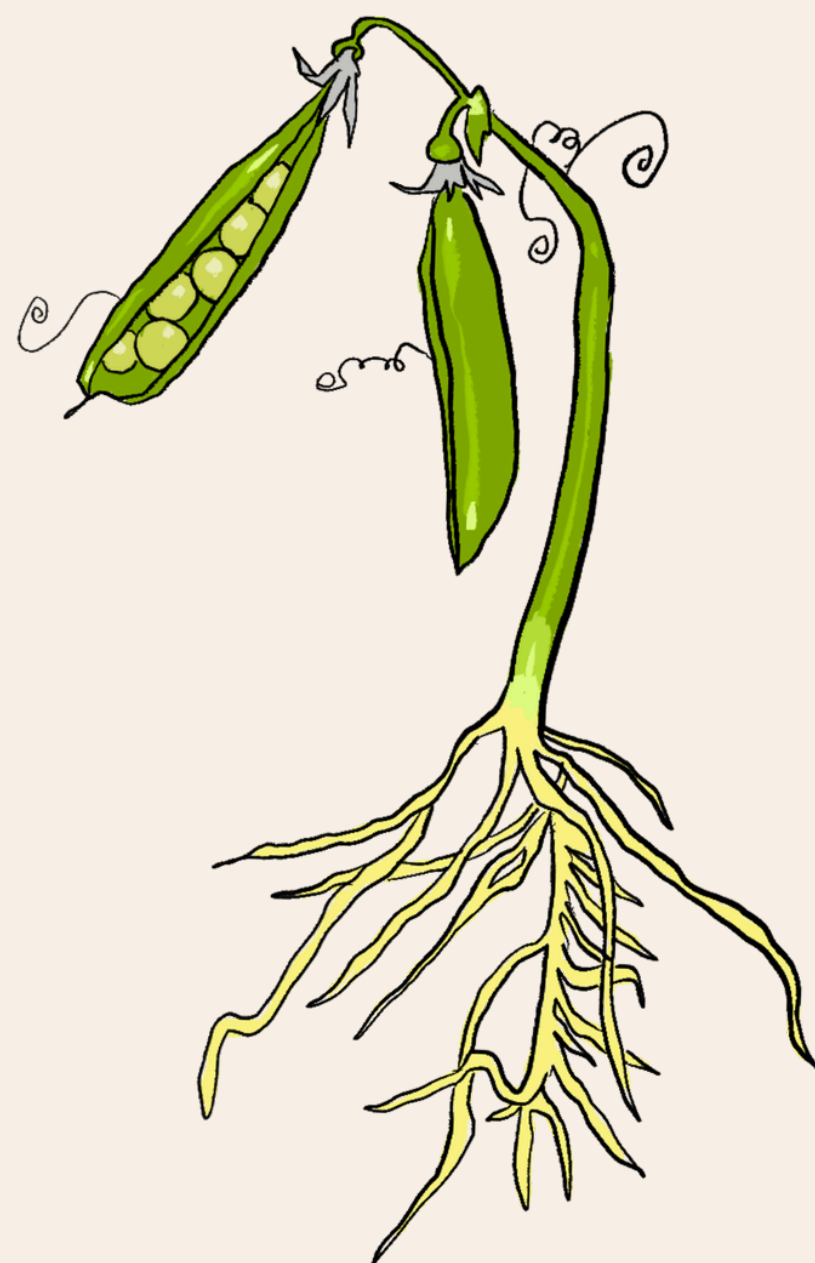
Wealthy people and corporations who avoid paying their taxes withhold critical revenue from our schools, libraries, and core basic needs programs like Medicaid.

Differentiate Fraud from Unintentional Mistakes Then Pivot to Real Solutions

Basic needs programs can be challenging to navigate because of complicated rules and excessive paperwork.

Adding more steps to the process may deter eligible people from applying, or even lead to an increase in improper denials as state workers struggle to implement new rules.

If the goal is to prevent application errors, policymakers should streamline programs so people can get help when they need it.



Peas transform the harmful compound ammonia into nitrogen, enriching the soil.