

MEMO

From: Grecia Lima, National Political Director, Community Change Action

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RE: Not spooked by 'No Labels'

Friends:

The other day, my younger brothers asked me what I thought about No Labels, the self-described centrist alternative to the major parties. I was surprised they'd heard of the group, which wants to be a political home for those who support "common sense solutions" – but which doesn't name the solutions or even the problems they hope to address.

No Labels may not have a platform, but they do have ambitions to run a presidential candidate in 2024, and it turns out my siblings, young Latinos, fall into a demographic they want to reach. Like many of their peers, my brothers spend a lot of time on TikTok, where No Labels is investing heavily using influencers to target their messaging to tap into frustration and apathy and peel support away from the major parties.

Both parties stand to lose votes to No Labels and other third-party candidates, like Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Cornel West, but the Democrats are especially vulnerable. I know I'm worried about this. But I also know that the usual strategy of telling people not to "throw away their vote" to a third-party candidate will not go over well with folks who already feel unseen and unheard.

Trusted messengers are the best tool we have to combat the threats and uncertainties ahead of us, as trust decreases and people are bombarded by highly targeted AI-generated ads and misinformation. We trust the opinions of friends and family, people who we relate to outside of political discourse, who share our concerns and interests.

Trusted voices aren't just individuals – they are also local nonprofits that provide **support in times of crisis**, or help people access social services or information. They can also be institutions that people join to make their voices heard about important issues – like Community Change Action.

The danger of AI-fueled outreach is not just scale, it's culturally competent scale. AI allows groups to target not just by demographics and age, but also using detailed information about people's likes and dislikes, the products they buy, the games they play, etc. Community Change Action can't compete with that scale – but we can serve as a safe haven of trusted information, and we will help our state partners to continue being seen as safe havens, too.

To do that, we need to establish ourselves early. There is an important role that digital media – influencers, paid ads, organic shares, etc. - can and should play in providing an early framework of analysis for our voters. But strong messaging and scalable dissemination has to be coupled with sustained engagement. Community Change Action, with our partners, has built a proven model of direct voter engagement that integrates narrative change, civic participation, and ongoing political involvement. No single message or engagement will change voters' apathy or interpretation of this political moment. Voters need sustained engagement and trust in order to believe and carry a different story about our current moment of political, economic, and social uncertainty.

Community Change Action builds ecosystems that move people from consuming a narrative to taking action. As I've highlighted through our 2022 program analysis, in the last cycle we built one of the largest and most impactful relational voter contact programs in the country. But we could not have done it without an intentional communications strategy that targeted voters with the messages that spurred further action. We are committed to building a much larger program in 2024 and look forward to sharing more with you in the coming weeks.

My brothers asked me about No Labels because they know what I care about, they know my values, and they trust my judgment. I asked them to think about what issues are most important to them and advised them to find people and organizations in their communities that care about the same things. Trust me, this is not the last conversation we're going to have to have about the state of the world and their worries for the future, about candidates and policies, or about what sustains their faith in the power of civic participation to influence change.

It may seem simple, but this is the key to fighting disinformation and apathy: sustained conversations with people we know and trust.

Yours in the fight,

Grecia Lima
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