



November 19, 2015

Arizona State University's Morrison Institute Forum Asks: Who is the Independent Voter?

Arizona State University's Morrison Institute recently published a study commissioned by the Citizens Clean Election Commission titled "Who is the Independent Voter?"

Unveiled last week in Tempe, Arizona the study was presented at a forum last week. **Cathy Stewart**, Vice President of National Development, IndependentVoting.org, gave a **report from the field** and a national perspective to the forum.

The study - the first of its kind - included one statement after another by independents on the corruption of the two parties and the control they exert over the process, shining a spotlight on the largest community of voters in Arizona.

However, they conclude: "*The truth is, there is no such political animal because there is no 'typical' independent voter. As a singular unit, he or she doesn't exist and it would be*



R to L: Cathy Stewart; Secretary of State Michele Reagan, Tom Collins, Citizens Clean Elections Commission; Joseph Garcia, Dir. Communications & Latino Public Policy, Morrison Institute; Patrick McWhorter, Arizona Campaign Director, Open Primaries.

virtually impossible - or more accurately, misleading - to 'create' the prototypical Arizona independent voter." (See "**Independents not Cut from the Same Cloth**" in the Arizona Republic or [listen to KJZZ-radio](#)).



Cathy Stewart breaks it down for the Arizona Secretary of State, Michele Reagan

In her remarks, Stewart presented a different view. *"If you look at independents through the traditional lens of our dominant political culture -- ideology and party affinity -- then that's what you'll see, what you will find. But I think if you only apply that lens, you can miss some of the most essential features of what independents are motivated by and searching for."*

"In our experience," said Stewart, "organizing independents from Maine to Alabama; from New York to North Carolina, from Florida to Utah, independents cannot be adequately understood by applying the dominant paradigm of partisan politics. After all, they are making a determined move away from that very paradigm - a move away from the political parties and a move away from the traditional pillars of partisanship and ideology. Independents are looking for new ways to move beyond them, to get out of the partisan stalemates and to create new coalitions and new ways to come together to deal with our most pressing issues."

Patrick McWhortor represented independent voters during the panel discussion. In answer to a question about increasing voter turnout among independents, he said: *"All voter participation should be higher - it's not just Independents who don't show up. Only 25% of Democrats turned out in the primary, which doubled in the general. Contrast that with independents, who quadrupled their numbers between the primary and general elections. Independents feel as though they don't have the choices they want/need in an election, and so they don't show up. We've heard time and again from independents that they want to have a voice in meaningful elections, and if they don't believe that is the case, they don't want to participate."*



L to R: Al Bell, Independent Voters for Arizona; Cathy Stewart, Vice President of National Development, IndependentVoting.org; Patrick McWhortor, Arizona Campaign Director, Open Primaries; Amanda Melcher, Outreach Coordinator, Independent Voters for Arizona; Armida Lopez, Arizona Latino Outreach Coordinator, Open Primaries; Tim Castro, IndependentVoting State Coordinator, Open Our Democracy campaign.

Q & A on Power and the 2016 Presidential Race with Jackie Salit on December 15th National Conference Call

With several presidential debates gone by and both parties catering to their bases, many people are wondering if there is a play for independents.

Natesha Oliver, founder of M.I.S.T. (Missouri Independents Stand Together) posed this question to Jackie:



"I'm curious as to why none of the presidential candidates talk about independents not voting in the primaries, not in the debates, or their platforms or anywhere. Why are we so excluded from the conversation even though we're at least 43% of the voters?"



What's your question for Jackie? Send it to national@independentvoting.org

Then join the call on Tuesday, December 15, 8pm ET

The Parties vs. the People: Where's the Power in Presidential Politics 2016?

Register for the call here

A Profile in Independence:

IndependentVoting.org's Fundraising Team

Jen Mckenna, Russell Daniels and Zach Handler are the dynamic

fundraising team at IndependentVoting.org.

Said Jen " *We're all in the arts and we're really inspired by and enjoy what we do together. That's extremely unique, having been in other phone rooms and seen other environments. I don't think the kind of phone call we make is one you get everyday, and consistently the donors say that to us -- how much they appreciate what we do. And we want to let our donors know how special their participation is, that it really makes an impact. So we feel very special about them as well.*"

Zach continued: " *There's a cultural myth about people who do things on the phone as unimportant, uncreative, unskilled, but what we do is the opposite.*"



L to R: Zach Handler, Russell Daniels, Jen McKenna

None of the three come to independent politics "naturally." " *I don't consider myself to be a political person, in any way, shape or form,*" said Jen. Russell joined the team when he saw an ad on *Playbill*, the classifieds for actors. Both Russell and Zach were Democrats, with Zach, even actively working for Democratic Party causes. " *My apprehension was that I thought independent politics would be about moderation,*" he said. " *But I learned it was about democracy, and not having to look at everything as Left and Right. I'm really turned on by people who say 'I don't agree with you on everything, and I want to work with you anyways.'*" Russell described his experience this way: " *These conversations, little by little, impact the conversation in the country, whether that's here on the phones or me talking to family.*" Jen added: " *It's like an acting role. It's the joy of performance. When you can get out of your own way and make room for something tremendous. That's what I think we do here.*"

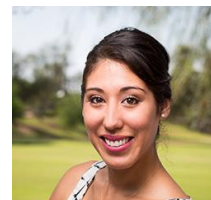
" *We're currently in our end-of-the-year campaign,*" said Jen, who is the Director of Donor Cultivation. " *We're talking about what we mean at IndependentVoting.org by corruption, as when society can't take care of the people in its communities. Our message is about closing the gap between the political system and the vision of humanism that our democracy is based on. We're also sharing with our donors exciting developments in Arizona and work that is laying the groundwork for a possible referendum for top two nonpartisan primaries in 2016.*"

Zach and Russell, both Developmental Associates on the team, spoke about how the murmurings of the presidential election year has begun to layer some of their conversations. " *Obviously people are focused on candidates,*" said Russell, " *but we're also saying 'We hear that, but what good is electing anyone if it's still going to be a broken system.'*"

Click here if you'd like to make a donation and support the team's efforts, or contact Jen directly at jmckenna@independentvoting.org.

In the News

Open Primaries' Armida Lopez wrote an oped, " **Both Parties use Hispanics as a Political Football - Enough Already!**" that appeared on *Fox News Latino*. " *We must have a government that is willing to see past gridlock and focus on producing legislation that has the public's interest, the Latinos' interest, at the forefront.*"



Al Bell, an Independent Voters for Arizona member, penned this letter to the editor in response to a deceptive mailing he and other independent voters in the state received from the state Republican Party. **Independents Don't Have to Join the GOP to Vote.**

Thanks to efforts of Drey Samuelson, Rick Weiland and Takeback.org, nonpartisan elections will be one of eight initiatives calling for sweeping changes in the state's electoral system on the ballot in South Dakota, 2016. [IVN reports on it here.](#)

Tiani Coleman of **New Hampshire Independent Voters** shares her thoughts on the No Labels convention she recently attended. Her opinion piece, **Nonpartisan Primaries Put Power in the Hands of the People**, appeared in the *Concord Monitor* and the *Union Leader*.



Open Primaries President John Opdycke appeared on *MSNBC* with Melissa Harris-Perry. [Watch here.](#)

After exiting the Democratic Primary, Jim Webb wrote "**America Needs an Independent Presidential Candidate**" which appeared in the *Washington Post*.



Utah Judge David Nuffer recently rendered a decision in a case involving the conduct of primary elections (*Utah Republican Party v. Gary R. Herbert*), namely who may participate in them and who may control them. Randy Miller, founder of the **Utah League of Independent Voters**, wrote a letter to the editor in response. [Read it in the *Deseret News*.](#)

MacArthur Genius Award Winner Next Guest for the Politics For the People Book Club

" *The Notion of Family*" is the first photo book selection of the Politics for the People book club. It's author, Latoya Ruby Frazier, takes the viewer into Latoya's family and hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania, the home of the first Carnegie steel mill which opened in 1875.

Book Club members are currently choosing a picture from the book and writing about it on the **Politics for the People blog** . Join Cathy Stewart, the book club's founder, when she interviews Frazier on the upcoming Politics for the People Conference call.



"At P4P, politics is fun, history comes alive, and everyone learns and grows together."

—CATHY STEWART, FOUNDER & HOST

BOOK ★ CLUB

OUR FINAL SELECTION OF 2015 IS ALSO OUR FIRST PHOTOBOOK!

The Notion of Family

LaToya Ruby Frazier

By the 2015 International
Center of Photography
Infinity Award Winner

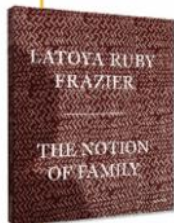
Conference Call with the Author

Sunday, December 6th

7 pm EST

(641) 715-3605

Code 767775#



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