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May 24, 2022

OPINION | COMMENTARY

What I Learned When I Ran for Governor of Massachusetts

American voters are hungry for common sense and purpose. Republicans and Democrats are giving them strife and division instead.



Dr. Jessie Fields, Dr. Danielle Allen, Jacqueline Salit

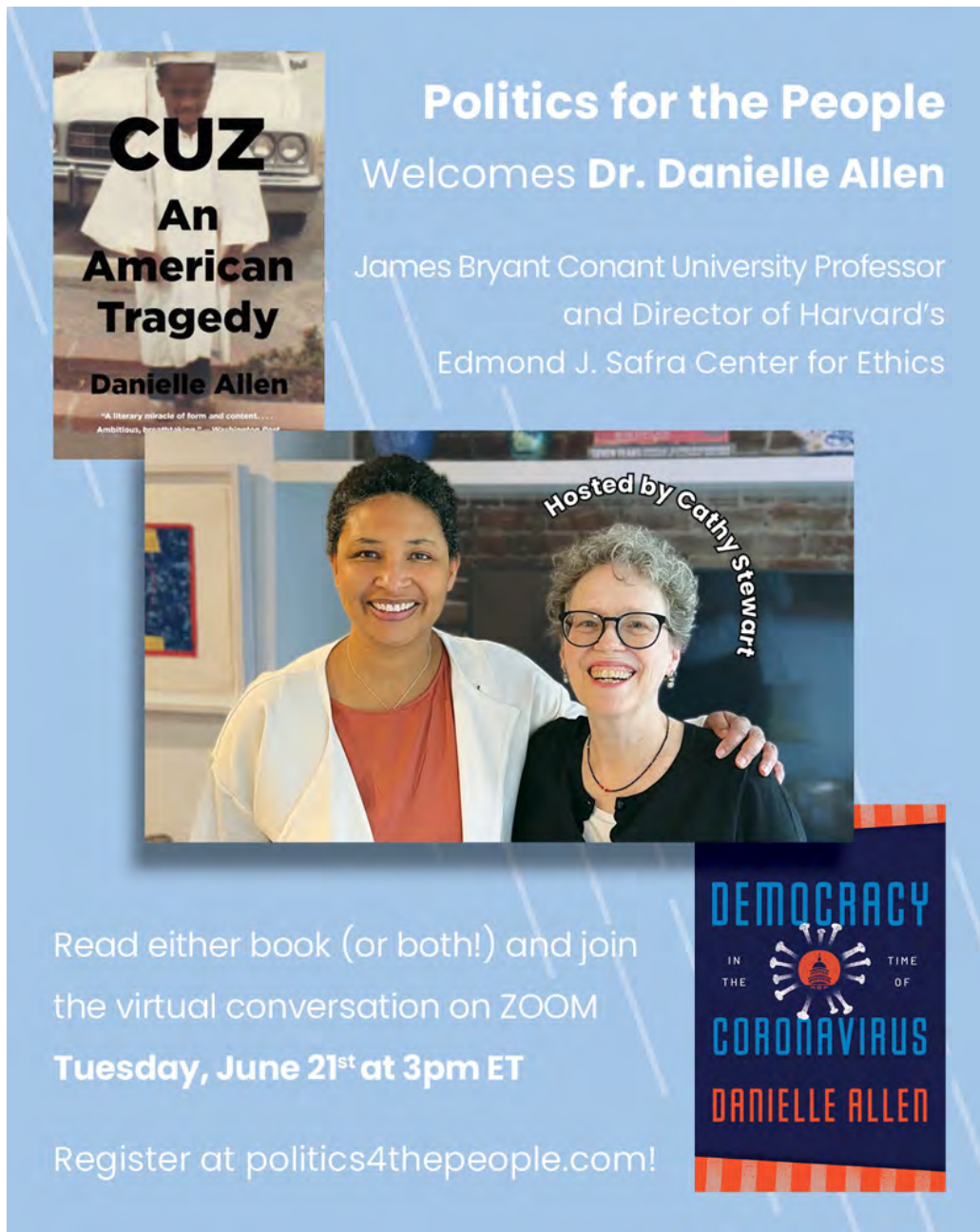
In a recent opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, Danielle Allen, Professor at Harvard University and Director of Harvard's Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, shares her experience as a political outsider and a first-time candidate, during a 15-month campaign for governor of Massachusetts:

"We often hear that America is a deeply polarized society, divided by party, region, and lifestyle. We the people, pundits tell us, are hopeless, too busy pulling down the other side to clean up the wreckage. But what if we the people aren't really the problem? What if most everyday Americans share a moral compass, even if they sometimes approach issues from different directions? What if the real problem is that our political institutions stop us from coming together?"

Read (or listen) to the full *Wall Street Journal* piece [here](#) or [download here](#).

Read Independent Voting President Jacqueline Salit's opinion piece in the *Boston Herald*, "**[A Caucus Casualty and a Serious Loss for Democracy](#)**."

Allen will be the guest of the **Politics for the People Book Club** (sponsored by **Independent Voting** and **The People**) and hosted by Cathy Stewart, Independent Voting's Vice President for National Development. **Register here** or click on the image below.



CUZ
An American Tragedy
Danielle Allen

Politics for the People
Welcomes **Dr. Danielle Allen**

James Bryant Conant University Professor
and Director of Harvard's
Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics

Hosted by Cathy Stewart

Read either book (or both!) and join
the virtual conversation on ZOOM
Tuesday, June 21st at 3pm ET
Register at politics4thepeople.com!

DEMOCRACY
IN THE TIME OF
CORONAVIRUS
DANIELLE ALLEN

South Carolina Bans Fusion

By David Belmont

On May 13, 2022, South Carolina governor Henry McMaster signed Senate Bill 108 into law. Among the provisions in

the bill were sections that would abolish fusion voting (which permits more than one political party to run the same candidate for public office) in South Carolina, a practice that political parties in the Palmetto State have enjoyed since the inception of elections. In the 19th century, fusion voting was common throughout the United States. With this abolition, there are now only seven states that still permit the practice.



Wayne Griffin

Fusion allows for the building of electoral coalitions in which minor political parties can partner with Democrats or Republicans, influencing the majors to take up reforms that appeal to the fastest growing (and in many states, the largest) group of voters: independents. Fusion is key to bringing younger voters into the process, as they are much more inclined to identify outside the major parties.

Wayne Griffin, state chair of the Independence Party of South Carolina, has been active in the fight to save fusion. After the bill to ban it passed, he said:

"Abolishing fusion hurts the voters of our state, especially those in the African American community. My daughters have often said to me that they wouldn't dream of being a Democrat or Republican. Young people are looking for outside-the-box solutions!"

Read Griffin's opinion piece, "**Commentary: Fusion Voting brings more people to the polls**," published in *The Fulcrum* and the *Portland Press Herald*.

The power of fusion for the African American electorate was demonstrated in the 2005 mayoral campaign in New York City. A fusion between the Independence Party of New York and the Republican Party created a pathway for 47% of Black voters to vote outside the Democratic Party. This changed the fundamental dynamic in New York City politics as Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration became more responsive to the concerns of Black voters and

the Democratic Party was forced to recommit itself to these New Yorkers for fear of losing their support.

Eyes on Independent Race in Utah

Eyes are on the United States Senate race in Utah where Evan McMullin is running as an independent. Not just because he's an independent and could win the election, but because McMullin's campaign is creating an unusual coalition in the process. The Democratic Party of Utah, virtually a minor party in the state, decided not to run a candidate and instead to endorse McMullin, who is running against incumbent Republican Senator Mike Lee.

"This is a turn of the screw," said Jacqueline Salit, president of Independent Voting. Salit aided McMullin's independent presidential run in 2016, helping him to secure a ballot line in South Carolina and to access contact with independent voters. "Evan is a conservative who has a radically democratic vision of a new kind of politics in this country. While he and I might disagree on certain issues, the fact that he is breaking the rules of the partisan game is a righteous cause."

McMullin is also being endorsed by former Republican National Committee Chair Michael Steele and former Democratic National Committee Chair Howard Dean. In a joint statement to supporters, they wrote: "As former Party chairs (of two diametrically opposed groups), we've never come together like this for a candidate. Actually, we've never both been asked to support the same U.S. Senate candidate in a high-profile battleground race before. Just like Evan McMullin's campaign, this level of unity is unprecedented. He is building a cross-partisan movement that is doing something rarely accomplished, or even attempted, in the political world."

Utah politics gets a further complication with James Hansen running as the Libertarian Party candidate for US Senate, positioning himself as an alternative to both McMullin and Lee. Salit observed, "Now that Utah independents have gotten the Democrats to endorse, we'd sure like to see some tactical unity among the independents. Maybe next time."

From 2022 to 2024: Independents Look Ahead with a New Survey!

It's midterm season again. Americans are faced with a familiar scenario. Conflict between the parties and conflict within the parties. Meanwhile, who is looking out for the American people?

This is the context in which Independent Voting's survey: **From 2022 to 2024: Independents Look Ahead** is making its way to scores of independents across the country and asking them to say who they are, why they are independents, and what circumstances they believe are required to move the country in a positive direction.



From 2022 to 2024: Independents Look Ahead was launched at the beginning of April.

In describing why they're independent, It's not surprising that right behind choosing "I'd rather vote for the person than the party," many independents are saying that both parties have "lost touch with the American people."

The survey also asks independents to comment on President Biden's dwindling popularity rating among independents by asking what they would tell President Biden he needs to do to regain support from independent voters. The responses thus far vary widely. While some see the situation as hopeless, others are offering sound advice. "Independent voters want solutions that fix problems; not solutions that only serve the purpose of keeping a party in power," said one person.

Several other questions probe independents' feelings about a possible independent candidacy and what independents should do as we move towards the 2024 presidential election. For example, one question asks, "If an opportunity to build a new party arose in which independents played a vital role, and the focus was on democracy reform, would you be interested in participating in such an effort?"

The campaign has already achieved its first benchmark of completing surveys in every state and now is aiming to complete 5,000 in total by the end of the year. Some independents are recording short videos that they are sharing on social media. Others are writing op-eds and letters to the editor, urging people

to take the survey. Others are joining the national phone tree and calling independents in their state, and as summer approaches, some activists are planning to bring the survey out to independents at local fairs and supermarkets.

In a Letter to Editor to readers in his North Carolina county, Hugh McCollum (who also got on the phones to call independents in Asheville) wrote: "A national non-profit organization, independentvoting.org, is conducting an opinion survey of independent voters to find out about their view of the state of US politics, our two-party system and why they're an independent."

Mike DeWolf, co-leader of a campaign to open the primaries in Oregon, shared the survey with supporters in Oregon and commented: I really must compliment Independent Voting on the very high quality of the survey questionnaire that was



sent recently. It was perhaps the finest political survey I've ever completed. It is clear that your organization is genuinely interested in understanding the views of its independent voters so that it might build consensus and act on them. In completing the survey, I had confidence that the views of those being surveyed will be respected and considered."

Take the Survey Here

Help us reach our 5,000 survey goal by sharing the survey widely (Find the survey on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) or from the [campaign page](#) of [Independent Voting's website](#) or [download the survey here](#)).

Join our survey team! Contact Gwen at gmandell@independentvoting.org for more information.

[Speaking as an Independent: A Training](#)

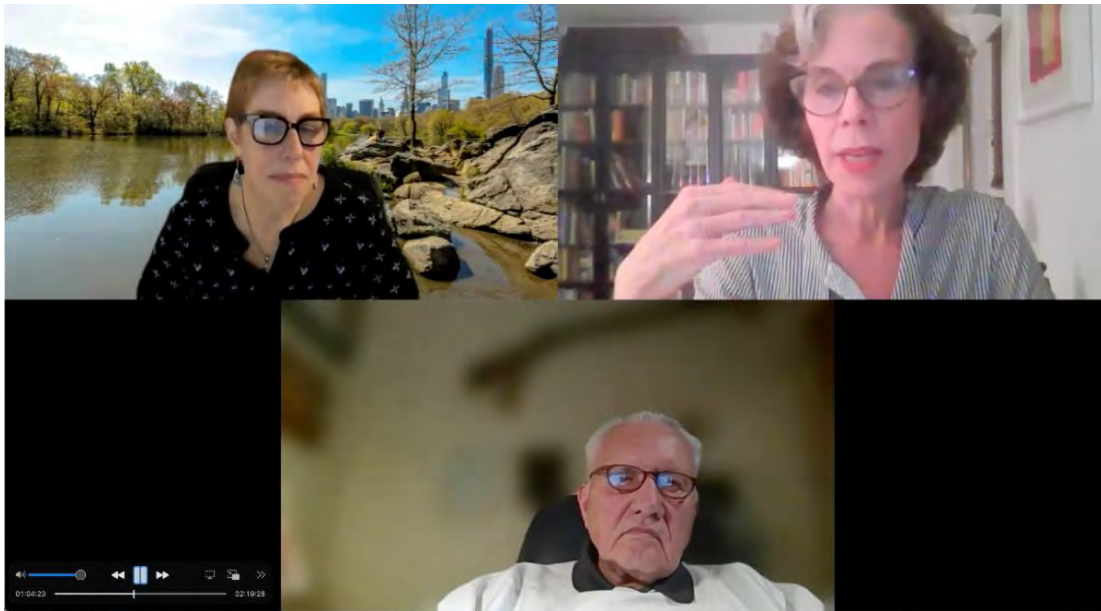


From Top left to right: Michael Katz (Delaware); Brenda Carr (Florida); Will Batzle (New Jersey); Theodore St. John (Louisiana); Joanne Rock (Colorado); Meko McCarthy (North Carolina); Jack Charbonneau (Kansas); Bonnell Keller (California); Paul Hosse (Kentucky) Cesar Marquez (Nevada); Jim Rohrer (Colorado); William Fogle (Kentucky) Mark Porter (Oregon); Kayla Sullivan (South Carolina); Richard Kenski (Virginia) Not pictured: Terry Crosby (Washington, DC), Peter Franson (North Carolina)

"I've always assumed there must be other voters out there who believe the same things I believe... Independent Voting's spokesperson training program helped verify that for me." These were comments from Jack Charbonneau of Kansas City, Kansas, an independent who participated in Independent Voting's most recent spokesperson training on April 25. Jack was joined by 16 other independents from 16 states who spent a couple of hours together developing their voices as independents.

After viewing a powerpoint presentation filled with key information and talking points about independents, designed to help participants tell their stories, trainees broke into groups and developed questions to ask Independent Voting

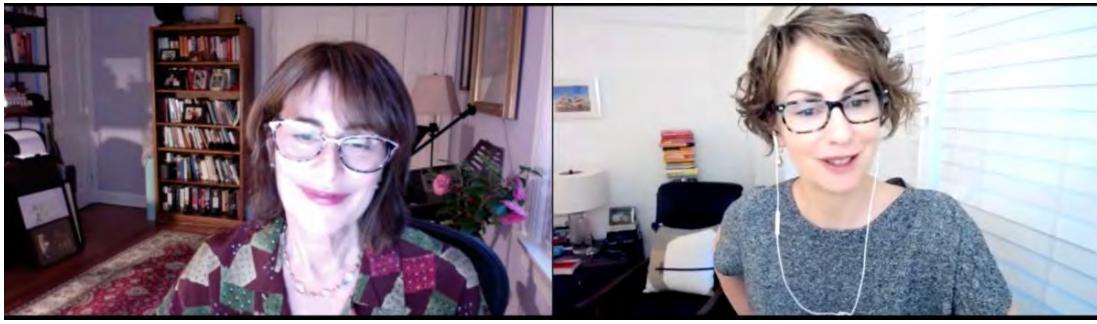
president Jackie Salit: Should the office of Secretary of State be a nonpartisan office? asked Mark Porter who learned about the training from a fellow Oregon Open Primaries activist. "This question," Salit said, "gets to the heart of a severe defect, that election administrators responsible for fair and free unbiased conduct are in almost every situation designated under a party label. This is corrosive and undermining to the consent of the governed."



"What about the question of forming an independent national committee," asked Terry Crosby of Washington D.C, for her group, and Jim Rohrer of Colorado asked "What is the one most impactful thing we can do to help indies?"

This Salit said, was a question she thought about often:

"It's time to have a coordinated national confrontation with the analysts, political scientists, pundits, media and politicians over the question of whether there really is an independent. The political establishment continues to insist that even though people call themselves independents, the pollsters always follow up with 'how do you lean?' and if you answer that question, they write off the fact you have identified yourself as an independent. All they care about is your voting pattern. They will not acknowledge that when an American identifies as an independent, no matter how they vote, they are making a statement of noncompliance with the existing system."



Cathy Salit and Maureen Kelly

Participants then went to work with professional trainers (and independents themselves) Cathy Salit and Maureen Kelly to create short presentations to audiences of their choices (which varied widely).

"Being an independent is not about being on the fence, being an independent is about not having any fences at all." shared Paul Hosse from Louisville Kentucky. (Check out Paul's latest blog posting in "[Another Opinion](#)")

Kayla Sullivan, a student activist in South Carolina (see profile below), when describing herself as an independent said "Being 'middle of the road' is just as useless as being a Democrat or Republican. I believe the full potential of the government is being squandered on 'taking sides' and never actually getting around to being productive and making progress."

Performing a caller into a local podcast, Will Batzle of New Jersey shared his personal experience of being an independent. "Reports like PEW Research Center are wrong saying independents are really Democrat or Republicans because we might vote for them. We're not, we're people who don't want to align with a party, but have to to make a choice that fits our needs."

Several participants immediately went to work following the training. Check out Jim Rohrer's column, "[Thoughts on independents](#)" in Colorado's *Canyon Courier*.

Joanne Rock, also of Colorado, submitted a [Letter to the Editor](#) to the *Vail Daily* that was published last week. In it, Joanne shared her experience as an independent. She said: "As an independent, I believe in some of the ideas of each major party but not all the ideas from either one. That is why I want more choice. In fact, it is an issue of fundamental fairness. So, despite progress over the last half century the independents are 'having a moment.' I am hoping that the network of independents goes from an Independent Streak! to a Winning Streak!" Joanne shared with readers that through the training she discovered

she is not alone and urged readers to participate in **Independent Voting's survey.**

Want to Help Make Independents Visible? Join the Spokesperson Training and learn how to tell your story!

Here's are testimonials from two of the participants in last month's training:



Michael Katz, Physician
Anesthesiologist, former Delaware
State Senator, business person,
experienced in legislative and public
health initiatives.

"Meet and speak with other Americans who feel disenfranchised with the current political system."

Jim Rohrer, retired business executive who writes a column in Colorado on issues of the day, including politics:



"Even if you feel well versed on the issues independents face, participate in the training... there is more to learn."

Independent Voting's Spokesperson Trainings take place several times a year. No prior speaking experience required. If you'd like to apply for an upcoming training, **[fill out and submit this application today.](#)**

The Push for Open Primaries in Pennsylvania

Voters in Pennsylvania went to the polls last week and independents weren't able to participate. A coalition of forces called Ballot PA — which includes Independent Pennsylvanians, Open Primaries, Common Cause PA and the League of Women Voters — are working to change that. They are advocating for **legislation** (introduced in the House by Chris Quinn and in the Senate by Dan McLaughlin) that would end this voter suppression and let all voters vote. A grouping of activists took to the polls to deliver that message on primary day.

A Franklin & Marshall College poll released May 12 shows that 64% of registered voters in Pennsylvania are not satisfied with the rules and procedures that guide the way elections are conducted in the commonwealth — double the number that felt that way in August 2020.



"The country is more independent more fluid," said John Opdycke, President of Open Primaries. "People want to vote for candidates, not parties."

David Thornburgh, Executive Director of Ballot PA, shared with the Hub:

"The Ballot PA campaign to end closed primaries and open the door to up to 1.3 million independent voters has really been picking up steam. The bill we support passed the Senate in the last session, but stalled in the House. It was reintroduced in both chambers, and we hope it will come up for a Senate committee vote soon. The House has new leadership since the last session,

and is more open to the idea that every voter should be able to vote in every election that their taxes support. We're building a strong coalition of business and civic leaders across the state, people who are tired of political polarization and dysfunction. We are hopeful that the 2022 PA primary is the last that's closed to independent voters."

In testimony submitted to the Senate State Government Hearing on April 21, Jennifer Bullock, Director of Independent Pennsylvanians said:

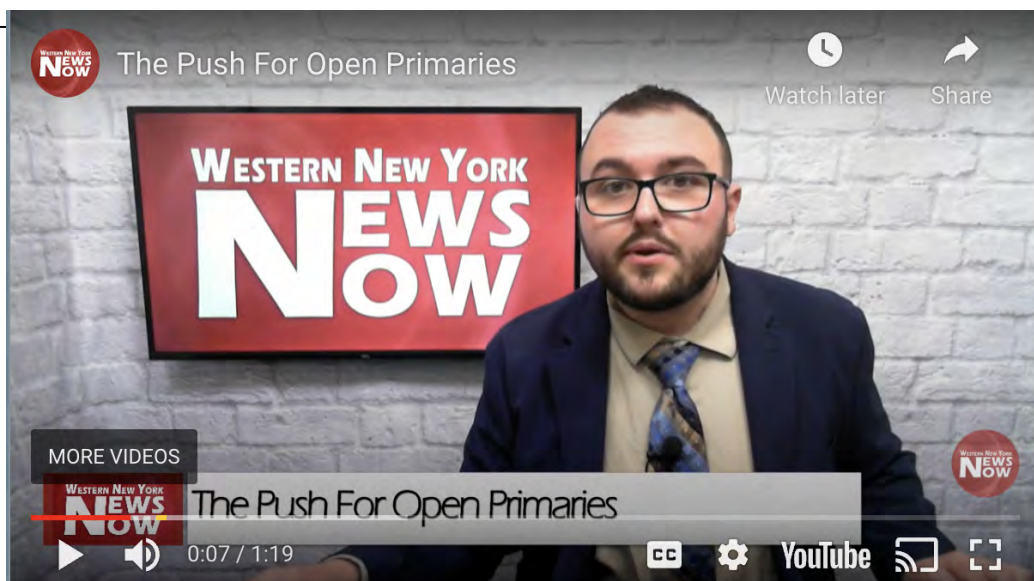
"We are 16% of the electorate in Pennsylvania. We are veterans who are independent at high rates because of the value of serving the country, not a party. We are young people who are independent at high rates because young people want to participate yet they are still figuring things out and don't want to be locked in.



Jenn Bullock

"We are new citizens who don't want to join a party because 'party' means something very different where they are from. We are state employees who feel strongly that they can best do their job if they stay out of party politics. There are so many reasons. All important, all connected to how Pennsylvania and the country are changing, evolving, and shifting. And our numbers are growing, just like in every other state. Why should I and 1.2 million other citizens be penalized and shut out of voting?" [Check out Bullock's full testimony here.](#)

Here is some of the media coverage featuring leaders in the campaign:



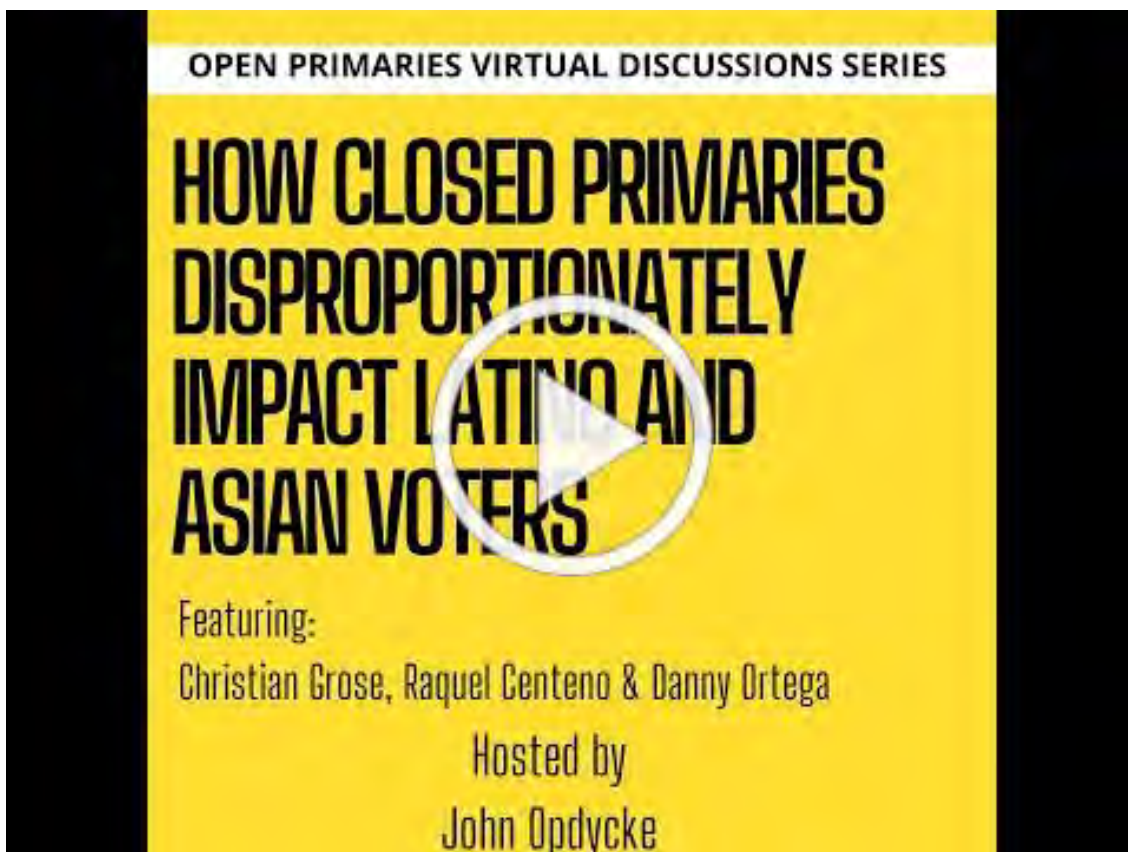
The video above is from WNY News Now

Read

- **"PA Election Day 2022: Why Independents can't vote for candidates this May, and the push to change that"** (*Spotlight PA*) ;
- **"Independents can't vote in Pennsylvania primaries--here's why that might change"** (*Fox*);
- **Organizations renewing push for open primaries in PA** (*WFMZ*)
- **"Guest View: It's time for Pennsylvania to open its primaries"** (*The Herald*)

Closed Primaries Disproportionately Impact Latino and Asian Voters

Open Primaries' recent virtual discussion focused on how closed primaries disproportionately impact Latino and Asian Voters. The discussion can be viewed below.



America Talks

More than 50 members of the Independent Voting network answered the call to participate in **America Talks**, the national virtual event that took place in April and invited Americans to connect in conversation across political divides.



America Talks

Here are a few of the many stories that participants shared:

Allen Cox, Bronx, New York

I had a very pleasant experience with the group I was assigned to. I got the sense that people in the group not only enjoyed each other's company but found it important that we were doing this together. I was very touched by people in the group talking about their families and neighborhoods that had positive impacts on them.



And they seem to be moved by my history of growing up poor with a history of substance abuse and incarceration and then finding an activist community that turned my life around and brought me here with them. We spent a lot of time chatting after the allotted time for the meeting, and people said they looked forward to finding out what was next.

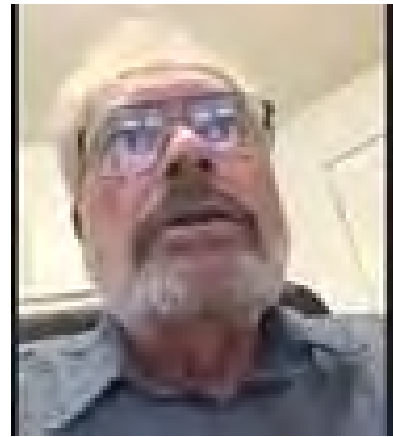


Sandy Hebley, Dallas, Texas

"The most interesting occurrence was at the very end when one of the group, who had identified himself as a gay, Jewish psychiatrist from New York City, commented that, when he heard me say I was from Dallas, Texas, he expected me to be a far right-wing conservative! He said he was VERY surprised when I said I was always the 'weird, radical, liberal' in my circles growing up."

Will Rawn, Havre, Montana

"An interesting difference developed. Two members of the group were from the urban northeast, a third from rural Alabama, and I've lived on the Montana frontier for many years. Regional. I was surprised to hear about the kind of school board war about issues like critical race theory that I expect to place in Virginia or Florida; the rest of us were surprised by some aspects of the southerner's comments on the Black Belt; and the others had little idea of the multi-party nature of water politics on the prairie."



Mike Pierson, Leggett, California



"Interestingly, one the two people said that he is an independent as well. He asked some interesting questions, such as whether I found most independents think alike - which is not the case! One thing I found about this discussion is that it seemed we were only able to scratch the surface a little bit on what makes us different and ways to communicate across aisles. I find it is a difficult line to walk to say things that are both meaningful and inoffensive, especially inoffensive to people I only just met. Still, I

hope that these discussions will give us, as independents, the chance to let others see that there are alternatives to the common left/right viewpoints that dominate political media today."

A Renewed Campaign for Open Primaries in Maryland

Reported on by Darius Holt of Indian Head: A group of Maryland voters gathered in a zoom meeting, discussing strategies for bringing open primaries into the state. Host Darius Holt talked about the shift in voter affiliation in the state and the case for Maryland's state primaries to be accessible to independent voters. He went into detail on how unaffiliated voters in Maryland have grown to 20% in the past few years and options on how to bring awareness of independent voters in the state.

The meeting continued on ways to connect with independent voters and advocate an open primary system in the state. Suggestions like social media networks, submitting a group Op-Ed to newspapers and connecting with other Maryland independents. The meeting concluded with a need for better messaging to bring open primaries in Maryland.



From top left: Len Breslow, Darius Holt, Bottom: Reed Harrison, Dona Sauerburger

Profiles in Independence

Kayla Sullivan Pawleys Island, South Carolina



Hey, y'all!

My name is Kayla Sullivan and I am from Aiken, South Carolina, and I am a Political Science major.

I was raised by my mother and grandmother. I am biracial—born to a Caucasian mother, and an Afro-Indigenous father – though, he wasn't in the picture. Thus, my mother and

I grew up with a Conservative mindset (because of my upbringing and my heavier involvement in the Baptist Church) in my early years.

Once I turned 13, I began to develop an opinion of my own. When the world turned out to not be what I was taught, I immediately wanted to know why. So, I researched a lot of things. My curiosity was cultivated from my unique Black-ish experience, as well as my experience as the child of a single mother, and an educator.

I knew that a few things from the Right made sense to me, and the same was true with the Left. However, neither group really said what I wanted to hear, and they often seem almost unproductive to me.

In my own mind, I have always dealt with not so much being a part of one group or another, because racially I never fit in anywhere. Even on my own Voter ID, I am listed as "other," so this seems fitting.

In the News

Commentary from Jarell Corley, Independent Voting activist, "**To Remake Illinois Politics for the Better, We Need Open Primaries**" (*Chicago Tribune*)

Read "**The key to fixing political polarization is in the primaries.**" (*The Fulcrum*)

"**Beware party bosses: the rise of unaffiliateds is coming for you,**" a great piece by Tony Woodlief about North Carolina. (*Washington Post*)

Read CEO of No Labels Nancy Jacobson's opinion piece "**The 2024 surprise few can see coming,**" about the possibility of an independent candidacy in 2024

Read "**The power of the independent voter,**" about the power of independents in the midterms (*ABC-Denver*)

Read "**Opinion: You Can Cry if You Want To But it's Not Our Third Party.**" (*Politico*)

Read "**June 7: Independent's Day in California?**" (*Independent Voter Network*)

Read "**A Decade ago, California adopted a strange top-two primary system. How's it working out?**" (*LA Times*)

Read "**Maine is heading toward semi-open primaries.**" (*Associated Press*)

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