

MONTHLY MEETING SUMMARY

Board Members Present: Bentonne Snay, Richard Thurer, Jane Moskowitz, Elizabeth Newman, Thomas “Mac” Hooten, Janet Nostro, Pat Thaller, Marjorie Wilkoff, John Wander

Members Present: Amelia Tournal, Barbara Zwick, Ruth Balestra, Monique Selman, Marti Wakshlag, Madeleine Shirley, Janet Stearns, Maria Gonzalez, Tania Cruz Gimenez, Beatriz Portela, Elizabeth Honkonen, Sallie Hughes, Ally Easley, Kerry Gruson, Patricia Pino, Julie Samkoff, Linda and Gaston Fernandez, Sheryl Gold, Ruth Balestra, Carolina Camps, JoAnn Bander, Lynn Kislak, Sharon Van Smith,

Guests Present: Gus Castello, Hillary Hoffman, Marlon Ebbert, Georgina Angones, Jeanette Slesnick, Arun Ravindran, Diana Hooten, Norman Moskowitz, Javier Estevez, Eric Basterrechea, Rick Ibarria, Julie Siegfried, Gus Castillo, Marjorie Baron, Jordan Levin, Brian Olson, Linda Roth and husband, Maria Bures, Antonio Heydari

Panelists: Jane Torres, Horacio Sierra, Natasha Otero-Santiago, Juan-Carlos Planas, Maria Elena Lopez

I. Call to Order and Welcome

President Bentonne Snay called the meeting to order at 6:30 and reviewed the rules. She also introduced and welcomed all guest speakers; Hispanic Democratic leaders who were invited to speak about how Dems can improve communications and clearly inform Hispanic Voters about Dem values. Each speaker was given five minutes for opening statements followed by prepared questions for all presenters and Q & A from meeting attendees, as moderated by Vice President Jane Moskowitz.

II. Future Engagement of Hispanic Voters- Initial Presentations

First Vice Chair Maria Elena Lopez of Miami Dade Dems

- Stressed that to change the views of the community, the key is messaging.
- The Dems did not campaign four years in advance like Trump and the Republicans did.
- We need to put our messaging in something less than 3 sentences using simple terms, especially regarding the socialism issue.
- We need to reach out more to the Latin community and educate people on how the elections work.
- Cubans who came here after 1990 were all brain washed by one person (Trump) since 2016.

Former Republican for Biden and Dem Strategist JC Planas

- We must have year-round Dem activities and campaigns, not just before elections.
- We should determine who we can and cannot get to listen and to call out fascist GOP members.
- Some Trumpers will never believe Biden won and other GOP members will join with Dems in Congress.
- Need rapid response. Spanish radio has been horrible- all about conspiracy theories. We need to complain and request meetings with radio sponsors. Univision monitors its TV but not radio and this needs to be addressed.
- FBI gave info to Twitter that caused them to ban Trump.

Natashia Otero-Santiago of the Miami-Dade Democratic Hispanic Caucus

- Need culturally strategic messaging.
- There are 1.2 million Puerto Ricans with approximately 850,000 eligible voters; now the largest Latin American group in Florida (27% of Hispanic Florida voters).
- Puerto Rican interest in the 2020 election grew- probably due to many new citizens who moved here after Hurricane Maria.
- Socialism is not as big as an issue with Puerto Ricans since they are U.S. citizens.
- Need to focus on NPAs.
- Start early and forcefully to get out the Puerto Rican vote.
- Need more Puerto Rican involvement in government; currently there is one congressman and one senator who are Puerto Rican.
- Need to let them know the importance of voting and determine the best way to bring them out.

Go Vote Miami and Key Biscayne Dems Club Leader Jane Torres

- It is important to ask how we communicate with those who see things differently and let them know what Democrats really stand for.
- People do not want to be told what to do. Why should they listen to us?
- We need to find out what is important to Hispanics by asking them and listening to their answers.
- We need to build relationships because people trust those they know and friends of those they know.
- Fear and anger hinder rational thoughts and many Hispanics have PTSD from their negative experiences that caused them to immigrate to the US.

President Horacio Sierra of the Cuban American Dems Club

- We must show our pride in being Democrats and focus on bringing out all members of our own base to vote.
- Need to call out the GOP for their lies and racism.

- Stressed the importance of messaging. What do we stand for? Stress the social progress that benefits voters including social security, Medicare, Obamacare, civil rights and that all have been initiated and supported by Democrats.
- Candidates need to talk to voters about what is important to them.
- Local issues we should focus on include voter registration year-round and showing respect for different cultural groups.
- We also need to recognize that many Latinos have different views, making it important to target messaging to each different Hispanic group, including young Cuban Americans.
- Do not spend time on trying to convince non-Dems to vote for Dems.
- All were invited to the January 23rd Cuban American Dems Club Meeting at 10am (info provided in email accompanying this Meeting Summary).

Summary of the Q&A session moderated by Jane Moskowitz

- 1) What messaging is needed to reach Hispanic groups who are demonizing Dems and think the election was stolen? What are the issues that matter to Hispanics?**
 - Ask Hispanic voters why they think Biden is a socialist.
 - Clearly communicate what we all have in common, especially among GOP members that no longer support Trump.
 - Proactively communicate with NPA and GOP voters and find common ground between them and same Hispanic group candidates.
 - Engage in year-round activities to engage more black and Hispanic voters in Dem groups; LGBTQ members may be especially receptive since the GOP has been anti-LGBTQ and we cannot assume all GOP members are anti-LGBTQ.
 - Use broadcast and social media, phone calls and letters to communicate with Hispanic voters.
- 2) How do we reach Hispanic voters? What techniques should be used? What is the role of non-Hispanics?**
 - Continue to conduct meetings/events like this one.
 - Educate Hispanics about the Democratic party; have booths at every festival, health fair, Youth Fair and other community events year-round.
 - Establish an Education Committee; need list of Spanish speakers that can be dispatched to schools, etc. to inform Hispanics about Dem values, the voting process, and especially to educate them about graft and fraud not being normal in US elections, unlike what many have experienced in their former Hispanic countries.
 - Educate newly naturalized citizens about Dem Party values and how US elections work via town halls and with pamphlets/written materials.
 - Explain how we hold elected officials accountable in the US.
 - Phone calls from Puerto Ricans to Puerto Ricans were effective. In Puerto Rico, everyone votes on election day and not before election day.

- Dems need to learn from GOP members that set up centers where they provided English classes, health care info, childcare info and more of what people need to build relationships beyond just knocking on doors at election time. This requires funds to set up centers in Hispanic communities.
- Dems need to inform Hispanics that we are behind small business loans, the stimulus checks, etc. and that we are the party that supports people coming to America to achieve the American dream.

3) How can we select winning candidates? What are the characteristics that will appeal to different Hispanic communities?

- Need to establish a base/bench of good candidates who are more engaged with voters beyond just asking for their vote; the DEC can assist by providing candidate training on voter engagement.
- Look within our own groups of friends and get more people involved.
- It was noted that we had great candidates who lost to less qualified Republicans because voters were disinformed and Dem candidates did not address these issues with voters, especially re: being socialists like those from their home countries.
- It was suggested that we need to be prepared to file lawsuits because the GOP is scared about re-apportionment.
- It was noted that Cubans in particular, will vote for Anglos that speak a little Spanish rather than Hispanics that speak improper Spanish.

Comments/Questions from meeting attendees. (See attached chat for summary of questions, comments, etc. made throughout the meeting)

- Eric Basterrechea raised the issue that we were lacking a particular “style,” as this was a key to GOP success. He emphasized that we need to use the power of persuasion and address what he called “wedge issues,” those that divide different party members. Need to be able to listen to GOP and/or Trump supporters without judgment before we can get them to listen to us.
- Monique Selman asked whether only Hispanic candidates will be supported? Responses included that it depends on the individual candidate’s talent, charisma, etc. As per JC, Cubans will vote for Anglos that try to speak Spanish more readily than they will vote for Hispanic candidates that speak Spanish poorly. Important for candidates to build relationships by being relatable and approachable.

III. CG Dems Business

a. Treasurer’s Report

Due to time restraints, we did not have a treasurer’s report.



b. CG Dems Membership Update

- Membership chair Elizabeth Newman encouraged attendees who were not members to join and urged people to tell their friends about our club. Goal is to be more inclusive.
- She noted that on March 9th we will hold the first Members Only Annual Meeting w/Board Election and 2022 Plan of Action.

c. Update on Support for Coconut Grove Crisis Food Pantry

- Janet Nostro reminded attendees to support the Coconut Grove Crisis Food Pantry by donating money or helping with preparing food for weekly distribution on Tuesday mornings.

IV. Upcoming CG Dems Monthly Meetings via Zoom Bentonne Snay

- 2/9: Coral Gables Mayoral and Commission Group III Candidates
- 2/16: Coral Gables Commission Group II Candidates
- 3/9: Annual Mtg w/Board Election and 2022 Plan of Action plus Julie Becker on Blue Wave 2020 Lessons Learned and Plan of Action for 2022

V. The meeting was adjourned by President Bentonne Snay at 8 p.m.

Meeting summary prepared by Secretary Marjorie Wilkoff with edits by President Bentonne Snay.