

Date: February 3, 2016

To: The Roosevelt Institute

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## **Engaging the millennial generation**

### **Report on the Roosevelt Institute focus groups**

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Millennials are unique and hold tremendous power and potential – economically, socially and politically. To better understand how to engage this generation, Democracy Corps conducted two focus groups in Philadelphia on January 19<sup>th</sup>, one among African American millennial women and one among white millennial men.

Their experiences and perspectives are very different from what we observe in other focus groups, yet there is tremendous potential to engage these voters with a “Level the Playing Field” message and policy agenda. They are very negative about politics, yet they are following the Republican primary battles closely and with some horror. Their anger about student debt is embedded in a values-based critique of our times. And they are looking for ways to build civic and community involvement.

#### **Disconnected, frustrated, turned-off, but soundly rejecting conservative platform**

This generation, like the rest, finds politics and politicians “disgusting” and “disappointing.” Many Americans would agree with this young woman’s assessment of our country: *“It’s disappointing. I just think our country could do a lot better than some of this. It’s just going to take a real long time to fix the mess. For real.”* (African American millennial woman) Their response is driven by a combination of having no time to entertain this mess, mistrust, and a critique of focus.

This first instinct is especially prevalent among the men, who are tuned out. As one man explained, *“I feel like politics never really come up in conversation. Like, I feel like me and my friends never, ever talk about politics. It doesn’t come up. We’re all just living our lives.”* (White millennial man) Most describe themselves as “indifferent” about the future of the country, politics and government and “uninformed” about the candidates for president:

*I feel like I don't really follow politics too much, and I feel like – I feel like I would be the person to forget to vote.* (White millennial man)

[This is] *Probably the first time I ever talked about politics.* (White millennial man)



There is also a strong sense, particularly among the men, that they have been misled by politicians and government. This is less about corruption and more about misinformation and general skepticism about which sources can be trusted:

*They don't tell you shit, so we don't know shit.* (White millennial man)

*I feel misled.* (White millennial man)

*I would agree with that.* (White millennial man)

*Misled.* (White millennial man)

*Misguided.* (White millennial man)

*Misled.* (White millennial man)

The African American women agree. They continue to warn that you cannot trust what you see on TV or social media and say you have to do your own research.

The third major theme was the belief that politicians and government have the wrong priorities. This was the central discussion among the women we spoke to:

*I feel like there's more that could be done, like to help fix where it's been. But the focus is on other things. Like, everything doesn't get the amount of focus that it needs to get, basically.* (African American millennial woman)

*I feel like the funding of the country is just not going where it should be at. Like, the funding is not going in [...] the certain areas that it should go in.* (African American millennial woman)

*Schools and libraries are going to shut down and stuff, and I think that's stuff that we need to focus on. This is the future, like our future.* (African American millennial woman)

The men echo this sentiment. One man, a father, complained that all four of his neighborhood parks had been knocked down. Another asked, “*Why are we spending billions on new prisons and not education, you know?*” (White millennial man), launching another conversation about a \$30 billion dollar prison being built in the Philadelphia area.

Many of the older millennials voted to elect President Obama, but eight years later they are pessimistic about the value of their vote. At best, their vote does not really count. At worst, it is an exercise that is meant to give the appearance of control to the masses. The men are particularly cynical about the democratic process, with an acute sense that others are in charge:

*I don't think our vote actually counts. I mean, if they're going to pick, they're going to pick their puppet. They're going to pick the face they want.* (White millennial man)



*It feels like a face, like making the public feel like they're going to do something, but it's not really going to do something.* (White millennial man)

Despite their pessimism and lack of interest, these younger voters are paying a lot of attention to the Republican Party and the presidential primary. They will not entertain these candidates. The white millennial men laughed out loud when asked to describe the Republican candidates for President:

*I feel like they're cartoon characters, Looney Tunes.* (White millennial man)

*I'd say some were laughable.* (White millennial man)

*Scared.* (White millennial man)

The African American millennial women are too repulsed to laugh:

*Ooh, Lord. Have mercy.* (African American millennial woman)

*Ashamed.* (African American millennial woman)

*Disgusted.* (African American millennial woman)

*I don't have any words.* (African American millennial woman)

*Yeah. They're just so distasteful.* (African American millennial woman)

*Repulsed.* (African American millennial woman)

*Disappointed.* (African American millennial woman)

It is very possible that the Republican nominee is what will motivate these millennials and get them involved.

### **An economy that “expects so much and offers so little” – except to the top 1 percent and Trump**

It is clear these millennials – especially the women – are in a very precarious position. They use words like “*uncertain*,” “*unsure*,” “*worried*,” “*unpredictable*,” “*hard*” and “*unstable*” to describe the economy overall. (African American millennial women) There is some harsher language when it comes to describing their personal experience in the economy:

*Unrealistic* (African American millennial woman)



*Sad and crappy* (African American millennial woman)

*I'm very disgusted.* (African American millennial woman)

The only advantage to being a young person today is technology:

*I think we grew up in more technology and stuff like that. Like, for me, that helped me with school. Oh, my God. Google? How would I have graduated without [it].* (African American millennial woman)

*If you don't have cable to pay for Comcast or something, you have a YouTube app or something like that, you could watch TV that way, just think of something and search for it, that kind of thing. It's not like we have the radio and that's it.* (White millennial man)

*The world's at your fingertips. You know, it's information.* (White millennial man)

While they believe the economy is “*unbalanced*” and “*unfair*” they did not have a structural analysis of the economy. (African American millennial women) The women, for their part, have a clear idea about *who* is writing the rules – “*congress*” and “*politicians*” – but they are not sure what the “rules” governing the economy are. As one woman tried to explain, “*Like everything is just like all over the place, up and down all the time. So, you don't, like you have no idea what's happening next.*” (African American millennial woman) All they know is that “*It's just that serious a mess.*” (African American millennial woman)

Their understanding of the rules may lack depth, but they are very aware of who is winning and losing in this economy:

[Let's talk about the losers. Who's not winning in today's economy?]

*Me.* (African American millennial woman)

*I think the middle-class the most.* (African American millennial woman)

*I don't believe there's a middle-class anymore.* (African American millennial woman)

*The middle class.* (African American millennial woman)

*Us.* (African American millennial woman)

*The middle class and the lower – yeah, the working class, I think. Anybody who's not like the 1%.* (African American millennial woman)

The very wealthy are undoubtedly the winners:

*The rich.* (White millennial man)



*The scumbags.* (White millennial man)

*Trump.* (African American millennial woman)

*The top percent.* (African American millennial woman)

*The 1%.* (African American millennial woman)

*Trump.* (African American millennial woman)

This comes with a pretty strong class analysis. As one man put it, “*You could work hard all your life and bust your hump, and some guy would come over and take your pension fund right away, and what do you got?[...] Some rich guy somewhere, well off, house in the Hamptons, things like that.*” (White millennial man)

### **Student debt, hard work and betrayed generation**

The struggles at the heart of their lived experience revolve around their student debt, the need to gain enough experience to get a job, and working in jobs that barely pay enough to make the ends meet and nowhere near what a person should expect for the work.

The cost of college and the struggle to pay back student loan debt is top of mind among these millennials, even though several are more than a decade out of school. This was the first matter mentioned when we asked the men what is not going well in the economy today:

*Student loans.* (White millennial man)

*Yeah, student loans.* (White millennial man)

*Well, going to college. I mean, go to college, get a student loan, then you work at McDonald's for the rest of your life.* (White millennial man)

*You want to put gas in your car or you want to pay your student loan? I mean, that's just what it is.* (White millennial man)

*And if you have student loans, your credit is wrecked.* (White millennial man)

This was also very important to the women. Some were still living at home to afford college. Another complained, “*I'm in some crazy debt and I'm only 24.*” (African American woman) But they see education as their ticket to a better life, despite the burden.

Jobs that don't pay enough are the central struggle for these men and women. They feel as if they are paid just enough to survive, and not enough to warrant the effort:



*I still live at home with my mom and dad, I haven't moved out. You know, I'm working hard, but there's no payoff to it, you know? (White millennial man)*

*I just feel like every time I run into some money, every time I get paid, there's another loan, something else that I have to pay, and I just – I'm not down, and I'm not coming up. I'm just floating right there. There's always something, you know, that's occupying my cash or funds. (White millennial man)*

*Just from experience, the expectations are a little unrealistic. They expect so much but offer little. (African American millennial woman)*

*Because you young, they don't care what they pay you. They pay you so little, and this is so ridiculous. I can remember back in the day when you can just be coming out and actually get a job and go right into the field that you went to school for and actually make what you're supposed to make at the starting rate. Now, they just want to get over. (African American millennial woman)*

What unifies these struggles is an overarching ethical complaint: their hard work is not appreciated and is not rewarded. These millennials were raised right. They value hard work and take advantage of opportunities given to them, sought out college and more training, many working their way through, somehow found jobs in the midst of a recession and worked as hard as anyone. They did everything right. In return for their efforts they are saddled with student debt and are under-paid and over-worked in their places of business:

*I feel like they underappreciate the good people and I feel like that's what sets people up. I feel like it's setting them up for failure. You want people to be educated, you want people to go to college and stuff, but then they get out of college or whatever other graduate schools they go to with all this money in debt. So, then, that can mess up their credit score and stuff like that and then, you know, then you want people to make an honest living and stuff like that. But, then it's like they work so hard to get to where they're at, and then it's like they're going backwards because they have all this money they have to pay back. And then they don't want people to – not that I would condone it – but they don't want people to sell drugs and all that kind of stuff, but you make it impossible for people to do things the right way. So, how is that rewarding the people that are doing the hard work when it's just like punishing them, really? (African American millennial woman)*

*We keep talking about hard work and everything like that, it's come up like 20 times already in our conversation. I think that's very tied to the American dream, and I'm not sure if hard work is as valued today as it was in 1950. (White millennial man)*

*I was just going to say, personally, for all of my jobs that I worked and all of my schools that I went to, I can be the hardest working person in the classroom, but the teacher's not looking for the hardest working person in the classroom. And I can, like I work every job that I get, just because I take it seriously. You know what I mean? But, it's not worth the*



*money that you make. Honestly, I don't think it is. I might not, this might not be my career, but I always find myself feeling miserable after a while in whatever job I'm working at, because I just feel like I'm not getting noticed, I'm not getting recognized, and I do work hard at everything that I do, and I don't feel like it matters anymore. So, you slack or you're working hard, you're still going to have the same outcome. You know what I mean? (African American millennial woman)*

A related and recurring theme in both of these groups is that it is all about the people you know, not how hard you work, and that works to their disadvantage more often than not:

*You just – it's easier to get a job if you know people. (White millennial man)*

*You've got to know people now, it's all about who you know nowadays. (White millennial man)*

*You got to lie. I feel like some people make you feel like you got to lie about who you are in order to make it – to the next round or the next level to get somewhere. (African American millennial woman)*

*My first job, I know I actually had to know somebody, and that's how I actually got into where my first job was actually at. (African American millennial woman)*

The need to “level the playing field” takes on a whole new meaning in this context.

Interestingly, the millennials worry about the younger generation – and their worries and descriptions of those younger than them sound a lot like what we hear from older generations about the millennials: they don't work as hard and have higher expectations:

*Our youth, I mean, look. (White millennial man)*

*I feel like, with us now, in this day and age. Not the people younger than us, because they're babies. But, this day and age, we have a more better understanding of what it is to work hard and to actually work for what you want to do. Some of the people underneath of us, they just think it's supposed to be given to you, and we actually work hard for what we need. We seen our parents actually work hard to get us things and stuff like that. (African American millennial woman)*

*I could say, for me, the way I was raised. My mom pushed me to go to college after I graduated and stuff like that. And now it's like I work at a school and these kids just sit there and don't work. And I'm just so happy that Obama stopped No Child Left Behind, that they're going to stop it, because you could literally just not come to school and do no work, and you pass just because – and that's just setting these kids up for failure. (African American millennial woman)*



## Opportunity for a “Level the Playing Field” message

These millennials are ready to respond to the Roosevelt policy agenda and “Level the Playing Field” message, and they do. After reading the “Level the Playing Field” message, they say these are “*the topics that I would like my opinion heard on*” and it “*would be awesome*” if some of these things were done. (White millennial men)

The participants also read a conservative economic message. One of biggest findings in this group is just how much stronger their preference is for the “Level the Playing Field” message in comparison. Only one participant preferred the conservative statement to the Roosevelt statement across both groups. They completely reject “trickle down” as an option. They agree “*the proof is in the pudding. It's been a long enough time to show the results.*” (White millennial man) Nothing is trickling down to these millennials.

**“Level the Playing Field.”** When asked what they liked most about the Roosevelt economic message, several chose the “Level the Playing Field” slogan for which the message is named. It was particularly popular with the men. Some read this as having a chance to find a good job:

*It means everybody just has a choice, you know. Like I said earlier about getting jobs. It's kind of hard to get your own job, unless you create it or you know somebody that's in it. It – I see kids every day that I know try to get jobs, and they just can't get them you know, or their uncle will get them in there.* (White millennial man)

*The last sentence appealed to me. Let's just level the playing field so the middle class can grow. Like we were talking about earlier, the economy, how it was different from back in the day until now. I know from my mom's story it was way easier for her to get into the hospital where she was at back in the day and make what she used to be making than when she had to come out, she got fired or whatever, and trying to go back and they're trying to start her at the bottom of the barrel. It's just ridiculous.* (African American millennial woman)

Another participant read this as giving the small business man a shot in an economy dominated by big corporations:

*I read that differently. As opposed to, you know, getting a job or finding a career, I read that more as level the playing field for starting a small business, you know. It's easier for a large corporation to start up a sister company that it is for, you know – It's like the old saying – there's an old saying, you know, what's the best way to make a billion dollars? The best way to make a billion dollars is start with a million dollars. And so, I read that differently, you know, as, let's let small businesses have a chance to grow, versus large corporations opening sister companies.* (White millennial man)

Another participant thought about Caucasian billionaires and the gender and racial disparities:





*I feel like if everybody was given some kind of way to all start on the same playing field. Because I feel like the people who are billionaires and stuff now, they come from old money. They all made their riches in like the 1900, way, the early 1900s and stuff like that when women didn't have rights, most minorities didn't have – well, no. All minorities, they didn't have any rights. So, the ones who were really making the money and able to start businesses were pretty much just like the Caucasian males, pretty much. (African American millennial woman)*

There is power in the flexibility of this “Level the Playing Field” offer.

**We need a country that works for the middle class.** Another phrase that was frequently underlined as a positive statement in both groups was “we need a country that works for the middle class.” Many of these young people considered themselves middle class because they know that things could be worse – they could be making minimum wage. As one man explained his preference for this message, “*Just, it was more about the middle class, and I think we're kind of represented here as the middle class.*” (White millennial man)

**CEOs and billionaires are using their lobbyists to write the rules so government works for them.** At least half of the participants in each group marked as negative the statement that “CEOs and billionaires are using their lobbyists to write the rules so government works for them.” They really start to put two and two together when they read this sentence. They begin to understand what you mean by asking who is writing the rules of the economy, and connect CEOs’ and billionaires’ political spending to policy and the economy:

*They use money and influence to give people what they want. (White millennial man)*

*This one statement where it says CEOs and billionaires are using their lobbyists to write the rules so government works for them. I remember, I don't know if it was the last election or something, I know billionaire people had a problem with getting a bigger tax cut out of their cut or something like that. Who the hell is y'all to feel some type of way that you're all getting a bigger tax cut? You all are making the money. Us, as the middle class, we're giving you more than what they're taking out. We're going to give it right back to you. (African American millennial woman)*

*I feel like the CEOs and billionaires and banks, honestly, I feel like they're the ones that really run the government when you think about it, because think about when the politicians are running their campaign and stuff like that. They need that money in some – they need the money for the commercials and stuff. Who's the one? You've got to pay attention to who's giving them the money. (African American millennial woman)*

*That, and then I feel like they're using that to like, “You help me out; I'll help you out.” It's like they use their money to make sure that they're protected by the government, whoever the politician is running, making sure their best interest is protected. (African American millennial woman)*



*It's the same idea that the money is driven, is being driven, is driving all the politics like a puppeteer and it stays. It just stays in that circle. It doesn't go outside of their circle of billionaires.* (African American millennial woman)

Accordingly, several of these millennials responded positively to a commitment to “start by reducing the toxic influence of money in politics.” As one woman explained, *“I think that stood out to me, because that's the only way I see that politician is getting ahead, because they're using that money. The more money, the more endorsements, the more people are banking them with money, that's how they're able to get seen by anybody, the commercial ads, radio ads. And the money is really driving politics, and I think it's taken away from what, I guess, what it's supposed to be about.”*(African American millennial woman)

**Make college affordable and relieve the pressure of student loan debt and guarantee women receive equal pay.** This message also speaks to their struggle to make enough money and pay off their student loans by offering to guarantee women equal pay and make college affordable:

*Yeah, and it said guarantee women receive equal pay. Now that I will definitely say is like a big problem. I can tell the difference between my parents, like when we were talking about parents and stuff, my dad doesn't do half as much work as my mom does, not even. But he takes care of mostly all the bills. She gets stressed, like she's stressed out and she really works hard. You know what I mean? I don't think that's fair, so, yeah, I do agree with that.* (African American millennial woman)

*It would be nice that this is really happening, and happening more often. Make college affordable and relieve the pressure of student loan debt. Guarantee women receive equal pay.* (African American millennial woman)

Even some of the men identified equal pay for women as one of the most positive things in this paragraph.

### A “Rewriting the Rules” policy agenda

After hearing this message, the participants were asked to choose from a list of policies which would be most important to happen for the economy. Their choices clearly reflect the call to “Level the Playing Field,” their feeling that billionaires and the rich are using their money to make politicians and the economy work for them, and their struggles to afford a quality education and find a good paying jobs.

MOST POPULAR POLICIES	IMPORTANT	MOST IMPORTANT
Better prepare students for the current economy by improving curriculums so the content is relevant, such as coding classes, and provide more opportunities for internships and other experiential learning.	13	4



Make college more affordable by adopting income-based repayment of student loans, in which repayment is based on a set percentage of the student’s future income.	8	2
Get rid of secret money in our political system by requiring full disclosure of all money raised or spent in a campaign immediately online, stop the wealthy and big corporations from spending unlimited amounts of money on elections, and empower small donors by matching small contributions from voters.	8	1
Increase penalties on companies that violate minimum wage and overtime pay laws or fail to provide safe working conditions and enforce those laws.	8	0
Invest in the types of education that help workers evolve with a rapidly changing job market by expanding free community college and trade programs that allow workers to earn a credential and get a skill, go into the labor market, and if they can’t find a job in their chosen field, return to school for another credential.	7	1
Remove any incentive for corporations to move off-shore so they can avoid paying corporate taxes by taxing corporations based on where they actually do business and draw resources, not where their corporate headquarters are located.	6	0

**Education.** Policies to make college affordable and better prepare students for college were some of the most popular chosen in these groups. It reflects their struggles with student loan debt and the value that these young people place on education in this changing economy. Three of the six most frequently circled policies were devoted to education.

One of the top policies was one that would have an immediate impact on these young people who are struggling with repaying their student loans: adopt income-based repayments of college debt.

The other two education-related policies are ones that seek to expand opportunities to develop skills for the new economy. The single most popular policy on this list was one that sought to help students prepare for college by improving pre-college curriculums so that they are relevant to the new economy as well as expanding opportunities for experiential learning. Six of the men and seven of the women made this one of the top five policies on their list, and five of the millennials said this was the single most important thing for the economy on the list. The second policy was especially popular among the women and seeks to prepare workers for the rapidly changing job market by expanding access to free community college and trade programs so workers can return to school to get credentials and skills. Their preference for these policies reflects earlier statements about their struggles to find even entry-level jobs that do not require experience.

**Democracy.** Half of each millennial group said that a robust policy to reform money in politics was one the most important to happen. In fact, three of the men said that this would be their starting point if they had to pick which thing needed to happen first. This policy seeks to disclose campaign donations, end unlimited campaign spending by billionaires and corporate donors, and empower small donors by matching their contributions.



**Making work pay.** We have found in our recent web-polling that increasing penalties on companies that violate minimum wage and overtime laws and enforcing those laws is one of the most popular progressive policy offerings. This we reaffirmed in these millennial groups, where eight participants saw this as one of the most important things to happen. With many of these young people describing an economy that puts more pressure on young people in the workplace, this is one way to ensure a more level playing field at their jobs and help with earning what they deserve.

**Tax Reform.** Finally, several millennials thought a tax policy to remove incentives for corporations to move their corporate headquarters to avoid paying taxes was important. This policy reflects one of the things that they disliked about the conservative economic message – they do not think that corporations should receive more tax cuts. One woman explained why they did not deserve such tax cuts:

*“I put an X on the first one, though, because it says businesses grow and create jobs, but then it says cut taxes on businesses and entrepreneurs, because I feel like a lot of the big companies, like Apple and stuff like that, the ones who are really making a lot, I feel like they’re not investing in our economy. So, where they get their stuff made is not here. They get it made in like China and stuff like that.”* (African American millennial woman)

Importantly, these millennials are not sure if any of these things will get done, but they did say hearing such a list would lead them to get more involved. It was inspiring to hear one man volunteer, *“Yeah, I mean, I guess with some of the things I circled, that I was interested in, if somebody started hitting on them, then I would pay more attention to, you now, what they were saying, you know.”* (White millennial man)

There is huge potential to engage millennials if they hear politicians offering these policies and this “Rewriting the Rules” message.

## **Black Lives Matter & Racial Justice**

The Black Lives Matter movement and issues of racial justice were well received by the white millennial men. When given a diagram showing the wealth disparities between races, almost everyone was sympathetic to what they saw as a product of a long history of discrimination:

*I feel like it makes sense. I feel like within the last 15 years, I feel like we now respect each other more, like you were – you try to take race out of the equation, but 50 years ago, others were getting put down, and all the whites were looked at as the superior. It makes sense. Especially assets and property, or things that you own, I feel like it starts 100 years ago, and it's just going to get bigger from there. And if the white – I don't know how to word this – the white people, they had more opportunities in the past, and obviously, you just, we have a head start.* (White millennial man)

*Yeah, it makes sense. It really does. You walk into a business, it's all white.* (White millennial man)



*Yeah, it's what you're thinking about all the old, rich, white dudes.* (White millennial man)

The one “doubter” in the group distrusted this chart only because he did not think even white people were making this much. He lived in a community dominated by minorities, and there was no daylight between him and his neighbors.

When asked about the Black Lives Matter movement, the men had a good grasp of its goals, even if they “*feel distant from the problem*” and did not see it at work in their communities (White millennial man). They understand this as a movement for overdue equality at the highest level and they recognized that African Americans and police have a long and turbulent past that is legitimate and not easily solved:

*I just think it's police and blacks have their own certain relationship dating back [...]*  
(White millennial man)

*I'm like, I know that sometimes it doesn't seem like they have an equal opportunity, but I felt like equality should have been happened a long time ago, you know.* (White millennial man)

*So, you know, police brutality, equal pay. I think law enforcement is the main area of focus.* (White millennial man)

However, the men were put off by some of the more brazen tactics of some of the protestors involved in the BLM movement. They identify two types of BLM supporter – one is “*what you see online, you know, hashtag activism*” and the other is “*causing more problems*” and “*throwing statues and burning [things] down.*” (White millennial men) They go so far as to compare the latter to the Black Panthers. Despite their sympathy, these concerns prevent them from fully embracing this movement. But they are not working against it either.

The African American millennial women were conscious of the BLM movement. The goals of the BLM movement – from criminal justice reform to racial wealth disparities – were points of enthusiastic conversation during earlier discussions. And some spoke about the need to come together as African Americans to mobilize for better. But when it came to the BLM movement in their community, these women wanted something more than marching, saying, “*it's pointless*” or worse, “*It's dangerous.*” (African American millennial women)

*I feel like a bunch of walks and blocking streets off and marching and stuff is not going to do much, because, at the end of the day, they still shoot on my block every other day. So, it's like, I just feel like everything starts at home. Who raised you? You know, what they instill in your mind and what's on your social media Website and who you're hanging around and stuff like that.* (African American millennial woman)



*I feel like they should be more community-based in terms of, I wish they [were] going into schools. Kind of like a City Year type education works type thing. Like, if we could get together as one. If everybody in each part, like West Philly, in each part of the city they had like some type of, where everybody signed up on the e-mail and sent it out to say, you know, we're going to come into the school this week and talk about a certain topic or something. But, I don't know. Just marching, I never participated in any of that [...] (African American millennial woman)*

## Getting Involved

We already saw how pessimistic these millennial voters were about the political process and the value of their vote. When it comes to other ways to influence change in their communities, participants complained about a political system that is not set-up in a way that makes their voices heard: *“Honestly, no, to the question of, is our political system hearing the younger generation. Because I don't know that, I don't know the avenues that they would be listening.”* (White millennial man) But they accept responsibility for not trying hard enough:

*“I feel like people don't – we're not protesting, or we're not getting together and going to this and asking them the questions that we want the answers to. We're just complaining and sitting on the side, because we're doing our own thing. I feel like we get caught up in our own lives, so we don't really think about the politics, and then the election comes up, and a lot of people are uninformed or don't really know what to do.”* (White millennial man)

Their hesitancy to get involved may be explained by a feeling of disrespect: *“I think the younger crowd are intimidated by the higher-ups, government, politics”* (White millennial man); *“So, the new generation, they don't want to really hear what we have to say or hear our ideas and stuff like that. I think sometimes old people think that we don't know what we're talking about, even though we're in this age.”* (African American millennial women)

The solution for these young people is, *“you've got to fight the system from the inside out.”* (African American millennial woman) And they see a role for social media in getting people involved. When we asked them how millennials are heard when they try to make change, this was their first choice:

*I mean, nowadays, they use all the social media to get the word out. I think that is a good way, because word does travel fast on social media. As many reposts and re-likes and views and everything.* (African American millennial woman)

*Twitter.* (African American millennial woman)

*I think the mainstream social networks, they may want their people to actually look at. Every big news tags, every big radio station, has those particular main type of sites.* (African American millennial woman)



Some of the men wondered if this is an effective way to generate change if it is not reaching beyond a circle of friends and followers – but they do acknowledge that they are at least beginning to have political conversations with their friends, which can have important consequences.

And the more that we talked about getting involved, the more they began to value dialogue with their friends and people in their community as a way to start making change. We asked the men to create a Facebook Page for millennials, and many of them wrote enthusiastic calls to arms:

**Nicholas:** *Speak now or never be head!!! Your voice matters!! Don't be discouraged. Foundation is key let's build!*

**Daniel:** *Not many young people, at least the ones I know, consider what's happening outside their own neighborhood. What's next/the future.*

**Tom:** *One person can make a difference. A single voice can become the voice of many. Your best interests are worth talking about.*

**Zach:** *There's more to the world than just your own life. We are all trying to make it in this world but you have to step back and see the big picture. Don't get caught up in your personal life and let the top% influence the world you live in. Vote, pay attention. Don't talk about it, be about it. Be the change.*

**John:** *Quit complaining about life not going your way if you're doing nothing to change it.*

**William:** *Helping your community – knowing the people in your community, making it a better/safe place.*

This was an inspirational change of attitude from a group that felt powerless and admitted to being totally uninterested in politics when they first sat down.