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PS106A

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2023 May 04

Campaign Strategy: AOC 2024 in Florida

I. Introduction

Florida is a tough state to crack. Since 1999, Democrats have not held the governorship nor the house of the legislature. Republicans currently have veto-proof majorities in both houses of the Florida legislature. With such overwhelming power, one could assume that Florida has a Republican-majority voter base. However, according to Florida's Department of State, from 2018 to 2023, Democrats hold 33-38 percent of voters while Republicans hold 35-38%. The difference isn't great- so why are Republican candidates, generally, winning by landslides? Two common trends popped up when I researched this: 1) Democratic voters are not consistently voting 2) Minority voters are being overlooked in campaign strategies. These two trends will be monumental in this campaign strategy.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's (AOC) campaign speech for the 2024 Presidential Election should show her roots and colors. Firstly, her rationale will be, "Together, the American people won't be limited to their dreams, they can also make them a reality. Together, si se puede!" The theme of her campaign will be the "American Dream" that has been denied to those who are of different ages, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, genders, and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Without using radical language, we can build a campaign around providing opportunities for Americans to thrive and prosper. To do that, she will tackle three hot issues: immigration, the economy/job opportunities, and affordable housing.

II. Candidate Histories

A. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's History

To begin, AOC was born in The Bronx to a working class Puerto Rican family. A few years into her childhood, AOC's family relocated to Yorktown in search of better educational opportunities for her and her siblings.

After high school she attended Boston University where she majored in Economics and International Relations. Before graduating, AOC had the opportunity to work for the office of Senator Ted Kennedy where she took special interest in immigration issues. As an Educational Director with the National Hispanic Institute (NHI) she assisted Americans, DREAMers, and undocumented youth in leadership and preparing for college.

In 2008, a myriad of issues cropped up for AOC: firstly, the 2008 Recession was a detrimental economic event for all Americans, but especially AOC as her father had recently passed from cancer. The medical bills, funeral expenses, on top of living expenses for her family resulted in her taking on low-wage restaurant jobs in order to keep her family afloat.

Witnessing first-hand the struggles of working-class Americans of color fueled AOC's drive for a political career. After volunteering for Bernie Sanders's 2016 Presidential campaign, AOC launched a grassroots campaign against incumbent Joseph Crowley for Congress. Her platform was progressive and focused on the key issues of abolishing ICE, criminal justice reform, tuition-free college, universal healthcare, and environmental justice.

After defeating Crowley, she worked on her first piece of legislation "Green New Deal" in the House of Representatives, calling for a switch from using fossil fuels to renewable energy as well as investing in clean energy research, development, and technologies. Similar to former-President Franklin D. Roosevelt's infamous "New Deal", AOC explained that switching to an infrastructure built on renewable energy would encourage the growth of that industry,

creating more jobs and opportunities. Her work on this policy could be a weakness; on the one hand, when asked how she should fund this program, her immediate answer was to tax the top 1% earners. The Floridian majority, regardless of party lines, tend to vote for lower taxes and if there is mention that taxation would increase, their votes to keep programs as they already are. However, in the 2016 Elections, Floridians voted to amend the state's constitution to provide tax exemptions for renewable energy devices. If AOC can effectively stress that her involvement in the "Green New Deal" was to: 1) Create 9 million opportunities and jobs for Americans, and 2) Stress that within the Green New Deal, there also exists tax-exemptions for renewable energy sources, this issue can be neutralized, if not a strength.

Included in the "Green New Deal" is a clause that states, "[Provide] all people of the United States with: (i) high quality healthcare..." (Ballotpedia). Affordable and universal healthcare has been one of the cornerstones of AOC's campaign and is a strength in Florida. According to the Center for Excellence in Polling, in 2021, Floridians supported measures that increased accessibility to affordable healthcare, and lowered costs of healthcare services. Additionally, in 2012, Floridians voted against a constitutional amendment that would prohibit a universal healthcare system. AOC has supported a number of legislations that would provide "Medicare for All"; as a result, her stance on this issue can be considered a strength.

Lastly, an issue that AOC has worked extensively on is immigration. This is her biggest weakness; according to Florida Atlantic University's News Deck, Florida's Republican polls revealed that immigration is the second-most important issue, with threats of illegal immigration and crime factored in. AOC has always been in support of undocumented immigrants and expanding the US's immigration system to provide accessible pathways to citizenship, especially for refugees and asylum seekers. Florida's Republicans supported former-President Donald

Trump so much because of his strict immigration laws, including his initiative to “build a wall” between the US and Mexico’s border. Current Governor Ron DeSantis has received much criticism for Florida’s growing undocumented immigrant crisis. With this in mind, and knowing that most Floridian voters are conservative, this is an undeniable weakness.

B. Nikki Haley’s History

Nimrata Nikki Randhawa, also known as Nikki Haley, was born to two Indian immigrant parents in South Carolina. Haley worked at her family’s boutique as a teenager, only temporarily leaving to pursue her Accounting degree at Clemson University.

Nikki Haley’s career in politics began when she was named to the board of directors of the Orangeburg County’s Chamber of Commerce in 1998. In 2003, she was named to the board of directors of the Lexington County’s Chamber of Commerce as well as the treasurer of the National Association of Business Owners. In 2004, she became the President of the Association. Further, she worked with the Lexington Gala to raise funds for local hospitals, and took interest in the Lexington Medical Foundation, Lexington County Sheriff’s Foundation, and West Metro Republican Women, kickstarting her 2004 campaign for Congress.

On a platform centered around tax relief and education reform, Haley ran for the South Carolina House of Representatives challenging the incumbent Larry Koon in 2004. She won, and was re-elected in 2006 and 2008. She was elected chair of the freshman caucus in 2005 and majority whip of the South Carolina General Assembly.

From 2011-2017, Nikki Haley served two terms as South Carolina’s governor. Then, in 2017, former President Donald Trump nominated Nikki Haley as the ambassador to the United Nations. Upon finishing her term as UN Ambassador in 2018 she created a new policy group

called “Stand for America”, which focused on strengthening the economy, culture and focused on national security issues.

As South Carolina’s Governor, Haley focused heavily on lowering taxes, voting against a surtax on cigarettes, and a bill which increased the sales tax but exempted taxes on unprepared foods as well as property tax on “owner-occupied residential property”, except for taxes which are due from property-tied debt. She has also focused on policies which provided tax cuts for both small businesses and corporations. This is a strength for Haley- Floridians care a lot about taxes; measures in ballots from 2012-2020 mostly revolved around taxes, and votes were aimed at providing as many tax-exemptions as possible.

In addition, Haley also discussed issues relating to immigration and reproductive rights. She stated that, as a child of immigrants, she believes that there should be tighter restrictions on immigration laws. As a result, in 2011, she signed a law into bill which “requires police to check the immigration status of anyone they stop or arrest for another reason and suspect may be in the country illegally.” Because Florida’s Republican base sees immigration as the second-most important issue, and views illegal immigration negatively, her stance on this issue is a strength.

With policies related to abortion, Haley is an advocate for the unborn. She has signed a number of bills restricting reproductive healthcare, including the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, which ban abortions at 20 weeks of pregnancy and other policies which tighten abortion access, especially for women who have been raped, or for fetuses that were a product of incestuous unions. This is a strength for Haley in some ways; on the one hand, Republican Floridians share her perspective and are pro-life. On the other hand, Florida’s Democrats view reproductive healthcare as the most important issue in 2024 and her hard stances on this issue would dissuade voters.

C. Mirror Opposites

As daughters of immigrants, AOC and Nikki Haley share similar policy interests, particularly with issues relating to immigration, reproductive rights, and taxes. However, the main difference between them is their age and experience. Haley has worn so many different hats in the political sphere, and due to her age, has had more exposure and seniority than AOC has. Furthermore, she has tangible proof that her legislation has had an effect on South Carolinians, whereas AOC's evidence of efficacy can only be inferred.

However, an advantage that AOC has over Haley is her media-savviness. Her campaign success in 2018 can be attributed to social media and virality. Videos of her giving campaign speeches regarding her status as a Woman of Color coming from a low-income, working class family and her political aspirations resonated with other working class Americans. Although policy efficacy is something that voters pay attention to, likability, passion, and relatability is also important. Haley and her family, although immigrants, belong to the upper, elite class of White-collared workers. If AOC stresses her relatability to the public as she always has been, she can turn the public's attention away from her lack of experience, and towards her resonance.

Immigration is an issue the two candidates have approached differently. Haley, although a child of immigrants, supports tightening immigration regulations and cracking down on illegal immigration. AOC, on the other hand views both documented and undocumented immigrants as an integral part of American society and the economy. AOC urges for a path to citizenship for all undocumented immigrants in the country, cutting the Customs and Border Patrol budget, and urging the Department of Homeland Security in providing accurate information to asylum seekers. The fact is, AOC does not endorse undocumented immigration, but she acknowledges that undocumented immigrants exist and have paid 9.7 billion dollars to the IRS annually. The

disadvantage in this area is that Nikki Haley, like other supporters of strict immigration laws, will use patriotic rhetoric in that America and its resources should be only made available to American citizens. This will make AOC seem unpatriotic and that she is giving “handouts” to undocumented immigrants.

Another mirror opposite is their view on abortion. AOC views abortion as a woman’s right to exercise autonomy over her reproductive health, whereas Nikki Haley views it as murder. Haley signed a bill which restricts abortions to 19 weeks, with no exceptions for rape or incest, and her bill also jails providers who violate this law. AOC, on the other hand, has spoken out against the appeal of Roe v. Wade and co-sponsored as well as voted on the Women’s Health Protection Act, which would reject the Supreme Court’s ruling of overturning Roe v. Wade as well as codify abortion rights into federal law. Furthermore she has come forward about her experience of being sexually assaulted and stated that she was “grateful she had a choice”. This is an advantage on her end, especially considering the fact that Haley signed legislation which banned abortions after 19 weeks for women who had been raped. For AOC, a woman who has experienced sexual assault, to speak out against these restrictions and to illustrate that she knows how dangerous it can be to not have access to abortion rights and reproductive healthcare could shift the public’s perspective on her stances as well as solidify the Democrats’, who place reproductive rights as their number one policy priority, choice in voting for her.

Lastly, a polarizing issue these two candidates differ on is taxes. Nikki Haley has stated that in order for there to be more job opportunities, the government needs to tax corporations less in order to incentivize the creation of more jobs. AOC, however, has favored taxing the rich. When questioned about the budget for the Green New Deal, AOC proposed that the government should introduce a 70% marginal tax on those who earn more than \$10 million. This could be a

great disadvantage for AOC: in 2020, AOC was fined for not paying a \$2,000 tax for a failed business venture. Her team quickly defended her in stating that the tax-warrant may be invalid due to the date in which the business was terminated. This claim is still under investigation. Regardless, to propose a marginal 70% tax while having an outstanding balance does not fare well in the eyes of the public, regardless of reason. This, in turn, is a mirror disadvantage for AOC and an advantage for Haley.

III. Voter History

A. Issues and Polling

According to a poll conducted by the Public Opinion Research Lab at the University of Northern Florida from February 27th, 2023 to March 7th, 2023, Floridians rank the top policy concerns as follows:

1. Housing Costs (26%)
2. Economy/Jobs/Inflation (17%)
3. Education (12%)
4. Immigration (10%)

Shortly after, a survey conducted by Emerson University was published on March 17th, 2023. The Republican participants ranked their top policy concerns as:

1. Economy (30%)
2. Immigration (23%)
3. Housing Affordability (13%)

The Democratic participants ranked their top policy concerns as:

1. Housing Affordability (21%)
2. Economy (20%)

B. Voting History

At first glance, Florida's voting history has been overwhelmingly Republican. In the 2016 Presidential Elections, former-President Donald Trump won with 49% (4,617,886) of the votes, while former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton lost with 47% (4,504,975) of votes. In the 2020 Presidential Elections, again, Trump won with 51% (5,668,731) of votes while Biden lost with 47% (5,297,045) of votes. In the 2022 Governor Election, Ron DeSantis won 59% (4,614,210) of votes while Charlie Crist came behind at 40% (3,106,313). In the 2022 Senate Election, Marco Rubio won with 57% (4,474,847) of votes, while Val Demmings fell behind at 41% (3,201,522) of votes.

C. Geographic Support

According to Truckads.com, Florida had 10 major media markets: Ft. Myer- Naples, Gainesville, Jacksonville-Brunswick, Miami-Ft. Lauderdale, Mobile Pensacola, Orlando-Daytona Beach-Melbourne, Panama City, Tallahassee-Thomasville, Tampa-St.Petersburg-Sarasota, and West Palm Beach-Ft.Pierce. According to CNN Politics and Real Clear Politics, Out of the 10 media markets, 6 are sinners with strong support for the Republican party. For all researched elections (2020 Presidential, 2016 Presidential, and 2022 Governor and Senate races), Ft. Myers-Naples, Jacksonville-Brunswick, Mobile-Pensacola, Orlando-Daytona Beach-Melbourne, Panama City, and Tampa-St.Petersburg-Sarasota all had members of the Republican party win. As for salvageable markets, 4 remain: Gainesville, Miami-Ft.Lauderdale, Tallahassee-Thomasville, and West Palm Beach-Ft. Pierce. Gainesville.

1. Gainesville

The Gainesville media market comprises 4 counties: Alachua, Dixie, Gilchrist, and Levy. The Democratic Party won the Gainesville market in the 2020 Presidential Election (Biden:98,974; Trump: 82,375, Total Votes: 181,349) and in the 2016 Presidential Election (Clinton: 83,649; Trump: 73,171, Total Votes: 156,820). However, they lost in the 2022 Governor (DeSantis: 66,570; Crist: 60,346, Total Votes: 132,696) and Senate (Rubio: 64,792; Demings: 61,296, Total Votes: 126,088) races. This qualifies Gainesville to be a salvageable market, with 2-2 split elections results.

2. Miami Ft. Lauderdale

The Miami-Ft.Lauderdale media market includes Broward, Collier (East), Hendy, Miami-Dade, and Monroe counties. In the 2020 and 2016 Presidential Elections, the Democratic Party won with the following results: Biden: 1,341,047; Trump: 1,028,791; Clinton: 1,262,137; Trump: 722,277. In the 2022 Governor and Senate races, the Republican Party won with the following results: DeSantis:788,860; Crist: 717,439; Rubio: 767,168; Demings: 734,787. The election results were split 2-2, making Miami Ft.Lauderdale media market a salvageable market.

3. Tallahassee-Thomasville

The Tallahassee-Thomasville media market includes many counties: Gadsden, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Madison, Suwanee, Taylor, and Wakulla. In the 2020 and 2016 Presidential Elections, the Democratic Party won with the following results: Biden: 141,922; Trump:118,951; Clinton 127,041; Trump: 107,311. In the 2022 Governor race, the Republican party won (DeSantis: 101,478; Crist: 92,669), however in the 2022 Senate race, the Democratic Party won (Demings: 96,580; Rubio 96,434). With the 4 elections split 3-1 in favor of the Democratic Party, Tallahassee-Thomasville is a salvageable market.

4. West Palm Beach-Ft.Pierce

The West Palm Beach-Ft.Pierce media market comprises Indian River, Martin, Palm Beach, and Lucie counties. In the 2020 and 2016 Presidential Election ,the Democratic Party won with the following results: Biden: 592,536; Trump 541,582; Clinton: 500,782; Trump:444,515. In the 2022 Governor Race, the Democratic Party won (Crist 360,156; DeSantis: 206,063) while the Republican Party won the 2022 Senate Race (Rubio:440,829; Demings: 128,086). This qualifies the West Palm Beach-Ft. Pierce media market as a salvageable voting group.

5. Saints, Sinners, and Salvageables

As a result of data calculation between the 2016 and 2020 Presidential Elections and 2022 Senate and Governor's Elections, the markets have been broken down into two categories, salvageables and sinners:

- Salvageables: Gainesville, Miami Ft. Lauderdale, Tallahassee-Thomasville, West Palm Beach Ft. Pierce.
- Sinners: Ft. Myers-Naple, Jacksonville-Brunswick, Mobile Pensacola, Orlando-Daytona Beach-Melbourne, Panama City, Tampa-St.Petersburg-Sarasota.

D. Demographics

The demographics researched for the 2020 Presidential Election, 2016 Presidential Elections, 2022 Senate and Governor races are: age, gender, race and ethnicity, marital status, education, and income.

1. Age

In the 2020 Presidential election, Joe Biden won the votes of 18-24 year olds (57%) and 25-29 year olds (64%). Donald Trump's voter base consisted of 40-49 year olds (51%) and 50-64 year olds (54%). Both candidates split the votes for 30-39 year olds (50%).

In the 2016 Presidential Election, similar results were seen with Hillary Clinton winning the votes of 18-29 year olds (54%) and 30-44 year olds (54%) and Donald Trump winning the votes of 45-64 year olds (56%) and 65 year olds and up (57%).

In the 2022 Senate race, Val Demings won the votes of 18-24 year olds (57%), 25-29 year olds (58%), and 30-39 year olds (55%). Marco Rubio won the votes of 40-49 year olds (58%), 50-65 year olds (62%) and 65 year olds and up (62%).

In the 2022 Governor race, Charlie Crist won the votes of 18-24 year olds (55%), 25-29 year olds (56%), and 30-39 year olds (52%). DeSantis, however, won the votes of 40-49 year olds (60%), 50-64 year olds (63%), and 65 year olds and up (64%).

With these results calculated, the age demographic of saint voters are 18-24 year olds and 25-29 year olds. The salvageable voters are between 30-39 year olds, and sinners are 40-49, 50-64, and 65 year olds and up.

2. Gender

In the 2020 Presidential election, Joe Biden won 57% of the female votes while Donald Trump won 53% of the male votes. Similarly, in the 2016 Presidential election, Hillary Clinton won 50% of the female votes while Donald Trump won 52% of the male votes. In the 2022 Senate election, Marco Rubio won 62% of the male votes as well as 51% of the female votes, with Val Demings trailing behind with 37% of the male votes and 48% of the female votes. In the 2022 Governor election, Ron DeSantis won 64% of the male votes and 53% of the female votes while Charlie Christ won 35% of the male votes and 46% of the female votes. With these results, the saint voters are female and sinners are male, with females also swinging in the salvageable direction.

3. Race and Ethnicity

In the 2020 Presidential election, Donald Trump won 62% of the White votes while Biden won 53% of the Latino votes, 89% of the Black votes, and 55% of other racial and ethnic categories. In the 2016 Presidential Elections, Hillary Clinton won 84% of the Black votes, 62% of the Latino votes, while Donald Trump won 64% of the White votes. In the 2022 Senate race: Val Demings won 90% of the Black votes while Marco Rubio won 64% of the White and Latino votes. In the 2022 Governor election, Ron DeSantis won 65% of the White votes and 58% of the Latino votes while Crist won 86% of the Black Votes. These results conclude that saint voters are Black, salvageable voters are Latino, and sinner voters are White.

4. Marital Status

The 2020 Presidential Election did not collect information on marital status among voters. In the 2016 Presidential Election, Hillary Clinton won 52% of the Not-Married votes while Donald Trump won 51% of the married votes. In the 2022 Senate race, Val Demings won 50% of the Not-Married votes while Marco Rubio won 60% of the Married votes. In the 2022 Governor election, Ron Desantis won 62% of the Married votes, while Charlie Crist won 38% of the married votes. Both candidates split the Not-Married votes by 50%. These results conclude that the salvageable voter group is Not-Married, while Married voters are sinners.

5. Education

In the 2020 Presidential Election, Joe Biden won 51% of the college-educated votes while Trump won 53% of the non-college educated votes. In the 2022 Senate race, Marco Rubio won 53% of the college-educated and 59% of the non-college educated votes while Val Demings won 46% of the college-educated and 40% of the non-college educated votes. In the 2022 Governor election, Ron DeSantis won 56% of the college-educated votes and 60% of the non-college educated votes while Charlie Crist won 43% of the college-educated and 39% of the

non-college educated votes. With these results, salvageable voters are college-educated and sinner voters are non-college educated voters.

6. Income

The income category was not consistently reported throughout the four elections researched; the only result that was available was the 2016 Presidential election, with Hillary Clinton winning the under \$30,000 (56%) and \$30,000-49,000 (51%) and Donald Trump winning the \$50,000-99,000 (52%) and \$100,000-199,000 (54%) voter groups. On this information alone, a conclusion cannot be made on which groups are saints, salvageable, and sinners.

IV. Message Targeting

A. Campaign Message

AOC's overall campaign message will encompass her life story as a Latina growing up in the Bronx and the struggles she faced, the uncertainty she felt as a first-generation college graduate with a declining job market, and her commitment to building a better America that provides its people with opportunities and prosperity, appealing to the idea of the American Dream.

In the introduction, it was mentioned that "Together, the American people won't be limited to their dreams, they can also make them a reality. Together, *si se puede!*" would be her rationale. This was specifically done to introduce the idea of unity in struggle; despite economic downturns and disparities, we can come together to create an America that is equitable to all. I included the phrase "*si se puede*" in the rationale as it is a reminder of the grassroots campaign she ran in the Bronx. AOC often used Hispanic markers in her campaign, and her logo includes the double exclamation point used in Latin-American languages. Furthermore, Non-White

Hispanics and Latinos are 18% of the US population and 26% of Florida's population, by far the second-largest demographic group. In Florida, they are also a salvageable voter group. Using a phrase in some voters' first language shows a sense of camaraderie and relatability that is invaluable. This can show that she isn't just another American Politician that does not understand the reality of her constituents' issues- she has lived them. Aside from religion, race and ethnicity and cultural knowledge is one of the largest identifiers we, as people, use to group ourselves together. Former-President Barack Obama used a similar tactic in 2008 at the League of United Latin American Conference (UNLAC) when he spoke to Latino Leaders; in the introduction, he spoke Spanish and repeated after the crowd, "Si se puede!" (C-SPAN, 09:15). In the exit polls, he received 67% of the Hispanic vote.

Secondly, the issues she will be shedding light on are immigration, affordable housing, and the economy with emphasis on the job market. These issues were chosen based on the importance highlighted in recent polls, as well as the advantages they provide to her campaign. For one, AOC has personally lived the struggles of housing crises during her childhood and young adult years. She understands the frustrations of people who cannot afford homes in today's market, all while not being able to acquire job opportunities. Her relatability, something that was stressed prior, is one of the key reasons why she has such loyal supporters. In comparison to Haley, who grew up with parents in the middle-upper class, AOC has repeatedly talked about personal experiences that are relatable to Americans of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Her speeches from her 2018 campaign, where she ousted incumbent Joe Crowley, displayed her trustworthiness as a member of the Bronx and Latino communities, in addition to her understanding of the real struggles Americans face. With the growing polarization and

distrust of politicians who offer frills, this genuine approach may appeal to her audience's ethos and pathos.

B. Message for Key Voter Groups

1. Latino Voters

There is one hot-topic among Latino and Hispanic voters: immigration and the idea of the "American Dream".

In the 2022 Senate race in Florida, Marco Rubio won because of his reliance on his family background: child of Cuban immigrants (the largest Latino/Hispanic ethnic group in Florida) who worked to climb the socio-economic ladder to achieve the American Dream. This narrative was so powerful that it swung him into his third senate term. He used patriotic rhetoric to substantiate his policies: no "hand-outs", strict border control and immigration regulations, as well as appealing to Catholic Cubans in being pro-life. While this may be a setback for AOC, she can remedy this by reaching out to the other subgroups in the Latino community: Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, whose voting patterns tend to lean left. In Florida, the Latino and Hispanic demographic breakdown is: Cubans (28%), Puerto Ricans (21%), South Americans (18%), and Mexicans (14%).

In the 2016 and 2020 Presidential Elections, as well as the 2022 Florida Governor's Race, in order to win the Latino vote, Clinton, Biden, and Crist all launched campaign videos that were in Spanish, targeting issues such as social security, immigration, and universal healthcare. In the 2022 Senate Race, Val Demings held events within Puerto Rican communities and hosted a press conference with Telemundo, a Latino news outlet, after her primary victory. She spoke about her American Dream of equality and equity for all races, as well as marriage equality and reproductive rights for women, something that resonated with Latino women in particular.

For AOC, as a Puerto Rican woman, if she were to shed light on her background, coming from a low-income Latino family, as well as her experience working with the National Hispanic Institute, she could sway this salvageable group in her favor. In 2018, she released a campaign video stating, “I wasn’t born to a wealthy or powerful family, I was born to a mother from Puerto Rico, father from the Bronx...I’m an educator, an organizer, a working-class New Yorker...I’ve waited tables...going into politics wasn’t in the cards. But after 20 years...you have to ask, who is New York changing for?...A New York for the many is possible. It’s time for one of us.” (The Courage to Change, 0:00-2:07). With this messaging and door-to-door canvassing, AOC achieved victory. In 2016, on her campaign tour to Florida, Hillary Clinton hosted a rally that was clearly directed at the Latino people in Miami, as she had multiple Spanish speakers at the rally, with performances from Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony. After the concert, Clinton said, “With only 10 days left...it is easy to forget that Donald Trump is out there, stoking fear...insulting 1 group of Americans...We are not gonna let that happen because we will come together, we will grow together, and we are stronger together!” (CSPAN, 51:53). After exit polls were released, Clinton won 62% of the Latino vote in Florida, proving the efficacy of this tactic. Additionally, while the subgroup of Cubans tend to lean right, making them “sinners”, there are other Latino ethnic groups who will support AOC should she highlight her personal and professional biographical experiences in working with and for Latino people, especially highlighting that she is one of them.

2. College Educated

To begin, aside from social and ethical issues, college students/graduates tend to be worried about two things: job availability and student loans. The lesson is simple: young people

acquire crippling amounts of debt in order for a chance to attain a well-paying job with their degrees. The reality, however, has been bleak. These are two things that, again, AOC has personal experience with. In 2018, after her campaign victory, AOC received a lot of backlash from the opposition, stating that she was too inexperienced to be in Congress and her past as a bartender was used against her. She effectively responded to these accusations, saying that there is nothing wrong with working in the service industry, and that she personally experienced financial hardship, like many other Americans, upon graduating during a recession. With 2024 coming up and a recession being near, she can utilize her past experiences of being a college student graduating with uncertainty, and handling student loans to invoke feelings of understanding from these salvageable voters. In this targeting speech, she should include plans of alleviating/forgiving student loan debt, or possible repayment plans that would ease the burden on Americans. In 2020, Joe Biden used this exact tactic- his biggest campaign promise in Miami was forgiving student loan debt for graduates and students of public universities and came from families making \$125,000 or less. With this being the central tenet of Biden's 2020 campaign, he received 61% of the College-Educated votes as opposed to Hillary Clinton, who received 57% of the College-Educated vote in 2016 (Forbes). To further pad her message, AOC can ride the coattail of Biden's attempt in alleviating student debt; she has backed Biden's Student Loan Forgiveness policy initiatives, and highlighting her professional work/voting patterns will allow college-educated voters to see her continued efforts in advocating for student debt relief. This same tactic was employed by Biden when he cited his support for initiatives in free-tuition by Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders in their respective states.

3. Miami Ft. Lauderdale

Miami-Dade and Ft. Lauderdale has one of the most diverse populations, with 28% of Miami-Dade and 11.8% of Ft Lauderdale being Hispanic and Latino(Miami Matters). In 2020, President Biden made special efforts to visit Miami-Dade county as well as Little Havana in Miami to appeal to Hispanic and Latino voters. In 2016, Hillary Clinton held a Rally in Miami, featuring Jennifer Lopez and Marc Anthony. As mentioned earlier, Florida is home to the largest Cuban population in America, and Biden made note of this as he took jabs at Trump, saying “Cuba is not any more free than it was four years ago.”, while Clinton criticized Trump for inciting fear and targeting Hispanics and Latinos. Both candidates made their stances clear: they were allies to Latinos and they intended to use their platforms to support both domestic and foreign policies that would affect Hispanics and Latinos. The polls shortly after reflected their efforts: Biden and Clinton won the Miami Ft. Lauderdale media market by a landslide. It is clear here: to target Miami Ft.Lauderdale is to target Latinos while instilling patriotism.

For AOC, a Puerto-Rican woman, being Latino is something personal to her. Not only did she grow up in the Bronx, with a large Latino community, but she also spent her early political career working with DREAMERS and Latino-American citizens alike. In order to sway the salvageable voters in the Miami Ft. Lauderdale area, AOC would need to lean into her Latino heritage, share her experiences working with the National Hispanic Institute, as well as advocate for issues that matter to the Latino community, such as universal healthcare, immigration, and social services. To further unify this message, she should say that for Latinos to lack access to these resources is not just a Latino problem, it’s a problem for all Americans. Obama did the same thing in 2008 during his speech at UNLAC in New Mexico, which resulted in him winning 67% of the Latino votes.

V. Message Delivery

A. Announcement Event

AOC's announcement event will take place in the streets of The Bronx on October 13th, her birthday. This will be done for a few reasons: it's her hometown, it's where she has historically served, and she has a large support base there. These factors combined will result in large turnout, starting her campaign off with the right momentum. In 2019, Vice-President Kamala Harris did something similar, hosting her event in Oakland, where she was born and raised. In 2016, Trump held his at the Trump Tower, a place that is familiar and where he already had support.

The event will include loud music, mostly of Latin origin, and there will be Latino pastries served. As news cameras pan around, there will be a diverse audience in the background, happily cheering on AOC. The background behind the podium will have a large American flag, with international flags bordering it. This is to appeal towards not only Latinos, ethnic communities as well. It's done to establish a personal relationship, one where the audience can see themselves in AOC. For audience members who also come from Latino backgrounds or ethnic enclaves, or for those who grew up with parents working low-wage jobs and grew up with a lower socioeconomic background, they can identify that AOC grew up there, came back to serve there as a member of Congress, and is now running her campaign to be the first female, and Latina at that, President of the United States. It's a story that most children of immigrants and immigrants alike can identify with; it is a signifier of the American Dream. Her event will show that this is America, we are Americans, as well as immigrants and children of immigrants.

B. Paid Media Advertising

1. Broadcast/TV Ad (Geographic)

The ad will be streamed across all streaming services (Hulu, Netflix, HBO Max, etc.) as traditional TV is not typically watched by the 30-39 age group (salvageables), and would be a pre-roll instead of a skippable ad, and it will be about one minute. The shows being targeted would be popular shows, to reach a wider range of audiences, and data collected would specifically allow for this ad to run for people watching in Miami Ft. Lauderdale. To begin, the ad would feature the American flag waving with a black and white filter over it and slow, inspirational music playing, and a slow montage of Miami Ft. Lauderdale residents working, living, and interacting with each other would flow through as the music picked up, with residents narrating what their community is about. The screen would cut to black, with the text “Who is Miami changing for?” would be displayed over the screen, and fade out to a colorful, inspirational bit, with advocates in the media market walking around, protesting, having conversations with each other. AOC would appear, in conversation with these people, and smiles would slowly form on their faces, as she narrates her plans and issues. “Vote for Change. Vote for AOC.” would then appear on an all purple screen, with her signature logo.

This ad is tailored to appear neutral, with purple in the ending card, showing that AOC just wants a Florida/country that advocates for all people, regardless of party affiliation. It targets people native to the geographical location, showing the businesses there, the people there, and showing that she, who comes from a similarly diverse community, is ready to talk and listen. As stated in class, one of the issues about salvageable voters is that they’re not being targeted at all, and therefore not voting. This ad asks them to engage with political conversations, and vote, as well as targets the fear Floridians have in the authenticity of our democracy and their voices being heard.

2. Mail

For the mail ads, we will specifically be targeting Latino voters. The ads will have “What has the Republican Party Done For You?” in the subject line or banner of the postcard. It will, again, be all purple, with AOC’s cutout, and be in both English and Spanish. It will use phrases such as, “La Raza”, “Mi Gente” and “Si Se Puede” to further show camaraderie and familiarity with the people. Furthermore, it would talk about the international relations the US had with Cuba and show the lack of initiatives the opposition’s party has done for their community, similar to how Biden noted, “Cuba is no more free than it was four years ago.” in order to target Cuban salvageable voters. It would further discuss the plans AOC has to make the US a more equitable place for Latinos to thrive, and cite her experiences working with and for the Latino community, specifically with the NHI.

Latinos are one of the groups who have the least amount of targeting efforts by the Democratic Party, despite being one of the fastest growing demographic groups in the US (WTTV). This ad will not only show that there is effort being put into understanding their community, but that AOC herself knows the struggles they are facing and is willing to represent them. Furthermore, most Latino families use their mail and advertisements in order to look for coupons or job opportunities (MediaPost). This method of targeting through mail is effective as it will actively be looked at. We can utilize these similar strategies for emails to target younger Latinos (Lee, et al.)

3. Online Ads (Demographic)

Online ads will be used to target 30-39 year olds, specifically through YouTube informational videos, as 70% of millennials watch those types of videos (Think with Google). The ad will be a video, and is skippable, but will start with a purple screen and text slamming down onto the screen with harsh sound effects, stating, “Student Loans. No Jobs. Housing

Instability.” or something similar. Then AOC will appear, talking about how our current policies do not protect millennials, and state her plans. The ad will run for no longer than 30 seconds, and will therefore be not skippable. These issues are things plaguing millennials, and with the current job market and voter research, the economy and lack of support is exacerbating these issues. This ad targets by knowing millennials, knowing that they watch, what they care about, and delivering a plan to them. If it doesn’t persuade them to vote for AOC immediately, it will inform interest and beg them to do further research. The Google algorithm, then, will allow for similar ads about her campaign and her stance on other issues to appear on other websites they visit, giving her platform more exposure.

C. Online Messaging (Social Media)

Social media is AOC’s bread and butter- it’s where she gains the most exposure. In order for there to be a broader reach, I would advise for her to work with TikTok influencers or prominent influencer channels on YouTube (Vogue, Wired) and to livestream on Twitch, Instagram, and/or Facebook. Her greatest gift is her ability to relate to the struggles of working-class Americans of many backgrounds, and it would be wise to capitalize off of that. Furthermore, she could also speak in Spanish, publish short-format videos of her working with the demographics she is targeting, and host forums on Reddit such as “Ask Me Anything” in order to directly speak to constituents.

As she is doing this, I would further advise her to do something similar to the Twitch stream she did in order to mobilize voters. As she plays video games, she could talk about her issues and plans, as well as encouraging voters to vote for change or to protect our democracy. These strategies combined would show her relatability and charisma, which would spike people’s interest in her.

D. Candidate's Biggest Policy Weakness Plan

AOC's biggest policy weakness in Florida would be her stance on taxes. The wisest thing to do in this scenario is to light a lantern, but also defend her stance and provide context. If Haley were to say, "AOC wants to raise your taxes!", she could say, in video ads, social media responses via livestreams, or at rallies, etc. that while she did advocate for that, it would be only for the top earners in the United States, and we could use those taxes to fund programs like universal healthcare, or provide tax exemptions for the middle and lower classes. Alternatively, she could also redirect the accusation, asking, "Well whose taxes am I raising? Why are the middle and lower classes being burdened with high taxes, without seeing any of the benefits?" and listing plans that she would fund with those taxes, including renewable energy programs that would, in fact, provide tax-exemptions. She could use this as an opportunity to appeal to environmental voters, millennial voters, and voters who are interested in social welfare programs. In addition, she should bring up that while Haley has been a big proponent of tax cuts, she has "offered millions of dollars to big corporations as South Carolina's governor" (Tax Policy Center). Additionally, although she proposed to hike gas taxes in order to reduce personal income taxes, South Carolina's gas taxes "hiked in their GOP-controlled legislature" (Tax Policy Center). Haley has used a number of tools to "lower taxes", but she did so by offering corporations subsidies and tax-breaks (Tax Policy Center). By showcasing these mirror-opposite policy initiatives, AOC can effectively show that she has been, and will be working with and for the people, while Haley sides with corporations and the top 1%, furthering feelings of distrust. The strategy to use online ads, rallies, and social media will allow her to reach a broad audience; as this is one of her largest policy weaknesses, she needs to put extra effort in communicating these concerns and discrediting Haley.

VI. Summary

The last Democratic candidate that lost in a Florida state-wide election was Charlie Crist, who lost with 40% of votes.

In 2022, DeSantis spent \$3.7 million dollars on Spanish-speaking ads, while Crist only spent \$3.1 million on both English and Spanish ads (NBC News). Additionally, DeSantis aired 10 times more Spanish ads, targeting Latino voters more, explaining the 58% of votes he won from them (NBC News). In order to combat this, AOC would need to put more effort into targeting Latino voters through mail, email, and other forms of paid advertising. She would also need to focus on issues that Latinos in Florida care about, such as social welfare, job opportunities, and reproductive rights, which resonate with Latina voters, as well as international relations with Cuba in particular.

Furthermore, AOC would be able to gain more votes in 30-39 and college educated demographics if she were to talk about issues plaguing their daily lives, such as student loan debt, inflation/lack of jobs, and lack of housing.

Finally, with Miami Ft.Lauderdale being diverse, she would need to create a broad ad-campaign that shows the people of that media market together, unified, and working together as Americans, while also pinpointing the specific issues that plague the Latino-majority population in that media market.

The Latino voters are one of the largest demographic groups in all counties of Florida. Appealing to them through specifically targeted ads in an area where the majority of their population resides (Miami Ft. Lauderdale), as well as targeting them through mail ads will allow for AOC to win the Latino votes. Additionally, targeting college-educated and 30-39 year olds, as their issues intermingle, will allow for her to reach over the 50% threshold.

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