

A New America: How Millennials are Sparking Change

Content Brief:

Born across two decades spanning from roughly 1981 to 2001, the so-called millennial generation will shape the coming decades in American life more profoundly than any other. America today is at a crossroads – confronting increasing competition from developing economies while our education system is struggling to provide the skills the workplace demands even as it serves students of unprecedented diversity. It is against this backdrop that a generation of socially engaged, technologically savvy doers are beginning to leave their imprint on American life—the first etchings of a portrait that will only grow deeper, more complex and more consequential in the years ahead.

Empowered by their sheer size -- 90 million-strong, this generation is larger than even the baby boom -- the Millennials will comprise a full 30 percent of the electorate by 2020. They are an unusually collaborative bunch, electing to share everything from work space to cars. (Consider that miles driven in the US in 2012 came in 10 percent below the level estimated in 2006, partly due to the Millennials' penchant for car sharing). America today is more diverse than ever – and the millennial generation, which is 42 percent non-white and proved to be the decisive supporters for America's first African American president, personifies this new demographic reality.

In this traveling town hall series underwritten by Microsoft and hosted by National Journal and The Atlantic, we will animate what it means to be a Millennial, illuminating their experiences and challenges through a kaleidoscope of perspectives. We will meet entrepreneurs, civic activists, students, veterans, young people in the workforce, and those trying to find employment. We will capture the diverse reality of this enormous generation, showing both how they are fitting into our existing institutions and already beginning to remake them in their image. And we will bracket their perceptions with insights and assessments by leaders from older generations, stimulating a dialogue across generations.

It is fitting then that in this program, we will hear from young entrepreneurs who have leveraged their talent for the common good. Trailblazers whose early contributions give credence to RFK's observation that youth is "not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity" will be featured in this program, which will be designed as a call to action by and for Millennials who are committed to public service and a view of education as the great equalizer. We will also hear from young veterans making their way back into civilian society, young people who have chosen to seek vocational skills rather than a four-year college education, and recent graduates finding their way in the workplace.

Traveling across the country, the series will seek to start an intergenerational conversation, bringing together elected officials and the young iconoclasts who are changing the world from the outside in.

Always aware of technology and its capacity to effect transformative change, this program will seek to surface solutions even as it celebrates the ingenuity of a generation which will lead the way to a better future.

Cal State University, Los Angeles
December 6, 2013

Cal State LA has one of the lowest tuition fees in the country and attracts a diverse student body. The University is investing heavily in STEM education and entrepreneurship and it's against this backdrop that *National Journal* and *The Atlantic* will explore how the Millennial generation is utilizing those programs to secure a brighter future.

Draft Agenda for Program:

** Working document, additional format and panel details to be determined as our headline speakers are confirmed*

2:00-2:15PM

Welcome Remarks

- William A. Covino, Cal State University, LA President
- Bruce Gottlieb, National Journal
- Fred Humphries, Microsoft

2:15-2:35PM

Opening Keynote Remarks and Interview

- Representative Xavier Becerra (D-CA)

2:35-2:45PM

Audience Participation

2:45-3:05PM

Panel 1: STEM Education

While the overall economy remains sluggish, many sectors are growing, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields. STEM jobs tend to be higher paying than most jobs in other growth categories yet remain unfilled because employers cannot find applicants with the necessary skills.

This pronounced skills gap is both a tragedy for the millions of unemployed and an urgent threat to American competitiveness. In 2011, just 45 percent of US high school graduates were ready for college level math; only 30 percent were ready for science. Worse, 17 nations' high school students outperformed US students in math – an embarrassing shortfall, to be sure – but also one with dire real world consequences. Indeed, experts say that by 2018 there will be 3 million fewer US workers with college degrees than needed.

According to a recent Harvard study, increasing the percentage of math proficient students to the levels attained in Canada and Korea would increase the annual U.S. growth rate by 0.9 percentage points and 1.3 percentage points, respectively, and would boost national income dramatically. This panel will focus on best practices and solutions for improving STEM education and bolstering opportunities for Millennials seeking to work in STEM fields.

Panel includes (more names may be added):

- Dr. Emily Allen, Cal State LA Engineering Dean

- Jessica Alvarenga, undergraduate and graduate student in electrical engineering at CSULA, now pursuing PhD at U of Denver
- Armando Diaz, Associate Executive Director, Boys and Girls Club of Venice
- Tara Chlovski, Founder and CEO, Iridescent

3:05-3:15PM

Audience Participation

3:15-3:35PM

Panel 2: Entrepreneurship

Entering the job market amid the most turbulent economy since the Great Depression, the millennial generation faces strong economic headwinds. The challenges Millennials face include elevated unemployment, more student debt, and a limiting job market, which makes it difficult to rise steadily in their careers. It is not an overstatement to say that confronting these challenges, and the resilience required by them, has become the defining characteristic of this generation.

As they have responded to the challenge, many Millennials have also shown pragmatism – and marked entrepreneurial ability. Today’s newly minted college graduates are more than three times as likely to start their own business than college graduates leaving school in the early 1990s were – a dramatic shift in such a short time frame.

This panel will bring together young, diverse entrepreneurs and business experts to explore how technology provides both a platform for startups to grow and a more democratic path to finding funding to finance them.

Panel includes (more names may be added):

- Shahin Kohan, President, AIMS 360/Focal Technology Solutions
- Estelle Reyes, Executive Director at NFTE
- Rob Carpenter, Executive Director, Global Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship

3:35-3:45PM

Audience Participation

3:45-3:50PM

Closing Remarks